

LSFS24 20.6.1989

Leonie

Q: If we can just go back to your family background, clarify - you live with your family?

A: Yeah. My mother, my father, my little brother and little sister.

Q: So your sister's younger than you.

A: Yeah.

Q: How old are they?

A: My little brother's thirteen and my sister's ten.

Q: And do you get on?

A: Yeah, we get on fine, we have occasional fights but everybody has them, so - we get on fine.

Q: And - I noticed your mum was doing medical research, which sounded quite interesting.

A: Yeah, she's - she works for [REDACTED]. But she does it on a part time basis which leaves her free to come and look after us.

Q: So has she always been at home to kind of look after you?

A: Yeah, she's just recently gone back to work, 'cos we pushed her into going back. She didn't want to go back but we thought it would be better if she got out and about.

Q: So she did.

A: Yeah. Well after sixteen years at home it was a bit hard at first but she's alright now.

Q: Mm. No, that's good. And what do you do - you're at a -

A: ... sixth form.

Q: Yeah. No, I was thinking of - you did eight hours' work a week.

A: Oh yeah, I'm a Saturday sales assistant in a fashion store.

Q: And is that alright?

A: Yeah, it's fine 'cos I get to meet a lot of people, because I wanna be a journalist when I grow up, when I finish my education, so I wanna get as much experience as possible, so I just change round jobs meeting different people.

Q: 'Cos what do you think you'll do - you said you were going to university -

A: Yeah, hopefully I'm gonna do a communications degree with sociology at university.

Q: Do you know where yet or is it -

A: Well the Polytechnic of Central London's quite good because they do all media courses so I'll have to check that out but I'm not sure yet.

Q: Do you like writing?

A: Yeah, I like writing, that's why I filled in that questionnaire.

Q: And, thinking about this particular research, which is about young women's relationships and - and all aspects, what would you say at the moment is the most important relationship in your life?

A: At this particular moment, probably with my friends because we're all just having a good time at the moment, and it's not just one particular friend, it's a lot of friends around my age just causing a (?) riot and stuff like that, you know, just going out and... being a right trouble.

Q: What do you do?

A: We usually go to the Pizza Hut and go to the cinema, usually things like that. I don't like going to discos 'cos it's just - just not my scene, I don't like it. So we just go and cause riots down Oxford Street, stuff like that.

Q: When you say "cause riots" -

A: I mean we just go in there and just - I mean just actually be we try on clothes that we know we're not gonna buy but it's just a laugh that everybody does anyway.

Q: What, do you all go in and try them on?

A: Yeah, it's so funny. Also 'cos I mean I shouldn't do it because I mean...

Q: Are you all girls or is it a mixed group?

A: No, we're all girls. We've got - I've got friends who are boys as well but when we go out it's just... lunches and stuff like that and serious talk about careers.

Q: Serious talk about careers?

A: Yeah, 'cos most of my friends who are males are in the music business anyway, journalists and TV presenters and radio and stuff like that.

Q: How do you know them?

A: 'Cos I used to work from my old school... so when I started interviewing people they just kept phoning me and asking me to lunch and stuff like that so I just got to know them that way.

Q: Mm, that's quite nice.

A: Yeah, it's good when people like ... really enjoyed the interview and would you like to come and have lunch, it's really good.

Q: Mm, 'cos it gives you really good experience.

A: Yeah.

Q: So have you had a lunch with any famous people?

A: Yeah, but - but I don't like to talk about it.

Q: Why not?

A: I don't know, it's - it's - I feel that I'm - how could I say, using them to get sort of like people to notice me, so I just don't bother.

Q: In here you seem to have a - when you say you've got a special boyfriend who was twenty and you went to the cinema and - is that somebody else or is that somebody that you had - 'cos you said you didn't have a boyfriend -

A: No, that was ages ago though, it was like last year so -

Q: What happened?

A: We - we decided to go our separate ways because it wasn't working out, so it's better anyway,... get more experience of life and decide what I'm gonna do with my relationship, I don't know what's gonna happen.

Q: So was that your decision?

A: Yes, it was mine. 'Cos I decided I needed more space.

Q: What, space in your life?

A: It was sort of like - we have to go here, we have to do this, sort of like nothing what I wanted to do was brought into consideration, what we talked about most of the time was his career, not what I wanted to do, so I decided that wasn't for me so I said -maybe we might get back together but at the moment let's just forget it. We're still good friends...

Q: Was he upset?

A: Yeah, but I mean I suppose that's initially reaction so - he's okay now.

