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ORAL PERFORMANCES AS RITUAL: ANIMATING THE INVISIBLE IN MORMON WOMEN'S MISCARRIAGE STORIES

by

Kristin Leifson Ballif

A thesis submitted to the faculty of

Brigham Young University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of English

Brigham Young University

December 1998

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

As chair of the candidate's graduate committee, I have read the thesis of Kristin Leifson Ballif in its final form and have found that (1) its format, citations, and bibliographical style are consistent and acceptable and fulfill university and department style requirements, (2) its illustrative materials including figures, tables and charts are in place; and (3) the final manuscript is satisfactory to the graduate committee and is ready for submission to the university library.

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ABSTRACT

ORAL PERFORMANCES AS RITUAL: ANIMATING THE INVISIBLE IN MORMON WOMEN'S MISCARRIAGE STORIES

Kristin Leifson Ballif

Department of English

Master of Arts

This thesis is comprised of ten Mormon women's miscarriage stories and it is their stories that are used as the text for my analysis. The purpose of the study is to provide a space for these women to share their experiences and to reveal their cultural values and beliefs. Because the women are all Mormon, there are some distinctive cultural and religious values that are shared within their stories and it is these aspects that are analyzed and discussed within the text.

Women need to be able to share their miscarriage stories so as to alleviate feelings of isolation and grief. Many of the women in the interviews agreed that talking to others about their miscarriage helped them to feel less isolated and that they were not alone in their experience. Because there is no specific ritual in our society for miscarriage, women struggle to know how to deal with their grief. Again, being able to talk about their experience provides a "marker" to remember the pregnancy--to animate the invisible.

A common response found with women who miscarry is a sense of guilt--guilt that they somehow caused the demise of the pregnancy by strenuous physical exercise, feelings of uncertainty about wanting the pregnancy or taking medications that could affect the baby. These feelings of guilt extended into religious issues as some of the women questioned whether the miscarriage was a result of their spiritual state or their relationship with God.

The women also talk in detail about the actual physical occurrence of the miscarriage. Many described how they felt about their bodies during and after the miscarriage. There were feelings of embarrassment or weakness and they questioned why their body had reacted the way it did. Enabling the women to talk about their bodies in such an intimate and personal way can be empowering as well as an excellent means to educate the women's societies about the real physical and emotional effects of miscarriage.

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I owe a great deal of gratitude to my family who have loved me along my way and to my wonderful husband, Bryan (a self-appointed thesis committee member) who has supported, encouraged, given much and taken less so that I could accomplish this dream. To our children, Ashlin and Nathan, thanks kiddos for being patient with Mommy--I love you. Lastly, I dedicate this project to the one we lost--may we know you someday.

Table of Contents

Chapter I: Introduction.....1

Chapter II: Animating the Invisible: Storytelling as a Means of Legitimizing the Miscarriage Experience.....12

Chapter III: Oral Performances as Ritual: Grief, Guilt and God.....21

The Non-existent Ritual.....21

The Right to Grieve--Feelings of Loss, Grief and Depression.....24

Guilt and God.....26

Chapter IV: Speaking the Female Body.....36

An Intimate Death.....38

Pain During Miscarriage.....41

Perceptions of the Body.....43

Chapter V: Conclusion: Hollow Echoes to Filled Reverberations.....49

Works Cited 57

Appendix I: Interview Questions.....61

Appendix II: Women's Miscarriage Stories.....62

Carol.....62

Shauna.....72

Katie.....99

Marie.....118

McKenna.....144

Rachel.....154

Sherri.....173

Kathy.....184

Robin.....195

Gretta.....204

******All the women's names have been changed to protect their anonymity. As these are personal interviews, I chose to use first names in lieu of last names when quoting the women. They are experts in every sense of the word whether they are referred to by their first or last names.

CHAPTER I--INTRODUCTION

MY STORY

A miscarriage is a natural and common event. All told, probably more women have lost a child from this world than haven't. Most don't mention it, and they go on from day to day as if it hadn't happened, and so people imagine that a woman in this situation never really knew or loved what she had.

But ask her sometime: how old would your child be now? And she'll know.

Animal Dreams--Barbara Kingsolver

Our baby would have been four years old April 1998. I can still recall quite vividly the events that happened four years ago from this date. The day of my miscarriage began like any other day. I taught my class at three, ran some errands and went home. After returning home, I felt that something wasn't right. I used the bathroom and noticed then that I was spotting. I was amazed at how once again I had sensed changes in my body. I had spotted briefly after finding out I was pregnant, that was almost six weeks before. The nurse said that this was common. The spotting had finally stopped and I was relieved, but when after six weeks later it appeared again, I felt that my fears of losing this baby were being realized. By this time, it seemed almost inevitable. That was Friday. Saturday I was still spotting and when I called the doctor's office, the nurse said to rest. So I did. My parents were in Israel so Bryan, my husband, and I went to their house to watch a movie. The bleeding turned from brown to bright red. I was devastated. This was what the nurse had warned me about. I couldn't believe it. In fact, I didn't want to believe it. How could this be happening to me? No one that I knew in my family had ever had a miscarriage. Why me? I still tried to talk myself into believing that like the first month, the spotting would eventually stop and go away. But now there was blood--bright, red blood. By Sunday morning the bleeding became heavier and by Sunday evening it began to be accompanied with cramps--dull, painful cramps. Because I was the

Relief Society President for our ward, I needed to attend a stake leadership meeting that evening. I remember I became very emotional as the speaker spoke of "trials that we each have to bear." The sister sitting next to me from my ward looked at me curiously as I rarely showed emotion in public. I was Kristin--the Relief Society President, the emotional rock, the woman who "had it all-together," the person who never seemed to have any problems.

