

LSFS25 20.6.1989

Tia

Q. ...from the beginning, can you just tell me a bit about your family, like who you live with and -

A. I live with my mum and my sister. My sister's fifteen, one year younger, I'm the oldest.

Q. And have you ever lived with your dad or is -

A. Well my mum and dad got divorced when I was eight so he lives with my brother. I've got a brother as well ...

Q. Does he live with you too?

A. No, he lives with his mum. So we all meet together on a Sunday, come together.

Q. What do you do on a Sunday?

A. Well, not much, we just - sometimes we watch television - because I like training and stuff like that, my sister doesn't like it, so me and my brother go track running and badminton and swimming, and then we come home and watch television, and then that's it, and then we go home. Quite boring really.

Q. Does your dad come along to that as well?

A. Yeah, he takes us.

Q. So he takes you swimming or whatever you do. Does your mum go too?

A. No. She likes it anyway - she says she can relax and do what she likes on a Sunday without us there.

Q. Like 'cos she's got rid of you, sort of thing.

A. Yeah.

Q. What does your mum do?

A. She works at [SECRETARIAL ROLE]. And she's doing [HIGHER EDUCATION COURSE].

Q. What in?

A. I don't really know, I think it's [SUBJECT].

Q. And what does your dad do?

A. I don't know, I think he's an .. [ELECTRONICS], that's what I think he does. I don't really ask.

Q. You're not really interested?

A. Well, it's something I probably won't understand it anyway if he tells me, so I don't really bother.

Q. And do you do any work, sort of paid work?

A. I work for [SUPERMARKET 1] now, I joined about a month ago now. It seems longer than that. I used to work in [SUPERMARKET 2] before I joined [SUPERMARKET 1]. I only work there because they pay well, that's the only reason I go there.

Q. What, [SUPERMARKET 1] pays better?

A. It pays better than any of the other supermarkets.

Q. Is that like shelf-stacking or cashier -

A. No, cashier.

Q. Cashier.

A. I don't like it...

Q. Do you do that on a Saturday?

A. Tuesday and Saturday all day and they give you overtime if you like.

Q. And what are you doing here?

A. Two A-levels, English and Sociology. And - oh I did two GCSEs 'cos I messed up my Maths last year so I did it again, and I did a new subject called Science, Technology and Society.

Q. What, that's for GCSE?

A. ...

Q. So what do you want to do eventually?

- Q. I don't really know what job I want, I know that next year I wanna do a degree course in Business Studies which I think is gonna be quite interesting. But I don't really know what job, I don't even know what jobs that leads to. It sounds interesting to me.
- Q. Would you stay in London for that?
- A. I suppose so. I wouldn't mind moving out a bit - I don't know, I think I'd be a bit scared to move away from home, I'll probably just stay and get into a university in London or whatever it is ...
- Q. And have you got lots of friends here?
- A. I met quite a few people, it's really weird, it seems like such a quick time to meet new people and become friends with people in such a short time. But I sort of go round with a crowd of people here and like I don't know anybody 'cos I'm the only person from ... who came here, so on the first day I didn't know anybody and I know quite a few people now. Most people around seem to sort of -
- Q. 'Cos I gather it's only been open a year.
- A. Yeah.
- Q. So are you part of the first year?
- A. Yeah. I mean everybody else knew everybody else ... but I was like an exception 'cos I wanted to do A-levels and they wouldn't let me do it in ... so I came here.
- Q. So are most of your friends kind of girls or boys or mixed?
- A. Well, there's a group of people I go round with and they're like girls and boys and then I've got two friends from ... I was with most of the year, just two girls, and that's it.
- Q. And what do you tend to do with them?
- A. I mean like last week we went to a party or they go round to my house and we stay up and we talk or whatever, and we sit about, watch telly or we might go out sometimes ... might go out to a party or something and then come back and stay up when we get here. That's it really. We don't really go out of our circle, we don't go to any discos or anything like that, we more or less just stay in our own circles... went to the park, middle of the night we just sat in the park, we played music and ... and stuff and that was it.
- Q. But you didn't get moved on, sort of vagrants or anything like that.
- A. No. No, we was on ...
- Q. How many of you?
- A. About nine of us. It was quite good 'cos you can talk to all of them ... it's quite interesting, to meet new people.
- Q. What sort of thing do you talk about?
- A. Everything. We talk about more or less gossip, mostly gossip, gossip about what everybody else is doing, or who's going out with who or whatever, or who said what to who. That's about it. Nothing much, nothing interesting really.
- Q. Is that you and your girlfriends or -
- A. All of us together.
- Q. So it doesn't matter if there's boys or girls, you still talk about who's going out with who or -
- A. Yeah. Yeah, but we don't talk about us ourselves, like we don't say, "we're going out with so and so", you know, we just talk about everybody else's -
- Q. Somebody who isn't there?
- A. Yeah. (Laughter)
- Q. And have you got anyone special?
- A. No. I don't wanna go out with anyone, wanna just do my work and then maybe I might go out with someone later on.
- Q. Is your work very important?
- A. This work is 'cos I want to - I don't wanna be living here very long, I'd rather leave, go to another country, go to America or somewhere else, I don't wanna stay in this country 'cos I think it's going downhill, it's not getting any better, nothing's improving, it doesn't seem to be, so go somewhere where the prospects seem a bit better and the money's better and I can have a big house and a car -everything.
- Q. And have you had a boyfriend before at all?

