

Heterosexual Lifestyles of Young People in an English City

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This paper is contextualised within the growing social research effort to generate data and develop theory relevant to preventing the spread of the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). The specific focus is upon describing and understanding patterns of sexual behaviour and the implication for the transmission of HIV. The paper is structured in two parts; firstly an introductory part which reviews some broad lines of thinking concerning the way in which sexual behaviour is channelled in certain directions by socio-cultural factors. Attitudes to the timing of sexual intercourse in relationship development are reviewed as a useful summary measure of sexual philosophy. In the second part of the paper some recent research findings are outlined which provide accurate and representative data concerning the sexual lifestyles of young people (16- 21 years of age) in the city of Bristol in the South-West of England. The survey was undertaken among 400 young people during April 1988 by quota sampling in randomly selected areas. The findings highlight the heterogeneity of young people's sexual lifestyles in the South-West of England. Finally some concluding implications are drawn concerning pertinent HIV-related, health education strategies.