

LSFS21 9.6.1989

Anita

Q: If we can just start with a bit more about your family - just that you live with your mum and dad and older brother and older sister. So you're the youngest?

A: Yeah. I've got - I've got another three brothers but one of them - two of them are in SOUTH ASIA and one of them is like in this country but he's married... My sister's still living at home she's twenty-four...

Q: ... which is really - only got as far really as explaining that your sister was twenty-four and she might be going back to SOUTH ASIA.

A: Yeah, when she goes over there she might - she might get married, but we're not going there - we're going there for a holiday really, but - 'cos we're only going there for a few weeks, but if we find anybody she likes, you know, we'll try to arrange - it's up to her, though, we're not gonna push her into anything. My parents - they are... so they can be quite strict but they're not - they're not so, you know, like quite as strict as some parents are. They're a bit more liberal. They still worry about me and my sister because like we're the only girls and like they have to look out for me because like they think I might be influenced by what my sister does, and so they're a bit harder on me than they are on her.

Q: Really?

A: More liberal with her, yeah.

Q: That's interesting 'cos sometimes you'd expect it to be the other way round, that -

A: Yeah.

Q: - they'd be harder on the first one and take it easier on the second.

A: I just think they don't want me to turn out like my sister because for a while she was just, you know, going out a lot, to nightclubs and stuff, and they - my mum got very worried, and my - my parents - my dad, he doesn't want that to happen to me. I saw what happened to her, I don't think I probably agree with anything my sister did.

Q: What did she do?

A: She used to stay out really late and there used to be arguments at home quite a bit about her going out all the time, but she used to want to go out at eleven o'clock and - used to really worry about it, my mum. She's okay now but... my sister doesn't go out alone anymore. She gets very worried.

Q: So does she go out with a group or has she got a -

A: She had a -

Q: - boyfriend.

A: - boyfriend and my parents - they weren't too - not worried about the boyfriend, it was more what time she'd be back and - like she's single...

Q: Yeah. So she doesn't go out alone.

A: No... It's quite strange, my sister was gonna get married to this AMERICAN or something, and my parents agreed to it, and like he was Catholic and they didn't mind that he stayed Catholic, and my parents were willing to (?) tell people that he was Muslim... respected... in the community. But well that sort of fell through because he realised that she didn't want to travel to like America, Iran and all these places...

Q: So did he break it off?

A: Yeah, he went to America in April and he wrote her a letter, saying I think it's best that, you know, it ends this way because I don't think you're ready to come to, you know, America or something with me. 'Cos she's very - like although she's a rebel, she still cares about the family, like she sort of holds us together like through all these crises, like if we're in financial difficulties she always pays... She's quite good.

Q: What does she do?

A: She works in... the city, ... I don't know much about it, she's working her way up.

Q: But she's doing very well.

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: And so how did she meet the American...

A: [REDACTED], and like at first she didn't really want a relationship but ... got closer, then at Christmas time something happened, which was she got attacked - at Christmas time she got attacked outside the flats -

Q: Really?

A: - yeah, and about - she came home, and he would have walked her home but he thought that my parents might... so he didn't, and he felt really guilty about it, and my parents agreed to let her marry him because that way she'd go out with him and we'd know where she is and, you know,... really worried...

Q: Because - did she get attacked on her own or -

A: She was on her own. She was coming into the flats and - it's not the first time it's happened to anybody in our flats 'cos downstairs has got like an intercom system, and that wasn't working, there was a man sort of hanging around. Nothing actually happened but like he hit her and she - she managed to get away, you know. She was really shook up about that.

Q: Yeah, I'm not surprised. So do you get on well with her?

A: Sometimes. Well - well, she can be - she can be very bossy... We do get on, even though like she's seven years older than me, you know, I can talk to her. I feel embarrassed talking about personal things because like I feel like she doesn't understand, but she's been through it so she knows. She says, like, snap out of it.

Q: Not always so easy to snap out of it.

A: No. But she's - she knows, she can - when she was younger, she was about my age, she had a nervous breakdown and that's why my parents are less strict, they don't want to make her have another one. And like whenever I get like moody or depressed or something she says, you know, I can see the same thing happening to you, you know, cheer up. She does make me feel better...

Q: Do you go out with her at all?

A: Sometimes, but like it's just sort of, like, pictures and stuff. She's got friends who are her own age, she goes out with them, and I go out with my friends, you know, it's not that often because my dad - it was okay up 'til a while ago - I think it was after what happened to my sister, 'cos that happened at Christmas, that attack, and since then they've been like hard on me and they don't want me to go out without, you know, knowing what time I'll be back and if somebody'll give me a lift. I mean I can understand it, but it sort of gets me annoyed sometimes.

Q: Well, it must make you feel quite restricted.

A: But I mean I expect it because, you know, I am actually Muslim so I should agree.

