

LJH36 15.12.89

Natasha

Q: One of the main things that we're interested in, is how young women think and feel about their relationships. What would you say is the most important relationship to you at the moment?

A: My family, I think; my mum, my...

Q: Yeah. In what way - what's important about those relationships?

A: What's important about them - I don't know. I suppose they're always there, they're not like friends and things where you can - like friendships can end and stuff, so something constant - I don't know really.

Q: What about your friends, what about relationships with your friends?

A: Are they important?

Q: Mm.

A: Yeah, they are, they're very important.

Q: What sort of relationships do you have with friends?

A: Well, basically I've just got a few close girlfriends I've had for quite a long time... since I started secondary school.

Q: You met them at school?

A: Yeah.

Q: What do you do with them, what sorts of things do you do?

A: Go to each other's houses, talk - I don't know - eat -

Q: Yeah.

A: We go out and things to the cinema and meet other friends and things like that.

Q: Were you in like a little sort of group at school, did you go around as a group?

A: Not really, no. We started - well, in about the third year we were sort of a group and then it got - eventually it just turned out to be sort of close friendships.

Q: What about boys, are there any boys in your friendships?

A: No. I have a few boys that are friends but not quite - not really close friends. 'Cos I've got a brother who's eighteen so I know a lot of his friends.

Q: Yeah. Do you think - some of the young women I've spoken to have said that they have, at your sort of age - maybe a little bit younger, when they're still at school - they have a kind of - they have boys and girls who are friends... but it was easy for them to have boys as friends at that sort of age - did you find that?

A: What sort of age?

Q: Well, from about fourteen to sixteen, seventeen.

A: What, and then it got harder after that?

Q: Well, they were just describing what it was like then, that you know, it was - it was - it wasn't as if boys - they weren't having sexual relationships with boys and they were having that kind of relationship, whether there was sex in it or not sort of thing -

A: Yeah.

Q: - they could have boys as friends, and I was just wondering - that's why I asked - whether you've had any boys. Do you think that you did have friends like that who were boys?

A: Not really. I mean I don't think it was any different then from now really. But I never really did.

Q: I noticed from your questionnaire that you said, when you were talking about being at school - sex education, that was the main thing that we asked you about, about which you were a little bit dismissive. I mean, how was it, what was it like?

A: It was very bad, I think. I think... it was, I mean it was like - I mean it's difficult to remember like when we actually had it, 'cos we used to have like certain parts of our - up to like the third year when we chose our GCSE options and things, we used to have like subjects working on a rota. So we'd have health education once every however long. And it wasn't very often, so it was very kind of - and it didn't sort of start until about the third year. Which I think in some ways is too late for a lot of people. And also the thing is that it was mixed and I thought that was really bad, 'cos it just meant that the boys were really stupid, and - and so - it was also taught badly as well.

Q: Who actually taught it?

A: There were a couple of teachers -

Q: Were they just subject teachers who had to do -

A: No, Health Education teachers, who taught kind of Child Development and things like that as well. But there was never like a kind of - we followed a course when we started, you know. It was just very kind of all over the place.

Q: ...You did say though, that you had something about relationships. 'Cos that's one of the things that a lot of the young women said was lacking about relationships, it was all about the technical aspects.

A: Yeah, it was, but it wasn't - it was kind of like we watched these films that were made in the seventies about this - I don't know if you've seen them, I've forgotten what they were called - about this couple - I don't know, they were about sixteen, they were at school, and the girl gets pregnant. And it's like a sort of series - it was really out of date, I mean - but it was - and that's what - I mean we sort of - they tried to sort of talk about relationships, but it was very difficult. 'Cos I mean you can't really - unless you have like very small groups of kind of, you know - you can't really - I don't think you can really talk about it as a massive group of boys and girls at that, it just kind of - I don't know, it wasn't very - it was never really very productive.

Q: ... is this too much milk, I can pour some out... some sugar... Well, what sort of things - have you left school now?

A: No, I'm at the sixth form centre.

Q: And what sort of subjects are you doing - well, I know what subjects you're doing. What made you choose to do those?

A: What made me choose to do those -

Q: French, Italian and -

A: - and History. Well, I chose Italian because we'd been to Italy for six months and I took my O-level a couple of years ago, and I wanted to do Italian A-level. And that kind of worked well with French, and I like French anyway, and I liked History as well, quite interesting. I didn't wanna do like all languages, I wanted to do something sort of... History.

Q: What - what do you think you might do with these A-levels, should you get them?

A: I suppose eventually go to university, probably do French and Italian or something. But before that I'd like to go and live in Italy or France, do some sort of exchange thing, for a year maybe and then sort of decide what I wanna do. 'Cos I'm not sort of sure

about what course or, you know, even what I want to do eventually, I've got no idea. So I'll just leave it to the latest time possible.

Q: Yeah. It's sometimes difficult to decide, isn't it, but it would be nice to go abroad for a year.

