

LSFS22 9.6.1989

Mia

Q: So maybe we could start with your - what would you say, in terms of the study's on relationships, what do you feel is the most important relationship in your life at the moment?

A: In my life at the moment?

Q: I mean it could be family, it could be a girlfriend, it could be a boyfriend, it could be anything.

A: ... I've got a good girlfriend but I haven't got a boyfriend at the moment so it could be...

Q: Right. And is your family quite close or -

A: Yeah, I'd say so... everybody comes round... just popping in. So like really -

Q: But it's -... 'cos it's your mother, brother, sister -

A: Yeah, 'cos there's (?) more my brother and my sister at home at the moment. My sister's studying at college, then I've got two other sisters and a brother who left home...

Q: What, they're all working?

A: Yeah, they're all working.

Q: So - and what happened to your dad?

A: My mum had a divorce about - I don't know, about ten years ago now.

Q: Do you remember that?

A: Yeah, I do actually, it was a bit traumatic at the time but I suppose it was better than... 'cos I always wanted them to stay together for years and so I thought of schemes to get them back together, but now I just - it's alright.

Q: You've accepted it.

A: Mm.

Q: Do you still see your dad?

A: Yeah, occasionally. Like, no visiting rights or stuff like that but it's just I see him occasionally and... (? crying)

Q: And you work in the supermarket?

A: I used to. I've left now. I used to work at [NAME OF SUPERMARKET] for a year and a few months, but I've left now. I fancied a change, it was getting a bit too much.

Q: Was that sort of shelf-filling, then, and that sort of thing?

A: Well, I was a cashier as well. It was alright but the staff like - the Saturday staff like me, they were okay, but the supervisor was just too much, they were really - I don't know why they had the job there, they didn't wanna work there at all... have to do. So it was just all down to us in the end, we used to like have to do everything. And -

Q: Yeah. That's... Are you doing A-levels?

A: No, I'm doing CPVE at the moment.

Q: Right.

A: Business studies.

Q: So what do you think you might do with that?

A: Well, I've got into college now, so I'm gonna do a B.Tech. National Diploma in leisure studies.

Q: Right.

A: As long as I pass my CPVE and get onto that...

Q: Start next year?

A: Yeah, September. That's what I wanna do, 'cos I wanna like go into management, in the sports side of it, I'd like to run a sports centre or a sports shop, so - that'll be about six years, but -

Q: Is it that long?

A: Yeah, 'cos you have to do a degree after the F.E. course.

Q: That's a lot of work.

A: Mm. But it's what I want, so as long as I work hard at it I should get it in the end.

Q: Yeah. No, it's good to know what you want.

A: Mm. I never used to, I used to just walk around thinking, you know - it's dawned on me this year, I - after the third and fourth, it just really came to me that that's what I really wanted to do.

Q: I see that you - you didn't seem to learn all that much about sex in school.

A: No.

Q: Did you know most of it before?

A: Yeah, most of it before, but like when we did the - end of the first year, second year, like you just touched up a bit more on what we actually knew before, 'cos I can remember at primary school, everything just like... just made you realise more like when you actually came to secondary school.

Q: 'Cos what sort of - how many times did they actually teach you about kind of anything to do with sex or personal relationships?

A: I think we had a few weeks on it, that's all like. In science lessons we had - every science lesson for a few weeks were dedicated to that. And then in the third year, I think it was, when we had PSE - that's personal and social education - we done a lot more on it then; and we brought home some stuff... did spend a fair bit of time on it...

Q: So did they teach you much about AIDS?

A: No, not that much about it, I can't - it was just - at the time we learnt about it was when it started to become well-known and they didn't know - they didn't know too much about it then, so we just - just like skimmed over it, like... and stuff like that...

Q: Were people interested in it and scared of it or - what was the general attitude?

A: Yeah. Like there was a lot of interest, and like a lot of people were scared and stuff as well. Like, you know, like - 'cos it was not much known about it, everyone was thinking, my God, if I got it and that,... but I mean I found it was really interesting to learn about it because like nobody knew anything about it properly. I'd heard of it but... interest was...

Q: And could you ask questions and things -

A: Yeah. We asked questions and we formed a questionnaire ourselves, like, for lower - not too much lower school, but lower school kids, and like higher school, like fifth years, 'cos we was in the third year at the time. And we filled - we had... - it was on relationships as well.

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah, so it was quite good, it was (?) appropriate. We got a lot of stupid answers out of it, but when we looked through we had quite a few sensible answers, it was quite interesting.

