

MAG07 27/4/89 RT

(000-006, description of interview aims).

QU: Can you tell me about yourself and what you're doing now?

AN: Right. I'm 23 and I'm married. I'm in the last year of a Ph.D in [TOPIC] and I'm also a teaching assistant.

QU: How have you got to this point?

AN: I finished school after 'A' levels, I came to Manchester and did a BSc in [TOPIC].

QU: At the Business School?

AN: No, at [NAME OF UNIVERSITY], and then stayed on and started my Ph.D.

QU: Right, so what led to the choice to do a Ph.D., instead of going out into the world of work?

AN: There wasn't any particular job that appealed to me at that time, and I'd done a dissertation to pass my third year for my degree and I wanted to carry on exploring those sort of areas, carry on doing research.

QU: Had you expected to do that before?

AN: It was a possibility, but I hadn't particularly thought that I'd end up doing research, at least, not straight after the degree because, I mean, going into work and then doing research later on.

QU: Are you happy with the choice you made, are you enjoying that?

AN: I enjoyed my research, but I got married halfway through, in fact my husband doesn't live in Manchester, so it gets very complicated. And I think if I'd got married a year earlier, or had started planning a year earlier than I did, then I wouldn't have necessarily stayed on to do research, certainly not at Manchester.

QU: So you wouldn't have to move around?

AN: Yeah.

QU: Where is he?

AN: He's in [TOWN] which is in [COUNTY].

QU: What does he do?

AN: He's a clergyman.

QU: I see. He can't move up to you?

AN: No, at least he could do but there hasn't been the opportunity so far for him to do so.

QU: So whose job comes first between the two of you?

AN: Well, at the moment his, I think, because when I finish my Ph.D., I've got some ideas about what I want to do, but nothing definite. And, I think, well, certainly this time round, as it were, I'm prepared for him to look around for something, because he's looking for a new... at the moment, as well, so for him to move first...(035)...and then to fit in around him. And even if we stay where we are at the moment, then there'll be plenty of opportunities for me because it's easy commuting. So I'll be perfectly happy to stay there.

QU: So when you got married, was there an agreement that you had a future and a career?

AN: Yes, well he knows that I want to carry on working, and I think he is prepared to support me in what I want to do. But he is quite keen to start a family quite soon. I'm keen to start one reasonably soon. I think I'd like to do something else first, for a short

while. Partly because being in Manchester, being in the same department for six years is a bit limiting; there's a world ...(049). It's almost, I feel I've taken quite a lot in, I've had lots of advantages and I'd like to give something back. In a broad sense, I'm not planning to go into something specifically caring, you know, that sort of thing. Not something specifically helping society, as it were, just in the general sort of global sense. I'd like to use what I've been given.

QU: How do you see doing that, what are the possibilities with your sort of knowledge?

AN: Well, possibly teaching, but I don't think in university. I think I'd prefer to go into .. (059) ..teaching, or something.

QU: Why?

AN: The problem with teaching in the department, I mean I enjoy it very much, but it's a very...there's no coherence, it's not a coherent sort of community. Whereas I think in a school, there's much more of a community sense and it's, you're dealing with an educative process, rather than just teaching people, specific facts; because in schools I think teachers are much more involved in the education process, where as in university, you tend to find out yourself, educate yourself in that process. Which is perfectly right, because you can't ...(068)...the whole time. But I think I'd like to be involved in much more of a community environment.

QU: Are you thinking of teaching young children or secondary school?

AN: Secondary school.

QU: So you would be teaching ..(070)..

AN: Yeah...

QU: ...(072) ..interests in other areas...to teaching?

AN: Well I wouldn't mind teaching R.E. because my research is in [AREA OF RESEARCH] and I did R.E. 'A' level and I've had to do a lot of theology reading for my research. I'm quite interested in teaching R.E.

QU: What do you see as modern R.E. these days? Has it changed since I was at school?

AN: I went to a church school so that's obviously going to be different to what is taught in the average comprehensive. I still think it's important to have a specific religious framework, not just have sort of morals or ethics or society, which apparently is more what R.E. is about in some schools. It's important to consider other faiths because of the multicultural society now. But you could argue that it's easier to understand other faiths if you've got a clear idea of one specific one. So, obviously I'm a Christian so, I would find it easier to teach Christianity. There's obviously ethics and morals that are involved as well.

QU: How would you see the issues of AIDS or sexuality within an R.E. lesson? Do they have a place?

