

LJH14 no date**Sara**

Q: ... things that we're asking young people about, when we're talking to them, we're just talking to young women in this particular study, is what they think and feel about relationships; for example, what's the most important relationship for you now?

A: Now I think when I'm more friendly, like before it used to be when I'm attracted to someone, I considered that first before I thought of being friends with them but now I think, you know, I should be more friends with them than before, I should get to know them, you know, and see what kind of person they are, and see if like I get on with them, I have some things in common with them.

Q: What sort of people would you be thinking of, in that relationship?

A: What do you mean?

Q: Well I was thinking of relationships with anybody at all, men, women, family, friends.

A: Friends, mostly friends like you know, you try sort of to get friends with someone and like if they don't have anything much in common with you or they don't talk much and stuff, kind of tend to leave them. If they sort of like, you know, sort of we get on a lot and we, you know, can just sort of talk, like you know, talk okay and everything I think I become quite good friends with people.

Q: Mm. Have you got many friends like that at the moment?

A: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, I have. Like when I was in - in our school like in the lower school I had all friends in my class, but when I came up to this school, it's like I've got so many different people in all my classes, I've got sort of quite a lot - lots of best friends, I've got five or six best friends like. So it's better that way.

Q: Do you go around as a group in school?

A: No, I stay by myself, and then I see - if I wanna talk to someone I go up to them and I hang around with them at break and then I might hang around with someone different at lunch and stuff like that.

Q: Oh right so it's...

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: What about outside of school, what kinds of friends do you have outside of school?

A: Well I don't really have much friends outside of school 'cos I don't work or anything so -

Q: Do you see your schoolfriends outside?

A: If we plan to go out or something, yeah, I do, but then most of us we don't, we don't really go out anymore. Like in the lower school we didn't have much stuff to do, so we used to plan going out and stuff, but nowadays all these exams, and no, none of us have been out once yet.

Q: Yes. Everybody seems to be very involved with the exams.

A: Yeah, it just - it just bangs you. I mean last year we weren't really involved in our exams and we never knew what hit us and like this year - all of a sudden and it's like we're all just kind of scribbling away in our books and everything. You don't get time to think about let's go out and all this unless we're bunking off.

Q: Do you?

A: Yeah, I do.

Q: Not very often?

A: More recently now than before. I don't know if it's because of the exams or - like you know, there was a revision class here and there were some boys who came so we became friends with them and then we sort of wanted to keep in contact so we'd meet up in the library and stuff and we'd revise there together, we'd sort of have a good laugh... It helps get our work done because I can't really concentrate at home, there's always something that's happening, like say my mother or someone will come up in my bedroom and everything, and the TV and stuff, so I prefer to go to libraries with my friends, I can concentrate a lot more.

Q: So that's the main thing you do when you bunk off, you just go and revise with this group of -

A: Yeah. I don't really, I'm not now - I'm not really thinking of going out and having fun, you know, until all this stuff, you know, all my exams are over and stuff.

Q: Yeah. And what kind of thing - which exams are you doing?

A: All of them: there's science, (?) logical science, all three sciences combined, German, art, drama, sociology, there's English, maths... so about eight.

Q: Yeah. And how are you finding them, is it just a bit of a strain really at the moment?

A: Right now I am. But it's like the coursework deadlines are coming in right now, so after that I think I'll be okay 'cos I can like, you know, go to some of the revision classes so I can revise there. I'm not really worried about that.

Q: The exams themselves, yeah - I know that a lot of the marks are...

A: Yeah they do so it's, you know - as soon as this is all finished it's gonna be great.

Q: Yeah... So I saw from your questionnaire - well what kinds of things were you thinking of doing, you're thinking of - is it drama?

A: I do like drama a lot, yeah, I do like drama. I like - yeah - I like acting, I like writing a lot. I like most things.

Q: But the main thing you want to be is something to do with psychology as far as I recall.

A: Yeah, yeah, I do.

Q: Either a psychologist or -

A: I really like, you know, reading books that go into that. I don't know, it's really interesting about how people tick and stuff like that.

Q: Mm. Are you thinking about pursuing that as a career or -

A: Yeah, I'd like to. You know, I'm really interested in that kind of stuff.

Q: Yeah, yeah. What gave you the idea?

A: I don't know, it only came last year, it's like - you know last year, it's like lots of people had lots of problems and they used to come to me and they used to tell me their problems and everything and - I don't know, it just made me think, and it's like there's this - I don't know, it's like you can tell someone else, you can give a better answer to someone else's problem than you can to your own, like I had a lot of problems last year, I couldn't figure out what to do, what I was doing, and yet when people came to me I could sort of, you know, act like nothing's happening and stuff like that.

Q: Yeah.

A: It was weird.

Q: Did you have anybody to talk to about your problems?

A: No I didn't. I couldn't. I just couldn't bring myself to talk to anyone, so –

Q: What were they?

