

**LJH32 8.9.1989**

**Siobhan**

Q: What we are interested in in this piece of research is how young women feel about their relationships, and what are important relationships to them. Which would you say are the most important relationships that you have? - any kind of relationships, not necessarily...

A: Family ones. Best friend. And then boyfriend.

Q: Right. In that order, do you think -

A: No, all three together.

Q: Yeah.

A: I think... the best friend ones like more beneficial.

Q: What's important about that kind of relationship for you?

A: Well, we're very open with each other anyway. With problems that you wouldn't necessarily go home with, with your friends...

Q: Yeah, yeah. You say on the questionnaire that you spend a lot of time with a group of friends -

A: Well, see, we all live together, girls and boys. I mean, an awful lot of my best friends would be boys. But I'd never - I would never have a relationship with a friend...

Q: ... yeah. And is he - is he - yeah... bit of difficulty talking in the same way to men and boys as they do to girls and women. What about your family relationships, do you see them?

A: Well, they're at home -

Q: Yeah.

A: - so - well I mean, I usually do go home about every five or six weeks. But now I'm on the course, I mean, I'm not going to go home that often.

Q: No, you can't really...

A: We get on great, my mother's young, you know, so we go out drinking together.

Q: Yeah.

A: Invariably the tongue loosens and - but I don't think there's anything wrong with that. The next day both of us - "oh I shouldn't have said that", but I think it's fun what we do, you know.

Q: Mm, yeah. What about brothers and - brothers and sisters?

A: Well they're both younger and they're both... immature. I mean one's eighteen, and she's way ahead of herself, that's a girl, and another about twenty-two, he's very (?) strong, very quiet. And he's very late, you know, going out socially and that. We get on alright though.

Q: How long ago did you come over here?

A: About four years.

Q: Oh, quite a long - what were you doing before you did the course?

A: Well I did my training at home, my SEN training, and then I came over here to get onto a conversion course and now I've got onto...

Q: How do you find that one?

A: Great. Very stressful.

Q: Yeah?

A: ...

Q: Yeah? What sort of - what happened?

A: Well, just exams... crazy - I know I always get upset about - I did two papers the other day in the exam. One, God I done it brilliantly, and the other one I thought was a load of rubbish. I got a much, much higher per cent for the rubbish, and I'm just thinking, I'll go mad.

Q: Yeah.

A: If this is what nursing is, I'm leaving. The one that - the one that they thought wasn't as good, I mean I passed both, and I'm going to see them about it because I put in every single point that was relevant. Say I used some of things of the psychiatric... that should have got marked... It's not like - seclusion rooms - well I don't either, but they are used, so we can't... from that...

Q: Yeah... but it's a question of a sort of batch of material rather than -

A: I mean you can't be... give us a lecture. You know, you can never be biased or let your own sort of attitudes, you know, influence the way you look on... When I got home...

Q: Yeah, yeah, sure. Well you passed them both, that's -

A: I know, well, that's why I can...

Q: Yeah, yeah. Still I mean it is annoying if you... - I could never judge actually, I always used to think, oh my God, I've probably failed that, and then do quite well, you know. I just was in such a state of nerves when I was doing exams, I couldn't remember clearly what I'd written down and stuff like that.

A: I mean I got seventy-five percent for the second, and I still think it was rubbish!

Q: Pretty good.

A: ...

Q: Well, let's talk about more pleasant things. Let me ask you about your relationship with your current boyfriend.

A: Oh, well this is the business, this one. We'll get married and -

Q: Yeah.

A: But with the course and everything, I'm just not ready to just yet.

Q: Mm. How long have you known him?

A: I've been going out with him for about two years.

Q: And you met him over here?

A: Yeah.

Q: And -

A: Well, I actually knew all of his family very well except him.

Q: What, from home?

A: From here.

Q: From here. Is he from here?

A: Well, he's from home but he's living over here now.

Q: Yeah. And - it's a sexual relationship...?

A: Yeah.

Q: What made you decide - I mean when - when did you decide that it would be a sexual relationship? I mean did you spend did you spend time... quite long before or short or -

A: Well... as I put on the survey, or the questionnaire, I've had like two sexual relationships before. The first one - I always - I still say that if I had to live my life again, I wouldn't, before marriage.

Q: Yeah.

A: And I really - like I try to sort of enforce that on my sister. Not in a sort of judgmental way, but just from my experience. I definitely wouldn't enter it too early.

Q: Mm. What was sort of - what was the situation with the first?

A: I don't know, I just - well I (?) thought I was in love.

Q: Don't we all!

A: ...

Q: How old were you?

A: I think I was very easily influenced, I mean not as a rule, but then I went over. I went over to my friend's, and I said, "Guess what!" and I said "never!" You know, that was exact, my reaction, you know. And they said... Weeks later and I did it. I was in a state.

Q: At the time though, did - I mean who decided that you would make it into a sexual relationship? Was he putting pressure on you -

A: Yeah.

Q: - or did you decide?

A: I don't mean that horribly, because - I mean, my present boyfriend wouldn't care honestly if we never did. I mean, he doesn't think it's all-important. He likes it obviously, but I mean, he almost - I mean, he doesn't like me being on the pill at all, and would much rather that I did come off it because it - of the damage it does.

Q: The effects of it, yeah. Are you worried about that?

A: Not particularly, no. I mean I still smoke but - it's crazy. I mean I'm aware of the side-effects.

Q: Yeah. Would you - this first occasion when you started a sexual relationship, you were using contraception then, were you, or -

A: Not really. Condoms occasionally. It wasn't a very active sexual - sexually active relationship. I think we were both young...

Q: How old were you?