A: Yeah. Especially if you're doing languages, it's not - you know, it would help me a lot with what I was gonna do the next year.

Q: One - one of my friends... do a course on art history for a year - I think it was in Italy actually. So she'd be sort of improving her Italian -

A: That'd be really nice.

Q: Yeah.

A: There are lots of really nice things you can do like that, if you've got the time to do them.

Q: Mm. And you feel that as well, you don't feel the pressure that you have to sort of get on and move on in your career or something.

A: No. Well I think it's a real shame like - go to school and then, when you've been to school go straight to university. I think it's nicer just to do something completely different for a year, otherwise I think you get - you know, people that - I know someone that - she did really well at her A-levels, but she's now at university and she's getting really wound up about work and everything. And if she'd had a year off I'm sure she would have had time just to relax and everything.

Q: Mm, yeah.

A: So I'd like to do that. But then I suppose you may never wanna go back.

Q: That's just what I was thinking... to wind up again, yeah.

A: But then when you - when you do languages, I mean you spend like a year or whatever, you know, a year in France or something quite often, which is obviously quite laid back...

Q: Yeah... good steady trajectory. Do you think that your parents influenced you in what you want to do?

A: My mum would have liked me to do sciences. But there was no way I was gonna do it 'cos I didn't want to.

Q: Yeah.

A: But she would have liked me to do maths and physics and chemistry, just 'cos she never did. (laugh). But so - but they - she's not gonna force me to do anything, and I - you know, I got kind of - my better grades were in the things I chose. I mean not that - that wasn't why I chose them, it's 'cos I like them better that I got that grade.

Q: Yeah.

A: It would have been stupid for me to do maths, and I kind of scraped a C out, thought I'd failed, and, you know, I did much better in French. So she didn't really have that much influence. At one point I was gonna do Philosophy instead of History, and she didn't want me to do that. So she had some influence over me in that. Then I think I would have chosen History anyway.

Q: Do you think that - how long ago did your parents divorce?

A: About five years. But they were separated, they've been separated most of the time I can remember. But my father used to live upstairs, you know, 'cos we've got quite a large house. But - and so they were separated then.

Q: ... Did you find that difficult?

A: Yeah, it was awful... It was just a bit tense really. It didn't really work out. 'Cos the idea behind it was quite good, but - you know, my mum didn't want us to lose contact with my dad, but it didn't work very well.

Q: It must have been extremely difficult for them.

A: Yeah.

Q: ...

A: Yeah.

Q: So you've got this relief, then -

A: Yeah, I was quite pleased when they - when they finally separated and he left. I mean, most people are really heartbroken, but in my circumstances I was quite pleased.

Q: Yeah, yeah. That's quite interesting, I was talking to a young woman yesterday who felt it had been very difficult for her, and - but she felt that almost all her friends had parents who were divorced or separated. Do you think that's -

A: Yeah, I do as well. And the ones that are together are mostly miserable.

Q: Yeah. Not much of a recommendation.

A: No. One of my friends probably wishes that her parents were separated, 'cos they get on so badly. And ones that are separated just seem quite happy, from what I've seen. I don't know if that's always true.

Q: Do you think it's gonna - it's influencing the way that you feel about relationships?

A: ...Yeah.

Q: How do you feel, I mean what sort of relationship do you envisage for yourself?

A: I don't know. I don't know. Just a lot better really.

Q: Mm. Difficult to speculate. You said - you said on your questionnaire that you had one sexual - well, I don't know whether it was one, but you had had sexual relationships, though not - without sexual intercourse.

A: Yeah, there was one.

Q: What was that like?

A: Well, it was a friend of mine that - oh, it was a boy that I was friendly with at school, when I was quite - when I started secondary school, and he was [NATIONALITY], and he went back to [COUNTRY]. And then he came back for three weeks, and we sort of had a relationship in that time. But it was...

Q: How do you mean?

A: Well, because he was going back and everything, and so you couldn't - I mean, as it was my first sort of relationship, I'd rather it was - I'd rather it was something that was gonna be a sort of commitment, and I think it was a bit kind of (?)unproductive.

Q: ...?

A: Yeah.

Q: But were you rather fond of him, I mean how - what made you think of having a relationship?

A: Yeah, I liked him a lot. 'Cos I liked him a lot when I was younger, but it wasn't the same, and I was sort of in the first year, second year and we were just quite good friends. And then when he came back, I liked him again. And, yeah, yeah, I mean I liked him a lot, but I knew that it wasn't really gonna work. Even if he'd stayed it wouldn't have worked -

Q: Really? - yeah.

A: So maybe it was good that he left. I thought that afterwards, I thought maybe it was good that he left. It wouldn't have worked if he'd stayed.

Q: Why do you think that?

