Individual Interview 2 – Julia

(Full time: 54:16)

Int: Hello.

Julia: Hi.

Int: How are you?

Julia: Very good and you?

Int: Great. So, first thing’s first, you have read and have understood the consent form?

Julia: Yes.

Int: You understand that this is completely voluntary?

Julia: Yes.

Int: And you can withdraw at any point if you wish to do so. My apologies for the dogs because they will be barking throughout.

Julia: No stress.

Int: Alright. So, reading the consent form you have a basic idea of what the study is about. We’re just, very simply looking at the relationship between the notion of belonging and safety. Ah, do you have any questions, worries, or concerns before we get started?

Julia: Not right now. I’m actually quite interested to hear, um, what questions you’re going to ask.

Int: Aw, I’m glad. Um, ya so we’re just going to go through some background information and then we’re going to talk a little bit about the concept of belonging and then we’re going to have a look at the aspect of safety, and just really chat about it.

Julia: Okay.

Int: Ah, so firstly background information. So, how old are you, are you working, are you studying, where do you live, have you moved around a lot? So, let’s just into that for a bit.

Julia: Okay well, I’m 22. I haven’t studied, I do want to umm… I would like to go into nursing but we will see if that happens. I am currently a transcriptionist for an American company, um, I don’t know how I managed to land that, but I did. I have moved quite a bit I think… I am on my fifth move now, um, and hopefully we’re going to move again soon.

Int: All the time in Pretoria or have you been moving in Gauteng or?

Julia: Luckily all in Gauteng.

Int: Okay cool.

Julia: Ya, so that’s good, but it’s still – you move and it’s tiring and it’s… I cannot do much more moving.

Int: Geez, I must say I have never moved, not once in my life so, I don’t really understand it, but we’re actually going to get into that in a moment. So, with the notion of belonging it’s kind of two-sided. We have this emotional feeling, like ‘I belong’.

Julia: Yes.

Int: And then there’s also this political sense where you ‘belong within society’.

Julia: Yes.

Int: So, I would like to ask: How would you describe this feeling of belonging, this emotional side of belonging?

Julia: That is quite a question.

Int: Theory wise as well.

Julia: Start off with an easy one and then just dive right into it. Um, okay, so belonging for me is somewhere…that I just feel calm. That I don’t have to think about anything, I can just – I can have my door open and, ah… and not have to worry about someone jumping through it. Obviously, not a gate – I know I’m pushing luck there – just, my door open just for some air to come in. Um, so I thin essentially belonging for me is safety and also not just being stared at, I guess.

Int: Okay. Um, that is actually very interesting. So, when we look at belonging we tend to attribute it to this notion of ‘home’; so, where you belong is ten to one where you feel ‘at home’, um, but for someone who has moved homes so often is your understanding of ‘home’ this ‘stable’ notion of home, this ‘safe place’ of home cause that is also what we’re questioning here.

Julia: So look, I was brought up in a home that wasn’t very stable to begin with. So, my idea of a ‘home’, um actually wasn’t a normal persons idea of a home. I was brought up with understanding that, anything could happen and you have to be ready for it. So, my ‘flight or fight’ response is very flighty. So, I … when it comes to home environments with people I can take them on quite nicely, but for me I’d say ‘home environments’, I don’t really find that I have a set idea of a house or a home, I have more people that make me happy and that makes me feel safe. But um, ya, I’d say my idea of a house or a home isn’t actually anything, it’s just people and my dogs.

Int: Okay well, we could remove that and say, ‘well home, for you, isn’t a structure it would be people or your dogs for example’.

Julia: Ya.

Int: I’d like to go back to the instability of your previous experiences of home.

Julia: Yes.

Int: Is the ‘instability’ because you’re saying, ah, well you said, you had to be ready at any moment like something – whatever could happen, could happen. That instability was that linked to a lack of safety or just a lack of predictability, that made you feel unstable?

Julia: No, predictability was there. I was brought up in a mentally unstable household. It also wasn’t the safest area. We were right on Delmas road, which is a quite unsafe road because of, obviously, a lot of people travelled there and a lot of crime, obviously, would follow. Um, so break-ins and things like that were constant. We had two house break-ins from what I remember, luckily not anything where we were held up, but still traumatic enough to know that someone was in our space. Um, and then my childhood growing up in a house that was supposed to be my home, it was um… it was more of a ‘get ready to lock a door’, than like ya, so I was… sorry, what was the original question?

Int: Um, looking at the instability of your home would you say that was a lack of safety-

Julia: Yes.

Int: Or a lack of predictability? But you said it was quite a predictable home, but

Julia: Ya, I would say predictability was there but um, stability was not.

Int: Not at all?

Julia: Ya.

Int: Ya, actually going into this ‘safety sense’ of a home, because you said your house was broken into once or twice, um, was this in a particular house or was this constant in every home you went to?

Julia: No, it was only in a particular house. So, that was quite ah… I did live on a plot at one point, which was not that safe, obviously, but it was a bit safe than all the other places I think I’ve been.