- A. No, no.
- Q. So has there been anyone you've actually fancied?
- A. Yeah, I fancied - I mean you fancy people and they sometimes they - most of the time when I fancy them, they usually ask me but I say no. I don't think it's 'cos I don't want to, sometimes I want to, but I just don't, I just say no anyway. I don't know. Sometimes I think about that, I think, why did I say no? ...
- Q. What, you can't change your mind?
- A. No. Well I can if I want to, but I never do.
- Q. What, is that 'cos you're a bit scared?
- A. I think it might be. I don't - I just think it's a bit strange 'cos sometimes I think, seventeen years old and you're not going out with anyone, what's going on? You know, everybody else is talking about all these people they're going out with and you're not going out with anyone, and I think well, we're not the same, we're all different people, take our own time.
- Q. 'Cos - the friends that you go out with, have they all got boyfriends, or some of them have got boyfriends?
- A. No, only one of them. No, two of them, yeah, two of them have. Two of them, like four people out of the group, go out with each other but then apart from me, all the rest of the girls in the group fancy one boy and he's already going out with someone and it's sort of strange 'cos they're always trying to get to him sort of thing.
- Q. Sounds a bit fruitless really. Why do you think you'd feel a bit nervous about going out with someone?
- A. Well I think - I don't know, I just do. Like I don't - usually - like I haven't been asked out by that many people 'cos I don't make myself an imposition, if I think they might like me I don't ... until they go and find someone else to pick on.
- Q. What, so you're making life difficult for yourself?
- A. I suppose so, but I mean I just - I get nervous, I get really nervous when I think someone's gonna ask me out so I just stay away from them and hopefully they won't come near me, so nothing ever comes of it in the end, which I don't mind - like.
- Q. Have you got any boys who are just friends?
- A. Yeah, quite a few people from the centre. 'Cos like some of them work where I work. Most of our group works at [SUPERMARKET 1] so we see each other and like they walk you home when it's dark and stuff.
- Q. Because that's quite nice, just to get to know people on a friendly basis, isn't it?
- A. Yeah. I think that's really - specially boys, 'cos I was really nervous of boys, I went to a all-girls school, I didn't know any boys until I came here and, like I've got two boy cousins but I don't really see them, and that's the only boys - I only knew girls first off - so that's why I didn't have parties or anything like that, I wouldn't have a party 'cos I wouldn't have a party when you can't invite any boys, so just ...
- Q. Do you find it easier to chat to the boys that you know now or are you still a bit kind of nervous when you meet them or walk home with them?
- A. No, 'cos usually they're together, they're with someone else, I don't like to be just me and the boys, I never really talk to them when it's just me and them together.
- Q. So it's usually you and some other ... as well.
- A. Yeah. So it's different then, you don't have to talk to them, and I don't know what they're gonna say and I don't say anything, it goes quiet, I don't like it. Atmosphere -
- Q. So you think you're quite shy?
- A. Yeah. My friends say I am, they say when someone talks to me I go all quiet, or I just pretend I've got something else to do ... I think I'm very shy. I try not to let anybody else see, try to keep it to myself.
- Q. Are there times when you aren't shy - I mean are there times when you sort of make a lot of noise or are you very bouncy or -
- A. Yeah. Sometimes I get hyper-active and I do things, like on Saturday I just got this urge to go and ask someone to dance, I just got up and the whole party was empty and I thought if this boy says no I don't wanna dance, I'm gonna drop down dead, but he didn't, he danced with me. There's other times when I just sit there and be quiet on my own.

- Q. It takes quite a nerve on an empty sort of dance floor to ask someone to dance.
- A. Yeah. Well it was getting boring, we were there for ages and nobody was making a move, nobody was doing anything, so I just asked someone to dance. When I did it somebody else did it and somebody else did it, the place became crowded, so it didn't really notice that much.
- Q. Where was that?
- A. It was just a party, a friend's party. Not very good.
- Q. Are there a lot of parties going on at the moment?
- A. Well it's really weird 'cos like for years I didn't really go out anywhere, I used to be on my own like and I used to stay at home, but now, because I've got my friends here and then I've got my friends from my old school that I see quite often, so if I'm not going out one week with these friends, they want me to go out next week with the other friends, so like I don't get a rest, everybody else is moaning when they've missed a week out and I'm tired and everything 'cos I've been going out every week for the last two months.
- Q. So you're in demand really?
- A. Yeah (laugh)
- Q. So does that affect your schoolwork?
- A. Well, not really, I try not to let it because if I know I've got something to do, like when I had my exams on I didn't go out anywhere, just stayed in and revised. I haven't got any more exams, I just come in on Tuesdays and Thursdays so Saturdays, Sunday and I still have Monday to do any homework I have to do. That's fine for me.
- Q. Yeah, that's quite nice. Is it gonna be like that next year?
- A. I don't really know 'cos I wanna do a course maybe at ... just to build a bit my exam grades, a little bit better.
- Q. So this research is concentrating on relationships and what relationships are important and how you approach relationships; and what would you say was the most important relationship to you at the moment?
- A. My friends I think, very important because if you haven't got any friends and you see everybody else going out like and you're at home and you're just watching the television, it's not nice. It's horrible. And I've been without friends before because like at my old school nobody - like for whole, nearly the whole year I didn't have any friends at all, I didn't have anyone to talk to.
- Q. Why?
- A. They just went strange on me one day and nobody would talk to me, and it was like if one person doesn't talk to you who's the leader of the gang then nobody will talk to you. So it was - it wasn't very nice.
- Q. Was that when you first went there or was that -
- A. No, that was about the third year. I think it was the third year at school. And then my sister went through the same thing about two months ago, it's really weird. Like they're jealous. I can't see what they've got to be jealous about really but they seem to be -it's all a bit strange.
- Q. That must have been horrible for you.
- A. Yeah, it was.
- Q. And then it suddenly changed?
- A. Yeah, the next minute they're all friends, it's like oh, it's not our fault that we weren't talking to you, we just weren't talking to you 'cos so-and-so wasn't talking to you. And if you don't talk to them, you know what it's like without friends, so you talk to them anyway even though you don't like it. And then when I moved into the upper school, new people moved in so I just went with the new people who were there.
- Q. It must change your view of it when people that you thought were your friends -
- A. Yeah. 'Cos I mean you think people are your friends and you tell them things and tell them sort of private secrets or whatever, and the next thing you know the whole group knows and they're all sneering, that's not very nice. You wonder what they're gonna tell next, or if they're gonna make up something that might be even more damaging to you.
- Q. Were they making up things about you?

