Participant number 26 – Female, 23, Newham

Part 1:

Interviewer: Okay, um can we start by talking about what you’ve put first please?

Interviewee: So this was like the difference between the amount of friends that you may have online versus the amount of friends that you have in person. So it’s really easy to just sort of log on and feel like you’ve got a really good sense of connection with the people that- let’s say live in London, but then when you close the computer, it’s like oh well, it’s just me again now. [Laughs] [Interviewer: mm] And you don’t even know whether these people are what they are, based on what they post so it’s not- doesn’t really give you the confidence to go out and meet people online. Especially with some of the horror stories you get about people that have met other people online. [Interviewer: mm] Yeah, so that’s what that’s about.

Interviewer: So it sounds like what you’re saying is um… you might have many friends on social media [interviewee: yeah] but then, you know, you don’t know who are kind of your-

Interviewee: Yeah. I’d say it’s really easy to um feel as if you’re not lonely when you have that distraction but once that’s taken out of the picture it’s quite easy then to be like well actually, I am quite lonely.

Interviewer: Mm. Um… okay. So then you’ve got sort of your friends and they post whatever they want [interviewee: yeah] and then it’s just you [interviewee: yeah] after when you log off on social media, then you’re [interviewee: yeah] just by yourself. [Interviewee: yeah] How does that make you feel?

Interviewee: It makes me feel like I’m just sort of distracting myself really. As opposed to making more of an effort to go out and meet people. You’re like well why- I have- I have conversations, I can have conversations pretty easily, but that’s not like true social interaction really, is it? [Interviewer: mm] Makes me feel like social media’s- the intentions of it are not necessarily what’s happening as a result. It’s just sort of… having a negative impact and is making our social skills a lot worse.

Interviewer: Mm. Um… you mentioned a couple of things. Um you said you- it’s not true conversations, and then making your social skills a lot worse. [Interviewee: yeah] Can you tell me more about that?

Interviewee: Just in terms of- I feel like when I meet older people, or people like my parents age, they are- they can hold a conversation a lot better with people their own age group than we can. We’re sort of so used to putting an emoji to say I feel sad instead of being able to articulate I feel sad and this is why. It’s just sort of like emoji, poop emoji, crying emoji, and I think like that- that’s essentially dumbed us down [interviewer: mm] in terms of being able to understand how we’re feeling and how to articulate it to other people. [Interviewer: mhm] Yeah.

Interviewer: And how does that make you feel, not being able to articulate your thoughts in ways that you want and…

Interviewee: Because I’m quite aware of it, I feel that… it- it makes me feel sad. It makes me feel like our generation’s not headed for great things but um because I am aware of it, it doesn’t get me too down. Yeah and I work- I- I find that most of my social interaction’s at work anyway, so I feel like by the time I get home, more often than not, I can do with not talking to any other people. So it doesn’t make me feel too isolated, but I could understand for someone that maybe doesn’t have many friends at work or doesn’t get to interact with people too much, maybe they’re a student and they don’t- they’re sort of um- what they like to do isn’t the same as what everyone else likes to do in school so they’re not really getting the chance to make too many friends except for maybe friends they have online. But how many of those sort of materialise into genuine friendships. Who knows.

Interviewer: Mm. When you say genuine friendships, can you tell me more about that? You said how many-

Interviewee: Well that sort of leads onto this one here. Um, if I’m able to just sort- to go onto this one here, in that when you are happy and everything’s going well, it seems like everyone wants to be around you and support you and is really willing to help you and give you the time of day. But then when you are sad or there’s maybe something going on or maybe that’s your true self, maybe you’re not really the happy person that everyone for example sees online. And then when you are not in that state, there is a lack of support, compared to those that sort of feed off of positive energy.

Interviewer: Mhm. Actually, before we move onto that box, let me ask you a cou- um a couple more questions on the- about the first box. [Interviewee: yeah] So um you said basically earlier on that um you see people posting things on social media. Um… um, how does that make you feel when your friends post things on social media um… when you said something in relation to um them and then you after- when you come off social media?

Interviewee: Uh- well I just find it quite interesting because I’ve opted not to use a variety of forms of social media, now I only have Facebook and it’s only to contact family that live abroad, just because I found that I was spending too much time on it, but if I look back at when I was on Instagram, Snapchat, etcetera, it’s- I found it really interesting to see- so I could- I could be walking down the street with my friend and my friend could be sitting there telling me her boyfriend is the worst person she’s ever met in the en- in the world and she hates him but then you look on Instagram and they’re like happy, on a beach, this is the best thing in the world. So I think a lot of the- well the things that people post- you get to see people’s best selves all the time, don’t you. You don’t get to see it- see people’s true emotions and I feel like that’s led for people within my age group to be quite disconnected from being able to confide in other people. Because of fear of being judged, especially when you- they may have put things out there to sort of build a online persona that is not true to who they are on a day-to-day basis when they’re walking down the street.

Interviewer: Hmm. And how does that make you feel?

Interviewee: It makes me wanna- wanna have friends that are older, or younger, to just sort of- ‘cause I’m a mentor so I a- I- a lot of- a big part of my approach is um trying to get younger people- I work with eleven- to sixteen-year-olds- to be able to articulate how they feel to people and not be too scared of judgement and not to judge other people. Um but it does make me sort of avoid being friends with- or making new friendships with people that are in my age group, sort of early twenties. [Interviewer: mm] So it- it makes me feel limited.

Interviewer: When you say limited, can you tell me more-

Interviewee: Yeah, limited to um who I can s- not speak to but relate to. Um just because I feel like a lot of people- for them this is the norm. To be one thing in real life and another thing online and I- sometimes when you can tell people that’s not actually how things are they can become quite defensive about it and that might make them open up things inside them that they don’t really wanna talk about all the time. So um… yeah, I think it- it makes me feel limited as to the friendships I can make in my community.

Interviewer: Um, you also mentioned that- judgement, you used the word judgement a couple of [interviewee: yeah] times. People don’t wanna be judged and so on. [Interviewee: yeah] Can you tell me more about that?

Interviewee: I think I’m gonna end up keep going back to social media influences, because… I think at twenty-two I just missed it. I just missed the bracket for being on the playground and being on Snapchat or being on Instagram, whereas like the first couple of years of my secondary education, we were playing football and we were playing netball, but then it went to right, let’s just go on the playground and sit like this and listen and talk to people from all over the world but not actually make any genuine friendships with the people um that are right next to me. So everyone sort of built up this online presence, this persona that doesn’t exist and- so I have- I have friends that won’t leave their house without getting to a certain stage of like being prepared physically, because they don’t want for anyone to see what they really look like, based on what they’ve managed to put- to look like online. So I think a lot of people are fearing um being judged for how they look, how they behave, how much money they earn, what they do for a living, what activities they take part in. [Interviewer: mm] So I think it’s really easy to feel judged. And the people that a lot of people look up to are not looking up to them for reasons other than there’s normally attractiveness and- and your financial situation. So everyone’s sort of striving to constantly make other people think that they are the best, but they may not necessarily feel that way themself.

Interviewer: Mm. And how does that make you feel?

Interviewee: Sad. Just sad really. And quite fearful for- I- I’m just quite interested to see what my generation’s gonna be like when we do get to my parents’ age. Because we’re so- we’re not connected in any way at all, really. Even down to our opinions on political issues. If you ask most people what are your opinions on… who’s the current MP, they’d say who’s the current MP. Whereas I feel like a lot of older people at- at this stage of life, even having conversations with my parents, sort of knew where they want the country to go, they understood the implications of the choices that you make now and how that’s gonna effect you in twenty-five years’ time. Now people don’t really have any idea. They’re not- not really interested in it, which is sad and sc- uh quite scary.

Interviewer: When you say s- scary, can you tell me more about that?

Interviewee: It’s just like the unknown. I guess any- any period of time when you’re thinking into the future, you’re gonna be thinking about the unknown. But I don’t feel like there is- i- it doesn’t seem like the way things are going, are like this or this, it seems like they’re just sort of getting progressively worse.