Int: So, can we refer to this one house where you experienced the two break-ins with ‘Delmas house’?

Julia: Yes.

Int: Okay, so we have ‘Delmas house’ which was your first house, second house, third house, fourth house?

Julia: First house.

Int: First house. So, grow up, childhood in this place, then we move – so, two house break-ins happen here, move to another house?

Julia: To the plot.

Int: The plot happens. Break-ins?

Julia: None, actually.

Int: Which is rare for a plot.

Julia: It’s interesting. I lived there for seven years which is quite a-

Int: Oh, a big chunk.

Julia: Quite a lengthy period to not have any break-ins or any unsafe – ag, lack of safety.

Int: Lack of safety, specifically in plots, because plots ya.

Julia: Ya.

Int: And I’ll actually get into that in a moment when we get to maybe touch on farm murders. Ah, so we move onto house three, any break-ins or?

Julia: Um, no, no. Not while we were there, no.

Int: So, break-ins while you were out?

Julia: No.

Int: Oh, while you were living there.

Julia: Ya, no. While we were living there, we didn’t have any break-ins no.

Int: And then fourth house?

Julia: Fourth house… no.

Int: Fourth house is currently, I take it ‘current house’?

Julia: Yes, ya.

Int: Okay, cool. So, lets go to ‘Delmas house’. What’s this experience of having your house broken into?

Julia: …

Int: I understand you were a child at this point too, so.

Julia: No, I actually remember feeling very violated. Um, because it was just a very normal day. Nothing had happened, there was no like sign beforehand. We didn’t have one of the better houses – we lived in a complex, so it was ya. So, it wasn’t um, it wasn’t the one of the better houses amongst the others, it was kind of average. So, um, I just remember walking in… and just… immediately feeling… not scared, but out of place. I felt out of place in my own house. So, I was very um, unwelcoming and very… um. It felt like someone had… touched me by being in my house.

Int: That is actually very interesting because I touch on this in my research where your home is almost an extension of yourself and your identity.

Julia: Ya, I would definitely say yes.

Int: Which is quite interesting when you say, when you walked into this house and it’s like someone touched you physically, um.

Julia: It kind of – to put it a bit more further. It’s like when someone strokes your head, but in a creepy way. Ya, that type of

Int: Creepy like touch.

Julia: That’s what it felt like; that’s what I can connect it to.

Int: Um, and was it obvious as soon as you walked in the house, like things were gone or was things thrown away or tossed about?

Julia: It wasn’t actually, it wasn’t completely obvious, but because our house was very – my mom has OCD so um, things were always in the right place.

Int: Ya, it has its order.

Julia: And immediately you could see thing were not in the right place, so. It was immediate for us, but for other people it wouldn’t have been.

Int: Um, with this disruption of someone coming in – the fact that they were just touching your things, they were in your space without being welcomed into that space. Is that what you’re referring to when you say this was just uncomfortable?

Julia: Yes, ya.

Int: We are going to get back to that in a moment. Um, just want to take a little bit of a break because we did go really quickly into something-

Julia: Quite intense.

Int: Ya, very quickly. So, um, ya, we were talking about the sense of belonging and say its this calm feeling, its this sense of safety. Do you feel that sense of safety belonging in or to South Africa?

Julia: No. I feel like I walk into a place and wherever I… wherever I go something is not right because I am who I am. And whether it be women or whether it be race or something like that its – honestly, I do not feel welcomed here.

Int: At all?

Julia: And it’s increased.

Int: Increased?

Julia: Ya.

Int: Because that’s actually something I wanted to talk to you about, that follow onto the next question. Does your sense of belonging change throughout your life – saying that it has increased, so when you were a kid-

Julia: I think maybe I wasn’t aware of it when I was a kid. Um, now more so because also people are a lot more verbal about how they feel about you. They’re not just looking at you, but they are expressing how they feel. I have been told that I don’t belong here, by um a, ah, black male. And he… I wasn’t in any weird place, I wasn’t in his house, I wasn’t in his house, I was just at a shop.

Int: Joh, in a public space.

Julia: A public space. I think I was, buying… \*sigh. I think I was buying a pie or something, something stupid.

Int: Just a normal day.

Julia: Ya, it was just a normal day and I turned around and this guy, very aggressive as well, um – “You don’t belong here.”

Int: And your response to that was?

Julia: It was just like, “Okay, sorry.” And walked away because I know with someone like that-

Int: Just not get into it.

Julia: Rather just leave it alone because they will take it further.

Int: Don’t want to create a scene I take it?

Julia: Exactly, ya. And also, I don’t know what they guy has in his pockets.

Int: That’s also true -

Julia: Look, I might not be the right person to – I have confronted someone but that’s because they stole my phone.

Int: \*Laughs. Oh okay.

Julia: But then it was adrenaline, I wasn’t thinking. In those, in a calm situation I will think like that. Like let me rather just ‘skip this scene’, ya.

Int: Can we actually talk about the time that your phone was stolen?

