

LJH20 13.6.1989

Nicole

Q: ... filling in the questionnaire and talking to us. What did you think when you saw the ad?

A: Well, just sounds interesting.

Q: Yeah. I'll give you a little leaflet about it... One of the main things that we're interested in in the research is to find out what young women think and feel about relationships and... very big subject, so can I ask you which relationship or relationships are most important to you at the moment?

A: Friendship.

Q: Yeah? Any particular one that you have in mind or -

A: ... the one I wrote about in the - and we see each other, not so much now, she's in CITY IN NORTHEAST OF ENGLAND, and she comes back for the holidays and we see each other, talk to each other on the phone... talk.

Q: Yeah. When did she go to CITY IN NORTHEAST OF ENGLAND?

A: She went to university there.

Q: Yeah. What, did she go last year or -

A: She's the same age as me, she's - she got her A-level grades and I didn't...

Q: You said you were gonna go to medical school.

A: That's right.

Q: That's your ultimate plan?

A: I've (?) got to pay.

Q: Yeah? And what gave you the idea of doing that?

A: I've always had an interest in science and I didn't want to be stuck in a laboratory, I wanted to be working with people somehow.

Q: Yeah. And so medical school sounds like a reasonable... It's quite a long course, isn't it?

A: Yeah.

Q: Have you wanted to do that for long or is it recent -?

A: Fairly recent I suppose, I haven't thought about it too much, always knew I wanted to do something in the scientific line, and about the time I was filling in the university forms I thought, why not?

Q: To - to go back to those relationships again, what about your relationship with your family, how is that?

A: I get on with them better this year. I used to have arguments with my mother, she was used to being a kid, she used to try running my life... and then I just wanted to have a bit of life of my own really.... the same as her.

Q: Yes, yes. That's a (?) neat way. Sometimes it worries people if they - if they have similar views to their parents, but if you feel that you've decided for yourself anyway and you coincide with your parents then it's... yeah. What about your dad, do you get on with him okay?

A: Yeah, alright. I suppose I'm not as close to him as I am with my mum or my friends, I couldn't talk to him about some of the things I talk about with other people but we get on well and I love him and I admire him very much.

Q: Yeah. What about your - your sister -

A: Yeah, my sister. I do - we're not as close really as we used to be, after all... do tell her things but somehow we used to be together all the time and then we'd just be kind of so close on the surface, and we had something to do together, and I'd buy her Christmas presents and get along marvelously, and these days she got her own friends and her

own life and we don't really see much of each other 'cos I'm always out at my job and she's out after school with all her friends... evenings...

Q: But what is that job, is it - is it evenings?

A: Mostly I work during the daytime, I work all of Saturday evening as well.

Q: Just temporary is that?

A: This is until I go to university in autumn - well it's until I go on holiday in the summer and then -

Q: Where are you going to university?

A: Liverpool.

Q: Oh. I'd sort of somehow assumed London.

A: No.

Q: Yeah. So you'll be travelling quite a way from home.

A: Yeah.

Q: Have you been to Liverpool?

A: Well, I've been for an interview and once for an open day at the university.

Q: Yeah. What did you think?

A: It seemed a nice enough place there... and everything.

Q: Yeah. I've never been actually, one of the few places I've never been to, but it looks quite ...

A: I've never been... where I've lived after... marvelous posters and all that kind of thing, inviting you to communist meetings and so on and so forth.

Q: Yeah. Well I guess it's because they've had this heavy unemployment where... sort of problems...

A: Yeah.

Q: Could be. Okay. Well some of the other things that we're interested in is to find out about what your - what your sex education at school was like, and I...

A: ... I was so glad when I saw that, I didn't think I'd ever have a chance to write down how completely useless it was.

Q: Yeah. Which school were you -

A: This was NAME OF SCHOOL.

Q: Mm. Where's that?

A: In Kingston.

Q: Oh, yeah, I've heard of that.

A: To be fair I did get some sex education at NAME OF SCHOOL where I was before, and even then it wasn't much on relationships and stuff, just mainly on the scientific side of it. I was only about - I don't know how old, nine or ten then.

Q: So it was really not much good at all?

A: No, I didn't think much of it but I really knew just about everything I needed to know and I knew how to look up what I needed in books so I'm pretty well off really.