Q: And was he the one that you said you were going steady with or was that another one?

A: No, that was the one but it's sort of like - I thought it was but then I just decided not to because I wanted to do a lot of things before I decided who I wanted to settle down with, and because he was my first boyfriend I didn't think it was the - the right decision at the time. So I decided, let's get some more experience.

Q: How long had you been going out together?

A: About six months.

Q: That's quite a long time.

A: Mm. It was a hard decision but it was one that had to be made, so I thought, might as well. 'Cos I'm only sixteen, and I was fifteen at the time, so I've got a life ahead of me. And I wanna get my career done first.

Q: Right. Do you feel that strongly?

A: Yeah. I wanna get - because I mean - 'cos the media's such a hard area to get into, especially if you're a woman, 'cos I - I realised that 'cos there's only two women DJs at the moment, and not a lot of women journalists except that work for women's magazines, but I wanna work for a national paper and be a woman editor. And on top of that I'm black as well so it's be even harder. That's what they say about... writing to people and like not getting answers, it's just stuff like that.

Q: Do you think it will be harder because you're black?

A: Yeah. I've definitely found that out. But I mean there's no harm in trying. And if I do try maybe I will get to the top. But I mean it does underestimate your confidence a bit when you get - I mean they don't directly tell you, you can't get to the top because you're black, but it's harder.

Q: What, people actually say that or they infer that or -

A: No, no they can't, I mean they don't say that because - because it's not right to say it, but I mean they - they'll just say, when I've talked to my friends at... it's really hard to get into the media, I goes why, 'cos - they goes well you know that more than fifty per cent of the workers are men. So what, you know - and maybe the other twenty-five per cent are women but, you know, some blacks do get into it.

Q: Yeah, if you make up your mind...

A: Exactly.

Q: So you weren't desperately in love with your boyfriend?

A: No. Just a crush I suppose 'cos that's what usually first loves are.

Q: Have you felt in love with anybody else?

A: No. I'm just at that stage where I just wanna have some fun, and I'm not really into getting another steady boyfriend at the moment, I just wanna sort of like get my career off the ground by getting as many - passing as many exams as possible, 'cos I think it was a good decision because it could have given me time to study for my exams.

Q: Right. And what do your parents think?

A: Oh, my parents are okay, they're behind me, behind my career and... friend anyway, so I'm - I'm really lucky. And sort of like I've got a good home and whatever I want to do... they're behind me. And sort of like they set goals, they go if you get three passes, we'll get you a CD. And on my twenty-first birthday they're gonna get me a car if I reach - get my degree and stuff like that, so it's good, I work towards goals and stuff.

Q: Mm. Do they have ideas about kind of marriage and things?

A: Well my parents had a - didn't have an arranged marriage, 'cos my dad's a Muslim not a Hindu, so that was a bit difficult -

Q: Why, 'cos you're meant to marry one -

A: Yeah, one –

Q: - the same.

A: Yeah. So that was a bit difficult and they didn't get accepted at the start but I mean their marriage has lasted nearly twenty years now so a lot of people have been and said, well, we were wrong sort of thing so - I mean they have got strong ideas who they want me to marry but I mean they're not gonna impose their ideas on me, I'm gonna have to learn by my own mistakes.

Q: Right. So they haven't said -

A: No.

Q: ...

A: ... arrangement. I'm not gonna have an arranged marriage, that's one thing off my mind.

Q: Where are they from?

A: My parents are from AFRICAN COUNTRY. So that's... go on holiday, see all my mother's family.

Q: So they're French-speaking?

A: Yeah. It's really good because my cousins, when they go out, they can't speak it, and they can't communicate with like our relations who can't speak English but luckily I can talk it so I can.

Q: So you're French is really good? That makes a lot of difference.

A: Yeah, I know, especially like the relatives really wanna get to know you but they can't 'cos they can't speak English, it's sort of like a barrier, so I'm glad I was taught to speak French in a way and communicate, I mean even though it's not very good but I mean you can still communicate.

Q: Have your parents been here a long time?

A: Well my mum's been here about twenty-five years and my dad's been here about twenty-six.

Q: That's quite a long time.

A: Yeah.

Q: So they met each other here?

A: No, they met in AFRICAN COUNTRY when they were really really young, when they were fifteen. My mum came over, then she went back and they got married and they came back. They... exactly what I wanna do, they fell in love when they were fifteen but they wanted to plan their careers first, they came here and then they went back to get married after they got their permits and stuff, they came to live here.