Q: And was ...

A: Yeah, I think so, because, yeah, they are - like weddings and things, the women are like kept in one room and the men in another. Like Hindu weddings they have, like, it's like a party, you know, everyone sort of talks and things, but Muslims it's totally different, it's just the ones that come from Bangladesh and India. India aren't as bad as the Muslims in Bangladesh because... we just haven't got any, like, real community links apart from like the mosque, but we don't go to that anyway, just my father, he prays at home, so he doesn't go to the mosque.

Q: And does he keep sort of strict (?) rules about drinking and -

A: Well, yeah, he used to - before he used to drink, he used to be an alcoholic, he used to drink every day, he used to get drunk all the time, and there was - a doctor said that he would have to stop drinking because like he'd got really high blood sugar, and he

nearly had diabetes or something similar... and he had to stop drinking, otherwise he would like die, so he managed to stop and he's been quite religious since. It's totally changed him, he's so calm now, he does shout, but he's a lot calmer than he was, you know, when I was little, 'cos I can still remember he used to get drunk and everything. It's quite strange. I can't believe that he's changed so much. But like when my brother came home drunk once not long ago, he said, you know, he said it doesn't matter, let him learn, he has to learn from his mistakes, so he wasn't encouraging him to drink but he was saying, you know, I could understand 'cos everybody's tempted and it's best to see what it's like, otherwise you're just gonna be tempted all the time. My mum couldn't really understand that... like religious... you know.

Q: ...

A: Yeah. He's quite - everybody respects my father, his brothers, 'cos they're younger than him, and they all respect - they come to him like when they're in - when they've got problems and stuff and he sort of like sorts it out, like a judge, you know, like he'll judge something, he'll sort of stand, unbiased and he doesn't give his opinions but he sort of says well, you know, at the end after hearing everything out, he decides what's best. They all respect him. I think that's why he's more strict with me than my sister, 'cos everybody knows about my sister going out with... and he thinks that if I start doing the same they'll lose respect from my brother and they don't really want that to happen. So -

Q: And how about your mum?

A: My mum? She's very worried at times. Like if I go out she -she'd like me to be back very early, and if I'm like about ten minutes late, you know, she starts looking out the window and if I'm half an hour late she'll start to phone my friends, and that. And she bought - she goes and asks my dad, oh where is she, and that really annoys him, so when I come in I not only get like told off by my mum but my dad also says, you know, you shouldn't worry your mum like that. I think like it's only ten - ten minutes or whatever, it's not my fault, like the train was delayed or something. But I can understand it. My parents are quite a bit older anyway, so I think that's got something to do with it, and plus I'm the youngest -

Q: Right.

A: 'Cos my mum's fifty-something and my dad is like sixty, so they are getting on a bit. I mean I worry about them, I keep telling them not to worry about me 'cos I can look after myself, 'cos I wouldn't come home at such a late time to get into any sort of trouble. They don't really understand.

Q: Do you go out with your friends or do you have a boyfriend?

A: I go out with my friends. My mum, you know - I don't think I'd - I'd really get a chance to see, if I was going out with somebody I wouldn't get a chance to see him all that often so it wouldn't really work out. I'd rather wait 'til I get older.

Q: Have you ever had a boyfriend?

A: No. I just - recently I was asked out with somebody who I was gonna go out with but - they sort of said - oh, you know, they made up some excuse. And I was - well I was quite angry about it but, you know, I've accepted it, I don't really mind.

Q: What, they asked you out but then they -

A: I don't know what happened. It was really strange. And I talked to them the following, like the following week, and I said I -'cos they said they'd cut their hand and they couldn't come 'cos they were getting a tetanus..., I thought that was a feeble excuse. They did actually cut their hand because he cut his hand in a chemistry lesson I think, but that really annoyed me. He's very popular, he's got, you know, a lot of friends in the sixth form at school, and - well, oh, I can't be bothered.

Q: Right, yeah.

A: His friend, I'm quite good friends with him, asked me out before roundabout Christmastime, before that, and I would have gone out with him but I - I preferred like, you know, this other person, so I thought, well I'll wait and see what happens, and when he finally did he sort of let me down.

Q: Yeah. Disappointing.

A: Like it was all arranged - like we were gonna go out that night, and - I don't know, I was really angry.

Q: Yeah.

A: I think he was too scared to go out, because like all his friends - he didn't tell them, he just told his best friend, like all the others like if they found out, you know, they'd probably - probably, you know, I can't be bothered, I can't take all the hassle. 'Cos everybody ...

Q: ...

A: Well maybe not, I think they were just teasing a bit and then, you know, they'd be okay, but I don't think he wanted them to know at all... found out... a bit. It's really annoying.

Q: Yeah,... should have a bit more guts... Was he Asian?