Q: Yeah. Quite a lot of young women I've spoken to are really distressed by their sex education in school, terribly variable - some schools - it's probably dependent on particular individuals within the school as well... So where - where did you first hear about AIDS?

A: AIDS? I can't remember. I never read the papers much so I think I just kind of... TV... you heard people say something about it, you catch a glimpse of something and then people are saying things at school, I think it was - you know, this girl I... she said, what's the matter, have I got AIDS or something, and then I thought, well I'd better look it up, find out about it.

Q: So you did, did you?

A: Yeah.

Q: And do you feel that you're fairly well informed?

A: Yeah.

Q: What - what do you know about it, what - what do you think of it as being?

A: Something caused by a virus which transmits through bodily fluids - do you want me to tell you everything I know? - I know quite a lot actually, I learnt about it, I had to write about it for a debate and I got two library books out about it... what did I say, oh yeah, ... your defense system, it's like... caused by the virus, the various cancers and so on, they're just caused by the fact you can't fight back against them any more so you end up with all these... diseases which ordinarily there's be one in a million chance of getting, and they now have a theory that once it's been around for a few years it breaks down your brain and you go senile, so they're very pessimistic about the possibility of a cure because of how the -the virus can get into the brain but anything that they can use against it can't. I don't know...

Q: Mm. So you learned quite a lot in order to do this debate?

A: Yeah.

Q: Has it affected the way that you think about yourself, I mean what you do?

A: Not really, I wouldn't - I wasn't sleeping with anyone at the time so it wasn't a case of me switching from being promiscuous to being completely celibate or going over to safe sex or anything.

Q: Mm. What do you think of safe sex as being?

A: Well, things like - if you want to try penetration using condoms, and then just trying other things, trying kissing, cuddling, holding, touching, oral sex, those kind of things. Oral sex is small risk but they reckon it's practically zero because it's broken down by the thyroid gland or something.

Q: Mm. Yes, you have got pretty well informed. Do you put this into practice yourself?

A: I reckon so, yeah. I wouldn't just sleep around, I wouldn't sleep with a stranger and -

Q: Do you have a boyfriend at the moment?

A: I have a boyfriend, yeah.

Q: And that's affected the relationship?

A: I've only slept with him once actually.

Q: Yeah?

A: Used a condom. He was a virgin, too, before that so I'm not at any risk as far as disease goes, but I wanted to protect myself against pregnancy.

Q: That's right, yeah. That's - that's your major concern, is it?

A: Yeah.

Q: Is it a recent friendship or -

A: Fairly recent, I met him back in February, I've known him a few months now.

Q: Yeah. Are you thinking of sleeping with him again?

A: I don't know. The relationship isn't going anywhere very much and we've always known it was going to break up when I go off to university... break up when I go on my holiday.

Q: You're not particularly bothered?

A: I don't mind much either way, I'm just not too keen on him really.

Q: Mm. Is that - have you had other boyfriends before?

A: No.

Q: So this is the first one that you had -

A: The first relationship for either of us.

Q: Yeah. So how did it happen, how did you first meet him?

A: Actually it was real Mills and Boon stuff, I was working at the cinema and he came in and bought a bag of popcorn, then he came down ten minutes later, bought another bag and said well, actually I came back for your smile and he gave me his phone number.

Q: That's nice.

A: Yeah.

Q: But then you're not - well I suppose, knowing that you're going away -

A: Yeah, which puts a time limit on it. I don't know, it's - we don't have a lot in common.

Q: Yeah. What's he like?

A: He's rather strange. He goes on about death and destruction, North England... sense of humour. A bit hard to handle really.

Q: Yeah? He's twenty-two...

A: Oh yeah, he's just had a birthday.

Q: Yeah.

A: That's when I slept with him.

Q: Oh, a birthday present.

A: Something like that.

Q: Yeah?

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah. How did you feel about it then, the time that you slept with him?

A: I suppose I was curious. I wanted to try it...

Q: Yeah. And what do you think now?

A: What do I think now? I don't know why people make so much fuss about it. I - I don't mean sex itself, I suppose there's quite a lot more to that than you get between two completely inexperienced people and so on and so forth, but - I'm not judging at all on that one thing, I just mean people make such a cult thing out of virginity, they think it's so important, one way or another, it doesn't make any difference at all to me. I expected to feel completely different somehow and I didn't.