Q: So they kind of tested in a way what they felt for each other.

A: Yeah, exactly, by being separated, which I thought was a good idea. 'Cos it's still going strong today.

Q: Yes, 'cos you say you've got no particular plans to get married -

A: No.

Q: - but do you think you will?

A: I don't know. It depends because if I get my career off the ground and I feel - because I mean I suppose if I get married I'll want to start a family then and I mean I'll have to think, is it the right time for me to be able to leave work, and would I be able to continue afterwards, or

could I continue my work at home, just them sort of decisions that I'll be able to think about, and if it's the right time I probably will get married, yeah.

Q: And, thinking about the kind of relationships aspect, do you have lots of - well you say you have lots of girlfriends you go out with -

A: Yeah, I have, I mean they're mostly my age but I mean then I've got all my cousins and stuff like that, and they're all basically the same age group so it's like a lot of fun... days out or we stay at each other's houses and have slumber parties and just cause general riots in our own homes.

Q: What's a slumber party?

A: It's sort of like in our bedrooms and like, all in our pyjamas, and all our food, like junk food like pizzas and Coca Cola, just general just junk food that our mums refuse to let us eat, and we just sit around talking about boys as usual, who we saw in the supermarket, who we saw at the bus-stop. Just general stuff like that. And sometimes we just talk about what we wanna do and how we're gonna achieve it. Like are we gonna go to university or are we gonna go on a traineeship or something like that.

Q: And have any of them got boyfriends or are you all in the same situation?

A: Well one of the girls has got a boyfriend but the rest of us are single.

Q: So do you ever talk about sex, things like that?

A: Generally, yes. Because I mean it's something that we're all going to encounter someday anyway. Unless we decide to be celibate or turn into a monk - no, a nun. But I mean it's sort of like - it's not - it's just not we think, oh what are we gonna do, or what are we gonna feel when we encounter that situation, but I mean I'm not ready to go into that kind of relationship, not yet anyway. ... think about it that much anyway.

Q: So were you taught about it much in school, it didn't sound from your questionnaire as though they taught much at all.

A: No, they didn't, not at my school, the only things we learnt were in biology, and we had health education but all we talked about was skin and hair care.

Q: That's not very - much about sex, is it.

A: Exactly. No, it isn't, I mean health - that's - that's what we thought at the time, health education is meant to be sort of like I learned most of it from my mum 'cos she told me a lot. She - she wasn't - 'cos I mean most parents like, where do I come from mum, oh you came from a stork or a garbage can, or something like that, but she told me straight, that me and your dad had you sort of thing, and when I was older I got to understand. So I mean I'm really grateful that she told me.

Q: Mm. Did she tell you about periods and stuff?

A: Yeah, she told me all stuff - I think she told me when I was really really young, about five, and she said when you grow up you've got - I can't remember how she said it but I remember when I started that I knew what it was already, so - and I hadn't learnt about it at school or anything. If I ever have kids I want them to grow up like my mum brought me, 'cos she wasn't inhibited about telling me anything, so that was good.

Q: So do you feel that you could talk to her about it -

A: Yeah, I can talk to my mum about anything, so that's really good. 'Cos some of my friends can't. But I feel that I can talk to my mum about anything, I mean if anything happens to me I mean she won't blame me, she'll just say, well, what happened, and she'll give me advice or tell me to forget about what happened or whatever. I mean there's more - like when I broke up with my boyfriend she said that there's plenty more fish in the sea and don't worry about it.

Q: Mm, which is true.

A: Exactly. I mean she doesn't pressurise me into breaking up with my boyfriends or anything, that's good.

Q: Did she talk about kind of sex in terms of feelings and things like that as well, or was it just kind of how it happens -

A: No, it was just sort of like - she explained that feelings... emotion... before I go into it I have to think very carefully, and it's not just, okay I can give myself physically but am I able and ready to commit myself emotionally as well. To one person and - because of the AIDS thing, like to be cared for and stuff like that.

Q: So has she talked to you about AIDS?

A: Yeah.

Q: 'Cos I notice you said that she - some of the work that your father does -

A: Yeah.

Q: - is to do with -

A: Yeah, medical research he does - like if somebody, if they think they've got AIDS... he analyses it. So I mean it's really good 'cos my dad doesn't - you don't catch AIDS through touching it so you sort of like - they're not going round shouting that it can be caught through kissing or holding hands or stuff like that, because my dad does research for them. So that's okay. I mean I do talk to my dad but we don't talk about sort of like emotional things or sex and stuff like that, but it's mostly me and my mum, we have good little chats.