Interviewer: Hmm. When you say progressively worse-

Interviewee: With regards to not having a sense of community. People are not really working together any more, it’s very much me me me me me, how am I gonna get to the top, how am I gonna be the best, get- have the most money, the most followers, there isn’t really- even- if you speak to a lot of people, the idea- like my parents bought a house together. That amongst young people now is the b- like one of the biggest no-nos, never buy a house form someone, never put your money together with someone. What’s yours is yours, what’s theirs is there’s. You could be married for thirty years, but you very much have to look out for yourself. Because everyone just wants to be the best all the time. But not the best as in- see for me, I feel like I’m being the best when I’m being the most kind. That’s what brings me a sense of like fulfilment is have I been kind in this situation. But a lot of people are… h- oh, am I able to go and buy that new pair of shoes and am I able to have that pair of sunglasses. Can I go to Miami this year, you know? We call it stunting. Can I buy a ca- can I finance a car that I can’t even afford just because it makes me look a certain way. You know, and I feel like a lot of people are getting their sense of fulfilment and belonging out of that, which is a never-ending cycle, because if you’re- if you’re that way inclined anyway, you’re probably quite insecure, and constantly feeding into that channel is not gonna make you any less insecure as you get older. And I feel like the insecurities lead to the selfishness and then it’s like a… a never-ending cycle really. I’m trying not to be bleak about it but it kind of is what it is, and having the opportunity to work with young people, I can- I’m beginning to understand the- the patterns that enabled for us to get here in the first place and try my best on a daily basis to sort of interject at certain points and say have you considered this ideology instead or have you thought about this for yourself or, you know, along those lines. Giving younger people a wider viewpoint really. [Interviewer: mm] Yeah, hmm.

Interviewer: So it sounds like what you’re saying is society’s sort of um progressing towards attractiveness and how much money you have, possessions and [interviewee: yeah] the material stuff.

Interviewee: Stuff, yeah. Just stuff. Which didn’t really ever bring- well it never brought me any joy. There’s been plenty of things that I’ve wanted and wanted and I really needed, but then once you’ve got it and you’ve got it, there’s always something else, isn’t there? Doesn’t really ever end. For me anyway. So that’s why I’ve just given up now. [Laughs] I have a certain amount of stuff, I like my stuff, I try not to be wasteful, if it- if it breaks, I fix it, and that’s the way that it is. And that’s another thing about not having social media, I think that that gives me a certain amount of freedom because- for example I wore these shorts on Sunday, but the only people that know I wore these shorts on Sunday are the people I was with on Sunday, whereas I have- some of my other friends who are also with me on Sunday, the outfit that they chose to wear on that day, they’ve now thrown away, because they cannot be seen twice in that outfit. That’s just the way that it is. And I think for- maybe it’s not most people but, out of the maybe seven of us, I’m the only one that doesn’t care. Or me and my partner are the only ones that don’t care. But the others are like nope, do you want this? Or they’ll swap outfits with each other, right now this is yours, ‘cause I’m gonna take a picture in this and I- you can’t be seen in the same place as me wearing that ‘cause I wore it two years ago and it’s- it’s insane. [Laughs]

Interviewer: Mm. Um you mentioned something earlier about it’s a never-ending process. Can you tell me more about that?

Interviewee: I just feel like unless people… wake up and put in effort and time that they may not gain anything from to be able to help those that are slightly younger than us to try and get the trend going back in a more sort of ethical way, then it’s gonna be… it’s gonna be terrible. For- for people, for the environment, not just for us as well because we’ve got the good end of the scale. If- even with regards to talking about being wasteful. Because of this façade that you have to put up… it’s so sad that you can’t wear the same outfit twice, but it’s even more sad of how much water was pumped into making that outfit that you’re wearing that you’re now putting in the bin that someone doesn’t have to drink. So it’s not just effecting us, or the environment, but the people that are living in those third world countries that are making the things that we eat, wear, buy, that are ultimately getting their worst end of it. And that’s now. What about in ten years? Twenty years? Thirty years? If nothing changes, where are we gonna be?

Interviewer: Mm. Um is there anything else you want to say about that box?

Interviewee: Not really. No.

Interviewer: Okay. Um, can we start by talking about what you’ve put in the next box please?

Interviewee: It was about um… how many more people want to be around you when you’re emitting positive vibes compared to the people that want to be around you when you are emitting negative vibes. But those negative vibes might be something that actually having more people around you would be able to help. Yeah. So people’s effort- effort with you when- when there’s something that they might wanna be a part of compared to she’s depressed, no I don’t wanna be around her. Or oh, she’s having really bad anxiety, nah, I’ll see her on Sunday, maybe she’ll feel better. You know. Which can make a person feel quite lonely, ‘cause it seems like at the hardest times is when people [unintelligible 15:36] are least interested. Like if I’m ever feeling down, I won’t go to my friends straight away. The first people I’ll contact is my family ‘cause they don’t really have a choice, they have to listen to me. But my friends are sort of like no, it’s Saturday night, I don’t wanna talk about anxiety, I wanna party. You know? Which is fair enough. But um… still quite sad.

Interviewer: So it sound like what you’re saying is um, you know, when- when you’re happy, when you’ve got everything and you- when you’re good, people wanna hang out with you [interviewee: yeah] but then when it’s the op- the o- the other way around, [interviewee: yeah] when you’re down or feeling low or, you know, not in that same level that you used to be, people don’t wanna be with you.

Interviewee: No. Yeah. Uh not everybody. I’d [unintelligible 16:21] I put in like three here was just because I draw- I couldn’t draw ten, so it’s not to say if I’m feeling bad that there aren’t people that I can’t call on and th- that they wouldn’t come to support me but there are a lot more people that would rather be around me when I’m standing on a bar in Hoxton on a Friday night singing karaoke, you know. That’s when people are naturally more gravitated to want to be like oh, let me step out of my comfort zone and say what’s your name, where are you from? Whereas if you’re sitting in the pub by yourself, maybe sitting around looking like that, trying to have a think, no one’s gonna come up to you and say are you alright? Like, do you want- do you want to sit with someone, have you had an alright day? That just doesn’t happen in London. And I’ve been to Ireland, which is very much a place- um more of the outskirts of Ireland in like country places, I’ve also been to Wales, and you walk down the street and people say good morning. And um if you’re- if you were sitting on the road upset, someone would say do you want a lift home? And- or um are you feeling okay, can I buy you some water? It’s just very much not like that here whatsoever.

Interviewer: Mm. And when you said- in- in that picture, did you- when you had these people above- like when you had these three sort of characters up- [interviewee: yeah] are they referred- do you refer them to- as friends or-

Interviewee: Associates. Or just um… members of my community. Yeah. Just general members of the community. [Interviewer: mm] It’s quite alarming really because we live in a country that’s probably got one of the uh most readily available… set of services and um things like private health care that are accessible to us. But still, this is where we’re at. Could you imagine in a place where there’s nothing, how difficult it is for those people. Or though I have found in getting the opportunity to travel to a few third world countries is that there’s a much greater sense of community and when people have less- when people have less, they actually want to work together. Um f- Turkey for example, which is not quite third world, but I’d say is less developed than London. Um a restaurant that was between two other restaurants brunt down, and they closed the two either side and within a week, local members of the community, as well as the staff and people that worked on the neighbouring restaurants, helped to have rebuild it. That would never happen here. They- what would happen here is they would put two signs on either side saying discount food at each one of these and fully take advantage of the fact that there’s one business that’s not able to run. Alright how are we gonna make more money based on this problem? Whereas there, it was very much how are we gonna get our street back to how it used to be. We want it to be how it was, how can we help? Not here.

Interviewer: Mm. So sounds- it sounds like what you’re saying is that the community spirit is not happening as much [interviewee: no] in London.

Interviewee: No. It’s sad though, because we’ve got one of the most diverse cities in the world. And if everyone put their minds, skills, values and beliefs together, it could be amazing. But still it seems like people are choosing to… keep that barrier between [interviewer: mm] as opposed to like merging everything together. [Interviewer: mm] Hmm.

Interviewer: And how does that make you feel?