A: I was trying to work this out. I'm sure I was... Over here, that's old, but for home... which I think it's better. But - I mean, I don't think anyone's mature enough emotionally, and I think you have to be very emotionally, sort of, stable and mature to deal with the sexual implications... in a relationship.

Q: Were you worried at the time about pregnancy?

A: Oh yeah... As I say I mean it only - it didn't happen very often. I mean we were both living at home, in our separate homes... And the second and third... sort of... my turn.

Q: You decided that was what you wanted.

A: Well, I mean I didn't sort of say to them - you know what I mean.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: I mean I knew I was ready for it then. More so this time even than the last time.

Q: Yeah. And you get on very well with him.

A: Oh, brilliant.

Q: What about the sexual relationship, is that good, I mean -

A: Yeah. Well I mean I find with - I think women as a rule generally find it more comforting than pleasurable. Well that's talking to - you know - 'cos we're friends and that's what we all feel.

Q: Yeah.

A: But with him, I mean he's the same kind of - very soft.

Q: Do you think you find it more comforting than pleasurable?

A: Oh, yeah. Definitely...

Q: Had you been - within these other relationships, had you been aware of AIDS?

A: Well, you see that wasn't -

Q: Yeah.

A: - out then. No...

Q: When do you think you first heard about it?

A: Well, it's really only the last two years, as far as I'm aware, that I can remember. 'Cos like when I was nursing at home there was never any - there was legionnaire's...

Q: Yeah. Do you know much about it, about AIDS?

A: A fair amount. I think the public's still very ignorant. And I think that they can do with an awful lot more health education about it. I mean even nurses, sometimes, you know, talk and really argue about it.

Q: What do they say?

A: I mean if I got stuck - if I had a needle stick into me, I wouldn't really worry, because as far as I'm aware the chances are so remote - I mean especially if you wash it round, you know, sort of let some more blood come out after and that. But some people would be devastated. I know 'cos it's happened actually... just went crazy...

Q: Yeah. Well I suppose... but - but I mean, you're right, the chances are -

A: I mean, I think hepatitis really is much potentially, in our sort of line of work, more -

Q: - more of a danger, yeah.

A: Yeah, you're much more likely to catch - catch (?) herpes -

Q: Mm, yeah, and I suppose the same sort of -

A: - than AIDS.

Q: - rules of hygiene, that kind of thing, would cover you for both, wouldn't they? Have they done much about AIDS on the course at all?

A: Nothing.

Q: Nothing?

A: At all.

Q: Yeah. Well maybe they will.

A: ...

Q: Can you remember how you first heard about AIDS, I mean where and how?

A: Well it was the condom thing, you know?

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: ... Yeah, that must be the first. Because then, it was only then, I think, that it clicked with people. Promiscuity - I can't even talk right - you know, that they had to be much more aware during sexual relationships, that the risk was there where it was never thought of before or mentioned. And even - I mean people think that at work they could easily sort of - to catch it. And I think that sleeping around is - is a cert to get it. ... crazy.

Q: Yeah. So, what - what - I'll just ask you a straightforward question about AIDS - how does it - how does it spread? - AIDS.

A: How I believe?

Q: Yeah.

A: - well, through sleeping around and -

Q: Sex - yeah - but the specific -

A: Sperm.

Q: Yeah.

A: Carried in sperm and blood. And saliva...

Q: Yeah, that's what - that - that's what changes in the literature, doesn't it, sometimes you'd... pint and a half of saliva before you'd be able to transmit it or something. What about the difference between HIV and AIDS?

A: Well there isn't any, is there?

Q: Well, what is - give me what HIV is then. (laugh)

A: ...

Q: ... Well I'll tell you, shall I?

A: Yeah.

Q: I won't keep you in suspense.

A: I know it.

Q: Yeah, HIV is the virus, right, that gets - and that may or may not develop into the actual AIDS.

A: Yeah, the full-blown thing, yeah. 'Cos people can have - be HIV-positive but won't get the full-blown thing...

Q: Mm. But then they can spread it then.

A: Yeah.

Q: ... What did you - what did you think of the campaigns about health and sex education, AIDS education?

A: They were very good, but I mean, they only lasted sort of in between each commercial on TV. You'd get the AIDS one and the condom one, and that went on for about a month, and 'til now we haven't heard another thing about it again.

Q: Yeah, yeah, nothing around at all - not even many posters. Well, occasionally I've seen them in the tube, the one about "don't go far without one" and stuff like that.

A: I mean some of them were - that graveyard one was excellent, because it was so horrendous - and everyone was going (gasp), which I mean made the full impact that it was supposed to.

Q: What do you think when - a lot of that was around safe sex, the idea of safe sex. What do you think of when you say, "safe sex"?

A: Well, using a condom. That's it. It's only safe protection or - like...

Q: Can I ask you that a slightly different way round - what for you is sex? If somebody's talking about sex to you what do you think of? (pause) - It's not a trick question, it's just what you think -

A: Well, obviously it's gender or else intercourse, depending on the context of it.

Q: Yeah, oh yeah. But I was think- - yeah, I use sex and gender interchangeably for kind of gender things, but just sex... So, when you think about safe sex, would you think of any of the other sorts of things that you can do, sexual things that you can do, which don't include intercourse, for example? I mean, in these relationships that you had, before you had sex, were you - they were sexual relationships -

A: Oh, do you mean -

Q: You tell me.

A: Do you mean did we do anything else, apart from the sort of the whole -

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: No, not really.

Q: So you jumped straight in at the deep end sort of thing.

A: No, well I suppose there must have been - yeah, there was, there would have been... I just wanna think. Yeah.

Q: Other sorts of things.

A: But actually, probably ... for quite a while before we decided that we didn't... it happened.

