

LJH16
Catherine

Q. So what I'm trying to do in this piece of research is ... one of the things that we're particularly interested in is how young people, especially young women, think and feel about

relationships. So, I was going to ask you what's important in relationships to you?

A. Um, you mean between a man and a woman, don't you?

Q. Any kind of relationship.

A. Any kind of relationship.

Q. Which is the most important relationships to you, for example?

A. Friendship.

Q. Yeah?

A. I think, and when you trust, I think that's important. You should be able to trust somebody in a relationship.

Q. Yeah? That's it. Have you got good friends at the moment?

A. Yeah, I have.

Q. Good female friends, women friends, girlfriends?

A. Yeah, very good. I haven't really got any man friends or boys. Most of my friends are girls.

Q. Do you meet them mainly at school here?

A. I met most of them at school and my closest friend, I've known her for eleven years because we grew up together, we live across the road from each other and we grew up together and the rest of my other friends, I met them at school. But we all live in the same area, we live like the next road from each other.

Q. Right, so you can spend a lot of time together. What kind of things do you do with your friends?

A. A lot of the time we go to one person's house, we go to EMMA's house and watch tele and make tea, talk about everyday things in life like what's on tele to sex through to ... everything. We go out to clubs rarely. We used to go out a lot in the summer holidays but now cos we all do different things like college, school, work we just meet up there sometimes when ...

Q. Yeah, right.

A. One of the other things that we are interested in, as you can see from the questionnaire that you filled in, is what kind of sex education you got in school and what you think of it.

Did you ... what did you get and what do you think of it?

Q. The sex education I got at first it was to do with how the egg gets fertilised and I thought it was a bit confusing cos they didn't teach us ... they just told us ... all they said was, 'This is an egg, this is a sperm', and they just told us that they get together and make a baby. But I didn't know ...

A. How they got together.

Q. I did know about sex before. I knew about sex from my friends - they told me, but I thought that was confusing for somebody else who doesn't know anything about it. I thought

that was a bit stupid. And then it just fizzled out. We didn't really have a lot of ... I learnt a little bit in school but mostly it was outside from family and friends.

A. Yeah. Did they talk about AIDS at all in the ...?

Q. No, AIDS came up in the fifth year, yeah, that's when the big publicity thing came about. That's when I first heard about AIDS and it really shocked me cos it had been around for a lot of years and I hadn't heard one thing about it.

Q. Mm.

A. A couple of girls have said to me, 'Yeah, I've heard about AIDS', and I said, 'I've never heard of it before. It's a new thing to me'. And that was a bit worrying cos I thought they could have at least told us about that when we first got to the school.

Q. Yeah. So you think you heard mainly from other sources - through the television and stuff like that and after that then they mentioned it at school?

A. Yeah.

Q. What did you think of those, that initial information that you had about AIDS?

A. At school, you mean or ...?

Q. On the television.

A. On the television. I didn't like some of the adverts. I thought they were too ... they were too ... they weren't realistic enough. It just had the AIDS ... I thought it's not enough for me to go into it. Show how you can get it and how you can prevent it more, etcetera. And at school, my teacher - she showed us how you can prevent it. She told us all these things so in school we learnt more about it.

Q. So that was one thing that was valuable in your sex education. Did ... who ... how did you think people got it when you first started hearing about it? I mean, from the television and other sources.

A. I thought you could contract AIDS from sex. I thought you could contract it through sitting on toilets.

Q. What about the difference between ...? Did you think of any difference between HIV and AIDS?

A. I didn't understand what HIV was.

Q. Yeah. Do you think you do now?

A. HIV is when you're carrying the virus, but you don't actually have AIDS. And you can contract it from someone through sex and they'll catch AIDS or get HIV.

Q. Yeah. And then that ... it can develop into ... And it may take quite a long time.

A. A couple of years or more 'til you find out.

Q. Or even more.

A. That's quite frightening.

Q. Yeah. Do you think that you will have ... that you change the way you think about sex and everything because of that, because of AIDS?

A. I would. I mean, I wouldn't have one-night stands and things like that.

Q. Do you think it's influenced your friends in the way that they think about sex and behave?

A. Yeah. We all think alike really. We think that you shouldn't just have a one-night stand cos we all think that it's important to have a relationship with somebody first.

Q. Mm.

A. And then go in for sex. Not just have sex and that's it, 'Bye bye'.

Q. Yeah. And the relationship is important for you?

A. Yeah, I think it's very important.

Q. Do you think that there's a difference between boys and girls in that, that there's a sort of double-standard or a different type of behaviour?

A. Yeah, I think boys are more likely to sleep around than girls. Cos girls have got this, 'If you sleep around, you're a slag', whereas for boys, 'If you sleep around, you're macho, you've done it'.