A: I think - 'cos I - I was sort of more interested in a sort of real commitment, that he wasn't really prepared to give, 'cos I mean he was fourteen, I was fifteen I think - we were in the same year, but I think it does make a lot of difference at that age. And most of my friends who had relationships had them with people much older, or at least a couple of years older. I think it does make a difference. And so I don't think it would have worked.

Q: Yeah. Well it's very hard to sort of perceive yourself committing yourself to somebody when you're rather young like that.

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah. You say most of your friends have had relationships, have many of your friends had relationships?

A: Yeah, most of them.

Q: And what about - did they have sex with the people they were having relationships with?

A: Yeah. But - I don't know if they're quite - I don't know if they're typical or not, but one of my friends is living with someone who's - she's the same age as me, she's living with an Italian bloke she met on holiday. He's twenty-eight, twenty-nine. Another one of my friends is having a relationship with someone who's thirty-eight, something like that, and so -

Q: How do you feel about that, you look as if you're a bit doubtful about it?

A: Yeah, well I am doubtful about both of them.

Q: Yeah.

A: I mean, HANNAH, this girl who met this EUROPEAN bloke when she was on holiday, he actually came to live in her house. But I don't know how her mum let her, but she did. Quite strange. And it kind of - she lost all contact with - I mean we were very good friends, and we kind of gradually sort of petered out. But she sort of only sees him. I haven't seen her actually, 'cos we - we were at secondary school together. I haven't seen her for about four months or something. But as far as I know, she's kind of lost contact with most people apart from him. I think that's a bit of a shame really.

Q: Mm, yeah. A lot of the young women that I speak to say that their friends go on forever, but men come and go sort of thing, so it's best not to get too involved. But I suppose it's difficult if you're sort of passionately involved with somebody, not to want to spend as much time as you can with them.

A: Yeah.

Q: Can you imagine yourself being in that sort of situation?

A: Yeah, but I don't think I ever would neglect friends, 'cos I've had it done to me so many times. I know that sounds stupid, but if you don't have a relationship like over - you know, I mean I haven't had a long relationship with someone, and you notice, you know, you can see more objectively what happens to other people. I'm not saying I won't do the same, 'cos maybe I will, but, you know, you can - I see how people have lost their friends and the effect it has on them, and it's not really very good, and so I would try my best not to do that. And I don't think I'd want to, 'cos I think my friendships are that important; you know, I wouldn't - maybe I would, I don't -

Q: Difficult to know, isn't it, sort of speculate about it.

A: But it is a kind of obvious mistake that a lot of people make.

Q: Mm, absolutely, yeah.

A: I suppose it's quite difficult not to make it, but it seems a bit - something I would really try not to do.

Q: Mm. One of the - the other things that we're asking about is the way in which, when you're in a relationship, how you would feel about the degree of power you had. I mean I know the relationship that you had was rather short and... but did you feel that you could decide what was happening, or that it was that he decided, or -

A: Well, I think probably it's quite hard to decide what's happening... I think he probably decided more. I think now I'd probably be more strong - I'd probably be stronger, and so I would make sure that I was deciding more, do you know what I mean?

Q: Yeah.

A: 'Cos that's one of the reasons why I wasn't happy really, 'cos I was just sort of, you know, letting it go on for the sake of it, just 'cos I thought, you know - I didn't really stop and think about what was happening. And so, I think he probably had a lot more power than I did.

Q: Mm. Did you think about having sex at the time or was it not that kind of relation - I mean, was it not - it wasn't a possibility for you?

A: I think he may have done, but we never talked about it. But it wasn't like - it wasn't something I wanted to do, not under that circumstance anyway.

Q: But did you - did you do other things - I mean, you described it as a sexual relationship. In what way were you thinking of it as a sexual relationship?

A: Well, he didn't - there wasn't really any other choice, was there? How was it - how was it made out?

Q: Oh, you mean on the questionnaire, yeah. Well, it was - we put it like that, we said that you had a sexual relationship without intercourse or with intercourse or -

A: Well, what do you call a sexual relationship?

Q: Well that's it, that's why we put it there, so that people could put whatever they saw as being a sexual relationship. So - that was why I was asking you, I was just wondering how you saw it; I mean, you might have engaged in activities which were sexual, but didn't include intercourse, or you might have felt that, because it was a relationship with a guy, a particular kind of relationship, that it was a sexual relationship. Just to find out how you felt about it really.

A: Well, a bit of all of them really.

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah, I mean one of the reasons why I said, "sexual relationship" is 'cos I thought, if you said "relationship", then it could have just meant a friendship.

Q: Mm, yeah.

A: And obviously a sexual relationship isn't - I mean, it's a friendship, but it's different. So partly for that reason really...

Q: So... it's quite complicated that one, isn't it? The other thing that we're asking, which is around that kind of idea of what is sexual and what isn't sexual, is what - what people think about safe sex, have you heard about safe sex?

A: Yeah.

Q: What - what do you think of it as being?