Julia: Oh ya sure, I’m just going to take a …

Int: By all means.

Julia: So um, also just another normal day and I had, I was in high school I remember, I think grade nine, I had a lot of aggression, I can also say that. Um, cause my parents had just began to split up then and… we were going to – I had just done a volleyball game, and we went to Mr. Price Sport in Atterbury to go get, um, new shoes. So, simple little thing, nothing too complex, nothing that screams – like I’m wearing Gucci and Prada and you can steal from me. \*Laughs.

Int: Just a normal human being.

Julia: I still had like a cheap phone then. It wasn’t like a crazy phone, it was also middle – middle-class. And a guy - a women, walked past me and a guy almost kind of bumped into me and he tapped my shoulder. Um, and I remember think that was kind of weird, and he apologized for bumping into me. but I just remember the tapping was a bit strange. So, I’m quite a tall individual, I am usually about 1.7/8/9, so ah… I just remember turning and I can see over the shelves and he had already started running out of the store. And I was just like: “Phone.”  
I just patted myself down, and I felt it wasn’t there and I just started running. \*Laughs.

Int: \*Laughs.

Julia: Which in retro effect is not the smartest thing to do for a what, 15-year-old girl.

Int: Oh okay, chasing after a fully grown man.

Julia: Exactly ya. He wasn’t the biggest guy compared to me, but I just lost it. I started running after him, he didn’t get too far. Luckily I did cause quite a scene, um, because I was just screaming: “He’s got my phone! Stop, A-”  
And all of that. And the security saw and shame, I still remember, this one lady was pregnant and she still chased after him. Um, but security saw. I stopped him first and I told him: “No, give me back my phone.”  
He just kind of looked at me and laughed and said: “What phone?”  
And I was like: “Dude, ill pat you down myself. Give me my phone.”  
And ah, I actually did. I reached into his pockets and I found my phone eventually. But I do remember him initially going for something in his bag, he had like a little satchel type of thing, but he did stop because there was a lot of people forming around us. So, I think he knew that he was going to lose no matter what he did. Um, but ya, I got my phone back and security got him and, in a way my… humanity was tested that day as a 15-year-old girl, because they took him to the back room and they asked me what he had done, I told them. Now, the took just what I said at face value; they didn’t ask anymore questions, and they closed the door, and I just heard screaming. And I was just like: “Over a stupid fucking phone, that is-”  
Sorry for my swearing. That, just about that, this man ultimately put his life in danger for. And I understand his realities and I also understand mine. And ya, that was when my phone was almost stolen.

Int: Um, to go back to what you just said because I thought it was quite interesting. You say he put his life in danger for a phone, but he also put your life in danger for a phone.

Julia: Oh ya, that’s also true. I didn’t – ya.

Int: I find it interesting that we have these linkages of extreme violence’s in South Africa. It’s not just your phone that is at risk, but it is also your life that is at risk.

Julia: Ya, true.

Int: Um, any idea what’s causing that?

Julia: Well, definitely poverty. It’s definitely poverty. Um, and also maybe a sense of entitlement because some people will be poor but they’ll be content.

Int: Be respectful of [other’s] stuff.

Julia: Yes. They’ll have enough. They would believe that they have enough. Whereas you could have someone that has – is at the top of the food chain and he is essentially stealing from people because he is robbing them of their money and stocks, I don’t know.

Int: Yeah, yeah.

Julia: So, I think it has to do definitely with poverty, but then also with entitlement – what we believe we should have, and materialistic views on life. Um, ya.

Int: Following in this vein of entitlement. Um, so sorry we’re not going to be following the interview schedule, we’re going to be jumping around a bit.

Julia: It’s fine, don’t worry. I’m having a great time.

Int: I’m glad. Um, so with this vein of entitlement, um, and I do refer to this a lot in my research, there seems to be this sense of entitlement over a woman’s body.

Julia: Yes.

Int: And we link that a lot to rape. So, why do men rap – rape. Why do men rape?

Julia: I also wonder why they rap. \*Laughs.

Int: \*Laughs. Me too somedays! Ya, so one of the reasons is because they can; because there is a sense of entitlement to the feminine body as well as feminine sexuality. So, the feminine sexuality has been constructed as something solely for male gratification. When we look at the sense of entitlement, ah, I just want to get your ideas on that – what makes this entitlement, why is my body not my body but rather for someone else?

Julia: Stereotypes definitely. Um…

Int: What types of stereotypes?

Julia: Ah… a woman should be hairless. Who says that? I don’t know many women who say that or want to say that. Men say that, because they prefer it.

Int: Ya, there’s a preference.

Julia: I don’t know many women that want to go on diets or say: “I should go on a diet.”  
We do that for men.

Int: To be attractive.

Julia: To be attractive because that is what they view. Whereas, if we want to throw it into a different light, men exercise for us, yes, but there isn’t a lot comparatively that they do, um, to their bodies for us. We do sacrifice a lot in a sense – they do work harder, in like the stereotype, um but they don’t work hard like we do on ourselves.

