

Florida Gulf Coast University

Histories of Choice

Interviewee: [REDACTED]

Interviewers: Unknown

Location: Unknown

Date: Unknown

I1: -phone too to record and after we're done and we turn this off we check that it actually recorded and then we delete it on our phones. We're using two backups because we drove here ([REDACTED]: I get it) and we don't want to lose it. They can get lost.

[REDACTED]: Where's you guys' school?

I1: We're in Fort Myers.

[REDACTED]: Oh ok.

I1: Have you been down there?

[REDACTED]: I used to go to Captiva Island in the summer.

I1 & I2: Oh yeah!

I1: That's kind of nearby. Is it recording? Ok. You ready?

I2: Yeah it's already on.

[REDACTED]: So what, you'll be asking me questions?

I2: Yes

I1: Yeah, I'll be leading the interview, I'll read the stuff we always want to touch on like, "Hey! Where were you born?" and stuff like that ([REDACTED]: Yeah). And then Mimi will be thinking of things because every story is different, you story isn't going to be in all these questions, you know what I mean?

[REDACTED]: Yeah, gotcha [sic.] Ok!

Florida Gulf Coast University

Histories of Choice

I1: And if you have questions for us at any point-

█: Ok, I will (laughter).

I1: We're just going to start with the biographical stuff like the boring stuff (█: Ok!). When and where were you born?

█: I was born in █, Arizona on June █, 198█.

I1: You're right near my sister's age.

█: Yeah, yeah I feel old (laughter).

I1: No! My sister, c'mon that's so close! No she was '8█, I think. So we want to hear about your family background. What region of the country did you actually grown up in?

█: So my family background or what region, like-what do you mean my family background?

I1: Did you grow up in Tucson?

█: Oh, ok. I was born in █, I lived there for about four years and then I moved-I grew up in █, Arizona. I went to middle school and high school and then I went to college in █ or, well, I went to Arizona State University. Then I moved-do you want me to go on to every place? (laughter)

I1: Not if you don't want to!

█: Well, not if you don't need me to.

I1: What did you major in? I'm curious.

█: So my undergrad I was a Broadcast/Business Management and I also-so when I finished undergrad I moved to █ for grad school and I have an MBA in Marketing and Global Business.

I1 & I2: Wow! That's very cool.

I1: So, education level, you went on to the MBA.

Florida Gulf Coast University

Histories of Choice

■ Yeah (I1: That would be a follow-up question). My education level is MBA. Wow, I feel special.

I1: You are special!

■: Wow, thanks (laughter).

I1: What about your family? Where did your parents go, or-

■: Well my parents are psychologists, so they have their doctorates from Texas A&M. They start-my dad was like a CEO of a behavioral health insurance company and my mom ended up working for them so they didn't do private practice they did more of the behavioral healthcare industry. But they are psychologists and they have their doctorates.

I1: What was that like? Growing up with two psychologists?

■: Everyone asks me that! They didn't-it wasn't-they're not the typical psychologists, I guess. They never tried to psychoanalyze me or anything, the only thing I can say is that they gave me good advice about things and they also pushed me to never become a psychologist because-I don't mean to tell you not to do that if that's what you guys are doing (laughter)-

I2: I'm a psychology major (laughter). I'm going to go into social work.

■: Ok, ok. They just told me that apparently-yeah, I don't know why. But anyway, I mean-it was fine. I didn't even notice they were psychologists. I could go in later about [sic.] how it affected me but growing up it was just like any other profession. They just had good advice. (I1: That's great.) And my mom was an anxious mom just like any mom would be. My parents were very loving and supportive, yeah. I had a really good family life.

I1: Was your family religious in any major aspect?

■: I mean, we went to church. Like a non-denominational church. My dad grew up Southern Methodist so he was pushed very hard to go to church like three times a week and- or, Southern Baptist, I'm sorry. My mom-so I'm baptized Piscopalian, but-so we went to church but it was never forced on me. If I wanted to go on my own, then I could go. So in high school I was in youth groups for church, non-denominational things but my parents never forced a religion on us. We believed in God and went on holidays but it wasn't something that was a must-do.

Florida Gulf Coast University

Histories of Choice

I1: Yeah, I feel like non-denominational is so rare. That's the kind of church I went to. They let me wear my jeans, it was cool (laughter).

█: Yeah! Yeah I went to a church in █ that was very-it was at like a concert hall. Not a concert hall but like a band-

I1: Yeah like a band venue!

█: That's what I'm thinking of yeah. But it was like-you dressed how you wanted, they have very contemporary, modern music. The messages weren't specifically about religion just messages about how you can better yourself and be more loving and kind but it was like a rad vibe.

I1: Yeah, nice. There's some like that in █ [█, Florida].

█: In █? (I1: Yeah) Where's that?

I1: In downtown █.

█: Oh! Yeah I don't live-

I1: Sorry, I'm throwing around terms-you said you were going to visit █-

█: Yeah I've only lived-yeah. But now-now I don't really go to church. I believe in God and I pray and I have a very spiritual beliefs [sic.] and I'm very spiritual but I don't identify with a certain religion.

I1: Gotcha. That's cool. What else-so, I think we met a guy. Are you in a committed relationship?

█: I am in a committed relationship. That is a guy.

I1: That is a dude (laughter). Do you want to talk about that?