AN: I think it's valid to place sexuality issues within a religious framework, but even within specific religious belief structures there's quite often a wide range of possibilities about how far you can take sexual morality. I don't think you ought to be dogmatic about it, even in a school situation. I think it's possible to teach about relationships and so on, and positive and negative aspects, and positive and negative types of behaviour.

QU: What about talking about sex? Actual behaviour? Can you talk about relationships without talking about sexual behaviour?

AN: Not really. I think you've got to do that because lots of relationships will have a sexual element in them. But I think possibly it might be difficult and slightly off the point to go into very detailed discussions of sexual behaviour in an R.E. context, and it might be easier to have it in a separate pocket. Though the danger with that is that people might regard sex and sexual behaviour as a separate thing that doesn't relate into morality or relationships or anything else.

QU: What type of education do you see is needed around relationships and the issue of sexuality for young women? How would you present it, or what are your views? What should people be told about relationships?

AN: With relationships, talking about discovery. You can't predetermine or predict what a relationship is going to be like, and you can't say to somebody - you ought to have this type of relationship, because it depends on individual circumstances and the way that two people react together. I think that you need to emphasise things like equality. Although that doesn't necessarily mean equality in the popular sense; more mutual trust and recognition. And it's probably quite important to emphasise that quite early on, before people start forming relationships, because they could get into patterns which are detrimental; not through any fault of their own necessarily. I don't really know very much about up to 16 year old boys, and how they develop in relationships, and how they're taught because I went to a single sex school. I've got a younger brother but I never really talk about that sort of thing with him. One gets the impression that boys are just interested in sex, at least, whether they actually are or not, they claim to be. And there's quite a lot of sort of peer pressure, sort of to have conquests and so on. And possibly, an emphasis on that not being the solely important thing in relationships.

QU: How about young women? Do you think young women, 16 or younger, that their primary interest isn't sex?

AN: I don't think so. Not sex for sex's purpose. I think it's more to do with reassurance and acceptance, and being, becoming a woman. So maybe some think that until they've had sexual intercourse they're not a 'woman'. There's also peer pressure on that sort of front. I mean, we used to talk about it all the time; whether so-and-so has actually done it or not. Even when at sort of 17 or 18...(162-163).

QU: Tell me about the school you went to. What sort of advice on these issues they gave you.

AN: It was a single sex Church school, boarding and day, and I boarded. We had basic sex education, in terms of biological issues in the first year. We didn't really talk about morality aspects until quite late on, until, not that I can remember, the fifth form. We took R.E. 'O' level a year early so that in the fifth form we had general R.E. and that was much more (?)overt than the R.E. syllabus. And we had people come in to talk about contraception. We had someone from LIFE to talk about abortion, a man, which was a mistake.

QU: Did you have the opposing side as well?

AN: No, we didn't.

QU: This was a CofE school?

AN: Yeah. We had discussions on moral issues as well. Not really sexual morality, it was more to do with...(182)..and things like that. And then, I remember, we had this session right at the end of the 6th form, it was supposed to be a preparing us to go out into the world sort of thing. There were various sessions on lots of different things -

banking was one of them. And we had some people, I don't know precisely where they came from, whether they were counsellors or what, to talk about relationships and things. But by then most of us, if we actually hadn't had a sexual relationship, we'd had non-platonic relationships, so we thought that this was old hat. Because of talking amongst ourselves and things, we knew a bit about contraception, sexual intercourse, aspects of relationships and so on. So, telling us about it when we were 18 was possibly a bit late.

QU: Do you think the type of education you received, in isolation from peer information, was enough to equip you to make informed decisions in terms of sexual practice?

AN: Not really, no. I don't know how much one can really rely even on the information you get from friends, to make informed decisions about that. Because I think that when the crunch comes, it's not necessarily how you expected it to be. So, it's almost impossible to make a completely informed decision about that. And it's something that you've got to actually do before you know what it's like.

QU: Do you think they did all that they could do, then. Was it adequate?

AN: Well, adequate, but not really...(216)

QU: For instance, were there young women, you or your friends, having sexual intercourse without contraception, that suggests it was inadequate?

AN: Yes, but I'm not sure that that was because they were uninformed. That was partly due to general pressures in relationships and so on. And also, it was virtually impossible in school, for boarders anyway to get any sort of contraceptive (?) advice. Well, you could get it at home, if you went to your doctor at home, and some people were on the pill, but that was...(226). So it was awful, because they wouldn't give you more than a day's supply of medication, in case you took an overdose. You had to queue up every morning to get ...this pill (laugh).