Int: So, there’s um, and I want to have your opinion on this because you have kind of basically touched on it quite well. Where there is this idea that women kind of have to control their body, and bring it tighter-

Julia: So easy to do.

Int: Exactly, it’s so easy. Just starve yourself to become smaller, whereas the male expectation is get stronger, be bigger. Um, is that something you agree with, is that something you have seen in the world?

Julia: I have seen it. I don’t agree with it, but…

Int: Where have you seen it - in what situations?

Julia: Ooo, wow, in many. I know one guy who told his wife that if she didn’t weight in a, I think it was in a year, that he was going to divorce her.

Int: Oh, whoa.

Julia: And he said it in front of – in open company and-

Int: Publicly?

Julia: Publicly. And he didn’t see anything wrong. The older gentlemen, so not as like in tune with what is going on in the world, but still just to say that out loud – it kills me, so. I think I also see it online, obviously a lot on Instagram, on Facebook, and all of these things. There are diet adds everywhere. There are wax salons everywhere. There are a lot of things where women are almost propagandised and maybe pushing it propagandised into making sure that they look their best, all the time.

Int: Um, going-

Julia: I hope that answers your question.

Int: It does fantastically, um. I’m just going to keep the dog quite in a moment. So, going back to this example you’ve just said. Um, this man who told his, wife I take it?

Julia: Mmm.

Int: That she needs to lose weight in a year otherwise divorce. Um, it happened in a public setting?

Julia: Yes.

Int: Were there women around?

Julia: Yes.

Int: And what was their type of response versus the men’s type of response?

Julia: Oh ya, that’s actually quite interesting. Um, well no, I think there was an overall disgust, but the severity of the disgust was a lot more fore the women. The men were disgusted but they were… I think they kind of thought it was a joke, but even just saying that as a joke would be quite sick. And they did eventually just laughed it off, whereas the women talked about it afterwards for quite a while, because it was something that shocked them and it was, well, disgusting to say.

Int: I actually want to use that to go into the next point. So, I don’t know if you’ve heard about this #NotAllMen, #MenAreTrash movement.

Julia: Oh yes.

Int: So, when we talk about the #NotAllMen what do you understand about the fact that some people are saying that men are trash in general and then there’s a group saying: “Hey, by the way it’s not all men.”   
Do you see that as any type of rationale, as a good argument to have, or are there holes in that?

Julia: Okay ya, that is an interesting question. Um… being engaged I can definitely say abuse and um, well, anything a man is characterised as being bad, I haven’t experienced that. Um, my fiancé has never gotten verbally abusive to me – abusive in any regard. Physically, mentally, nothing like that. Um, and actually I can say he is one of the more sensitive people, and sometimes I struggle with that as a – no really, as a woman which is strange, because he can be more sensitive to things that I will go: “It doesn’t actually matter.”  
So, I can definitely attest to ‘Not all men’, because men that I know, that I associate myself with – let me rather put it that way. I know of some men that I would really not associate myself with. But the men that I associate myself with have moral values that really connect, um, let me word this properly…

Int: You can take your time.

Julia: Ya, they ah… they understand that women are not just a piece of meat that they can do anything with. They also understand that we have feelings and actually most of the time we actually do feel a lot deeper than they do, because that is how we work through the world. They don’t. and then yet again, you can say ‘Not all men’ handle it like that. So, out of the percentage of men that I associate myself with, um, some are super tough… some are super caring… and some don’t know how to process the world, they are lost. Um, but then you get this like internet thing of, um, ‘Men are supposed to be tough’, ‘Men aren’t supposed to cry’, and that. And um, ya, I think that the ‘Not all men’ thing should just be there – should not be any men that do it, but I kind of, I understand the fact that the world is a bad place. and that we have to face the reality that there will be bad people. So, yes, I agree that um… it’s not all men, definitely, and also to maybe throw a spanner in the works, it is some women.

Int: That’s very possible too. You just said earlier, um, that your fiancé is a lot more sensitive than you, and you see that as a bit weird because you are a woman and society views you as the supposed sensitive one. In this um, elapse, if I can call it, in sensitivity do you feel less like a woman?

Julia: No, not at all. No, I actually find it a lot more enduring, um because I can actually talk to him. I don’t just get this brush off of ‘not it will be fine’, because I think I do that more which, maybe I do it because it’s happened to me so many times. I’ve had to – I grew up pretty much in a single father home-

Int: Which is actually quite rare.

Julia: I had to be a lot tougher because, he couldn’t connect with me that way. And… ya, I definitely think that it’s a lot better to have someone that can just talk to you and can understand, and sympathize and empathize with what you are going through, not just ‘agg, you’ll get over it’. So, I like that.

Int: We’re going to move onto the next question. So, how would you describe life as a woman living in South Africa?

Julia: A joke.

Int: A joke? \*Laughs.