█: It's a fact! (laughter) Yeah, so, I-like I mentioned, I'm sober and I'm in recovery, so Austin lives in █, Florida (that's my boyfriend) and I've known him on the internet for like a year or two. We weren't talking-just because-I blog, and he has this company called Sober Evolution so we're both-we do things in this digital recovery space. When I started my job he was part of

Florida Gulf Coast University

Histories of Choice

my marketing plan, his company, and I wanted him to come visit our facility to see if they could help us market. We weren't built yet so I asked him if he just wanted to meet for coffee or tacos or something (laughter). We haven't been dating for very long but he was very good looking to me and very handsome so I didn't think he would be very nice so I wasn't-I didn't think he'd be interested in me also (laughter). So when we first went on-when I met him, I guess now it was a date [sic.] it was just very genuine and authentic and kind and I was just blown away by his personality because I didn't expect him to have that personality based on past experiences with really good-looking guys (laughter). But anyway, so, that's-we've been dating like eight weeks (I1: Wow, it's fresh!). Yeah it's fresh but we're very serious.

I1 & I2: That's awesome!

■: Thanks:

I1: That's such a millennial romance story.

■: It is! It is. I'm right on the cutoff to still be a millennial, I feel special. I made it.

I1: Well, you get to be both (laughter). What race or ethnicity would you call yourself?

■: Caucasian. Yeah.

I1: We talked about your education background and we kind of touched on professional background but how did you get started in your career?

■: In my career? So, I moved to ■ because I wanted to work in cable television. I had interned at a company called Cox Media which does the advertising and sales division of Cox communication, like, Time-Warner, Spectrum, whatever you guys have out here. I saw these people from different cable networks like MTV or Discovery Channel, Lifetime, they would come and speak to us about their networks and tell us about their programming and make sure we were selling ad space and I was like, "I want that job." Because they travel all across their territory and they just talk about their network and their programming and so I was like, "I've gotta [sic.] be in LA or New York to work in entertainment" so that's why I got my MBA. I got my MBA at Pepperdine. I wanted to work so I lived in ■ and we were required to do an internship for our MBA program, it's a two-year full-time program so between the summer. I got an internship at Discovery Channel and I worked at an affiliate advertising sales network distribution. I guess I did a good job because my second year about three months in a woman was going on maternity leave and they asked me if I wanted to take over her position temporarily

Florida Gulf Coast University

Histories of Choice

while she was on maternity leave. I was actually thinking about leaving school because they wanted me to work full-time but we worked it out where I could do the job and still complete school. That's kind of how I got started and I worked there for like-well, I was in that position for about six months and the woman came back from maternity leave, I was going to move to ██████████, North Carolina to work for Discovery Channel out there but then I decided I didn't want to move (laughter) and then I got a job offer at Lifetime and as soon as I got that job offer the woman was like, "I wanna [sic.] be with my kid, I don't want to be at work" so then I stayed with Discovery Channel for about three more years (I1: Oh, wow). Yeah. So then I quit-part of my-so my, I had substance abuse issues and they didn't show up really at Discovery Channel but my abortion is part of why I got started on opiate pills. Anyway, I quit because I was engaged to this guy and he-we had met in Arizona and he had gone to law school in California while I was getting my MBA and he wanted to go back to Arizona so I quit my job at Discovery Channel which was like my dream job but I also had love addiction issues which I didn't recognize back then like I would just do whatever to make someone else happy. So I had trouble-I got a job in Arizona but then I got fired because I was on this drug called Tramadol and I got it for non-medical reasons and they didn't know I was on a drug but they knew I wasn't working so they let me go and then I started kind of dabbling in prescription pills. My fiance had been verbally abusive and physically abusive so one night he was on Valium and alcohol and he ended up pushing me into the refrigerator and throwing me on the ground and the cops were called so we broke up. I-

I1: That was that, after that?

██████: Yeah. But it took a while, like he had choked me before and been extremely, extremely angry and terrifying and I still kept saying, "Oh he won't do it again" and he said he wouldn't do it again but then he kept doing it so that was that.

I1: Well, congrats first of all.

██████: Do you want me to keep going about-

I1: Yeah! It's all tied in.

██████: So then I moved to Texas for a little bit to live with my parents after we broke up. Obviously-like, my parents lived in a kind of golf retirement community so I didn't want to live with them so I moved back to ██████████. I got a job in produ-in television production, and while I was on my job, like two days before it ended-in television production you don't get a full-time job. It's just scheduled for the time of the television series, about how long it takes to

Florida Gulf Coast University

Histories of Choice

film. So it was like a 9, a 12-week job. Then I got in a car accident and I got prescribed more opiates and so then I started kind of abusing opiates again and my problem was that my identity was tied to my career and my education. I always had to be super successful, get straight A's, go to grad school, and my sister is really smart so I was always in competition with her because I somewhat felt [sic.] (although this wasn't true) that my parents loved her more because she was doing well in school and getting grades so I was like, "Well I have to do that too."

I1: Yeah, the pressure.

■: So anyway, that was part of my problem was that my identity, it was like, "What am I doing for work?" So when I-when that job ended I got this job as a VP of sales for this entertainment group and that was a big deal for me because I hadn't really worked in a good job for about a year and so it was a big opportunity for me and then two days before I was supposed to start the investors of the company pulled out so I wasn't able to come on. So I called my psychiatrist and I told him that I felt suicidal and that I wanted to die and he told me, "Well I have the answer for you, let me give you a prescription." So I ended up the next day driving [sic.] to a pharmacy and picking [sic.] up this prescription and it was Adderall. So (laughter) I-I had like- I had tried Adderall like, once, so I knew what it was but I didn't really know the full effect and he prescribed me the highest dose that you can prescribe in California and so I took it and I was obviously very euphoric but also unable to sleep for like two or three nights (I1 & I2: Right.). It was-yeah, I didn't have a tolerance to it at all. But anyways, that's-so I started abusing Adderall and then I was in a drug addiction for four or five years when I started Adderall, I was like-I would get a job and lose it and I was in and out of rehabs and so when I finally got sober I started working, I first started working for Trader Joe's as a crew member. Then I worked for a treatment center out in ■. Then I co-founded a company called AddictionUnscripted.com which is like a digital recovery publication where people can share their stories of their own substance abuse and then families can talk about substance abuse-

I1: That's very cool.