Interviewee: Like I don’t wanna live in- I don’t- I don’t think I wanna live in London for the entirety of my life anyway, but it definitely um contributes to it. Yeah. Um it also makes me want to- ‘cause next year I’m going to be going to Birkbeck to study community development of social policy, and that is a big part as to why I want to um go into that line of work anyway, particularly with young people, just to equip me with um… more of the knowledge and skills as to be able to open my own charity, to be able to work with the community on a small scale, to try and make things like ever so slightly better. But that even seems to me like I’m choosing a very difficult line of work to go into because the odds are against… that way of living, the way that I’d like to see things be here.

Interviewer: Mm. Um just going back to um your friendships um… so I know you have a picture of so- somebody and another picture of [interviewee: yeah] somebody else. So um can you t- can you just go- can you- can we talk about l- um about this so-

Interviewee: Yeah so this- these are both me.

Interviewer: Okay, so both characters are you-

Interviewee: So this is a good day. [Interviewer: uh-huh] This is a bad day.

Interviewer: So the left one with the um-

Interviewee: The tears and the sad. [Interviewer: mm. So this one-] Oh, no sorry, this one here.

Interviewer: The left one is basically the one that’s happy, you know, [interviewee: yeah] you’ve got lots of people above- like [interviewee: yeah] [unintelligible 20:47] support you-

Interviewee: [Unintelligible 20:48] ‘cause it’s sort of like, not only am I like sort of gravitating towards people because I’m in the mood to, but they’re also gravitating more towards me because I’m- ‘ve got like sort of signs of body language, like smiling, to say yeah, let’s chat, let’s be friends. Whereas here… not so much.

Interviewer: Mm. Okay tell me more about the- the gravitation from both sides in this good day picture- section.

Interviewee: Yeah I feel like… I’ve been guilty of this myself but, if you never thought of maybe walking through a campus or- and you’ve seen someone that you would normally sort of- well you would still say hello, but someone that you may have, I don’t know, gone to the park and had a drink with before, and you see that they are angry, moping around, not very happy, and you’re like you know what, today is not the day, I don’t really want to off- for them to offload their problems onto me, I’ve got already enough of my own problems, let me just walk down- let me get in that lift instead of getting in that lift. Maybe that’s just a human behaviour. Maybe that has nothing to do with being Londoner, but it’s the only place I’ve ever lived so- and I have visited other places for prolonged period of times and I do feel like other pe- in other places, other people would um potentially want to put in more effort to find out why it is that you’re not feeling so great and how they can help.

Interviewer: Mm. Um… okay so basically- and- and what about this one. The- is that okay if I um- [interviewee: the dog?] is that okay if we move them [unintelligible 22:16].

Interruption

Interviewer: Thank you. [Interviewee: that’s alright] That’s- yeah, that’s gonna be much helpful. So um, and then tell me about the bad day one. So when you have a bad day, you don’t have a lot of people um- I wanted to see um- I wanted to know like if that- you know- that is in relation to your friendships or not. So for example let’s say- I don’t know if you mentioned this earlier or not but I think you did, um-

Interviewee: Who I would go to if I were feeling that way?

Interviewer: Yeah, like for example if you- let’s say like if you’re happy, if you’re- you’re quite, you know, popular on social media [interviewee: yeah] for example, people would be, you know, supporting you and be your- being your friends. Whereas if you sort of have your down moments and, you know, if you’re not that cool person that you- w- you know, [interviewee: yeah] I don’t know if that sort of- if- I think we might have touched this on beforehand-

Interruption

Interviewee: Um, I don’t- uh maybe that is unique to my group of friends, um or maybe it’s just me in like if I’m not feeling particularly great, I probably wouldn’t call my friends and tell them. Um just because… j- I- I just probably wouldn’t. I wouldn’t- I- I um have a boyfriend, so if I am having a really bad day, he’d be like my first point of contact. Or I’d call me mum. Um or people um… I- what I have found with my friends is that… they are not really feeling that great within themselves. So sometimes when I tell them oh I’m not feeling too good, I don’t really know whether they are… I- unhappy with me or whether um… they’re actually enjoying my misery. Because sometimes- you know misery loves company, um and I do have quite a few friends that have got quite severe mental health issues. So I have noticed that sometimes them friends, if I am having like a bout of feeling really low for a period of time, will gravitate towards me but not in a- in a positive way, in a negative way, to sort of like- I sort of see it as a little bit like a cult. Let’s all be really depressed and make really bad life choices together, so at least they’ve got someone to fall back on. Um… truth is, I should probably find some new friends. But I mean I’ve been friends with these people for what- I’m- I’m twenty-two- over ten years. It’s quite difficult to just be like well- I- I’m not the type of person that says well you’re- you’re really down at the minute so let’s not be friends. But I do feel like um… there are times when my friends have dwelled in my misery. And maybe enjoyed it. [Laughs] As opposed to wanting to help me get out of it, actually trying to push for me to get even deeper into it [interviewer: mm] for their own benefit.

Interviewer: Um so how does it make you feel, for example, um if you um… um- yeah, being in that situation that when you’re happy and when you’re good, people support you or when you’re kind of in- not good, people don’t support you?

Interviewee: It makes me feel like everyone’s fake, really. But then I’ve also come to realise that maybe that’s not their fault. Maybe that’s the way that society has raised for them to be because it can’t- it’s not just one person, it’s a large volume of people, and that can’t be personality trait that’s sort of- personality traits are not contagious. I mean you study psychology, maybe they are. [Laughs] Um but I would assume that is something that they’ve sort of dev- they’ve developed that personality trait as a result of what being a young Londoner has pushed for them to be. Because I have also a lot of friends that are from different countries and it’s- it’s completely different. I’ve got quite a few Eastern European friends, quite a few um Arab friends and the attitude is different. The- they- they don’t- I don’t think they would dwell in my misery with me. And I think they fear judgement a bit less than us.

Interviewer: Um when you say like, you know, like they’re fake- ‘cause you mentioned something earlier that they’re fake. Can you tell me more about that? It’s fa- you said it’s fake.

Interviewee: Yeah yeah. Um… I was just- it’s not… it’s not all- it’s like not judging a book by its cover, but not in the way that you traditionally use that saying, in that what you might not get what’s at face value. And it’s- it’s- again goes back to the persona that people have- have built because of what they think that they have to be, based on- it really is ever only coming from their own mind, isn’t it, because there are like social influences um that may impact that but again, it’s only sort of pressures that they’ve put on themselves as a result of those influences. So I do feel like there are a lot of people- there is what’s here and then what’s here, and it’s very hard to see what’s here, and you only- it takes for you to spend a long period of time with someone or for something significant to happen where you see how someone is very very quickly, um… to be able to tell how big of a difference there is of what’s real and what they’re choosing to portray to other people. [Interviewer: mm] Mm. Yeah.

Interviewer: And how do you feel about that?

Interviewee: Again, quite saddening. It’s just- it’s just quite saddening really. I’ve sort of devised ways of being able to cope with it, and one of those things is making friends that are outside of my community. Whether that’s in- out- outside of England- I go to a lot of festivals so I get the opportunity to meet quite a lot of people from different countries, different places in the U.K. um…. In studying I’ve met people from all over the world and yeah, I’ve just found- let me just- let me make friends with a wider range of people that may be haven’t been so um… brainwashed. For my own sanity. [Interviewer: mm] And personal development.

Interviewer: Um… and you also mentioned that um- you said personality that people develop. Um… can you tell me more?

