**Interview 1 – Male, 24, Newham**

Interviewer:

Can we start by talking about what you’ve put first?

Interviewee:

yea, um, being misunderstood was the first thing that I thought I associate with loneliness. I think, um, sometimes you could have, someone could be, maybe surrounded, you could still have people around you, if they don’t quite understand you, you could still feel quite lonely. Um, yeah, if they don’t understand what you’re trying to express, and you still feel the that sense of loneliness, and I think that’s probably the one I’ve experienced more so, that’s why I associated it, rather, I don’t think, I’ve, many times in life, I haven’t been that physically, I’ve always had people around me but I’ve been more misunderstood, which has led to being lonely.

Interviewer:

And, how does that make you feel?

Interviewee:

Uuum, quite frustrating. It’s frustrating to be misunderstood.

Interviewer:

Can you tell me more about that?

Interviewee:

Um, um, I think, sometimes, my parents probably haven’t had a similar experience to life to me. Um. But then I don’t think a lot of my friends have had a similar experience to life to me as well. Um, I don’t think, yea, I don’t think a lot of people had a similar experience of life to me so that um, I think sometimes I can just feel like you’re having a conversation with somebody, they don’t really grasp what you’re dealing with so therefore, I feel quite, it feels quite, alone in your thoughts, in what you’re dealing with.

Interviewer:

So people not being able to understand you, um…

Interviewee:

[Interrupts politely]Even if they want to, and they’re trying to, but it could still feel quite lonely if they, if you don’t feel they understand you properly. It’s not for like a room. For a lot of people, they want to help, they want to understand but they can’t. It can still feel quite lonely for the individual. You can’t feel anything if you’re being understood…for me, yeah.

Interviewer:

Thank you. Is there anything else you want to say?

Interviewee:

Just about number 1?

Interviewer:

Yes.

Interviewee:

Yeah, I just think, um, yea, I think I summarised to the extent of what I mean. I think the only, I think as well, like, in this, where I live right here, I grew up in quite a mixed environment. Everyone’s living, everyone’s lived experience around here is so different cause of culture, skin colour, religion, lots of variables and different reasons. Um, and I think that lack of shared experience can lead to the feeling of loneliness.

Interviewer:

When you say ‘shared experience’ can you tell me more about that?

Interviewee:

So, just, a lot of friends which I would have gone to school with partake in activities with, would have just gone home to different homes, or gone back to different rules, live by different values. But then on the flip side, your family and your background had lived a different experience, because of the generational gap, I just feel like, just as an individual sometimes, you can have friends, you can have family, but if they don’t quite understand your lived experience, you can feel quite alone.

Interviewer:

Thank you. Is there anything else you want to say?

Interviewee:

No, that’s about it.

Interviewer:

Thank you.

Interviewee:

Number 2?

Interviewer:

Sure.

Interviewee:

Um, this one is pretty straight forward, this is just, it’s a one person being on their own and quite sad and a group of people quite happy. That’s the idea of being like an outcast. Um, being pushed to the side, not being included. I think that’s what I, I... I imagine this person to be lonely. Not all the time, I don’t think being on your own is always a bad thing, I think it can be a good thing to be honest, but, um, maybe too much on your own can lead to feeling of loneliness. Yea, I mean I’m quite, I supposed in context as well, are you alone because you want to be alone or are you alone because you have to be alone? So, I think they’re both two different experiences, so when I choose to kind of lock myself away and do my activities that I choose to do on my own I think I’m quite at ease with that situation, but if all my friends got invited to a party and I didn’t, then maybe I wouldn’t appreciate being alone in that moment as much.

Interviewer:

And how does that make you feel?

Interviewee:

If I were to experience what ‘thing guy’ [referring to the drawing] is experiencing?

Interviewer:

Yes.

Interviewee:

Probably quite sad, annoyed. I think this person probably wonders why they can’t fit in with these guys, these people [referring to the drawing], and it may lead to feeling of inadequacy. Very slight, small percentage of people operate here all the time [referring to the lonely person being isolated from a group of other people] and don’t feel lonely, they just feel okay with it because they think that there [referring to where the individual is being alone] is better. But for the rest of people, I think being here all the time [referring to where that one individual is drawn at] would be quite sad.