- A. No, well I don't really know, they didn't really say anything, but I didn't hear anything that was made up. They just thought I was posh, they're saying "you're too posh"... go to some private school, it's alright to be posh there, this isn't the area to be posh, and that sort of thing.
- Q. That you were posh?
- A. Yeah.
- Q. Why did they think you were posh?
- A. I don't know. 'Cos I don't talk their way. 'Cos I can't stand the way they speak, they speak sort of saying things like (?) an-ting and I don't like it, 'cos I don't think it's - there's no need to say - talk like that ... that's a way of talking. I don't know, I don't think there's any need to talk like that because it doesn't mean anything, they say things like, "y'know what I mean... I was down so-and-so" - but I don't think there's any need for it, if you're gonna talk like that - I just don't see the need for it, because you can't get a job when you speak like that and it's not worth practising something like that, when it becomes a habit and you start moaning when you can't get a job or you can't get into a certain place you want to go to. I didn't like it.
- Q. Perhaps they thought you were snooty or something.
- A. Mm.
- Q. Well it's better here.
- A. Yeah, it's quite nice. The people are nice. Sometimes I think I should have went to - 'cos I went to (?) [NAME OF SCHOOL] 'cos I thought that was a good school, you know, a really good school to go to. I mean you find that [NAME OF SCHOOL] has got a really bad reputation with all the other schools.
- Q. Really?
- A. Yeah. I thought it was the (?) [NAME OF SCHOOL 2] that was the school that was the really bad reputation, that they'd sort of say it was the maternity wing sort of thing, but no - I think [NAME OF SCHOOL] it was really bad all along. I really wanted to leave at one point but said I'm not gonna let them make me leave. I think I should have, should have gone to [NAME OF SCHOOL 2] or another school, it would have been better.
- Q. Mm, if it was really upsetting you. Could you tell your family or anyone that -
- A. I told my mum. She went up there, but you can't make people talk to you... so it didn't really matter. I mean I did have some people to talk to, it wasn't like I was on my own every day, I had some friends, quiet people to talk to. It's not nice, 'cos you're walking down the road or something and you start becoming paranoid, you start - they're laughing, you know some people are laughing, you think oh they're laughing at me, and they're just laughing at a joke or whatever.
- Q. No, it's horrible. Do you get on well with your sister?
- A. I get on okay. I don't know, I mean we get on okay, but then when I see other sisters together I think then maybe we don't get on well enough. It's probably my fault though because I can't - I don't like people - I don't know, she gets on my nerves, she just gets to me, I don't like her to come too close to me or touch me or stuff like that, I cringe. She doesn't like it.
- Q. But do you not like anyone touching you or is it just her?
- A. It's her. I mean I don't like people kissing me and touching me and hugging me, I can't stand it, so -
- Q. Was that something that was done in your family or not done or -
- A. Oh, it was done, like my mum and all that, I just - I didn't like it, I still don't like it. My mum's sister's like that as well.
- Q. So do you think you'll like having a boyfriend if you've got kissing and hugging?
- A. I don't know. I mean like I suppose it's different, isn't it? I try and think of what it's gonna be like but I don't know, it could be completely different.
- Q. Do you ever think of what it would be like?
- A. Yeah, I mean like when we went to the party someone gave me his telephone number and I was thinking whether I should phone up or not today, but, I don't know, I probably won't phone him, knowing me.

Q. Would you like to phone him?

A. Yeah, I would like to phone him, you know, talk to him and all that sort of thing but I don't know - it's a bit scary as well 'cos you don't know what people are like, if they're mad or whatever, you phone them up and you go somewhere with them and then you just don't come home again, you don't - you're never seen again. You hear all these stories and stuff.

Q. But was this someone who you'd never seen before?

A. No, I'd never seen him before.

Q. I suppose you could make some sort of date that involved going out with other friends as well so you never had to actually be -

A. Just us. Yeah, probably. I probably will.

Q. So do you think you'll get married and have kids in the future?

A. I don't know. I think - I think I will get married. Probably. But I wanna get everything done first, I don't wanna get children - I don't wanna get pregnant or anything like that now. I just think that's a big waste. I'd rather get everything that I wanna have now and then get married and have children afterwards. 'Cos I think it'd be nice to have children and be able to look after them properly and give them everything, well not everything but most things they want, not spoilt.

Q. And do you think you'd actually have a sexual relationship before you got married or -

A. Yeah, I think so. Even though I don't know what it's like. I mean, people say they enjoy it, it's not worth - you might get someone who you think might not be able - might not be your sort of person, when you become sexual with them, might not be right for you, and you don't know that and when you're married it's just too late. I don't wanna get married and get divorced, I wanna get married and be married for ever.

Q. Is that how you've always felt about marriage?

A. Yeah. 'Cos my parents are divorced and - I don't know, it's not worth it. It's good when you've got both parents, I think. It's lucky for me 'cos most of my friends they just haven't got any fathers - well, they don't see their fathers for years, but I see my father every Sunday. So it's quite good, I mean I can tell him things, but I still think it would be better if he was living in the house with us ... much better.