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah, he's more - he's not like some Asians, you know, the ones who my parents... He's more like - he's more westernised, like me and my family and that, so I got on with him quite well, but I don't know, I just got really fed up, just depressed a few weeks ago.

Q: Did it just happen a few weeks ago?

A: Yeah, it happened before half term, and - it was just really annoying. All my friends said, oh that's really good, you know, he did actually ask you, and I just - when he called it off I said oh well, you know, he's a bit of a creep. You know, but they sort of say oh he'll probably ask you again, but he hasn't got round to it in like two weeks and it was half term as well,... I still see him around. He's got exams. He comes in every day and he doesn't revise at all. And I just think, well, he's stupid, he's wasted a year...

Q: So he won't pass them anyway?

A: Exactly. My sister... it's stupid anyway because I'm doing A-levels and I say no, that's nothing to do with it. I say he's just, he's just very lazy, he doesn't wanna work. I am quite lazy, but I always do what I have to do and I sit down and revise. He comes in and sits in the cafe all day long. I don't go there all that often.

Q: Did you used to?

A: Yeah. Not all day, just for a bit. But if I see him in there I sort of like avoid - avoid him. I - I liked him for so long, you know, it was such a let-down.

Q: Ah, it must be awful.

A: Yeah it was. All my friends, you know, they're really nice about it, they say oh, you know, he'll come round, he's probably just a bit shy and all this, but he doesn't seem shy because he's got so many friends - he's got loads of friends who are girls as well, like he doesn't seem the shy type. He sounded really different - when he phoned me up he sounded so different I couldn't, you know - it seemed like I'd known him for ages, and then I saw him the next day at school, he wanted to go still in the morning, but I don't know, he just sort of changed his mind by the afternoon, it was really weird.

Q: Had he had other girlfriends or does he just have -

A: Well -

Q: - friends who are girls?

A: - he was going out with somebody, I know that, and he used to like some girl who used to like come to ... school... last year and he still sees her but they're friends, and he sort of told me that, that he still likes her still, you know, likes her as a friend, you know...

But he did have a girlfriend, but I don't know if he was just saying that 'cos I - he just seemed such a, you know, ... to actually turn up, a date so, you know.

Q: Is there anyone else that you've got your eye on?

A: No. Just... I don't - I mean I don't like him as much as I used to because I know what he's like now, it's really put me off but-

Q: Would your parents mind you going out with him?

A: Oh, I - I wouldn't tell them at first, but like if we really got on well then I'd tell them, because I think he was a Muslim as well. My parents don't mind if I go out with somebody who's Muslim, even if they're not... I think... Asian still. They wouldn't... person was actually Muslim, because they said if I met anybody, as long as they're Muslim, you know, they're not worried, even if they were like Turkish or whatever, it'd be okay, so.

Q: So do they actually say what they expect from you and what -whether you'll have a kind of arrangement (?) for the future?

A: Well... (?) hinting like when we go over... and saying well, you know, if you find somebody for you then, you know, you can get married if you like, if you like, you know, so it's up to me. They haven't hinted but I mean I'm too young, I'm only seventeen, like -I mean they know I am... I've told them I'm not gonna get married 'til I'm like in my twenties, like my sister because like, it just wouldn't work. I don't think it - like especially if I had an arranged marriage, 'cos I'd be really bitter, you know, turn out like my mother... my father. She doesn't hate him or anything but you know she has all these like bad memories, you know, like she hasn't been - had any happy experiences, you know, everything has gone wrong since she got married, or so she says. You know, I'd probably end up like her... I mean it's not - I mean I do love my mum, but I don't like to end up like her 'cos she worries too much, you know.

Q: Yes, 'cos you hear a lot of people saying about arranged marriages, that in the end they all work out and people grow to love one another, and things like that, but there must be some that aren't quite as sort of simple and happy as that.

A: It all looks, you know, happy, and I'm sure it is for a while, you know, like the first few years maybe, like because you do get attached to the person, but I think after a while it turns sour on you, you don't really care for them, like if you fell in love with somebody it would be different 'cos you - you know, you'd just think, well, it was my fault, you know, and you'd think... and you'd be able to get out of it if you wanted to. An arranged one, they'd keep you together, like the families would do everything they could to keep you together and you know, like if you're unhappy, it's not really fair on you. So, you know, I don't - I would agree to an arranged marriage but - as long as I was really sure about it, I wouldn't just say yes because it was, you know, the last chance, you know, that I was getting really old, you know, I thought this was gonna be my only good offer, you know. I wouldn't - I wouldn't get married just for the sake of it, I'd get married because I thought, you know, it could actually work. That's how my sister sees it, you know, I suppose it's because of her that I... Ever since I've been little I've been saying that I don't want an arranged marriage, you know,... married.

Q: Really?

A: Yeah, since I was about five, six.