A: I don't know, I was just really lonely basically, I don't know why. I just was, it's like everyone considered me their friend but I wasn't - I didn't sort of think I could go to anyone with my problems like, so I just - I don't know, I just kind of withdrew a bit... everyone was sort of going saying I was depressed for a little while and stuff.

Q: Yeah. How did you manage to get out of it? Well, have you -

A: Yes. Just - I don't know - I used to talk to myself, kind of. I don't know 'cos if you talk to yourself you can build up your confidence and stuff, and just carry on, and then eventually I just felt like, you sort of come out and you end up talking to your friends and stuff. I don't tell them my problems or anything, I just sort of, you know, have a laugh and stuff really.

Q: Yeah. But it makes you feel a bit more relaxed.

A: Yeah.

Q: What was causing the problems?

A: I don't know. I don't know. I just came - it's like - I know I've changed, I mean like my views have changed on lots of things and when I think back - like sometimes I'm doing things and I think oh, I'd never have done this before. But then I'm doing it - it's like I know I've changed a lot from - and then as I was saying earlier oh, you know, I've changed since last year -

Q: In what ways?

A: My attitude and - I don't know, like more to my close friends say, and you know, you're more withdrawn from us now, you're not sort of really with us any more, sort of - I don't know, and they said that sometimes you're so cold. Lots of people said that last year and it was like I wasn't friends, I was really angry and everything, and it's like lots of girls came up to me and they were saying, oh, you're so different, it's like you've just gone all cold to us, you're not really with us any more, sort of.

Q: And that was last year?

A: Mm.

Q: But this year -

A: This year. This year I just pretended everything - you know, last year didn't exist, it didn't happen. I just sort of carried on like with my friends I just sort of pretended nothing happened. They've just forgotten as well.

Q: Yeah. So it was a depression that came upon you without any -

A: It just came. I don't know, I just sort of like - I don't know what it was, it just came and like all of a sudden I had all these - it seemed, it seemed that I had all these really big problems but it wasn't really because when you look at it it seemed like there was nothing there, like, and if it happened now... I'm thinking why did I become like that then, because it was like nothing major, d'you understand? It was like I don't know, maybe it was all my friends coming up to tell me their problems and... mad I couldn't tell anyone mine and stuff like that.

Q: Yeah. But it gave you the - but not only that, but people telling you their problems was giving you the idea that it might be -that maybe you can handle other people's problems better, you know.

A: Yeah. Yeah. That's what I thought because I really can't handle my own and I was thinking - it's like, I really think that teenagers have a lot of problems as far as I'm

concerned, lots of them don't know how to handle things. I can get on - I think if I was, like, to stay one age for ever it'd probably be sixteen.

Q: Yeah?

A: Yeah. I'd just like to stay that age for ever and ever because I think that's really - I don't know, I just like that - you know, maybe when I'm thirty I'll say I'd like to be twenty and stuff, but you know, I don't wanna be ten years old over again or anything like that, I just wanna stay sixteen.

Q: Well maybe it gets better each year, you know, next year you'll think -

A: Yeah, yeah, this is a lot better, yeah, I know. 'Cos sometimes you think that, oh no my problems, like when you think, lots of my friends... kind of go, oh I remember when we were first years -problems, they were nowhere, it's like everything seemed so - I don't know, just problem-free, everything seemed like, I don't know, sweet childhood and all this, it's like, I don't know -

Q: Then suddenly -

A: Then all of a sudden it's like you've got - it's like everyone's pursuing you to do this, to do this, to do this, like your parents say get a college education, some saying you've got to get a job, someone saying you've got to pass all the exams, some... coursework, someone wants to talk to you, someone wants to do this, so everyone wants to take, take, take, and you're just kind of sitting there going - You don't know which way to move and everything. And that never happens when you're first and second years, I mean the only pressure we ever got was to do our homework and that was it. Go home, scrawl essay, nothing really.

Q: Well perhaps that's growing up, you know. I doubt if the pressures are gonna get any less.

A: No, I don't think so. I think they're gonna get a lot more worse. 'Cos then you start to expect a lot more from people. 'Cos I find like now I'm a lot more choosy about my friends. You know, I just sort of like, I sort of tend to criticise. Like before I might have just hung around with anyone, you know, but then now I just tend to look and if they say things I really think about what they've said, and go home and I sort of go and I think, what did they say that for, and then I try to analyse it and get a lot more - you start to think a lot more, I don't know why, but you just start to think a lot more and then you sort of - after you've had a lot of problems - you think of - I don't know, it's... maybe it's 'cos I had a lot of problems last year and I thought... really, I couldn't talk to anyone, but nowadays I just don't tell anyone anything really 'cos I don't trust them, d'you understand? I don't know why, I just can't trust anyone. I don't know.

Q: Mm. Nobody at all, not even a close friend or -

A: They're all just best friends and it's like everything I could tell them I could tell other people as well.

Q: Yeah.

A: Like that. The only thing that makes them close to me is because we have a laugh and I don't hang around, but other people hang around them.

Q: Yeah.