Interviewee: Do you mean- well, I think I’ve touched on it but just sort of… instead of people sort of- I think everyone goes on the search to find out who they are. I’ve come to the realisation it’s not really about who you are, it’s about what you make of yourself and whatever you want to be, you need to make that a reality in order for it to be true. You’re not just gonna sort of wait for something to come along and say this is who you are and this is what your purpose is. You need to go and actively seek it. And I think a lot of people- young people are not sort of making the switch to changing things in their day-to-day life that make them who they are. Instead they’re just sort of… padding- padding themselves out with what they think that they should be in order to make other people think that they know who they are and what they should be doing, based on an influence of some fort- some sort. That could be your friends’ influences, it could be comparing yourself to other people, it could be your family influences. There’s a wide range of influences. If you got dealt a bad hand then you got dealt a bad hand and it could be really bad. For example, if your family put a lot of pressure on you um… and it’s something that you can’t change, then that can be really- that would cause for you to make your own persona. Like I’ve got a friend called Redmond who um- he’s gay and he didn’t come out till he was about twenty, so he spent twenty years with a completely fake personal, not to us but to most people, even to his family. It was only a very few of us that actually got to see what he was like once you closed the door. And luckily now he’s getting to express himself and his life has completely changed. But he spent twenty years pretending to be something that he wasn’t. Um… which again is not his fault, but that is fake, isn’t it? It is nothing- it’s nothing um- I don’t- there’s not- it’s not necessarily a bad thing, but it’s not reality. It’s- unfortunately for him, due to the hand that he was dealt, he was unable to be himself. Um so the person- the persona that he spent twenty years building is really hard for him to now um remove that from is life, ‘cause that- that’s who he’s pretending to be for so long. So I can see why he’s still struggling now, ‘cause it’s only been a couple of years, to like merge what he thinks he should’ve been all of the years and what he actually is into like a all-round person that’s actually happy on a day-to-day basis. Yeah. Hmm.

Interviewer: Um is there anything else you want to say about that box?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: Thank you. Um can we start by talking about what you’ve put in the third box please?

Interviewee: Yeah. So this is- I think one of the times where I feel the most lonely is oddly when I’m around so many people that I can’t even breathe. Have you ever been on the central line at rush hour? It’s like a hundred people in a tiny tiny little carriage, you can literally taste the other person’s breath. But the idea of saying how was your day at work or you look sad, are you okay, do you wanna get off a stop early and go to the park is- it’s absolutely ludicrous that you just wouldn’t do it here. Because we’ve sort of been told by family and stuff that this is a dangerous place to live, don’t just make friends with anyone off the street, um don’t just talk to people, ‘cause they could be this or they could be that. Um… so yeah, that’s what that’s about. That’s about being around so many people in close proximity every day but actually not having a single connection with any of them, except for probably the hatred for the fact that you’re both on the central line at the same time and that it’s god awful.

Interviewer: Mm. So it sounds like what you’re saying is being sort of in tubes or subway stations where you’re quite- you know, you’re surrounded with so many strangers contributes to [interviewee: yeah] your feelings of loneliness.

Interviewee: Yeah. And what I would find- what I find really interesting about this is that if you ad alcohol to this mix, everyone starts being friends. So the minute you put- you’re in that situation but you’re drunk, or someone else on that train is drunk, maybe because it gives people like a false sense of confidence, and maybe it’s a confidence thing that’s stopping this from happening more than a I can’t really be bothered thing. But yeah, I’ve noticed that there have been times when I have been day-drinking, got on the tube, and made a friend with pretty much every single person that’s sitting on that train. Or you’ve seen people actually talking or putting on music and dancing together. And I’m [unintelligible 33:28] all we have to do is put alcohol into the mix here, and everyone’s great, and we’re all wonderful friends, which is quite scary, isn’t it? ‘Casue it could be the complete opposite way. You could drink alcohol and become enemies very quickly too, depending on who you are as a person, how you react to alcohol… or other drugs. Hmm.

Interviewer: When you said false sense of confidence, [interviewee: yeah] tell me more about that.

Interviewee: Um, I don’t know if you drink but when I drink… it’s not as if to say that I… it’s not- the person that I am when I’m drink is not the person who I am in real life. But the person who I am when I am drunk just gives less of a shit really. Like I just- if I were to speak to someone on the train and they said to me ugh, I would be like then fuck you. Onto the next person. Whereas maybe if I was sober- and I wouldn’t even think to talk to someone on the train to be honest, but if I did speak to someone on the train, and they responded negatively to me, I might think well was it me? Does my breath smell? Um why don’t they wanna talk to me? You know? So I just think that- I think you just care less about what other people think when you’re drunk, which w- gives you more confidence because you’re more open to do more things um because that fear of judgement just isn’t there.

Interviewer: Mm. Um… what did you actually write here? On the bottom of the box?

Interviewee: Nobody even gives each other eye contact.

Interviewer: Um… is that um- would you say that this is only limited in- in- in tube stations or do you have any o-

Interviewee: No um that’s sort of going onto this one here, um but I’ll go onto that after, but this is purely about public transport in all forms. [Interviewer: mm] And I just so happen to get on the tube more often. But the bus, the train, um… the overground is quite interesting as well as the tube because the seats actually directly face each other but no one sits and gives anyone eye contact. You might like sort of eye people up, oh nice shoes, nice bag, um nice phone, I wonder what they’re listening to, but you won’t actually like look at someone in the eye and start a conversation. In your time in London, have you started a conversation on the train?

Interviewer: You’re asking me?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah I’ve done that.

Interviewee: Yeah. Maybe that’s a personality trait. But did you feel- not out of your comfort zone, but did you feel like you were quite unique in doing that? Do you get the vibe- when you get on the train, do you get the vibe that everyone on the train wants to sit and have- or anyone on the train wants to have a conversation with you?

Interviewer: Yeah, you get that vibe that most people don’t want to have a conversation-

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: How does that make you feel?

Interviewee: For me, because it’s all I’ve ever known, it kind of just is what it is. But in getting the opportunity to go to other places, and seeing what it could be like, I just feel like we could all work- we’d work a lot better together than we do… sort of apart. So… it- it’s good, it makes me feel like there is potential for there to be something more. It’s just gonna take maybe one or a few or multiple individuals to change it. So I suggested, you know how they have um the baby on board badges, they should also put a badge out that says I’m free to have a chat. And you wear it when you get on the tube and that says to anyone else that’s wearing that badge actually I’m open to having a conversation. And that would be a really really nice idea.

Interviewer: Mm. Um… I wanted to ask something, I completely forgot. Um… okay. So… so it sounds like you don’t find- you find it very um- you find public transportations quite unfriendly, [interviewee: yeah] um yeah. Um… okay. Is there anything else you want to say about that box?

Interviewee: N… no. Not really. Yeah, that’s it really. This person looks happier than they should do. Although I would say that… it’s- it’s kind of like- it’s segregation really. ‘Cause we’re sort of segregating ourselves from- from making a connection with people that live around us. Um and it kind of… makes me think about the civil rights movement. ‘Cause there was that same sort of sim- well not similar, but a lack of unity then. And it seems like now we’ve moved forward, we’ve sort of- like we’ve not made it about race, we’ve not made it about age, we’ve not made it about… gender or sexuality or anything, it’s just sort of like naturally a personality trait just to not talk to people. [Interviewer: mm] Yeah. Or feel like we can’t talk to people. Which is I guess how it would have felt way back then, but just for a completely different reason. [Interviewer: mm] But it’s sad. It makes me feel like we’ve come so far but there’s still them bou- boundaries or barriers in place. Yeah.

Interviewer: Mm. And how do you feel about that?

Interviewee: Again, not- not too great. Not too happy about it. Yeah. Yeah.

Interviewer: And um earlier you mentioned that we work better as a group then individually. [Interviewee: yeah] Tell me more about that.

Interviewee: I just feel like everyone’s got a different- a different brain, a different body, a different mind-set, different values, beliefs, skills… um qualities, weaknesses and strengths and… that is all it is when it’s an individual. Whereas if you combine, even just two people that might have opposing strengths, opposing weaknesses. Like if they work together then maybe we could sort of help for everyone to get- not on the same page but where they would like to be instead of just sort of seeking that internally all the time. ‘Cause maybe the answer isn’t gonna be there. Maybe the- the suggestion that you need is never gonna come from sort of inner reflection, and it’s gonna be on maybe constructive criticism or even just having a chat with someone else [interviewer: mm] and asking their opinion on it.

Interviewer: Is there anything else-

Interviewee: No, that’s all.

Interviewer: Okay. Thank you. Can we start by talking about uh box four please.