Q. Yeah.

A. 'How many girls can I bed in my life?' I think that's wrong as well. I think boys should worry about it a lot - about this AIDS issue a lot. I think it's really important.

Q. Mm, yeah, I think you're right. Do you think they do? Do you have any experience of boys being concerned about it?

A. I do know some boys who are concerned about it and they say they wear condoms and everything, but I still see other boys and they just ... I don't really know if they are concerned

about it but they just carry on as if ... they use sex as a ... how can I put it? They use sex as something good. If they have sex with a different girl every night it's something brilliant, really good. And I just think they're lying cos I don't believe them. Cos of their age this year I think they're lying or just saying that.

Q. I think there probably is a lot of bravado and that. Cos in a sense how can they be if the girls are saying that they don't want to do that, who is it that they are having sex with? But do you think ...? Some of the people that I've spoken to have a similar view about girls. I mean, the boys ... Let me put it another way. Do you think boys have a different attitude towards the girls that they sleep with and the ones ...?

A. Yeah. If a girl sleeps with him and if she consents quickly to the boy saying, 'Yeah, I'll have sex with you', then he'll think she's slack whereas if a girl says, 'No', sometimes he'll ... he'll say to her, 'Oh, you're a frigid ...', but in his mind he'll be thinking, 'She's a bit sensible. She knows what she's thinking'. But he'll try and make her feel bad. Whereas a girl, if she goes to bed with him, he'll say, 'Oh yeah, you're lovely'. Then the next day he'll be calling her a slag behind her back.

Q. So you think it's best to avoid it?

A. Mm.

Q. Have you had any relationships with men?

A. No. I couldn't really call them relationships. Just quite close friendships but nothing like that.

Q. No sex or anything?

A. No.

Q. What does sex mean for you? I mean, what, if I say 'sex', what does it mean for you?

A. It just means a man and a woman together.

Q. Sexual intercourse. Not other sorts of things that you might do. I mean, for example, when you say you had friendships that you just see as friendships, did you do anything that you would have thought of as part of a sexual relationship at all?

A. Kissing, that's it.

Q. Some people just think of sex as that, as sexual intercourse, but other people think that other things are involved as well.

A. Like kissing.

Q. Yeah. What other sorts of things do you think that might be?

A. When they're touching you and things like that.

Q. A load of the stuff about the AIDS publicity has been about safe sex. What do they mean by safe sex?

A. Safe sex is where you actually pull out or use a condom ... You have one sexual partner.

Q. Right. Cos I was thinking about these other sorts of things that we were talking about. That there could be other things that you do which don't include penetrative sex which might

be thought of as safe sex. You haven't thought of that?

A. You mean? You mean like when they fondle you and things like that?

Q. Yeah, stuff like that. Another question that I've been asking people, especially at this school where it seems that it's come up in the sex education quite a bit is about masturbation? I mean, did you learn anything about it at school or ...?

A. No. That I heard about outside, at a friend's. When I heard about it I thought, 'Err, that's disgusting'. I thought, 'That's terrible, really bad', and then ... I've never sort of done that. I think it's a bit 'ughh'.

Q. Yeah. What about other sorts of sexuality - like homosexuals and things like that? Gays and lesbians? How do you feel about them?

A. At first it really disgusted me. I thought, 'That's disgusting'. And then I had a friend, she's a lesbian, and she told me, and she said, 'If you don't want to talk to me anymore, that will be fine, I'll understand'. And I sat down and I thought about it and I said, 'That's stupid if you don't talk to her just because she's a lesbian. That doesn't mean to say she's going to jump on you'. So, I think it's fine, but I must say I'm not interested to try it.

Q. You're not interested at all?

A. No, no.

Q. At the beginning of the AIDS epidemic they were talking about AIDS being like mainly to do with gays. How did you react to that?

A. I thought - not lesbians - I thought if it's anything to do with ... I think it's bisexual people because they spread it around cos they're having sex with men and women.

Q. So you did think it was spreading out of that?

A. Yeah.

Q. What about now?

A. Now? How do I think it's getting spread now?

Q. Yeah.

A. Oh there's drugs, when they use dirty needles, things like that. And also, still bisexual, homosexual, heterosexual ...

Q. All possible sources. Talking about drugs, do you take drugs yourself or have you ever? Do any of your friends take drugs or involved in drugs at all?

A. Not that I know of. I have heard rumours but I don't believe them. I can only recall of one occasion about a couple of years ago - a friend of mine took speed and they told me how messed up they were, and they said to me, 'Don't touch it'. Also, there's a ... I wouldn't mess with it anyway because I've watched ... I've seen in the media, television, radio, films, etcetera, I've seen what it can do to people and I just think, 'No, it's not for me'. I don't think you need it, really. If you're stable enough you don't need that rubbish.