A: Well, you mean what do I define it as?

Q: Yeah.

A: Isn't it without penetration or something?

Q: Mm. Seeking your definition. Yeah, right. A lot of people say "condoms" as the first thing that comes to their head.

A: Yeah, yeah, use condoms, I suppose, yeah.

Q: Yeah. But, basically other sorts of sexual activities without penetration.

A: Yeah.

Q: Which brings us I suppose around a little bit to the AIDS - I mean one of the objects of the study is to look at what people think about AIDS, what they know about it and what they think about it, and what you think of - what do you know about AIDS for a start, where did you first hear of it?

A: Quite a long time ago, you know, a good few years ago. I don't know when it suddenly sort of came out.

Q: I think there was a big push in the media in '87, I think.

A: Yeah, I think it was about - about three years ago... Yeah, easily three years ago.

Q: And what did you think about it then?

A: I thought it was quite serious, quite - I mean I wasn't sort of personally worried about it, like as part of my life, but I think it's quite serious - I thought it was quite serious then.

Q: Did you learn much about it, I mean do you feel you know about it? For example, what is it, what is AIDS?

A: I can't remember what it all stands for.

Q: It doesn't matter about what the letters stand for... what kind of thing is it?

A: What kind of thing is it?

Q: Mm.

A: Well, you can get it through contact of blood, which is normally through sexual intercourse, and it's a breakdown of your immune system. So, you can get, like, a cold or something and, you know, it can be really serious. And you can be - what is it, HIV-positive, and not actually have - carry the - what's it called? Actually carry, you're not actually carrying the - you haven't actually got it, but you could get it, is that right?

Q: It might develop. You can be - being HIV-positive means that you have the virus -

A: Yeah, the virus, that's what I meant, yeah.

Q: - which can lead -

A: - which can lead to actually having it.

Q: There's sometimes quite a long time-gap in between.

A: Yeah.

Q: And if it - and you can get it through sexual intercourse and stuff, yeah, and from blood. But not just - I mean the blood not necessarily just through intercourse, I mean any contact with -

A: - like a blood transfusion or something.

Q: Although they've caught that now, that used to happen at the beginning, but now they're screening blood and treat it in a way so that it kills the virus. So that's not a problem any longer. But if - in excepted places, you know, in the third world or whatever, where they wouldn't have that screening process -

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah. Do you think that the people you know worry about AIDS and its effects, or that - feel at risk or anything?

A: No. I don't think they do. I think - I think there was a big - you know, there was a big publicity thing about it, all that "don't dive in" and things, and there was quite a scare, it was something that people were suddenly talking about. And I think - but I mean I was only about fourteen then, so people I knew weren't having sexual relationships. But - and then it kind of died down, and I think now there's a lot less talk about it than there was then. I think people think it's something serious, you know, they maybe see something - maybe on television, they'll see someone who's got AIDS, or they'll hear about it or something, or - you know, they know about it, you know, as much as, say, I do, but they don't - but they don't relate it to their own lives, at all. I think that's partly to do with being a bit kind of - it's kind of - it's still thought of as a sort of homosexual disease rather than something which is gonna affect everyone. I think people generally don't worry about it, don't think about it now in relationships. But it's not 'cos they don't know about it, it's not 'cos they - you know, it's not 'cos they haven't - I mean, a lot of people probably don't know about it, but I mean I'm talking about people that know about it and know about the risks, but I still don't think they think about, you know -

Q: - in terms of their own -

A: - in terms of their own relationships.

Q: Yeah. I think you're probably right actually. I get that impression from...

A: Yeah. I mean even - I mean I think - I mean the risk isn't particularly high, if, say, you start a relationship with someone who's your age, especially if they're a virgin or if they've only had a couple of relationships. But I mean people that I know have had relationships with people that are older, that are probably in like really high-risk groups, and they haven't worried about it. I mean I've sort of talked about it, but people don't think it's actually gonna, you know, happen to them or - they really don't. And when it does, I think when it starts happening to people you know, I think people are just gonna be totally shocked. And then I think people will change. But I don't know how long that'll be before it gets to that stage.

Q: Right. It could be fairly soon, I think. Especially in terms of HIV infection itself. It is - I mean it's quite worrying really, and it's - I mean it's true what you say about people not relating it to their own lives unless they've actually had some sort of experience of it. Have you, I mean has anybody - have you ever known anybody who's HIV-positive or -

A: No, not personally. But like my mother's known people, so I've known of people having it, you know. She knew someone who got it from a blood transfusion... and also a couple of gay people who have it. But I haven't known anyone personally, and I don't know anyone who knows more personally, within sort of - I don't know how many young people, is it quite high?

Q: Well, it's not - I mean, at the moment it isn't terribly high amongst young people, but I mean there's sort of scary stories coming from the States... the group that's growing fastest in the States are teenagers in fact, heterosexual teenagers, so the sort of fear is that that - that will occur here. Partly for the reasons that you say, that people just don't see it being relevant to them...