Q: It happened. But - you didn't decide, you just -

A: Too much to drink, believe it or not -

Q: Yeah?

A: - which is absolutely dreadful.

Q: Yeah? This was the first time...?

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: And that is why - I mean I'm still really - I mean I'm twenty-four and I've sort of done a lot, I've lived a really good life, but I'm still really old-fashioned, believe it or not.

Q: Well I... what you're saying.

A: Yeah, from - and that's why I'm still really like ashamed. And, actually, most of my friends all say they really wish they never had. And I really, really wish I hadn't. I mean that's what I was saying, that if something did go wrong in this relationship that I'm in now, there's no way I would again until after I was married. But I mean - I mean this is what I used to say...

Q: What, you mean this is what you think but you don't know whether you could do it if -

A: No, just say something happened to this relationship and it split up, I definitely would not - and I mean it's not even the AIDS, it's just, sort of, my -

Q: Yeah, the way you feel about it, yeah.

A: I mean, I don't think it's a good idea really.

Q: So you haven't really - it's not so much worrying about AIDS or pregnancy or anything that's put you off -

A: No.

Q: It's more -

A: It's just my own -

Q: Yeah. Where do you think it comes from, that conviction?

A: Well, you see, I was brought up in a convent. Not - I went to school, was schooled by nuns in primary school, and then again in secondary school. I actually remember we were given some misleading...

Q: Well, I was gonna ask you about that, the sex education. You - various things weren't even touched at all -

A: No.

Q: What was it like, the sex education in school?

A: It was like sort of French kissing - "Ooh!" - come on! Actually, there was a debate on about two years ago, and there was some of our past pupils went back. They were

about three years actually above me in school and it was on the TV. And they were really... our school. These girls are at university now...

Q: Was it - did it mainly have - was it oriented towards sort of pregnancy or -

A: Oh, yeah. And I mean really mega-anti-abortion.

Q: Yeah.

A: Because it was nuns. "If you french-kiss you'll get pregnant" - I'm not exaggerating, honestly, it was really bad.

Q: Really? - as bad as that, yeah.

A: And we were absolutely terrified. I mean, I think we just became more sort of - we became more inquisitive. I don't think youngsters ought to... It was so - when I came over here at first, you know, there were fifteen-year olds... I mean the whole attitude here is completely different. I'll be working alongside someone and they'll say, "oh, I must take my pill, I forgot". I mean in Ireland it's, God, don't tell everybody! I mean, that's something... first, I mean quite a few of us were... twenty. I mean it was months and months before we had the courage to tell anybody else. We were giving false addresses at the family planning clinics. And putting an engagement ring on my finger.

Q: Yeah, yeah. It's as well - it's - you feel that as well, you sort of internalised that, that was what the school was pushing.

A: ... Yeah, and I mean, that's obviously still with me.

Q: Yeah, right, yeah. And what about your mum, I mean how did she -

A: She didn't.

Q: Not a whisper.

A: Absolutely nothing. My aunt told me the facts of life when I was about thirteen. I think, 'cos my aunt was a teacher, my mum thought she could handle it better. And she was my godmother and we were very close anyway.

Q: Yeah, yeah. And is she much older than you, your aunt, or -

A: She's about forty-two. But she's really young. We can talk about anything.

Q: Yeah. So you have a good relationship with her as well.

A: Yeah.

Q: Your father's dead, is he?

A: Mm.

Q: Was that long ago?

A: When I was thirteen.

Q: Ah, so it was quite a long - Is your mum living - is she living with your other brother and sister?

A: Sister, yeah. Well she's in a...

Q: And you - you took a few risks at the beginning of your sexual experience - do you think you take risks in any other aspect of your life? You said you smoke...

A: I drink.

Q: Yeah.

A: I...

Q: Yeah?

A: ...

Q: I was wondering about drugs and stuff like that.

A: (?) Where do you work - oh, God, no. Absolutely not, I'm really, really, really, mega-against it. Even like cannabis, even the little things that... We used to actually have a lot

of parties in the street - well, there were two friends in fact, three of us, and we used to have a party like every two months, it was a mega-party. And quite a few of our friends smoked dope, I mean two of them... And I mean, that was when we ended up stopping them and like, in the end because it was just too much of a... But we used to... do it in the garden. But then that was because we were told in time, but if the police raided the house, because the three of us were the tenants, and if someone else was smoking and we weren't we'd still get the rap. Which means instant dismissal from the UKCC. But I mean it didn't affect - the rest of our friends that were nurses as well.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: Actually it's amazing the amount of nurses that do it.

Q: Yeah. Well I think there's a certain - yeah, I mean there's a certain kind of stereotype of nurses, because they've got access to drugs...

A: ... well, none that I know of would take anything worse than that.

Q: You were asking me where I worked. It's the Institute of Education. I'll give you a little pamphlet showing you the...

A: What, is it attached to the (?) Wittington?

Q: No, it wasn't, it was just that - this piece of research, we're doing it in North London, so I was just going around everywhere where I thought I might find young women. You know, so sometimes I hang out in the family planning clinic, sometimes it's schools, colleges, everywhere sort of thing, and ask if they would be interested in taking part and give them the questionnaire. But it's at the Institute of Education which is part of the University of London.

A: Ah, is it. Do you mind if I have a cigarette -

Q: Please go ahead, I'll go and get you a - I'll go and get you an ashtray.

A: Some Dutch courage. D'you want one? Do you smoke?

Q: No, I don't smoke. My boyfriend smokes rather a lot.

A: I used to have a ... when I was eighteen, which is why... I mean I just cannot talk about it.

Q: Yeah?

