

PSY SESSION 5 TRANSCRIPT

Transcript Code

[???] = word(s) not clear

... = indicates a pause or switch of thought mid sentence

Word with (?) = indicates best guess at word

[IA] = sentence(s) inaudible or indecipherable

Participants

E = Elizabeth (Interviewer)

INT = Male Interviewee

Recording starts

E: Why did you put it like this do you think?

INT: Well, I'm on a limited income and, therefore, it's important that I use things very efficiently, or as efficiently as I can, or as efficiently as I think that I can.

E: You're quite savvy with it; you try and pay a lot of attention to this kind of thing, yes?

INT: Yes. It's like when I boil the kettle, I don't fill the kettle right up, I just put in enough water for the immediate use and if I don't need a light, I'll switch it off, I don't leave lights on. I mean even when I'm watching the television, I prefer the light off to the light on. I realise how much electric bills have gone up in recent years, energy bills per se and, therefore, I try to be as efficient as possible with the use of energy, and also thinking environmentally as well.

E: How do you know these things have high energy use, have you monitored them, or do you guess; is there any way you think about things that use a lot of energy?

INT: I understand about electrics, I'm a fully skilled motor vehicle mechanic, use of electrics within vehicles I understand that, how electricity works, power consumption and the rest of it. I'm au fait with most things and how they consume electricity.

Rather than actually monitoring it, I've built up knowledge over the years of what things use and if you use certain things frequently, they'll put your bills through the roof. I'm aware that certain things in the lifestyle we lead, we tend to use them as part of the comfort of living. I mean lights, I've got low energy lamps, the place I live is well insulated and, therefore, I tend to keep the energy consumption down.

E: Are there things here that you would consider essential and luxury?

INT: Yes. Again to keep the lifestyle I like, some of these, central heating, electric drill, I've got one but I don't use it very often, ovens, kettle or toaster, vacuum cleaner. I've got an electric fan heater but I very rarely use that, and cooking hobs. I mean in that line, more or less most are essential as well, plus fridge freezer, having a bath, I shower more than a bath so that cuts down on electric as well. I've got an electric fan but I rarely use that. I quite often use the microwave, and of course the television, mind you the programmes on at the moment aren't that edifying, the quality of those are going down.

Digital, satellite, DVD players, camera charger, electric razor, I've got one but at the moment I'm not using it. I've got a laptop, printer and the internet, but that I would say is a luxury I could do without. I don't often use the alarm clock either, unless I need to get up very early. Coffee machine I don't have one of those. I would say mainly these tend to be more essential than towards that end, apart from that line. This line tends to be more on the luxury side, not essential, just to improve lifestyle.

E: That's the other reasonable energy use.

INT: Yes.

E: I would like you to picture yourself at home on an average day. Talk me through the things you do in a day, just about the different ways you use energy from morning to night on an average day.

INT: Where I live is actually in a flat which is part of a complex. It's got storage heaters.

E: Are you on Economy 7?

INT: Yes. Even so if you leave them on without thinking about it, your energy use can go up, especially in the winter. It's a small flat and I tend to only use one storage heater, which I find more than adequate for the whole flat, because it's a one bedroom flat, it's quite small with a kitchenette.

E: Do you find that expensive the storage heater?

INT: It's not that expensive, but I think it's because I keep it under control. The other thing that's outside my control is the fact that the halls and corridors, other places, are heated separately, they go on a separate bill that you've got no control over. Well, you have got control by agreement with the other people in the building that you keep the heating systems down.

E: Do you pay for that as well?

INT: Yes, there's a separate monthly charge that is put on for the whole building. Also the actual washing facilities are communal, but then again just because it's communal I don't use too much energy. I don't go and wash my clothes for the sake of it; I'll do it when it's needed, probably once or twice a week.

E: Could you tell me more about the washing, is it that the washing machine is communal as well as the tumble dryer?

INT: Yes.

E: You don't have one in your own flat?

INT: No. That's for the use of the whole complex, the different machines. Usually from a week-to-week basis I do one main wash a week and quite often, especially in this weather, tumble dry them, because it's much more advantageous. There's limited room for hanging out to dry naturally, and in the cold weather they don't dry anyway. Every so often with bedding and the rest of it, there's an extra wash, possibly once or twice a month as well for the extra bits and pieces.

E: Are those coins?

INT: No, it's included in the communal charge, the use of the machines and also the electricity used within it as well. Also the water charges are based on the community of people, you pay a proportion of that rather than individually.

E: Do you think that affects the way you use energy, or the way that other people in your neighbourhood, because if you think about you're paying a standard price no matter how much you use in that respect?

INT: I try not to be wasteful, but I've found that other people within that building can tend to be a bit wasteful, leaving on lights, leaving doors open when it's cold, leaving windows open. Other people don't seem to be that bothered with the way they use things, because they don't see a direct correlation between the energy use and environmental issues and all the rest of it. If you start talking to people about that, they soon switch off, they just don't want to know, too busy leading their own lives.