■: Yeah it's trying-it's like, getting the stories out about real substance abuse and also showing the other side like about recovery and stories of redemption and strength. So we got an investor and then my business partner and I had a fall out and I was unemployed for about three months and then this company that I'm working for now reached out to me and they're in Florida-I had my resume on Indeed.com and they recruited me and now I'm their marketing director and that's how I moved to Florida. I was in Texas before. That's kind of my career story but a lot of substance abuse mixed in. Yeah.

Florida Gulf Coast University

Histories of Choice

I2: That's a wild ride.

I1: It is a wild ride (laughter).

█: Yeah I've been sober about [sic.] three and a half years now.

I1: Congratulations!

I2: That's awesome!

█: Thanks, yeah. Now I finally have-I've started having jobs that I can keep (laughter) and that are more in line with my education and my background and my real work ethic because I just didn't have-I wasn't the person I am when I'm on drugs, so, yeah.

I1: Something you can excel and succeed in (█: Yes.) You feel comfortable with it.

█: Yeah, yeah. I love it. It's built my confidence back up, my self-esteem, because it was broken down with my addiction.

I2: That's amazing.

█: Thanks!

I1: Jeez! I'm sorry, it's-it's just-that's the best success story I've ever heard. I guess we'll move on to other things. I want to talk so much [sic.] about that but I'll try and stay organized.

█: Ok! Am I giving you too much information?

I1 & I2: No!

█: Ok.

I1: No, very average amount of information. Which is a lot! Because it's like-nobody's like, "Hey, want to talk about this?" So, it's average. So we're going to go into reproductive rights and health stuff, so, what drew you to be interested in this project [sic.], how did you get on board?

█: So my friend Kelly, can I say her last name? Well-

Florida Gulf Coast University

Histories of Choice

I1: It's up to you. If you want to use a pseudonym then we would transcribe it with the pseudonym.

█: Ok, I'll just say my friend Kelly, she is very-she's in recovery too but she's very public about her abortion story and she-I had talked with her about, like, I had listened to some of her podcasts talking about abortion and I just said, like, "Thank you so much for being willing to talk about this publically" I said "I've had three abortions and I have a long story about it but I haven't opened up publically about that. My friends know and I'll tell people but it's not something that I share with the entire world. I was-I told her how much I admired her and she suggested this book that I haven't even read yet. Not "May Cause Miracles"-I don't know. Some book about dealing with abortion because I had tried to find-I've gone through therapy about some of the stuff that happened around my abortion because it was a traumatic experience that I never really dealt with so I tried to work through it with a therapist. I had also tried to find books about my own abortion and like, if you have a miscarriage, yes, there's a lot of information but there's not a lot of information about if you elect to have an abortion. So anyway, she told me about this project and she emailed the doctor and the doctor emailed me and set me up with y'all.

I1: By 'doctor' do you mean Dr. █?

█: Yeah, sorry, I don't know how to pronounce the name. Dr. what?

I1: Dr. █. She's great. I hope that you meet her someday. She's great. When you were growing up, sorry, I'm trying to stay focused, when you were growing up did you-let's say you had a question about sex, who would you go talk to?

█: So my mom and dad were actually very open about sex, my mom gave me a book about it when I was like, nine or something. I forgot what it was called. They told me about sex and how it happened and they sat down with me and let me know-I remember in sixth grade I had never kissed a boy so I wrote on the whiteboard, "Mom, can you come talk to me after work?" So she came in my room and I asked her how to french-kiss a boy because I didn't know how (I1: That's so cute!) (laughter). But sex? I don't think I asked how to have it nor-nor did they stress the importance of birth control or protection. The first time I had sex and a lot of times after that I didn't use protection. I actually got on birth control when I started having sex in high school when I lost my virginity. I did that on my own but I remember telling my mom and dad that it was like-I made some excuse that I was, I told them it was for something else but they knew (I1: Like acne?) Yeah, maybe something like that, I can't remember exactly. But anyway, I masturbated in high school and like my dad-my parents knew. My dad-yeah, my dad would tease

Florida Gulf Coast University

Histories of Choice

me about it. There was this company called Spencer's Gifts, I don't know if you guys (I1 & I2: Yeah.) But my friend gave me this thing called a Jolly Cucumber for my birthday one year, it's a dildo that looks like a pickle.

I1: Oh like Spencer's in the mall!

■: Yeah, in the mall! So anyways it was under my bed, I had already had my-I used a back massager to masturbate. But anyway he stole it one time and at Thanksgiving dinner in front of my family he's like, "Are you guys-Lara, you missing anything?" and I'm like, "What are you talking about?" and he's like, "Got your Jolly Cucumber!" So my parents were like, open, like teased me about sexual stuff and they were more open about it than most parents are.

I1: How'd you feel about that, was it funny for [sic.] you?

■: Yeah! It was funny, I wasn't embarrassed. No, because I'm very open about sex and masturbation and everything, much more open than most women are. I'll talk about masturbating with my friends and they giggle and say they don't do that and stuff like that.

I1: Most women say that.

I2: Yeah and you're like, "You're lying!"

■ & I1: Yeah (laughter)!

I1: So for sex health, when did you first have a sex health class or something like that? Was it a class, or-

■: Probably middle school but it was like one class, it wasn't a full term of classes. In Health we discussed that once or twice and I remember in high school we did as well [sic.]. But I do know that I never really understood the importance of protection. I got off birth control later on because I thought it was making me gain weight, so-I don't-I know I was taught about condoms and birth control and stuff like that but it didn't necessarily hit me or make me realize that I should be doing that or could be doing that.

I1: Gotcha. So what did you know about sexual health growing up? Like, health as in PAP smears and condoms and birth control, that kind of thing.