A: I mean I've often - I mean I've had two or three hospital admissions with my chest, and they've always said... always said, you know... and then joined the family planning clinic in [REDACTED]... I was with them about year and then I thought... And then I sort of eventually told them.

Q: Yeah.

A: After a year.

Q: Yeah. What, you just felt you couldn't -

A: I mean, I think it's just so dreadful, I just - I mean it just still upsets me so much, although not for long. And I just sort of have the attitude now, don't think about it, it'll go away. It doesn't, it comes up at the most obscure times now. And then when you really try not to think of it you think of it more.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: I mean that's why... 'cos I didn't want the sexual relationship the first time. And I mean actually what happened with him was we came over here, to have it here. So, I had to go private and really pay, really, really, pay for it. And I just finished with him in the middle of the street, five minutes after I came out of the clinic. And even if I see him

now I just - I just can't talk, you know? Now I can sort of say "hello". And the thing is, he's not been out with anybody since.

Q: Yeah.

A: But I think now he's put me up onto such a pedestal... sort of. But I really blame - hated him, and still do. And blame him. ... I think it's probably very... But I do blame him.

Q: Yeah. Well, if you didn't want the sexual relationship –

A: I could have said no.

Q: You could have said no -

A: I could have. I just - it's probably, I mean, it will be helpful for me, I don't know...

Q: Yeah, definitely.

A: Actually, 'cos this present boyfriend - I mean I ... for two years wondering whether or not to tell him or not. 'Cos a few people did know at home and ... think about it, you know, blackmail...

Q: Yeah.

A: I think he'd understand. (?) I can't speak to him about it. I think he would.

Q: But he - but he knows you had the other sexual relationships.

A: Oh yeah. He's not very happy about it.

Q: Yeah.

A: He only had one before me... which is fair enough.

Q: But you think this would probably be just - a blow for him.

A: Well, one of our friends actually had one... - nobody knows, he - her partner told him, and they come out one night. And he did believe that what she'd done was really - 'cos she already had a daughter, and she's not married, and she's only twenty-one now still.

Q: Would have been bit much for her. Yeah.

A: She's in a really good relationship and they're getting married next year...

Q: You never even thought - I mean at the time you decided to have one, you thought it was the best thing to do. I mean you had no idea of marrying that guy or, you know...

A: Well, I thought at the time, we'll have to get married, that's the end of it. And then I'd just started nursing, and my excuse to myself was, if I go ahead and do it I'll have... I can't even...

Q: Yeah.

A: But if I went ahead... millions ...I'd be able to have afterwards... Which is a really... excuse... I could justify what I was doing.

Q: Yeah. But you have to...

A: I mean I still think it was really dreadful.

Q: Yeah.

A: And the reason actually - 'cos I started to worry about it last year, and the reason I told... to make sure that they hadn't sort of messed it up.

Q: Yes.

A: That was a really good place that I went to here. I mean that's what it's all - really pay the extra. I went to [PRIVATE HEALTHCARE CLINIC].

Q: Yeah, well it should be fine. I mean they - did they look at it for you in... Did they check you out?

A: Well, it was when they were doing a smear, the smear, the first smear.

Q: Mm, yeah.

A: I was so worried that... I mean I've even watched people really, really,...

Q: Yeah. Well it is a very, very, real worry, isn't it, but I mean... private...

A: At the end it was three hundred pounds... now. You wouldn't be able to afford it, I don't think. But in the North - I mean in Ireland, there's just no way. I mean my grandparents (?) are Catholics, you know? And it was only when their son took over the shop last year that he sort of, would let them sell condoms. My grandparents just wouldn't have it. (?) My mother... until last year. It was only then that I...

Q: It's a completely different scene there, isn't it.

A: And I mean the South's even worse. You just couldn't get them if you wanted them at all.

Q: Yeah. Are you thinking of - of staying here when you get married, or going back home or -

A: Oh, I'll be here for another few years anyway.

Q: Mm. Get work here -

A: Yeah.

Q: What does your boyfriend do...?

A: [NAME OF PUB].

Q: Oh, he works in the pub -

A: Yeah, well it's...

Q: Yeah, yeah... So how - how do you sort of see the future, then, you'll get your qualification. When's that, next year?

A: Next July.

Q: And then get work somewhere round here.

A: Well, I mean, there's always plenty of jobs here...

Q: Yeah. And what about marriage - after you've qualified or -

A: Yeah. I'm still feeling very - a lot of my friends are at home, and the ones here are... getting engaged and things but -

Q: What about children...?

A: Oh yeah, definitely. I love them.

Q: Yeah.

A: ... have a child and not bother getting married.

Q: Would you do that?

A: No, probably not...

Q: What sort of things do you actually do, what do you spend your spare time when you're not slaving away up at the [HOSPITAL]?

A: Well, we're really into eating out. There's six of us, three couples, and we go out every single Friday night, so I mean - I love the... went to... just go down... Ice-skating.

Q: Ice-skating, that's... Where do you go?

A: ... Centre actually.

Q: Oh, really?

A: We usually go to - well we always used to go to Queensway until recently.

Q: I used to do that years ago, at Streatham... South London.

A: Really?

Q: Yeah.

A: And we used to love those day-trips out in the..., you know?...

Q: You were talking - you said you had a good female friend on the questionnaire. Is that one of the ones that -

A: Loads. Honestly, it's really - with so many best friends -

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: I mean, well, there's three of us girls living together with our three partners, and we all get on very, very, well. And then two girls that are training with us. I mean there's the two that I used to live with, and the two that I go out for the night with...

Q: Yeah.

A: And we would have no hesitation in talking about - I mean, they know... I mean there's about twenty of us hang round together as a group, boys and girls; and we've a brilliant relationship, each and every one of us. Even the boys, you know, we chat away about anything.