Q: Yeah, that's nice.

A: Yeah.

Q: I suppose your sister isn't old enough yet.

A: No, she isn't, but she understands some things and my mum's already told her about periods sort of like, 'cos she's ten and I started when I was eleven so - we all started, my mum started early and I started early so I mean ... got her prepared for that anyway. I mean she knows where she comes from, sort of like she knows she doesn't come from a stork or something like that -

Q: - under a gooseberry bush.

A: Silly things parents tell their kids.

Q: No, just to put off or not ever tell them the truth.

A: I think kids are more hurt if they find out another way than their parents telling the truth 'cos I mean if their parents didn't have sex then they wouldn't be here, so I mean, you know, that's the way I think of it but it doesn't even really bother me.

Q: Mm. And how do you actually see sex?

A: In what way?

Q: Well is it something that you think is an important part of a relationship or is it just sort of something that happens?

A: No, it's an important part as well because you're showing that you love that person so much to share everything with them, so it's an important part... (?) keep myself... I mean it's not like the sixties anymore, my mum was telling me, 'cos she was watching this programme the other day, you can't just like have so many relationships, you've got to be able to commit to one person and stay with that person.

Q: Do you think that's the effect AIDS is having?

A: Yeah. Because before a lot more people were promiscuous and sort of like they used to have, especially in Playboy images, sort of like girl every night and one night stands and stuff

like that, it's more dangerous these days and it's changed young people's thinking towards sex anyway.

Q: Have you found that with you and your friends?

A: Definitely, because I mean we - I mean I didn't think about sleeping around before but I mean it is more dangerous now, 'cos I mean you don't know how many girlfriends your boyfriend's had before you sort of thing, so you've got to be very careful.

Q: And would you have a sexual relationship before you got married?

A: I don't know, it depends, I mean if I thought it was the right time I probably would, but if it wasn't, if I didn't think it was then I wouldn't, but I mean considering I'm gonna get married, if I do get married, when I'm thirty, then I suppose I will.

Q: Yes, you may not be able to hold on. And is it something you kind of look forward to or -

A: Yeah. Because it's a new experience. Like having a first boyfriend, it's something new, I'm looking forward to - something that you're a bit afraid of, but then again you want to try. So that's how I look forward to it.

Q: And do you think you see it as something that - that would be sort of full of pleasure or - or more painful or -

A: No, I see it as some - as a commitment so it would be pleasure.

Q: And in terms of kind of other aspects of - of sex, were you taught, or has your mum talked about, other aspects of sex apart from, say, sexual intercourse?

A: No.

Q: So has anyone - or do you and your friends talk about kind of other sorts of sex that may not include actual penetration type sex?

A: Not really, no, no.

Q: So do you not know about them at all or -

A: Yes I do but I - I read something, when I was doing my biology research I learnt all about the other kinds of sex as well, but I mean I do know - but I mean we don't generally talk about that side of things anyway.

Q: 'Cos in terms of AIDS and things like that -

A: Yeah.

Q: - it's been talked about, 'cos - well, I mean what do you for instance understand by safe sex?

A: Using contraceptives like a condom. And, just the general thing not to sleep around generally, stick to one partner. AIDS can be caught through drug - drugs as well so - sharing a needle or a cut or something like that, so it's just - or blood transfusion so it's just not through sex anymore. It's just spread over the whole range of medical and drug abusers as well.

Q: And there's other sorts of aspects of safe sex people have talked about since AIDS, concentrating on say having some kind of enjoyment without actually having intercourse, so that you actually kind of get aroused or two partners get aroused without actually exchanging bodily fluids or whatever... And - and people talk about that as safe sex as well.

A: Yeah.

Q: So that you're not actually at risk. So do you feel that you're a person who takes any risks in your life?

A: If it's to do with my career I'm willing to, but emotionally I don't think - I'm very selfish because I don't like to get hurt so I have to think before I do anything. It's like if I enter a relationship I think well what can it - what's he gonna give me and stuff like that, but I mean if

we're just going out as friends, that's how it usually starts, we go out as friends and everything, then it goes on from there.

Q: And do you do anything like drinking, smoking, that sort of thing?

A: Well, my mum calls me an alcoholic but I mean -

Q: Why?

A: - no, because my mum, since we was small, she's let us drink in the house because she's scared we'd go out because we hadn't had it at home, and drink, and I did try cigarettes once with my friend but I didn't like it so I didn't continue. But I mean like I said, but I don't think I'd ever try drugs though, that's one thing I wouldn't try, but I mean it's sort of like you've got to try it to know whether you like it or not, otherwise you're never gonna know.