Florida Gulf Coast University

Histories of Choice

■: I knew I was supposed to get-well so I got my period and I asked my mom what it was because I had blood in my underwear-

I1: Oh, you didn't know until it happened?

■: Well, I knew what a period was but I wasn't sure-when I got it, I wasn't sure what it was. I didn't-I wasn't like, "Oh! I got my period!" I was just like, "Why is there blood in my underwear?" And she said, "It's your period" and I was like, "Gotcha." I don't remember the first time I saw a gynecologist or learned about PAP smears. I can't-I don't remember, I don't remember if I saw one in high school. I'm sure my primary care doctor would give me pelvic exams and I knew you had to get a PAP smear yearly but I don't remember when I learned that or how old I was.

I1: Ok. Do you want to talk about your first time at all?

■: My first time having sex or my abortion?

I1: Your first time having sex (■: Yeah!). Were you prepared? What was going on?

■: So I was in a long, good term relationship with my first love in high school. I remember fooling around with him on the floor and stuff and having, what is it called, "dry sex?"

I1: Dry humping (laughter).

■: Dry humping (laughter)!

I1: Yeah, now we have to transcribe dry humping (laughter)!

■: Well yeah, so I liked that, (laughter) but I was worried, I was like, "People are going to think I'm a slut if I had sex." I kept thinking that people would think I was slutty if I had sex. We talked about having it but one night I remember we were in my Four Runner and I was leaving to go on a trip to Washington D.C. for some student government thing and we ended up having-we had sex I was maybe sitting in my front seat and he was like, that way. I didn't-[inaudible]-I didn't know how to feel about it. I was glad I did it but it didn't feel the best because I didn't really know how to do it. I was also like, "I shouldn't be doing this" in my head even though I wanted to do it. I was so worried about what people would think of me. So afterwards I remember in Washington D.C. telling myself, "Ok, we didn't have sex, he didn't go all the way in" or something like, "We didn't have sex." I was so worried, I felt ashamed that people would think I was slutty. I had an experience in middle school where I did a lot of sexual stuff with my

Florida Gulf Coast University

Histories of Choice

boyfriend at that time and I remember people were like-people calling me a slut and stuff like that. I think that stayed with me, so I was worried that it would happen again.

I1: So, like slut-shaming?

■: Yeah. I think that's why I didn't feel that comfortable for a while. But then we started having sex all the time and I didn't care. It was just that first time [sic.] that I was worried about.

I1: Were you the first one out of your friends to have sex?

■: No, I wasn't. Some of my friends had had sex before, but not all of them. I think for my group of friends anywhere from 16 to 17 was a normal age for them to lose their virginity.

I1: We're interested in-do you feel like you had access to birth control when you were younger? Because you mentioned earlier that-tell me if I'm wrong, but you said you kind of just went on it on your own?

■: Yeah. I mean, there weren't condoms available anywhere that I could get unless I wanted to go to Walgreens but I think I felt too embarrassed in high school to do that because it was-I didn't even want to buy a tampon, how am I going to buy a condom? (sigh) Sorry, I'm worried that he's hot.

I1: Do you want me to pause it and see if he wants to come in?

■: Yeah, let me-is that ok?

I1: Yep, we'll pause it.

[pause recording.]

I1: Yep, ok

■: Alright, so access to birth control, I didn't want to go in a store and buy it because I was embarrassed. I did know I didn't want to get pregnant in high school so I remember, like I said earlier, I made some excuse about why I wanted to get on birth control. Oh! I remember what it was. I had really bad cramps from my period in high school. Honestly they were pretty debilitating, but I used that as an excuse to get on birth control because I wasn't ready to tell my parents I was having sex. They eventually found out like six months later and didn't really care

Florida Gulf Coast University

Histories of Choice

because they liked my boyfriend and I think my parents are more open about sex. They would let my boyfriend spend the night and have the door closed and stuff like that but they were also, it's not like they just ignored us. They checked on me, too, but they were fine that [sic.] I had a long-term boyfriend and was having sex. But I got on birth control yes, so I wouldn't get pregnant.

I1: In high school?

█: In high school. Yeah.

I1: Did you ever discuss the possibility of getting pregnant with any of your partners?

█: I think my first boyfriend and I discussed it because, and I didn't want to get-so yes, I haven't, but my first boyfriend-yes we discussed it and I think that's why I got on birth control. But I didn't-I didn't know anyone that had gotten pregnant in high school. And then when I first did get pregnant-so I usually have had long-term relationships and I didn't drink in college but then when I turned 21 I went on a trip to Europe and I hung out-so my friends that I went with were big drinkers-well, not big drinkers, but they drank. And so I started drinking and then the first time I got pregnant I only had sex with this guy once, I think I had hung out with him two or three times and I remember being drunk and not even thinking about protection and not even thinking that I could get pregnant, like I wasn't even worried about it at the time. Even after that I had a long-term relationship (sigh) and I got pregnant again. I don't-I don't know why but I felt like, "I'm not going to get pregnant." (Sigh) And then I did. And then I had an abortion. With my substance abuse, when I got pregnant the third time I honestly didn't even think-I wasn't thinking about anything, I was high. So I got pregnant that last time. After that I started using-I still don't even use condoms or birth control I use the rhythm method and have people pull out after being pregnant three times. I know that's not the smartest thing but I don't like birth control, it makes me feel-I don't want to do birth control because I feel depressed and I gain weight [sic.] on it and I-I just don't do it. I've been using the rhythm method-I'd had a serious boyfriend for two years and we used that, with him I use it and he doesn't come in me. And I haven't gotten pregnant (laughter).

I1: So, have you had three then? Three abortions?

█: I've had three abortions, yeah. I can talk more.