QU: ...(231)..So, it was supplied by the school medical nurse?

AN: Yes. So if you did want the pill for contraceptive purposes, it was virtually impossible, you couldn't go to the school nurse and say - right, I'm having this relationship...

QU: It was completely public?

AN: Yeah.

QU: Did you personally get any advice or information from home?

AN: Not really, on much earlier things like periods and so on. I don't actually remember discussing it with my parents. I remember my mother giving me a book to read.

QU: On periods?

AN: Yeah, but that was before we'd even done it at school, and also, when it actually did happen, we all went, you know - sssh! what's going on. I never really discussed..., my mother used to discuss her general reproductive system with me, because she had problems with it. But never in terms of what experiences I might have or what contraception I might use, or anything like that.

QU: So, how did you cope with sexual encounters?

AN: Up until I was about 16, it was the holding-hands variety, although I remember I went on holiday once, on a music course, and I was talking to this chap who was considerably older than me, and it never really occurred to me that he might want anything else, but he sort of took me outside to this hall where we were, and basically

said - right, I'm going to have sex with you. And I thought - Aagh! So I said no, and managed to dissuade him. I think that was probably the first time I'd realised..

QU: ..that it was a possibility..

AN: ..yeah. I suppose we talked about it before, but I don't think at that stage anybody I knew was actually having a sexual relationship.

QU: Were you frightened?

AN: At the situation, yes. It was partly fear of the unknown. I hardly knew him, I'd met him for the first time that evening. I think it was the first time I'd realised that one's implicit behaviour could be taken in a completely different way to the way it was intended, in those sort of situations.

QU: Did that make you change the way you behaved?

AN: It made me more aware of the way I reacted towards men, where there was the potential for that sort of situation. Most of the men I actually know as friends would never do that anyway. And so, that's possibly why I've never been aware of it before.

QU: Did you have a sexual relationship before you met your husband?

AN: Yes.

QU: How old were you?

AN: 19.

QU: Did you know about contraception at that point?

AN: Yes.

QU: What sort did you use?

AN: The cap.

QU: Why did you choose that?

AN: One of the girls in the house I lived in, she used the cap.

QU: This was in Manchester?

AN: Yes. And she got on quite well with it. I didn't really want to go on the pill, partly, I wasn't convinced on the safety side, and I wasn't really convinced about the merits of messing up my entire cycle just so that I could have sexual intercourse. I was much more keen on having something that was directly associated with the actual act, which obviously the cap is, and I'm still using it.

QU: And you're happy with that?

AN: Mmm.

QU: Where did you get your contraception?

AN: Well, I'd more or less decided beforehand, and I went to the Family Planning clinic. They tried to persuade me to go on the pill, but I was fairly firm with them, and so they said - O.K. then.

QU: Did you go straight from boarding school to Manchester?

AN: Yes.

QU: Did you find that it was a big change in your life?

AN: In some ways. I'd been used to living away from home, obviously, so that wasn't a particular problem. I didn't like Manchester at first, but I don't think that was related necessarily to going to university. I think it was more related to Manchester. I suppose I didn't really find it much of a jolt.

QU: You said you had two long-term relationships which didn't include sexual intercourse. Was this difficult to maintain? Was this your choice?

AN: One of them it was, the other it wasn't really. I would've been quite keen to have sexual intercourse, but my partner didn't want us to. And I think, certainly for him, and possibly for me at that stage, that was the right thing. Particularly in terms of how the relationship ended. It was probably the right choice although I didn't really see it at the time. I think it was, he was the same age as me, but we were at very different stages of our development, and maturing, and that sort of thing. And I'm fairly sure that I was the first sort of long-term relationship that he had had. That may have influenced him.

QU: You haven't been in situations where you've been pressured to have a sexual relationship you're not sure you want?

AN: No.

QU: Is that to do with the way you are, the people you choose?

AN: I think so. I think if I got into the situation where there was pressure on me to have sexual intercourse, I think I'd probably get out of the relationship.

QU: In the relationship where you didn't have sexual intercourse did you have any sexual contact? Was it a 'non-platonic' relationship?

AN: Yes, there was a reasonably high level of sexual contact.

QU: You felt happy about the sexual contact without sexual intercourse?

AN: Yes.

QU: It's interesting how much sex is thought of as sexual intercourse, and how much it's all the other things we do, that we don't call sex.