Q: Did your parents ever talk to you about sort of more personal aspects, like the sort of facts of life and stuff, relationships?

A: No, because my mum she'd - she wouldn't come out with something like that, she'd just sort of insinuate, like when I was feeling really depressed because of what happened...

Q: Yeah.

A: - and I was - you know like I was really moody, I... properly, and it wasn't because - I just, I don't know, I don't think it was because of him, I think I was just not feeling very

well, and my mum sort of said, have you had your period this month? And I thought, well, you know, I'm not pregnant if that's what you're thinking, I got really angry about it because - you know, she should come out with it instead of insinuating. 'Cos I knew what she was getting at, but she just wouldn't come out with it. That annoyed me. Something like that happened when I was about thirteen, fourteen, and I had - I had a ... like I lost my period for about a year and she got really worried, she took me to the doctor's and like even he started to believe that I could be pregnant, he said oh you know, have a test, and I was thinking, look I'm not pregnant you know, and he was saying, I think you should have a test. And I knew what kind of test he meant, he wouldn't come out with like a pregnancy test, but I knew, and that really annoyed me because I mean I should know, you know -

Q: Well, yes, what you've been doing.

A: Exactly... My mum wouldn't give me a chance to anyway, you know. She should trust me a bit more, she - it's obvious, like she says she trusts me, but I don't think she does. Like I would - if I was gonna have a relationship I would tell her if it was getting really serious. I wouldn't tell her, you know, like the first few weeks when it's not all that serious, but if it was getting really serious like after a while, then I would tell her. Because they do have a right to know.

Q: Would they mind?

A: Yeah, they would, but I think they'd get used to it. I couldn't have like a sexual relationship with anybody anyway because like if I - if I did end up having an arranged marriage they sort of check, you know, they sort of you know like on the night if you're a virgin, it's really strange.

Q: How do they check?

A: Well, they don't really check but well, they expect you to, you know, bleed when you first have sex. But I don't know. It's really strange. It's like in Italy they put up the bedsheets or something. They don't do anything like that here, but the night you get married, that's the night they expect you to sort of, you know, have sex, and I don't know what - I don't know what goes on particularly, I know that's what they expect. But I don't really want an arranged marriage. It's like everybody sort of wants to know, you know. It could be bad for the girl like if she, you know, she's had a relationship before.

Q: A sexual relationship?

A: Yeah. And like it could give her a bad name, like the man could say, well she's not a virgin, I don't - I don't want her anymore, you know. I don't think that that would happen but -

Q: 'Cos it makes it sound a bit like buying and selling -

A: Yeah.

Q: - doesn't it, a bit like - you feel like... goods.

A: Exactly. You don't really...

Q: ...

A: Especially like, because I'm only like seventeen, my parents could easily - they could easily push me into something which I wouldn't be sure about, because at the moment my mind isn't, you know, it's not - not really aware, you know, of what's going on... and I - I could quite easily agree to something which I would regret and like if they're gonna sort of push, force me into something that they say they won't, but they could in ways sort of twist - you know, saying oh you know, this is a good man and so on, you know, I might start to believe them, they might sort of brainwash me and I don't - sort of get worried. I've set my mind, you know, I won't get married 'til I'm really sure about somebody.

Q: But do you think you can stick to that?

A: Yeah, I think I could. Maybe - maybe like, you know, two or three years I might change my mind, but then, you know, I'll be like twenty like by then, it won't be so bad anyway, 'cos you know, I think I'll be more ready to accept somebody.

Q: And do you feel that you might want to have a sexual relationship before...

A: No, I think I'm more sort of old-fashioned in a way because I'd prefer to, you know, wait until after I'm married. I don't know why, I just - you know, just like - you know, like pregnancies, it worries me, I know there's like contraceptives and stuff, but I don't think I could have a sexual relationship until I am actually married. But I know it's better sometimes to have had, you know, find out before, but I don't think I could. Because I would feel really guilty, like if I went out with somebody I would feel really bad about it anyway, I mean if I was, you know, having a sexual relationship as well with this person it would make me feel much worse. I don't think I could cope with it.

Q: What, with the guilt?

A: Yeah. Because like my parents, they wouldn't know. Even like if they found out that I was actually seeing somebody they would automatically think that, you know, I was actually having a sexual relationship. But, you know, I would want to prove them wrong... I'm not -

Q: Yeah.

A: - even though they wouldn't believe me. It's still in your mind, how you feel about yourself. I would feel really guilty.

Q: Girls sort of have different expectations of what they think sex might be like or what they would expect from it. Do you have any idea...?