I1: Yeah, we can talk about all of them. So this is when we get into the sensitive and difficult part. Just another reminder, because it's so important to know, if you don't want to talk about

Florida Gulf Coast University

Histories of Choice

anything you can just say you don't want to. (█: Okay.) So [pause] I'm sorry, I just focused on the wrong part.

I2: Third part.

I1: Third part, thank you. How did you come to the decision to undergo an abortion? Whichever one you'd like to talk about. Or all three.

█: Well they're all different. The first time I was like 21 and I-my decision was like, "My whole life is ahead of me. I'm not going to have a baby."

I1: Was this the Europe one?

█: Well, after-I came back from Europe and got pregnant in Tucson. I was visiting those girlfriends that I went to Europe with in Tucson, so, I got drunk and had sex with this guy once and I got pregnant. I didn't even-I didn't tell him that I was pregnant. I remember my period was late but I was like, "Oh, there's no way I could be pregnant." And then finally two weeks later after my period didn't come I finally checked and I was like, "Oh my God, I'm pregnant, what the fuck am I going to do?" Honestly, for some reason, because my stance on abortion has changed over time now. At that point in my life, I was like, "Well I'll get an abortion." I didn't look at it how I look at it today, I was just like, "I'm not going to have a baby. I have my whole life in front of me. I'm about to go to grad school. There's no way I can take care of a child." So I just-I called a place and then I took the pill and that was the first time I was prescribed opiates. Well, I think I had been prescribed before but that was the first time I felt-I had pain pills afterwards and after they were out I used them for non-medical reasons to relax myself or to go to sleep and I started realizing that I liked the way that felt so that's-I always say that's how my substance abuse started was from that abortion, it's not like they gave me tons of pain pills but I used them for reasons outside of pain.

I1: Ok, so is that like the two-pill abortion?

█: Yeah, the two-pill.

I1: And then they gave you pain pills because it can be uncomfortable?

█: Yeah, yeah. So then my second abortion. Similar story-well, not similar story. I was with this-it was my fiance, who I mentioned in the past, but we weren't engaged yet. I was in grad

Florida Gulf Coast University

Histories of Choice

school, I got pregnant, and I didn't want to have a baby again. I was in grad school (laughter) it was like, same excuse and same reason. So we talked about it and-

I1: How old were you then?

■: I think I was about 22 or 23. It only happened like a year later. And I wasn't that responsible, I wasn't responsible about sex. I just-I wasn't using the rhythm method, we weren't using condoms, I wasn't on birth control, I just for some reason thought, "Oh, it won't happen to me." Even though it had happened before. So I again made this decision like, "Ok, I'm not doing it. I'll just go to the abortion clinic." Got the pills. I did it again. I don't remember that experience as much, that abortion, I don't know why because I'm trying to think of where I laid, I was bleeding and stuff like that but I really don't remember that one very much.

I1: Were you using at this point?

■: No, I was in grad school so I wasn't even-I wasn't on substances during grad school. I would-sometimes if someone had a pill or something I would take it on the weekends but I didn't have my own at this point.

I1: I have a question then. My background is in sociology and domestic violence and abuse. I guess my question, if you don't mind, would be was the violence happening at this point?

■: [pause] Well-the anger, the dom-

I1: Any of the abuse.

■: Verbal, yes. I would-he would get so angry that I would hide in the bathroom and he would break the door down with his head and his fist. I had to hide in bedrooms and he would break the door down to get in. He didn't hit me but he would yell at me. It was when he-it's not an excuse but when he drank he got super angry. So yes, he was verbally abusive but for some reason at that time I liked the drama. I feel like for some reason I liked having that turmoil in the relationship.

I1: Usually an abuser fosters you liking it. Also, most people have memory loss at that point because your body goes into fight or flight mode and you basically can only eat, go to the bathroom, and have sex when you're in that mode. Your body can't form long-term memory because you're in that really intense fight or flight mode and so during those periods, even if it's

Florida Gulf Coast University

Histories of Choice

not immediately happening, people say-I don't remember, something big like, "I had an abortion I don't remember."

█: Oh, wow that's interesting. Because I'm trying to think back, I know I was in █ but I don't even remember where-I don't remember the experience of the clinic, I don't remember the experience of going through the pain, I just-that recollection doesn't happen but the first and the third one I can.

I2: Do you remember if it was the same method, the two pill?

█: Yeah it was the two pill.

I2: So how far along were you for the first and second one, if you remember?

█: Yeah, I found out the first time at six weeks. I tested like two weeks after I missed my period. I went right away so within six to eight weeks. The second one was similar, within six to eight weeks. Right when I would miss I would test and I would call because I didn't want to have to go through the suction one. They would only do the pill if it was a certain time. So I didn't really think much about my abortion at that point. For some reason-so the third time I got pregnant I had been in rehab twice before. I had been in drug addiction for two or three years on and off trying to get sober. I would maybe get sober for like, three or four months and then relapse and then go back to rehab, it's kind of like a cycle. But I got pregnant by this guy I met in rehab and we-which, love addiction, again, I got kicked out for being in a relationship with this guy. Anyway, I got pregnant by him. [Sigh] I'm-I'm trying to think, I had relapsed on something prior to getting pregnant but I think I was hiding it. I think I may have taken an opiate pill or something but tried to hide it. Anyway, I think I found out probably seven weeks in. I remember, we were out to dinner at a pizza restaurant and my friend, who I was living with, actually was pregnant. So I got a pee test and went to the bathroom at this pizza place and I found out that I was pregnant. At that point I was considering keeping the baby. I was about 26, probably? 26 or 27 (laughs) I don't-it's not-even though it-going out of rehab, I was like, "Well, maybe I should keep this baby" and also because my friend was pregnant. I thought, "Well, maybe I can do it if she's doing it too." So I considered keeping the baby but my boyfriend was like three years younger than me and he didn't want to keep the baby. We-he was like, with this abortion we talked about it a lot more than I had with any of my past, like, we talked through it. He came with me and I remember this experience very deeply. He came with me and I went in and they were doing the ultrasound and it was taking a really long time because I had done it before so I knew. They were like, "Have you peed yet?" And I said, "Yes, I peed." They kept doing it and then the doctor took me into a room and he told me, he said, "I just wanted to see-You have

Florida Gulf Coast University

Histories of Choice

twins.” I think he showed me a picture of the two and at this point I was like, “I don’t think I can go through with this.” I don’t know why it was different because of two babies. It’s like, he asked, “Are you sure you want to do this?” [I said,] “I don’t know if I want to do this.” He didn’t pressure me one way or the other he was just trying to tell me there were two babies as opposed to one.