Q. So you'd like them to be back together again really?

A. Well, not really, not my mum and dad. I wouldn't mind if my mum got married again but I don't think my mum and dad are right together.

Q. Did they row?

A. Yeah. Argue, all the time. Sort of drives me mad at my house 'cos my mum and dad used to argue, now my mum and sister argue all the time, it just drives me crazy. They argue 'cos she does silly things and they just argue over nothing. I can't stand it. I can't stand people arguing.

Q. Do you shout at them?

A. No, I don't shout 'cos I might get shouted back at, I just go in my room and close the door.

Q. And shut it out?

A. Yeah. But then I always get brought into it 'cos my sister thinks I'm perfect and my mum always brings me up, TIA doesn't do so and so and so, and then I'd get sort of blamed - well not blamed but, well I'm not TIA and so and so and so and so. My name always gets dragged into it somewhere along the line. 'Cos my sister, I think she might resent me when she gets older 'cos she'll think that she's been compared to me all the time.

Q. Things like kind of learning about sex and sex education, did you have much of that at school at all?

A. We don't - we learnt it - because every term we'd have something different and like, you know, we learnt about it for the whole term, all the contraceptive methods, pregnancy, everything, we learnt really thoroughly; and we just didn't learn about - we learnt about gay people and whatever. You know like we had speakers come in and talking about why they think they're so and so or like how they began to know and sort of find out, so you don't have to - you don't despise them 'cos... you just don't understand, I suppose. I mean

I don't understand properly but - I know that, but if that's the way they are, that's the way they are. As long as they don't do it on me, you know, I don't mind.

Q. Was it interesting having speakers in about things like that?

A. Yeah, because if someone's telling you all the time, telling you, telling you that people do this and people do that, it goes in one ear and out the other, but if someone's telling - sort of telling you and being there and being proof, it does happen. 'Cos we had a girl, a girl from our school, she wasn't supposed to speak or anything but then she started talking about how she became pregnant, she had an abortion and then you think, well I'm not gonna let myself get into that sort of situation, so you become like, often you become more careful. So that's quite good, to see living proof of it.

Q. Yes, rather than someone talking the kind of theory of it you mean. Was that at [NAME OF SCHOOL]?

A. Yeah. We haven't had any sex education here at all.

Q. Do you think there ought to be?

A. I think there should be, because I think three people have left here pregnant already and stuff like that, and ... - well specially downstairs in the common room you don't know who's going out with who because they're all swapping against each other like, so I think they should be told, you know, or should be warned against it. Specially AIDS.

Q. Did they teach you about AIDS at all?

A. Yeah, we had a video, it was really good. 'Cos they were all in the wine bar talking about AIDS and then they met two people who had AIDS so it was really interesting, the video. They were like eighteen and nineteen the people, all talking about it. But we didn't really - we didn't learn about systems and everything, immune systems and stuff, we just were told that people got AIDS, you know, if they became promiscuous they got AIDS and it was mostly gay people men - who started AIDS and stuff like that. That's all we learnt. That was AIDS for us.

Q. So is that all that you know of or have you learnt other things since?

A. No. No, I read a - I read it up like, and I did a project on it as well at school. I wanted to know more anyway.

Q. So do you know how it's passed on and things like that?

A. Well I mean, I know what they've said in the medical books but I don't think they know what they're talking about properly themselves so - I don't think anyone should be quoting them saying that, you know, maybe it's passed through blood or maybe it's passed through - because I don't think they know. One minute they're saying it can't be passed through by kissing or whatever, then they might be saying yeah it can, swimming pools and stuff like that before - they should do proper tests - but they don't even know what they're testing so they can't find out. We'll have to wait a while and just take the consequences, I think. Or try and do something to stop, slow down the process. I don't think there's anything else that can be done apart from that.

Q. So how do you think we can protect ourselves against it?

A. We're gonna just have to stick to one partner. I think a lot of people are gonna become celibate because of it, not - or, you know, try not to become so promiscuous. I mean we've got stupid people who think, I won't get AIDS, I don't care, I won't get it, and they're the people who are making it worse for everybody because they'll get it and pass it on to somebody else. And you've got people who are quiet, and they - who might have it but they don't tell anybody, and they still sleep with other people. That's really dangerous as well 'cos that's - killing people, I think, that's knowing, I mean you're giving them a death sentence. That's really wicked.

Q. Mm. Do you feel very aware of AIDS as something, you know, that you'd think of if you were going into a relationship with someone?

A. Yeah. But then I don't think there's anything you can do about it really, because I mean I suppose the man could wear a condom or whatever but then you've got things like - right, the girl might say I'm not gonna sleep with you for six months and then you're gonna get AIDS test, you're gonna have it now; then he could be going behind her back and going and sleeping with someone else. It doesn't show up for six months so you don't know.

And then, you know, you've got AIDS or whatever and you've passed it on to someone else. You've got blood donors and stuff as well.

Q. But do you think wearing a condom would help?

A. I don't really know. I mean I suppose so but then - yeah, it probably would help but then like there's other situations, like blood, haemophiliacs and stuff like that, giving blood, and if they can't test them blood can't be kept for a very long - well, I don't really know, I suppose it could be. I think - I'm not sure if blood can be kept for a long time, so you've got blood that's going into other people's bodies and stuff like that.

Q. But if you were just having, say, a relatively straightforward relationship, so that we're not particularly talking about having blood transfusions or anything like that, would you think that you could protect yourself against that?

