

**LJH 29 29.6.1989**

**Anya**

Q: ... Right. One of the main things that we're interested in in this piece of research, is to find out what young women think and feel about their relationships. So the first thing I'd like to ask you is what, for you, is the most important relationship that you have at the moment - any kind of relationship?

A: My parents. Generally, family, friends, my boyfriend. That's it.

Q: And what's important about those relationships for you?

A: I don't know. It's just a bond really. I mean I'm at college with my friends, so they're a big part of my life, 'cos I'm with them most of the time. Then I go home with my family. I rely on them. Then my boyfriend.

Q: What's the sort of relationship with your boyfriend like?

A: I don't know. Normal boyfriend and girlfriend relationship, I don't know.

Q: What's it - when did you meet him, have you been seeing him for long?

A: Yeah. Three years... three years now. I met him at school. He didn't go to my school, he went to a different school. And I think I was in the fifth year - yeah, I was in the fifth year, coming up to my sixth - no - was it my fifth year? - yeah, I was coming up to my sixteenth birthday.

Q: Yeah, and it's - how do you feel about that relationship, how is it going?

A: Fine.

Q: Yeah? Good? Is it a sexual relationship?

A: Yeah.

Q: What made you decide, or did you decide, that it would be a sexual relationship?

A: No, I didn't decide, it just happened really.

Q: Yeah? Was that soon after you met him or -

A: No, it was about - nearly two years after I met him.

Q: Mm. So what was the relationship like before?

A: I don't know, it was - just like a normal relationship, I don't know, it was just -

Q: Yes, I don't know what a normal relationship is -

A: - no -

Q: - because people think, you know, all sorts of different things. What sorts of things did you used to do, and still do, I assume?

A: What, sexually or -

Q: Well, both I'd be interested in.

A: Yeah. Go out, see our mates up at the college. No - I was at sixth form so I was at school, ... come home, see him when I saw him - I didn't see him every day 'cos he was working. Sexually we wasn't - we didn't have intercourse, but there was - there was - like we did other things but it wasn't sexual intercourse. That was it.

Q: Why was that? - You decided that you didn't want to or -

A: I just didn't - I don't know, I wasn't ready. I don't know. I don't know why, it just - it just wasn't - it wasn't time, so - and then -

Q: - and then the time came.

A: Yeah. (laugh) And the time came, and then it happened.

Q: And it seemed right?

A: Yeah.

Q: And did - you said that you didn't decide, it just happened, but were both of you - I mean were both of you keen on doing it at that point or - was he more keen than you or -

A: I don't know if either of us was keen really. I don't know, I think - I don't think - I don't think we was eager to have it, but it was - it was something there that we was gonna do together, and then there was time, and the time came and we did it. It wasn't -oh quick, sit down and just - I don't know, it just came naturally really.

Q: Yeah. What about contraception, had you (?) used any?

A: What -

Q: The first time.

A: The first time? No.

Q: What about subsequently?

A: What do I use now?

Q: Use now, yeah.

A: Yeah, I'm on the pill.

Q: So you went on the pill soon after that.

A: Yeah. Yeah, the next day I told my mum.

Q: What did she say?

A: "Ooh - I ain't got no virgins in my family now" - that was what she was worried about.

Q: Was she?

A: Mm.

Q: Yeah. You've got brothers and sisters -

A: Yeah.

Q: - but all older, are they, or -

A: I've got two sisters which are older, a brother that's older and two younger brothers.

Q: Are they all living at home or -

A: Yeah. Well, except..., she's got her own flat, she's got (?) two kids.

Q: When - when you first had sexual intercourse, did you enjoy it or -

A: I was more tense than anything. I was nervous. I mean you hear so many different stories about it - you're gonna bleed, you're not; it's gonna hurt, it's not; you're gonna cry, and all this. And you're gonna feel bad for losing your virginity, and all this crap. And I was, I was extremely nervous. I don't know. It was - it wasn't - it was okay, I mean it wasn't nothing spectacular. I mean I enjoyed it better the second time. But the first time, I don't know, I just thought "... finished now". It's so... that was it.

Q: Did you feel - you said sometimes people say you feel bad 'cos you've lost your virginity, did you feel that?

A: No, I didn't. No, not at all.

Q: Was that alright?

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah. It's a complicated thing, I suppose really because the pressures -

A: Yeah.

Q: - that are on you at that time - And how has it been since, I mean how do you feel about your sex life at the moment?

A: Quite good, I enjoy it.

Q: And do you do the same sort of things that you were doing before -

A: No, no. Before we used to just have like basic sex and that would be it; but now, I mean we do other things now.

Q: Mm. And you enjoy it -

A: Yeah.

Q: - which is good. How do you envisage the relationship continuing, or do you - how do you see it going in the future?

A: I don't see marriage. I don't see that at all. But if I looked at the future, I see him... I mean like if I'm going out in two weeks he'll be there. Or if I'm invited to a wedding next year, he'll be with me. That is it, I mean I don't look twenty years ahead or anything like that. It's just - I don't usually look ahead until I've got a plan or something that needs planning, like engagements and things like that, I've got to go out, and that's the only time I (?)look. But otherwise I just take it as it comes.