Q: What, everything do you think, or -

A: No, I mean there's some - I mean like I said, I wouldn't try drugs, I wouldn't, I don't know, because - probably because the media's put it in my head that I shouldn't. Even the safest thing I don't think I would because what if I liked it and I continued, then I'd be a drug addict sort of, I think of it that way. So I just don't bother.

Q: Do people smoke dope or anything in school?

A: Well there was this time when there was, and they used to go and flush it down the toilet, but it sort of like died down when the principal said that he would expel anyone who was caught with it, so it just blew out the window, I don't know what happened.

Q: And what - how much do you drink then?

A: I don't drink that much, I don't - I don't even drink at all, it's just sort of like if I go to a party with my mum or we go out or I go to a restaurant I will drink a little bit of wine, I only like the white wine -

Q: Right.

A: - but I don't drink a lot, not at all.

Q: Do you go into pubs at all?

A: No. Don't like pubs, they're too smoky.

Q: So - do you do a lot of things with your family, as well as with your friends?

A: Yeah. Sort of like - because my mum and dad come from AFRICAN COUNTRY... family, I don't know, they're just like - like we go out to picnics on Sundays and things like that because I mean we hardly see each other during the week 'cos my mum and dad work and sort of when we come home me and my brother and my sister do our homework and it's like my mum and dad prepare the food, so we hardly get to see each other, Saturday I go to work and my mum and dad do (?)DIY round the house so the only day we get to see everybody is on Sundays, so we keep Sundays free, we go out to the beach or to picnics or - just general, museums and stuff like that, that's fun.

Q: That's nice, yes. And - and going back for a moment to things like AIDS, do you what do you actually know about them?

A: Well, AIDS isn't a disease in itself, it just affects your immune system so you can't fight off another disease like pneumonia, which can kill you then. I mean AIDS doesn't kill you in itself, it just attacks - yeah, the white blood cells, that's it, I remember, it attacks the white blood cells which then you can't fight off a cold or flu or anything else, which then kills you.

Q: And how do you get it?

A: Through sexual intercourse, drug abuse and blood transfusions if you - but not - that's not in general, but I mean sort of like if somebody did have AIDS and was a carrier and accidentally

got caught I mean not all hospitals do do that but if it does happen that can be through general - anything to do with contact with blood.

Q: Did you learn that from kind of leaflets and things or did your dad talk -

A: My dad told me a bit about it because of his work, told me about like what he does and explained that - how people could catch it and stuff like that, and then the leaflets started to come through the door when, like the big thing, AIDS is here, stuff like that.

Q: So do you think you'll - you'll actually protect yourself against that when eventually -

A: Yeah.

Q: - you have a relationship. How will you do that?

A: My friend JUDE keeps saying that she's gonna have her boyfriend have a AIDS test, but I mean you really can't tell somebody to go and have one, it's not morally right, is it? I mean it's funny, you know, to talk about it, but I mean probably - use contraceptives first.

Q: What, any particular sort?

A: A condom. Because I can't go on the pill because I wear contact lenses and the two just don't go...

Q: I didn't think it made any difference to what -

A: Yeah, no, there's two - I can't use the mini pill, the combination one, 'cos I asked the doctor and he said...

Q: I'm sure there are other pills you could use.

A: Yeah.

Q: So would you feel that you could ask a man to use a condom?

A: Yeah. There's no reason why he shouldn't. It's his responsibility too, I mean I don't like the idea that women have - I mean they're the ones gonna get pregnant so they have to take all the responsibility, it's not fair. It takes two to make a baby so it takes two to take responsibility.

Q: So you'd expect him to do his share.

A: Yeah. And if I did get pregnant he'd just have to stand by me...

Q: Which do you think is - is kind of the most - what would you be more afraid of, being pregnant or - or getting AIDS, in terms of entering a relationship that might be a sexual one?

A: I (?) wouldn't mind being pregnant. I suppose catching AIDS. But then being pregnant when I was really - like say I'm sixteen now would be a bit - scaring enough, but I mean if I did have, then I would keep the baby so I suppose catching AIDS.

Q: I was thinking just 'cos some people I've talked to have - have thought, who were actually either thinking about or having a sexual relationship with their boyfriend, and they've been on the pill or things like that, and actually their first thought in their mind is not to be pregnant, and therefore they've gone on the pill or whatever, and then it's a sort of kind of additional thing of, well maybe we should use a condom because of AIDS, things like that. Do you know what I mean, it sort of comes second, the first thing is kind of oh, I don't want to be pregnant. So - or would that be the same thing for you?