A: No. I don't - I don't really think about it. I think girls are more romantic, they think more about love rather than actual sex, whilst boys - I don't know, I think that they expect girls to actually have sex with them before they're married. I don't think I could bring myself to - if somebody expected me to and was pushing me I'd just sort of call it off, I'd say well, you know, if that's what - if that's all you're thinking of, then forget it. 'Cos, you know, it's up to me. I mean I might change my mind in a few years, I don't know, if I actually started going out with somebody I might actually change my mind about it, but I don't think I would.

Q: And do you think you'd see kind of the sexual aspect more as a duty or would you expect, you know, that it would -

A: No, I think it would come from, you know like love or whatever, you know, you want to express how much you love somebody, but I - I wouldn't think of it as a duty like - like another thing you have to do if you want to have children and stuff, you know, I would do it because, you know, I felt like having sex...

Q: What, you would expect some sort of - sort of pleasure?

A: Yeah. I think I would, because otherwise it's, you know... -I don't know, I wouldn't really see the point of sex. I don't know, like my mum, my parents, I know that they don't, you know, sleep together anymore because like my father, his bed is in a different room and like I've heard my mum going to bed and she was saying, oh no, don't, you know... they haven't sort of slept together. She doesn't say it but, you know, I know that she's talking about, you know. It seems... it's more like, more like a duty, like when she was a wife, when she was younger, you know, she had to because, you know, she was the wife and it was expected of her. 'Cos I don't - I don't - that's why I think I'd like - I'd prefer to get married out of love, because, you know, then I wouldn't think of it as a duty -

Q: Right.

A: - and I'd sort of enjoy it more.

Q: It seems strange that, you know, your mother hinting at you getting pregnant and yet sort of it sounds as though she never actually taught you about sex or anything like that,

so she doesn't know how much you know, or if you know, or presumes that you do know.

A: Yeah.

Q: - kind of how to have babies or whatever.

A: It's true actually, she's never actually told me anything about, like, you know pregnancy and stuff. When I was little I used to, you know, I used to say, where did I come from, she'd say oh from my stomach, she didn't actually say, you know, you know, how... how I was born and everything. I just sort of found out about it from like friends and like school and they teach you about it in sex education. I don't know how she expects me to know about things if she doesn't tell me.

Q: Mm. Does she assume school tells you?

A: Well I don't - I don't know, I don't think she's, you know, like seen what the curriculum is, so I don't think she even knows that they do teach us about sex education in school. Like she might be shocked if she found out. I don't - I don't think - I don't know if they talked about it in SOUTH ASIA actually, I don't think they are, so ... finds out, somebody must have told her, but... I mean I do know, but it's - it would be better if it came from them.

Q: 'Cos how have you learned... has it been -

A: Yeah, it's been sort of like school, like in the first year there was... talks and information and stuff. But I've never actually told my parents about, that they taught us ... about it, you know, but I think they know,... they do know.

Q: Were they biology lessons or other sorts of -

A: Biology. And also PSE, which is like personal social education, like they talked about like contraceptives and stuff and it was - it was quite useful and stuff but it was only like in the third year... attention. 'Cos we sort of like, friends, you know, they sort of say oh, you know... a period or a condom or whatever, and like at that age you sort of think of it as a joke. You don't really take it seriously because you don't think you're ever gonna be like old enough to actually, you know, have sex or whatever. Now, because you're sort of over the legal age or whatever, you know, you think about it more but -

Q: Presumably do you have lessons on it now?

A: No, because, well I suppose teachers sort of... know about it... before...

Q: Would it be useful in a way to have things about it now rather than... or as well as?

A: Well, I think everybody thinks, you know, I know everything about it, but I'm sure there's like a lot more to it than finding out about contraceptives and whatever there is. And everybody sort of thinks, well, you know, I learnt about it in the second year, you know, I know - I know what goes on, but I suppose it could be useful, it might make somebody a bit more sure before... 'cos like some people don't, they sort of think, oh they're gonna have - it's gonna be really good or whatever, they expect, expect so much and, you know, they can sometimes be let down, you know. I think there should be - more aware of like all the consequences as well. 'Cos they think, oh the first time, you know, you can't get pregnant. But some people say you can. And like they say during your periods you can't get pregnant as well but, well, you can, can't you?

Q: People have done. It's less usual but it's not impossible.

A: ... People just think, oh, you've got your period, you can't get pregnant, you know, they don't realise that, you know, that if you - ... statistics... 'cos we do sort of know the basic facts now, it's more like what to expect and, you know.

Q: Did they talk about feelings at all, or how you negotiate relationships?

A: We were never taught about - we were taught about sex education and we weren't taught about like falling in love and how to handle your emotions and stuff. I - I think that that would be a good thing to have actually, 'cos I - we haven't actually been taught about, you know, what it's like to - if you think you're in love, is it love or is it obsession,

or whatever. 'Cos you don't know, and like if you've never fallen in love before, you know, you don't - you don't know if it's the real thing. And I think, you know I suppose nobody can tell you, you should know yourself, but sometimes like when you're really young you feel really sort of confused about things.

