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Women Who Have Had an Abortion

Abortion has always been a controversial issue, even till today. Some are against abortion because it kills the unborn fetus within the mother's womb. On the other hand, some accept it because they believe it is the unwanted mother's right. In the U.S., an abortion can be performed when a woman is no more than 3 months pregnant. After 3 months, the risks are too high (for the women) and the procedure becomes more expensive.

The informants are women who chose and have had an abortion. Three informants were informally and formally interviewed. Twenty-three questions were prepared and asked during the interviews. Life histories were asked to find out if it affected their decision. Instead of reading straight off the questionnaires, a flow of conversation was set to help the informants feel comfortable. The ages of the informants range from about 18-21 years old. The range of when they had the actual abortion was from 16-18 years old. Most of them had an abortion during high school. The following are some of the major factors that lead them to the decision: lack of preparation, too young, strict parents, and wanting to enjoy life.

Ann, now 21, had two abortions at the ages of 17 and 18. She is currently a student at Honolulu Community College. At about five weeks pregnant, Ann and her boyfriend sought abortion as an option. She was a junior (during her first abortion and a senior during her second) of Waipahu High School. She and her boyfriend (1 year older) have been together for about 3 years (currently 6 years). Her thoughts on abortion are "I think women should have the rights to get an abortion because people make mistakes." Another reason that led to her decision was her older sister. Ann did not want to turn out like her sister because she had a child at a young age, and now she is tied down with too many responsibilities. She is also an active member at a Christian church and was afraid of being looked down upon.

The procedure took place at a Women's Clinic in Waimalu. The clinic had a clean environment with only one patient, other than herself, in the waiting room. At that time, an abortion costs about \$300 to \$450. Ann's sister helped pay a part of the cost because it was too much for her. The night before the abortion, she was advised to take pills to help with anxiety. Before the procedure, Ann took sleeping pills. Her doctor was a Caucasian male. Upon request, a female nurse was present during the procedure. Her boyfriend could have been present during the procedure, but she did not want him there. Preparation took about 15 minutes. Ann could not recall the tools used

because she fell asleep. She thinks the procedure took about 10 minutes. All she remembered was lying down with a mask on her face, and the procedure was finished when she woke up. A pad was placed in her underwear because there was a little bleeding. The doctor gave her birth control pills and advised to rest for the day.

One week after the abortion, Ann went back to the clinic for a checkup, to make sure nothing went wrong. She felt sick and lethargic throughout the whole month. When her mouth hurt, she had the urge chew gum (this is uncommon). Ann and her partner had no regrets. About a year later, she found out she was pregnant and decided to go through an abortion again. Ann was 18 and still unprepared for motherhood. “I want to have a child when I’m ready and married.”

Krystal, now 18, had an abortion at the age of 17, during her junior year at Farrington High School. She and her partner (same age) have been together for about 5 years. Krystal and her partner always planned to have children together and when she found out she was pregnant, they were excited. However, growing up with strict Filipino parents affected her decision of keeping the baby. Years ago, she had rebelled against her parents wishes and just recently, they began to trust her again. Krystal liked the title of being a “good girl”. She wanted to continue on with her education, go to college, and be successful. She sought abortion as a solution. Krystal always thought it was morally wrong to kill an unborn fetus within a mother’s womb, but at her time of crisis, it did not matter. “I think it’s okay for the first time, if I did it twice, I wouldn’t be able to forgive myself.”

Krystal went to Planning Parenthood for the procedure. An appointment was made two weeks after she found out about the pregnancy. Her boyfriend allowed the decision to be totally up to her. He wanted to respect her wishes. Neither was too emotional about the situation. They grasped the fact that they can wait. There were two other people in the waiting room of the clinic. Her boyfriend stood by her side. She waited anxiously for her turn. At one point, doubt started to fill her head. She patted her belly and whispered “good-bye”. During the procedure, Krystal did not feel comfortable with her boyfriend, or anyone else beside the doctor, present. Inside of the room where the procedure was done, the doctor put a mask over her face. Minutes later she fell asleep. Forty-five to sixty minutes later she woke up dizzy and sore. The doctor advised her to rest for a couple of days, no sports (she wasn’t involved anyway), don’t carry heavy objects, and eat healthy. Months after the procedure, she felt cramps. Even today she still feels minor cramps. There were no regrets.