After the opening meeting the Stake Relief Society Presidency asked us to break up into specific groups according to our calling. The cramps became unbearable and I felt that I needed to go. I was becoming an emotional wreck. I kept thinking, "I'm losing a baby. I'm losing a baby," and I was on the brink of crying uncontrollably. I approached the Stake Relief Society President and told her that I wasn't feeling well, and if it were alright, I needed to go home. With a laugh she responded, "Gee, I wish I looked as good as you for not feeling well." I knew that she wasn't trying to be callous or insensitive but I was deeply hurt by her response. I was tempted to tell her that I was having a miscarriage and then watch her face flush with embarrassment and shame. But I bit my tongue, smiled, and walked to my car in the parking lot. As soon as I got in the car, I broke into tears. I felt so alone and hurt and angry that no one seemed to care, no one seemed to know what I was going through. Then I began to feel angry at God. I didn't know what I had done to deserve this. My mind reeled back into past mistakes, wondering for which sin I was being punished. The more logical side of me knew that God did not work that way--I knew that, I believed that strongly. So why was I feeling as though God had turned from me? "Hormones," I thought, "It's got to be those darn hormones."

When I arrived home I collapsed on the bed, sobbing. My husband held me. I'm sure he felt sad, helpless and hopeless. We both did. I changed my pad and went to bed. As Sunday night continued on into early Monday morning the bleeding became heavier and I was passing large blood clots. I couldn't believe that something like that could come out of me. The cramping also became more intense and I couldn't sleep, neither could my

husband. Each time I got up to go to the bathroom to pass more blood, he would follow me in and stroke my head and ask if I were alright. We knew we needed to save some of the tissue and so Bryan got a rubber, yellow glove from the kitchen and fished through the toilet water to try and find anything that looked remotely like tissue. It all looked like blood to me. We would save something and put it in a small plastic bag, then throw it away once I would visit the toilet again with a new batch of blood to sift through. I don't remember how long this went on in the early morning hours. The night seemed to be drawn out, especially for me, just so the pain would be prolonged. I do remember, though, the gentleness of a loving husband. I felt such a bond, such a love for this young man, a love I'd never felt this intensely. He was by my side through the whole terrible ordeal and I kept thanking him for cleaning up the blood in the bathroom, cleaning me up and stroking my head.

Monday morning I didn't attend my classes or teach and stayed in bed. I was exhausted, both physically and emotionally. The bleeding had finally tapered off and the cramping had stopped. For that whole day I rested and I remember my older brother coming into town from Idaho. He came over to visit and I told him what had happened. He expressed his sympathy and that his wife, who was presently pregnant with their second child, had experienced a miscarriage before this second pregnancy. I had no idea. I felt somewhat comforted to know that I was not alone, at least in our family.

The next day, Tuesday, Bryan bought muffins and orange juice for us to eat for breakfast. We ate and talked together on the bed. He needed to leave and go to his lab to do some work. I decided to take a shower. Within minutes after getting into the shower I started cramping again, more intensely than what I had felt before. I started to cry. I thought that this ordeal was over, that I had already passed the fetus in that bloody mess in the toilet and now I needed to rest and recover. I began passing blood clots again, although not as big as those of the morning before, but large enough to cause me concern. I kept wondering how I could lose this much blood and survive. I became very frightened

and called the doctor's office again. The nurse told me to come in promptly. I called Bryan in tears and he ran all the way home praying, "We've lost a baby, please help me keep my wife."

We quickly went to the doctor's office and the doctor examined me and said that he could see tissue. He was concerned that I was losing so much blood and that we would need to do an emergency D&C because he didn't want to have to do a blood transfusion. The fact that I had eaten within the last two hours was another concern, but one concern overruled the other and the doctor said to meet him in same day surgery at the hospital. So off Bryan and I went. I remember walking into the same day reception area and feeling the blood literally running down my legs. I didn't want the people in the waiting room to see blood coming through my sweat pants so I asked if I could go to the bathroom to wait. By this point I was gushing blood and I felt so weak and tired.

The D&C was performed and I got sick only once right after in the recovery room. I remember feeling a great sense of relief that everything was out of me, that the bleeding was in control and that I had no cramps. We went home, and my husband called his father and mother and told them the news. They were sad and sympathetic. I asked for a blessing and my husband and his father gave me one, and I remember feeling much more at peace.