Obviously the heating system is pre-set, so I know pretty much that the heating covers the whole day with it being storage heating. I don't mess around with it. I put it to a setting that seems comfortable for me, not too hot and not too cold as it were. In the morning when I get up, I

do switch on the television because I always like to know what's going on, current affairs, the news.

E: It's one of the first things you do?

INT: It tends to be, not always but quite often. It depends whether I'm in a rush to get out or not. If I need to get out quickly, I won't bother with the television, I'll just make my breakfast. That always involves a cup of tea and sometimes toast, so I use the toaster, but not always, sometimes it's cereal. I'm aware the toaster tends to use a fair amount of energy in a short time, so I don't have toast every day, but I like the variety. The cup of tea seems to be institutionalised, everybody wants a cup of tea, but I only put in enough water in to boil for a cup of tea, I don't fill the kettle right up. Lights don't automatically go on. I tend to open the curtains rather than switch a light on.

E: Only as you need it?

INT: Only if I absolutely need it will I switch the light on. I tend to be as frugal as possible with the use of all sorts. It's totally electric, there's no gas. I tend to be out quite a lot. I don't stay in all that often. I like to go out. I was seriously ill not too many years ago and I took time out of recuperating. I had a serious stomach problem, I lost a lot of weight, and it took about two years to build myself back up again. I've always been one for being out and walking, and I tend to get out and have a walk for at least three miles, maybe five miles, in the morning.

I'll come back and quite often visit the library, visit friends or do my shopping, and then I'll come back at lunchtime, and quite often that's just sandwiches and a cup of tea. Sometimes I'll use the toaster because I'll have scrambled eggs on toast or beans on toast, but not always. I'll usually switch the television on again to listen to the midday news, just for about an hour, and then I tend to be out again for most of the day.

I live in Crediton so I'll quite often catch the bus in the afternoon and come into Exeter and go around different places, see what's going on, like finding this out and getting involved. I'm involved with a local arts group as well, so sometimes I'm out with them. I tend to be out of the flat apart from getting up in the morning, lunchtime and evening. It's usually about 7 / 7.30 in the evening that I've got back in and I'll cook the main meal. I like cooking and, because of the stomach problem I had, I make sure I know what's in the food.

E: You only eat certain things?

INT: Yes, I had to re-educate my stomach to be able to eat things again.

E: Has that affected the way you cook?

INT: To a certain extent. I also worked for Toby Restaurants. I was a manager of a restaurant and a public house. I've done quite a few different things in my life, so I know how to cook. I've acted as a chef and all sorts. I know the best way to cook things and I tend not to have too many fried foods, too much fat, lots of fruit and vegetables; my cooking is according to it.

I don't often use an oven because I'm living by myself and, therefore, I tend to just use the hob, because I find using an oven for one person isn't economical. The actual oven doesn't tend to get used. Then I'll sit down and watch the television for the rest of the evening and fall asleep when I fall asleep but, as I say, the lights go out when I put the television back on again. I don't have the television on while I'm cooking.

E: It's not on in the background?

INT: No, I tend not to because I like to concentrate on what I'm doing when I'm cooking. That's pretty much it. I do go away quite often as well, about three or four times a year for anything up to about six weeks at a time. I'm due to go away again in the middle of this month. I'm away for five weeks. I'm going to North Wales on a farm. It's got a small forest where I make sculptures and stuff like that, from wood, from slate, site specific local materials, so I keep my hand in making sculptural things while I'm there. I try to keep myself active.

E: Can you tell me more about how the storage heating works?

INT: It's night storage. It comes on in the small hours. I think it's sometime after midnight that it comes on. It's thermostatically controlled and regulated, so you can pre-set the thermostat for how much capacity you want to put into the heater overnight.

E: Do you know what your thermostat is set to at the moment?

INT: It's mid-range.

E: Are there degrees?

INT: It's just numbered. It's that big a heater that you can open the vents in it to allow the heat to permeate out, but it's such a big heater that I don't need to open the vents. It's a relatively small flat.