A: No. I think it would be the other way round, if I did - sort of like AIDS first, and if I did get pregnant, well that's something that happens and I'd have to take responsibility for it sort of thing. But if I - if we took precautions, if I was on the pill and he used a condom, I don't think I would be able to get pregnant, unless it was one chance in a million sort of thing. But even then I would take the responsibility and keep the baby.

Q: You wouldn't have an abortion?

A: No. I don't think I could.

Q: What, even if it would affect your career?

A: Yeah. I mean morally I don't think I could... keep the little baby.

Q: And do you and your girlfriends ever talk about kind of other aspects - well I suppose if you don't really talk about sex you wouldn't talk about the other aspects of sex, like masturbation, things like that.

A: No.

Q: Has that come up at all in any of your discussions with anyone?

A: No.

Q: 'Cos that's something that - that we've been finding a bit that it's not something that - although it's often something that girls might do themselves, it's not something that they actually talk about. Or people think of it as something that only boys do. So it hasn't come up at all in your -

A: No.

Q: So would you have liked to talk about things like that in some way?

A: It probably will come up, sooner or later, I mean somebody will mention it, so I mean... I can't remember - I don't really get embarrassed about talking about things like that, so, I mean I talk about it...

Q: Could you talk about your - to your mum about anything like that, or is that slightly taboo?

A: I don't know because we've never really talked about something like that, but I mean... I don't think she, I mean she'd probably blush, but I mean she wouldn't say we can't talk about that now, she just sort of like - well let's get it over and done with and let's all talk about it sort of thing.

Q: But it might be up to you to sort of bring it up?

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah. Well at least she wouldn't kind of change the subject.

A: Yeah, that's something anyway.

Q: And who do you feel are the people most at risk from something like AIDS?

A: I don't think, like the media said it was mostly homosexuals, because I mean - because now it's something that can - I mean women can be carriers and pass it onto their babies anyway, but I just don't think there's one particular group, but I mean high risks are homosexuals though.

Q: Why's that?

A: Because - I mean they - they probably do have safe sex though. 'Cos - I mean I wouldn't know but I mean this is what the media said, so - but I mean, come to think of it, homosexuals probably do have safe sex now because of AIDS. I mean they're just like anybody else so they probably do.

Q: In fact I mean it is said that people in the homosexual community have taken more notice of -

A: ...

Q: - warnings than heterosexuals who have thought oh, nothing to do with us.

A: ... you know, I can't catch it 'cos I'm a heterosexual, exactly.

Q: If you had to describe yourself as a person, how would you describe yourself?

A: Well, I'm chaotic, I'm crazy, I'm mad.

Q: Why?

A: I'm just sort of like - I do everything opposite - I mean if somebody - if I'm in the middle of a street and somebody causes an argument, I stand there and argue with them where she will

turn away and walk away, but I just stand there and argue with them. Or I mean if I know I'm in the right, but if I'm wrong I will apologise. But if I know I'm in the right I won't let them get away with it, sort of thing, and so she gets very embarrassed.

Q: Who's that, your friend?

A: My mum.

Q: Your mum.

A: She goes, it's got nothing to do with me. I don't know... I don't know. That's a hard question.

Q: It is, I know it's a hard question. How would your friends describe you?

A: How would my friends describe me. This takes all sense of modesty out of your head. Well, considering that I've got a lot of friends, I think they must like me. That's one thing. Because I mean when we go out I've always got ideas of whether to go, whether it's a museum or... I always like sort of like make it fun, I have a guided tour - 'cos we go to the British Museum and I take them on a guided tour. [REDACTED].

Q: So you know it very well.

A: I take them on a guided tour but I sort of like point out the funny bits, so they like that. Like, and we take it in turns to organise trips, sort of like one day we'll go to Madame Tussaud's and the next week we'll go back (?) in the river and we just sort of like organise an activity to make it fun. So I don't know how my friends would describe me but they think I'm fun, so -

Q: Mm, well it sounds like you've got lots of ideas of going places and things like that.

So - what else was I going to ask you - are all your friends kind of black as well, or is it a mixed group?

A: It's mixed because I mean my mum's not racist and neither's my dad, so I mean they won't say you can't have a black friend, you can't have a white friend, you can't have a half-caste friend, they're not like that, I mean when I have a new friend I bring them home and they meet my mum and dad, whether it's a girl or a boy -

Q: Right.