Sam is an eighteen-year-old female born and raised on the island of Oahu. To get a broader perspective of what this informant I started off with a brief family and personal history. She was raised on the Leeward side of the islands, attending public school. Both parents raised her and her household included her and her younger sister. She has two older, overprotective half brothers in

their 30's. Her mother raised in a strict Japanese family, segregated her paternal and maternal sides of the family. Her mother marrying a non-Japanese decent caused uproar within her maternal side of the family and therefore within her maternal knit, she and her sister were on close watch. For her maternal side of the family expected them to recover on behalf of their mother's lack to "reach" family standards. Sam had been active for the early years of her high school career. She was a member of the girl's swim team, JV basketball team, and track. She states the many wonders of her early high school years as the days "she wish she kept forever." In the interview that I had done with her, she responds to her fond memories of her younger years as stable, care free, and obviously the careful steps she feels led her to the person she is today.

At the age of 16 and an incoming junior at James Campbell High School, Sam stated the many obstacles in which an ordinary teen might go through. The sports she once participated in, no longer was a part of her daily routine and friends that once held her so composed, found their own individual way into the life of high school teenagers. She recalls the many expectations that no only she had for herself, but expectations that came from her family. She stated, " you never really see yourself change, and the immaturity level your at, at that time. I didn't believe in abortion I thought it was morally, ethically, and stupid for a girl to open her legs and then get an abortion, but after put in that predicament, I realize, you cant talk unless your in someone else's shoes."

As a 16 year old, junior she dated a 21-year-old male by the name of Chris. Chris was a 21 years old and a full time construction worker. They met each other through friends. Their relationship went strong for five months. Sam says, "it was a relationship's honeymoon time, where the world revolves around just the two of you, but it was obvious he wasn't much of a sweet (cusses) guy that he played out to be." During the fifth month of their relationship, Sam found herself pregnant. She broke the news to her then partner, Chris and immediately she states, " O yea, it changed our relationship." As she broke the news to her boyfriend, he flat out told her that she needed to get an abortion. 16 years old, young and confused she questioned her relationship with Chris.

In just a few weeks after Chris found out the fights never stopped and without regard told Sam, that he didn't want to have anything to do with her or the child she carried. Immediately Sam, not only pushed by fear of her family disowning her, but the burden of a caring for a child at such a young age, financial problems she may incur as a single parent, but also the emotion she was burdened with that the father of her child did not want anything to do with them. Chris "coughed" up \$630 dollars for a confidential abortion, being that she was a minor. No one in her family was aware of her pregnancy as she got it 2 months within her pregnancy. Chris accompanied Sam to the clinic

where she followed through with the procedure. The couple broke up soon after the procedure and the relationship and the child they bore within five months is far from a distant memory for Sam. After a couple months after the abortion, she dated other guys while being harassed by Chris. She recalls, “ Me being pregnant changed everything and I don’t think Chris wanted a tie down, but when he saw me with another a guy he was angry. He’d verbally harass me in many ways. For example, he called me on mother’s day and called me a baby murder. Maybe hurting me was his sense of closure, but I went through the pain physically, mentally, but most of all emotionally.” Sam went through depression and the unnecessary abuse from her ex-boyfriend didn’t ease the tension. Without the knowledge of her parental units or close family, she turned to an aunty, a family friend.

It has been 2 years since her abortion. Currently in a relationship with a new boyfriend she states, “If there were anyway to erase that memory I would do it in a heartbeat. If there was anyway I could block that part of my life, I would, but I cant. I think that for that situation I feel that having that abortion was one of the wisest choices of my life.” With no regrets about getting that abortion she does not encourage abortion, but definitely sees it as an option. Abortion she says is an option that can and should be taken but at all costs avoided. With no regrets she says the hardest part is the emotional aspect. No one in her family has found out about her abortion and she hopes to keep things that way. Chris now 23 and is involved with another female, in which the couple has a 5 month baby boy together.