Q: So did it sort of provoke discussion?

A: Yeah, a lot of talking about it. Used to just bring up the subject and just talk about it, it was quite interesting.

Q: And do people still talk about it?

A: Not as much as when, at the time, but, you know, it does creep into conversations and stuff like that, so it's still talked about, yeah.

Q: Yeah, 'cos there's sometimes the feeling that people only really worry about it if somebody's making a fuss about it -

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: - and then it sort of - it fades away as though people think, oh, it's gone away.

A: ... all the adverts at one time but now you never see any adverts. It might go into a drugs one but not as much as like they had...

Q: I mean do you feel aware of it or is it something that you feel doesn't apply -

A: I - I'm aware of it, I do think about it occasionally. Sometimes I go... think about things like that, then other times just...

Q: What do you think about?

A: I'm not really sure, like... think about like, just - no, it's, like, there's no cure for it, and it's mainly sexually transmitted or people have got it through like blood transfusions and stuff like that. I wouldn't say I knew too much about it.

Q: Do you feel that you could be at risk from anywhere?

A: I try not to, but there's always the possibility, 'cos, like, if you get into a serious relationship you never know, like, what your partner or whatever has been up to before. But you personally... be at risk.

Q: Would you - like if you were in a relationship like that, would you sort of feel that you could do something about it or -

A: No, I - like, I'd ask, make sure I'd ask questions and stuff before I'd actually go into a sexual relationship with anybody, but I think it's the type of thing you just do out the blue, like.

Q: And would you sort of be prepared in terms of -

A: ... I didn't understand the question.

Q: Well, if you sort of had met somebody and say they wanted to have a sexual relationship, that sort of thing -

A: Yeah. Be prepared to but not straight away like, not like the first month of going out with somebody, I'd wait and see like how steady the relationship was first. 'Cos, like some people, they just wanna relationship for one thing and that's it,...

Q: Have you found that before?

A: Yeah. But no, no way...

Q: What happened with that one?

A: Well, it didn't last long. I don't know - he did like me as a person as well, but it was just like too soon for, you know,... make love. I was much younger then anyway so -

Q: How old were you?

A: About fourteen then. Three years on.

Q: How old was he?

A: He was about sixteen, seventeen, I suppose. I wasn't really into underage sex and stuff like that, anyway, at the time. Just friendship, relationship really.

Q: And that was your first experience?

A: Yeah. Like but - I haven't really had like really good relationships since then.

Q: But did he sort of ask you or did he sort of force you?

A: No, asked, you know, but I refused.

Q: You refused?

A: Yeah.

Q: So have you had a sexual relationship with anyone?

A: No.

Q: Not yet.

A: Still...

Q: Do you think you will, in the near future, or do you think you'll sort of...?

A: It depends... have a relationship really, but - I'm much older now I think, and probably like realise. I probably would do, but like, as I said before, like after we've been going out for a while and we know each other, we know that it's not just for like sex, that we wanna go out with each other.

Q: How long's for a while?

A: In my eyes?

Q: Yeah.

A: Ah. Quite a while. Like say like, maybe after quite a few months I suppose. Not as much as a year but it depends how the relationship's been going, I suppose. Some relationships are really slow and -

Q: And would you protect yourself?

A: ... Like in which way do you mean, like - like safe sex and such or -

Q: Yeah.

A: Mm. I'd probably like, sort of like, condoms... probably be as safe as that...

Q: 'Cos when you say "safe sex" - what do you understand by safe sex?

A: Like, safe sex is kind of like, well you don't wanna get pregnant through it, but on the other hand you don't wanna catch any sexual diseases... I reckon both... at the moment.

Q: Right. Would you use a condom with both?

A: Yeah, I suppose both. Well, if I knew like my partner like hadn't had many sexual experiences and stuff like that, hadn't like - wouldn't have a chance of transmitting a disease to me, probably I'd use a condom or like the pill or something, but that's not safe either apparently. You can't really tell.

Q: And is - I mean, is there anything else that you understand by safe sex apart from a condom?

A: Not really, no, ...

Q: I mean, they didn't talk at school or anything about, like, safe sex in terms of having sex without penetration, so you can actually, you know -

A: No, no.

Q: - have sort of sexual pleasure and activity without actually having intercourse.

A: Oh yeah. Oh yeah...

Q: Did they discuss that? 'Cos sometimes in sex education they don't talk about much...

A: They - they... intercourse, it wasn't really - I mean like brushed over that but not in much detail.