A: - they always meet my mum or they speak to me on the phone, so my mum knows who I'm going out with and stuff like that, and so far they haven't said anything. But my friends are a mixed group 'cos I've got an Asian friend, a black friend, a white friend, a Greek friend, a green friend, a yellow - you know, we sort of like things like that, and it really annoys me when people goes, well what colour's your boyfriend, I always say he's green. Because it really annoys me, I mean what does - does it make a difference what colour he is, you know.

Q: But do people ask you that sort of question?

A: Yeah.

Q: What do you think they expect?

A: Because I - I went out with a white boy before, they probably expect me to say well he's Asian sort of thing. But it just annoys me. It's probably because I've been doing sociology.

Q: Yes. Why should it make any difference.

A: Exactly.

Q: Was the boy you were going steady with Asian or white?

A: Yes, he was white... any difference.

Q: ... I mean if everyone's been brought up in a similar sort of way sort of, then there's no need to be that sort of clash of expectations that you might get if somebody had just come from another country or -

A: Yeah. No, my mum - my mum's brought us up, because she said she's come to England, she doesn't want her kids to be excluded from anything, because we'd already be excluded

because of our colour anyway. She's - I mean she's aware of racial pressures anyway at school, so that's why we can wear what clothes we like and - I mean - I mean I'm not allowed to come in really late, but I mean I am allowed to go out with my friends, so it's sort of like I don't get excluded 'cos of things like that. So it's really good, they're really understanding, my parents.

Q: Yeah, they sound very nice. And - when you had your boyfriend was he - he came home and everything like that?

A: Yeah.

Q: So he was round your house. And did you, in terms of - I mean I know you didn't have a sexual relationship with him, but did you kind of do anything else in terms of kissing, cuddling or -

A: Yeah, we kissed and cuddled and stuff like that but I mean - I didn't think it was right for me to go into a sexual relationship, not at this point, because as I've said, I - I don't think I'm ready anyway. It's just something that I know I'll be ready for when the time comes, or when the person comes, or it's the wrong man at the right time, I don't know.

Q: And when you - when you actually say a sexual relationship, what do you mean by that?

A: Full sexual intercourse because I mean I don't consider kissing, although it is part of the sex - sex, but I mean sort of like it's expected of every relationship anyway, so -

Q: But what about other things like, you know, feeling other people's bodies, things like that?

A: I don't think anything's wrong in that anyway. It's something that's natural, as my mum keeps telling me. You know, it's natural sort of to happen so -

Q: Did you do that too?

A: No. I just didn't feel I was ready so - didn't commit myself.

Q: Mm. Yes, 'cos it's not something you actually want to kind of do if you don't want to do it -

A: Exactly.

Q: - 'cos then -

A: It doesn't feel right.

Q: 'Cos I think some people do it because they think it's expected.

A: Exactly. And because all their friends are doing it. I just thought I wasn't ready so there's no point.

Q: Mm. No, you'd stand out for what you felt.

A: Exactly.

Q: When you - I mean you say you discussed contraception with the doctor in the family planning clinic - was that for any particular reason?

A: No, because I kept getting really bad stomach aches when I had my period and the doctor suggested that I went on the pill because it was really really bad, I mean it sort of like - I used to get sweat, sweat attacks and sort of like - but I said I didn't want to go on the pill because I was sixteen and - but I didn't need it for contraceptive reasons, not at the moment, and sort of like because - you know, the pill's connected with cancer scares and stuff like that, I didn't want to start very early. So he suggested that I try some other tablets before - and if the final came to the final, if I really wanted to stop the pain it would have to be the pill. But luckily they've stopped again with my other pills so they're alright now.

Q: Good. No, I know they do that sometimes -

A: Yeah.

Q: - it seems a bit drastic to -

A: I know, but I mean I said that could he try some other form of treatment, but I mean it got really bad so he just - he tried several different tablets and I found one that eventually stopped... so I found - as long as I remembered to take them before, otherwise I do still get the belly aches, but that's because I forgot, I didn't take them.

Q: No, they sometimes give it for people who get very irregular periods as well 'cos it makes it -

A: - makes it regular, yeah. I'm lucky but it's just the belly aches.

Q: I think I've almost finished. Is there anything that you can think of to do with what you and your friends do, and how you meet people - do you meet new people with your friends?