We hadn't told anyone that I was pregnant, so it was difficult to have to tell our families that I had a miscarriage when they didn't even know that I had been pregnant. My sister cried on the phone and was sad that I hadn't told her that I had been pregnant and that I hadn't called her in the midst of the miscarriage. When my parents came home from Israel I told them the news and they came over with a beautiful plant that had blossomed pink flowers. After a few weeks the flowers shrivelled up and the plant died. It all seemed to symbolize my inability to give and nurture life--I was devastated. When I finally went back to teach my freshman English class a few days later the students asked where I'd been. I told them that I had not been well, and some of the young men

responded that they had been sick, but they still came to class. Tears welled up in my eyes but I didn't answer. I wanted so badly to make them feel small and ashamed at their insensitivity. I recognized that they didn't understand, because they didn't know and I did not want to tell them.

What became unbearably difficult afterwards was the loss of expectations. I had bought a small diaper bag and some infant shoes. Bryan had bought small red sneakers and we had these items on our dresser to remind us of our excitement at the new prospect of a baby. After the miscarriage I put these items away as I couldn't stand to look at them any longer. There was such an empty, sad, feeling inside of me. I remember my girlfriend from high school had written a couple of months previously and told me that she was pregnant. I was waiting until I was safely out of the first trimester to tell her that I too was pregnant. I was so excited to tell her my news. I had actually composed the letter in my mind and was anxious to write it. After the miscarriage I remember the sadness I felt that I wouldn't be writing that letter.

I also felt sad that my husband was married to a woman who would miscarry. I felt that I had failed as a woman. I expressed this to him and he continually reassured me that that was not true and that he loved me. I expressed to him that maybe he felt he should have married another woman, one that could produce a child. Again he told me that he wouldn't have married anyone else in the world but me. Despite his sympathetic and I might add logical reassurances, I somehow, and strangely so, felt that the miscarriage had been my fault--that I was responsible in some way for what had happened. I lost confidence in my body. I had always felt that my body was so strong and healthy and that when I did decide to have a baby, I would not have any problem. I felt as though my body had failed me and I was confused as to why all of this had happened. I also felt embarrassed--embarrassed that my body and that this pregnancy had failed. I felt that since I hadn't produced a strong healthy fetus, I was weak.

I began to blame the Mormon church for aggravating these feelings of inadequacy. There is such an emphasis on families and motherhood that I felt resentful because I was unable at this point to participate in these "specific roles for women." I found myself having extreme feelings of jealousy and anger at women who were able to have children. If I saw a pregnant woman it was all I could do to not stop where I was and cry. Injustices in the world became very apparent to me at this time. I continually asked Bryan, "Why is it that women who do not want their children are able to get pregnant? It's not fair!"

There was also a deep sadness that I had missed a wonderful experience and I was hurt by that. I felt that I would never get pregnant and that the experience of motherhood would altogether be lost to me. This frightened me. With much effort, I fought these feelings of fear hoping that perhaps this actually would be a one-time ordeal and that there were children who could and would come.

Altogether, this was a difficult time for both my husband and myself and we both became very sensitive about children and childbirth. We also became empathetic to other women and couples who had experienced miscarriage and infertility problems. That was a very positive thing for both of us. We had grown together through a difficult experience and we had also grown closer to others who had experienced the same event.

After the miscarriage, I did not perform any ritual to help with the grieving process--nothing to help me sort through and make sense of my experience. I did find that talking to other women who had experienced miscarriage helped ease some of the pain by simply expressing my loss and sharing my hurt and feelings of disappointment. I began to slowly realize--with great comfort, that I was not alone in my pain and this helped to alleviate my tremendous feelings of isolation.

This realization served as the starting point for this thesis project. I desired to uncover the feelings of other women who had experienced miscarriage, and provide an opportunity for them to feel understood and perhaps less-isolated. I also felt it was critical to explore the nature and origins of these women's thoughts and emotions

surrounding their miscarriage experiences, with particular attention to influences generated from the Mormon religion and culture. In order to accomplish these goals, I interviewed ten Mormon women, eight of whom had experienced one miscarriage and two of whom had experienced more than one miscarriage. Their transcribed miscarriage stories (found in Appendix II of this work) are the text from which I drew my analysis.

My purpose, then, for this thesis project is to first, provide an opportunity for dialogue about Mormon women's miscarriage experiences. I've come to realize the importance for women to talk about their personal experiences which usually include those events that happen to their bodies, as Julia Kristeva explains poignantly about what our generation of women are attempting to do today with discussion. She says, "These women seek to give a language to the intrasubjective and corporeal experiences left mute by culture in the past" (474). Women are usually not encouraged to talk about their bodies and those experiences unique to them. Most of the women interviewed felt uncomfortable sharing their miscarriage stories with others, when ironically, sharing their stories with me was an important way for them to work through the loss of their pregnancy and dreams. Thus for many, this apparent taboo of verbalization needs to be broken allowing women to lift their inhibitions of discussing their miscarriages.

Although I have two healthy children now, the feelings resulting from my miscarriage are still quite vivid--I don't feel it is ever too late or that it has been too long to talk about this difficult experience. In many of my conversations with women of all ages, they easily recall their miscarriage and the details that surrounded it. Likewise, a narrative reported in another work about a woman who had experienced a miscarriage many years before recounting it, still reports a great sense of loss. She says, "My miscarriage was 21 years ago. Yet I have absolute recall of the devastation and the sadness" (Allen and Marks 9). While this "devastation and sadness" may not be felt by every woman who has experienced miscarriage, in my personal conversations with women (including the stories

which I have collected here) the women talk about their miscarriage with great emotion and as said previously, in great detail.