Q: Yeah. Does that include - I mean apart from your own history, can you talk with... these friends - well, you've been talking to the girlfriends, you said about kind of the sexual experience... - can you do that with the - with the boys as well?

A: Mm.

Q: Yeah?

A: Yeah. We did this (?) survey last year. Yeah, we do, we can all talk with one another. Which is good. We're very open. We're all Irish and I think that Irish people have no - I mean some of us, within half of an hour of meeting someone, we'd tell them everything, you know?

Q: Yeah.

A: Whereas English people, I think, are slightly more afraid to do that. I find that. 'Cos the girls on the course, you know - well, I'm the only Irish one on the course; and we've known each other now ten weeks, and it's only over the last two we've started talking.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: ..., you know. But I mean it took ten weeks.

Q: Yeah. Do you find that you wanna speed the pace up a bit, you know, be more Irish with the English or something or -

A: Well I think, just 'cos of how I am, they sort of come to me with problems and things...

Q: When you - talking about having this large group of friends, and boys and girls amongst it, do you think that - I was gonna ask you about sort of sexual behaviour of men, or boys and girls compared sort of thing. Do you think there's a sort of double standard operating, that -

A: Oh, God, definitely.

Q: Yeah?

A: Yeah. I mean one of our friends, I mean he's really lovely, he's had a very hard time..., he was living with this girl, and she deliberately got pregnant to get him to marry her, and he wouldn't have any of it. We don't know her - well, one of the girls does and didn't like her at all, and - then she really resented all of us because he was so friendly with all of us, and she really thought that we were all having affairs with everyone. So then - the boys all went on holiday. Last year we decided to take separate holidays, all the girls went, and all the boys went. And actually, while they were away, he phoned home to see how the baby was - and hadn't she got pregnant again! We just couldn't believe it, you know. So then she actually had an abortion... And now he - he's sort of thinking that was one of our friends, on and off for about five years. You know, and up until now I mean he'd have... anything... you know...

Q: Yeah.

A: But it would really - I mean I know if I said to him - I mean I really saw someone I fancied... they'd kill me. They're very, very, possessive like that with us. Not our boyfriends, but our friends who are boys.

Q: Yeah.

A: When we sort of had boyfriends into the pub before, before we were all sort of settled down now, they'd go up to them and -... you know, "you'd better not do anything to hurt her or annoy her or try anything, you'll have us to deal with", you know? And we used to be really - we used to get mad with them, you know; 'cos the fella we'd have brought with us'd go into the toilet; about four of them'd go in at once to... over the night, and say to him...

Q: Yeah.

A: Then they'd be off. That's 'cos they do care about us.

Q: There's different ways of (?) regarding sexuality, isn't there. How do you feel about - if I can put it that way - your sexuality? Do you feel comfortable being a sexual person or - I mean you said it wasn't terribly important -

A: Well, it's not all it's made out to be, I don't think.

Q: Yeah. Nothing spectacular -

A: No. Not that that's any reflection on my boyfriend or on me either, we're just - I think you could do without it.

Q: Yeah, that's the way you experience it.

A: My boyfriend's father, ROD, I really wholeheartedly believe this, that if someone had... a much better person, and much nicer and much happier and much more content.

Q: Yeah.

A: Now I think about it I mean he probably was right.

Q: Yeah. And even though you don't necessarily feel that yourself sort of thing, you don't feel that you need it or that -

A: Well I enjoy it, but I mean if my relationship did break up tomorrow, I mean on Saturday night I wouldn't just think, let's go and find a man somewhere. I wouldn't.

Q: Yeah.

A: I mean morally... I mean I have to really sort of, I mean, think a lot before I can, 'cos I think it's a much bigger commitment than engagement. But that's just me.

Q: Yeah.

A: I think it's a mega.

Q: Do you think that - when you say that there's a double standard, and the guys are running around, do you think that any of those friends of yours are worried about AIDS at all, or think about AIDS?

A: Not as much as they should do. I think now they would use condoms.

Q: Actually, you said you wouldn't ask somebody to use a condom.

A: No. Well, no, I just couldn't. But then if - I mean I - this friend that I told you about, you know the one that had... had the baby and that; I mean I know that none of my friends use condoms at all. But then really, they've no idea... what the other... either.

Q: Boys or girls?

A: I mean the girls should probably question the boys, I mean I don't have to, but that's just because of my boyfriend. But I know the other boys, I mean some of them are - you know, real boys.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: Like that chap that had all those problems like - but I know the girl he's with now, she would never have asked him to use a condom. If I was going out with him, I would.

Q: Yeah, yeah. So you think you could have done if that was -

A: I'd find it really hard.

Q: Yeah.

A: I mean, I'd hope he'd take the initiative.

Q: What would be hard - embarrassed or -

A: Yeah, embarrassed, yeah.

Q: It's funny that, really, 'cos especially if you feel it's -

A: - I mean it is detrimental to health really, when you think about it.

Q: Yeah. And would that be the case if it was pregnancy or AIDS you were thinking about, I mean -

A: You see, I would think of pregnancy much quicker than -

Q: It would be - yeah - pregnancy you'd think about, yeah.

A: But I think with some of my friends, they sort of would have sort of reason to be suspicious about their past...

Q: Do you think - I mean, some of the young women I've spoken to - I mean I know, probably from the way that you think about sex you wouldn't imagine, but do you think it's a sort of realistic position to take - they sort of think it's unfair; "why should AIDS have come along now, you know, when I'm young and want to be, you know -"

A: Well they (?) must have their cake and eat it.

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah, I mean, we've actually said that.

Q: Mm, yeah.

A: ... There is an element of truth in it as well.