A: Yeah, I mean usually when we go out we just have a laugh, I mean - how do we meet new people? Probably - I meet a lot of people through work, through my interviewing through the magazine, and I... a lot of people, like I'm gonna go to college so I'll probably meet a lot of people there. And we go out - like my friend will phone her friend and her friend'll - and sort of like there's the chain, and... sort of like go to a big park and have lots and lots of us, that's how we meet people.

Q: How many of you are there?

A: Well, basically there's ten of us, but if we build it up into a chain there's about fifty-five of us.

Q: That's like a small army.

A: Yeah, 'cos I mean there's like ten of us so each of us knows about five people... different so we just - yeah, it is a little army.

Q: Is it mainly the ten of you that go round together or is it -

A: Well sort of like we split up into twos or threes but if sort of like - I mean we all ring each other up and stuff like that so -

Q: But when you're going, say, round the shops and trying on things -

A: Oh, there's not usually ten of us, no. Because some of us work and stuff like that and we can't fit in with - but it's usually three or four of us, or two.

Q: And you go to the cinema and things like that as well.

A: Yeah. I mean sometimes we get videos out and go round each other's houses, and we all bring our own food and share it out and stuff like that.

Q: And what is it that you're doing - sociology and -

A: I'm going to do English and Communications Studies next year.

Q: That's at A-level? So it would be the year after next you'll go to college?

A: I go to college next year, university the year after next. Or polytechnic, one of - I haven't decided, it depends if it does the degree that I want to do, and if it fits in, 'cos I don't wanna move away from home. So -

Q: You don't want to leave London?

A: No.

Q: Why is that?

A: I don't know, it's just that I don't want to go away from London 'cos I like London. I was just telling that to my dad yesterday. Out of all the cities in the world I think London's my favourite, apart from New York, 'cos I went there once and I really liked it. My mum doesn't wanna go there, she's scared of muggers. But I mean there's them here but it's not as bad as in New York, but I think New York, London and Milan, all the cities that I like, capital cities, like London's my favourite so I don't wanna move out. Because I mean everything's here. 'Cos we went to Cambridge -

Q: To live or to visit?

A: No, we went to Cambridge for a week. It's so quiet... there is no traffic, there is no nothing, and I don't think I could go away to university for three years and be quiet. So I'll try and find a poly in London.

Q: Except that I suppose in defence of that, if you go to college, university outside, then there's lots of things going on within the university as well, so that even if you go to quite a quiet place there's often a whole kind of riot going on within the university if you're part of it.

A: I know 'cos I went to... university, but I mean in that way I'd still like to live in London though. I mean everybody has their own choice... but then again, I mean it's two years away and I'll probably change my mind and say, well, I want to be away from my mum and dad for two years... I mean that's probably what will happen, me saying this now, but I mean I'm gonna be nineteen when I go away so a lot can happen in two years. I might have a massive fight with my mum and dad and move out or - I don't know -

Q: Sounds unlikely.

A: Exactly. I mean I just think... so...

Q: Would you move out and, say, move in with a boyfriend or anything like that, can you envisage doing that?

A: No, because - I mean my mum and dad, at the moment they've converted the attic and I've got my own little flat and I don't think I'd give that up for anybody. I mean it's got its own bathroom, a kitchen, bedroom and sitting room, and I don't think I'd - I don't think, no, no, no, no - I like my little flat and it's sort of like really good 'cos they - they knew that I needed independence but they didn't want me to move away, and I thought it was very crafty of them, so they had the loft converted like and I live up there, but I mean, sort of like my own space, if I don't clear it up that's my mess, but I don't like my room tidy - untidy anyway, so - I think that's a very good idea.

Q: Mm, sounds great. It's good that your house is big enough to do that as well. You haven't got a kitchen up there?

A: Yeah, I've got a kitchen. But it hasn't got a cooker but it's got a microwave.

Q: So you can be totally self-contained.

A: Exactly, but I still come down and eat my dinner because I don't wanna be totally cut off.

Q: Well, no, especially when you get on so well, it's not as though you're sort of having arguments all the time. Do you have any arguments with your family?

A: Yeah, we do sometimes when my mum and dad don't agree with something that I'm doing. I mean we don't argue - first of all we start into a discussion, then I'll start shouting to get my point across, then my dad'll start shouting, but we always make up in the end so that's alright, 'cos I know if I let it cool down for two days my mum'll ask me if I want some dinner or something like that, and she'll start talking to me again. But I don't think I've ever had a row with my parents not to talk with them longer than a week.

Q: What was that about?

A: I can't remember, I was really small, I think I done something...

End of interview.