Q: So you don't think about the future in general - I mean, on the questionnaire you said that you planned to go to university when you finished your -

A: Oh, yeah.

Q: You've got that much sorted out.

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah. What are you gonna do, what do you want to do at university?

A: I don't know, I was... haven't decided yet.

Q: Ah, right. How much longer have you got on the course here?

A: Just a year.

Q: Just a year... sort out something. Have you got - have you got any longer term sort of hopes or expectations of what you might do after?

A: Not really, 'cos I'm always changing my mind. I mean, when I was at school, I wanted to be a courier and learn all these different languages, and then I wanted to be a dancer, then I wanted to be this, that and the other. I'm forever changing my mind. So I - I don't - I can't put anything into focus really until a year before -

Q: Yeah. But you're - you're going on that educational route, though -

A: Yeah.

Q: - you have decided that you will get qualifications, whatever they are.

A: Yeah.

Q: Do you think that's important?

A: Yeah, I do now. Now, definitely, in this country. I mean you have to have it or you're on the dole, or on the YTS. And I don't want that.

Q: Yeah.

A: ...

Q: You say in this country: what other country are you comparing it to?

A: Well, I don't - it's just like this government, they make everything out to be - you've got to have qualifications, or you don't get anywhere. But pushing the educational system, even though they're forcing it down... they still expect people to come out with good grades and all that. And if you haven't got them, you're gonna go on the YTS and all that but -

Q: - it's not for you.

A: No, not at all.

Q: Have you got a lot of encouragement from your parents?

A: Oh, yeah. Sometimes too much.

Q: Yeah?

A: Yeah.

Q: And what about the rest of your family, are they following the same kind of -

A: Well, my brother's just finishing his exams, and he was gonna go into the sixth form... but he might go and do an apprentice - an apprenticeship... So he hasn't decided, he's not gonna decide till this September. I don't know - my other brother, he's still at school.

Q: What do your mum and dad do?

A: Oh, I don't live with my dad, they're divorced. My mum and dad are divorced.

Q: Do you see your dad?

A: No.

Q: Was it long ago?

A: ... Oh, I saw him - I see him when I can be bothered or when he can be bothered. Like I saw him about two years ago when he got remarried again - for the third time!

Q: Yeah?

A: Yeah. And that was it, that was the last time I saw him.

Q: Mm. So - how long ago was it that -

A: They got married - they got divorced?

Q: ...

A: They got divorced about thirteen years ago.

Q: Ah, so quite a long -

A: - no, longer than that - I think it's - I think it's - yeah, about fifteen years ago.

Q: Mm. So did you have much of a relationship with him before?

A: No. I never have really.

Q: And what kind of relationship do you have with your mum?

A: I don't know, she's like a sister really. She's like really - I mean it's not child/parent, it's not like that. Like, she don't treat me like a "you're my little girl and you're gonna do as I tell you". I mean, I've got my individual views, if I don't agree with her it's fair enough. So it's more - she's more like a sister. But I mean she does lay the law down sometimes; there are some things that she just won't agree with. Or she won't let me do. But most of the time it's quite friendly, chummy.

Q: And you talk to her about things, I mean you said you told her -

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: Lots of things, everything really.

Q: Yeah. Do you think - so you think she influences you in what you - in the way you run your life somehow?

A: Oh, yeah, definitely. 'Cos she's - I don't know, she's very independent herself, do you know what I mean? She's got her own - she's got her own life, and like if she wants to go out... it would be - I would feel something, I would say, well... or whatever. But then she's got her own life and she's - she's dependent from us, even though she's part of the family, she is her own, do you see what I mean?

Q: Yeah, she's got her own sort of -

A: Yeah, so we - I think that influences all of us, 'cos we all sort of - when we come home, we're part of a unit, but when we're outside we're ourselves. D'you get what I mean?

Q: Yeah. One of the other things that we've been asking people about is about risks, whether they take risks in their lives at all. I mean you don't take risks as far as pregnancy -

A: No.

Q: - is concerned. But do you think you take risks in any other area of your life...

A: I don't know, I don't know what you mean by "risk".

Q: Well, some people think smoking and drinking is risky.

A: Oh, I smoke, (?) you know I do.

Q: Yeah.

A: But I mean I don't drink excessively, I just - like from college we're always going out for drinks. I smoke, I drink...

Q: What about drugs?

A: Oh, no, no, nothing like that. I mean smoking is a drug -

Q: Yeah... other drugs. So's drink, I suppose... Do any of your friends... drugs?

A: No. When I was at school they used to - quite a few of them used to sniff Tippex. And another girl, she sniffed glue. But it never appealed to me. And used to - a spliff used to be the big thing as well, like ... used to smoke spliff...

Q: Do you think it's like sort of - you sometimes find sort of school groups do one sort of thing, I mean there might be the group who smoke, drink, take drugs or whatever, and another group doesn't. Do you think ... splitting up the school into groups of people who did certain kinds of things?

A: Yeah, probably, there was like five or six of us that were all like - we all hung around together, and like there was only - no, there was a lot of them - a lot more, about, say, ten; and there was only about four people who didn't do it. Like we smoked, yeah. But there was only about four of us that didn't sniff Tippex or take glue or smoke spliff, there was only four of us.

Q: Mm... everybody else was doing it.