I1: What state were you in, if you don’t mind me asking?

█: Like, sober? Oh, state! California.

I1: Were these all in California?

█: The first one was in Arizona, the second and third was [sic.] California. It wasn’t like a Planned Parenthood it was just another type of clinic. So I went outside, my boyfriend was out there, I told him, we hugged and cried. He was like, “I just-I can’t have a baby, I can’t have a baby.” And I-so my feeling now and over time when I looked back on it before was had I thought about it more [sic.] I feel like I would have had those babies [sic.]. But because I didn’t take the time to think about it and I just listened to my boyfriend. I feel like it would have been different. For some reason, that abortion greatly affected me and when I went back to rehab the third time and finally sobered up I was very upset and depressed about it and I just couldn’t stop thinking about it. At that point, I felt like I killed human life where I didn’t necessarily feel that in my first and second one. I felt like they were angels in the sky, my babies-those two twins. Then I felt guilty because I was like, “Why do I feel this way? Why don’t I feel guilty about my first and second abortions” so it’s like, what am I thinking? So the third-the third abortion, I don’t know why but it was a lot more traumatic for me, the aftermath of it. The first and second I didn’t think about much, I don’t know if it had anything to do with the fact that I had twins or that I was older, I don’t know what it was.

I1: The printout, I’m sorry, I can’t remember the term. Like, the scan?

I2: The sonogram picture?

█: Yeah. I think that-he showed me the picture.

I1: ONLY in the third one though?

Florida Gulf Coast University

Histories of Choice

█: Only in the third-maybe they showed me in the first and second but I don't remember it. But I don't think so. I don't know why it was shown in the third one but I remember them printing it out or me wanting to look that way-they told me I could turn my head if I didn't want to see.

I2: Do you think it was different because this time around you had a boyfriend that was loving, from what it sounds like? You were more connected?

█: Maybe, maybe. But it's not-I mean, yeah, maybe? I honestly don't know why it was more-I was-when I look back on that relationship it's not like it's that special to me now, but maybe at the time it was? Yeah but it was somebody that actually had empathy and compassion for what I was going through and someone I could talk with about it. The other one-the first guy I maybe told [sic.] three months later and that was just to piss him off. The second time, yeah, I was in a-an abusive relationship so it wasn't like that guy forced me to have an abortion we just didn't like to talk about it. So this time, yeah, we talked about it a lot more and I was sad about it. I had a lot more thoughts about that abortion and those two-like, now I think of them as babies where I wouldn't have said it before. I had a lot of therapy around that one. I also think the fact that I got older, I'm now 3█ but when I was first getting sober I was 3█ and I thought, "Oh, I'm never going to be able to have a baby again. I ruined it." So the issues of aging also made it more traumatic.

I1: You're scared that you won't conceive?

█: Yeah, I wouldn't be able to have a baby again. That was a big fear of mine. Then I ended up, my last psychologist at the last treatment center where I maintained long-term sobriety-I wouldn't get checked by a gynecologist, didn't for a long time because I was afraid they would tell me. So I finally a year into therapy with my psychiatrist. Not my therapist, I had therapy with a different person, my psychiatrist would prescribe my medications, nothin abusive, and then also talk with me a little bit. But anyway, I finally got checked out and the doctor said I had scans and everything was fine but she was like, "I won't be able to tell if you can get pregnant until you start to try to get pregnant." So she couldn't really tell me anything. I think I-when I think about the fact that I had that abortion, I still get very sad and I write poetry about it and it's on my mind a lot.

I1: Was your family involved in any way for these?

█: They knew that I was-I've told them I've had three abortions but I told them after. It wasn't like I called them during and [sic.] told them. I don't-not that my parents don't believe in abortion. I think my mom wouldn't have wanted me to have abortions but she's never expressed

Florida Gulf Coast University

Histories of Choice

that or said that. I think that's why I never reached out because I didn't want to hear, "You shouldn't have an abortion."

I1: You didn't want that adverse-

I2: They were supportive, afterwards?

■: Afterwards, yeah. They asked how-they don't ask me questions about it, they don't try to get information about it. I told them yesterday, they were actually in town so I told them, "Hey, I'm going to have an interview about my abortions" and they were like, "Good!" They don't want to know about it, you know what I mean? The details of it. I've talked to them about how I was depressed about the third abortion but they don't ask for much information. Yeah.

I1: What about your sister?

■: My sister? My sister has actually had an abortion before. One time I wrote a poem about her abortion before I had ever had an abortion and she found-it wasn't mean, it was just her thoughts about it-and she found it on my computer and she was really mad at me because she obviously didn't want me to-I wan't putting it anywhere, I was just writing because I'm a poet, too, but I never called-I don't remember-my sister and I were always on-and-off close. She knows I've had abortions and now we're able to talk about women's rights and reproductive rights and all that and we're on the same page about women having the right to choose. But I haven'-maybe sometimes I've gone and sat down and told her about what I feel about it and she understands. And she's allowed me to talk about it and be supportive. At the time that it was happening I didn't reach out to her.