Secondly, my purpose is to analyze the miscarriage stories and to pull together and present the similar themes and responses to their varied experiences. This thesis began as a personal journey to understand and make sense of my own experience. Mary Catherine Bateson suggests in her book *Composing A Life* that "Women today read and write biographies to gain perspective on their own lives" and that "Self-knowledge is empowering"(5). Thus, it is through dialogue and analysis that we can learn and understand more about ourselves, miscarriage, our Mormon culture, our culture at large, and about women in general who are a part of our human condition but whose unexpressed experiences are so often left out of the human experience.

The Mormon religion teaches to value one's own experience, as Terry Tempest Williams explains, "As a Mormon, at a very early age you are encouraged to tell your story....In Mormon culture, I was taught to value my own experience" (Williams qtd. in Pearlman 124). I wanted to provide a way for these Mormon women to tell their miscarriage story and in doing so to help them and anyone who reads their stories to value their experiences. I perceive this as one important way to empower and legitimize women and to validate their life experiences and themselves as human beings. Elizabeth Dewberry Vaughn's character in her novel *Many Things Have Happened Since He Died* expresses this empowerment when after she has taped her autobiography and then transcribed it, she says, "Making these tapes gives me a certain kind of power. Authority" (4). These women telling their stories and then having them transcribed and written down on paper is a way to help them know that their experiences are important, useful, real, and authoritative.

I conducted these interviews using a small, portable tape recorder. Before starting each interview, I asked each woman to read a set of questions that I had previously thought of and had written down (see Appendix I). I explained that they could address

these questions or feel free to simply share their experience in any way in which they felt comfortable. I wanted them to talk openly and as freely as possible and so I tried to conduct the interviews as though we were in a conversation. I responded to them periodically by nodding, verbally expressing acknowledgement, asking questions and making comments. Most of the women shared the actual miscarriage experience. A few women briefly talked about the actual miscarriage and then concentrated more on how the miscarriage affected them afterwards. Because of the nature of my questions, most of the women talked about discussing the miscarriage with others so there is a sort of metanarration occurring within their stories which I feel is just as valuable as the actual telling of the miscarriage experience. After recording the interviews I transcribed the stories from the tape cassette using a transcription recorder with a foot pedal.

I tried to gather age variations as well as occupational variations. The majority of the women however, were under the age of thirty and were in the English graduate program at Brigham Young University. They were all married and in the majority of cases the miscarriage was their first pregnancy (see Appendix II for biographical information).

As I conducted the interviews, I began to hear similar responses from the women, responses that struck a familiar cord with me as well. Certainly every woman will respond differently to her experiences and there were some contrasts in their stories. But the similarities in some of the women's stories were interesting and even a bit surprising as I didn't expect that such similar feelings would exist with such varied experiences. We all had three things in common--we were Mormon women who had experienced at least one miscarriage. I found other collections of miscarriage stories in my research, but what makes this small collection unique is that all of the women are Mormon, and as a result there is a distinctive religious and cultural influence in each of their accounts.

As I reviewed the miscarriage stories, I pulled together common themes that generate discussion within the following chapters: **Chapter II--***Animating the Invisible: Storytelling as a Means of Legitimizing the Miscarriage Experience* introduces the

theoretical foundation of storytelling and narratives. The opportunity to share their miscarriage story for these women is a way to empower them and to give life to or animate the pregnancy that they were never able to see fully develop. According to Sandra Dolby Stahl, storytelling provides "listeners an invitation to intimacy" (37) and it is this invitation that these women are extending by telling their miscarriage experience. This chapter will also discuss how talking about our experiences can help with the healing process and alleviate feelings of isolation and conversely acknowledges the inherent complexities that occur when such an attempt to share is made. **Chapter III--***Oral Performances Replacing the Non-existent Ritual: Grief, Guilt and God* describes the need that women have to do something to remember the miscarriage. Many women need a ritual or marker of some sort to help with the grieving process; telling their story is a type of ritual that can help women pay homage to their lost pregnancy and allow expression of their grief. An extension of the grief that the women feel is guilt. Many of the women interviewed expressed guilt for having miscarried. I will analyze some of the possible reasons for this guilt. Much of the guilt and feelings of failure that the women expressed seem to stem from some religious and cultural beliefs that women today have inherited. When looked at carefully and thoughtfully, Mormon theology can help dispel some of the conflict that is felt concerning guilt as well as the nature of the spirit (as some of the women expressed concern as to what the miscarriage meant for the embodiment of the spirit). **Chapter IV--***Speaking the Female Body* discusses the need for women to talk about their bodies. Historically women have not been encouraged to talk about such intimate details concerning their bodies. I will present some of the arguments why these types of topics have been ignored and suppressed. I will then give specific examples from the miscarriage accounts where the women discuss their intimate encounters with blood, fetal tissue and the death of the fetus as well as how they responded and viewed their bodies during and after the miscarriage. Again, much of how the women viewed their bodies has been inherited from past generations, but women can find comfort in knowing

the value of their body according to Mormon theology. **Chapter V--***Hollow Echoes to Filled Reverberations* discusses the conclusions and implications of my analysis both for the women and for the Mormon and medical communities with which the women were affiliated. Richard Bauman talks about the implications that an analysis of this sort has on culture, as he states, "At its most encompassing, performance may be seen as broadly metacultural, a cultural means of objectifying and laying open to scrutiny culture itself, for culture is a system of systems of signification" (46). These Mormon women's miscarriage accounts can indeed "lay open to scrutiny culture itself," by their verbalized experiences and their perspectives on these experiences.

