– I think probably the most equal relationship you could probably have right about now would be with a woman. I mean, but in any form of loving, I mean, there's a possibility of getting screwed, but I sort of can't get the feel of just talking about sexuality. I mean, talking about, like, women have been like sex objects for so long, and relating to men and having them come up, because you're not using your head. I mean, you can't talk head to head. It's sort of like he's talking head to body. And like, it's the same thing, you know, that I sort of feel towards women, you know? I can't explain it. Never mind.

– And I can't see, you know, going to a Puritan thing altogether.

– No, I don't think it's a Puritan thing. What I'm saying is after being looked at as a sex object, purely, you know, for how I can perform, it's a nice thing to just think of like heads. And you get as much hassle from men these days if you don't do it at all, as if you do it with another woman. Because you have undermined what, you know, the basic thing they want you for, for the time.

– I understand. But I've had a very, very happy experience of relating to someone for nearly a year, that they didn't want to relate to me sexually, you know, who's very much in love with me and, you know, it was a guy-- is a guy, but didn't wanna sleep with me. And at first I found that just amazing. I didn't believe him. Like, what's wrong with you, you know? And then I accepted it and found that very, very happy that he wanted me, like, to be as an equal. And then I found him very happy to sleep together, as equals, you know? Celibacy kind of isn't something that I really want to accept

– I don't know. I think that I thought it was an alternative, you know, just as homosexuality, bisexuality, celibacy. And I don't hear that many women talking about it.

– Trying to admit that they're, you know, that everybody is gay, that everybody has feelings for all sexes, you know, animals, anything. And like, secondly, think about your own head so that you're not gonna like flip out if you find out someone is gay around you.

– I guess I, in a sense, like feel a lot of pressure from society, not to be, not to do that. You know, in other words, what I'm saying is that this society does not let you be sexual. They define what is the acceptable sexual. It's like what can I do as an individual with the support, you know, of my sisters to change that? In other words, that while I go into my utopia, there shouldn't be odd looks. There shouldn't be like weird stares. And there shouldn't be a policeman coming up to me--

– Or, well, yeah, sisters saying, "Why are you holding hands? What are you doing?"

– You know, the word "come out." It's such a weird expression. When I first came out, back in January, I was really paranoid one day to walk down in the house, into the living room, knowing that all the women's liberation people were there and that the topic hadn't been much discussed. And I was afraid to hold hands with my lover during the meeting. And wasn't sure what kind of a reaction I would get. But it was in my head, you know, that was my expectation. That was the fear. You know, it's all the worries that I had about being myself. Not all of them.

– [Participant] It wasn't just in your head because I was at the meeting. It was like my first women's liberation meeting, and you were with another woman, and it really blew my mind. It really did.

– When I started out in women's liberation, you know, it was the worst possible thing that could happen, would be to have been identified with the stereotype of lesbian women's liberation. And then when I was in a room, and there it was in front of me, it's like rubbing my nose in the shit is how I felt about it, you know? I mean, like, I can talk about it now.

– Oh, I know how you felt. No, but I can say it now because it's really, you know, it's such a long way that I feel. The process from feeling that that was an offense to me and that I didn't wanna be identified with it, and that okay, if you wanna do it intellectually, I think that's fine, but go do it in your bedroom, you know?

– [Participant] It was too public.

– Now I don't feel that way, you know?

– And I remember one of the third women's liberation meetings we had was, we talked about how women were unable to relate to each other emotionally. And I started getting really uncomfortable. People started intellectualizing, and then it became an intellectual problem, whether you related to a woman or not. And then you started getting more uncomfortable, 'cause you thought, oh gee, maybe I'm not relate... In other words, before what I appreciated as a spontaneous outburst of affection became almost a mind thing, and I could no longer do it.

– I get the feeling that Dottie, the question that Dottie originally asked has been talked all around and explained away, which was how do we protect a gay community? In other words, how do we ensure the fact that that gayness can grow? And like, what I hear is people minimizing what happens. I mean, three pig cars pulled up in front of me and you and Kate, when we were holding hands. She also had a hospital uniform on, but our friend was questioned extensively about why we're holding hands and didn't they know that was sick? Oh, yes. So, like, I was a little scared and I'm still a little scared about who knows whether or

not I'm gay.