A: That's it.

Q: Would you like to have a very close friend? Do you think that would be -

A: I'd like to have a boy. I don't know but I think boys are a lot more trusting, I don't know why, I think that maybe it's because, I don't know, boys seem a lot more quiet, or something, I don't know. I don't trust girls, I don't know why.

Q: Do you have any good friends who are boys?

A: Yeah. Like now I have three boys, we met in the middle class. They're really nice, they changed my view about what boys were, sort of like I used to think they were really horrible and stuff.

Q: In what way?

A: Like - I just thought that guys, 'cos like I had a boyfriend last year and it's like - he had two girls and it was like me and the other was my best friend and it's like, it kind of shocked me.

Q: Mm. You didn't know?

A: I didn't know - well I had a kind of feeling about it, and then afterwards I just got really angry and - but I still talk to the girl and stuff, I mean I never held it against her.

Q: Well she was probably in the same position that -

A: Yeah, I know but - and she knew though, it was kind of like she knew I was going out with him, it's like our relationship was public, well hers with him was private.

Q: Ah, yes.

A: And I thought, how can she do that? I mean, you know, maybe she's sort of - I would never two-time anyone. If a boy had a girl, I would ask him to drop her to go onto me and stuff.

Q: Mm, yeah.

A: But no, it's like, before I used to think that boys were different from girls but really they have the same problems and they feel the same things, they're not any different from girls, they have different bodies and because of that they're brought up just slightly different, you know.

Q: You think they're brought up in a different way? You don't think there's a kind of double standard or anything where different things -

A: What d'you mean?

Q: - for boys -

A: Oh, yeah. Oh definitely. Like... it's like lots of the boys, oh, lots of boys hate their dads, lots of boys, they feel really sort of close towards their mums but lots of boys, there's like the kind of girl they wanna go out with is different to the kind of girl they wanna marry. And like they're thinking, oh my goodness I don't wanna ever... get a boy 'cos he might think that I'm, you know - so it puts into view that boys like rather more attractive girls, like easy, but when they wanna marry someone they wanna go out with someone who's decent. And I thought to myself well I don't wanna go out with someone ever again because - I don't know, they go out with you, they're not really thinking of you nicely, they're just thinking you're just easy come easy go, like that.

Q: Mm. Mm. And that worries you.

A: It does because I - I don't wanna go out with someone who doesn't take me seriously or anything, or just thinks that in a couple of years I won't wanna be with this girl. 'Cos I tend to look for long-term relationships rather than something that's gonna be short and sweet or something.

Q: Mm. And do you have that feeling about girls, I mean if girls are going out with boys and or maybe having sexual relationships with them or something, do you have that same sort of feeling that the boys seem to have?

A: What do you mean?

Q: Well like thinking there are girls who are easy and girls who you marry -

A: Oh yeah, I know.

Q: - that kind of division.

A: No. I don't, no, I don't feel that way. I don't feel - I just think, if I wanna go out with someone it's normally I'd say that I'm probably mad about someone anyway. 'Cos like that I feel that way, 'cos I feel very strong, and I get into something, it's like I really get into it and everything and then I - and make, you know I said I try to analyse everything, and when I talk to them I sort of look at everything they're saying, I listen. It's like if they made one bad mistake it's like I keep thinking, and I wonder why they do it and then I go back and I kind of ask them - what did you say that for? And then they go, I just said it, didn't I. And then afterwards I kind of go, and I think oh that's okay 'cos the person who said it didn't mean anything from it and stuff like that.

Q: It's good if you can do that because some people take - really take offence or take it to heart -

A: My mum does that... she carries it, you know, and she hoards it and when someone say something I think, oh I hope I don't... my mum because it's like my mum and her sister does it. All three of her sisters do it actually, and it's like I think to myself - what... you know the way parents bring you up, lots of their ideas and stuff, manners, go into you, so... but it's like I keep thinking I hope I don't become that way 'cos after that way you get too hurt 'cos - 'cos then you trust someone too much and then when someone says something you kind of keep it inside you. My mum doesn't go out and blast it anywhere, she just sits there, she keeps it and she gets angry and angry and angry, and she finally blows it out on something. But I don't do that, I'd hate to do that, I try never to do that.

Q: Yeah. It's certainly difficult. I mean there's this kind of saying that parents like to see themselves in their children, but children hate to see themselves in -

A: Yeah, that's right.

Q: So you're living - living at home with how many brothers and sisters?

A: One brother, one sister. One brother is in boarding school. My brother's in boarding school, my sister's here, my mum and then my dad. That's it.

Q:

A: Okay.

Q: Is your sister younger or older?

A: She's younger, she's second year.

Q: Here?

A: Yeah, she's in this school but in the other building. You know there's two buildings. That one.

Q: One of the things that we're interested in finding out, as you can tell from the questionnaire, is about the sort of sex education you get at school or are getting indeed.

A: At school?

Q: Yeah.