CHAPTER II

Animating the Invisible: Storytelling as a Means of Legitimizing the Miscarriage Experience

We are just writing [talking] out of the passion of our own experience. We are taught not to trust our own experience, but experience is all we have.

Terry Tempest Williams

Telling Our Story

Telling our story is an important way to relay who we are and what we believe or value. Particularly within a certain community, the stories we tell "[bind]s us to [that] community" (Williams qtd.in Pearlman 122). Carolyn Heilbrun says of stories, "We can only live...by the stories we have read or heard" (Heilbrun qtd.in Murphy 81). Harold Rosen says in *Stories and Meanings* that stories "become a way in which the story-teller appraises his life-experience" (Rosen qtd.in Murphy 81). The need to tell our story almost seems as natural as breathing. It is our way of saying "Look at me, here I am, see me, I'm alive and think." Sandra Dolby Stahl states in her book, *Literary Folkloristics and the Personal Narrative,* that "people tell personal narratives to be listened to" (37). Stahl also suggests that, "when people tell personal narratives, they offer their listeners an invitation to intimacy" (37). Through the stories "individuals assert their connection with other people" (120). Often women who miscarry miss the opportunity for intimacy and connection available from narrating the experience because many women feel inhibited or simply uncomfortable telling their miscarriage stories. As a result, the listeners miss an opportunity of experiencing this intimacy and profound learning experience as well.

Both men and women share stories about their lives. But there are certain subjects, particularly for women, that aren't talked about and even more often are not considered appropriate or worthy of any serious discussion. Miscarriage is one such subject. Certainly, depending upon the individual and external circumstances, women have talked

about their miscarriage experiences. Oftentimes though, it is how the information from the story is received and interpreted that becomes problematic. Occasionally, there is a lack of sensitivity on the listener's part, and many women who want to share their miscarriage experience--whether to share the grief and loss or for whatever reasons, feel inhibited to talk about this experience, feeling that quite possibly no one is really interested. If telling our stories "binds us to community" and is an "invitation to intimacy," then there are many untold stories that are absent from the binding process. The most tragic result of this, as Neil Postman exclaims in his essay, *Learning by Story*, "Without a story, our selves die" (122). If a woman's miscarriage experience is never recognized and validated, she may herself feel unrecognized and ignored. To not allow women to tell this story not only erases the miscarriage experience, but a part of the women themselves as individuals. Story allows us to view a self that is only accessible to us by the actual telling of the story (Stahl 22). Therefore the women are able to see themselves as a separate self, to view and examine what that self did and felt, and then learn and heal from their experience. Storytelling provides the opportunity to learn more about our human condition and specifically, about how to talk to, listen to or understand the emotions that women feel after a miscarriage.

Marie Allen and Shelly Marks make two important observations about why the emotional impact of miscarriage is overlooked in our society. In their book *Miscarriage: Women Sharing from the Heart*, they explain, "Because we do not literally `experience' miscarried babies, [they are]...quite logically...a nonloss" (6). Therefore the loss that women feel goes invalidated and ultimately suppressed for many women. Secondly, Allen and Marks explain that society is unaware of the emotional impact of miscarriage and as a result women have little or no resources for emotional support.

This is certainly not to say that all women who have experienced miscarriage have not received emotional support in one form or another. Nor is this to say that all women should first, feel a specific way about the experience; secondly, feel that they need to tell

everyone they can about their experience and; thirdly, feel that everyone should want to talk about it extensively with them. Not all the women I asked to interview formally were willing to participate for personal reasons. The women represented here were those who were willing to share their stories in a more formal setting. These women deserve to be heard if not for their own desire to be recognized, then for their desire to animate the invisible--to give life to the pregnancy they were never able to see fully developed.

Talking About the Miscarriage

Many of the women I interviewed initially felt either embarrassed or inhibited to share their miscarriage experience with anyone, except perhaps for a family member or very close friend and even these close relationships did not always encourage the women to share their experience. As a result of this, many of the women experienced feelings of isolation until they were able to eventually talk to others who had either experienced a miscarriage or even those who had not but were simply willing to listen. Right after she miscarried, Carol states she "didn't want to talk about it. I didn't want to talk to my family. I didn't want to talk to the one person that I had told (66)." She adds, "I just couldn't tell my students and I couldn't tell anyone else so there was no way I could make an excuse for myself" (66). She says, "Eventually I guess I called my parents. My mom was good about it, she basically said, `You can try again,'" (Carol laughs), "You know? But, `It's ok,' and that `Those things happen'" (66).As Carol began to open up to more people she said that it did help her "not feel like I was alone, `cause I did feel like everybody else that I knew who got pregnant had their baby'" (67). Carol continues to explain that her home teachers came over to give her a blessing and she says, "It was really good to talk to them because I found out that both of their wives had had miscarriages. And they were very open about talking to me and, um, about the feelings...And I was really impressed to how open they were, and...how much they were willing to share about their feelings and you know, what they perceived their wives' feelings to be at the time and how they got through it. And so it was really helpful.