Q: Would you have liked more on those sorts of things or -

A: Yeah, I think... about it... on it. I suppose it's just the way the school was. I don't know how they teach it now, though.

Q: Has it changed?

A: I really don't know, I've got no idea. My friend, in their biology class, they've just done a bit of it at school, but I don't know that they really went over it so much.

Q: Funny, 'cos with the other two this morning, they were talking about - kind of other more, I suppose intimate things, that they didn't discuss in their lessons such as masturbation and things like that.

A: No, I didn't. We did talk -

Q: - and women sort of having orgasms and -

A: We did talk a bit about masturbation and - we didn't talk about - I don't think we talked about orgasms or anything like that.

Q: I mean again, is that something that - that you or other people would have liked to, or would people have just got embarrassed or -

A: I think, like, maybe not when we - not in the first year, but maybe when we were a bit older, like third, fourth year I think we could have spoken about things like - but I think they just thought it was a bit embarrassing for the teachers, because like - you know, like in our ordinary like lessons they talk about - when we had sex education it was quite - quite embarrassing for the teachers then anyway, so they thought they just took the embarrassing part out of it...

Q: It seems a bit unfair on you.

A: Yeah. (Laughter) In a way, but I suppose I could understand why they didn't, but - I suppose we would have been better off...

Q: Were there things that you ended up feeling that you wanted to know more about but didn't, or -

A: No. I don't think so, can't remember one. No, I don't think so.

Q: Do you talk to your mum about things like that?

A: Like, occasionally but not the type of thing like we just talk about all the time, you know, like we might do, or we might not. Like when we were younger like - sort of a lot more questions and stuff, but now like - I don't know, find out on your own, I don't know. Like, the more older you get I think it's more embarrassing for you to ask as well as like, for your parents to answer, like so -

Q: So has your mum ever talked about kind of getting pregnant or anything like that, she's not sort of said, you know, "one thing you better not do" -

A: Yeah, I suppose she wouldn't want me to get pregnant now. Like my brother... like his first relationship, he's got a child... not together now so - I suppose, like, it was a mistake because they - they didn't - as I say, it's a bit hard on the child, so young, and not very good parents at the moment, 'cos they never actually lived together and... so -

Q: Yeah. It's a bit tough on her.

A: Mm... She's very insecure. But I mean she won't go anywhere without either of her parents. When she comes over to our house she won't stay unless one of her parents is there with her.

Q: Really? So you can't sort of babysit.

A: No. No, she only goes to school and that's it.

Q: How old is she?

A: She's six now.

Q: And have you talked to your brothers and sisters about anything like that?

A: No, not really. I don't really talk to my brothers and sisters, mainly just friends and that's it. Might talk about like things but not in great detail.

Q: 'Cos how old are your sisters?

A: Well... RANGE OF OLDER SIBLINGS.

Q: Gosh. So you're the youngest.

A: Yeah. But there's a difference 'cos like the four youngest ones, we were born in England and like the other three were born over in THE CARIBBEAN. So we don't (?) relate as much, I don't know why but - 'cos they came anyway, they were like (?) nineteen, they... grow up... attached, but a bit detached to like...

Q: So you - have you done sort of things socially together or do you each lead your own lives?

A: Mm, yeah, we do go out, like we go to parties together. Like the normal way... all the same age but I tag along sometimes. Sometimes I might even go out with my brother 'cos like I get on quite well with him these days, so... go out...

Q: Where do you normally go?

A: Anywhere. I don't really like to go to parties... cinema, anything. Go round to each other's houses, sit there for hours, you know, just talking and stuff.

Q: Is that mainly a group of girls or are you girls and boys or -

A: No, it's quite funny because like we're a group of girls all going round together, and like - I don't know, we - we do talk to boys but we... mainly just girls together most of the time, you know. But we do, like, know boys and stuff, to talk to and stuff, but like more, when it comes down to it, we're just all girls together.

Q: Is that - do you like that?

A: Yeah, it is nice, like we wouldn't mind, like, having around a group of boys as well, but it's fine with the girls really.

Q: And have there been boys that you've fancied?

A: Yeah. (Laugh) A lot.

Q: And have they come to anything?

A: No, I - like they're just like - the boys I've fancied, like, they're either in school or like some of my brother's friends, something like that, and that's it really. They do go to some social events that we go to, yeah.

Q: But none of them have ever asked you out?

A: No. (?) Wouldn't think of it at the moment, but I -

Q: Keeping your fingers crossed.