Q: And you say as well, when you decided to make love, that it was - that you decided, that there wasn't any particular pressure on you or anything like that.

A: I decided that, yeah.

Q: And now you've decided what...?

A: Not so much that, I don't mind either way, it's just something I'm curious about, it's something - kind of new experience for me, it's no - no different than me deciding to visit another country or take an evening class or something like that, as far as I'm concerned it's just one more thing I want to try in my life, so - that's what it's about to me.

Q: Mm. So you will - you will again, maybe not with him but maybe when you get to university or something?

A: Yeah, I should think so.

Q: What about him, has he talked about AIDS at all or...?

A: He hasn't actually mentioned it but - well, that's one of the things he hasn't mentioned. I suppose it's because neither of us...

Q: Mm, yeah. That's another sort of approach that they've had with safe sex, suggesting monogamy as well, condoms and monogamy... that's what they suggest, condoms and monogamy. What about the - at the beginning of the AIDS thing there was a lot of stuff in the media about it being a gay plague or something like that?

A: Like I said, I don't read the papers much, when I did decide I wanted to know something about it I sort of felt, well, if I read the articles in the paper I'll be starting in the middle, so I went and got a book from the library and read up on it and learned things that way.

Q: Yeah. So you didn't catch much of the stuff that was on the television -

A: No, not really.

Q: Yeah. Because I've been asking about that, whether people thought that the government campaign or education campaign had much effect or was any good. You haven't even seen it so -

A: Well I mean I've seen some of it, it's impossible not to see the giant posters and the things they put in girls' mags about how do you feel about asking a male partner to use a condom and so on and so forth, and the leaflets - I mean all of that, it's impossible not to see some of it, I think it's a good idea.

Q: Mm. Do you think it's been effective or -

A: Well, apart from actually doing some statistics I don't know if it has been effective, I think it should be effective, I think it's likely to have been effective.

Q: Mm. What - how would you feel about asking -

A: Funnily enough it was... suggested in the first place. And -no, I wouldn't, I mean I reckon if you're going to sleep with someone you should know them well enough to be able to suggest something like that, I mean if you can't then something's wrong.

Q: Mm... wouldn't have got yourself into that position.

A: Mm.

Q: I don't know. It's difficult to say because some people think, oh, you know, I'm gonna get carried away and, you know, when you're getting carried away how can you possibly ask somebody to do that, so I suppose people have different - different views kind of really. Well I mean - when you did make love with your - your boyfriend, you were obviously careful even though it was he who suggested - do you - do you think - do you think that you take risks in other areas of your life?

A: What do you mean?

Q: Some people think drinking and smoking's risky.

A: Well, I've never tried smoking, I mean not even the traditional puff behind the bike shed, nothing like that, that's an experience I reckon I can do without, and I have a social drink, kind of if all my friends are going to a pub I have something with them, but I wouldn't just go out to a pub any time I felt I had a problem with my life.

Q: Mm. So it's just social drinking. Anything else that you might take risks with?

A: Yeah, I suppose - you know there's all this pressure on women not to go out late at night - late at night and so on, I'm not so bothered, I've got friends who panic about it and... their parents. I try not to take risks but somehow I'm a bit less bothered... to the point.

Q: Mm. So you wouldn't come home late at night?

A: I don't usually, I try not to, but I mean if I actually did by circumstance get stuck out at ten or eleven at night and had to walk home I wouldn't be having chickens about it, I'd be fairly relaxed. I try not to worry about things until they happen.

Q: Do you think you could look after yourself if anything did happen?

A: I've read about all the things you're supposed to do - what do you mean, like getting raped or attacked or something?

Q: Yeah, anything like that.

A: How do you mean look after myself?

Q: Well, I don't know - take - what you might do, I mean run away is one way, one way of dealing with it.

A: Well considering I've always been a slower runner than anyone else I know, that wouldn't be my chance. I know all the things you're supposed to do, I mean not just to save yourself but also to make it clear you don't want sex so you can get the bastard put away when it comes to court...

Q: So you have thought about that even - even though you're not worried about it happening until it happens you are - you are concerned.

A: ...

Q: Does that kind of thing - I mean one of the things that we're interested in is - is the way that young women feel about, you know, their sexuality and so on, does that kind of, you know - problem, males being potential rapists, is that...