A. Yeah but then I'd be thinking of a condom so that I wouldn't get pregnant more than if I was gonna get AIDS.

Q. So pregnancy would be more important?

A. Yeah. You - you thinking about AIDS and ... 'cos you - I'm not sure, I mean I haven't seen - they don't really report about people sixteen or seventeen with AIDS. You don't think of anyone your own age with AIDS already, you think that's too soon, they can't have AIDS ... it's only people of twenty-three and twenty-four who get AIDS, about that age it starts.

Q. So do you think people, because of that, feel that it's not really very real?

A. No, it doesn't seem very real because you've got no one around, well nobody says anything if they've got it, so you don't know who's got it and who hasn't. So you think, well it's not gonna happen to me, and nobody else around me's got it so I don't think it's gonna happen. Not yet. So you can do what you want now, enjoy yourself -

Q. And pay for it later.

A. I suppose so.

Q. Who do you think's most at risk from AIDS?

A. Well, they say homosexuals are and specially bisexuals, because - well they're the passers, they're the carriers. Not the carriers, but they pass it on to other people so that it can come into women as well, because they said that AIDS only started with men, only men had it, so they must be most at risk.

Q. So in a way kind of everyone's at risk, in that case.

A. So - everybody's got the same chance of catching AIDS off someone else.

Q. It's a bit hairy really, isn't it?

A. Yeah, it's a bit nerve-racking, to think you just die because you went to bed with somebody and you didn't take the right precautions.

Q. Mm. Are any of your friends kind of having sex with their boyfriends?

A. Well, I don't know about this group but I know that - I only know one person really, actually, I only know one person, that's my cousin. She was a bit wild, she was probably having sex from about twelve or something like that, going out and all that stuff.

Q. Do you know if she takes any precautions?

A. I think she takes the pill. But I don't think she takes - don't think she makes her boyfriend wear a condom or anything like that.... well I don't think she's thought about it, she's just thought about getting pregnant, that's her first priority.

Q. Do you feel you could ask a boy to wear a condom?

A. I think - I think I would because if I was going out with someone like that and I thought I was gonna have sex with them, then it would be - I'd probably know them very well and probably be able to talk about it to them quite confidently, and not be nervous or whatever. And I would ask them to - I would -

Q. 'Cos then - do you have an idea of say how long you might go out with a boy before you'd think of having a sexual relationship?

A. No, I don't know. I don't know about that because I think left to the girl, most of the time, they'd probably just wait for ever. Just wait. But usually the boy wants to have sex more than the girl does - well, not who wants to, who says they want to. The girl doesn't say anything ... because ... you know, it's a boy's role to sort of talk about that sort of thing...

- Q. Is that what's generally thought, that it is the boy's role to actually introduce that?
- A. It's supposed to be the girl's place to just endure, sort of, the boy asks and asks and asks and then the girl just gives up in the end and says alright, then. That's expected, like.
- Q. What, she finally says yes?
- A. Yeah, she finally says yes and then it's all happy, everything, the boy's really happy and he goes really happy. And she's depressed the next day, that's what it's supposed to be like.
- Q. Why is she depressed the next day?
- A. Because she thinks, well I've lost my virginity, and she's sad and everything. That's what most people say, or that's what most girls that I talk to say.
- Q. Is that what they say?
- A. Yeah.
- Q. Well, that seems a bit sad. So suppose a girl actually wanted to have sex with her boyfriend, would it not be done for her to introduce the subject?
- A. I suppose - yeah, I mean I think it would be. But for me, it would have to be a really good relationship with someone first, to be able to talk to them and get along with them well before I had sex with them, I think. So it would have to be right for me.
- Q. So it would be quite important to have trust...?
- A. Yeah. I don't want anyone going back and talking to their friends about what they did with me.
- Q. And what do you think sexual experience might be like?
- A. I don't know, I mean I don't really think about that, I don't think what it's actually gonna be like, I just mostly think about how nervous you're gonna be when it actually, you know, when you actually get to the chance to do it, and whatever. And where you're gonna be, 'cos like for a girl my age now, and like if I'm going out with someone my own age, there wouldn't be any where to go, and wherever you went you'd be really nervous, it'd be sort of hurried probably. Because I mean I'm not gonna do it in my own house. No, not while my parents are there, and I wouldn't do it in his house. You don't particularly wanna do it in a car or anything like that, so -
- Q. So yes, where else is there? Which isn't probably the best place to have your first experience of sex.
- A. No. 'Cos you'd be really nervous I think, you'd be scared that someone's gonna catch you and moan and -
- Q. I mean do you think you might enjoy it or is it something, like you said, a girl's got to endure?
- A. No, I think that - yeah, I think you would enjoy it, if you did it - well, if I did it and I didn't enjoy it I wouldn't do it again, sort of thing - well you probably would, but just...
- Q. But would you do it because the boy expected you to do it?
- A. No. If I want to do it, I'll do it in my own time, like at my own pace sort of thing, and if the person doesn't want to wait to that certain time, then they're probably not the right person for me, if they can't wait for me. Can't be, you know, very nice or very thoughtful, I don't think.
- Q. So if a boy that you were with sort of wanted to have sex with you or something after a few weeks and you didn't, would you -
- A. No, I would just say no. I would tell them why, I wouldn't just say, you know, no and change the subject. If I'd say no I'd tell them why and everything and then, you know -
- Q. Even if (?) you'd really like to?
- A. Yes, I think so. Because it's my worst fear, I do not want to get pregnant, I really don't, and when you hear about all these contraceptives - and people taking contraceptives and they don't work, and things like that, and you do get pregnant. That'd probably be the reason why I'd say no, because I didn't wanna get pregnant, even though they probably would work and probably I would take the pill, I'd still be scared.
- Q. So is that - that's your worst fear?
- A. Mm. I don't want to get pregnant, no.
- Q. Why do you think it's so kind of frightening?