I1: You never confided in her?

■: No, if I confided in anyone-well, the first and second time I didn't confide in anyone. I mean, I told people but I wasn't-I didn't have emotion [sic.] about it, it wasn't like I felt like I needed to talk about it, at least.

I2: It was more cut-and-dry for you? Just like, "I'm ready to do this?"

■: Yeah, yeah. I wasn't like, "Oh, I'm killing something." Not that I think women who chose that are doing that, that's just my own feeling about it now. If I got pregnant now I wouldn't have an abortion. But I say that and I'm not pregnant, so who knows? (laughter) You can't really say 'till you're in it [sic.]. But I didn't confide in a lot-the people I started confiding in were

Florida Gulf Coast University

Histories of Choice

people-the third time, when I had therapy and was talking about it. Some people, I remember saying-I wanted to go to this grief and loss group at my treatment center and I remember they told me, “No, this is only for people who have lost real, like their mom and dad and sister. You can’t come if you’ve had an abortion.” Which I kind of got, I kind of get it and I kind of don’t because I had a lot of grief about it and I wanted to work through it but I wasn’t allowed to. My fourth treatment center-sorry, I know I’ve been to a lot of treatment centers-afterwards I left and get a therapist for my love and sex addiction and we worked through my abortion stuff and she had me write letters and do some things but I still don’t feel like I’m fully healed. Nor will I ever be about it. But I also avoid-I don’t really discuss it, either, because I feel like I don’t really want to talk about that pain like I avoid it. It’s not like I’m hiding it I just-he [boyfriend] knows I’ve had abortions but I haven’t gone into detail with him about everything.

I1: If he asks you details are you open to that?

█: Yeah. Yes. If he asks questions, yeah, I am open to it. I also still feel like people, if I was open about it like public about it and wrote about it on my blog (like my friend), I still feel like I’ll get shamed and attacked because I remember she wrote this post about getting an abortion when she was drinking and all these anti-abortion people attacked her and reposted her article and twisted it and turned it into something that it wasn’t and so I feel like I don’t want to be public about it because I don’t want to be attacked in that way. I’m not prepared for that. Especially when I’m not feeling fully healed and still feel like I didn’t make the right decision the third time. I am grateful for my past and I know everything led me here but I still-I haven’t fully dealt with all of it even though I’ve tried.

I2: They say grief is a process, as cliché as it is. You know? It’s ongoing. At some point you get to it.

█: Yeah.

I1: Do you want to talk about the process of finding a doctor?

█: For an abortion?

I1: For each of the three times. Like, did you Google?

█: Yeah I probably Googled ‘abortion clinic’ in Arizona. It wasn’t Planned Parenthood but I went to a family planning clinic. It was easy to find, it was easy to set an appointment.

Florida Gulf Coast University

Histories of Choice

I1: Was it secular? Was it religious-affiliated, or-

█: I don't remember them being religious-affiliated, I don't remember. I didn't really listen (laughter) I just went in and got-I got pills? They gave me the pills, they told me what would happen. It was pretty easy in Arizona to get an abortion. In California, same, it was easy. The second time-I don't have memory [sic.] about it but I believe I went to Planned Parenthood the second time. The third time it was in California and it was easy to find a clinic. There wasn't like, people standing outside and protesting [sic.] or anything like that.

I2: Wow, that's frustrating.

I1: That's scary. Were you eight weeks when you had your third abortion? You said you were seven weeks when you found out, or, I think?

█: It was probably a little bit more but I know there was a cutoff. I don't remember the cutoff for how long you could take the pill but I could take the pill.

I1: I think it's before the first trimester or something. 12 weeks?

█: Yeah, I'm not exactly sure but it was at least two weeks after I found out so maybe nine or ten weeks?

I1: Do you feel like your religious background had any influence on these?

█: No because I was already (I do this a lot) I step outside of people tell me how to do and what to think and I form my own ideas about it. At the time, yes, I believed in God. My first and second [abortions] I'd probably identify as a Christian. I wasn't thinking about my religion when I did it.

I1: So it was independent?

█: YEah, and I still-I don't think about it in a religious way. I deeply, deeply believe in God right now and I have a very strong relationship with God and I pray all the time but I don't think God's mad at me for doing any of that. I think God forgives me, the only thing I have a problem with is forgiving myself. And then for caring so much about one abortion but then not caring about the others. But don't-I didn't really think about religion stuff when I did it.

Florida Gulf Coast University

Histories of Choice

I1: These experiences have influenced your opinion on abortion. You said it's changed over time-

█: Yes, yeah.

I1: How do you feel right now, I suppose?

█: What I-so, what I felt for me personally was that they weren't human, I wasn't killing anybody-I'm sorry, I keep using that word 'kill'-

I1: No, use whatever language you want.

█: I wasn't killing anything and for some reason I now started to think, and I don't know where it came from, but that I killed-this is how I just say it for myself-I killed two babies. They were actual humans. Even though now I just-now I think all of them were human. Maybe I didn't think-I don't know. I feel like I was selfish the first and second time, third time I wasn't selfish. However, I don't want to be any type of woman who tells them, like, "Oh, you can't do that, that's a human." I believe that every woman has the right to choose exactly what is right for their own body and that we shouldn't be dictating that. That's a woman's personal choice. And I would never say to a woman who wanted to get an abortion, like, "No! Don't do that, you're going to kill-" I believe that everyone has the right to make their own decision and believe what they want to believe. These are just my personal beliefs on my own abortion. I've had friends ask me about abortions and I've had abortions. I never tried to persuade them one way or the other, I just tried to be a supportive friend. I try not to bring my own experiences into theirs.

I1: Gotcha. I-

I2: Relating to-

I1: Go ahead.