Q: Yeah. It does seem like a sort of blight on - on things. What about, you know, the original stuff that came round on AIDS, there was quite a lot that was suggesting it was like a gay plague or something like that. Did you catch any of that, what did you think about that?

A: What do you mean, the incidence... is much higher?

Q: Mm... Did it make you think -?

A: I suppose it would, yeah. I have to agree with them.

Q: Yeah. But did you think that like only gays could get it and things like that? I mean that was the sort of way the media...

A: Well, that is the way I would have thought, yeah, to begin with initially.

Q: Yeah. What - what made you think - change your mind...

A: Well, because at the start it was portrayed as only homosexuals getting it, and the only ones that had it were homosexuals, but then they started - so it became more heterosexual.

Q: Mm. And also, some people getting it from infected blood, there was quite a lot of that...

A: ... and you're reading stories now...

Q: I think that happens quite a lot, to say nothing... almost equal men and women who've got it... heterosexuals.

A: Well I would say, if a nurse got it, she would blame it - she would say, oh I must have got a needle stick injury and didn't realise, before she would even consider that it could have been from a past boyfriend.

Q: Yeah.

A: They do - that's - I really believe that wholeheartedly.

Q: Yeah - they would really go for that explanation. Somebody was telling me actually they - I think they'd been to a training session for nurses, where - where that was the whole emphasis; they were talking about safety, and they were talking about AIDS and that, and that was the whole emphasis of the - of the training, that it was about protection from ... needles... things like that, or - or - or, you know, contam- - contamination with blood getting into you, an injury or something like that, all that kind of health-oriented -

A: Well, that's what... (tape change) It's either medical or not... very worst of it.

Q: Yeah.

A: ...

Q: One of the questions that I've been asking people that - I don't know why... how - I say - people have been finding it difficult, but I mean some people don't find it so difficult - I ask: what is your image of yourself? If you had to describe yourself to somebody else, how would you do it?

A: Well, I'm fairly outgoing - is that what you mean?

Q: Mm.

A: Too soft sometimes...

Q: How do you mean?

A: Well, I can be taken advantage of sometimes. I find it very hard to say no to people, you know, for favours. At work I'm invariably in (?) the last end of the ward duty. I think... I don't really know what you're looking for.

Q: Well I just wondered what - suppose I ask you what is your friends' image of you, do you think it would be the same or -

A: Probably,, I think... I'm a real organiser. I like social activities and things. I'm always planning sort of the next night out. But otherwise I think they would say - agree with...

Q: ... The other thing that we're doing in this study is asking young women whether they would keep a diary for us for a very short time, maybe a couple of months or something like that.

A: Well, I do keep one anyway.

Q: Would you be interested -

A: Mm, if you like.

Q: Yeah. We're interested in how you feel about your relationships and things like that, but also what you do in your sexual relationships -

A: ...

Q: - as... as you can, yes. Yes, yes, that kind of stuff, do you think you can manage that? You can change the names, to protect the innocent so to speak, disguise the people. I've got a little pad...

A: Well, he's actually gone away for a month.

Q: Has he? Well, maybe you'd better start when he comes back.

A: I'm actually gonna go over twice, in a month. So it would be really... large gaps in between.

Q: See what you think.

A: Well, have you sort of given guidelines or anything?

Q: Well, no, I just say...

A: Well, say I just keep my own diary and I can bring it to you when -

Q: Okay, well, do you wanna put all that kind of stuff in your own diary?

A: Well I mean I'll code it.

Q: Yeah, right.

A: So I'll know what it is.

Q: Telling me what the code is of course.

A: Yeah. Well I mean, I'll know myself when I write it -

Q: Yeah, right.

A: - what it is. Sort of is it how you're working - "we made love and -"

Q: Yeah, the kinds of things that you do as well. That kind of stuff.

A: Kinky.

Q: Well who knows - who knows what people think's kinky?

A: Well, that's true too.

Q: Some people might think... Just one other thing - when you talk about your relationship with your boyfriend it sounds as if you very much trust him -

A: Yeah, I do.

Q: Yeah. Do you think - I mean do you trust men in general? I mean the first relationship wasn't too good -

A: No, no.

Q: - did that cause you to feel that you -

A: Well, sometimes you're jealous. 'Cos this actually come up about... My friend wanted to work, a Saturday night (?)agency, so I said I'd do it with her, because all the boys were going out on a stag... And so, I said okay. So, I went into work and it was the night of that riverboat disaster.

Q: Yeah.

A: So, my friend rang me, and she said, ring back to make sure the boys have come back alright - 'cos she's just got married and her husband went on the stag as well. So, I phoned, and I was talking to a friend, and she said my boyfriend was standing beside her, do you want to speak to him? So, I said yeah, alright... And he said I can't talk to him. No, and I said, "why not?" and he said, "because I'm - I'm (?)leading one of the girls in the pub home". And I went mad. I said "what!", and he said, "well, part of my duty is, being a member of the establishment of the [NAME OF PUB], I mean the girl's really drunk, she wants me to lead her home, so I am". So I - "bring someone with you". And he said "no", he said,... so I hung up. So, I said, well, do your duty, and put the phone down. ... like a dog... Well, this happened about three o'clock. At eight o'clock I wasn't even gonna go home, I was gonna go and stay with my friend. So I got home and he was lying on top of the bed like this, with his clothes on and -(mock snore)- and: "I suppose I should help him, put him to bed", and he'd been plastered and - which I knew they would be 'cos they were on a stag. I mean I was trying to untie his shoes and... he was probably out all last night and put his shoes on in such a hurry! (laugh). I was being totally unreasonable. So I just sort of pulled his shoes off and threw him into the bed. And then I couldn't find his jacket. I was - "he probably left in such a hurry to get back", you know; "'course he's lying on the bed, he's only been in about ten minutes"! So, of