- And so again, the very first question is, "Why do you call yourselves gay, when actually you are sick tramps?" That one didn't get through, I think.

- [Participant] We need tramp liberation.

- Now this was from a call-in, which means that it was all over the city, instead of people that had some exposure to gay women and people that have gotten to see that it's not so frightening, that gay women and gay men aren't constantly attacking their children and constantly trying to seduce straight people. So therefore, you know, a lot of the questions were of that type.

- A letter addressed to us, and the man said that he was a minister. And he said that he didn't... He was not coming in. He wanted us to know why, and he proceeded to quote the Bible, everything you could possibly think of in the Bible. And then at the end, telling us we could still be saved if we do the following, you know, 24 things.

- And then we got a letter today from another Baptist church and all it said, it had their letterhead, our address. And in capital letters, "Please remove us from your mailing list." You know, there are people, that are educated people, that don't want to know. They're just totally shutting their minds off to it.

- [Participant] Why do you think they do it?

- [Participant] Because it's scary.

- It scares a lot of people.

- You know, when you're thinking that it's finally becoming okay to have male-female sexual relationships for purposes other than procreation, you know, it's gonna take even longer for people to understand that you can also have male-male and female-female relationships for the purposes of fun.

- You know, I don't know. I don't know if I ever really felt terribly frightened by the thought of lesbianism, in terms of my own personal life. I don't think I really thought anything. And I can intellectualize with the best of them and talk about, "Yeah, everybody should have the right to, you know, do their own thing and nobody should try and stop two consenting people from doing what they want." Until very recently, and I got a letter from a really close friend of mine. I haven't seen her in like seven years, and she's been going through whole bunches of hell and shit. And you know, all kinds of turmoil in her life. She wrote me a letter, and it's the happiest damn letter I've ever seen. She has fucked maybe 150, 200 men in her life,

and she's never been happy. And she's living with a woman, and she's really, really happy for the first time in her life. I got so busy in what I was doing that I didn't have a chance to respond to her. And I kept thinking, "You ought to write to her, because if you don't, she's gonna think you don't approve." And finally, Tuesday night, I got this phone call. And she says, "Well, I was wondering what you've been doing lately." And I said, "You know, Anne..." I was in the middle of a meeting and I said, "I really can't talk, but I'm glad you called 'cause I've been so busy and I've known that you would probably think I didn't approve." And she says, "Yeah, that's exactly it." So, you know, I explained that I do approve. I really approve, you know. I really feel that it's a really great thing. Instead of saying, "Everybody should be allowed to do, you know, what they like," in an intellectual fashion, I've come to say for this woman, you know, as I know her, that's a good thing. But I also feel that for this woman, as I know her, it's not a good thing right now.

– Well, with people that are gay now, you know, within the framework, kind of, the gay liberation front, how do you relate to each other? You don't have well-differentiated roles, do you? I mean, there isn't somebody who's a butch and somebody's who's a femme. You're trying to get away from that. This is really a naive question, but how do you kind get together and you know--

– [Participant] Oppress each other.

– Well, I think one, I mean, maybe, one difficulty that I'm having, 'cause I do not have a gay relationship yet. I consider myself gay. I do not have a relationship yet. Yeah. In me, I see, you know, the traditional role, you know, the way I'm trying to get out of that. And I think once, you know, you get into a relationship, and if you both are aware of how you are, in a sense, programmed, you know, that you begin to deal with that programming. And I guess I see it more or less, you know, working out of, you know, like if I happen to be, you know, in bed with a woman, well, should I make the first move? If I make the first move, does that make me a butch? Or should I wait for her? But if I wait for her, does that make her... You know, that kind of business. It's, in a sense, that you really have to introspect and really, you know, come to an understanding of how you, you know, were and are brought up.

– For months now, I've been a carpenter, and I got fired today, so I don't have that job anymore.