I2: Relating to-this is kind of separate-relating to your own experience, do you think that your addiction kind of brought on the abortions in a way? Did it result in that? Or did the abortions kind of result in your addiction? How do you think that played throughout the years?

█: Well, I didn't really have substance abuse issues in college. Like I said, the first time I tried-I had an abortion, I was prescribed opiates, and I started feeling a certain way about them. That was the first time I used prescriptions for non-medical purposes. I do think the experiences-I

Florida Gulf Coast University

Histories of Choice

repress things and I push them back so I don't have to deal with them so I repressed a lot of my emotions around the first and second one and I'm just not really thinking about that. If it's going to hurt, I don't want to deal with that. I-I do-I had a lot of traumatic experiences later like the abusive boyfriend. I think the abortions were traumatic even though I didn't deal with them. I still think there's grief and loss there that I never addressed. I do think they probably, the abortions played into my substance abuse because it was untreated trauma and untreated grief that I didn't deal with and I was trying to escape pain. That's the main reason I abused medications. That was painful. It's not that I think someone who hasn't had abortions can do this I just think it accelerated my addictions and it was a reason-I wanted to escape the pain. It wasn't until later on that I became addicted to drugs. Does that answer the question?

I2: Yes, it did. Yes.

I1: So, we kind of talked about how abortions carry stigma and you talked a bit about that. Would you like to add anything?

█: I just think it's sad because for me in my own recovery, for me to be truthful and honest about it and speak out about what I went through and how I am today and how I recovered and my redemption story and strength has been very beneficial for me for my own healing and I think it's beneficial for other women who hear my story that they can-it helps them heal themselves by hearing about another woman who has gone through something similar and has come out the other side. The stigma around it, for me, and I don't believe that everybody feels this stigma-some people are able to talk about it but for me I don't want to be criticized, I don't want it to come-I don't want all of these articles-if I talked publically and openly about my abortion I do believe it would help a lot of women. I also believe, like, personally, I'm scared of the backlash that would happen with it. If I wrote something about it or said something-I feel like if I spoke on a podcast or spoke to a group of people I would feel more comfortable but for some reason I don't want to write about it and I think the fact that I believe it is stigmatized and I feel that stigma leads me to not talk about it as much as I would [sic.]. Talking about things [can] heal you so much but I just don't talk about it very much. I still think I need to work through more of it because I always push it to the back burner. The fact that I don't cry when I'm talking about this even though I never-I've cried in private about it and it's something that brings me great sadness it just shows that I repress a lot of my feelings and emotions about it I think the stigma contributes to that.

I1: Definitely. I feel like if there's so much pressure to do a certain thing, feel a certain way, you just-it's like you said, it's how you feel and how you're trying to handle it. (█: Yeah, yeah.) I guess now we'll go into the political issues, it's kind of the last chunk. (█: Ok I-ok, I just, I

Florida Gulf Coast University

Histories of Choice

don't know tons about politics) You don't have to (laughter). If you have anything to say, if you don't, you know. (pause) I'm sorry.

I2: I think you touched on this but I think the last question was sharing any feelings you have about the recent restrictions on access to abortions.

█: I mean-personally, I'm not a fan of Donald Trump at all. I voted for-I-actually, I didn't vote (laughter) don't be mad at me, I didn't want to lie and say I voted for Hillary Clinton. I didn't vote. However, I supported Hillary Clinton. Sorry for not voting (laughter). Oh, God, I don't want that to be out there. So I don't know as much about what's going on with trying to restrict, I do-it does upset me that all of these men are trying to make policy on women's bodies, but I haven't honestly-this probably isn't the best but it is the truth-I was so angry when Donald Trump was first president and some of the-like, the Muslim ban and things like that I would get very fired up and post all over social media about it and I realized that it was changing my own inner peace and I don't want to send out anger so I've tried to step away from everything that's happening in the news and politics and I'm not an active voice in that space anymore nor do I follow what's going on so I don't really have an opinion. I do believe that women should be able to have abortions and that they shouldn't be restricted and the fact that they have to travel so-when they have to travel from one state to another, something like that, that's just another traumatic experience on top of another. It brings on more shame and stigma for these women because people in power are telling them it's wrong, so-like I said, I don't know a lot about it but do I like it? No.

I1: Gotcha. Are there any other topics or issues you want to cover before we end the interview?

█: No. Are there any-I guess, any more questions?

I1: We ran out of stuff!

I2: Is there anything you want to share that you feel is important that we missed or didn't ask? Personal or political?

█: I'm thinking. No, not that I can think of.

I1: Ok! And not that you should say there names but is there anybody else you think we should talk to that you know? Do you think they'd want to be involved in the project?

Florida Gulf Coast University

Histories of Choice

■: Yeah, so I don't-if I can think of someone. I know Kelly reached out to me after she did it. I don't-are you guys doing it, like nationwide? I don't really know anybody in Florida-

I1: I don't know what our limits are.

■: Yeah, I just moved here.

I1: This is [inaudible]'s and my first travel interview, I don't think it's the first one on the project because this-this project has been going on for a while, hasn't it? Close to a decade?

■: Yeah, if I think of people I'll send you guys names. I'll talk to them first, of course, and then I'll connect you.

I1: Well you have the copy that's like the rundown-a very clinical version of what we're doing but you know what it's like now as a person-the human-ness of it. But if you want to you can talk to ■.

■: Ok! I will.

I1: Ok, so thank you for being a part of Histories of Choice. Thank you for sharing your story and that's it for us.

■: Thank you for doing this work and thank you for listening! And thank you for-I felt like-it was easy to talk to you, you didn't have an opinion one way or the other about what I said. You're very professional.

I1: Thanks! We aim for professional! (laughter) You can tell-

[End of recording.]