A: Yeah. (Laugh)

Q: What was it - So which was the - you say you had a short-term relationship, was that the one who - when you were fourteen?

A: Yeah.

Q: Who suggested sex?

A: Mm, yeah.

Q: Did you tell him to get lost or was it -

A: No, it just - no. Like, understandable, but like, we're still -

Q: Friends. Yeah. So did he understand that you sort of -

A: Yeah. He didn't take it badly or anything.

Q: Then what was the other one? You say there was a long-term relationship -

A: Just this boy that I met. About a year, year and a half. But I don't know if he lives in this country now anyway, so we wouldn't be able to go out with each other anyway (laugh).

Q: Where's he from?

A: Like – like, we met when he was back on holiday in THE CARIBBEAN, like...

Q: But was he living over here?

A: Like over there, like his folks live over there. Like, he's got relations over here, stayed here... chose to, and...

Q: So how did you manage to see him...?

A: Well - no, when we came over – like, when I was over, he was over on holiday and came back over here for a long while, like together, here, like he's only just gone back so -

Q: So would you still be together if he hadn't gone back?

A: Probably. Yeah.

Q: How do you feel about that?

A: Well, I can accept it really, because my mum would like me to go to THE CARIBBEAN but - 'cos she wants to go over there to live for a while - but I couldn't really live over there. I can stay over there, like, for a long time on holiday, but I don't think I could like settle there, no. It's too different for me. Because he's used to it, my boyfriend... so it's just like the same with my mum... So it's understandable. We write to each other.

Q: Well, that's nice. Yes, 'cos it could be quite difficult for it to work out if you weren't happy there. So when did he go back?

A: About - about a year, a year ago. A long time.

Q: What, so you were going out with him when you were sort of fifteen, sixteen.

A: Mm.

Q: And was that quite serious?

A: I don't know. I would say it was more like - it was more friendship, more like - I don't know, just, like, we enjoyed each other's company. I suppose that is important in a relationship but, like, it wouldn't never be like, a sexual thing, I don't think... if we were still together now it probably would be, but I don't know, you can never tell.

Q: Did that ever come up at all?

A: ...

Q: And why do you say that if you were still together you think it would have happened?

A: I don't know. Because, like - I don't know, like it would have progressed in a relationship, got to know each other a lot more better than we already did. And if we were still together, probably - I don't know. Can't really explain or anything like that, put it in words.

Q: Would it be something that you kind of want to happen, or is it something that you feel is a bit like a progression of the relationship, there comes a point where it's expected of you to make it a sexual relationship? Do you know what I mean, it's a different sort of thing to say, "ah, I really want this guy sexually" or "well, I have been going out with him for twelve months, maybe I ought to". Do you know what I mean?

A: I don't know, probably like progressional, but at the same time wanting to as well, like I don't think I'd ever have sex just thinking, "oh, I've been going out with him for a while, I might as well". You know, so - I think... if there was like a sexual attraction there, I suppose so, yeah.

Q: But do you have any sort of expectations of what you think sex will be like?

A: No, not really.

Q: I mean do you think it will be painful, or pleasurable? Embarrassing?

A: Like hopefully you think that it's pleasurable and, like, actually a bond of love between people and not just something to do for the sake of it.

Q: Yeah.

A: It's hard to... (Interruption)

Q: So - yeah, what were we talking about - expectations?

A: Just..., that's what I said. Pleasurable and like, a actual bond of love.

Q: And do you think you'd kind of decide what you wanted to do within a relationship, or do you think the man has more decision?

A: I suppose it has to come from both sides really, in a relationship. I really don't know.

Q: Well like, say when you were going out with your bloke who's gone back to THE CARIBBEAN, when you did things together, who decided what you were going to do or

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A: I suppose I did, really. What I wanted to do. Like - he didn't really care what he wanted to do, you know, he could have just sat down on a park bench for hours on end and just talked, you know. But we didn't really do much socially, like go out with friends and stuff, it was just... But in a relationship now I'd rather have, like - like... done what we do from both sides. Like we might just say, well, let's go in there... make the decision together, you know...

Q: And - they're the only two relationships you've actually had. But you've got one that might be happening.

A: Yeah.

Q: Is that someone at school?

A: Yeah.

Q: So has he asked you out?

A: No. Not directly. But like indirectly, you know. But - (?) I'm waiting at the moment.

Q: Could you ask him out or is it still sort of - there aren't ways of...?

A: I don't know. I think I - I think I could actually, you know, ... shy type that wouldn't ask anybody anything, you know. But then, like, through friends and stuff, you know. But I suppose I could, but in a roundabout way, you know... you know.