Interviewee: Yup. This one, very similar to the last, is just about the amount of people that you see walking down the street all the time. Um and the lack of conversation between anybody really. And it’s also about the um stigma behind people that are happy to talk in public and that they may potentially have a mental health issue. That’s very much a thing within um the community that I’ve grown up. If someone comes up to you and talks to you off the street, you think what do they want, are they gonna rob me, are they crazy, like what does this person want. They have to make their intentions very very clear before even starting a conversation with you, which is why um- I don’t know if you’ve met Sylvester, but me and Sylvester actually met because he was on the street trying to get people to talk to him and no one talks. Like my boyfriend um runs a charity. And until you go up and say I’m not asking for your money, I just want five minutes of your- you have to make it very very clear what you want from a person before um you can even strike up a conversation with them, which is quite sad. That we would assume that it’s something negative. [Interviewer: mm] As opposed to someone just asking- just to- just having a chat. Yeah. Even if you look at some of the social experiments that are on YouTube and stuff, I don’t know if they’re real or not, but if you- you see a person in two different places, or even the same place at a different time, with a sign saying can I have money for food, and everyone completely ignores them, but then on- as a joke, saying I need money for make up or I have a billion followers and need to buy these trainers, and people actually stop and they want to know why- why are you sitting here? You’re an attractive girl, why are you sitting on the floor? But that same girl that was sitting there looking a bit rough two days ago, no one even stopped to talk. So it makes me feel as if people will come and they will seek a conversation with you if you feel- if they feel like you can offer them something. But if… you feel like they’re just trying to take from you, or they want anything, then it’s like nah. Nah… not- not- not gonna give them my time. Which is really sad.

Interviewer: So what you’re saying is um, if you look attractive or if you’ve got something- or at least it might sound like you’re offering something to someone [interviewee: yeah] rather, they’ll stop by and [interviewee: yeah] try to help… yeah. [Interviewee: yup] But if they don’t necessarily um, you know, they look sort of really bad and poor [interviewee: yeah] or whatever, and then people kind of avoid them because they don’t want to- they feel like there could be-

Interviewee: Very much consumed in their own problems and not really interested in giving their time to helping other people. Which is why you find in my line of work- because I went- I took- my salary was cut in half when I went from working in sales to working with young people. And that to me- it was expected but now getting to think about it, it’s alarming, because we’re making so much of a- much more of a bigger impact than what I was- what I was doing in my last role, and making an impact on another person’s life every single day. But it pays so much less. So there isn’t really an interest in helping people. I guess it’s capitalism at its finest really, isn’t it? But the interest is just not there. Um which is why a lot of people don’t do it for too long, and they end up going back to like a soul-sucking role that actually enables for them to pay their bills.

Interviewer: Hmm. Um tell me more, when you said uh that people would stop by if you’re pretty um or if you say you have make ups or you’re leed- needing this money for make ups.

Interviewee: Yeah. Well I did promotional work for a while and… there’s a very famous saying in that line of work and it is tits get tips. So, depending on how you present yourself on that day, if you’ve just come from a night out, your hairs raggedy, you haven’t put any make up on, you’re in baggy clothes or dark clothes or whatever, you’re probably not gonna sell that night. Maybe it’s just the environment that it is. But if you go dressed up, potentially revealing clothing, effort into your appearance, into your hair, you’ll make some money that night. That’s just the way that it works. People are drawn to attractiveness.

Interviewer: Mm. Um and how does that make you feel?

Interviewee: It makes me feel sad. I’ve come- I- I’ve devised strategies to be able to cope with it. But what makes me even more sad is that people that are younger than me are seeing that and they think that that’s normal. And then that- it puts- it makes them put a pressure on theirselves to be something that they may never be, or they’ll find that when they get to where it is that uh level of attractiveness that they want to be at, that’s not actually what was missing in the first place. Yeah so again, that cycle of insecurity and- and putting too much pressure on yourself. So that makes me sad and really concerned at again where we’re gonna be at in the next twenty years. How these young people are gonna grow up. [Interviewer: mm] And how it’s gonna get worse for the people that are- are sitting on the other side of the world building a life for us to live, and we’re just constantly just being wasteful and wasteful and wasteful, because we’re filling that void with things that don’t mean anything.

Interviewer: When you say filling ourselves with voids that don’t mean anything, tell me more.

Interviewee: If you are feeling inadequate or you’re feeling a bit insecure or there are skills that you wanna adapt, or things that you know that you’re not good at, it’s… not really common knowledge- it’s not something that we’re taught in school, it’s not something that we’re taught in anywhere really except for unless you’ve got parents that are that way inclined. Although in this day in age people are having kids really really really young, so a lot of people don’t have parents that are that way inclined to help for you to seek fulfilment within yourself, as opposed to again just padding out what’s already there in things that are not real to make yourself feel a bit better there and then but not actually filling that void. The void could be anything, it could be, I don’t know, trauma as a child, it could be… it could be a- a wide range of things. It could be failure to meet the stupid expectations of like Lo- of English schooling and the way that that’s going. The fact that the education system hasn’t changed in a hundred and fifty years but… the outside world has changed. So we’re not preparing young people at all for what’s gonna happen once they leave school. Which is really concerning. It’s really concerning.

Interviewer: Mm. Sounds like you have concerns about, you know, the future of young people in this country.

Interviewee: Yeah, for sure. Because if eventually, it is- we have an inside joke, because I work in a school, and we have an inside joke where you meet some young individuals and their mind-set is so warped that you’ll look at your colleague and be like that’s our pension, sitting right there. Like that is what we’ve got to rely on when we get old. We need to do something because someone like that- there’s thirty individuals that I’ve got in front of me who’s perception is so warped about what’s important, they’re not gonna be able to hold up this county. They’re not gonna be able to do it. Without support. But not many people are interested in giving the support. And the ones that are are not getting payed enough to do it. So huh how are we going to- maybe- maybe it’s down to um lessons for parents as to how to help your child with that themselves, so that there’s more work going in at home. But again, if it’s something that- like we- we’re- we’re gonna be responsible for that, but we’re warped ourselves. So how are we gonna then take it back and tell them anything different for them to be able to tell the next generation anything different and the next generation anything different. The way it’s going, with the young people I see every day, world war three is gonna come really quick, ‘cause they are angry. They are really really angry. And they can’t even begin to think about why they’re angry. It’s just a natural anger. Which is really scary. Like war is gonna come quick at this rate. Especially because… the people that are a bit more clued up about politics and the economy and- and how the world works and the aff- the impact of the British empire on the world now, people think it- it’s done, we- we stopped doing all of the evil things. No, the impact of what we’s done is still playing to out benefit and to other people’s disadvantage to this day. People don’t know about it, and the people that do know about it are people that generally have had access to a higher level of education who will most likely feed into the capitalist society anyway, and make it work for their benefit. So it’s like keeping poor people out of the lurch, but the people that have a bit more money can actually see things for what they are. But that’s dangerous. That’s how we ended up in this situation in the first place.

Interviewer: Mm. Sounds like you’re not happy about where the future is going with our young people.