AN: Yes.

QU: Can you remember the first time you started hearing about AIDS, two or three years ago?

AN: Yeah, definitely after I came to university, and probably towards the end of my undergraduate time.

QU: And can you remember what your initial reactions were? Have they changed quite dramatically to what you feel now?

AN: I don't think it had much of an impact. Things that have a lot of media hype surrounding them, I tend to ignore on principle. I think it's just the media making a fuss again. I'll listen to the reports and I'll read the stuff in the newspapers and everything else; but I'll come to my own conclusions about what sort of significance it should have. There was the thing about it being almost exclusively a homosexual thing and everything. But there wasn't really very much about precisely what it was in terms of how it was manifested or what it was in biological terms.

QU: Do you feel those issues have been clarified to you now?

AN: To a certain extent. Again, the only thing that has given me more information, that I've seen on the biological aspect was the 'Tomorrow's World' programme, or something like that where they had, were talking about developing a vaccine. And so they had a blown-up diagram about the virus affects blood cells and so on. And how the vaccine might help that. But there doesn't seem to have been anything in the mainstream press about that aspect of it.

QU: It's portrayed as a sort of sexually transmitted disease. What was your reaction to the moral tone, the association with homosexuality, the statements from the CofE etc..and the moral terms employed. What were your opinions?

AN: I thought it was a bit sort of 'let's jump on everyone hard'. I mean, obviously, if you're going to have sex with a wide range of partners, you're more likely to get at risk

anyway, through other STD's. And I suppose that's a risk you take. Although whether it's an important risk I don't know; I suppose it depends on the individual. The implication was that no one should ever sleep with anyone until after they'd had an AIDS test. And you shouldn't sleep with anyone unless you know who he is, you've got details of all their other partners, and all their other partners and so on. There was an emphasis very much on the sexual intercourse aspect, and all the other things that are part of sex, as you said, were ignored. It was a very negative campaign. There was no emphasis on, well - It's better if you don't do this, but you could do all this instead. There really didn't seem to be very much of that at all.

QU: And there still isn't. (420)..that's all that people seem to have got out of the campaign. Do you see a distinction, as the media have portrayed it, between the 'guilty', who are blamed for 'going out to catch it', and those people like hemophiliacs and children who have it?

AN: No, I don't think you can blame people for having AIDS. If they're with someone who is HIV+ then they're taking a risk. Then, I suppose you may be in a position to say I told you so, they developed the virus. But because it takes such a long time to manifest itself, you may well have a sexual relationship with someone you've got no idea has got AIDS, and who themselves might not know. I mean, not to rush off and have an AIDS test every six months or something. So, I don't think you can blame people at all. I think it's just something that's unfortunate; and you've got to try to weigh up what you think is the potential risk from your own sexual behaviour, and whether you're prepared to modify sexual behaviour to minimise that risk.

QU: Do you think people and you yourself have a reasonable idea of what the risks are?

AN: In statistical terms, no. Because there's all these figures bandied about. They say - x number of people have the virus, but it could be 10x this number; and you think, well, if only these people have the virus it's o.k., but if it's 10x it's not o.k., but if, on the other hand, it's 5x, then it might be o.k.. You don't really think in those terms when you think of your own sexual contacts. And even if you drew a tree of your partner and all his previous partners, and all your previous partners, and all their previous and so on even if you could do that, had the necessary knowledge to do that, I'm not sure that that would really help you in terms of working out your statistical risk of actually contracting the virus.

QU: Did you change your behaviour in any way on the basis of knowledge of what the risks were and how it was transmitted?

AN: No, because by the time it had all come into the public domain, I was, yeah, having a relationship with my husband, although we weren't married by then. And, well, I mean I couldn't be certain that he doesn't have the virus, But then on the other hand I'm reasonably sort of...well, I'm prepared to take what I think is a fairly small risk. He's had previous partners, but I think the general sort of frequency and timescale of it means that it's extremely unlikely that he would have it.

QU: If you hadn't met your husband, would you have been prepared to make changes in your relationships?

AN: Possibly. I think it would depend on individual circumstances. I think I would in the early stages of a relationship. I think I would sort of carry on in the same way as before because I wouldn't expect to have sexual intercourse at anywhere near the beginning of a relationship and so obviously it would depend on how the relationship developed, and

what the person's general expectations had been before. I think I would be more aware of it, although to what extent that awareness would actually filter through to my behaviour I'm not sure. It would be like a sort of warning.