A: Yeah, they used to say, "go on, go on, go on, go on". We still used to hang around with them, I mean we used to be there when they was doing it, but we never took it ourselves. I don't - I don't think it did split us up really, 'cos we still hung around together.

Q: Yeah... And they didn't feel that you should be doing it -

A: No, they - I mean they used to say, "go on, go on, go on".

Q: Yeah. Mm. Why do you think you were so strongly against it?

A: I don't know. I don't know. I mean they were my friends before... took drugs or anything like that. I mean you can always... them back, so you just don't take it, that was it.

Q: Yeah, I can remember being a bit like that myself, ...not being able to explain why but just sort of disapproving somehow, "I'd better not get into this", or something like that.

A: Yeah.

Q: The other thing we're interested in finding out about in the research is about what your sex education at school was like. It sounded from what you said on the questionnaire, as if it wasn't terribly good.

A: No...

Q: Yeah, yeah. And a bit late, you didn't get anything 'til -

A: The fifth year!

Q: Yeah, so what did you think about it?

A: I thought it was rather funny, because by that time I mean - I was - by - I was going out - no, I had - I wasn't going out with anyone at the time when we had the sex education. No, I wasn't going out with anyone at the time, but I mean everyone knew about it, and like all the boys at that age were boasting - "Yeah, I had her last night", this, that and the other. But there was a few - there was a few girls that used to say, "course I'm not a virgin", but I always maintained that I was. I went "Yeah, course I am, I am". And I thought it was rather funny because everyone was running around saying they weren't, and then they wouldn't - they started to have sex education -

Q: Yeah.

A: - and half the class weren't bloody virgins. So they didn't need it.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: So - they didn't really tell us much, it was only about a three week course anyway. And it was - it was only forty-five minutes long. By the time everyone had got in, settled down, then the woman pulled out a condom, everyone would start cracking up and it would take another half an hour to calm them down again! So by that time, nothing was being learnt. She only showed us like the durex, the coil and the cap, and said, if you want - if you want advice, come here, there and everywhere. Or what - she just gave us some addresses. Yeah, that was it.

Q: So it was all around contraception really, nothing - nothing much else.

A: No, nothing else.

Q: So where do you think you did learn about these things, I mean how -

A: Well, my sister - well, my sister's twenty-three. I mean she's got two kids. And she - she was having sex at a very early age of fifteen. And like it's just - I don't know, you sort of pick it up from that. And then my other sister was there, I mean I'm more close to her 'cos she lives with me, and we - we used to share a bedroom. And like when she was first having sex, we used to talk about it all the time.

Q: Yeah.

A: And it used to be - (gasp) - you know, "quick, come up, meet you upstairs for a fag". And that's all that we used to talk about. And I used to be sitting at the end of the bed saying, "yeah, and what happened, what happened?" and "what's it like?", and all this, that and the other.

Q: Yeah.

A: And "what you gonna do now?", and - and then she went to the clinic and got it all out, 'cos she went on the pill, and then when she come home we obviously talked about it again. So I knew - I knew most things from her.

Q: Yeah.

A: And then my mum. I would ask my mum sometimes, but I'd mainly go to my sisters.

Q: Mm, yeah.

A: That's where I learnt really.

Q: And obviously that school sex education hadn't been adequate... mentioned anything about AIDS?

A: No. Not at all.

Q: When do you think you first heard about AIDS, when did you realise AIDS -

A: When the big scare was on. When everyone was going mental about it. That's when everyone knew. Because my mum - my mum was at that time - I don't think I was - was

I having a sexual relationship? - no, I wasn't at that time. I don't think I was, I can't remember. How - do you remember the first programme that they brought on -

Q: Yeah, they had it for about a week on the television, practically every night.

A: Yeah. I can't remember what it was called. It was that radio man - he got married the other day - ... Green. Him.

Q: Yeah.

A: He was on, do you remember - how many - long ago was that?

Q: It was about two or three, wasn't it?

A: Yeah. I don't think I was having a sexual relationship at that time -

Q: Yeah.

A: - but I was going out with him then -

Q: Yeah.

A: And my mum said, "Oh, you'd better watch it, you'd better watch it". She says, "You're gonna be ... over this at some stage...". So I mean we had to all sit down, she had us all sit down and watch this stupid programme -

Q: Yeah.

A: - which it wasn't stupid really. But I mean they made it out in such a big thing. It was such - it was like a panic. Everyone was going mental - "don't touch me!" or "don't use my toothbrush", or - I mean it's not - it's not hygienic to use someone else's toothbrush, but I mean, little things were made - cutting your finger -

Q: Yeah.

A: - when you was cutting a loaf of bread, it was (gasp), "I'm gonna catch AIDS now". Everything was so - it was really blown out of proportion, I thought anyway.

Q: Yeah. Did it scare you, though, that whole presentation, that whole way of putting it?

A: I don't know. It made me - the men were on there, were just so male chauvinist pigs, it was just unbelievable. It made me realise, well, when you go out and you do have sex, you - you look after yourself, 'cos no one else is gonna do it for you. 'Cos when I - there was this man on there, and I couldn't believe the things he was coming out with.

Q: Yeah?

A: He was so disgusting. You felt like getting in the telly and killing him.

Q: Yeah.