Interviewee: No. It’s quite scary. I didn’t really have an idea of how bad it was until I went and worked with them on a day to day basis. And this is- it’s really scary. That’s why so many people are dying in- like how many- four people were stabbed on Saturday night. Um, my friends are in Ibiza at the moment but it’s- she said it’s literally a hundred percent- everyone that’s there right now is from London or Manchester of Liverpool. It’s- it’s like a massive- UK cities, everyone’s there right now. Twenty stabbings on Saturday, five deaths. At the hands of young British people. That have gone to another country. Probably haven’t been able to handle their drugs and alcohol and that’s what happened. Or that- that internal anger has come out in a situation and- yeah, people are dying. What makes me wh- more concerned though is like I said before, we here are in a much better position than many other places. Like a considerably better position. But it’s still this bad. So… that’s why I’m- that’s why I’m so like adamant that war’s gonna come. It’s gonna come at this rate. Because if we’re the best, and we’re in cris- well not the best, but if we are one of the best in terms of… well y- you could understand what I mean by that, right? And we’re still at this point, in a crisis, in so many ways, if we’re in a mental health crisis and… yeah, how’s it… what’s- what’s the future for the world? That’s why I’ve applied for dual nationality. I’ve appl- I’ve applied for a Jamaican passport, because in the instance of war, by guys, I’m off. I’m off. I can’t. I can’t be here, I can’t see it. Not to say that it’s not gonna effect the Caribbean, but if I’m gonna die, I’m gonna die on the beach. I’m not gonna die on the train. [Laughs] [Interviewer: hmm] Yeah. I feel like I’ve been quite bleak about it, although the subject is not a particularly positive subject, the experience of loneliness. Loneliness can never really be an amazing thing, can it? So maybe this is the way that this conversation was meant to go but it- I don’t feel like I’ve had anything really good to say about… um being- the experience of loneliness in London. Or being a young Londoner in general. [Interviewer: mm] Yeah. It just- what uh also makes me concerned is that I’ve made an effort to educate myself on a lot of different things. But most of the people around me haven’t and they don’t have a clue. Um… maybe it just goes to show that I need to change my circle, um which is why I have gone- opted to go back into education, to try and get the opportunity to meet people um… that are a little bit more clued up about what things actually are. But yeah, the fact that… like I have a friend and she said- she made a really stupid comment about the slogan black lives matter. So I made her watch [unintelligible 51:53 sounds like rupes] and she didn’t even know about the slave trade. At all. She was like why- why are they doing this. Why- why are people being treated like this? She didn’t even have a clue about it. And I was like… what? You don’t even know? No. Because… again, we- we’ve- we’ve had- we’ve had such a big distraction of- and I think social media is a big- plays a part in it. I don’t think it’s all bad, I think it does wonderful things, but we’ve just been so distracted. People like my mum, when they were bored on a Friday, they need to get out the house and go and meet people. They’d actually read a book. Or- or do some research or study ‘cause they wanted to, not because they had to. Not- not- not anymore. People get a lot of their information and their facts off of articles that are written by god knows who and anyone and anywhere. Biased, potentially based on that person who wrote it’s thoughts, and they take it for fact. Sc- also very very very scary.

Interviewer: Mm. You mentioned internal anger [interviewee: yeah] that the young generation have to- [interviewee: yeah]. Tell me more about that.

Interviewee: Well for me, I was a really angry teenager, so I got kicked out of school when I was fifteen. And I can articulate why my a- why I had internal anger, because when I was about thirteen my parents went through a really bad divorce and we ended up all living in the same house with mum’s boyfriend, dad’s girlfriend, toxic place for a child to live. That explains- like it sort of helps for me to understand why I was so angry. So there are individuals situations um, like mine for example, or people that- I think- I think poverty makes people really angry. I think the fact that most people- well a lot of people are insecure um makes um them really angry. Yeah. And I think that- that constant comparison is driving for a lot of people to be really angry. It’s making young people feel inadequate. Like they’ve always got to try to- again, be the best, but not the best based on anything that actually matters. Not the smartest or the kindest or the most considerate or the most compassionate, but the best looking, the most money, the most girls, the most cars. That’s what is- that’s- that- all I see on a day-to-day basis, really. All of the young boys I work with wanna be a rapper. And if they’re not- if they don’t make it as a rapper then they will sell drugs because… quote un-quote, why am I gonna make seven pound eighty-three an hour when I can make seven hundred pound a day. Jails not that bad. This is jail. So I might as well be in jail where they’re gonna feed me and home me instead of having to go buy food that I can’t even afford. Yeah.

Interviewer: Mm. How does that make you feel?

Interviewee: Really sad. It also makes me question whether I want to even bring more life onto this planet. I think, maybe thirty years ago, it was really normal to get married, have a wife, have a husband, settle down, have a kid, or adopt a kid, buy a house… trying to buy a house as a Londoner, unless you’ve got some sort of income that’s ilegit, or you’ve got some sort of inheritance or some sort of support from somewhere, it’s near on impossible. You’re not gonna get a house in this day and age. Unless you do like a help to buy scheme. Even then you’re essentially setting yourself to be up- in debt for the rest of your life. Um… and it makes me, as a woman, feel like should I bring more life onto this planet- like, clearly overpopulated and people are not growing up to be happy or living fulfilling lives really. It’s not something that I see on a day to day basis. So it makes me question whether w- it- it would be worth my contributing to that. Although, there’s always a counterargument in that the person that you bring up and raise may be someone that perhaps can make a change. Um so I’m sort of on the- the barrier- same me and my boyfriend are both on the barrier of that at the moment. Do we just say fuck it, travel the world and never have any kids and just get another dog and love it, or do we um try to do what- what’s normal for us to do and take the risk? Yeah. [Interviewer: mm] [Unintelligible 56:09] things are very very different for us than it was for our parents. Maybe there were other concerns, maybe I’m wrong, I was never around, but… I don’t think they would be the same concerns that we have now. Yeah. I don’t really have much more to say about that one.

Interviewer: Okay. Um… thank you very much.

Part 2:

Interviewer: Can we start by talking about what you’ve put in box one please?

Interviewee: Yeah. So I’ve got the pub. Again, alcohol. [Laughs] If you put alcohol into an equation, if you get a lot of people and put alcohol in the middle of them, you would find that they’re probably gonna have chats as opposed to if you just put that same amount of people in a circle and left them to their own devices. So I also work in a pub. Um and I find that a lot of people there are chatty and you get to know a lot of people really instantly. Maybe it’s because a lot of the time I’m in a position where people have to talk to me ‘cause I’m asking a question. Is it- would you like this? Would you like that? What can I do for you? So I get the opportunity to talk to people quite a lot. So I’m gonna put the pub and also I’m gonna like put that as a thing that’s work for me. I’m work- I mean it’s customer service. I’ve got to talk to people. So I do get the opportunity to meet [interviewer: mhm] a lot of people. And I see other people meeting people just because they’re in that same venue and maybe they’ve had a drink or two and that they’re feeling a bit more confident than they normally would. [Interviewer: mhm] Plus it’s a place where I’d say lonely people go. A lot of lonely people go. We call a lot of pubs in my area death’s waiting room, which means that there’s a lot of old people there, and they’ve gone there to- just because they don’t wanna be in the house by theirselves anymore. So I think it is a place where people go to have a chat. I think that’s a big part of the British culture as well, going to the pub.

Interviewer: Mhm. What is it about going to the pub that attracts you. Or just…

Interviewee: If I had my way, I wouldn’t go as much as I- as- as I- well, I don’t really go much. I work there. But if I had it my way, I wouldn’t go there often with my friends. I’d much prefer to go- I like to be outside, so I prefer to be in the park. Plus I’m an extra cheap-skate so I’d rather buy alcohol and sit in the park and drink it than go to the pub and pay for service that isn’t that great anyway. Um but my friends like to go to the pub because my friends like to drink. That’s it really. They like to drink, wanna get out of the house, want the opportunity to meet people that they otherwise wouldn’t have met. [Interviewer: mm] So I think that’s what the main attraction- going to the pub. I think that’s always been the way. Even if you look back to… hundreds and hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of years ago, people were sitting around in little barns, drinking ale, dancing and chatting and having fun and that’s just the way that it was. [Interviewer: mm] Don’t know if that’s unique- u- I don’t think- that’s probably not unique to the U.K. but I definitely think that is definitely a part of the British culture. Drinking. Li- if they- what are they- even like within my family we say let’s drink and be merry. [Interviewer: mm] That’s like a big- let’s drink and be merry. It’s a Sunday thing to say, it’s a Christmas thing to say, it’s just the way that we are. Yeah uh friends’ houses- um did you want me to move onto the next one?

Interviewer: No, no, no, let’s focus on the first one. [Interviewee: yeah] Um I was just gonna ask, so it sounds like what you’re saying is you like that whole social connectedness that you can engage in at a bar or pub [interviewee: yeah] because maybe the drinking element can- can reduce barriers [interviewee: yeah. Yeah.] Mhm… [Interviewee: for sure] Um and then- and- and so you basically find that the pub is a- is a space where you can just connect with people. [Interviewee: yeah] Yeah. And how does that make you feel? In that situation, that environment?