- A. Because I've known people, in my old - especially in [NAME OF SCHOOL], I've known a few people, and these people are really bright, they're really bright people, and then I meet them again and they're pushing a baby in a pram ... a child and - nothing, they've probably got no GCSEs, they've got nothing to fall back on, they've got no job, they've just got this child they'll have to bring up. I suppose you could have an abortion but then they say that you get guilt feelings and all that sort of stuff as well.
- Q. Mm. Would you be able to have an abortion?
- A. I think so, yeah. I mean I'm not against it, I think that's what most people should do at my age, I think they should have an abortion. I don't think it's a good idea to have the child at all, I think it's stupid.
- Q. Well it's rather early to be having that responsibility, if you want to do other things then it's very difficult to do them straight away, you'd have to wait some time.
- A. They can't be very responsible people if they got their self pregnant in the first place, to be looking after a child really.
- Q. So other aspects of kind of knowing about sex and things, have you learnt anywhere else other than school; do you talk to anyone else, like your mother or friends or other relatives -
- A. No. I mean I talk to my friends - we don't really talk about sex.
- Q. What, not to your friends?
- A. No. Don't talk to anybody. It's just what I've learnt at school really. That's it.
- Q. So do you know about kind of other like different sorts of sex?
- A. Like what, what do you mean?
- Q. Well, if I said kind of what do you think it would be like to have sex with somebody, I mean what would you assume I meant by that?
- A. Just - well I'd assume you meant with a man or guy or something.
- Q. Mm. But what would you assume I meant you were doing together?
- A. Just having sex, normal sex, like not anything weird. I don't really know what you mean, I just think, just normal sex, that was it.
- Q. What, sexual intercourse?
- A. Yeah. Not anything else, I wouldn't think of oral sex or anything like that, it's just horrible.
- Q. But has that ever been sort of discussed or -
- A. No. Well, most people just say oral sex... you know, ugh, so you don't really think about it, you just think of it as there, that's what's been even told, or when anybody's ever said it they've said it in a negative way.
- Q. Oh. 'Cos that's often supposed to be one of the ways that a lot of women get a lot more pleasure than from actual intercourse, you know straight intercourse itself. So it's - it's sometimes a shame that it's sort of learnt in terms of being something you cringe at, because there's aspects of that that women obviously get a lot of pleasure out of, even if say they get less pleasure out of the sex that men get a lot of pleasure out of.
- A. Mm.
- Q. But presumably there's not much kind of space where you can talk about things like that.
- A. No. No, 'cos you don't - well at least not my - I don't really talk about it with my good friends either, we just don't talk about that sort of thing.
- Q. Nor things, sort of other things on the same lines like masturbation or -
- A. No, we don't talk about it at all. Well, we talk about the guys doing it, we don't talk about the girls doing it, no, it's not said.
- Q. It's not said. Do you think it's done though?
- A. I don't know. Not by me but I don't think, I mean - no, I don't think they do it. I don't think so. Most of them just can't wait to get their boyfriends. When they've had their boyfriends they just don't give themselves space, they just run and get another boyfriend straight away, so they don't really talk about it, and they don't like to talk about their - nobody asks questions about what they do in private with their boyfriends, so it's just not talked about really.
- Q. So unless you actually read books it's a bit hard to sort of find out what people might be doing or enjoying or not enjoying or whatever.

- A. Unless you read books you won't know a lot, that's true. Or you might hear about it - I don't know how you'd - my - I mean films these days, like 18 films and things like that, talk about it a lot. But that would be it. 'Cos the other day me and my friend - well, my friend went to see a blue movie -
- Q. What, on at the cinema or -
- A. - just a video -
- Q. Just a video, yeah -
- A. - she went to see, but I wouldn't get out of my ... shop 'cos girls don't get blue movies out, so we went to these guys' house from here, at the centre, and they had some there so she saw it. But I mean unless you see things like that, that's it, you don't know.
- Q. Did you see it?
- A. I saw it, but I didn't particularly want to see it, I just got up and went and got a drink or something. And she didn't watch that much of it, she didn't like it.
- Q. No, I wouldn't think that's the best way to learn about it actually. Do you think boys know about sex very much, like there's more to sex than just putting it in sort of thing?
- A. Yeah, I think they - I don't think they do know, I think they like to think they know more than girls do, but I don't think they do know, or a lot of them say, you know, they've had so and so girls but I don't think they have. No, I just think they're - most of the boys in this place are virgin; 'cos ... they asked some boys and they said, yeah, I'm virgin. And you get some who say, let me think now, they go like this and they say, ten, I've slept with ten girls, or whatever. You say, yeah I believe you, sort of thing. Boasters sort of thing.
- Q. Yeah, a lot of them like to say they have, whether they have or not.
- A. Most of them at the centre - I mean most guys here haven't even had - well, they've got girlfriends now....
- Q. What were you saying, most of the boys here have got girlfriends?
- A. Yeah, they've got girlfriends now they've come here, but then most of the boys went to private schools as well - not private schools, just boys' schools, and like they say they've been out with so and so girls but they haven't had any more contact than most girls who have been to all-girls' schools have.
- Q. Right. And they probably don't know how to sort of give a girl pleasure -
- A. No.
- Q. - sort of at all.
- A. They don't talk about it. If they're - if they're talking about it they're boasting but they're not gonna say no, I don't know anything about it.
- Q. No.
- A. 'Cos they'd look stupid, or they'd think they would.
- Q. Would you, in kind of sex education programmes at school, like to have more things that were kind of to do with things outside straight kind of "what is intercourse?" and -
- A. I don't know. 'Cos I think maybe it might be better if you just learned about - like as it sort of happened. If you learnt about why it's actually happening I think it might be better 'cos then you can see - you don't get any negative attitudes and you just wouldn't get anything else that's pressuring you into what's right and what's wrong sort of thing, so you can learn about it as it happens.
- Q. So you don't have any set expectations.
- A. No.
- Q. Do you think you're a person who takes risks at all in your life?
- A. No, I'm not because - that's why if I know a boy's interested in me I stay away, or I don't let them come near me, I hide and these sort of things, I do stupid things, I hide from them just so they'll go away, and I won't have to, you know, talk to them or whatever. I don't really take that many risks, but then sometimes I do mad and crazy things, whatever.
- Q. What's a mad and crazy thing?
- A. Like walking across the dance floor to ask someone to dance -
- Q. Yeah, which is a risk in a way 'cos he might say -
- A. - no, and then I'd have to walk out because I couldn't take the laughing.
- Q. Can you ever see yourself taking risks with things like contraception or -