A: Well I don't think every time I'm around with a bloke, oh my God, what's going to happen now... I don't get worried about men because of that, and I don't think it's true that all men are potential rapists. Maybe more of them are than some people would like to admit but I've been friends with lots of men and they didn't do anything at all.

Q: So it's quite... Did I say it like that, did I say it as if I sounded as if I thought all men were potential rapists?

A: No.

Q: What about - in the, in the sort of relationship that you've been having with your boyfriend, it sounds as if you're both making decisions about how - how it happens. Do you think - do you think there's a double standard, you know, between, you know, expectations of what young men can do and young women can do?

A: I think it does really, I've just never come up against it, I mean with my first relationship there's a sort of rather amusing reversal of more traditional ideas, he wanted me to get in touch with him first so I took him out on a date, I end up paying for dates because I'm the one with the money and he's out of work. That kind of thing. When it came to sex, he was more worried about it than I was I reckon, because he was a virgin.

Q: Mm. That's quite interesting really... But you think in general it probably is the case that -

A: I think so, yeah.

Q: How about when you were at school, did you get that impression from the way that people talked or -

A: Well since I was about twelve or thirteen I've been to single sex schools so... didn't see that many boys actually. I do - the boys I see, just little things they say, things - the way they sound disapproving when they say a girl slept with such and such, they're never worried about the blokes point of view. It just kind of little things I pick up, you know.

Q: Mm. When you were at school were you - did you have - you had your best friend, did you have a particular group of friends as well that you -

A: Well, there were people, I knew people, I had acquaintances and - I suppose I just tend to break friendships and form new ones, I've always had, you know, I wouldn't be short of people to invite to a party or whatever, and then I'd have one close friend and -

Q: I was thinking like sort of a group that you might have gone around with or something like that.

A: Well it was more like there were several different groups, I mean 'cos I - my friends tended to have groups that they went around with, and there was a group actually... the school, she was a [YOUTH GROUP] and so I tended to get involved with the people from there. I met my best friend, not because she was in my school, but because she was in the [YOUTH GROUP], and all the really close friends I've had have - I've got at the moment have been there some time or another.

Q: What sort of things do you do there?

A: The [YOUTH GROUP], oh... used to do things like... outdoor... went on hikes, did football, volleyball, all that kind of stuff.

Q: But when did you leave, did you leave when you left school?

A: No, I left actually only a few months ago, it was just kind of getting more and more boring. It was because all my friends either had gone to university or they were doing things which meant they were very busy and didn't have time to turn up, and basically there just weren't any of the people left that there'd been when I started there, so -

Q: - so that had been something which had taken up quite a lot of your spare time when you were out of school?

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah. Was it enjoyable up until the point where it became boring because there was nobody there?

A: I don't know. I think I was always trying to fit in and somehow I never did quite make it and now the entire composition of the group has just changed... left and a whole bunch of new people have come in, and by that time I'd - the people who had once been in the group were close friends of mine so I didn't worry too much about it.

Q: Mm. When you were saying you were trying to fit in -

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: - did you feel you had difficulty?

A: Yeah.

Q: What -

A: ... anti-social I never had - I mean I always had friends, I just never much liked talking to people, I'd rather go up to my room and read a book. Then when I was about sixteen, I joined the [YOUTH GROUP] and I was trying to make friends and fit in for the first time in my life, I just didn't know much about making conversation.

Q: How do you feel now, that you're getting better at it?

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah. What made you decide that you had to, I mean did you get fed up with sort of sitting in your room reading books?

A: Well, not really, I started this [YOUTH GROUP] thing because it sounded interesting and funnily enough it was this boy I fancied, who was complete..., I can't think why I bothered with him, but at the time it certainly did the trick, it was... tired of listening to what he was saying and then I got interested in what other people were saying, and then got interested in the whole thing of being with the group and part of it myself.

Q: Mm. So you had friends who were male, I mean male friends... or was he...

A: Well this wasn't until I was about fifteen, I mean it wasn't - I never saw anything of boys, but just never had a close friend who... what I'd call a close friend, wasn't much of a friend at all come to think of it, but yes, I did. I had this close friendship with a boy I still know, I don't see much of him, but - I haven't seen him for ages, I finally got up the courage to ask him out and he said he didn't want to go out with anyone at the moment but we're still friends.

Q: Did you feel - well, you said it took a lot of courage to ask him - well I think it probably does take a lot of courage to ask - is that because of the way that people think about what's appropriate for girls and boys?