A: Because he just did not care. "No, I'm not wearing a condom, even if she asks me, it'd spoil my pleasure" and all this. Then the man said, "Look - what if she has AIDS and she doesn't know about it?" - "I don't care" - "What if you've got AIDS and you don't know about it?" - "Well, she'll have it, won't she?". He was so - and then I thought, well, I go out there and I'll be looking after myself.

Q: That's right, yeah.

A: And that'll be it.

Q: Yeah. But have you - do you feel - I mean obviously you're in a steady good relationship now - do you feel if you were starting up a new relationship, that you would be able to protect yourself? I mean what would you do, would you ask the guy to use a condom or what?

A: Well, he either uses a condom really or he didn't have sex with me, and that would be it. Because there's a girl in our group now, and she's just started going out with her boyfriend - like the majority of the girls in our group are like in a sexual relationship or have had one - and she really - and she's right - I mean, some people have said, oh,

you know, "you're over-cautious, you're over-cautious", because all she talks about is, well if I have sex I'll get him ten thousand condoms, and gonna make him wear them!

Q: Yeah.

A: And people say that she's over-cautious, 'cos that is the first thing that comes into her mind, is a condom.

Q: Yeah.

A: Which is right. And if I was in her position, I'd be doing exactly the same thing.

Q: Yeah, yeah. So is that what you think of as safe sex - I mean, what do you think of as safe sex?

A: Not sleeping around. That's it, I mean - you don't have to - you do not have to go round every Tom, Dick and Harry. I mean, you can have a - you can have a steady relationship, and that is part of safe sex, and knowing where he's been and knowing where you've been. And then if it does come down to it and you do end up having - like sleeping with a guy you wear a - make him wear a condom.

Q: Mm, yeah.

A: But then I don't think - if you went round sleeping with this, that and the other guy, I don't think - that ain't safe sex. Even if you do wear a condom it's still not safe sex. Because you're - you're just going around, you don't really know him, you've met him for one night, you've got a bit tipsy, and then you've gone with him. It's not safe at all. No.

Q: Do you think - the way you're talking, you sound as if you think there's a double standard operating and it's different - do you feel that, that it's different? - that there are certain rules for men and for women - that example you gave, the guy on the television, sounded as if he was just operating a total different -

A: Well, my brother, my brother is - my eldest brother, he is a male chauvinist. He will go with what he can get, he is - I mean, he doesn't - he's not like it to me, that's 'cos I'm his sister. But I mean he womanises every single girl he goes out with. Which is disgusting, but I mean what can I do?

Q: And you think that's sort of fairly general, men have a different attitude towards -

A: I don't know, it - I don't know, I think it's - I think it is changing, it is. 'Cos there's a lot of girls at college and they're only young, they're seventeen - sixteen, seventeen, and they're not like that at all. They're not like that at all. The older generation, like my elder sister and her - and my elder brother, they're really - they expect that from a man, do you know what I mean?

Q: Yeah.

A: They expect the man like - my sister's boyfriend, he was always jack-the-lad -

Q: Yeah.

A: - around with the girls, and putting his arm round her. And there's a few - there's a boy in the second year and he's thirteen, and he thinks it is fine to do that to me. And like - like he comes up and he puts his arms around you - "Alright babe?" - "Don't come that crap to me please" - and he went "why?", and I goes, "cos I'm a feminist", and he says - he goes - what did he say? - he said - he said "Stand there and I'll show you what a feminist is". And I said, "oh, you gonna do something with that, are you?". And he - just can't handle it, they think that you're being rude to them if you say anything against their masculinity, they think it's rude - "How dare you! You question me?". I mean I'm - he thinks he's allowed to do it, he honestly believes that it's fine to come around, put his arm around me, try and sweet-talk me, like try and get me in the back room, it's alright,

because he's never - he was born to do this. But then some people in the class like in my year, they're not like that at all. I mean they would think, even if they slapped you on the bum, they'd (gasp) - they'd have second thoughts about doing it. Even if it was friendly they'd still think, "oh I'd better not do that, 'cos she might take it the wrong way".

Q: Mm. You think - do you think that is the effect of feminism, do you think feminism has had some impact at that level?

A: What, do you mean the men think about what they're doing?

Q: Mm.

A: I don't think it's feminism, I just think it's changing. I just think it's - men and women changing their relationships altogether. I mean it's not just - I mean you can't just pinpoint it down to any one thing.

Q: Mm, yeah.

A: I mean it's - there's loads, there's lots of things, that we can't - that men are just realising that they can't take women for granted, that even though the older generation still does - like my dad, the way he treats his wife is disgusting. Like dinner (clicks her fingers) - now, this, that and the other. I mean he literally clicks his fingers to her, which I wouldn't - I - I mean I'd chop his fingers off if he done that to me.

Q: (laugh) Yeah.

A: And - but I think it's - like my younger brother, he's got a girlfriend, and he's only sixteen, and he - I mean, it's not that she's a feminist, I mean maybe - I mean that term's so loosely used nowadays and nobody knows what it is. It doesn't term anything, it just terms the woman against men, that's what people normally think of it. But she - I mean she doesn't take no crap.

Q: Yeah.