A: Yeah.

Q: So that it can - if people aren't taking precautions, it can happen quite easily that it will spread.

A: Yeah.

Q: ... What did you think - you were talking about those early ads, the advertising - what did you think of them?

A: I thought they were a bit awful really, I don't think they were very good, 'cos they were kind of - they didn't really say anything about what it was, they just sort of - I thought they were stupid really. But I think at that point I thought - I thought it was gonna be really serious, you know, I thought in three or four, or maybe five years' time, you know, this would really be a problem. I thought that much more then. It was much more in my consciousness than it is now. I mean, if I think about it I might think it's gonna, you know, it's gonna affect me and stuff, but it's kind of - I don't know, I think a lot of people have forgotten about it.

Q: Yeah. Well, it's slipped down...

A: I think it's really awful though, that people are not that worried about it. I mean, it's difficult to be aware of it, 'cos it's not something that you really wanna be aware of, 'cos I mean it's not something - you know, it's not something that you really wanna think about, or try not to. So I can - I can understand why people -

Q: - might be a bit, yeah.

A: But it's something that I would think about. Definitely.

Q: Yeah, you said on the questionnaire that you would ask someone to use a condom. But would that be about pregnancy or AIDS do you think?

A: Yeah, I suppose it depended, wouldn't it. Yeah, I suppose I would. Because I wouldn't go on the pill.

Q: Why's that?

A: I wouldn't want to.

Q: Do you think it's dangerous or -

A: Yeah, I think it's dangerous. I think it's not worth taking the risk. But for a lot of reasons - and, also, I suppose there is the AIDS thing and, you know, cervical cancer and things like that. I just really wouldn't wanna take a pill every morning and everything. I mean I know everyone says that and they end up doing it 'cos it's the easiest way out really, but I think - I think if I was in a relationship with someone, I think it wouldn't be something that I'd want to do, so I don't see why I should. I think it should be something that, you know, you talk about or whatever, sort of a two-way thing. So, I would ask, yeah. But not -

Q: - that - do you think that you really would -

A: - think I really would?

Q: ... into this speculative area again, where it's very different to say -

A: Yeah, it is difficult. But I think if I - if I couldn't really talk to someone, I wouldn't really sleep with them, I don't think.

Q: Yeah.

A: But it's easy to say that, I suppose, but I don't think I would. Not the first time anyway.

Q: You seem a little bit - I mean, do you feel that some of your friends behave in ways that -

A: Yeah, probably. Yeah.

Q: I mean when you talk with - I mean do you talk with your friends about their sexual relationships and so on?

A: Yeah.

Q: Do you get the impression that they'd be - have much control over what's going on?

A: No.

Q: Why do you think it is, or is it different in different circumstances?

A: I think a lot of men don't - couldn't really care about contraception at all, and so it's left up to them to sort it out. A lot of men aren't prepared to use condoms as well, and so people tend not to - not to use contraception for quite a long time. I think that's very, very stupid. And so - we do talk about it, but - like KAYLEIGH, a friend of mine, she - she knows how I feel about it, and so quite often we don't talk about it. I mean, she's on the pill now and she's alright, but for a long time she wasn't using any contraception.

Q: A bit risky.

A: I think that's very risky.

Q: What about - you're not taking any risks of that type at all, I mean you plan not to and you don't now; what about other sorts of risks, do you think you do anything risky in other areas of your life?

A: Well it depends what...

Q: Things like smoking, drinking.

A: I don't smoke, but not 'cos I think it's risky, it's I don't like it very much. Yeah, I mean I'm not - I mean yeah, there are some risks that I would take, but it would depend on the circumstance.

Q: What kind of things?

A: I don't know. Give me an example.

Q: Well, I don't know, I was just thinking - the sorts of things - people think very different things are risky. I mean some people think smoking and drinking, some people think using different kind of drugs is risky, some people think being a bit extravagant with money can be risky. I mean, it just depends what you think is slightly - a slightly dangerous thing to do yourself. I mean, do you feel that you do slightly unsafe things in any areas of your life?

A: Yeah, I mean at times I do do things that are unsafe. I mean - yeah.

Q: What kind of things?

A: What kind of things have I done that have been unsafe? Well, generally I don't do things that are particularly unsafe, I mean, compared to a lot of people. But I probably would do if I was - if I was sort of happy doing it, I don't know. I don't know. What do you want - like walking home late at night, is that risky?

Q: Well, that could be, couldn't it, I mean if you think - if you think that it is. Do you think that it is?

A: I think it is, yeah, but I've done it lots of times.

Q: Yeah. Yeah.

A: 'Cos you can't - you can't get out of doing that, really. It's very difficult to - unless you kind of lock yourself up and stuff. So yeah, I've walked home - I've done things like that that are risky.

Q: Mm. What about drugs?