Interviewer:

So, you’re associating being excluded from a group of friends with loneliness.

Interviewee:

Yes, excluded from a group of friends, um, excluded from potentially wider society as well. Um, yea I think that probably represents both, so excluded from friends but also excluded from wider society as well. I think it can be quite sad if you don’t have the same opportunities to be involved in some things as well.

Interviewer:

And if you don’t have the same opportunities, how does that make you feel?

Interviewee:

Um, Frustrated, frustrated. But, yea, I think a lack of opportunities can lead to frustration. Um, but yea I still think that 95% of people won’t like to be here [referring to the excluded person in the drawing] but there’s a small percentage of people that don’t mind being here. They’re fine with it. Someone like myself are probably, I like having friends but I like to come here when I want to be here, I wouldn’t want to have to be here.

Interviewee:

I don’t really know what much more to expand on that.

Interviewer:

Sure, no worries, whenever you feel like it, we can move on to the next one.

Interviewee:

Cool. [moving on to the third box]. This one is someone asking for help and support, getting no response, because nobody cares. I think…probably feel most alone when you need the support of others but can’t get it. I haven’t experienced this too many times in my life, in context I don’t, I’m fortunate in that way but I think, I think I’ve experienced it in instances, like maybe, um, but I think some people have this as a lack of an overarching energy in their life, that’s what maybe, feel like generally they ask for people for help and they don’t get the support and no one cares. But I think, probably, a couple of times in my life where I felt unsupported but maybe that’s because I was a bit younger, a bit more naïve, and ignorant to what support looks like, um, so just felt that way. But yea, ultimately, I think, um, so it was just like, someone feeling distressed, dealing with personal issues, I, just not having anyone to lean on or to speak to those issues about, I think that would be one of experiences of loneliness. Um, especially, if you maybe had it before. I think everyone needs somewhere to offload, so if you don’t have that and you feel probably a bit like stranded, yea, quite vulnerable. This person [referring to the drawing], potentially be highly receptive to the room, so that energy is like someone could take advantage of this person because of how lonely they feel and how much support they need. Yeah.

I suppose, if you maybe got like robbed on the street or something and you called for help and no one responded in that instance, you would feel quite lonely. But, so I think that’s the same thing but on a larger scale, generally I think people go through more longer-term issues in their lives maybe dealing with like mental health, other things and just not having someone there could also provide the same feeling of helplessness. For me.

And box 4,

Interviewer:

Is there anything else you want to say about box 3 before we move on?

Interviewee:

Box 3?

Interviewer:

Yes. How does that make you feel, for example, if there’s no one to rescue you?

Interviewee:

Um, it can feel quite sad. Um, bitter maybe. Um, I think times like this cause people to reflect on their actions and ask questions. If you consistently find in your life that, I don’t know, you going through stressful times and not really having people to lean on, I think it can cause you to ask questions on yourself, in your relationships, maybe as to why, why is no one there supporting me? You’ve got a difficult conversation to have with yourself.

Interviewer:

And, having a difficult conversation with yourself. Can you tell me more about that?

Interviewee:

Um, cause I think if you’re someone who extends yourself when you support people around you then you expect to be supported when you’re in time of need, but if they’re not, then I think you end up either asking yourself a) am I not treating people correctly? Is that why I’m not being treated with the same support that I want to be treated with. Or, you question the quality of people that you’re investing your time in. So, just, I think these things, a lot of reflection. When you’re alone and you need help and no one wants to help you. I think, after you’re upset, I think you’re going start thinking, ‘why?’ ‘why?’ ‘why does no one wanna, why’? ‘I’ve done that for them, why can’t they do that for me?’. Is it cause they’re a rubbish person or is it because ‘I actually, I don’t do anything for anyone?’, like and I think both of those, second one is probably harder to deal with cause you gotta change yourself. First one is just frustrating cause you probably wasted time investing in people that are not willing to make the same sacrifice for you.

[Pause]. I don’t think I have any more to add on that.

Interviewer:

Sure.