For the purpose of this information to remain confidential the informants have personally asked to have their names changed. All women had an abortion during high school. The costs to have an abortion range from \$300-\$600. 2 out of 3 informants are still with the same partner. Their factors that lead them to the decision are common: not ready, too young, and doubt. Although abortion is mentioned as perceived as a physically harmful procedure, what seemed more striking was the procedures capacity of impact on the informant’s mental and emotional state. Informants felt that abortion was a solution well made and although it is not personally urged, abortion still stands as a solution. The abortion subculture holds no traditions or forms of specific action, linguistics, or artifacts as representations of this subculture. It is an obvious assumption that the informants did not feel this was a subculture one may typically be proud to be acculturated in. This subculture segregates and isolates, these individuals into a realm that describe humanistic nature forecasted by emotions, mentality, and physicality. Societal views and demands along with personal aspects and daily lifestyles clash as typically this subculture is frowned upon in society

The following are asked during the interview.

Ann, age 21

1. What lead you to decide for an abortion?
 - Older sister had a child at a young age and didn't want to be like her
 - Not ready
 - Too young
2. How were you raised as a child?
 - Parents are divorced
 - Independent
 - Youngest, 2 older siblings- sister and brother
 - Christian
3. Did your immediate family have an affect on your decision for abortion? If so, how?
 - Yes, didn't want to have a child at a young age like her sister
4. How old were you when you had the abortion?
 - 17 and 18 years old
 - Junior and senior in high school
5. Would you get an abortion again?
 - Yes, she had it twice already
6. Did you plan the pregnancy in any way?
 - No, always unexpected
7. Are you still with the same partner? How long?
 - Yes, 6 years
8. Did the relationship between you and your partner change at that time?
 - No
9. Was abortion always an option in your relationship? How about your own personal thoughts?
 - If I did get pregnant, yes
 - Knew it would happen someday because they don't use protection
 - Abortion is okay because it's her choice, her body
10. How did you feel when you finally decided to have an abortion?
 - Nervous, for the first time
 - Relieved
11. Where did you go for the abortion?
 - Waimalu Women's Clinic
12. How was the setting of the clinic?
 - 1 person waiting in the waiting room
13. What were your thoughts and emotions the first time you stepped into the clinic?
 - Anxious
 - Wanted to get it over with
14. How did the workers and doctors treat you?
 - Friendly
 - Helpful
15. How long did the preparation take? The procedure? After procedure?
 - Preparation: 15 minutes
 - Procedure: 10 minutes
 - After procedure: 10 minutes

16. How did you feel (physically/mentally) right before the procedure?
 - Anxious
 - Nervous
17. How did you feel (physically/mentally) right after the procedure?
 - Relieved
 - Tired
18. What did the doctor/workers advise you after the procedure?
 - Check up in one week
 - Get as much rest and she can
 - Don't drive home
 - Take the day off
 - They gave birth control pills
19. Did your parents know of the pregnancy or the abortion? Anyone else in your family?
 - Parent's didn't know
 - Older sister knew
20. Did you, or your partner, want to keep the child?
 - Yes, but they could wait till they were married and ready
21. Did you regret it?
 - No
22. What were your thoughts and emotions on abortion after your abortion? Did it change? If so, how?
 - Women have the right to decide
 - Don't understand why people are so angry about it
 - That was always her thoughts
23. Who did you confide in most at that time in your life? How did they help?
 - Older sister, someone to talk to
 - Boyfriend, someone to talk to

Krystal, age 18

1. What lead you to decide for an abortion?
 - Wasn't ready
 - Wanted to go to college, pursue an education
 - Wanted to enjoy life while young
2. How were you raised as a child?
 - Only child
 - Parents were overprotective
 - Rebelled during childhood
 - Went against parent's wishes
 - Parents eased up years later and trusted her
 - "Good girl" now
3. Did your immediate family have an affect on your decision for abortion? If so, how?
 - Yes, they think I'm too young to have a child
 - They might look at me differently
4. How old were you when you had the abortion?
 - 17
 - Senior in high school
5. Would you get an abortion again?