- A. No, no I don't think so.
- Q. Like if you met someone and you thought, god, this guy's really great, you know, I really want to sleep with him or something, would you risk it or -
- A. Yeah but then - I think that I'd have to carry my own condoms, I'm sorry, because I don't care what anybody says, they can say what they like but they'd be the ones getting pregnant and I wouldn't be getting pregnant afterwards, or I wouldn't be getting AIDS and they would, so the laugh would be on the other side.
- Q. So you wouldn't worry about actually carrying condoms around?
- A. No. I wouldn't tell anybody I was carrying them... I would just keep them in my purse or whatever.
- Q. No, it's much better to feel safe.
- A. Yeah.
- Q. But do you take any other sorts of risks, like smoking, drinking, things like that?
- A. Well I don't smoke, 'cos I don't like it, it makes me feel ill. I'm allergic to it anyway so it's no good. And I can drink as much as I like, I don't get drunk. I don't like to see people get drunk. And I've never been drunk before, and I can drink, I can really drink a lot of drink -
- Q. What do you drink?
- A. Well, usually I might drink Babycham or whatever, which isn't very strong anyway, but I could drink rum and black and I still wouldn't get drunk. I can drink quite a lot of that, I could drink a whole bottle and I wouldn't get drunk. It's quite lucky for me.
- Q. But do you often drink rum and black and things like that?
- A. No, usually when I go out I probably have a Babycham or a Martini or something, something light. I don't get tipsy really. I see people getting drunk and acting stupid and falling around and like they might go to a party and they go away for ages and like that's how quite a few people got pregnant at the school because they get drunk and then they'd go and have sex with someone and they'd be pregnant. Most of them had abortions anyway.
- Q. What, and came back to school?
- A. Yeah. A weekend away sort of thing.
- Q. So what about things like drugs?
- A. No, I don't get in - I'm not in contact with anyone who uses drugs. Some - there's people who smoke weed and cannabis and stuff here but - I come up in rashes and stuff, like my dad as well, comes up in rashes if we go near it or smell it or anything, yeah.
- Q. You don't actually have to smoke it?
- A. No. And it makes me dizzy, it makes me sort of go high if I take other people's smoke in, I have to stay away from it when I go out. Drugs is no problem.
- Q. Where do your parents come from?
- A. They both come from [THE CARIBBEAN].
- Q. Have they been here a long time?
- A. Yeah. Well, my mum came here when she was three and my dad came here when he was five. So that's it -
- Q. Basically all their life.
- A. Yeah.
- Q. And do they have a particular religion or anything like that?
- A. No. My mum used to make me go to church.
- Q. Did she?
- A. Yeah.
- Q. What did you think to that?
- A. Well this was when I was about seven, six or seven, and you don't - it only started when we was about six and it lasted till we was six and a half, 'cos we just didn't want to get up in the morning or whatever, so we just didn't go. But I don't believe you have to go to church to believe in God or whatever, because there's people who come round and they are just so hypocritical, they're talking about God all the time and they went to church and they do this and that, and they're wicked people, they're really - really wicked and they

chat about other people's business more than people who don't go to church. So as long as you believe, or don't believe...

Q. Yeah. Does religion kind of influence you at all in the way you think?

A. No. No. I mean my mum says things like if she thought you were lying, she say you know God's watching you or whatever, but I mean it doesn't really do anything, you don't talk about God. It's just something that's unsaid. I mean mum doesn't ask us if we believe in God. I don't really know why I believe in God, I just do.

Q. If you had to describe yourself as a person, how people might describe you, what would you say?

A. Everybody says I'm shy, really shy, so ... shy. To me there's two me's, there's me that people see and there's me-me. And the me people see is me who's quiet and doesn't say much, and then there's me, that I know I am, who's boisterous and loud and jumps about and that's what my family sees. That's what people here, you know, like my family and my close friends see, but everybody else sees serious me... serious and strict and stuff. I don't mind.

Q. Is that how you quite like -

A. Yeah. I wouldn't mind being a bit more - it's just that I can't be boisterous and loud and stuff like that, I just - I can't do it when I'm not with people I know. So usually I'm in the background a lot, just watching people.

Q. Do you learn a lot from watching people?

A. I think you learn more watching other people doing things than you do if you did it yourself or was actually doing it yourself, because I could see that getting pregnant might ruin my life, smoking, getting drugs, you know,... ruins you, drinking a lot ruins you, without having to actually go through it myself. It's quite good watching in the background.

Q. If you know people really well, like do you get a bit more kind of loosened up then?

A. Yeah, like my friends I can ... I loosen up, we talk about different things, or like we act differently. We might be on a bus and make so much noise and stuff or walking down the street. We're different people. Then when I'm with my friends I'm sort of quiet, ladylike and stuff.

