

Interview 2: Sammy

I have known Sammy since elementary school. We sat at the same desk in science class and she and I would proceed to create and destroy countless DIY science experiments. We would go to McDonalds together and argue over whose Kids' Meal toy was better. Sammy went to private elementary and middle school in the city, but moved to suburban Pennsylvania in the 6th grade. Pennsylvania is a state known for as much for its cities as it is for the largely rural and suburban areas, and for the large Amish populations in towns such as Lancaster. Sammy proved to be the best person to speak to about the merging of city and suburban life, as she spent her childhood learning and growing in a somewhat harsh and fast lifestyle and spent her developing adolescence in the more solitary and personal suburban life.

Nikita: You were raised both in the city and the suburbs, both must have pretty drastically affected your attitude and upbringing. Which do you think had a stronger influence?

Sammy: I don't know. I think right now I'm more of a suburban type of girl. I spent some of the hardest and most shaping years in the suburbs. I became a woman in the suburbs and as a result I'm going to be more of a suburban girl than a city girl. To be honest, I barely remember the city. I mean, I remember our friends and everything, but besides that there's not much I remember or miss to be honest.

N: Ok. Then tell me what your suburban attitude which you have? What makes it different from a city attitude?

S: Well, I think kids in the suburbs are really bratty. Especially in the wealthier suburbs kids are generally meaner and a little nastier. But we are also way closer with our circle of friends than kids from the city are, I think. I guess this is because in the suburbs there is so little to do on a day to day basis that these are the only people you hang out with. And because the suburbs are so small everyone knows everything about everyone. You can't make one step left or right without word getting around. You become intimately familiar with the streets and the stories behind each corner and each house. That's really the biggest difference between us and city kids. We are raised with less privacy than we realize. As a result we are forced to develop different skills in order to protect our secrets and have some freedom to breathe.

N: Do you think the intimate knowledge of both your close friends and those in your neighborhood necessarily came from the fact that it was a suburb, or could it be that you are just an extremely friendly person? I guess what I mean to ask is do you think you would have been able to develop an equal intimacy with people if you had stayed in the city?

S: I mean, I *could* have been able to know people as well in the city as I do here. I just think it would have been harder, I would have had less opportunity. The thing is that I almost never actively sought out rumors and stories. They always just happened to float by as word spread from person to person. It was almost impossible not to know gossip simply because it was everywhere, and it was unavoidable. In the city I think people are little bit more closed off. They

keep more of their secrets and their comments to themselves. Kids in the suburbs talk and they talk a lot. Not only is there a lot of gossip but also there's a lot of confrontation. I know kids who aren't afraid to get in someone's face, maybe even make things physical if necessary.

N: Certain studies published in the American Journal of Psychiatry talk about different psychological developments of city kids versus non-urban kids and compare the ease with which each group navigates social situations and makes friends. How do you think the way you make friends is different than say someone from the city or a rural area? Do you tend to hang around kids from the suburbs or the city?

S: I went to college as the only kid from my school. So at first it was a bit hard because our town was such a little bubble that it was hard to imagine anything happening outside of it. But soon I met plenty of other kids from the suburbs who were adjusting to having left their small bubbles to a way larger world. So I guess I started out making friends from the suburbs because we were all stuck in the same boat. Also there are just way more kids from the suburbs than there are from big cities. But now, after I found my group of friends and felt a little bit less lonely, I'm pretty comfortable going to any party or bar and making friends with almost anybody. It's kind of fun and exciting because you never know who you will meet when you go out. But I still get really nervous before going somewhere where I don't know that many people. It's just a phase though, I'll grow out of it eventually.

N: Well great, thanks for taking your time to talk to me.

S: Sure, it was fun!