A: I don't think it's very good. I don't know - it's just that - I think maybe it depends on the way the teacher - I think it depends a lot on the teacher. 'Cos lots of people - some teachers are like - you get teachers who kids - us girls just kind of think, they don't know what they're talking about, know what it's like. They say it so matter-of-factly, it's like there's no emotion concerned, they just say well here goes girls, the penis goes into the vagina and the... all this, and you kind of don't take it in 'cos you don't find it serious enough to and like, I don't know - all I know is it goes into one hole and I think to myself, if I was to do it I would know which hole to do it in. And like this - but... I think to myself, 'cos I had this teacher, she used to be my form teacher in the first year, and when she used to talk to us we used to really sit there and we used to listen, we could talk about it with her, while most of the teachers in school, I don't know what it is but you just can't. I mean - I think there should be one teacher, like we have a male teacher, he's really... and everything and like we can really talk to him as a friend and stuff and we should have - I think they should get sort of - I don't know, but they should get people, kind of young teachers in the school who should be, you know, sex education teachers, I mean people who, you know, kids can go to, talk to and stuff like that as well.

Q: Mm, yeah.

A: I don't know, it makes a lot of difference who teaches... I don't think it was that good, the sex education we had. I mean I learn a lot more off TV and, you know, the media and stuff.

Q: Yeah. Yeah. Would you find it easy if it was a male teacher who was -

A: Yeah. I don't feel so embarrassed. I mean I feel embarrassed if anyone else makes a big issue of it - 'cos they probably make like some girls make a sniggering remark, I feel embarrassed for the teacher and so I feel embarrassed, the teacher feels embarrassed and stuff like that. That's the only way I feel embarrassed. But I wouldn't feel - 'cos the male teacher who's here, I mean, I don't feel embarrassed or anything what he says, 'cos he just says it and it's just so natural the way he says it and everything. And every one likes him 'cos he's such a - he's a really nice person, it's like he's so open, where most of the teachers you get are so closed, they're probably leading a double life somewhere, or something, you know, you think... everyone's got - everyone's saying oh, she must be gay or he must be a lesbian or - I mean homosexual or gay or something, and it's like you make up all these weird fantasies about them, like they're probably horrible, they're probably, you know, child batterers or some like that. You just can't relate to some of the teachers in the school, I don't know why, maybe it's because they all wanna keep like a relationship where, you know, they've got authority while you...

Q: Yeah.

A: Maybe it's because of that. But he didn't do that, he's just one of us really, except a man and a lot more older.

Q: Well that's quite good, it's good that you've got somebody that you can relate to.

A: Yeah.

Q: Did you - when you were having these - well such sex education as you had, did they talk about sexually transmitted diseases or AIDS or anything like that?

A: Mm, yeah, we spent a lesson doing that. We spent a couple -we did one last year, early last year before we came to the school we did one, we did about AIDS... and that was quite good but I've forgotten it.

Q: And where else did you - you know, what other sources of information did you have about AIDS?

A: Well - media really but reading the news the first time; but what did they show? - they were showing all these - were they showing pictures? No, they wasn't. When they talk about it like if it's on the TV my mum normally kind of switches it off and she puts it on the other.

Q: Does she?

A: 'Cos she feels - it's probably her upbringing, but she's always telling me, you know, (?) her dad, when he brought us up, he wouldn't let me read romantic novels, if he ever found them he used to tear it up, and things like that. So I think it's partly her and partly because she wants - when my dad's there, especially my dad's there, she sort of like wants to keep the relationship between me and him sort of like respectful, I don't know but she sees sex, if it's spoken in the family it's like disrespectful.

Q: Yeah. Does she speak to you about it?

A: Sex? No. But she knows about homosexuals and stuff. Like she's been living here since she was two years old so she knows mostly about everything, but she doesn't talk about sex. Well she may say - no she won't, she'll talk about homosexuals and think how it's really dirty and she'll say stuff like this. It affects my views on things.

Q: Yeah, I was gonna say how does that affect you?

A: No, it doesn't. 'Cos I've got a homosexual friend and that's fine. And before maybe if I didn't have my friend; like sometimes you know when we tease - we say something like teachers are homosexuals, lesbians, something, then at that point I don't really realise what I'm saying, but when I've got my mind on my friend I think I wouldn't have said that if she was there 'cos I'd feel embarrassed. And then I think, well I shouldn't have said it about the teacher in the first place anyway, 'cos how do I know anything about her, so - and it makes me think. But I don't think - I don't think it's really - I mean I live - the only part I find really quite disgusting is the bit where, you know, the man has anal sex because, I don't know, I just couldn't do it - sort of animals, I don't know why. It might have something to do with my religion 'cos my religion forbids it as well.

Q: Yeah, I was gonna ask you about your religion. Are you -

A: I'm Muslim.

Q: Yeah, strongly committed?