A: I mean she's a girl, she's a typical girl... I mean, she works for her money, she's just got a summer job, and her money is spent on her. I mean she doesn't subsidise him or anything. But he hasn't got a job, he's just lost his summer job. She doesn't give him money, like if he wants a new pair of jeans or anything he has to go out and work for it. She doesn't - she doesn't pay for him, she doesn't - I mean she doesn't go out and be - like you know, boys, they usually take their girlfriends out, don't they? - and the - all their mates come round, and it's usually the one girl or the few girls sitting there while the mates say "phwoar - " and have a laugh and being jack-the-lads and all that. She - she doesn't put up with nothing. She is so brilliant.

Q: Yeah.

A: And I mean - I know they say, men beat women. It's more like woman beat man in that relationship. She's so - if she thinks he's doing wrong or he's bullshitting her, she'll just go like "don't bullshit me". Or if she's - if he's trying to speak to a girl, "don't speak to that girl". She spots it straight away. She knows what she's about, and she doesn't take any crap.

Q: You sound as if you admire her quite a lot.

A: Yeah, I do. 'Cos I think she's brilliant. She's just so - I don't know, she stands up for everything. She wants, she gets, just like that. And - and I mean she even does use sometimes use her feminine charms to get round him.

Q: Yeah.

A: She's brilliant as well -

Q: Yeah.

A: - she can turn, I mean one minute she's - "No, I'm not gonna lend you ten quid. You want money, go and work for it, and you wanna go down the pub with your mates, well I'm going out with mine", and the next minute she can get round him because she's a woman, and she uses it for herself. Which I think is good.

Q: Yeah. Do you see any of those characteristics in you, yourself?

A: Oh, definitely, yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: I'm - I'm - I must admit I'm a bit - I couldn't do that personally, I know. If my boyfriend needed money and I had money and he needed some, then I would borrow it to him. I wouldn't give it to him, he'd have to pay it all back. I mean you have... you earn... that and the other. He doesn't get it for free, he always has to give it back. But I couldn't blatantly turn round and say, "No. You wanna go down the pub, you work for the money."

Q: Yeah.

A: Because if he was going down the pub, I'd be down the pub down the road with my mates, d'you know what I mean?

Q: Mm, yeah.

A: What's good for him's good for me.

Q: Yeah.

A: If he - if I was going out with my mates and he didn't have no money and we was going, I'd borrow him a tenner to go with his mates.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: D'you know what I mean? 'Cos I wouldn't like to sit at home doing nothing with no money. I would expect him to borrow it to me if I needed it.

Q: Yeah.

A: So I would borrow it to him.

Q: Mm. Where - where do you get the money from, I mean are you working?

A: Well, I work part time now. Just started work part time.

Q: Yeah. What kind of work are you doing?

A: I'm working in an off license. It's alright, a bit boring.

Q: ... just gonna do that for the summer, or do you think you'll go on doing it?

A: I'm - I'm gonna go on doing it till my end of college, and if I go... I won't be able to do it obviously.

Q: Yeah.

A: It's just for extra pocket money. To get some clothes, and I wanna go on holiday, and I wanna get... and all that, so it's just extra money.

Q: Yeah. What - you put down on your questionnaire that you were Roman Catholic.

A: Yeah.

Q: Is that - are you practising -

A: No.

Q: ... do you think it's had an effect on you?

A: No. No, not at all.

Q: Yeah.

A: I've got a lot of - a few Irish friends and they're Roman Catholic. And their mum is very strict with them, it still has no effect. They still go behind her back and have it off

with the man next door. So - there's no point really, I mean it's a waste - it's a waste of time.

Q: Yeah.

A: 'Cos if you - I mean she can go mass every Sunday, but she will still be - be - at twelve o'clock coming back from mass, going out with this man, next door. So what is the point? It's a waste of her time, she's getting up early in the morning for no reason.

Q: Yeah. I've found a lot of people that - we put that question on the questionnaire because we were wondering how it affected people's lives, but quite often people are just... It's the - they might even be practising, actually just - your friend who you were talking about, but it doesn't actually influence -

A: - not at all -

Q: - what they do. Whereas others it does, quite strongly -

A: Yeah.

Q: I suppose it's very variable, what - how different people feel about it. Another question that I've been asking people is what is their image of their selves - what is your image of yourself? - if you had to describe yourself, what you were like, to somebody else.

A: My image or my personality?

Q: Well, whatever. If you were sort of thinking of yourself, what do you think of? What are you like?

A: I'm stubborn, I'm extremely stubborn. I'm outgoing... I like going out, fun - I'm social, and I love socialising, every weekend I like going out. People say - some people say I'm flash. I think it's just that they can't out-talk me, they only say that when I can get my point across better than anything that theirs - and they say, "you're too flash, too flash". I don't know, that's about it really.

Q: Well how do you think - people's image of you, I mean you say some people think you're flash but -

A: Over-confident. People usually say that I'm over-confident.

Q: Yeah. And how does that compare with your image, do you think that you are...?

A: No, I don't think I am at all. I just know what I want. And that's it. I don't think - I wouldn't say that I'm over-confident. Maybe they only say that because they're not as confident as I am. There's so many - so many paranoid people in our college, it's unbelievable. That they want - if you do anything without them, even if you go to a shop they take it that you're not their friend. It's - it's so weird.