A: Yeah, I've smoked some things like hash. I don't - I mean I don't think that's particularly risky unless you do it a lot. But it's not something that I... I suppose that - some people might think that's risky. But I wouldn't do anything else beyond that, I don't think.

Q: In terms of drugs -

A: Yeah. 'Cos I really think that's risky. I'm not really interested in it either.

Q: Well, that's one of the worries... HIV, AIDS... needle...

A: Yeah.

Q: ... injecting. Are any of your friends into that?

A: No. I don't know anyone. I know people that have taken LSD and things like that, but not anything injecting. But yeah, that is a - that is a ... to do with AIDS, isn't it.

Q: Yeah, that's one of the problem areas, about how... spread... What about your image of yourself - how do you see yourself? If you had to describe yourself to -

A: I hate this sort of thing (laugh). How would I describe myself?

Q: - to somebody else.

A: In what way?

Q: Well, I don't know - what do you think you're like? What kind of person are you?

A: I don't know. That's not a very positive answer, is it?

Q: Well, let's try it the other way round - supposing one of your friends was to be asked what kind of person -

A: - I was?

Q: Mm.

A: I don't know what they'd say, I've never asked them.

Q: What impression do you get from them, of what they think you're like?

A: ... I don't know.

Q: Tough question.

A: Mm, it is a tough question.

Q: Mm, especially if you haven't thought about it before.

A: Well, I have thought about it before, but I mean I haven't come up with any answers. I think - I don't know, I think all the sort of adjectives that you use to describe character, I think they all apply at different times. So I can't just say, oh, shy, or not - or outgoing, 'cos I don't think - do you know what I mean? I think sometimes I'm very shy and sometimes I'm quite outgoing. So I can't say one or the other.

Q: Yeah.

A: Do you see what I mean?

Q: Yeah.

A: And I always find that.

Q: Yeah.

A: I don't know. Mostly when people say what you're like you always think it's wrong anyway.

Q: Mm. It doesn't quite mesh -

A: No.

Q: - with how you see yourself.

A: Well, you can tell me, that can be for you to decide.

Q: What (laughter)...yeah.

A: I suppose - I don't know - I suppose I think about things quite a lot. I don't normally do things very impulsively. Although sometimes I do, so it's not really fair to say that I don't ever. Do you know what I mean?

Q: Mm. It's a kind of balance thing really, isn't it? By and large you're more like this than like that, if you take the two opposite characteristics... but occasionally you'll be a bit like that, sort of thing.

A: Yeah.

Q: So I suppose you could draw up a picture where you have, you know, like kind of one of those kind of bar diagrams where the bits that you were mostly...

A: Yeah. I think it's easier to describe other people, than it is to describe yourself.

Q: Yeah. Well, you know yourself better, or you know more about -

A: Yeah.

Q: - you've got more information to go on. Which often confuses the picture.

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah. I'm not so sure that's the case in every situation - I mean like things like the AIDS thing, more information would be a good idea, as you were saying. Like those early ads, gave no information at all, just tried to put the frighteners on you.

A: Yeah. But I think - I mean, I feel - even people that know about it aren't - I mean, that's the thing that's really worrying, that I think is worrying, is that even people that know about it are - don't relate it to their lives. I... even myself... But I mean when people don't know about something, then the only task you have is to make sure they do know about it, which might not be easy, but - if when you know about it you still don't think, you know - I think that's when it's really bad.

Q: I think that's one of the most difficult things really, to get people to change their behaviour...

A: Did most people say, that you talked to, that they didn't think people were changing or -

Q: I think - most people do feel that people don't think... and it's also the case that many of them who are themselves very frightened about it and concerned about it, quite often do things which, you know, are somewhat risky -

A: Yeah.

Q: - given the way they feel about it. So it's difficult, but that's - I mean that's why we're interested in this, because it's - it could be that young women are not often in a position to be able to make those decisions. The situation may be such that certain things don't... can't make decisions. As you say, I mean, some men don't want to use condoms or...

A: And then you are put into a very bad situation.

Q: And then you have to make a decision, you know - to go ahead anyway regardless of what you risk, your fears about that, for some other reason, because you're involved with a person, or whatever.

A: Yeah. I mean it is difficult when you're involved with someone, thinking of it like object - you know, objectively, and to think - you know, you don't really think, I mean you can't really relate it to like your own personal thing, it's quite hard to do that. I imagine that being quite hard. So it's quite difficult really.

Q: When you were saying about - I mean, some men not being bothered about contraception, or I mean not - you know, leaving it up to the woman, do you think there's a sort of double standard about acceptable sexual behaviour of men and women?

A: How do you mean?

Q: Do you think that if - well, for a very straightforward level, if - if a man were to sleep with a number of people, it would be judged differently than if a woman slept with a number of people?

A: Mm, yeah.

Q: Do you think expectations are different about what's appropriate for -

A: Yeah.