Interviewee: I mean I can’t really complain about it because it’s nice. I mean it’s a nice place to go. However, if you have a problem with alcohol or a lack of discipline, lack of willpower, or you do have that internalised anger, you might not even realise that you’re using alcohol as a means of venting it as opposed to actually dealing with the root cause. So if you’re relatively strong minded and you sort of know where you wanna be, you know what your boundaries are, you’ll be alright. But if you’re not, that could lead to a really dangerous place. That could lead to a life of alcoholism, which… I- again, I think it’s quite common. [Interviewer: mm] Um… which is sad.

Interviewer: Mhm. Did you wanna mention something about your friend’s house or…

Interviewee: Uh, it’s not- it’s not part of the pub, it’s just sort of um- it’s the next one for the place I feel most socially connected. [Interviewer: mm] Yeah. Um got quite a few friends at uni um that live on campus and um flat shares. Um even now I’m- I live in loads of different places. So I’m here sometimes- depends on where my work is the next day. Uh more often I’m here, I might stay at my boyfriend’s house, he might stay here or I might stay at one of my friends’ houses um so I’m lucky to have the opportunity to get to stay at a lot of different places and meet a lot of people. A lot of my friends live in flat shares um where they’ve got loads of young people um in them. Five or six other young people, so it’s nice to be able to go there and sit in a communal area and have a chat, again normally over a drink. Um interesting. But yeah, it’s nice to be able to go and meet other people um in their own houses, [interviewer: mm] which is cool. I feel like people are less inclined to put up that facade when you’re in their own environment, just because you can see things for what it is there.

Interviewer: Can you tell me more about that?

Interviewee: It’s a lot harder to pretend that you are the richest, smartest, like most intelligent person in the world when someone’s sitting in your bedroom that is and absolute state, do you know what I mean? It’s- if you’re allowing someone into your house, you’re allowing for them to see how you live. And people- I think people are a bit more genuine in those situations because you can see things for what they are there. Um it’s- it’s a lot harder for people to pretend to be something that they’re not when you’re in their own environment. Yeah.

Interviewer: Mm. It sounds like what you’re saying is uh, some people pretend to kind of be someone that they’re not, [interviewee: yeah] um but by being sort of in one’s house, those people don’t necessarily have the option to pretend to be somebody else.

Interviewee: Yeah. Again though, like I don’t- I- I don’t want for you to interpret- when I say pretend, I don’t want for you to inter- interpret it as people are even doing it consciously. I think it’s an unconscious thing. I think it’s something that people just do. You know? Um not everyone. But a lot of people, particularly young people, just do it. It’s- I have very- when I was- I was very young when I became aware of- that people were gonna think of me what I put to them. So even- even now, today, I can tailor what I want for people to think of me based on what I choose to tell them. You know? And that might not mean me lying, it might just me be saying something in a completely different way. But I’m not gonna go to my job at the pub and be the exact same persona as I am when I’m being a mentor. Um just because I don’t really care about being a role model when I’m in the pub, whereas if I’m being a mentor, I am expected to act as a role model. So there are a lot of things that I wouldn’t disclose, there are a lot of things that if I were to disclose, I may f- potentially fabricate them to- f- to make it more appropriate. Um if I was going to a work interview, there would be a lot of things that you wouldn’t see of me um there and then that you might actually see six months into the job because I feel like right cool, I’m alright to be myself now. Yeah so I don’t think it’s something that everyone does consciously, I think it’s just something that is like- maybe- it’s human behaviour, really. [Interviewer: mm] But the people that do do it on purpose, um… I can understand why it’s quite easy to do. Because you can- you can choose to use this skill in any way you want really, can’t you? And if you are feeling inadequate, then it probably is quite easy just to allow for people to, again, see what you want for them to see. But to up the ante on everything. [Interviewer: mm] Yeah.

Interviewer: And how do you feel about that

Interviewee: Um… I feel quite empowered really. Because… it’s a good skill to have. And if you use it right, then it can work in your favour. So I feel quite empowered that um… we do have the opportunity to put out there whatever we choose to put out there. And essentially be who you wanna be in that moment. Yeah. However it does make me sad that other people choose not to, but with regards to myself I feel empowered by it.

Interviewer: Even if that means for example being someone that you’re not?

Interviewee: I’ve got to a point now where I can only- I only- I would only do that in a situation where I feel like I have to. Um but then the- for me, the minute that I notice that I’m not being myself, I would then think about how I can tailor my own behaviour to be more like the person that I’m trying to be. So if I- I swear quite a lot, so I wouldn’t go to an interview and swear all the time. But then for me, if I’m going for an interview and I’m incredibly well spoken for an hour, I wouldn’t then look back and say you’re- you’re a bad person because you swear. I would then say so you know that you have the potential not to, in spite of being that version of yourself. And I would then aspire to be that version of myself a little bit more. [Interviewer: mm] Yeah.

Interviewer: Is there anything else you wanted to say about that box?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: ‘Kay. Uh thank you. Can we start by talking about what you put in the next one please?

Interviewee: Yeah so- this box? Or here?

Interviewer: No no no, the lonely bit. So this one. The- the box number two.

Interviewee: Okay. Oh, I do have some more stuff here if you wanted me to just to go over it really quickly.

Interviewer: Uh okay.

Interviewee: Yeah so I’ve got the gym, because my gym has… pardon- classes. And the intention of those classes is to get people together. [Interviewer: mm] And I- my gym actually can pair you up with people that’ve got common goals. So they’re not gonna pair you up- for me, who’s trying to lose weight with someone who is trying to gain weight. So they would put me- they’d say okay, right guys, buddy pump class has started, I want Jess with so and so, and you’d spend that hour working out together, maybe having a conversation, getting to know each other a little bit, you have the opportunity to exchange details if you want to at the end, go to the gym together. So I do feel like it’s quite social in thy gym, which is nice. [Interviewer: mm] Yeah. [Interviewer: thank you] Um and then my home. Like I said, I’ve still got the opportunity to be around all the time. Me and my cousin are the exact same age. We were born six weeks apart so that’s really nice that I’ve got the opportunity to spend too much time- uh quite a bit of time with her. [Unintelligible 10:16- interviewee whispering] So that is a- not amazing. Um [interviewer laughs]… but things like that happen all the time, don’t they? Um so there are negatives and positives to living in a house where- like I would hate to live entirely by myself. I’d hate it. [Interviewer: mm] It’d just be awful. I’m really sc- I- I get quite scared. I- I’ve lived alone and like having my- I’m like my mum, coming to stay with you. I can’t- I don’t like living alone. [Interviewer: mm] It’s just not- it’s not for me. [Interviewer: mm] Don’t think I ever will, to be honest. Um yeah. [Interviewer: mm] Not for me. Um and yeah work. Work. I’m really lucky in that I got the opportunity to um, in my role, um I get a young person for- it could be two days I’m gonna meet this young person, be able to try and work with them to get them back into a mainstream school. It could be two years. So I- I’ve gone into work before and there’s been eight young people for me to work with that day that I’d never met before. That’s eight personalities, eight opinions, eight voices. Um so I think that’s really social. Obviously, it’s not a friendship but it’s still human interaction. Um and there’re a lot of agency staff that come in that- it’s nice to be around like-minded people that are all trying to do the same thing. Because you- it’s funny, kids will always turn around and say to you you’re only doing this for the money and you say listen, there is a lot easier ways to make a lot more money [laughs] than doing this. So it’s nice to be around like-minded adults that also have the same like values and beliefs and that’s a good- I think that’s a good foundation for a friendship.

Interviewer: Mm. Is there anything else you wanted-

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: Thank you.

Interviewee: So again, the place that I feel most lonely, I’m gonna touch on public transport, again lack of eye con- lack of conversation and eye-contact. I spend quite a bit of time on public transport. So that’s a place where I don’t necessarily feel the most lonely but it becomes very apparent to me how many people there actually are around me. Because before that, you only really- you think about the world and how many people there are, but you only really- in terms of like a name and a face, you think about the people that you actually know on a personal level, you’re not gonna think about Sandra from Essex that you’ve never met before. That’s essentially you making an imaginary person in your head. So sometimes when I do go out and I get on the train and I get on a bus, I’m like oh my god, this city has got so many people in it. Why couldn’t I find someone to do something with me on Thursday evening? [Interviewer: mm] Yeah. So it’s not that I feel lonely, although I do feel lonely, but it’s not just that. It’s that it reminds me of the potential, which kind of makes me feel even more lonely. Yeah. [Interviewer: mm] Um do you want me to just right- keep running through…?