– Like, I really felt butchy. Like I wear these, you know, carpenter's clothes. Yeah. I got scars on my hands, and I walk, I stride around. I have these boots that I wear. And so like the women I've been living with, I've been very afraid to approach just because for fear that I would appear as a man, you know?

– And in a way, it's in a way that has inhibited my relating to them because I've been so afraid of that role. And I'm out of the role. I don't know, I'm not quite sure what will happen now. But it's so strange what things, the things you you are and the things you do, and it's hard not to role-play. That scares me because I don't know how to avoid it.

– Like, I guess I see a real need, you know, for the consciousness-raising groups and gay liberation, you know, to be able to express those feelings that, you know, I think I'm, you know, playing a role.

– But a lot of times, too, like, society tells us that men are aggressive and outspoken, and a lot of other things, and that women just sit there and look nice. And in a gay relationship when one or both people are aggressive then, you know, is that really a butch thing, or is that yourself? And that's not negating that people play roles, 'cause you can really get into that, too.

– Like, I feel put in a bag at times, being expected to be more forthright and aggressive, and it's really frustrating. And so I constantly get reflective on how I'm relating to another person. And it was even worse when I was getting feedback from people when I started a relationship, and everybody was saying, "She's gonna mess her over. She's going... It's just like her, you know?" You know, not that I was gonna try and move somebody along the way, get her interested with me and drop her, but that I was just gonna absorb her because I have a way of dominating. And being told that by quite a few other people can really frighten you to death, and even knowing how to relate at all. And so you're just, like, constantly on slippery ice. And so I had to really discuss it with the woman that I'm close to, because I had all that weight on me from the outside, saying that this is what I was gonna do.

– It's kind of like, well, in the relationship I'm currently in, we've done a lot of talking back and forth, you know, as time has gone on, about roles and where we stood with them, as kind of like a conscious effort on our part, not to get into them and to do everything to relate to each other as people, because you do have the tendency from, you know, the way you're brought up to get into roles. But I think, you know, it's much easier for me to do that with a woman than to do that with a man and say, "You're acting too butch." You know, that's kind of a hard thing to do.

– I don't know. I think gay women and people in women's liberation give too much weight to that issue. I haven't found it very difficult to just be whatever is natural for me. And well, in the case of having somebody who's over-dominating, I did notice that I was being over-dominated, but that didn't change me. So, no, I think you can maintain whatever self, whatever you were before, you can be in a gay relationship. You don't have to think about it. What am I gonna be?

– [Participant] I'd really like to hear other people's ideas.

– [Participant] Now I'm gonna be straightforward and talk about it because you really have fears of people's reactions. And I know a lot of them might be, you know, made up in our heads and we might be like overly afraid. It's a really big question.

– You know, I don't necessarily analyze everything that happens between me and a male as having sexual overtones. And I also don't think I ever analyzed what happens between me and a female, necessarily, as having sexual overtones.

– [Participant] But I think a lot of people do. I think most people.

– Okay, well maybe most people do, but I think it depends on where you're at. I really do. I don't know.

– If most people feel that way, then it's a problem, you know?

– [Participant] But I think it's a human relationship type problem, rather than a gay problem or a straight problem.

– Yeah, but right now we're talking about it as a problem for gay people. And I think it's real. I think that one of the reasons is this not knowing what's expected of you. You know, suddenly feeling like if I were the straight person to whom you announced your gayness, that it might push different buttons than if you told me that you were pregnant illegitimately, or you told me... Because I don't know. I haven't had that experience before. And I don't know if the... You know, my first thing is, what shall I do? What shall I say? Are you asking of me something different than "Be my friend? Be understanding, love me still, trust me, be open." And that's really sad. That's really unfortunate. But I think it happens, you know. I mean, I remember the first time a friend of mine told me that she was pregnant, you know? "Oh, what am I gonna do?" I said. You know, it was my problem. And I have a very different reaction now, because I know, you know, I've worked through a lot of things of what it takes to be a friend, a lot of things. But I think as you're put into new situations and being told, you know, that your friend is gay or saying to somebody "I'm gay" is a new situation for lots of people.