Julia: \*Laughs. No, um really cause where in the world, besides – okay maybe, um… East Asian places. Where else in the world, where you speak to someone and share your experiences of looking over your back constantly and sometimes focusing on the font, because you’re scared someone is going to grab you or someone’s stab you or someone is going to cut your hair to make some kind of stupid political statement. Um, I definitely think that the reality that women face in South Africa… is something out of someone’s joke book because we obviously go through it and it’s not a joke, but it’s … it’s almost like we have been desensitized to it; like we’re tired for standing up for it. Um, it’s violent, it’s gruesome, it’s umm… almost perverse. Ya, I’d say maybe perverse is a good way to describe our life here. Um… but we’re used to it. We’re not going anything more really.

Int: That is something that has come up previously in my past research is that ‘it’s just what it is’. You live with this constant awareness of your lack of safety, and this constant security like looking over my shoulder, looking forward, looking sideways, just to get this false sense of safety. And it’s solely because, well, you’re scared.

Julia: We’re attacked constantly whether, ya actually maybe – even to take the physical and sexual abuse out of it, emotionally and mentally we are degraded.

Int: How so actually?

Julia: Um: “You’re just a woman. You don’t understand.”  
Um: “You’re not strong enough” - and I mean emotionally here. A woman’s constitution for ah… emotionally distressing things is usually, um… is usually referred to be being a lot lower than a mans.

Int: Their emotional stability?

Julia: No, no ah – actually yes.

Int: Okay.

Julia: They will break out into tears more easily, and yes maybe it is true but maybe it is because you should be breaking out into tears. Maybe, you not crying is the problem; for a man or for a women saying: “You shouldn’t be crying right not.”

Int: Do you see strength in tears?

Julia: Yes.

Int: Because that is something that goes against what society says.

Julia: It depends on the ah,

Int: Cryer?

Julia: Ya, it depends on the frequency because I can be crying 24/7 and not choosing to stand up and rejoin, and really fight for what I believe in. But crying and actually connecting with that part of you that allows emotion to actually come through and not just be this brick wall, or bottle it up, that takes a lot more bravery and um…

Int: Strength.

Julia: Ya, strength definitely.

Int: Ya, ya, I mean going into the next question I think we’ve actually already spoken about this. Um, do you feel safe in South Africa?

Julia: No, not at all.

Int: What has made you, well, feel this way?

Julia: Um… I actually, naturally, want t say men but that’s not my first go to. Here I’d say its cultural, because my biggest fear, because I know in one of the cultures here they believe if you rape a women she becomes your wife, and typically its young girls that they rape. I’ll get back to you; I’ll email you about what culture.

Int: Yeah, you’re more than welcome to.

Julia: I just remember reading it and it was so disturbing, and they have outlawed it now – the government has outlawed it but the culture hasn’t. So, I think culturally the belief, the understanding of a woman and the ideas of a woman is very – we are an object. So, here I am honestly something just to play with. But lets take it, like my experiences of friend who have gone overseas to a more western side of the world they actually… there is obviously the bad men who are not doing good things, but… they feel so much safer because they don’t have to worry about explaining themselves; explaining that they are not just something to paly with. And its, when, and I didn’t think this way years ago obviously, but when I actually got the account of these women saying these things of how it is just so easy being a women over there. You’re almost empowered constantly to say something, to do something, um, so that you can stand up for women years ago that didn’t have what we have. And it’s so interesting to see that, that shift in mentality towards women. Um ya, so I would say, to kind of just summarize it, here I think women have been desensitized and education does also have to do with it, um, but I’d say culturally I don’t feel safe.

Int: In South Africa?

Julia: Yep.

Int: Ya, it has been said before that South Africa has got a very pervasive rape culture and culture of violence. Ten to one if things are going to get done in South Africa you can strike, but that strike is probably going to be violent – we listen to violence, we have been taught to listen to violence. Um, and we can say that that’s related to our history, but when you say its cultural, um, do you believe it is more deep-seated, um, how do we get rid of that?

Julia: Ya, maybe – I think deep-seated, definitely yes, but education. There are so many women that don’t know that you can just exist and not have to apologise for it.; that you are not an object to be owned in a marriage. So yes, education and also, I’d say a lot more, um, movements should happen here – but ya, relating to education ultimately.

Int: Um, ya, just talking on the movements there – I don’t know if you’ve heard of the #AmINext? movement.

Julia: Yes, ya.

Int: What’s your response to that type of movement?

Julia: \*Sigh. It’s sad. It’s just sad.

Int: Do you feel like that you might be next?

Julia: Ya! Definitely. Um, actually I wonder… I wonder how it has taken so long.

Int: That is quite a dark sentence but, ya.

Julia: That’s, that’s maybe the problem. Because I am so aware, because I have been made to be so aware – I’ve been taught, um.

Int: By whom and how?