A: Yeah, I'd say I was. Fifty/fifty I guess. I can - I pray and stuff five times a day. But it's just that part of the sex I don't like, you know, I think it's really disgusting. But I don't think about it though. My mum and my friend, you know, my friend I don't feel embarrassed, I don't think oh she's gonna make a pass at me or anything like that. So I don't think - 'cos it's just like - I think homosexuals are just like heterosexuals, like... and people seem to think that a lesbian, if there's a lesbian in school, she must go around you know having... it's like she must go around you know, loving everybody or, you know, touching everyone, you know, they all seem to have that view, I don't know why, they seem to think that it's totally weird or something. But I don't think that, it's just -my friend never does that, I don't know, I don't know why people think that, and it's like they say to me oh, you know, she must be homosexual, like most of my friends

know that my friend's homosexual, before - at first it made me a bit wary and then I said that, she's no different, look, she's been with me such a long time, she's not gonna exactly change right now, is she? And they go oh, yes, true -and it's like... if you're with a homosexual it changes your views, do you understand, it's like you become more open towards the subject with an alien I guess, if you're with an alien you become - your views become changed and stuff.

Q: Mm, yeah. Experience of having met the kind of people when you can see - well I mean at the beginning a lot of the information about AIDS was linked to the idea that it was -

A: A homosexual disease.

Q: Gays or something like that. What did you think about that at the time?

A: At the time I thought it was true because I didn't know - I was totally ignorant of AIDS anyway, I didn't know - all I thought, all I knew was it was a sexually transmitted disease, then all I heard was homosexuals and I thought, well, they've got it, you know. And I thought it was mostly, the majority, was men. But then I heard it's women as well now. So -

Q: Mm. So is it - does it worry you?

A: Well, I don't think of it. I'm not having... I mean I'm not into sex before marriage anyway and stuff, so it doesn't really worry me so long as my husband doesn't have it, you know.

Q: What - how would you ensure that, do you think?

A: Well I would definitely ask him if he's had sex before marriage and if he has, I'd ask him to have an AIDS test done. 'Cos I want my kids - you know, I mean I'd be wary of course, 'cos nowadays you can't just go out and have a relationship with someone and expect to have sex without using contraception, and I would definitely use a condom anyway even if I did. Lots of people would.

Q: You think they would - do you think it's affected young people, your friends for example?

A: AIDS?

Q: Yes.

A: Lots of them - well the majority of them haven't had sex anyway but like most of them do say if they were to have sex they would use a condom, and they say they wouldn't - I mean they say we'd probably feel embarrassed, you know, saying "do you mind using a condom?" and stuff, but most of them say that - like, if I was to have sex, even all my friends would say, if we were to have sex it would probably be because we like foreplay, you know, sort of getting into it, and then afterwards it would kind of ruin it if you was to say, excuse me, could you go and get a condom please. I don't know, it just seems an off-putting idea. I don't know why. That's the only bit I'm sort of... that's why I'd say that the sort of carried-away situation where you wouldn't use a condom and like that, that's the only way we wouldn't use one. Other than that, we would. But most of us would feel embarrassed at asking a boy, I don't know why.

Q: Mm. Well I can see it, I mean a lot of people would; as you say it sort of interrupts the flow; I suppose if you've got it on you, handy, you can incorporate it into the activity, this is what they're always sort of advising, isn't it?

A: (laughter) Yeah. I know. I don't know.

Q: When you were talking about foreplay - do you - I've been trying to ask people, although I've never got the words quite right, about seeing sex only as penetrative sex -

A: Yeah -

Q: Do you see sex - is that what sex means to you?

A: Yeah, I mean that's what I - that was my very, very, first - when anyone ever said sex before, all I ever thought was sexual intercourse. That's what it is isn't it?

Q: Well, do you think of anything else as being sex?

A: No, I never thought of - I didn't think foreplay or anything was sex. But it is, isn't it, in some way. Oral sex -

Q: Oral sex can be part of it as well.

A: Yeah, it's like, like that, and I didn't know - I never ever connected sex with the touching and ... all that business. I didn't-

Q: ... sort of things that - you were saying, the description that you gave was the sex education lessons -

A: Yeah.

Q: - was pretty mechanical, wasn't it -

A: Yeah.

Q: - it didn't go into any of those other -

A: Yeah. You see it's like that, and maybe it's because of that, because sex is so mechanical when they're explaining it to us that we don't think anything so emotion, emotional you know, would ever have anything to do with sex. But I'm a lot more into touching - I think a lot of girls are a lot more into touching 'cos when I talk to my friends, like when we talk about our experiences with boys and stuff, and we do a lot 'cos lots of my friends like talking about their boyfriends and stuff, and I ask them, you know, what, do you touch and stuff as well, and they say yeah, and I goes, what, do you like being kissed on the neck, and that's with us girls, we like to be more kissed. I mean sex doesn't play a big part in our lives, I'm sure it does a lot in boys', 'cos the majority of boys I know, they do - I don't know, they just sort of bring it up, it's like they get excited and stuff, more about sex - they don't, not so much at the touching, whereas girls are more into the touching and the loving bit, and the boys aren't. I don't know why that is.