Q: Yeah...

A: We've never - I don't think anybody - nobody really talks about things like that actually. Like friends, like my best friend, will sometimes talk about being in love and how, you know, wouldn't it be good if you go out and all this, but we don't really, you know, let out our real feelings. We sort of bottle it up inside. I suppose that's why a diary is a good thing with letting out, you know, your emotions, 'cos like if you can't talk about it, it's good to actually write it down and look back on it, you know, think, oh I was feeling really depressed, or I was feeling happy, whatever. I think it's a good way of letting out, you know, your emotions instead of just bottling it up inside.

Q: Do you keep a diary?

A: Yeah. Well I haven't sort of wrote in it for about three weeks, but I used to - I used to keep it all the time up until like recently, 'cos I mean I think, you know, I've got my exams coming up and everything, so I haven't really had time. I - I usually do... Like if something interesting happens I usually write it in, but I just haven't, 'cos it's a new diary, the old ones sort of build up. I like... 'cos like all the people you used to like and, you know, how it changes, it's quite interesting.

Q: Yeah. In terms of what they taught you at school, did they teach you about AIDS?

A: Just - no, not very much. We just - like - all we were taught was that it's a virus and, you know, whatever it is, HIV, whatever, you know, it's not full blown AIDS until like seven years or whatever, and that's it, we weren't really taught much about it in school. 'Cos I don't think they'd expect any of us - I don't know.

Q: 'Cos how much do you feel you know about it yourself?

A: Well, I - I think I - because I've been reading like newspapers and whatever, I sort of know more about it than I was taught at school, it's not just what they taught us. You know, I don't know that much about it but I sort of know, you know, that it can affect all groups not just homosexuals, sort of - you know, it can affect all sorts of people... through blood or whatever, like if you have sex you can get it through that as well. I mean I do know the basic points about it. I mean I don't think, you know - they don't really tell us properly what AIDS is, it's just you know... We've been getting leaflets and things through the door... My dad, you know, my mum and dad, didn't really know what AIDS was and I was trying to explain it to them, but it just, you know, it didn't sink in.

Q: What, they didn't really understand?

A: No. Maybe it just ... pretend... I don't know...

Q: And do you feel that you might be at risk from AIDS at all?

A: No.

Q: I don't mean particularly now -

A: No, no, but in the future. Well I wouldn't use drugs at the moment, so - I would drink, 'cos I do drink sometimes, but I wouldn't, you know, I wouldn't use drugs because I just don't see the point of it, and, as I said, I wouldn't have like a sexual relationship until I was totally sure about it or I was married, you know, so I don't - I don't think I'm really at risk. I hope I'm not.

Q: I suppose it partly depends on your - the person you marry.

A: ... what sort of life they lived before. Yeah, that's true. I'd make sure I find out about previous girlfriends and stuff. I wouldn't sort of marry somebody without knowing what kind of relationships they'd had, and I'd expect them to be totally honest with me... I don't know. I don't think I'm at risk. It's really worrying, though, when you think about it. You know, you think the person you're gonna marry, you wouldn't think that they would - that

they could have AIDS, and you think, oh if they're gonna be married they're gonna be married sort of...

Q: Yeah. I mean is it something that you and your friends think of as a risk at all?

A: No, because my - my friends, they're - you know, they wouldn't use drugs or they wouldn't - I don't think - I don't know about them having sexual relationships themselves but I don't think they... I don't think - we don't really discuss AIDS very much, because we don't think we're at risk. If we were really worried about it then I suppose we would... using drugs... and stuff. But we don't. It's still worrying, though, because you hear about all these nurses who catch it from patients like, and from injections when it sort of pierces... hand and everything. It would sort of put you off like, if you wanted to be a nurse it could put you off, or a doctor.

Q: Do you know anyone who's been put off in that way?

A: Well, I know my - my friend - I don't - I don't think - I don't know if she wanted to be a nurse, but her mother is a sister, and - I don't know - she wanted to be a nurse, I think - I don't know.... I mean I'm sure it has put a lot of people off, you know, they can be so worried about it and they don't know... protected, whatever.

Q: Are any of your friends, do you know, having a sexual relationship?

A: I don't think so. Because my best friend, like both of them, they're not going out with anybody at the moment either and I - I don't think - I don't know if they would in the future. I can't really tell, can't ask them. I - we have discussed it... I remember sort of asking her and she - my friend... she was saying, I said, would you sort of have sex before you're married, and she said, well if I loved somebody I would, you know, if I wanted to... I mean I don't think I could even if I really wanted to because like I - I - although I'm not really into it, I don't know, I just - it would make me feel really guilty.

Q: It sounds like something that's inside you.