Q: Yeah, it's quite tricky. Do you think, like in a relationship, you'd be willing to take risks at all?

A: What kind of risks?

Q: Well, like, for instance, having - well, suppose you did decide okay, I'm going to have sex, would you - can you imagine sort of making - having a wonderful evening or getting a bit drunk and things like that, and just going to bed with them, or would you sort of plan to take sort of precautions ahead?

A: I probably could take a few risks, sort of like, if I did get drunk I'd... at the time. But I wouldn't like - I don't know, I wouldn't go out like just hoping for it... in that evening, but if it did happen - I don't know, it just would, wouldn't it?

Q: What, it would just happen sort of spontaneously?

A: Yeah.

Q: No - what would you do afterwards, would you get worried about it or would you just think -

A: Afterwards, I probably would be a bit worried, but hopefully nothing would - nothing serious... But you never know, he might - like even though it might just happen

spontaneously, like we might have, like, precautions or something there, I don't know. I've never really thought of anything like that happening anyway.

Q: What, so it's not something you've actually thought of much?

A: No, not really, no.

Q: Is that because you don't anticipate having a sexual relationship or because, sort of, if it happens, it happens, or -

A: Mm. Well, I don't know. I've just never really thought about it. Like, I do, like, want to have a sexual relationship, but - I don't know, it's just one of those things, like, that just happens, I suppose, you know.

Q: So can you think of actually taking any precautions at all, on other sorts of occasions? - Like if you decided you were going to - it was a more serious relationship -

A: Probably, yeah. Like, yeah. Yeah, I think so. Like, if I was into a sexual relation - like if I thought it was a sexual relationship, I probably would take precautions.

Q: What would you do?

A: ... Well, I'm not quite sure. I don't know, 'cos like if I knew, we'd probably talk about it together, hopefully, and then decide from there. So I don't really know...

Q: Would you tell your mum?

A: If it was serious I probably would, but if it was just, like, the beginning of a relationship I wouldn't really bother... Just like, she'd probably (interruption) -

Q: Right. Well, we were just talking about taking precautions.

A: Mm.

Q: But do you feel sort of conscious of pregnancy or AIDS as any kind of - something that you might be concerned about, or is it something that's a bit hazy?

A: Well, I suppose like one day I wanna get pregnant but not yet. And I don't wanna get AIDS. And I do think about it, like, and if I was in a relationship I'd probably think about it more, so - but at the moment I don't really think about...

Q: What, it doesn't seem very relevant?

A: At the moment, no.

Q: And do you see yourself as a person who - who does take a few risks occasionally?

A: Yeah, I do actually. Yeah, I do take a few risks but - yeah, I do.

Q: What sort of risks do you take?

A: I don't know. I just do things - sometimes just do things spontaneously and I don't think about it 'til afterwards, and I think, oh my, God, what have I done!

Q: "Why did I do -"

A: Yeah.

Q: You can't think of anything in particular?

A: No. Like at school, like I messed a lot of school up this year, like - that was a risk 'cos like - I now realise I shouldn't have done it, 'cos I used to just kind of not go to lessons, I used to go to school, not go to lessons, and I - that was the greatest risk I was actually taking in school, because - like now I actually realise I have to do well to get where I wanna be. But - but before I just... didn't really care.

Q: And what about things like smoking or drinking, things like that -

A: Oh. I don't smoke. I drink. I have - the last time I actually drunk drink, drunk a lot and got actually drunk, was... and I haven't drunk any alcohol since then.

Q: Well done.

A: So I'm quite pleased with myself for that. But I used to drink quite a bit before - not so like, I'd got a drink problem, but I used to drink a bit before. But not any more really. Only if I'm, like, going out celebrating or anything, I drink then.

Q: Right. And - do you see yourself sort of getting married and having children?

A: Yeah, I do.

Q: When do you see that happening?

A: I don't wanna be too old when I get married. If I'm gonna have another six years in education it'll probably be in my twenties, about twenty-four, twenty-five, something like that. So... I'll have a steady relationship whilst I'm actually studying and then it'll sort of progress from there...

Q: Are you looking for a steady relationship or is it something that just -

A: I would rather have a steady relationship than just like a relationship that lasts a couple of months and that was it.

Q: Yeah.

A: ... steady relationship than just, you know, come and go...

Q: Have you always felt like that?

A: Yeah. It's one of the things - (interruption)

Q: Okay.

(End of interview)