Q: Do you think that's very - very general?

A: Yeah, I suppose I do. I do think there is a double standard, definitely. If you - it's not really acceptable for women to sleep with a lot of people, whereas I suppose in a lot of circumstances, it is acceptable for men.

Q: Mm. They wouldn't be judged so harshly.

A: No, they wouldn't. I mean it's - I don't know. But - I mean I suppose there's the thing of men boasting about how many women they've slept with, but I mean I don't - I don't know any, well, people my age or whatever, or my brother's age, that would do that. I'm sure some people do, I mean, but I don't know personally people that would. So - and I don't really know people that would sort of bitch - I mean, I suppose - I do know people that would bitch about people if they slept with a lot of - women, that slept with a lot of - a lot of men.

Q: Mm, yeah.

A: I think women are much more - are much easier - more easily labelled than men, in that way.

Q: We're going along a sort of negative line, aren't we here, really, about the kind of position that young women are in when they go into a sexual relationship. I mean, it's hard - it's hard for you because you've not - you've not been in one, but you've seen it operating...

A: I don't - I don't think it's always going to -

Q: What positive can you see? Tell me the positives.

A: No, I mean I don't - I sound like I'm a cynic but I'm not, I don't - I don't think it is all negative. But the things you've asked me have been - have led me to say the negatives.

Q: Yeah.

A: Like about AIDS and all the things like that.

Q: What about the positive, what about - what about romance, is that positive?

A: Yeah. Yeah, that is positive. I mean I'm not - I don't think - I sound like... but I'm not.

Q: What would be your ideal relationship? Have a go at that one! You had a little go at it before, but it slipped away.

A: Yeah. Ideal. I suppose something where you had a quite - a strong friendship at the same time, and where you could trust someone, I suppose. And sort of be able to rely on them and know that they were always there, whatever. And to sort of know that you would - you would be with them for a while, that you would sort of... the right thing.

(tape change)

Q: What about children, have you thought that you might like to have children, yourself?

A: Yeah, I would, sometime. Not for long. I would definitely like to have children though. But I mean I wouldn't think about that now in a relationship I was starting, 'cos it's not realistic. Because I wouldn't have children for about another - I don't know, I can't say, but at least not for about - well - well, definitely, like no doubt about it, for about six years, and I probably wouldn't have them for about another six after that. So it'd be stupid thinking about that now.

Q: Yeah. But - but it's in your life plan sort of thing, you would like to at some point.

A: Yeah. Yeah, I would.

Q: You said that you didn't wanna get married, so you'd have to work out some way of doing it!

A: Well, I don't know, I don't wanna say that I wouldn't get married 'cos I might -

Q: Yeah.

A: 'Cos it is hard to know what else - I mean there's no alternative. I mean you could just not get married, I mean that -which I suppose - but in order to do that you're sort of - you have to be quite strong, I think. I mean, if you're gonna have children, that is. If you're not gonna have children, then I wouldn't think there'd be any problem. So - but I probably wouldn't get married, no. I mean, one of the main reasons why people get married is for their family, 'cos their family - their mother and father want them to get married. I've probably got the opposite myself (laughter), so - so I would probably not get married. That's one of the reasons, I suppose.

Q: Yeah.

A: But I don't know, I might get married, I don't know. I can't really say, but it's not something that I think that I'm going to do, but I might do it anyway. But it's not something that I have a - that I wanna do.

Q: Yeah. Quite a lot of people aren't getting married these days, I mean there was something on the radio today about the break-up of the family or something, you know, a lot of people are living together or - and having children without bothering to get married and so forth.

A: Do you really think - do you think - is that true?

Q: I think it is, yeah. Well I - I mean, and divorce, about one in three marriages end in divorce.

A: I believe that.

Q: Yeah. So - and I think it's true over the years, living together is becoming a more acceptable mode, and having children without being married is also becoming more acceptable, not so much of a stigma as it used to be, so people are more prepared to do it. Because sometimes that's the reason, I mean they - they break at the last minute... birth sort of thing, 'cos they feel it's not fair on the child or something like that.

A: Yeah, I mean people live together, but I mean people that I know that have got married recently, people in their twenties, have lived together for about three years and then they've decided to get married, not 'cos they were gonna have children - I mean, they are eventually, but not 'cos they're - she's about to have a child or because they're gonna have one in a year's time, but they kind of got married for - a lot to do with family pressure. If you're living with someone, then - I mean I - I - I think it would be difficult just to think, just to decide to get married. I mean, I don't know why they decide to get married to someone. I mean, people say it's a long-term commitment and everything, but I mean it's only a piece of paper or something. To me, it's not - it's not the kind of commitment I wanna make to someone anyway. So, you know, it seems like a strange thing to do. Unless you've got a family that would be really happy if you got married, and they're gonna give you a massive party or something and send you off on a honeymoon. I mean then there's reason to get married!