Interviewee:

Break up [forth box]. I think breakups bring a feeling of loneliness because you’re so engulfed, so consumed by someone else potentially, um sometimes you might have lived with that person, you might have not anymore, I think that, the feeling of the void that someone leaving leaves can make you feel lonelier than you probably are, cause, I was always just as lonely before any of my break ups occurred, well not lonely but I was always just as alone before any of my breakups occurred but when you break up you feel more lonelier after than you was before, even though you had the same amount of people around you so I can only assume that, that’s just your body doing that you’re biologically doing, you’re getting used to something and when it’s taken away from you, you feeling extra like exposed to the experience of loneliness. Yea, it’s like, it highlights everything, I think, you probably feel lonelier for sort of different, I know some people a year after their break up they’re still feeling pretty lonely. So anyone can come in and potentially fill the void that the other person has left but they might not be appropriate but because the person doesn’t want to experience the feeling of loneliness, they might engage in it and overlook certain aspects of the person’s character because they stop them from feeling lonely and I’ve seen that a lot. I think, it’s important to go into a relationship with a lot self-worth and understanding cause otherwise when you come away from it you just won’t feel that great, really. It plays with your self-value in your relationships. You feel extremely lonely after that.

Interviewer:

So, you’re saying that if you know yourself well, if you have a good understanding of your self-worth, you’re less likely to experience loneliness after a breakup.

Interviewee:

I think so. I think you can be able to take on more level-headed understanding of why you might have broken up. Maybe... you might look at it more from a perspective of ‘is it good for both of you?’ You be able to make a more composed decision on why you breaking up and why you going separate ways as opposed to feeling like you’re losing part of yourself. And I think the more that someone, longer for two people in a relationship, the more you start sharing ways and ways of life and I suppose it’s pretty hard to ask, two people that are in a relationship for 10 years to not feel lonely after coming out of their relationship. So I do think there’s a, it’s probably a certain level of relationship, that no matter how much self-value and self-worth you might have, you’re probably going to still feel a bit lonely when you come out of it but I think you can give yourself the best chance of feeling less lonely after by really having a level-headed, um, being grounded in what you represent what your values are, what you’re worth and that way you don’t feel like that person has left your life, that you’re worthless. I think that’s what brings about the feeling of loneliness. I hear a lot of people say things like, people feeling like when they lose someone, they won’t meet someone else, but they will. That’s just an experience, the high-end emotion you might have experienced that are going through at that period of time and when it goes back down you start you start seeing things clearer. So. This person [referring to the drawing] can have 10 family members living around, yet still feel lonely.

[Pause]. Anything else you’d like me to expand on?

Interviewer:

Um, I think, just wanted to know, so you’re saying that even if you’re surrounded with so many people, like 10 people as you said, like 10 family members, but you had a breakup, your heart was broken, that still doesn’t satisfy your loneliness.

Interviewee:

Uhum, I think in that instance. So much that there’s levels to learn in this. Cause even what I’m describing from here to here to here [referring to the drawing], you can probably be, you can be lonely here, in your heart, with your partner, still have friends that involve you and everything, still be completely understood by why the society, or just broken up that would feel lonely in that regard so this one, I felt that, but then I think could actually say the same for all of them so, you could be in a relationship, maybe not feel, feel quite composed like quite comfortable with your relationship, quite comfortable with how you spluttering to why the society, but then feel excluded by your friends, so I think maybe, yea there’s layers to loneliness. I suppose someone experiencing ultimate loneliness would be experiencing all of these [referring to all of the four boxes] at once, at all of the time, they have no friends to turn to, no partner, no one would care when they call and no one understands them when they speak anyways.

This one, it definitely came to my mind first [referring to the first box]. I think it’s just because the one I’ve experienced most. I’ve always had people around me physically, but I haven’t felt like they can understand what I’m saying.

This summarises everything I have to say about the experience of loneliness.

Interviewer: Thank you very much.

Interviewee: Thank you.

Part 2

Interviewer:

So, can we start by talking about what you put first?

Interviewee:

Um, so, I put the barber shop. Um, it’s where I feel most socially connected…and that’s because, I think, the regularity of how often we met up there, there’s a kind of community spirit, a lot of people that attend there to get their haircut are from the local area, or barbers are from quite local areas as well and they’ve been there for so long. So, some of the barbers may have been cutting my hair for when I was like 5 years old. There’s a real like, they just know me from childhood to a man, kind of thing. A lot of my peers have had that experience with the barber shop, so, kind of, just, when you go, when we’re there, we’re just, maybe talking about, it could be football, it could be the news, it could be music, it could be lots of different things, but there’s always a shared interest and there’s always humour, comedy you know, just jokes, um, because it’s so regular and everyone needs a haircut every couple of weeks so it’s just, it’s always, it always feels like a socially connected place. Yea, definitely the most socially connected place in my local neighbourhood. And um, this [referring to the second box] …

Interviewer:

Before we go on to the next one, I was just wondering, um, so you’re saying that that shared element that you guys can talk about, the regularity for example, they’re associated with, you know, those make you feel socially connected to people. How do they make you feel?