- No, because the first experience hurt
 - Could forgive herself the first time
 - Second time would be emotional
6. Did you plan the pregnancy in any way?
- Wanted and was expecting a baby, but couldn't keep it
 - Anticipation was exciting
 - Wanted excitement in life
7. Are you still with the same partner? How long?
- Yes
 - 5 years
8. Did the relationship between you and your partner change at that time?
- No
 - Boyfriend said it was up to her if she wanted to keep it
 - It wasn't a big deal for both of them
9. Was abortion always an option in your relationship? How about your own personal thoughts?
- Wasn't expecting to get pregnant during my senior year of high school
 - At that time, abortion was the only option
 - Wasn't ready for a child
10. How did you feel when you finally decided to have an abortion?
- Emotional a couple days before the procedure
 - Wanted to keep the baby, but couldn't
11. Where did you go for the abortion?
- Planning Parenthood
12. How was the setting of the clinic?
- There were only two patients in the waiting room with her
 - Clinic looked safe and professional
13. What were your thoughts and emotions the first time you stepped into the clinic?
- Quiet
 - Nervous
 - Emotional to herself
 - Doubting but want to go through it
14. How did the workers and doctors treat you?
- Friendly, very helpful
 - Offer food, asked if okay
 - Doctor looked professional, knew what he was doing
15. How long did the preparation take? The procedure? After procedure?
- Preparation: 30 minutes
 - Procedure: 10 minutes
 - After procedure: 10 minutes
16. How did you feel (physically/mentally) right before the procedure?
- Before: wanted to keep baby
 - After: regret
17. How did you feel (physically/mentally) right after the procedure?
- Felt... sad
 - Hurt 2 weeks
 - Even until now (procedure was a year ago), feels cramps

18. What did the doctor/workers advise you after the procedure?
 - No sports
 - Don't carry anything heavy
 - Get as much rest as she can
 - Eat healthy
 - Gave birth control pills
19. Did your parents know of the pregnancy or the abortion? Anyone else in your family?
 - Parent's didn't know
 - Two older cousins
20. Did you, or your partner, want to keep the child?
 - He said it was her decision
 - Wanted whatever was good (comfortable) for her
21. Did you regret it?
 - Right after procedure, yes
 - But not anymore
22. What were your thoughts and emotions on abortion after your abortion? Did it change? If so, how?
 - Before: against abortion
 - After: think it's okay to have an abortion for the first time
 - People make mistakes
23. Who did you confide in most at that time in your life? How did they help?
 - Close friends were always there to talk to
 - Wasn't really emotional about it
 - Didn't really talk to her boyfriend about it
 - It wasn't a big deal in her relationship with boyfriend

Sam, age 18

1. What led you to decide to get an abortion?
 - This was the only choice I had, I mean it wasn't, but in my situation I felt like it was my situation.
 - Considering the situation this was the only option I had
2. How were you raised as a child?
 - Abortion was not really brought up in home. I wasn't religious, we have a religion but we weren't active. My parents raised me to think before you do. Parents once told me that if I were to ever get pregnant they wanted me to get an abortion. They say it after the fact that it isn't currently happening.
3. Did your immediate family have an effect on your decision? If so how?
 - No. They still don't know.
4. How old were you when you had your abortion?
 - I was 16 years old. An early junior in high school (2004)
5. Would you get an abortion again?
 - No. It isn't something I'd do again. I see it like I've touch the fire once and I'm not about to get burned again. I'm older now and I think I'm wiser, plus id never put myself through that again when I get pregnant ill be better prepared.
6. Did you plan the pregnancy in any way?
 - Getting pregnant wasn't something I expected. I learned everything and heard everything about sex education, but you know, I never thought it would happen to me.