Q: A bit of conflict there.

A: Yeah. Like lots of us girls - I mean definitely prefer being touched, I mean I - would never be able to have sex without foreplay, there is no way on earth that I could ever get excited just like that. Lots of my friends do as well. 'Cos we have these discussions, like if I bring a book in or there's a magazine and we -or someone's been raped and we think - you know, and then I... I know I read in lots of magazines like lots of women have fantasies about being raped and stuff -

Q: Do you?

A: Do I?

Q: Do you read - well I could ask you that as well, yes - but...

A: Do I? No, I don't. I was just sort of...

Q: Do you think it's realistic that they do, I mean do you think women actually do have fantasies about being raped?

A: I think it's probable because - I don't know, 'cos when I see myself in a relationship I would like to have a man who's a bit more... a bit more powerful than me, I'd like him to be a bit more cleverer or something - maybe someone I could be dependent on probably, I don't know why that is. So maybe women - maybe women who are weak maybe like to have fantasies about that, I don't know. But I've always thought like, I'd like, like when I look for, you know, a boy or something, now and looking at a boy and I like him, I prefer him to be taller... cleverer and stuff like that. I don't know, just one inch higher. Not so high that he's looking down at me and sort of going, you know, I'm a lot more bigger than you and all this... I don't like all that business.

Q: But just that - just slightly - one step.

A: Yeah. One step (laughter).

Q: Yes. About the AIDS thing, just some straightforward questions. What do you understand AIDS to be, what do you think AIDS is?

A: I don't know, I don't know much, all I know is that - I don't know much. That's what I mean, it's like it doesn't go into me because I'm not really interested in what the teacher's saying. Because they used to make it so boring, I mean, to listen to a teacher... an hour, I mean you can get so much. I mean after five minutes I mean like you've lost me. Things like 'cos there's all these different diagrams they're showing me and everyone is, everything is different, and you're thinking which one goes where and how does it go? And they ask you to connect all these pictures with these words. What's the point of doing that, 'cos we don't know what the words mean, there's no point in putting them things together? 'Cos then they go - it's not done enough, I think they should have it more - they should have teachers who can - I don't know, who - they should choose a teacher who can really get on with, you know -

Q: Yeah, what you were saying before. Yeah, yeah.

A: They definitely do - because it's like sex is such - for girls it's really sort of an important thing so you need to talk about it with someone who you think, you know, will understand. Like teachers, we can't really relate to them, I mean we don't know what kind of people they are and stuff like that, 'cos they've had to be, I don't know, different.

Q: You think it would be helpful if there was like a special counsellor -

A: (emphatic) Yeah.

Q: - who you could go to -

A: I think all teenage schools should have that, all comprehensives, because like all like - an adult, if we can talk to an adult, we can feel a lot more reassured. So we can't talk about -like some people can't talk to parents, I mean I can't talk about sex problems or anything like that to my parents and like if there was an adult I could tell my problem to them, I mean I'd feel a lot more reassured because they're older and they represent something, they're a lot more mature, they must have - they must know a lot more about it.

Q: Mm. So it would be helpful, rather than just talking amongst your friends which is - I mean it's quite supportive -

A: Yeah, with friends like they can give you some support but then they're back with you again. What happens is that you sort of -they give, and they sort of sympathise, and then they sort of come next to you and they kind of like - it all happens when you're together but then you're still there.

Q: Mm. Do you see sex as risky, dangerous at all?

A: How do you mean?

Q: Well does it strike you - I mean some people worry about getting pregnant, other people worry about getting AIDS, it's slightly risky -

A: No. I don't think about AIDS or getting pregnant. I mean I wouldn't like to be pregnant anyway but I don't see - well if I was to have sex I would definitely have some contraception, there's no way I would do it, because I don't care if how excited I was or however... I was I would definitely not, 'cos I'm not taking any chances with anyone. 'Cos - how do you know, I mean some people say you need to have it ten times before you can get pregnant and God knows what. And I think, how do you know? I mean, you know, you don't know anything. I mean I - like there's this boy and he was saying, oh, you have to take - it takes you nine months to get pregnant, that was when I was ten years old (laugh), ten years old, and I was thinking: that isn't what my auntie said though; it was confusing me though, 'cos this guy's saying it takes you nine months and my auntie's saying it's - I remember nine months is to do with a baby, you know, it's like confusing and -

Q: Well I guess he was confused as well... probably trying some kind of line or something.

A: Yeah, probably. 'Cos I - it's not risky, I don't think it's that risky, so long as you use contraception really, I don't really think about anything.

Q: And what about safe sex, what do you think of that? There's been some stuff around about that -

A: What, do you mean about using condoms and stuff?

Q: That - that's what you think... safe sex?

A: Mm, that is - when I think of safe sex it means condoms or any type of contraceptive really. Is that it? Is that what it is?

Q: Well - I think they've been putting out in recent ads suggesting other sorts of things - I mean the sorts of things you were talking about like foreplay and stuff, that some of those which don't involve penetration are - I mean it's safe enough, you're not gonna get AIDS from a certain kind of activities like those.