Julia: Father, definitely. Taught me how to give a right cross. Also… myself definitely. Um, and the people I surrounded myself with, and still do. Um, I have always believed that I shouldn’t have to apologise for who I am, and to be honest in my first few year in that I… I wasn’t thinking about sexuality or being a woman or being feminine or being anything, I just thinking mentally. I am who I am, and I’m so sorry you have a problem with that. Um, so, for me it’s always been – it hasn’t been about my being female. It’s just, this is who I am and if you’re upset about that, that’s your problem. And if you attack me about that, I will attack back.

Int: There’s a theorist that I use quite actively during my research, her name is Gqola – its with a \*click, I can’t do it. Um, and she has this wonderful book, it’s ‘Rape: A South African nightmare’. And in the introduction, she speaks about what if all the women in the world just decided ‘I’ve had enough, we’re going to fight back now’. And then she kind of talks about it for a bit, what if there’s this massive violent feminine revolt against men in general. And she kind of just ends it off with, ‘well, we can’t do this; we can’t fight violence with violence because it’s only ever really going to end in more violence’. But this almost necessary process of teaching young girls how to protect themselves or not to put themselves in certain positions, is that not us arming little girls? Teaching them to fight violence with violence.

Julia: Mmm ya.

Int: Cause on the flip side we could ask, why are we not teaching boys not to be violent?

Julia: Ya, that’s true.

Int: So, in these situations when your dad is teaching you how to throw a decent punch, do you think he would have taught it to your brother, if you have a brother.

Julia: Ya, no, I’m an only child, but um… Oh ya, my dad would have taught my brother \*Laughs.

Int: \*Laughs.

Julia: Um, he’s very passionate about boxing so I think it was also just something to connect over for us.

Int: Alright.

Julia: But… ya, I really find that quite interesting because it is very good – I have seen a lot of these things and I’ve read it online and in some books, that you shouldn’t fight violence with violence but I also kind of believe in the saying of ‘desperate times’.

Int: Are we in ‘desperate times’?

Julia: I think so.

Int: Have we been-

Julia: We have been in worse times, yes. But if men were in our position, what would they do?

Int: Ya, would they not take up arms to protect themselves.

Julia: There’s also a thing of, um… it’s a bit dark, but um, I honestly feel this way, if a man is going to rape, he needs to be ready for the consequences. And to be honest, the consequences right now in South Africa are not high.

Int: You’d increase them high?

Julia: Ya, definitely.

Int: Death penalty or is that a bit too far?

Julia: I think that is too far, because women can and have before falsified rape. Which is very unfortunate because they are taking advantage of people that did not have any luck with the system. Um, so I think death penalty not so much, but definitely if there is hard, hard evidence, which might even increase women to come forward after being raped, that there should be a high prison sentence… ya, and they should have, like how America has it where if you have raped someone then you should be on like an alert.

Int: Ya, the Amber Alert, the Sexual Offenders list.

Julia: Yes, I think so because then a lot more people are going to shun them – it will ruin your life but you ruined someone else’s life, so take that.

Int: Ya, oof, like you it’s a pretty dark conversation to have. What is your biggest fear living in South Africa?

Julia: To be killed.

Int: To be killed?

Julia: I… yes, yet again going back to being desensitised to it, I’m okay to die, but I don’t want to die.

Int: No, of course yeah.

Julia: And here it’s a very easy reality; that I could be honestly just running and someone can gun me down for being a women or I can be grabbed and raped for week and then they will kill me. So, the rape idea, I’ve… I’ve, I’ve been sexually abused, so, it’s… it’s not something that’s, um… unfamiliar, but for other women I’m obviously sure it is, for me to die after that with not getting my retribution, that’s my issue.

Int: You’d rather fight and survive-

Julia: Let me fight, give me an equal opportunity to get back at you, but don’t just kill me, cause then you’re a coward.

Int: Do you mind if we speak about your sexual abuse?

Julia: Ya.

Int: Because this is, like I said earlier, when we were talking about your house break-ins, you said you felt so violated like someone had actually touched your body. And we can link this to the fact that we view our bodies as ours, as our homes.

Julia: Well, we hope.

Int: Ya, we hope. Um, in that situation of sexual abuse is that sim – that kind of feeling, experience, was it similar to the house break-in or was it different?

Julia: It was different, ya. It was almost like I was outside of myself. It was like, at first I hadn’t experienced it, it was something my mind had done something and just made up, but it was too real. Eventually, I came down off of that. Again, a lot of anger, obviously, that someone could do that to me, but um, also… disgust. There was a lot of disgust.

Int: Towards yourself or the perpetrator?

Julia: Towards myself at first, um, but I do have a fighting spirit. So, it then became if I find this guy I will do something – I don’t know what it is, I’m not too sure, but I’ll figure it out when it comes to that.

Int: And your relationship to your body during that, before, after, what was that like? Did it change, and if so, how?

Julia: Ya, um, so, my relationship with my body has never been positive. I think, yet again another thing we have to face, and connecting back to that answer of propaganda and a woman is just expected to control her body. Um, it’s never been a positive one, but… I think after that… my head space with it was more of, ah… it wasn’t my body he touched, but my soul. It was more that he tainted me, it was… ya, it was dark, it wasn’t good, but it wasn’t my body that I was angry or upset with, it was me.