Q. Yeah. What about other kinds of risky things? Do you do anything in your life in other areas that might be risky?

A. Um, no. I think you could say I'm a bit of an angel. I don't drink alcohol, I don't smoke, nothing like that.

Q. Nothing at all?

A. No.

Q. You're a good girl. I keep seeing all these good girls or I see ex-bad girls who are now good girls! Are you an ex-bad girl who's now a good girl?

A. No. I have ... I've tried smoking before. I just can't see what the big attraction is. Like a lot of my friends they smoke and I try and stop them but they don't ... it doesn't work.

Q. They don't take any notice. Who are you living with at home now?

A. I'm living with my parents and my brothers and sister.

Q. How old are your brothers and sister?

A. Well, there's LUKE who's twenty-three, there's ALICE next who's twenty-one, then there's me - I'm seventeen - and then there's my little brother WILLIAM who's twelve.

Q. Right, quite a lot of you then.

A. Yes, four of us.

Q. How do you get on?

A. Um, quite well. My little brother and I we tend to argue a bit but other than that we're alright. I'm a bit spiteful to him but I would say it's probably because I'm a little bit jealous of him.

Q. Yeah?

A. Yeah.

Q. How come?

A. Cos he's the youngest and so like he gets a little bit spoilt. And cos like the rest of us we're quite old enough to take care of ourselves now and he's like twelve so he gets a little bit more attention and I think I resent that a bit. Cos when I was younger my elder brother and sister, they didn't live with us, so I got all the attention. And my little brother came along and we both got the attention and now that both of them are back here, he gets more of it than I do.

Q. Where were they when they weren't living with you?

A. They were in Africa. They were at school in Africa.

Q. Are you from Africa?

A. Yeah.

Q. Whereabouts?

A. [COUNTRY], West Africa.

Q. Really? I lived there for a couple of years.

A. Did you?

Q. Yeah.

A. What did you think?

Q. I loved it, I thought it was wonderful.

A. A lot of people think it's all jungle and ...

Q. I thought it was great. I lived in [CITY] ... Have you visited much?

A. No. The last time I went there was when I was about six, but I do remember quite a bit of it. It was really nice.

Q. Yeah. Terrific. So do your parents go back much?

A. Yeah, my mum and dad went back recently. [REDACTED]. My mum's pining a bit - she wants to stay there.

Q. How would you feel about that?

A. I said 'no' because I'm used to growing up here and I'm used to this English lifestyle so I wouldn't really be used to the African lifestyle. But I wouldn't mind going to live there for about six months or a year.

Q. Well, you could easily do that with your grandparents, couldn't you? There must be quite a lot of family.

A. Yeah, I have got a lot of family.

Q. [REDACTED]. But it's very nice there. A lovely country. It's gone through a lot of changes since I was there which was quite a long time ago that I was there. So ... I asked you about ..., I asked you about your lifestyle, didn't I? What about the future? I haven't asked you about what you think you might do in the future.

A. Well, I want to go to college but most of all my main ambition - I want to own my own business in clothes cos I'm really into fashion. I love clothes. I want ... at first, I want to start off my own stall in Camden with a friend of mine. She likes to sew a lot. I'm quite good at sewing but I'm not brilliant and recently I bought a knitting machine and I've started knitting jumpers.

Q. On the questionnaire you were saying you're sort of interested in design ... designing things yourselves?

A. Mm. I design a lot, but I haven't really made up anything. I'm a bit wary that people will ...

Q. There's only one way to find out.

A. Yeah. Put them on the market.

Q. You could start wearing them yourself and seeing what people think of them. So that's your sort of long-term ambition.

A. Mm, I'd love to have my own business.

Q. Yeah. What about relationships? How do you see the future in terms of relationships?

A. I can't really say.

Q. What do you think of getting married or something like that?

A. Oh yeah. I want to get married and I'd like to have kids - maximum four. Cos my mum had four, I think that's a nice number.

Q. The same number, yeah. My mum had five which I thought was a little bit too many.

A. I know someone who's had nine.

Q. Gosh, that is too many.

A. But four is good, five is too much.

Q. Yeah. Is there anything that you'd like to ask me about at all?

A. What is this ...?

Q. What is it all about?

A. Yeah.

Q. Well, what we're doing is we're interviewing some young women both in London and in Manchester - it's quite a big piece of research. And we're basically trying to find out how they think and feel about relationships, what they know and think about AIDS and get some information which would be helpful and about sex education as well, what they think about the sex education they had at school and from what they say to get some information that would be helpful, improving, hopefully, sex education and the education about AIDS. And that's why we were asking things like, 'What do you think?', 'What do you know?', 'What do

your friends know?' and 'What would you like to know?' I mean, what do you think it would be useful for them to do in terms of AIDS education, for example?