Really, really helpful. Because then I felt even less alone" (68). Although it was therapeutic and helpful for Carol to talk about her miscarriage with these two men--which is the most important aspect, it is ironic that Carol heard the other women's experiences through their husbands, not from the women sharing their experiences with Carol themselves. Her experience with the husbands did provide an "opportunity for intimacy" that would not normally occur between the two sexes concerning this subject as miscarriage is unique to women, and women's experiences are not always shared with the opposite sex. These men proved to be an attentive and interested audience which is a very positive thing when our society generally tends to dictate what is appropriate for men and women to discuss and how to interact with one another. The "invitation for intimacy" was extended as well as Carol received a blessing from these men. Because only worthy males in the Mormon church are ordained to the priesthood and can administer to those who are in need, it was an important opportunity for Carol as well as some of the other women to receive a blessing to help comfort them. Being able to give blessings allows men to help and participate in a specific and unique way.

Shauna felt that initially trying to find an audience to listen to her and understand was difficult as well. She says that she "didn't really talk to many people about it. I didn't feel like I could really talk to my mom....I talked a little bit to some of my single friends who are really close, but, you know, they have no concept. So I didn't really talk to very many people about it" (79). However, she was able to talk to her "older sister a little bit, because she's had several, and I can talk really easily to her" (79). Unfortunately Shauna didn't feel she could talk about it much because if she did she perceived it as a "weepy woman who has to tell her miscarriage story, so. I just kind of kept it to myself" (80). It is disappointing that some women are made to feel that to talk about what happens to them, to their bodies and especially losing something from their body is just another "sob story" of a "weepy woman" talking about her life, her body and her self.

Sherri also felt this kind of embarrassment when talking about her miscarriage.She explains, "I couldn't talk to anybody about it....I didn't want to go into a lot of that detail, you know, to go into that kind of detail especially a lot of people I worked with were men, I didn't want to embarrass them with details of blood, you know, stuff like that" (177).In a sense, Sherri found it difficult to share these kind of details with the men from her job because it dealt with the birthing process--something that men have been excluded from for so long until recently. So much of a woman's life revolves around her reproductive system--the menstrual cycle, pregnancy and childbirth, and the loss of pregnancy. All of this results in a lifetime of experience and yet women don't always feel encouraged, and in fact, they feel *embarrassed,* as Rachel says, "When I talked to my friends they're embarrassed because....They were so happy about it, and they didn't expect it to happen....I was embarrassed...for that reason. Because I'd talked about it [pregnancy] and I was excited about it" (166). But as Williams suggests, "experience is all we have," (130) and so it is vital that women feel uninhibited and not embarrassed to share their miscarriage experiences.

Talking as Therapy

Most of the women expressed that they were eventually able to find someone with whom they felt comfortable enough to share the details of their miscarriage, and that being able to talk about their experience was helpful. Shauna said she was eventually able to talk to a good friend who had had a miscarriage and that this friend was, "great to talk to, [it] was really good to have someone that was sympathetic. She didn't say, 'Oh, let me tell you...' She just said, 'Tell me about it.' And so I told her about it, and, she was really sympathetic. And it was really good to talk to her about it" (94). Many times, the women simply want someone to listen and to sorrow with them. Finding a willing audience has a way of validating the women and their experiences as important and real.

Katie also found it helpful to talk about her miscarriage with a friend who had miscarried as she says, "[My friend] called and it was really great to talk to her `cause she

had had one. And we talked a lot about it" (110). As with many of the women, it helped to talk about their miscarriage experience with others who had also experienced a miscarriage. This helped the women avoid feeling so isolated--as though they were the only ones who had ever experienced it and therefore, something must be wrong with their bodies. As Rachel states, "I mean nobody ever talked about miscarriage" (161).For Rachel, it took a sister-in-law who wrote her a letter exclaiming, "Almost everyone I've talked to has had one" (161). And Rachel responded, "Which was nice to know"(161).

Kathy also found it helpful to talk so as to alleviate her isolation. She says, "I did find it very valuable to talk to other women. Once I started, you know, once people kind of found out, it was amazing to me how many women have had miscarriages!...It's not talked about" (193). Once a woman breaks the silence and begins to talk about her experiences, it presents a space for other women to step into and talk about their own. Again, this helps to alleviate the isolation that many women feel after miscarrying.

McKenna found it helpful to talk to other women, particularly at her job as she says, "It was all women, so we kind of had, it was almost kind of a support group there and it was really fun" (148).She continues saying, "Well...you think of pregnancy as this happy little thing that happens to people and you don't think of miscarriage as a common thing but it is a very common thing...My mother had told me that she had had a miscarriage and I was kind of surprised and then once I had mine it was like out of the woodwork all these people were like, `I had one and I had one'" (151). Mckenna poignantly states what many of the women feel--isolation in their feelings of loss. As they find that other women have experienced this, they feel much more comfortable and confident to share their own story. It provides the women with what Bateson described as the "self-knowledge" that can be "empowering." They begin to recognize that they are not alone in their physical as well as emotional loss.