Int: The fact that it could happen to you or the fact that?

Julia: Um, ya. The fact that it could happen to me, because the situation was stupid, but also just, um, that he dared to touch me; that I didn’t fight harder, that I didn’t express myself enough. That’s what I think it was, I wasn’t strong enough, I didn’t speak up – not enough, ya.

Int: What’s interesting to me, because that has been said before: theft is an attack to your economic pocket, assault is an attack against the physical body, and rape and sexual assault is an attack against the soul.

Julia: Ya.

Int: And you brilliantly articulated that. This, this sense of ‘how dare you touch my body’ – um, similar to this house situation.

Julia: Yes, ya.

Int: ‘How dare you entre my home’.

Julia: Yes, ya.

Int: How does that disrupt your sense of belonging to your own body?

Julia: I think, obviously, negatively. But… I believe everyday is chance to do something, like work towards something – that is my biggest thing, that there is always an opportunity to do something to make your life better, um, no matter how small it is. And I wouldn’t say, um – ya, I’d use the word ‘disrupted’ because what actually happened is that it prolonged my journey to loving myself, because I do think it is obviously a life long achievement to love yourself, but, and if you have done it early on, great, but I think… I think it took me a few years to get over that feeling of not being in control and um.

Int: In control of your body or in control of your life or the circumstances that surround both?

Julia: Ya, I think both. Circumstances, body, well ya life as well – life not so much because I can apparently bounce back from that as well. But it think it was more – ya, it was more that I was angry that now I just have to restart, and I have to rebuild. And it’s exhausting on the daily just to fight yourself and what your head thinks of itself, and be positive and all of that shit. And here I am, and I have to start again.

Int: So, it’s this ‘going back and then pushing forward, and going back’ – ‘why do I have to fight’?

Julia: Why do I have to fight this hard.

Int: Just to feel-

Julia: Normal.

Int: Okay?

Julia: Ya.

Int: To feel like a ‘man’

Julia: Ya, pretty much.

Int: Once again a really dark avenue, and thank you for walking me down it. It’s a tough story to share and I thank you so much for actually having the bravery to share that. We’re going to move on

Julia: Oh ya, don’t stress.

Int: Go a little bit lighter. So, how would you describe your physical home?

Julia: My physical home, oh um, a mess. \*Laughs.

Int: \*Laughs.

Julia: Happy. Definitely happy, lots of laughs. I’ve got three pugs and they are the ‘smell of my life’.

Int: \*Laughs. I like that, ‘smell of my life’. I’m going to steal that.

Julia: Ya, they are my children, and I know it’s very cliché to say that, but they are honestly so… so, uplifting almost cause you get home, and nothing in their day has actually happened – they like barked at who ever has come across the street and ah – and they do pretty much nothing, but they are so happy; and if you can be so bored but still so happy, I respect you. Ya, they’re loving and… intense – no really, I actually like intensity. I like um, I like having… I like knowing what someone is thinking and I like, um, having an answer to everything. And it’s pretty much that, its ah, whatever question I ask, gets answered, which I appreciate.

Int: Ya, it’s a great way. Are there any daily safety precautions that you take?

Julia: Yes. Mentally I get ready to hurt someone – really if I step out

Int: When you leave the house?

Julia: Out of the house – I have practiced, because I run a lot, so I have practiced how if someone grabs me from behind how I will turn around and hit them or kick them or something.

Int: To fight back.

Julia: Yes. So, that I can run away faster. I mentally prepare myself, I don’t really carry anything because um, I usually forget to be honest. But… I think the mental preparation is the biggest one for me. Sometimes if I know I’m going to somewhere unsafe, or lets say relatively not meant for a woman, I will take a knife with me just if I am in a situation I can at least do something.

Int: To protect yourself ?

Julia: Ya.

Int: What are these places that are ‘just not for women’?

Julia: Cities. Deep in the city, specifically for a white woman, obviously um, anywhere kind of secluded. So, even an alleyway; on any alleyway you can think of, that is not meant for a woman because all it takes is for a man to drug her or do something, um, even kill her. It’s so easy to do it, and many people don’t have a problem with putting themselves in that mindset: ‘Ag, I can just quickly do it’.

Int: ‘If I want to, I can’.

Julia: Ya. So, I think any secluded area and any city centers.

Int: You just don’t go as a woman?

Julia: No, I try to avoid them – and definitely dark alleyways.

Int: Ya, in that sense though, when and where do you feel ‘at home’? So, when you feel safe.

Julia: With my fiancé I’d say, because I know whatever situation or what will happen, he will do his best to protect me and so – and same like switched around. It’s, ‘we both will do whatever we need to’ and um. Also, far away from people; as far away from people as possible.

Int: The middle of nowhere.

Julia: The middle of nowhere – because if I know that I’m the only one there, I’m fine.

Int: You’re safe?

Julia: Ya.