Q: Yeah.

A: And they - they - and I hate liars, I hate to be lied to. That is one thing I cannot stand. And I can't stand people that are pretentious. And they say things which they don't even mean. Like this girl was having a argument, and I felt sorry for her so I helped her out within a argument. Sort of like turned - she was losing the argument. I mean not that that was bad - but it seemed like that, the way they was sitting there arguing. And I sort of like turned the argument around and threw it back in the other girl's face. So then this girl came out and she told me that she loved me. I - "why, why do you say that? Why, why, why? Why are you lying?" I can't - 'cos it is so trivial, why say that "I love you"?

Q: Mm.

A: I mean, why can't you just say, "oh thanks, thanks for helping me"? They have to come out with something big and extravagant and dramatic.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: I can't stand it.

Q: Yeah.

A: One thing I can't stand, being lied to.

Q: Mm. What about lying?

A: Do I lie?

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah, I do. What do I lie about? - I can't even remember the last lie I told. What do I lie about? I don't know what I lie about, I lie about stupid things. Oh, if I got no money I'll say to my mum, "can I have some money to get some sweets?", and really, I buy fags. I mean stupid lies like that. I mean I wouldn't go out and - go into college, say "my house was set on fire last night" or "I really like you" and I don't like you at all. I mean I - I don't see the point in all that, really stupid.

Q: Yeah.

A: Just come... Tactfully. Sometimes you - you just have to tell the person, "I don't like you" and that's it. And how they handle it is up to them.

Q: Yeah. Are there lots - I mean when you talk about people getting paranoid here, are there lots of sort of cliques and groups and - do you move between them or -

A: Well there's about five of us in a group, in my group, who hang around together, and then there's other little groups. And there's one or two people that just sort of like go from one group to the other and can't really make up their mind. I don't mind - I don't mind who I hang around with. If I like you then you'll be my friend and I'll be loyal to you. But I hate people that - they tell you intimate secrets, really personal secrets, so that you'll be their friend. And there is a girl... that does that all the time. And she'll tell you what she did last night, and - with someone who wasn't her boyfriend and - she's - I don't know - she's - she reads - she reads things into people's lives. Like if you come in one morning and you're not in a very good mood, all you have to say is, "Just leave me for ten minutes and I'll be alright" - she'll say, "You've had a argument with your parents" or something. And like - it occasionally happens to me, that I come in and I've got out the wrong side of the bed and I don't wanna talk to anyone, I just wanna calm down and have a cup of tea and be left alone for half an hour. And I'll just say, "Oh, gimme - gimme time to wake up" and that's it, and then everyone knows where they are. But she'll read something into that, she'll - something's happened along the line, that's - that's her cliché, that's all she says, "something's happened along the line".

Q: Yeah.

A: Say you chain-smoke all day - "something's happened within her house or within her relationship, and her parents have done this and the other". She - she has - she - like she tells lies, like - maybe, maybe she's not lying, but she's had lie treatment - I don't know what she calls it, I can't remember - but she's had treatment. I don't know, she's - but I mean if you're talking, she - "she's talking about me, talking about me". And you say, "If I wanted to say something to you, I'd say it to your face. I mean I'm not that scared of you, to say it, or I'm not afraid of you, I'm not this of you, to say it to your face". I can't stand it.

Q: Mm.

A: And like there's another girl, and we hang around with her. She's nice enough and I like her, but she's extremely paranoid. And like we went out. And her answering

machine was on so we thought that she was out. So then we didn't - we didn't phone her back 'cos her answering machine was on. And we got to college - 'cos we'd been out for a drink before - when we went to college, she - "Oh, where was you" like - "Oh, we went for a drink". She automatically thought that we didn't wanna be her friend anymore, 'cos we hadn't phoned her up. And she couldn't understand that her answering machine was on, so we assumed that she had been out. Why else would she put her answering machine on?

Q: Yeah.

A: She couldn't understand it. And I can't stand it really. Sometimes - I don't wanna be horrible to her, I feel a bit sorry for her because like she's always saying how she feels weary of making friends because, just as she starts to make a friend and really trusts the person, they drop her. And I don't wanna - I don't - because she says she's had it done so many times to her, I don't wanna do it to her, I don't wanna hurt her again.

Q: Yeah.

A: But then she gets right up my nose sometimes.

Q: Yeah. Maybe this is why people have been doing it -

A: Yeah.

Q: - perhaps if she behaves like that -

A: That's what I mean. You - you still think - I mean you have second thoughts of doing it to her because she's had it done so many times, and this, that and the other -

Q: Yeah.

A: You feel - you do feel sorry for her -

Q: Yeah.

A: - and you don't wanna say nothing. So you put up with the pain.

Q: Yeah. Complicated, though, there's a lot of - lots of things going on under the surface there. One thing I forgot to ask you, when we were talking about AIDS, was what - what - do you feel that you know enough about it? And what do you know, what do you think of AIDS as being?

A: A sexually transmitted disease. It takes - it can be unseen for three to five years, and then you can automatically get it. And then - you might just have the virus, and then you might get the full blown-out disease, of which you can die - may die within three, five, ten years. And then you may not, you may live for another twenty years. That's about all I know.

Q: How is it transmitted?

A: Sexually.