A: I don't think so. I mean for one thing, if I'd waited for him to ask me I'd still be waiting and I'd be waiting ten years from now but - no, it wasn't like that, I didn't think he'd think I was forward or anything, I was just afraid of being turned down.

Q: Well I suppose that's what they're afraid of as well.

A: I suppose so. I mean now that I've been through it once it's not so hard, I managed to ask my current boyfriend out without any difficulty, though obviously he'd shown his interest, he'd given me his phone number, but I had to ask him on a couple of dates before things really got moving and so on, so -

Q: So you think it's gonna get easier and easier?

A: Yeah. I've got more confidence now, I know that if someone turns me down the world doesn't fall apart.

Q: Mm, absolutely.

A: ...

Q: Well that's quite good, isn't it, yeah. I suppose I mean I would have thought that - that people might think... probably more the case... more sort of assumptions about... but - do you think - do you think it's women's liberation that's made the difference or -

A: I suppose it must be. Anyway the boys I know wouldn't mind too much about it - well they might mind because they're going (?) diving or whatever, or they don't want to go out with you or whatever, but I don't think it would be the case that they'd object to me breaking free of the stereotype or anything.

Q: What about your girlfriends, do you think that they have that kind of stereotype about behaviour, the behaviour of boys or girls or -

A: I'm not sure, I mean quite a lot of it is just nerves, I mean it's not easy to ask someone out under any circumstances, I've only really heard a girl's point of view on this whereas - well, most of the close friends I have who are girls have fancied someone at some stage and tried to get up courage to ask them out, but I don't really know how it is for boys, I can't compare.

Q: Mm. But it's difficult for girls. Yeah. What sort of other things were you doing - I mean you were doing the [YOUTH GROUP], what sort of other things do you do in your spare time?

A: Various things, I used to go to a children's orchestra... didn't have much time, I was doing four A-levels, didn't do much, just kind of loafed around really, I've always done a lot of things and had two-hour phone conversations with my friend every weekend.

Q: Yeah. Which instrument did you play in the orchestra?

A: I played the cello. I should take it up again really.

Q: ... take it up again, the sort of interim period.

A: Yeah.

Q: It needs a lot of practice though, the cello, doesn't it?

A: Well that depends whether you really want to get into it or you just want a bit of fun.

Q: I suppose so, that's probably true of any - any instrument.

A: Yeah. I suppose I think of myself as a person who plays the cello, I've played it for more than half of my life so... should be... interim period, and I'm planning to start an orchestra when I get to university.

Q: That's good, it's nice to have something like that, isn't it, really good... play a musical instrument. What sort of other things are you thinking of doing when you go to university?

A: Well, from what everyone says I'll be working for hours on end every day just trying to keep up the medical school course, but I don't know, I just want to start something a bit - I want to keep on with the Duke of Edinburgh's thing, I've started that, I want to..., I'd like to join some kind of outdoor activity, I don't know really, I'll just join things and have a good time really, have a laugh.

Q: Yeah, yeah. The Duke of Edinburgh award, I've met somebody else who was doing that as well. It sounded pretty hectic, I mean quite demanding.

A: Yeah.

Q: What level are you up to?

A: Not that I'm up to anything, ...at any of the levels... the job 'cos I'm bored. I only have to finish by my twenty-fifth birthday and... get a degree and go to medical school and everything.

Q: What sort of things do you have to do on that?

A: Skills, I'm doing knitting, physical recreation I'm going to do karate or something of the sort, service I'm trying..., expedition, four days around the country, and... residential award, what's it called, you can go away for five days to some place where you've never been before to meet people you've never seen before and do something like - you either have to be taking part in some activity like building a dam or you have to be learning something so I'm going on a vegetarian cookery course.

Q: Mm. What about the expedition in hard country?

A: Oh, that, I'm not so keen on the idea of, because I went on a four day expedition during the time when I was with [YOUTH GROUP] which was nearly enough to put me off, but you go away for four days, you carry all your stuff with you, you're not supposed to buy anything on the way, carrying your tent, you camp out, you have to plan your route beforehand, prove to the activity... that you know what to do in case of emergencies, you have all this training beforehand, know how to read the compass, read the map.

Q: And you go out - what size group?

A: Four to seven, I think.