Q: ... motivation there, yeah. And lots of presents and stuff like that. Yeah, I thought... maybe getting married is for the presents. But then staging the wedding, I couldn't quite... how to do it.

A: Yeah, I mean there are - I mean, there are advantages for a lot of people in getting married, and if you like - if you're in business, say, or your husband... or something... there are advantages in getting married. I mean I suppose you get benefits and things like that. And in certain - certain fields it's not really acceptable not to be married. Or people take it for granted that you are. I - I'd rather not be in a position where I had to get married. I don't, you know -

Q: - not a really crucial thing.

A: No. But there is no sort of alternative really, in terms of like some sort of commitment like that. Which - maybe there should be some sort of alternative.

Q: What, like a contract?

A: Yeah.

Q: A short-term contract or something.

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah. Go into it and you can decide, well this is for three years, or maybe a five year one, with an option for extension...

A: Yeah. 'Cos you - I suppose people do feel a bit insecure if they have children and they don't get married. Not just for like "oh, it's not fair on the kids"... whatever, "they'll have a hard time", 'cos I don't think that's so true now, but the thing of, you know, not having the security. But then again, I mean, how much security is it to get divorced?

Q: But when you say "security", do you think it's - it's the financial security?

A: What happens if you have children and the husband decides to leave, does he have to pay anything?

Q: Well, quite often they're supposed to, but quite often they don't, I mean -

A: And it's a lot harder, is it -

Q: Yeah, to get the money. I mean, they're supposed to pay maintenance, at least for the kids. And it also depends on the financial circumstances of the woman. But it's just usually the case that women are in a weaker financial position -

A: Yeah.

Q: - because of not having... and - and also if they come out of the - out of work... when they've had the children, then they're in an even weaker position than if they were in some sort of career path. So it's quite often the case. But I mean that's what I was thinking you were thinking, that it was - what the security meant, I mean security of knowing that you've got somebody around sort of thing, or the security of knowing you've got somebody bringing in the money, you know.

A: Well, I was thinking of both, but I was more thinking of the - someone being there and like a commitment.

Q: Support and -

A: Yeah. But then I don't think you really need marriage. As I was saying, there's no - I mean, I don't think you need marriage to have a commitment really, it's not really necessary, but I think some people would feel - I don't know if I would -... some people feel insecure without that, because that is the commitment, you know, that there is.

Q: Yeah, a sort of sign.

A: Yeah. But then - then again, is it really fair to say that you're gonna be with someone 'til death do you part, whatever you have to say. Maybe that's a bit unrealistic again, I don't know.

Q: Yeah... I mean nowadays it's - it's so long - I mean when they - when that was put into the wedding service, people probably didn't expect to live that long. They probably live twice as long as they -

A: That's true. That is a long time now.

Q: Yeah... complicated pressure on people's lives and so on.

A: But when you - when you're around most people, I mean most people I know that are married, that are divorced, it doesn't - you don't really see the advantages in getting married. Whereas maybe some people, I don't know, are surrounded by happy couples, and so they think, I wanna get married. But if you're not, then you don't - you probably wouldn't think that you needed marriage, 'cos you see how it can just break and - but that's not really what the important thing is.

Q: Yeah.

A: And so -

Q: Yeah, 'cos a lot of young women feel that there's a pressure on them to get married, because I mean that's what - what you do, that's the role for women, so they feel they have to. Regardless really in a way - a specific person will come along at a point and then that will be the person that you marry, sort of thing, but the idea of marriage is there before the specific person.

A: Yeah.

Q: ... and I think probably more people will be in your position, with more marriages breaking up and so forth, that - there's less of a pressure on people to do it -

A: Yeah.

Q: - because they can see... as well. Or - or that what the advantages are... haven't quite worked out -

A: Yeah. It does make a difference, 'cos it sets an example to you, and so it makes a difference, you know... a lot more divorces. But still people still are getting married, though, all the same. People walk out and get married. As you say, for a lot of people it's what's expected.

Q: How do you get on with your brother?

A: We get on quite well. We get on very well, I suppose, yeah.

Q: You're quite close in age, aren't you?

A: Yeah, he's - well, I'm just seventeen and he's almost nineteen... We're two years apart. Well, not any more actually, 'cos he's just started doing A-levels, but - we were two years apart in school years, but... But only recently has it been close. When I was fourteen and he was sixteen it wasn't that close, whereas now it's got closer, which is better.

Q: And you meet a lot of his friends as well.

A: Yeah. Because his girlfriend is quite a good friend of mine; because she used to stay at our house a lot, and like we... went on holiday together and stuff, so we're quite good friends as well, which is nice.

Q: Was that the person - on the questionnaire you said you had a close woman friend, girlfriend?

A: No, that was -

Q: - another one.

A: ...

Q: I just wondered if there was, you know, a kind of connection...

[REDACTED]

End of interview.