A: Mm. I know my sister has because I remember when she went away on holiday, she went away with one of her boyfriends... I don't think my mum knows about that, she told... and stuff, 'cos like I've met... and when she came back she thought she could be pregnant. And my mum was really supportive, like she went to the doctor with her and everything. So my mum knows that my sister, you know,...

Q: But will that affect her arranged marriage?

A: Yeah, I suppose it would but, you know, she could just say she, you know, lost it horse riding or something, I don't know. She could just make up some excuse. I know some girls like... lost their virginity, they sometimes get married sort of like - sort of like in their period, so it looks like they're bleeding... virginity, but it's their period. You see, so that...

Q: Yeah.

A: ...

Q: How do you spend most of your time sort of socially?

A: Oh, if I'm not at home watching TV, whatever, my friend, we just, you know, we sort of talk and we go to the cafe, you know, if we're in school, and if we go out we usually go to watch a film or, you know - we don't, we don't, we don't just sort of sit around and gossip and that sort of thing... all day, and if we've got a free lesson and we've both got free lessons... go and sit somewhere and talk or whatever. If there's like, just me I'll probably go to the library and do some studying...

Q: And you're in the same sort of social group with...

A: Yeah. We weren't up until like the sixth form, she used to be my friend... I never would have got so... just before Christmas, about October maybe, 'cos there was like a party at school and I remember we all got sort of drunk together and sort of - we still laugh about it, because I was the worst - I mean it was like the first time I had... and I remember... being really nice to me about it, and she really helped me, like we've become quite good

friends since, like you know, we're always together like. Before it was just me and my best friend LESLEY, and before that it was this girl called PAIGE who used to be... she's left, but we still see her from time to time. So if I go out with my friends it's usually just PAIGE and LESLEY, because we - we don't know...properly although, you know, we are quite good friends now. But we could all rely on each other, you know, if we said that we'd go somewhere we'd all turn up. We are proper friends now.

Q: So - go on.

A: No - it's just that it's really weird 'cos we didn't think we could ever make friends with her, because we didn't like them. Well I mean we didn't hate them, just... or whatever. We sort of changed our minds about them, you know, they're good friends to have 'cos they're very reliable.

Q: So is it important that your friends are reliable?

A: Yeah, I think - without friends I'd really hate this place, 'cos like studying and that just really gets... it's nice to be able to relax, you know... Yeah, I think my friends definitely are more important than like a relationship... you know like boys, my friends always they will be really important to me, especially like my best friends 'cos I've known them like... first year and, like, we've always been really close and especially in the sixth form. In the fourth year we were quite close, the fifth and sixth form we've become really close because like you're sort of growing up and you discover... you start sharing secrets and things... I think my friends are really important to me. My parents can't really see it, they - they say, you know, why do you need friends, and I say well, you know, they're my friends, you know. It's just like a brother or sister, you know, like somebody really close, I mean I can't talk to my sister because she's - you know, she's so much older, I just feel really embarrassed to talk about, you know like - maybe I could talk to her about like liking somebody or, you know, going out with somebody, but if I wanted like a sexual relationship I couldn't tell her. I mean I could tell my friends because, you know, they're the same age and they're probably going through the same thing -

Q: Right

A: ...

Q: And do you think you're a person who takes risks at all?

A: What sort of risks?

Q: Well I mean, I would have said things like pregnancy, but obviously that's not relevant, but things like smoking, drinking -

A: Yeah

Q: ... sorts of -

A: I do smoke and well, I drink but not that - like my sister... but it's not - the first time it was really bad but, you know, I don't drink so - I don't drink often, and it's only like... it's not like, you know, I get totally drunk. I'd only get sort of tipsy... like but I wouldn't, you know... I'm too young at the moment...

Q: What about smoking, how much do you smoke?

A: I started to smoke - I started smoking about - it's not... but I don't smoke at home, so if I smoked at home it'd be much more.

Q: So do you smoke here?

A: Yeah, we are allowed to smoke in the common room... I do smoke here... outside. But none of my friends smoke, which is quite strange. But I - I think I'm a very stressed person 'cos I did - I did one of them tests,... machine, and mine came up the highest, I was really... I don't know why, I just seem to be really stressed. Like I can't - at home if I sit down my mum says kind of, you look pretty worried, you know, why don't you tell us. But I don't really know what I worry about, but I'm sure I'm quite stressed.

Q: Do you feel you worry a lot?

A: I mean I can - I don't know what I worry about, sometimes like it's, you know, I think oh, I'm worrying too much and I think will I go grey, you know.

Q: ...worry...

A: 'Cos my mum's got grey hair. My mum, you know, she - I don't know, she worries a lot and I can see myself turning out like her, I don't - I really don't like it. 'Cos like she's a very tolerant person, you know like she'll take so much and then she'll hit back, and you know, she - she won't say anything to upset anybody unless like she's really upset herself, and I think I'm like that, I wouldn't - I wouldn't really deliberately try to hurt someone unless like I was really angry with them. What was the question? - I don't wanna turn out like my mum. She worries too much.