Interviewer: I was just gonna ask you, so it sounds like what you’re saying is um- um y- London has a lot of people um, you’re probab- you’re surrounded with a lot of people but uh- or London is- per se has a lot of people and the city but… you s- but you find it difficult sometimes to- to have friends that you could get together, for example on a Thursday evening.

Interviewee: Yeah. Yeah, it is quite difficult. I guess ‘cause everyone- we’re just working all the time. Um there will always be someone that isn’t, there’ll always be someone that is free, I guess it’s just about having the confidence to go and- and seek friendships and meet more people and have a- let’s say a longer list of potential people to spend that time with. But I mean I am only twenty-two and I’ve got quite a lot of friends. I guess by the time I get to in my thirties, I’d like to have a lot more friends that are a lot more open and that I’ve met in different places, in different countries, on different courses, different- different jobs. Um yeah. I think that’s something that will improve for me, but at this stage, I am- it is quite alarming to note- when you notice how many people there are here. Versus how many people you can actually call up on a random whim and say what are you doing? Do you wanna do something?

Interviewer: Mm. So it sounds like what you’re saying is it’s difficult to make friends in London.

Interviewee: Yeah. I think depending on your personality though. I think it does depend on your personality. Um I’ve got a friend who’s incredibly confident, although that does go back to the alcohol she drinks every day, and she makes friends every single day. But I don’t know how she would be if she didn’t drink. To be fair.

Interviewer: Mm. So how does it make you feel, like being in London and… and- and finding it difficult to make friends in the city?

Interviewee: Again, for me, I’m not that- I don’t get upset by it, ‘cause I’ve got enough friends and I’ve got a partner but it just makes me feel really sorry for people that aren’t in that same- same place.

Interviewer: Mm.

Interruption.

Interviewer: Um, okay so it sounds like what you’re saying is um… what makes you feel- well, just being in London and not being able to make friends- [interviewee: yeah] like you’re surrounded with a lot of people but then you can’t actually make connections with people or build friendships with them.

Interviewee: Mmm… I could. Um more often than not I could sort of choose not to, ‘cause I am sort of content. But it does make me wonder what if. And um… I think that I’ve got quite good social skills. A lot of the young people that I meet don’t have those social skills because they are very much- their- their uh social development-

Interviewer: Because they’re very much- what, is it because they [interviewee: the phone] wouldn’t get out-

Interviewee: The- the phone. [Interviewer: oh] They’re very um- oh of course yeah. Um they’re- a lot of their social development has come from interacting with people on an online basis. Even- it- it’s insane. You see w- in- in the school that I’m in, on the playground, they would message each other in a group chat while they’re standing right next to each other. So their actual verbal communication skills are not- are not on par. Which makes me feel sad and concerned about- right now that’s being monitored by us, but when that’s not being monitored, that’s gonna become and every day, normal thing. They may go on to teach their children that’s the way that you communicate with people, which makes me just think wow- what’s it- what is it gonna be like in the future? [Interviewer: mm] How are people gonna talk to each other? [Interviewer: hmm] Are we just gonna sort of have like a little device on the side of our head that tells the person next to you that Jess is feeling happy. Instead of you know saying I’m having a really nice day. Is that- and I think that’s dumbing us down. It’s bringing a- if used correctly, it’s something that could be incredible. But just like an iPhone, on a day to day basis, the things that you can do with an iPhone are amazing, but the things that a lot of people do on an iPhone are very basic. And they’re- they’re not- they’re not stretching their skills whatsoever with it at all.

Interviewer: Mm. And when you said it’s difficult to- to- to make friends in the city, tell me more about that.

Interviewee: I would say it’s difficult under no influence. Under the influence, it’s a lot easier. So again, I would just- I would just go back to that. I don’t know whether it’s just that we’re lazy, that we can’t really be bothered, that we feel fulfilled because we have got that social media interaction that we feel like well actually I’ve got enough people in my life, I don’t- I can’t really be bothered to go out and meet new people. Maybe it’s that. Maybe it’s- I don’t know, fear. Um I don’t really have this said issue, really. Although there have been times where I’ve sort of looked in my group- having friends that- well my school friends that I’m still really good friend with that are not particularly aware of much other than what’s going on right in front of them has made me really want to branch out and meet new people. But I believe in the law of attraction, so I asked for that and then I put the work in. And now I’m in a position um where that- that’s the situation. And I have met a lot of people. I’ve got a lot of friends that are quite a bit older than me, which is nice. Um just because I think it- it’s just different. Completely different. Different morals, different beliefs, different values, different objectives um, which is cool. But someone who hasn’t got the mind set to go and actively seek that. And if they don’t, then that could be quite sad. Like you’re just sort of left with what you- what you’ve dealt wi- what you’ve been dealt with. These are the friends [interviewer: mm] th- these are gonna be your friends. Might not be good friends, might be toxic friends, but you don’t really have the social skills to go out and make more friends so it just is what it is. [Interviewer: mm] And I very, very much believe that you are… or that the person that you’re gonna be in five years is largely based on the information you take in, the things that you believe and don’t believe, the books that you read and the people that you surround yourself with. If you’re surrounding yourselves with toxic people… how’s it gonna be? For you? In the future? Yeah.

Interviewer: Is there anything else you want to say about that?

Interviewee: This column here?

Interviewer: Mm.

Interviewee: Uh I’d just say that what makes me sort of the most sad, is that there are- this is quite a green city. If you look at some other cities, there isn’t much greenery. If you look at London from above, there’s a lot of parks, there’s a lot of trees, there’s a lot of places for people to go and chill out and interact. For adults. Because they normally set up businesses that’s gonna benefit by making someone money. So th- let’s open up this trendy new place in Hoxton for everyone to come and sit and eat pizza. Great for adults. But for young people- younger people than I am, you can’t- so- so I suggested that we go to the park. Me and you going to the park is completely fine. But one of my students going to the park with their friend to have a chat and have their phone oh so happily on the side like that is just not gonna happen, because there is a big gang problem. In Newham in particular. Um big gang problem, big drug problem, big violence problem. Erm which isolates people. Makes them stay in their house. Um or be like cool I’m gonna go there anyway, but then like bad things could happen. You end up getting a lot of people sort of loitering around, which is again not safe. Um especially with the likes of the recent acid attacks and things like that. So um I think the gang and violence issue that we have here is causing for people to feel lonely. [Interviewer: mm] And it- it’s- it’s- it’s creating limitations for young people. So, in South London- I did some work in South London- I remember being completely shocked because there was a group of young boys that were in the same class, same age, same interests. But they couldn’t be friends. Because one of them lived on a road that had black bins outside their house, and the other one lived two roads down where the bins are blue. So you’re part of blue-bin gang, and you’re part of black-bin gang and if we cross paths, then we have to stab each other. Because of the colour of the bin that is outside your house. That ter- that whole territorial issue that was happening in that particular area was insane. Like killing for a post code that was doing absolutely nothing for them. [Interviewer: mm] But that was like- their dad had taught them that. And then their grandad had taught them that. That was so like deeply ingrained into what they thought was true and what was not. It’s really hard to work with young people like that and try to help them see anything other. Because you believe what your parents tell you. You only get to a certain age where you’re like oh maybe my mum wasn’t right about this, and my dad wasn’t right about that. But in that community, there was what seemed to be quite a big ego and pride issue. So you can’t tell them their dad’s wrong about that, [interviewer: mm] especially from a professional point of view. You could have parents proper coming for you um and contacting people above you to say that they- you’ve offended them. You can’t really be of- offend people. So it’s quite difficult to work with young people that have that sort of warped mentality. But it’s really normal [Interviewer: mm] It’s really like a- let’s say average behaviour here.

Interviewer: Mm. Um is there anything else you wanted to say?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: Okay well thank you very much.