course then about ten o'clock - couldn't sleep, I was so angry, I woke him up - "What the hell were you at last night?". What had happened was that there's this girl who'd always drink in the pub fairly regularly, but I couldn't think of her - I just couldn't place her in my mind at all. Her husband and boyfriend - her husband and father had come into the pub and obviously had a row, and beat the hell out of each other. This guy, my friend, who just got married, had to get stitches in his arm and everything, 'cos they lifted glasses and did that. I mean it was really mega-bad... five of our friends sitting on each of the two men. So CONNOR barred the two men, and this girl was in a really bad state, she was pregnant as well. So, she... out of the goodness of his heart he said he'd walk her home. I mean it was so innocent and I thought, oh I'm terrible! And then I found out about his jacket - two of the girls had hidden two of the lads' jackets...

Q: Yeah. So, you think you can trust him after all.

A: Oh, he was disgusted that I, even for a second, presumed he would have run around. But it's just because I couldn't think of... If I had have known, I would have known, there's no way he would have...

Q: Yeah.

A: And at... to look after him, 'cos that really cut me up... I'd have gone crazy. I was even gonna go home sick, to catch him.

Q: You think...

A: A little bit of jealousy -

Q: Yeah, yeah. I was wondering whether that first experience might have made you feel sort of that you couldn't trust men - I mean, not only to be faithful or whatever, but just - you couldn't trust them that they'd...

A: No.

Q: ...

A: I mean if you - if you - you know, instead of doing this diary, if you... guidelines... 'cos I'd be too embarrassed.

Q: Yeah, I was -

A: Seeing as we've got off to a good start.

Q: ... for the diary... I'll switch this off. (break)

A: ... no, because it's just that I - I'd probably find it really hard to write it down.

Q: Yeah.

A: I mean you've made me feel at ease...

Q: Yeah.

A: And next time... I'd probably not bother. I'd probably chicken at it but - I mean this time I had no apprehension really about coming down, it was just trying to find the time -

Q: Yeah, yeah, just - yeah.

A: We were talking about it today and they were going, "you must be mad!". But I have to do a project, as part of this... (?)it might help people with nerves. God,... somebody helps me with mine. Purely selfish reason.

Q: Yeah, yeah. So - what kind of things?

A: Well, normal.

Q: What - what do you -

A: Traditional -

Q: - ...consider normal?

A: It's usually in bed. Very rarely anywhere else. It's always in the bedroom. Like the traditional way, you know with him on top or me on top, we don't really go in for anything - games or dressing up or anything.

Q: Yeah.

A: And oral sex, occasional, not every time.

Q: How do you feel about that? Both doing it for each other sort of thing or -

A: Mm. But I'd rather do it than have it done.

Q: Yeah?

A: Yeah. (?)Not so bad. Yeah, I'd rather sort of do it. 'Cos I think that men would get more out of it than women do. But... sort of not very often. If we're sort of lying about in the day or right before we go to sleep... I'm only joking.

Q: Yeah, right. What about anal sex, do you ever bother with that?

A: Oh, God, no.

Q: You wouldn't enjoy it.

A: No, I wouldn't. I think it's disgusting. I don't - I mean I don't think he would, I think he would think it was disgusting as well. But if he asked, I wouldn't.

Q: Mm, yeah. What about mutual masturbation, anything like that?

A: No. That's another thing: I've never masturbated in my life.

Q: Never?

A: My friends - this is something that we've often talked about, because you know when we were talking with the boys, we had this really open discussion one night, and they did not believe us. They just couldn't believe that we never had. I mean like we were ... and we sort of made each other swear on each other's lives, our parents' lives, and honestly none of us had. And we would have admitted it if any of us had.

Q: Yeah. Why do you think it was that you hadn't? - you hadn't thought of it or -

A: Well, hadn't thought of it and... sort of in our education, we were all brought up, you know, health education, you know...

Q: Does that - is it a sin or something or -

A: Well that's the way they would like us to probably still believe it is, I mean I don't think it is.

Q: No, I mean, is that the way that they expressed it to you?

A: Yeah. Oh, never. The hand would fall off.

Q: Or you'd go mad or something like that.

A: 'Cos you know you - well, I read a lot, you know, that's one thing I... But I must say, and I can genuinely say, I really believe my friend...

Q: Yeah. A little bit surprising.

A: They're all Catholics, and we've all been brought up, I mean my friends from the South, my friends from Belfast and... completely... 'Cos, oh yeah, we had this chap come in to lecture us a few weeks ago. It was child development, and we were going through Freud and his stages of development. Yeah?

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah, Sigmund Freud. And the tutor was saying, you know, women think about sex six times in an hour. And we all think we're sadly missing out. And she wouldn't believe us.

Q: Yeah.

A: And it took on a really good discussion; and we said, well we definitely don't. She was talking about masturbation, and - a lot of women won't breastfeed because they feel it's -

Q: - it's too much like sex or something. Yeah.

A: ... masturbate. And we thought the woman was mad. And she was young and supposedly... she said... all mad...

Q: Do you do that kind of thing with your boyfriend or does he do it with you sort of thing?

A: ...

Q: Suck your breasts, that sort of thing.

A: ... sort of kiss me, just sort of...

Q: You wouldn't like it?

A: Normally I wouldn't... We often have showers together... have a shower...

Q: Yeah. That's nice.

A: Yeah. 'Cos some of our friends don't. That's basically all, really.

Q: And you feel comfortable with him?...

A: Oh, yeah. Completely at ease. Well it's... you know, lights off and...