QU: We were talking about how difficult it is to translate knowledge of the risk into the practical demands of a relationship; asking a partner to use a condom, or wanting 'safe sex' which doesn't include intercourse, to cut out the risk in your behaviour. Have you got any ideas about that difficulty, about making demands on people? Because even when there's honesty in a relationship, when it comes to these issues the situation can change quite quickly. E.g. a lot of young women find it almost impossible to ask a partner to use a condom. Do you think that in a sexual relationship between a man and a woman where there's a delicate balance of power that it's more difficult?

AN: I'm not sure that it's necessarily to do with power, because I think most men aren't overly keen on asking women if they're using any contraception...they aren't, no. Right, I suppose it depends. I think quite a lot, just when it's more or less too late anyway - Oh, it's alright isn't it? I don't think it's necessarily power particularly, although possibly men are less likely to think about that, because they're not the ones that get pregnant; they don't have to live with the responsibility. Some of the men choose to but in the end they can walk away from the situation. So they're more likely to think it's a woman's responsibility, so it's nothing to do with them. It's more to do with people being embarrassed to talk about sex in general. And after they've had intercourse, they might find it easier, but then it might be too late. I think it's, the important thing is to create a climate, or encourage people to think it's possible to create a climate where it's possible in a relationship to talk about those things; almost in the abstract, or start talking about them in the abstract. And then make it more specific. I don't really remember ever talking about particular sexual behaviour and intercourse with any of my partners. I mean, I do with my husband now. But we didn't before we had intercourse as far as I can remember.

QU: Were you able to talk to him because of the stability of the relationship? Did being married make a big difference in how you perceived your relationship?

AN: Yes. I think that's probably the determining factor, but not the only one. I think we're both quite open and unembarrassed about things like that, and willing to talk about it. Whereas, I think some men in the ...sort of relationships they're in, it's something they do sort of metaphorically with their eyes closed.

QU: Would you recognise what HIV is? Do you know what the distinction between HIV and AIDS? Could you tell me what it is?

AN: HIV is the presence of the antibody, or the unpresence of the antibody, whichever way round it is, and AIDS is the actual virus which develops from it.

QU: If you heard that somebody was HIV+ what would you think that meant about them?

AN: Well, I wouldn't think that they had AIDS.

QU: Do you think they'd be at risk?

AN: Yes, I would think they had the potential to develop AIDS. And at the moment there is no sort of anti-virus..as it were. It would be, I would think that it was possible that they could develop AIDS, and there was nothing to prevent them doing so, except their natural bodily processes.

QU: Could you catch the virus from them? Would you need protected sex? If they cut themselves and they bled would you have to deal with them in a particular way?

AN: Yes, I would be at risk from them.

QU: Is there anything that you wanted to know about all the issues around AIDS and HIV that you think hasn't been covered by education etc.?

AN: I don't think so, I can't think of anything in particular.

QU: Do you think you've got the knowledge you want?

AN: I think so...(662). I think it's fairly clear through the campaigns that you can catch it through sexual intercourse, through blood products. But then there's all that hazy area, like other bodily fluids and things like that, and hopping about whether it's transmitted through saliva.

QU: Do you know (if) oral sex is risk behaviour?

AN: No, I didn't.

QU: That's usually a good test! (laugh) What type of person would you say would be at risk from AIDS or HIV?

AN: Someone who had unprotected sexual intercourse with a partner or partners of whom he or she had no previous knowledge. And drug-users and...(689)

QU: What's the previous knowledge?

AN: Well, previous knowledge of their partners and sexual activities, previous partners.

QU: All of them?

AN: Yeah.

QU: Do you think if you know someone's sexual history, for instance, if someone was or had slept with a bisexual or an intravenous drug-user, is that the sort of knowledge you mean?

AN: It would have to be more detailed than that. Because in certain groups like homosexuals, there's a greater incidence of AIDS, but that doesn't mean that the person you slept with had it, it just means that there might have been a greater chance of having it. I think you'd have to have a more detailed knowledge, rather than just knowing whether they're homosexual or a drug-user or whatever.

QU: If you were having a sexual relationship with a new person would you ask them about their sexual history? And, as you probably couldn't tell much from that, couldn't be sure, would you use protection? Would the risk be enough to change your behaviour?

AN: I'm not convinced if it came to the crunch that I actually would.

QU: O.k., that's honest.

(end-730)