Q: I was thinking when you were talking about the [YOUTH GROUP] it sounds as if it follows - it fits neatly on, to do the Duke of Edinburgh award as well.

A: Yeah...

Q: Oh right, so it's all stuff you've done already.

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah. Quite neat really. It's similar to another young woman that I talked to, was doing the Duke of Edinburgh, she said they have to go off to Scotland for this trip in hard country sort of thing, and apparently it had been totally chaotic, everything had gone wrong but I don't know whether - I don't wanna put you off or anything like that, but I'm sure -

A: Small problems, things like that happen because you didn't...years on end.

Q: Yeah... It's not the sort of thing that I think about doing very much at all. I'm surprised that you say you're not a very good runner given that you do all these sort of outdoor -

A: Well it's one thing to have stamina and another to have speed.

Q: Mm, true. Still I suppose... man...

A: I don't really fancy the idea of that, I think... introduced... I used to do a lot of jogging actually but now I'm doing (?) just by myself and in my own time.

Q: Mm, yeah... I was recently in (?) Stockwell and they had a mini marathon, ten thousand kids... about nine or fourteen or something from all over... they didn't have to run very far, they only had to run about 2.1 kilometres or something,... fantastic to see all these blonde kids running, it was great. What about longish-term future? You've got the next few years sorted out.

A: I haven't thought about it a lot. I'd like to be a doctor, get married, raise a family. I suppose I want to - I think of following my mother's pattern really, she got a career, she's not a doctor but she got a career, she married and she's got two daughters, and that's the kind of life I'd like to aim at.

Q: Sounds reasonable enough. So you think that it can - it can work out, there's a lot of people worry about whether or not you can have a career and be - I think a doctor's not too bad, that's something you can fit in quite easily.

A: Yeah. I've wondered about it in one way... I grew up... fitted in her career around her kids and in fact she wouldn't have been happy doing things in any other way, I never really worried about it, I just tend to assume that things will somehow work out. A woman I babysit for, she's a doctor, she's got three kids under five, she's had to pack in her work at the moment but she's going to go back to it sometime, she wants a fourth kid. I don't know if I'd want to go that far, I think I'll settle for just one kid.

Q: Just one.

A: Yeah... career, I just think one kid'll be enough really.

Q: And you think of being a GP... specialist...?

A: I'd quite like to be a GP, but I don't know.

Q: Can't say until you find out what it's like.

A: I know some people... house... start specialising... want to specialise in.

Q: Yeah, yeah. Sometimes - I mean in the medical profession there's a certain kind of pressure on women to go into certain specialisms... liver, specialise in the liver, which seems to be a very sort of macho area somehow... The way she was describing it like, you know, there are certain things you have to be able to do, like you have to be able to tap on the body and find the liver without any special technique or machines or anything, it's part of the skill, the mystique of the - being able to be a liver specialist. I thought it was quite interesting... Let me ask you a question about your - your image of yourself. What would you say is your - your image of yourself?

A: I don't know, it depends how I'm feeling. Some days that - I've got a lot of images, I like to be tough, confident young woman and (?) lovely personality and - then there's all the things... (?) swearing - things I try not to get upset about but I don't know, it depends what day you ask me on.

Q: What sort of things do you get upset about?

A: I don't know. Looking stupid.

Q: Looking stupid or being stupid?

A: ...

Q: Other people thinking that you look stupid.

A: Mm.

Q: Yeah. How do you mean? Just looking -

A: I don't know, just looking a right fool, just looking like -I don't know... at the moment but - I don't know... worry about things like, I don't know, things I'm bad at, things - whether I'm as good at the things I'm supposed to be good at as everyone says, like that.

Q: What do you think other people's image of you is?

A: I don't know. I suppose my best friend would say I'm a good listener, I've got friends who say I'm really brilliant, I've got -my boyfriend says I've got a lovely personality, I've got... (?) not really on the ball, and a bit anti-social, it just depends what group of people I'm with, people at school... people I do [YOUTH GROUP] with think that I'm bad at hiking and things.

Q: Mm. So you've got a different kind of image in each of these different groups?

A: ...

Q: And is it - you - you sort of respond to that image as well, I mean you said you've got a lovely personality, then do you think maybe at certain times you haven't got a lovely personality?

A: Of course.