A: Oh yeah. Yeah, I know. But I mean really like with boys, I mean the final is normally sex. I mean if I was to go out with a boy, I mean I was talking to a boy the other day and I was sort of saying like I'm not going out with a boy right now 'cos I don't wanna do that for a long time, like because - it's like boys, they like pressure you 'cos after a while they want, they want things, and you can't - I would not give them my virginity until I was married, and then afterwards I feel pressured because it's like I'd get to love them and then afterwards they'd be set off saying, let's go a little more further, a little more further, a little more further. And all my friends agree as well because I asked them, like my friend, she's had sex, and that was what happened to her, like her boyfriend kept on going, come on, let's just, just do it once, you know, it'll be nothing, and she just did it because it's like - 'cos after a while you just give in because you can't keep that person - 'cos you love that person so much and you wanna give them everything, you wanna share everything, stuff like that.

Q: So what happened to her after she had -

A: She had sex and my friend - like my friend told me, my other friend, her best friend, told me, and it's like she was saying - I was saying, did she say what it was like? - 'cos

one thing I wanna know is what it's like, 'cos like lots of girls - like in the books you read like all these stars and God knows what, and you think what's that supposed to mean? - I mean... you never see stars, so it's like that - and then, and my friend CAMILLA, she's - she says that she likes it a lot, but she doesn't exactly explain what it means, and because it's different for everyone really - because my other friend told me that the girl who had sex, it was just like nothing, it was just in and out, in and out, the boy just come in and out of her and she said it was nothing, she didn't feel anything. Well maybe it's an acquired taste really -

Q: It could be an acquired taste, or it could depend on the other sorts of things that you do as well.

A: Yeah, yeah it could be, yeah. I mean if you try - if you try it and everything and the fact that - I don't know, if you try and you want it to - you want it to be good for someone, it could be nice I guess.

Q: Mm. Does your - I mean you were talking about your religion before: your religion supports you, does it, in that position that you take, not to have sex before marriage?

A: Actually, I'm not supposed to have any relationships at all with boys either, but I do.

Q: I gathered that you do -

A: Mm. I do, but I'm not supposed to.

Q: That's where the fifty/fifty comes in -

A: Yeah, the fifty/fifty bit. It's like I agree with the majority of it but a lot of the bits I just can't take out 'cos they're not strong enough, because like... covered fully... I can't do that, no; and then other bits where you can't talk to boys, can't look at them, can't come into contact with them, can't touch them, nothing at all; and then bits I can't go along with.

Q: What about your parents, how do they feel? Would they prefer you to be -

A: Would they prefer me to be -?

Q: Like you were saying, you know, fully covered, not talking to boys -

A: Mm. I mean, the boys definitely no, and the girls - I mean with the full-covered thing, it's called purdah... I mean my mum isn't too hot on them kind of things, she's like, I think she'd probably think I was going a bit crazy if I did something like that - I don't know, she'd say why do you wanna be like that for? I don't know if she ... but with the boys, she definitely disagrees with that. She would never - if she finds out, when she finds out, she goes mad. She goes absolutely crazy. My dad, I don't know, my dad hasn't said anything about it to me.

Q: He hasn't discussed it with you?

A: No. His little girl. His innocent little thing.

Q: Let me ask you a question about how you see yourself. What is your self-image? How do you see yourself?

A: How I see myself. I don't know.

Q: You don't know?

A: I don't know. I just don't think about it. I don't see myself as anything really, it's like I don't think about it. 'Cos I just - I don't know, when I... I don't think, it's like there's two people but you don't think about what the other person is like, you don't consider them two different people, two same people that - two sides, you don't think - it's different from when you're talking to someone else. I don't know. I just don't think about it. I don't know. Like in some ways I can say I'm independent and then in other ways I can

say, I'm not, I'm just dependent, and then I say I'm strong, in some ways, I'm weak in other ways, I'm - sometimes I think I'm a total weirdo and other times I think oh, I'm just like everyone else, and then like that -

Q: Yeah. Strong swings -

A: Yeah... And then sometimes - like sometimes I feel like dressing up, sometimes I feel I wanna crawl in a hole and sometimes I'll go dressed like a tramp and sometimes I feel like - I don't know, it just depends. Sometimes I feel like be by myself and other times I need people around me, and most times - like when I wanna be by myself I wanna be by myself, but I want people there, not talking to me but just people around me.

Q: Mm.

A: If that makes sense.

Q: Mm.

A: But I just want people to be there -

Q: You don't wanna be alone.

A: Yeah, I guess so, yeah.

Q: What about other people's image of you then? I mean it's hard for you to pin down an image of yourself, but what do you think other people have as an image of you?

