**Extract 1**

So, about the age of seventeen in Time Out I saw an advert for the London TV/TS Centre. TV stands for transvestite and TS stands for transsexual. And in those days, we called, what we now call trans women, we called them transsexuals. I think that probably would be considered quite insulting now just to call someone ‘a transsexual’ because it’s a descriptive term, like just a transexual woman rather than a transsexual, but that’s what we said at the time. And it was a group that was based at French Place which is in Shoreditch in London, it no longer exists. So I really wanted to go to this group because I thought loads of people are going to be there who I’m going to be attracted to, so I persuaded my sister, I roped her in on the project and I wrote a letter to them saying that we were two school girls and we were doing a project on gender for school – I don’t know how plausible this was… And we’d like to come and interview people. Bearing in mind that I was seventeen, my sister was only fourteen at the time, we thought the only way we’re actually going to get into this group is if we make up this lie and claim we’re doing it for school.

We didn’t get any reply so one day, on a Wednesday afternoon, we went up to the group and said, you know, “We’re the two girls who wrote the letter, can we come it?” and they let us in! And I was like “Yes!” And I said “Can we do interviews?” And they said “Yes, OK. We’ve thought about it. We’ll allow you to do interviews, but you have to be supervised and you’ll have to be here for just one month and then you have to go away and write your project and send us your project.” So, we said “Yes, that’s fine.” So we … the group was open Wednesday afternoons, Friday evenings, Saturday evenings and Sunday nights. And they had the whole building. Downstairs there was changing rooms and an office and they had a helpline and transvestites used to take turns running the helpline and answering questions. Upstairs they had a seating area with tables and chairs, tea and coffee, and in the evenings they had one or two glasses of wine, but it wasn’t licensed, you just did a donation on the door and then you got one or two glasses of wine. Obviously not for me and my sister, just tea and coffee for us. And then some of the people from that group went to the pub opposite which was called The Bull and Pump which was a drag pump, a drag pub at the time and then would come back in before the venue closed.

So, it was very respectable. The look on a Wednesday afternoon was M&S, you know, smart feminine clothes but not outrageous at all, and in Saturday night it was kind of ‘80s smart going out evening wear so maybe a black pencil skirt, stiletto shoes, black stockings, shiny cerise blouse say, or red blouse and most of the transvestites were wearing wigs and quite heavy make-up, obviously to cover the beard shadow. So, it wasn’t outrageous, or it wasn’t focussed on sex at all, it was about people sitting round chatting, having conversations, a very social place. And they used to have a tape playing music fairly quietly in the background that was on a loop and I remember one song that they played over and over called “Those Were the Days my Friend” and at the time I remember thinking “I’m going to look back on this in the future and think Yes, those *were* the days!” Because they really were! This was the first place that I felt really really happy to be and I just thought this, I’m in my element here. All these people that I really like, I’m really attracted to, I just, you know, walking into that room, I felt completely at home.

So, I met my first partner there. Her name was Mandy. She was a transvestite and her name was Martin in daylife. Martin was a transvestite and not a transsexual, and that was kind of a conscious decision on my part, although there was quite a few transsexual women at the venue I gravitated towards the transvestites because I wasn’t really willing to take that step into defining myself as a lesbian. I thought that if I started a relationship with somebody who was basically a woman then I’d be giving up my dream of getting married, having children, living a normal life. I thought it’d be quite a big sacrifice and I didn’t really feel ready at that stage to take that step so I wanted a relationship with a man so I could still carry on with all my original plans.

**Extract 2**

But anyway, that was those two groups.

When I was at the Bi Women’s groups I met a person called Alison, who became my partner for the next eight years. And now I’d slept with a woman, I thought I had the right to call myself bisexual. So, we were in an open relationship for the first year and during that year, I was really exploring my sexuality. I slept with trans women, transvestites, feminine women, I’d had threesomes, I went to the Torch Garden Fetish Club and SM clubs, I was really exploring my sexuality and had to try everything once. So, it was an amazing year from my point of view. An incredible year of growth and experimentation. The Bi Women’s Group had lots of social events. It had a Christmas party in First Out. We attended Pride with our banner and all marched behind it. And we dressed up for Pride with things like feather boas and, you know, really fun outfits, and we sang a song called *She’ll be Coming with a Woman When She Comes*. And then we all sang “She’ll be coming with a man when she comes” ‘cos we were bisexual, so it was great fun.

After one year of being together, Alison and I decided not to see other people outside the relationship although we could bring other people into the relationship. This was quite a psychological adjustment for me because, having said I was on that conveyer belt where I thought I was going to get married, have children, settle down, and live the normal life, this was making the step of saying “No, that’s not going to be for me.” So, at that time I wouldn’t have even imagined it was possible to get married to a woman or to have children with a woman. That was off the agenda. Lesbians at that time were still having their children taken away from them in court cases, divorce cases, so there was no way that we would even have considered that. So, this was a big step but it was the right thing for me at that time. I felt, you know, I fell in love with her and I just thought this is wonderful!

Together we joined quite a few different groups and organisations. We joined SM Bis and SM Dykes.

**Extract 3**

Because I feel like I’m bisexual, but I’m attracted to the feminine side of the sexuality, transwoman is kind of the best of both worlds. It’s… there’s an element of masculinity still as well, and an element of femininity and it seems like it’s the best side of masculinity and the best side of femininity combined. To me it’s… it’s perfect, and I mean obviously, you have a relationship with a person, not with a gender as such and… the initial attraction was to the image, to the visual image, but long term it’s about do you connect with that person? Do you get on with that person? And I feel like yes, we… we’ve found, I’ve found the right person