A. I think it should be brought in quite early because I think a lot of young girls nowadays are starting to have sex. You read a lot about in college, you see young girls of fourteen and boyfriend's seventeen and they're having sex. And I think it's really important that it's got to girls at an early age. I think about first year in secondary school. I think one of the first things they should learn about is AIDS and sex education.

Q. And what did you think of the sex education here?

A. I thought it was good that they taught it to us, I thought that was really good. But I think they emphasised, well in my year, they emphasised more on sex when I came up to the upper school which is from fourth year upwards - fourth year and fifth year. In the sixth form now, we don't really get any. Fifth year last year was the best. We got a lot of information about sex, AIDS, what kinds of ... the venereal diseases and I thought that was really good. But I think you should be taught in the first year. I think that's really important.

Q. Yeah, I think you're right, definitely. And do you think there's anything in particular ... anything else that could be done about getting the information across to young people, making it relevant to young people?

A. Let me think. You could set up classes, but I don't think a lot of kids would go to them. I think youth clubs are a good place for that kind of thing. A popular youth club, like there's one up the road, I don't think they've got anything about sex education. I think they feel a bit scared because the kids would probably laugh and act quite stupid. But I think it's still important. I think the youth club ...

Q. Would be a good place to put some information in, yeah. They could have displays about AIDS and stuff like that. I suppose it's important that the information should be accessible to them. Did I ask you what your image of yourself was?

A. No.

Q. Let me ask you. What is your image of yourself?

A. What do you mean? How do I ...?

Q. How do you think of yourself? If you think of yourself what do you think you're like?

A. I think I'm a shy person. I think I'm shy, emotional, quite happy sometimes. I need a lot of confidence. I'm OK sitting here right now but when I first came I was, like, really nervous. I didn't know what to expect or what you were going to ask me.

Q. How do you feel now? More relaxed?

A. Yeah, a lot more relaxed.

Q. It's always difficult to know. I mean, who knows what I'm going to go on about? I mean, mostly I go on about sex, I think, basically. It just depends whether you want to talk about it or not really doesn't it and what you feel you want to say? What do you think other people's image of you is?

A. The same thing that I said about being shy.

Q. They've got the same image as you?

A. Yeah. In school ... I must admit I've improved a lot because in the first, second and third years I was really timid. I wouldn't say boo to a goose. OK, I'd mess around a bit but when it comes to talking to new people, meeting new people, I'm really sort of quiet, sit down, keep myself to myself and wait to be introduced. I don't ... I'll never sort of say like, 'Hi, my name's CATHERINE', etcetera, etcetera. I couldn't do that. But now I can ... I could ... I think I

would be able to manage it.

Q. You've got a bit more confidence and that. Have you been at this school all the time?

A. Yeah. And I've improved a lot in my confidence.

Q. Well, it is difficult isn't it? I always admire people who've got a lot of confidence. It's difficult to

steal yourself up to do things but I expect you are improving.

A. Yeah, I hope I am. My friends say I am.

Q. So, well, I think that's all that I want to ask. Is there anything more that you want to ask?

A. No.

Q. Sure? You're OK about the AIDS information? I've got a leaflet. Maybe I'll give you one. That's who we are. The people who are working on the project. And that's just some information about what it's all about. One of the things that we were thinking of maybe doing was coming back and talking to people a year on, like come back next year on and ask you a few more questions and see what's changed. Would you be interested?

A. Yeah, I'd be interested. I might and I might not be here because I'm doing my 'A' levels at the moment and I don't know if I'm going to drop out or not. I might.

Q. Why might you drop out?

A. Because I'm doing Textiles at another school, just across the road and recently my teacher has left so therefore they haven't got us another teacher and I don't have any lessons, so I don't know where I stand. I don't know if we'll be getting another teacher. I don't know ... so I don't know what's going to happen.

Q. Oh. Well, I hope they get it sorted out fairly soon.

A. So do I. Thank you.

Q. Well, if ... you could give me your home address, couldn't you? Did you give that to me on the form? Yep, you did so I've got your home address so maybe I might get in touch with you again if that's OK with you?

A. Yes.

Q. The other thing we were thinking was that people might keep diaries for us, just for a short while, maybe a couple of months. Just writing down about their thoughts and their feelings and things like that. Would that be of any interest?

A. I must admit I'm terrible at keeping diaries.

Q. Are you?

A. Yeah. So it wouldn't really be ...

Q. You'd never do it?

A. No. I wouldn't be able to keep it up. I'd probably be a let-down in that area.

Q. Why wouldn't you be able to do it?

A. No reason. Because I've tried keeping a diary and it never works. All my thoughts are in my head. What I feel ...

Q. And it's difficult to get it down on paper.

A. Yeah.

Q. OK. Well, in any case I'll probably come and see you next year to see what's happened.

A. Yeah, fine.

Q. Very nice to meet you.

A. And you.

Q. OK. Bye.

A. Bye. Good luck.