Q: Yeah. So a sort of reaction to what other people think, think about you. Sometimes there's quite a contrast between what people think of themselves and what other people think of them, a kind of conflict between trying to persuade the other person they're really the way they think they are and - How do you feel in general, I mean do you feel fairly confident about the future?

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah? How do you think that's come about?

A: Confidence, I suppose it's because, like I said, I've got my mother as an image and things have worked out perfectly for her and I've always been brought up to feel it would work out, I've been brought up in a reasonably wealthy family, I've been encouraged to think that I can do all the things I aim at, that I'm intelligent enough to get where I want to be, I've got the qualifications I need, I've got parents who are prepared to pay for the education I need, so really I'm very lucky in my life, and everything's gone well so far, just - it'll keep on going well.

Q: ... Yeah. What do you think about - the people that you were at school with, were many of them in the same sort of position as you or were there people who weren't? It was a grammar school -

A: ... very many close friends of mine were people at school, they tended to do alright, it was a grammar school, it was mainly people who were going to go on and take A-levels, most of our class stayed on and did A-levels, nearly all of the ones who stayed on are going on to university, so plenty of people were encouraged to think in terms of academic work.

Q: Yeah.

A: Quite good.

Q: Yeah. Let me just ask you another couple of things about the AIDS issue.

A: Yeah.

Q: What do you think can be done for people, to make them aware, more aware, of AIDS?

A: It's the sort of thing ought to be taught in schools, I mean, like I say, it should be part of sex education, people should really be willing to talk about safe sex, all that kind of thing, not just shove leaflets at kids, or tell them - the way some teachers make it sound when they call it sex education sounds like something fairly scientific, something that's got nothing to do with us. It ought to be more talking about - like get the kids into discussion groups, get them to talk it, that makes them think, then - that kind of thing, really, and like they've been doing, all the adverts in underground stations, in... saw one coming in today... magazines, kind of teenage magazines girls read, and all those kind of things, and like everyone thinks it's not going to happen to me, there's got to be some way to make them realise it does happen, I don't know what that'd be, maybe true life stories, something like that, you know the kind of thing I mean, kids saying - I've got this, I had this ordinary life, ordinary schoolwork, ordinary future, I always thought it would never happen to me and so on and so forth, but making people realise ... risks. ... saying how do you feel on the... it's one thing to - you could have something like saying, it's one thing to think beforehand I don't need to bother with a condom, but how will you feel the morning after when you've got to worry about it. Something like that to kids, to get them thinking about it, how they'd feel when they have - when they have to think about it afterwards and they have to...

Q: That's the problem really because, as you say, they sort of think it doesn't have anything to do with me. I mean in a sense you think that yourself, you're not at risk at the moment, but... a lot of people feel that, that they personally - it doesn't apply to them because of the way they organise their lives. But then something may happen -... go to university, you'd have to be sure that you...

A: Yeah.

Q: Do you think you would?

A: Yeah. I mean I know how to protect myself, but some kids just don't know, they think it's - I suppose even today there must be some people who still think it's all a gay problem, and so on, and there are some people who don't bother, they just take risks. They need to know just how serious it is, that it's like - I mean not many people, I suppose I mean everyone says, oh that's so awful, if you just picked up a sample of people off the streets and asked them what actually happens to you when you have AIDS - I know roughly, I know all the various diseases you can catch... then what happens that it attacks your brain, but even for me I only have this vague knowledge and most people wouldn't know a tenth of what I do or - they just have to know how bad it is, how stupid it is to take even the smallest risk.

Q: Mm. It's interesting what you said just now about how sometimes kids take risks, though, do you think -

A: Yeah

Q: - that sometimes -

A: They need to know just what they could be letting themselves in for.

Q: Mm, how to show them the consequences. But do you think that I mean in other contexts - I was asking you about risk-taking yourself -

A: Yeah.

Q: - do you think that some - for some young people it's quite enticing, the idea of taking - taking a chance? - adds spice to it or something.

A: The kind of people who join Gamblers Anonymous, you mean, or who don't join Gamblers Anonymous, I mean it's worse than that even, if you gamble all your money away then you can always work and make some more, but if you gamble your health away there's nothing at all you can do about it, and I think it's worth proceeding on the basis that it's very unlikely that - I don't know exactly how likely it is that people will discover a cure because opinions differ, but even a vaccine, that'd be in some ways easier to get at than a cure, but I think it's worth proceeding on the basis that they may never find a cure, I think it's worth thinking in terms of prevention.