Int: Um, when we’re saying – I want to refer to these things as safety zones. Would you say that your fiancé is a safety zone for you?

Julia: Yes.

Int: Um, and I want to link that back to the fact that your experience, well your first experience was instable – unstable, that’s the correct word. This connection of stability with a person has that replaced the physical structure of it?

Julia: Yes, definitely that’s a good way to put it. I like that.

Int: Um, ya and then one of the last few questions and then we’re basically going to end off and do a few more checks. Um, do you plan on staying in South Africa for the foreseeable future.

Julia: No, I’m already trying to get out.

Int: So, where would you like to go?

Julia: Either Australia or … to be honest I know its not a typical one, but I really do like, um, ag, what’s it called – Canada.

Int: Ah Canada, I like Canada. The Canadians yeah.

Julia: Cause it’s just – they’re happy people. Australians have quite a rigorous idea of life, and ya, the Canadians are just happy people they really are; they don’t mean harm to anyone. Okay, obviously it’s not all of them, but um, that or, a European country. I really think the Europeans have a very – they’re not friendly, but they do have… the moral capacity to understand what a woman means. And there are a lot more women progress.

Int: Okay.

Julia: Ya, they’re moving quite forward.

Int: Yeah, feminism is quite strong there.

Julia: Ya, big time.

Int: So, what makes you want to leave South Africa. You have said quite clearly, ‘No, I’m not staying’?

Julia: The violence definitely. Jobs, because the jobs here are either running out or we can’t get them. Um, we… my fiancé and I, we… don’t qualify even though we do and that’s quite sad; and for me, education wise, I don’t but for him, he’s go so much experience and just because of his skin colour we can’t get anything, we can’t find anything – nothing that will actually give us a life to move forward, have a family, buy a house. I mean I’m trying to buy a – well, I’m looking at a car right now, I cannot afford that, and that’s scary because earn more than, well not most South Africans, but I earn more than what is expected to live off in South Africa.

Int: And you still cannot afford a car.

Julia: I can’t afford a car. I can’t afford traveling too much with uber, like it’s expensive.

Int: Oh ya.

Julia: And um the, comparatively for Europe and Canada […], and Australia they understand that you at least need a decent amount of money so that you don’t have to just live a life eating bread and peanut butter for the whole month.

Int: Yeah, you can live and not just survive.

Julia: Exactly, so um, I like that idea and ya definitely the violence here and, ag ya, just the overall for my kids – which I don’t have yet, but give them an actual start to life so that they don’t have to apologise; they don’t have to worry about going to school and some kid pulling my daughter, or even my son, whatever happens, into a bathroom and that’s it, it’s done. They can be shanked, they can be raped, they can be anything, and that’s scary to think.

Int: It’s terrifying, I mean, like you said, you don’t even have these children and it’s something you imagine and you really, really think about. So, basically that’s all I’ve got for you today, yeah um, any questions anything you’d like to add, you’re more than welcome to add now otherwise you have my email address, you’re more than welcome to send me any insights, anything you find interesting.

Julia: Ya, I’d like to send you that cultural-

Int: Ya, please.

Julia: It’s essentially rape culture, but it’s a culture in South Africa, here, that highly believes you will get a wife if you rape and it’s also they have multiple wives, so you can rape whoever you want and it doesn’t matter.

Int: Oo, just for a second, in this situation is rape a method of claiming a woman – she’s mine because I raped her.

Julia: Yes, and specifically if you are the first one to rape her. You’re the first one to ‘break’ her.

Int: Also in this article – I really like that ‘if you’re the first one to break her’ – in this situation, so if this man claims a girl by raping her and another man would come along and rape her what would the first man’s response be?

Julia: That I’m not too sure – they didn’t cover that, it was more just the appalling nature of this culture. But I can – but I’m sure there isn’t, cause there’s also this psychological thing with men, not really with women, but yet again not all, but… if you’re not the first one to have him or her, then it’s almost not enjoyed as much. It’s not your person.

Int: It’s not as pleasurable.

Julia: Yes, and so I find a woman – if a woman has more sex than a man it’s like this horrible idea that: “Oh my word, you are a slut.”  
Or any type of… of horrible names you could give a woman.

Int: I find it very interesting that we have so many names to give a woman that sleeps around, but not a single one for a man – the ‘man-whore’ is kind of taken

Julia: But ya, it’s from a ‘whore’ – and a ‘whore’ is a woman.

Int: Exactly.

Julia: I’m trying to think.

Int: I mean, there’s obviously the ‘fuck boy’, but that’s more of a positive.

Julia: Ya. It’s a good thing.

Int: Ya, ‘congratulations you made it’. But ya, fantastic conversation. Thank you so much for sharing your experiences with me, I know we did get into a bit of a dark conversation not once or twice but a few times.

Julia: Ya, but that’s fine.

Int: So, thank you so much for giving your time today and like I said you are more than welcome to send me emails, insight.

Julia: Ya, I will.

Int: And ya, thank you so much.

Julia: Thank you.

Int: Great.