The Crazy Things People Say

Many of the women found it difficult to deal with other people's responses--an example of how ill-educated we are to the physical loss but even more profoundly the emotional loss of miscarriage. The Mormon religion emphasizes the family and encourages its members to "Prepare tabernacles [bodies] for all the spirits they can" (Brigham Young qtd.by Bruce R. McConkie 85). Because of this emphasis, there is an expectation for young couples to start their families fairly quickly, and when that doesn't occur, speculation arises. Shauna talks of a neighbor who had three children and was expecting her fourth child and Shauna says concerning the neighbor, "Her perspective is, a young couple who's been married three years, `Why don't you have children?' And she'd come out and say things like that, and was fairly insensitive. And so I didn't feel like sharing my story with her because I've resented some things that she's said in the past" (80). Unfortunately the neighbor missed an opportunity to learn more about Shauna as well as understanding and becoming more sensitive to women who miscarry and the feelings they have afterwards. Perhaps as expectations on family size become influenced and governed more by personal inspiration and situation, women who miscarry will feel more comfortable sharing their experience and their pain with others in their Mormon community.

Shauna also mentioned that she had talked with her bishop about her miscarriage after it had happened and when he asked why she hadn't mentioned it sooner, she felt uncomfortable as to how to bring up such a subject. Shauna exclaims, "Well, what am I going to do? `Hey bishop! I've had two miscarriages!' You know?" (95). Marie also found it uncomfortable to talk with her bishop, another indication of the difficulties some men and women have discussing topics concerning childbirth simply because this is foreign for men as miscarriage is unique to women. It was difficult as well because these men are in authority positions and perhaps the women felt at a distance because of that relationship. Marie explains, "What really kind of bugged me, and it wasn't his fault, he was really trying to be considerate, he really was. But what bugged me is he would...soft

tail around me all the time....He wanted to give me room to feel better or whatever. I mean, he didn't know what was wrong or how I felt or anything" (140).Marie resented the fact that her bishop wasn't asking her questions about the miscarriage. Eventually they were able to be more open and discuss it. Ecclesiastical leaders within the Mormon church usually make it their business to know what goes on with the church members for whom they are directly responsible. There is a bit of irony involved as the women feel uncomfortable talking to their church leaders about their miscarriage and yet feel resentful that their bishops did not respond more openly to them through inquiry.

Some of the women found the responses from their families and close friends to be awkward and insensitive. Katie responded that she "didn't tell some people just because I knew it would be so awkward" (102). She continues talking about her sister's reaction to Katie's miscarriage saying, "I didn't ever really want to talk about it. I didn't want to talk about it with people who, `cause like my sister, she just said, `Well you know, I know you probably don't want to talk about it, but I'm just really sorry.' I didn't want to talk about it with people like that, who obviously didn't feel comfortable" (113). Katie explains further that those "who think [talking about miscarriage is] taboo, I don't feel comfortable talking about it with them" (113). The more we are able to talk about these types of experiences, the more mystery and secrecy associated with miscarriage will dissipate. As well, our sensitivity to the subject will increase so that the women who experience miscarriage will not have to deal with remarks that make them feel worse about their situation.

The difficulty that can occur when such a topic as miscarriage and its emotional effects is misunderstood is that it then becomes trivialized--people simply don't know what to say and what this loss has meant for the woman. Marie gives an example of a relative saying, "Well at least you know you can get pregnant" followed by "I would just feel so unfulfilled as a woman if I didn't have children" (141). Marie says that, "It was just for me such an uncomfortable thing for somebody to say" (141). People tend to

trivialize the loss for women who have miscarried and as a result blurt out insensitive statements that they would usually never say to a person who has just lost a loved one. Although the loss is different in degree, as a woman who miscarries never had the opportunity to know the life inside of her, there is still a profound sense of loss of dreams and expectations for the pregnancy. These types of interactions do not help to establish and create an intimate relationship, instead they build walls of defensiveness and hurt.

The more we are able to understand miscarriage and its emotional ramifications, perhaps the more we can work at this binding process within a certain community and provide a nurturing atmosphere for these women who are hurting. It is important to know that miscarriage is a very common event, but at the same time, it is essential not to trivialize it because it is so common. The death of a mature individual is common but rarely trivialized. Although unique, the death of a fetus should likewise be treated respectfully as for some women it is a great loss and to trivialize or ignore the event can be emotionally damaging for the woman. Allowing women to animate their loss through storytelling provides not only an opportunity for intimacy and learning between the storyteller and the listener/reader, but a healthy way for the women to respond to their grief and to gain self-knowledge and empowerment.

CHAPTER III

Oral Performances As Ritual: Grief, Guilt and God

The first one is the bereaved, the mother; she carries a small black jar. From the size of the jar you can tell how old it was when it foundered, inside her, flowed to its death. Two or three months, too young to tell whether or not it was an Unbaby. The older ones and those that die at birth have boxes.