7. Are you still with the partner? How long?
 - No. The boyfriend that I had we broke up. Now he is with someone else and has a baby boy
8. Did the relationship change at that time?
 - Yes. It did, things were good in the beginning. When everything came up and told him. His family doesn't believe in abortion. He didn't want to have anything to do with me. Knowing that he didn't want to be apart of my life made the decision to have an abortion a little easier. He harassed her afterwards because he had a hard time moving on. We were together for less than 5 months. He was 21 I was 16.
9. Was the abortion always an option in your relationship? Personal thoughts.
 - We were too early in our relationship, getting pregnant never really came up. We use to talk about religion because his family was religion. The topic of abortion never came up, but he told me that his family was too religious. It never became a topic until it came into play. I always thought abortion
10. How did you feel when you finally decided to get an abortion?
 - Scared. Scared, I had second thoughts. A lot of it was that I didn't go in with a clear mind. I had too much things on my mind. I felt so much on my chest, anxiety, hurt, there was a lot of emotions things you can blurt out or just come out and say. It was just an emotional ride. So much emotion that came into plays right before.
11. Where did you go for the abortion?
 - It was a confidential clinic in downtown in Kapioloani. Underage so I had to pay cash. We didn't pay cash because we didn't want any records. I remember the Dr. Racapan.
12. How was the setting of the clinic?
 - It was like a room. A natural doctors office. With needles, vital stands and etc. To me if I could describe it I would picture it as a bad dream. Its like having a fear of the doctors and when I think about that's what it was. It was filled with sadness.
13. How did the workers and doctor treat you?
 - There were nice and I was referred to a counselor before. They were used to help one cope by preparing for what may occur after the abortion. They were really understanding. I opened up to the counselor and everything. And she asked me if it was something I really wanted to do even with the situation with my boyfriend.
14. How long did the preparation take? The procedure? After procedure?
 - They took my vitals. The made sure I was stable (heartbeat, blood pressure) Get into your gown, counselor talked to me. She asked me if I wanted him there. I had my boyfriend there and I wanted him to know what went on and what he put me through, what he's paying for and what he was doing as the father of that child. He wanted to be there during the abortion.
 - After the procedure they let me rest afterward as long as it took. There was a lotta pain in my abdomen where my hips were... took forever to recover from really bad cramps. It was like have really really bad menstrual cramps. I felt really weak. But physically the recovery wasn't as bad, but emotionally you never really heal.
15. What did the doctor/workers advise you after the procedure?
 - They advised me not to stress about a lot of things. They advised me to seek counseling. Follow up with your doctor like your gynecologist. Try not to think as abortion as an excuse. They're pretty much straight forward with you. They sounded like they gave people the thought that there is no worry about being judged about what you did. They were for abortion, but they make sure you understand what your doing, your end of the deal. They make sure that the predicament your in isn't something you want to be in again. They want kids to know that although they made this one mistake, you got to know what your doing. You have to wake up and grow up someday. There isn't any way.

16. How did you feel (physically, emotionally, mentally) right before the procedure?
- I felt struck. Like riding a roller coaster and feeling the plunge. Even with all the counseling you still have that feeling inside that tells you its wrong. Mentally I felt anxiety and second thoughts. Emotionally is anger and sadness. I couldn't find a sense of relief. There was no composure, there was no way to calm down. Emotionally was the worst. Physically wasn't that bad and mentally it was okay. But emotionally hit me the most.
17. How did you feel after the procedure?
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18. Did your parents know? Anyone else in your family
- My parents didn't know and they still don't know. I don't want to put myself through the questions they'll ask. The questions that they'll ask will be too much and honestly some questions I may not even be able to answer.
19. Did you or your partner want to keep the child?
- No. After finding out that I was pregnant he said he didn't want anything to do with me.
20. Did you regret it?
- No it was a choice that I feel I had to make then. I never forget but I can't do anything and there are no regrets on reacting to that situation.
21. What were your thoughts and emotions the first time you went to the clinic?
- I asked myself what am I doing and if there was anyway I could his mind for it. Is this my only solution? If I don't get an abortion will my family think about it? Will I be safe in this confidential clinic? Will they do the best to their ability to keep me safe? I thought about God and if he would forgive me. I wasn't religious, but would he punish me for not be truthful. And if my parents found out what kind of trust will there be? Would they felt I did the wrong thing. I assumed that they were against it.
22. What were your thoughts and emotions after your abortion? Did it change and how...
- My freshman year of high school I didn't agree with abortion. I even wrote an entire essay on why it's wrong. But I think that you can't be activist until you've been there. I believe now that you can't tell someone their wrong unless you've been put in their place and left with the few choices they had.
 - My thoughts on abortion now, I wouldn't push anyone to do it. But if you're put in predicaments where you shouldn't have the child. If you cant support your child then what's the point of keeping it. I don't recommend abortion. I don't think anyone should ever go through that kind of past experience I went through. If there were anyway to erase that memory I would do it in a heartbeat. If there was anyway I could block that part of my life, I would, but I cant. I think that for that situation I feel that having that abortion was one of the wisest choices of my life.
23. Who did you confide in most at that time in your life? How did they help?
- I talk to my auntie about it. I feel like I needed somebody that wasn't my mom, but someone I could trust. To have someone who could give me comfort. She was someone I could confide in. She gave me the perspective of what my mom might have thought, but understand me at my level. She supported me through a lot of it. She let me stay in her home. She helped me find a counselor.
 - You can't judge what you see. You have to be in that position to judge clearly.