Q: Any other method?

A: Blood. Someone said saliva, but I think it takes an awful lot of saliva to transmit a -

Q: Yeah, it's - the sort of level of knowledge is changing quite a lot all the time. I remember when I first read about saliva it said that you have to swallow about a pint and a half of saliva to actually get the virus... but now I think that the amount that you have to transfer has gone down, so it's complicated. So - and also the state of knowledge about how long you might have the virus before you develop the disease, the amount of time keeps changing... trying to find out more about it.

A: Yeah.

Q: Do you feel that you need to know more?

A: Even though I've had a sexual relationship, I don't think that I need to know more. Because I - I think that I'm pretty safe. But it would be useful knowledge to know, it would be something useful to know about in the future, or, say someone came to me at college for advice because they're starting a sexual relationship, and I'm - I never knew nothing about it and they was asking me questions, it would be also useful for my knowledge and for theirs.

Q: Mm. Do you think that young people don't know much about it, or don't care about it?

A: I don't think it's that they don't care. I - I think they just see it as an effort to find out about it. D'you know what I mean?

Q: Mm.

A: I mean if you go and ask about AIDS, people automatically think that you've got it - "why are enquiring?", "why do you wanna know about these things?" - "it must be because you've got it", that's what people automatically think. I don't know. Young people don't know enough, they do not know enough. I certainly don't think I know enough. I mean and I'm young and I'm having sex now, and I should be - I should know a lot more about it. 'Cos it might affect me (?)one day.

Q: Yeah. So do you think - I mean, do you remember some of the earlier government campaigns about it, do you think they didn't get across to young people? I mean they had the things at the beginning, the big slab of stone saying "don't die of ignorance" or something like that -

A: Yeah.

Q: And then they had some stuff about condoms which was on the telly.

A: They've still got that now, have you seen the advert?

Q: No.

A: It's a condom in a spotlight -

Q: Yeah.

A: - and - "don't go far without one".

Q: Oh, yeah, yeah. I think I saw one on the tube -

A: Yeah.

Q: - a poster of that. Do you think they're effective or ineffective, those campaigns?

A: I don't know. It makes you think twice, but I don't know if it's enough to make you do something about it.

Q: Mm, I think that's the main problem really, because people might be worried about it but then, when it comes to the - the crunch, they don't actually act..

A: Yeah. I mean even chat - even if they had documentaries and chat programmes, I mean - did you ever watch the documentary on that man who died of AIDS?

Q: No.

A: And - he was a great friend of some television person, I can't remember now. Anyway, they filmed his last years of life, and when he was in hospital. And they filmed his funeral - the funeral, at which - it was amazing, I mean - and he was such a brilliant character, he was so funny. He was even - I mean there were days when he was down, but usually he was so bubbly and he was optimistic, even when he knew that he was dying and when the doctors said "there's nothing we can do, you will be dying in three days", he was still bubbling and laughing and cheering up his mum and - I think programmes like that, they choke you. But it's - they trigger your tears and that's about

all, they don't trigger enough to make you get up, use the phone or go down to the clinic. Even in the clinic not enough is said.

Q: Yeah.

A: When I first went to the clinic it was a long lecture - "and do you know what you're doing?" and "do you think he's suitable for you?", all this. I mean I'd been going out with him for two years over. It wasn't like - "oh I'm glad you're taking this responsible step, I'm glad that you're realising that you need to take precautions if you're having sex". It's not - I mean there's so many different - there's so many young girls out there, that are not on the pill. I mean there's three girls down our street that have had children, and they were all under the age of sixteen.

Q: Yeah.

A: Every single one of them, and they've all got children now. I mean it's - they don't - you're not - maybe you shouldn't be congratulated to going up to the clinic at sixteen and saying "I wanna go on the pill", but I mean you should be made aware that you are making a reliable - you are making a responsible decision.

Q: Yeah.

A: To - to keep control of yourself. Like I mean, you don't wanna get pregnant, you don't wanna catch anything. But I mean you just - you go down there and you're told about (tape change) - you go down the clinic and all they talk about is "how long have you had sexual intercourse?", "do you think he's the right man, he's the right person for you?", "do you know what you're doing?", and "do you smoke?", and "do you go over the sunbed?" and "do you go under the sun?" - because all these factors might reduce - they might reduce the effect of the pill. You're not told nothing about AIDS, and the precautions you should take, you're not told nothing about that. You're not told nothing about different types of diseases, not just AIDS, not killers - I mean there are - there are killer diseases other than AIDS.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: You're not told nothing about them, and what effects they have on you, and how you can catch it, and what are the symptoms for catching them and things like that. It's useful information. And how your cure works and how you - how your body works in conjunction with your cure, all different things like that. Things that you wanna know.

Q: Yeah.

A: I mean I think - I mean if it asked - "why are you asking this question?" - "do you feel pressure of having sex?", "have you been asked to come along...?", "why hasn't your boyfriend come with you?". I mean if I went again, if I - I - I felt - I went with my mum, and I felt more comfortable with my mum than I did with him. Maybe because he was - I mean, he's a man and the clinic's full of women -

Q: Yeah.

A: And I always felt more embarrassed than he had -

Q: Yeah.