Q: Just getting back for a minute to things about sex education in school -

A: Yeah -

Q: - did they teach you about things that were kind of much more personal, sort of intimate to - to girls, well girls and boys, but things like masturbation and actually knowing your own body and -

A: No, I don't think they did. I - I can't remember them, you know, ever sort of teaching us about - I - I didn't know about masturbation until my friend sort of said one day, you know, she said something, I can't remember what she said, I said, what's that? - you know, I didn't know - and, you know, she sort of told me. I was quite, you know, shocked. Well I wasn't really shocked, I was quite surprised, you know.

Q: Was that about sort of women masturbating?

A: Well it was about women and men, I remember she told me about boys masturbating and about how - this isn't about masturbation - I remember she know she told me about boys and ninety - I don't know, about ninety per cent or something, had sexual fantasies of, you know, being homosexual or whatever, and I thought, God, you know, that really shocked me, 'cos you know - I remember she read it somewhere, you know, she told me about it... I don't think school has ever told us anything intimate, they used to tell you the basic facts, you know, it's just like biology, you know like... sex and flowers, how they - like, you know, it's just like part of the course.

Q: Nothing that really connects to you.

A: ... You don't really think of it 'cos like when you see childbirth on TV, you know, you don't think of, you know, oh, that could be me in like ten years' time or whatever. They didn't sort of make us think like that either, you just thought oh... you know... I don't want a kid, it's gonna hurt, sort of thing.

Q: They don't actually encourage you to sort of explore your own bodies and find out what gives you pleasure or -

A: No, I don't think, no...

Q: Do your - do your friends ever talk about it?

A: No... It's not really - it doesn't really interest us. I don't think I...

Q: But do you think any... No, there's lots of things that are sort of taboo subjects -

A: Yeah.

Q: I suppose things like, you know, sexually transmitted diseases and things like that - are they not talked about?

A: Well some, yeah, we usually just... jokes about... because we don't take it all that seriously, you know, it's not really like... I can't really talk about it seriously because like if we start worrying about things like that now, I don't know - you know, we're sort of like at risk,... worse. We sort of try not to think about things like that.

Q: So in the future, what do you think you'll do?

A: Well I don't know.

Q: Work or career?

A: Well, at the moment I'm doing two A-levels and I wanna do another one next year. I started doing three, but I had to drop one 'cos it was getting too much. But I think I might take a year off and get a job, after my A-levels are finished, and then maybe like apply to polytechnic or something. I don't know. 'Cos like if I do one A-level next year then I get - I only do one A-level in the school for a year, so I could get a job most of the time, but I - I'm really not sure. I haven't really thought about it... I used to want to be a lawyer and a doctor and all this, but I can't take it seriously now, 'cos I don't work hard enough -

Q: So you don't really know what you're -

A: No. Probably... in a ... shop or something. I don't know.

Q: And do you think you'll have children?

A: ... preferably when I'm sort of thirty, late twenties... more than... I'd like about two, I think, but I wouldn't want any more than three, that would be the maximum. (interruption)

Q: And - I've forgotten what I was gonna ask you - yes, 'cos you said you wouldn't get married 'til mid-twenties -

A: Yeah

Q: - 'cos -

A: I wouldn't really want children 'til like after a few years, I don't think - I mean I do like children but I don't think I want any 'til, like, I'm sort of a bit older. I think I'd like a job for a while.

Q: And would that be alright, sort of if you had an arranged marriage, would the person you marry -

A: I'd make sure it was - 'cos my parents know - they wouldn't, you know, they'd - they'd ask. My dad was saying the other day, you know, say if your husband doesn't want you to work, and I say, well I won't marry him, you know, it's up - like it's my life as well, it's not just his, I can't just live for him, it's up to me as well.

Q: Yeah.

A: That's how I see it. He'd have to accept it, you know, or find somebody else.

Q: What does your dad do?

A: He's unemployed, but he's sixty so he can't really get a job now anyway.

Q: What did he used to do?

A: He used to work for PUBLIC TRANSPORT. That's it really.

Q: Did your mum ever work?

A: She used to work TEXTILES - but it was a long, you know,...

Q: Was that at home or -

A: Yeah, it was at home. And that was it.

Q: So it'll be a bit different for you.

A: Mm, 'cos I want - like my sister's working and I think my brother... older than me, my brother'll end up working like my sister, 'cos all my other brothers, they probably work in like restaurants and things, but he'd like a proper career and like, you know, restaurants are like a dead end job. You can either be a waiter or a cook or... but that's all.

Q: Well, perhaps we should stop -