A: I was gonna say - this is a good bit, when we do form time, they have all these sheets that's really brilliant, it's - 'cos like you have - the questions you're asking, we kind of run through them as well, we always have, what do you think of yourself, what do your friends think of you, and your friends fill it in - it's kind of like and they show it to your friends and they tell you and it's like most of them think I'm moody, hardworking, lazy -

Q: I'll just close the door, one sec - Right, so... their impressions of you -

A: Yeah. It's like moody, sometimes clever, sometimes hardworking, sometimes forgetful -

Q: You forget a lot of things -

A: Mm.

Q: Did you find it - did it strike you as being sort of true?

A: Yeah, I mean I definitely am moody - I know I am. My mum's always saying, like sometimes I can go home and not say anything. And I wanna know it but I won't... I can have lots of things in my head but I won't know what I'm thinking of, but I can just be there and then my mum will sort of ...- and then I'll realise that my mum's in a bad mood ... it's because if I'm not talking my mum will become in a bad mood, I don't know why but she just does and then she says, what's wrong with you, and she says ever since you come home you've been - not saying anything, and she goes, girls like your age, they're not like this, you know, they're not so temperamental and all this, and I just get angry, I mean I just seethe inside... all these stupid things like... and you just can't talk to yourself afterwards. It's like last year I suffered from migraines and it's like - I was sent to see a psychiatrist and I thought it was a real laugh, it was so funny. Like my mum - that's when - like I guess I got more and more moody after my migraines came 'cos I get them, sometimes they last all day, sometimes about twenty minutes, sometimes they last for a couple of hours, things like that, and then - my mum, she's kind of saying you must have a big problem, and just tell me and just tell me and I said, and I'm saying, well, I don't know what the problem is, and she's saying you do

know, there must be something on your mind, otherwise you wouldn't be sort of you know - be so withdrawn and everything. Like she's the one that mostly... my best friend she says that as well. Most of my best friends, they sort of - if I'm not talking, they take no notice and they say, what's up? And they say, she's gone into her moods again and stuff like that.

Q: Yeah. But then you were saying that you do, I mean you do withdraw, you were distant last year -

A: Yeah, I did. But last year I kind of kept a diary. It's like really massive. But I used to sit there every single night, I used to just put everything down, and when I read it now it doesn't seem like there's so much there, it's like empty.

Q: Yeah.

A: It doesn't seem like - there's... nothing in it that comes out of me, I don't know, it's just a whole load of writing about nothing, I mean like there's no emotion or nothing in there, it's just like all these stupid words there...

Q: It doesn't... Maybe it helped you at the time...

A: Yeah, at the time it did, at the time, because I felt like I had something, right -

Q: Yeah.

A: - and I thought oh this is no one's, this is mine, and then - I made up this character as well, and it's like that -

Q: I was gonna ask you about that, that you've got this ambition to write teen science fiction.

A: Yeah, yeah. I love that. I mean I've always wanted to be a writer, ever since I was a little kid, ever since I was about two, three years old... them little books... and them Beauty and the Beast books, collecting all them. I've always wanted to be a writer. Teenage science fiction, horror. You know, it's - I don't know, I'm just interested in supernatural things as well ... anything weird, things like sixth sense and all that. It's interesting... different, which is why I probably like it. I hate it when people say... I don't know, you know like I could never see myself writing Mills and Boon books, probably because there's such a - it's because I think they're so empty, so there's nothing there. It's like anyone could write that. Like my cousin who reads them, my sister could write them 'cos she's reading them all the time. Like you read so much, they all become the same, and I just turn to the back page and I look, see - (laugh)

Q: Let me sit back and ask you one question... I asked you whether you saw sex as being risky, but I didn't ask you whether you do anything else in your life that you see as risky.

A: Anything we do that I think might be risky. Let me see.

Q: Slightly taking a chance?

A: I don't do drugs. Sex, I don't. Sometimes I jay-walk across the road (laugh). You know... I don't do anything really dangerous. No, I don't do things. I think I'm a pretty good girl.

Q: A good girl. A safe girl.

A: ... I don't know, I wouldn't do anything really risky, I mean I just don't - sometimes I feel like going out in the night but I don't, I don't know why, I can forget my keys and get them jammed in the lock and I'll have to ring them, my mum'll come down. (Laugh)

Q: Well thank you very much for talking to me. Is there anything you want to ask me about?

A: Yeah, how come you do this? Is it you're gonna write a book or something?

Q: Well what we're doing, it's a study that's taking place in both London and Manchester, we're asking lots of young women about how they feel about their relationships, about sexuality and what they know and think about AIDS as well, and the idea of it is all the information's gonna be put together to help the health campaigns and sex education in schools and health education about AIDS.

A: To make it better?

Q: Yeah, to find out what young women want.

A: To know?

Q: Yeah. And what they don't know, and what they would like to know and what they think about these things.

A: Yeah, I think you should definitely have stuff about AIDS, I think it should really be spoken about a lot. Because people get this negative attitude about it and stuff.

Q: Well good. Thanks for talking to me. One of the other things we were thinking of doing was coming back in a year's time and finding out what had happened to you -

End of interview.