Q. But you didn't mind sort of talking to me about things like-

A. No, not really, no, it doesn't really bother me. I don't really get intimidated or nervous or... no, it doesn't bother me.

Q. What's the favourite things that you like to do with your friends?

A. I love sports, I like doing a lot of sports, that's what I do. But my - at least these people I go with now, here, they come badminton and stuff, that's all they do, they get tired and stuff so they don't wanna do anything else, but like my other friends wouldn't do anything and so I wouldn't do anything either. So with my other friends I go to a lot of house parties and stuff like that and I quite like it. But they're a different sort of friends from the friends I've got from here.

Q. So you've got two sets of friends.

A. Mm. It's nice.

Q. Are you the same person with both?

A. I think so. Well with my other set of friends, they know me more because they've known me seven years or whatever so I'm quite different with them, they know like what I'm like, I can tell them lies or I can act differently, do things I wouldn't normally do and they won't say anything 'cos they think (?) oh that's probably how she is.

Q. Do you meet new people who aren't to do with school at all?

A. Not really, I mean not from the centre. I mean the centre is... I mean I've got other friends now because these people, my other friends from before, they still go to [NAME OF SCHOOL] sixth form so they've got new friends and they go round to their houses and when I go there I meet them, or I meet some of the friends from here, their friends as well. Like I did last week, I met about five new people to talk to. A few of them live where I live but I - I see them about but I don't really say anything to them. It's nice to have a lot of friends I think -

Q. Yeah

- A. - and some people to talk to or visit anytime, just pop round.
- Q. Yeah, especially if they live near where you do. Do you find you tend to go round with a mixed group or are they sort of more black than white or more white than black?
- A. Well from here it was so funny 'cos I took them home the other day and - 'cos there's one white person, one Indian person, two half-caste people, one Chinese person, one black person, an African person and like my mum said you've got a real mixed bunch there, sort of thing. All different religions and races. And then my other friends from [NAME OF SCHOOL], they're all black apart from one person, one person is white I think. So - I mean like I think it's good to mix with other races as well 'cos you can understand - black people are very racist against their own - not against white people in particular but against their own people, against other black people.
- Q. Really?
- A. Yeah. I mean if I was watching a programme I do it myself. There could be a whole cast of people and I'll pick out the black person and say ugh, why did they choose that black person?... Black people don't like African people, a lot of them, so there can be a big conflict between them.
- Q. Is (?) JAMILE the same group as you or is she in a different group?
- A. No, I see - I know JAMILA 'cos I know DALIA who's supposed to be here today. I could have sworn I met JAMILE before somewhere, before last year, but I knew DALIA from my primary school and then I met her again here, so - I mean she's just someone I know, she's not my really close friend.
- Q. So she had a different group of -
- A. Yeah, she -
- Q. - girlfriends that she goes around with sort of thing and you have your group that you go around -
- A. Yeah, but she goes round with DALIA and LUCY and I talk to DALIA and LUCY quite a bit because they work with me in [SUPERMARKET 1]. So I do quite a bit of mixing.
- Q. Well that's good because then you're not dependent on one group.
- A. No. If they stop talking to you, you've got someone else to talk to (laughter).
- Q. Who's the person you would confide in most, like if you had anything you wanted to talk about or ask about that was very personal?
- A. Yeah, I'd probably talk to my friend DANIELLE who went to [NAME OF SCHOOL]. Talk to her. But I don't really see her very often these days 'cos she goes to [NAME OF SCHOOL] and I come here and I can't get up there 'cos I've got work to do and stuff. But when I see her we talk.
- Q. So more than your mum or people up here.
- A. Yeah, I don't really - I talk to my mum but I don't talk to her about boyfriends and all that 'cos I can't stand it. Like I know if I had - if a boy phoned up my house, like sometimes they do, and she keeps going on and on about it, laughing and joking, ha ha ha, so and so phoned, ah, she's got a boyfriend. So I just don't tell anybody, I just keep it quiet, it gets on my nerves.
- Q. And has she ever talked to you about sex, things like that?
- A. No. No, she doesn't talk to me about sex. She told me about periods and that sort of thing, which I thought was quite good, 'cos some people I knew just didn't know until it happened to them.
- Q. Came as a bit of a shock.
- A. Yeah. She told me about that. But she didn't really talk about sex.
- Q. Does she assume that you know?
- A. Yeah, she knows we know.
- Q. Would you talk to your sister about it do you think, at all?
- A. No, not really. But she said like - she's had lots of boyfriends and stuff. She's younger than me.
- Q. So she's had more boyfriends than you?
- A. Yeah. Yeah, she's had quite a few boyfriends. She's quite popular actually. But then she's loose - not loose, sort of - I don't know, I'm a bit tense all the time, I'm tense I think, and

she's not, so she can mix in with people quite easily. It takes me a while to make sure nobody's, you know, nobody's sort of talking about me or spying or whatever.

Q. So you wait really till you know the people better.

A. Yeah, make sure I know them, 'cos I don't want - like if I tell them anything I don't want everybody else knowing.

Q. ... Is there anything else you can think of about kind of relationships and how you sort of look at relationships?

A. I mean I don't know - when I think of - I don't like to think of having a boyfriend.

Q. You don't?

A. I think when I - I get - I don't know, boyfriends don't seem to fit into my picture sometimes.

Q. Well in a way there's no reason why they should -

A. No.

Q. - yet... there's a lot of pressure -

A. It just seems - it just seems like I'll do my work, go away and probably just get married. I don't really think of having a boyfriend next. You know, everybody here, nearly everybody is trying to set me up for so and so, another person, you know they all do, I don't like it. But they still do it anyway.