Q: Mm, yeah, well I think you're absolutely right. I think they are moving along on the sort of vaccine and possibly a cure line, but I don't know, and also it seems that the - the slight... that the -the virus itself can - can, what do you call it, change, mutate, mutate, and so you're chasing a changing object.

A: I mean if you think about it it's so easy not to catch it, I mean even drug users, if they're careful about boiling their syringes and whatever they can avoid it, then it's easy enough to have safe sex, I suppose condoms burst occasionally but you can always like I said, do kissing, cuddling, people put too high a priority on sex, and - what's the other ones, blood transfusions they've eliminated the risk, it's just so easy to protect yourself, people think that something terrible - it's the most fragile virus, you can destroy it in a glass of water. It's so easy, I honestly think it might prove to be quicker and easier in the long run just to prevent it than cure it, just by educating people and making sure they don't take any risks.

Q: Mm, yeah, perhaps you're right, that's very sensible approach. We'll see whether the government will do anything along those lines. I mean...

A: That's no good. You'd end up with the kind of people who wouldn't drink from a cup of people who had AIDS, you handed them out... someone who's gay (?) out of their right place and then go home and sleep with a perfectly healthy looking man they picked up on a one night stand and they didn't know might be a carrier. So I mean you understood the risk.

Q: Mm, yeah. I think that's been a problem with the programmes really, because it's been partly hooked up around this moral thing rather than... what people knew. Yeah, yeah, it's very interesting. Is there anything else you can think of that might be - just in general, not necessarily to do with AIDS, that you want to ask me or tell me about or -

A: Nothing I can think of off-hand. I don't think so.

Q: What do you think about the kind of questions I've been asking?

A: A bit different from what I was expecting, it was a lot more general.

Q: Is it?

A: Yeah.

Q: Well I mean we're very much interested in how - how the AIDS thing is gonna affect young women, how they think about it themselves, but also... how young women think about themselves and... sexuality, their ideas about that really. We hadn't made that clear in the ad, had we? I don't know, it said something about sexuality in there, didn't it?

A: Yeah, it said how young women feel about their sexuality or something, I can't remember,... where it was. The thing is - oh yeah, that's what I wanted to say, was that the only way you found people for this thing, these adverts -

Q: Oh, no, all sorts of different ways -

A: Oh, that's alright then.

Q: - every possible way that we can. The way that we're limiting it is to do it in particular geographical areas, so London and Manchester - and by and large we've been concentrating on North London, to keep it... sample to compare... So we're getting young women between the ages of sixteen and twenty-one and - in work and out of work, in university, in schools, wherever we can find them, and in all sorts of different organisations, and we're doing lots of questionnaires, but a much smaller number of interviews, only about a hundred and odd in London and the same number in Manchester.

A: When are you going to publish all this, or are you?

Q: Oh, we will, definitely, yeah. We've written one paper already but that's only just saying what we were going to do sort of thing 'cos we haven't been doing it terribly long, but it's coming out probably in about - well, papers will start coming out next year. Shall I put you on our mailing list?

A: Yeah.

Q: - send you stuff.

A: Yeah.

Q: Well the other thing that we were thinking of doing, I don't know whether you'd be interested in, is asking young women to keep a diary for us for a short - short while - a short burst of about two months or something like that. Would you be interested in doing that?

A: I wouldn't mind, it's just that I keep meaning to keep a diary for myself and I don't get round to writing it up when it comes to the point.

Q: Well maybe if you had one of ours it would kind of -

A: - be an incentive -

Q: - galvanise you into action.

A: Okay.

Q: Well, maybe when you go to university so we can get some of the excitement when you first get there... I've got your address, haven't I? - and the other thing was, in which case I wouldn't send you copies of our papers till afterwards 'cos - we're thinking of re-interviewing some of the young women that we've talked to this year maybe early, halfway through next year -

A: - see how they're getting on.

Q: See what things have changed, developed -

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: Okay. Yes to diary, yes to re-interview. Good. Anything else you can think of that might be...? I've been winding up, I forgot to ask you about your religion.

A: Religion?

Q: Yeah. Do you have one?

A: No.

Q: I don't suppose... reasonable that I didn't ask... what you said on the questionnaire. Well thanks very much. Would you like to have a cup of tea now...