Interviewee:

Um, it feels good to go, um I mean I enjoy the barber shop, not just for getting my haircut but for… the experience I get to have by going there and seeing the same people and knowing that they’re doing well and, everyone’s getting by fine, I think…and….I’m grateful to see people that I know and have known for a long time fine. I think every time I go there, it just reminds me that everyone’s good and well and doing okay. Um, if I move far away, I’d think I wonder how the guys at the barbershop are doing. You know? I think just…yea, I mean, if I didn’t go to the barbershop, I wouldn’t have half as many people to…think football specifically, because football is always on a weekend and I always get my haircut on the weekend. Always, it’s always the topic of football at the weekend. And football always be on in the barbershop at the weekend, so. Um just like that element of fun and humour and just the barbershop creates that really good energy, really nice place to be. Yeah.

Interviewer:

Is there anything else you want to add?

Interviewee:

I don’t think so. For the place I feel most lonely, shopping centre after 7pm roughly. It’s where you often see like a lot of the poor people sleeping rough…and…especially when I feel it. Sometimes you see like if you’re leaving early for work before like 7am, you see the security guards kind of poking them, trying to wake them up and…I think…when I walk through there people ask me for money, don’t always necessary give it to them, I think I feel quite lonely in that moment, cause like, it’s so much like, that moment, me and that person are just leading completely two different lives, we don’t understand each other, um, I don’t share their experience, they don’t share mine and I feel quite disconnected with them. I feel quite disconnected from the people who sleep rough in the shopping centre, I feel like I don’t contribute to their wellbeing, I don’t, but, and sometimes that’s the way my conscious is but I don’t think I quite know how to, I’ve seen how some people do that the right things with soup kitchens and stuff and I respect and appreciate but often I just walk through, just um, move on to wherever I’m going cause I just don’t know how my money is going to be spent and um I wouldn’t want to contribute to someone’s down, like I wouldn’t want to contribute to someone’s drug habit, so there’s conflicting emotions. I may not understand their situations entirely and them sleeping rough on the floor cardboard boxes and me walking through with my head phones in, music, in and out of my phone, it just feels like we’re living two, that to me feels quite detached and I think that’s the most lonely, in my local community that’s when I feel most lonely, I don’t feel like I know those people, I don’t feel like they know me, I don’t feel…um…yea and I think that’s quite lonel [not finishing his word], yea it’s quite weird, that I’d, it still feels lonely for me even though I feel like, it’s more their lonely experience, I feel like they, in that instance, they’re being outcasted from the society. But when I go through and I don’t understand it might feel lonely cause like, cause I don’t, yeah. [a few seconds of pause]. And it kind of resents…kind of resent certain things, I think it makes me resent certain things, cause I can’t remember the last time I walked passed someonew ho is like, kind of, who asks me for change and I’ve said no and I haven’t actually said that. It’s like without fail, if I say no, I’d still walk away and second guess myself “ah, should I have, should I have, should I have?” but then if I on the time when I have, I’d still walk away and second guess myself “ah, should I have, should I have, should I have?”, so it’s like, I really really don’t understand their situation and it causes me to be, but I know that big part of me doesn’t always think nice, it’s entirely their fault, but like, and sometimes I feel like um, I feel like quite resentful to systems like councils, governments, all that sort of thing, I feel completely resentment when I walk through those environments and see those people sleeping rough in my community what I identify as my community, it can make me feel resentment towards people who have provided this situation and that can make me feel quite lonely as well cause it makes you feel like people are responsible for supporting people are not necessarily, they don’t necessary care that much. And that can bring feelings of loneliness. The forgotten ones.

Interviewer:

Is there anything else you’d like to add?

Interviewee:

That’s about it.

Interviewer:

Thank you.