Q: You do it in the broad daylight?

A: Oh, yeah...

Q: And that's - has it been whilst you've been with him that you've got to feel more at ease like that, or - what about the second relationship, you didn't tell me much about that one?

A: Oh, it was easy in that one as well. Mind you, he always, you know, wanted us to shower, have a shower and I wouldn't. Bit of a new thing.

Q: So he put the idea in your head. Was it you that suggested it -

A: Mm. (laugh) Yeah.

Q: Yeah, that's quite interesting. Do you ever get ideas from books and stuff?

A: Oh, well, I read them, but I don't...

Q: I remember years ago I gave my mother on mother's day, as a - as a joke really, a copy of the Kama Sutra -

A: You didn't!

Q: Yeah, I did. She thought it was wonderful. "I don't know how they can get into these positions, Janet!"

A: No, I don't either. Sometimes...

Q: She didn't - she didn't mind, she was alright by then. She used to be a bit strict when I was young but -

A: My mum still doesn't. She knows we're living together here, but when we go home it's separate bedrooms.

Q: Yeah.

A: But in his house it's not; his father's more open.

Q: It's strange, that...

A: Mm. 'Cos even with his daughters, he encourages it... "They're all gonna end up with each other whether they're engaged or not". But - he doesn't mind. 'Cos I thought maybe he would have had double standards there. But he doesn't. Just as long as they don't get pregnant.

Q: That's - I mean -

A: ... he doesn't care what they do.

Q: Yeah. Fathers can be - sometimes be rather difficult with daughters; it's a bit like you were describing your friends, this group of friends taking this kind of protective attitude, can stop you from doing -

A: Yeah. I mean I don't use any aids or anything.

Q: Mm. Would you? - I mean, might you?

A: No. I mean it just wouldn't appeal to me... So is there anything else at all?

Q: No, I think that...

A: ...

Q: The other thing we're doing is occasionally - well, we're asking everybody, but we might like to re-interview people in the following year to see how things are going, what's been happening.

A: Yeah.

Q: You'll still be round the corner because you'll be doing - yeah, right, well I might be - get in touch with you -

A: Yeah, that's fine, you'll have to remind me who you are -

Q: Of course.

A: I'd hardly forget.

Q: Well you can take this little thing... Well thank you very much, I mean it's very very good of you to talk to me -

A: No problem. I just thought though that my age -

Q: Well I was thinking that myself, because we really are, you know, we really wanted just to do it up to twenty-one; but then I mean it's incredibly difficult to get people because -

A: 'Cos ALISON gave them out to us... do you know her?

Q: No, I don't know her.

A: ... gave them out. But she - she obviously knows someone 'cos she said it was a friend of hers... "please, at least some of you fill them in"!

Q: Yeah.

A: So we looked at them and we said to her, well, look, it says under twenty-one - I mean I'm the youngest on the course...

Q: Yeah.

A: ... I think about six out of the ten did -

Q: Yeah, well I've got the questionnaires back... But - I mean - I probably won't - you probably will be the oldest person that I'll interview, but I thought it would be interesting to talk to you 'cos I was keen to get somebody from -

A: See I thought I, being Irish, it was different.

Q: ...

A: Because English girls and Irish girls, have a - there is a marked difference.

Q: Yeah, but I think that's interesting. And I mean - what we're doing is we're - how we're limiting is having - in North London sort of thing, because otherwise you could go absolutely crazy trying to get people together sort of thing. So the basic requirement is that you're between those ages and you - North London, well at least you're in North London.

A: Would you like me to try and encourage some of the rest, do you want to see them?

Q: Well if there are any that you know there who are younger, I mean if they really are - they're all too old - I spoke to the woman who is a sort of administrator for the course and she was saying that most of the people are older.

A: I mean you could have given them to students, student nurses.

Q: Are there some of them -

A: No, none on my course.

Q: Yeah. But I think they must have -

A: They're seventeen and a half upwards.

Q: Yeah. I think they must have done some of them as well. I gave them loads of questionnaires and I left it - 'cos they said they'd deal with it, they'd give them to the tutors and get them handed out, but maybe they didn't think of giving it to the young ones. I might have another go at them because -

A: You should.

Q: - they've got new intake coming in.

A: Say that you want new students... 'cos then they should all be about eighteen.

Q: Yeah, I'll have a go at that.

A: And, actually, I bet you'll find a big difference -

Q: Well, I'm sure -

A: - between now and next year -

Q: Yeah?

A: - when you're interviewing.

Q: Yeah.

A: 'Cos a lot of it's coming to London and let's have a drink, it's the first time they've ever been away from home and -

Q: Yeah.

A: - the evils of...

Q: Yeah. Well it's - it's interesting, I mean some - we are interviewing rather young women as well, about sixteen, so we'll be able to see quite a difference -

A: Especially nursing because it is actually away from home for the first time. I'm sure... stayed at home...

Q: ... Well I find that with some of the young women who come to go to college sort of thing, for the first time away from home, very excited... Right, well I'll have a go at that, then, I'll try and persuade them, I'll talk to...

A: ...

Q: Yeah. She was - I mean she was terribly helpful, but then she sort of realised that most of... would be a little too old for my purposes. But I just keep going and I try to find my young women everywhere. If you do meet any young women who would be interested, please tell me about them and I shall send them a - I mean some of your other friends might be younger.

A: The only one is that girl who... She's twenty-one.

Q: Would she be interested, do you think?

A: Probably not.

Q: No? Well I could give you a questionnaire...

A: She's very -

Q: No?

A: I don't think she would be. And she'll probably think that I knew you really well. I don't know, she's quiet.

Q: Well, I'll tell you what I'll do, I'll..

End of interview.