A: So there I was with my mum, and it was "why isn't he here? Isn't he - don't you think he's part of this?". I said, yeah, but I'm taking the pill, come on. I mean he doesn't have to take it every single day for twenty-one days, does he?

Q: Yeah.

A: He's not doing nothing. I'm taking it. So I mean, what's - yeah, it has got something to do with him, but I'm the one it falls onto. If I forget it, it's my problem. He isn't gonna be walking round nine months with a big lump. It is my problem.

Q: Yeah.

A: But they see - if your boyfriend don't come, he's unreliable and he doesn't care and - they talk about stupid things. Not the real issues.

Q: What they should be talking about, yeah, it sounds as if you feel as if all that sort of information should be available - I mean, maybe not only at the clinic, but in school, in the sex education...

A: Yeah, I mean, at that age, I mean - fourth year, how old are you - fourteen? - thirteen, fourteen. It's such an embarrassment at that age.

Q: Yeah?

A: It is, I mean, you're either lying that you had it, or you're telling the truth that you haven't had it. Or you're lying that you haven't had it. I mean - people just, they sit there, and it was such a joke. Even my brother - now, it's embarrassing for me to tell my brothers that I'm on the pill, 'cos I know my brothers will say...; it's alright for them to have sex with their girlfriends, but I'm not allowed to have sex with my boyfriend. And one day my brother come in, and he was so embarrassed - and I had the pill on the - on the sink. "What's that doing?" - my youngest brother, and he said, "what's that then?". And I said, "that's the pill". And all he could say was, "contraceptives?", and walked out the bathroom again. And I was so embarrassed - I don't know why, I mean - I mean we're usually an open family, and nearly everything gets discussed at the breakfast table. But I felt so embarrassed that he should know that.

Q: Yeah?

A: I - yeah, 'cos he was - I don't know. I mean you never think of your mother having sex - no way, my mother never had sex in her life! - I mean you never think - you can never imagine your mum lying in bed having it off, you just can't, it's disgusting - ugh! - she's an angel, she doesn't do it -

Q: Yeah. She must have done...

A: Yeah, yeah, I know (laughter) - it just -

Q: - immaculate conception, maybe.

A: Yeah. But I mean to talk about it at fourteen or fifteen - maybe it doesn't, maybe you have to be that young, maybe you need to be that young to get the idea, so by the time you do have sex you'd be knowing everything. Like the back of your hand, I mean you know it all.

Q: Yeah.

A: So maybe you do need to be that young, I mean - but there's always the possibility that people aren't gonna take it seriously.

Q: Yeah... embarrassed and stuff. And won't take it in because it isn't relevant if they're not actually - if it isn't - it's not what they're doing, or not what they're even thinking about doing.

A: Yeah, and they - they - I mean it was so trivial, our sex education. They thought it was - it was good, because they had a black condom. I mean - and that condom can relate to all black men.

Q: Yeah.

A: I mean, how pathetic! - We could just... at the colour of a condom.

Q: Colour of a condom, yeah. Well,... other colours as well -

A: I know but -

Q: - yellow and green.

A: Yeah, but it was so - the majority of the boys in my class were black anyway, it was seen as the most important thing that a condom was black, and it was made black. I mean they stressed that more than the pill or the coil... colour of a condom. It was hilarious.

Q: So is there anything that you'd like to ask me about, about - well, anything about the project?

A: Yeah, why are you doing this project?

Q: Well, we're doing it to find out what young women are thinking and feeling about their relationships, just as you said, and what they're actually doing in their sexual relationships, to feed into the sex education and AIDS education classes in a way, because sometimes people feel the programmes are irrelevant to young people and that young people aren't getting the information that they need, just as you feel, they're not getting the information that they need, and we feel it's important to find out what young people actually think themselves and what they're doing that is relevant to them. So that's why we're trying to do it. I mean... London and in Manchester... interview about a hundred and odd young women, and in Manchester a similar sort of number. We've got a team up there, and also quite a lot more people are filling in our questionnaire, so we've got some basic idea about what their sex education was like, and what their actual sexual practices are.

A: Yeah. What do you hope to do with this, I mean -

Q: Well, we'll feed the information into the health education authority, ..., into the schools' health education programme. We'll probably write a report - reports about it, and a book, that sort of thing, which will let everybody who's been involved know about - ... The other thing that we want to do is maybe come back and interview some of the young women again next year to see how things have changed, what's developed in their lives and so on. Would you be interested in -

A: Yeah, sure.

Q: 'Cos I've had your home address... And the third thing that we were thinking of doing was asking you to keep a diary for us for a short time, maybe a couple of months or something like that, describing their feelings and what they were doing in their relationships. Would you be interested in that?

A: Sure.

Q: I'll probably be sending those out very shortly within the next week, I should think. Just for a couple of months, see how it goes, and then post it back to me. I mean if you wanted to do it for longer you could. Right.

A: What - what exactly would you wanna know in the diary?

Q: Well it's sort of what you're - what you're doing in your relationship, including sexual behaviour in the relationship, plus what you think and feel about it, how it affects your emotions. But I'll write a little thing - you know, I'll send you a letter which will describe as well... So, well, thank you very much for talking with me, it's been a pleasure. It's been nice talking to - I mean I talk to quite a few people... sociology group...

A: Yeah.