- E: You don't really control when you're having it on?
- INT: It comes on each night, but as soon as the temperature is hot enough, I'll switch it completely off. I mean this time last year the heating was off because the temperature had gone up to about 20°, but this year I'm still using it. I don't need to put the heating on above halfway, and I don't need to open the vents to allow extra heat out. It's also got a fan heater on it but I've never used that, never needed to use it.
- E: Is that an extra thing if you're too cold?
- INT: If I'm cold. Some of the residents aren't that mobile and, therefore, they tend to get colder easier and they need the extra heating. Touch wood I'm lucky enough to keep active.
- E: I'm quite interested in Economy 7. It's quite difficult because you've not got your washing machine in your house, because some people do their washing at night, people on Economy 7 would do it later so that it's cheaper.
- INT: Well, no, it's only the heating that's Economy 7.
- E: So the electricity isn't?
- INT: No, it is just the heating that's Economy 7.
- E: If you did have something like that, that your electricity bill would be cheaper at night or at different times of the day, to what extent would you plan to use certain items when the electricity was cheaper?
- INT: I understand that there is peak usage, that people get up in the morning have breakfast, dinner times, and evening when they're coming back from work.
- E: How much of your schedule is flexible and how much has to be done when it needs to be done?
- INT: It's quite flexible because I'm retired. I can do things basically when I really want to do them, when I feel like doing them, I can be quite flexible in use and, therefore, if I knew it was cheaper to cook my dinner earlier than later, or later than earlier, I would do so. If it helped those that provide the electricity to be able to spread the load of consumption throughout the 24 hours, if I knew that certain periods were cheaper than others, I would organise myself as best as possible within that framework.

E: There is a limit; there are some things you have to do when you need to do them.

INT: Yes.

E: If you think about the things we've got here, is there anything there that you just couldn't compromise with?

INT: Breakfast in the morning would be more or less essential. I could get up a bit earlier if I absolutely needed to, and I do if I've got something planned for the day, or if I'm going away quite early, then things change. I suppose in a sense I have got a bit of a routine going, there is a routine. That routine is based on my physical needs, because of the illness I had and I make sure the priority is my wellbeing and, therefore, I've got into a certain routine because of it.

If I knew that using certain things at certain times were cheaper, I would do it. The breakfast thing is fairly stable, it usually happens at the same time each day within half an hour. I tend to do the washing on a Sunday morning because that's when most people aren't using the machines, but I could also, if I knew that using them at another time would be cheaper, try and fit in with that situation. There are quite a lot of things that could be manipulated. It's the same with having the shower; I could change when I had a shower. If it was cheaper to have a shower in the morning rather than the evening, I would have one in the morning, so there would be no problem with doing that.

Storage of food, fridge freezers that's on all the time, you've got little control over that, apart from how high you set the controls within that. I set them to the optimum where I know the food will be safe but it's not too cold. I know storing general food within 5° above 0° is adequate... well, closer to 3° than 5°. They're set accordingly and I've found the control setting of 2 in the fridge is adequate. If I set it at 3, you get ice formation inside the fridge so I know it's a waste of time setting it any higher, a waste of electric as well.

I suppose I'm even to the point where I make sure I never leave the fridge door open, it's opened and closed straight away. People will open the fridge door, take something out and leave it, go off and do something and the fridge is left open. Even things like frozen foods, I'll defrost in the fridge because that is more economical and safer for the food. It also helps the fridge in the use of energy as well. I suppose I do think about things quite carefully and work out what's the best optimum use in the way I use things.

E: Why do you think that is, is it because you're worried about money or are you generally quite conscientious?

INT: I don't think I'm worried about money. It's mainly I don't like waste. I've been brought up in a family that went through the war years, they made do and mend. I was born in the Baby Boom just after the war. Rationing was still there when I was a child and, therefore, you were brought up and made aware that wasting things wasn't something to be doing. You were scolded if you wasted anything. You were scolded because there was a limited amount of stuff available. Even things like sweets were a treat once a week. I understand how lifestyles have changed. A lot of these things I've got weren't in use at that time, not invented.

E: Quite interesting how practices have changed throughout the years, if you think about washing, showering, how often do you shower?

INT: Most days. I like my shower.

E: Whereas when you were younger?

INT: When I was younger, it was a bath, two or three times a week when I was a child. It seems to have worked out that most people, including myself, usually have a shower just about every day. Occasionally I come in and if I've exerted myself that much, I'm that tired, I can't even be bothered to have a shower, I'm falling asleep in the chair, because some days I've been out and I don't get back until very late. When the weather gets good, I'll tend to plan a day so I'm out, go to the seaside or whatever, so I'll tend to be back in as late as 11 o'clock at night. I like to get about and explore places, it's the child in me still liking exploring and finding out things.

E: You sound like you're quite clued up with energy saving.

INT: I think for the most part, I tend to be very careful on use of things. I'm aware now that gas tends to be dearer than electric, where years ago it was the other way round, electric was far dearer than gas. You go back to the sixties and electric was more expensive than gas.

E: Have you changed what you use?

INT: I've got no control. In a way it's fortunate I'm all electric rather than gas, but before most things used to be gas. When there was North Sea gas and all the rest of it, things tended to be cheaper, but now that's running out and we're having to buy our gas, the price is rocketing.

I'm also aware that even though there are different electric companies, they tend to be a monopoly, they

don't act independently. They see what each other is doing, knock on each other's back door and say, we're putting the price up, are you putting the price up? I'm aware they act together and not individually, a bit like supermarkets.

Recording ends 31:27 minutes