– When I say this to a person that's a good friend, a close friend, the reason why I'm saying it is not because I'm making overtures to her, but it's because I want her to understand me as a whole person, that if she knows that my hair is brown, that I come from a German background and that, you know, that my parents are such and so, she's only knowing part of me. But then, this is part of me too, a part of me that, you know, I don't wear as a sign around me, but that I can only share with certain people that I'm really close to, that I want

to know me as a whole person. It really frustrated me when a man that I really cared for, I told him this back in my hometown, just in May, and it really shook him up. He said, "But that's unnatural. How can you feel that?" And I said, "I've been in the process of trying to understand, you know, the development of it and to be myself, and I would like you now to try and open your mind to what I'm talking about, to how I can feel this toward another person." Don't limit, don't restrict me is what I was asking him to do.

- [Participant] I think it's unfortunate, you have to do a whole lot of educating when what you're asking for is understanding.

- [Participant] It's so unfair.

- So when you told me that most of your close relationships were with women, I had already had an idea of that before, but I just felt really glad that you were able to tell me that. And I was really glad that, myself, I wasn't shocked anymore and I wasn't scared anymore. And I wasn't afraid of you. I was really glad that you told me, that we could talk about it. I thought maybe you were saying it as maybe an education to me, but I didn't think so because I was sitting there, telling you about my relationships with men. And I knew you weren't trying to tell me, "You better face this." You know, you were just telling me about yourself. And I just was really glad that we talked about it.

- [Participant] I mean, some of the women could give you a stronger statement of what it feels like when they're in the dorms and what it's like. And some of you'd say something about that and how you can't talk to the people in the regular chit-chat sessions at the parties in the dorm.

- I don't know, in my relationships with other people, you know, my straight friends, I've had further problem in making them understand. And like, I think all you have to do is apply a little perceptiveness and try and understand exactly what level they're at in their thinking about homosexuality. And if you don't think they're far enough that they can accept it, then the thing to do is to talk about homosexuality and present all your ideas in as human a form as you can, to make them understand. And I don't know, anytime I've tried, it's always worked out well. And none of my friendships have suffered under it. But it is hard in just day-to-day living, approaching people with that. And I don't feel secure in approaching them with that unless they know other parts of me, unless they've known me for a while. So, you know, gets in the way sometimes.

- When you tell someone and they say to you that this is unnatural or something like that, at least they're being honest with you about how they're feeling. But I've run up against so many liberal people who just, you know, "Oh, gee, that's really cool." You know? And you can

tell that they really aren't feeling that way, but they refuse to say anything else or to give you any other feelings that they have on the subject.

– Yeah. But if you try hard not to notice that and you just continue trying to reach them, they usually come around at meaning it in a deeper way. "Yeah. That's cool." Because, you know, they've never had any insight into what your feeling means. And, like, you explain it to them. At least by saying it's cool, they've opened themselves up to further communication with you.

– Realistic to expect, say, that if you are straight, not only do you have a husband, but say you have a friend, you have another woman that you love. Is it realistic to expect that you could express these feelings without somehow altering your feelings towards your man? I mean, is it really possible to hold the two in balance?

– It is. I was and am in love with a man, have been for two years, and came out while I was in love with that man, and also love women very much. And it's worked out okay, so far.

– You know, I don't get into a relationship and say, "Oh, yes, he's a man. Therefore it's a heterosexual relationship, and therefore I'm heterosexual now." But I mean, this is the binds that we get put into in the ways of relating. Going about this room, we have, within this room, that relates strictly to women, we have women that are... One woman that's in a triad relationship. We have one woman that's in a triad relationship with a woman and a man. And we have women that relates bisexually. I mean, in this room, you know, we have just all these combinations of ways of relating. But I resent, you know, having to go around and say, "She's bisexual, she's homosexual, and she's heterosexual," because each time you do that, you're putting people into restricted categories. And it's to say, "This is my concept of myself because of people labeling me this. This is the way I should relate." Instead of just feeling free to be in love with the person I'm in love with, who, at this time, is a woman.

– [Participant] Possibly.