We pause, out of respect, while they go by. I wonder if Ofglen feels what I do, pain like a stab, in the belly. We put our hands over our hearts to show these stranger women that we feel with them in their loss.

The Handmaid's Tale--Margaret Atwood

The Non-existent Ritual

Traditionally, there has been no ritual or rite providing women who miscarry a structured and socially supported channel for their grief. When someone dies, we have a body to care for or memories of a life to remember. A death ceremony pays tribute to the life of the person. Victor Turner discusses various aspects of ritual in his book *The Anthropology of Performance* where he clarifies that the "Performances of ritual are distinctive phases in the social process, whereby groups and individuals adjust to internal changes and adapt to their external environment" (158). For women who miscarry there is no ceremony to help them "adjust" and "adapt" to the new situation in which they find themselves--they were at one time prospective parents, now they are not.

In a personal essay entitled *Losing a Pregnancy* written by Michele Winkler she discusses her experience of losing the opportunity of being a parent as she says, "In our society, there is no marker for a miscarriage. A dead baby gets a funeral, but a dead fetus is accorded no rites. For thirteen weeks I was pregnant, and then I was--not. Not bereaved, not a mother, just--no longer pregnant." Winkler found it difficult to adjust to her new "role in life." What was she now considered? There was no ceremony to

internalize what the miscarriage meant for her; a miscarriage ritual was non-existent. She was left with the status "no longer pregnant."

Judith Savage in her book *Mourning Unlived Lives: A Psychological Study of Childbearing Loss* quotes van Gennep saying that "Death ceremonies further serve as rites of passage" (44). Savage goes on to explain that these death ceremonies "facilitate the transition from one's previous roles and statuses, no longer appropriate in light of the death, toward new statuses and roles" (44). For many of the women interviewed, the miscarriage was their first pregnancy, and once the pregnancy was over, the immediate prospect of being a parent was over as well; they no longer had a baby coming. A ceremony to redirect "the transition from one's previous roles and statuses" as Savage states could be a productive way to help the women through their loss and to help them make meaning of their miscarriage experience.

Winkler writes of the need for women who have miscarried to not only verbalize their grief but to somehow participate in a ritual or ceremony that acknowledges their grief. Remembering is a "means to deal with the emptiness of the future...by filling this void with the images of the child they once had, through thoughts, memories, and open discussion. Only in this way does loss become a reality" (Knapp qtd. by Savage 10). Talking about the miscarriage in "open discussion" is the first step in acknowledging the grief associated with it and because there is no formal rite or ceremony for miscarriage, the opportunity for women to tell their story can in essence be a form of ritual.

Rosanne Cecil quotes P. Connerton in her essay *Memories of Pregnancy Loss: Recollections of Elderly Women in Northern Ireland* saying that "Rites are also as it were porous (187). She explains that the meaning associated with the ceremonial actions can permeate through other actions of daily living, that "Rites...give value and meaning to the life of those who perform them" (187). All too often women who miscarry do not give themselves the opportunity to grieve and participate in any ritual or rites, and as a result they may struggle knowing what kind of value and meaning this experience has for them.

Being able to tell their story is an act that involves using their bodies in a way that relays the memories and the meaning that the miscarriage held for them.

Clarissa Pinkola Estes emphasizes the need for ritual in her book *Women Who Run With the Wolves: Myths and Stories of the Wild Woman Archetype,* saying that "Ritual is one of the ways in which humans put their lives in perspective....Ritual calls together the shades and specters in people's lives, sorts them out, puts them to rest" (211). A woman's grief can be sustained unless she is able to do some sort of ritual to pay tribute and remember the miscarriage and eventually as Estes states "put [it] to rest."

The majority of the women I interviewed expressed no specific ritual to help them with their loss. Winkler writes that she was eventually able to do her own kind of ritual by writing her baby a letter and making a box which included the letter and other mementos given to her after her miscarriage. I personally read a prayer for my miscarried baby and then silently dedicated this project to it. I also brought out the infant shoes that I had tucked away after the miscarriage, took them out of the package and placed them on my dresser next to other pictures and mementos of profound and important experiences and there they sit to this day. The only comment from the stories I collected that was remotely close to a marker for the miscarriage or a "vow to never forget" (Savage 10) was by Gretta. She talks of how she feels "like I'm wearing, I'm wearing something like a sweater....I kind of feel like I have this shirt on, like it's always going to be there. Not necessarily heavy,...sometimes I'm sad but, I think it's just going to be a part of me" (215). Other than Gretta's comments concerning her feeling that the baby will "always...be there," none of the women described any type of ritual to help with the grief, nor some sort of marker to always remember the baby. One possible reason for this is perhaps the women felt as though it is an unacceptable thing to do because society regards this as *just* a miscarriage.

My argument and hope then is that actually being able to articulate this pain of loss by telling their miscarriage stories becomes the women's marker or ceremony in order

to have something tangible to symbolize their miscarriage. The actual telling allows the women to openly grieve and to make meaning of their difficult experience.

A Right to Grieve--Feelings of Grief, Depression and Loss

For many, miscarriage is in a sense a "loss of dreams" or a "loss of expectations." Many women and couples together experience these profound losses, as Savage states, "Those aspects of oneself that are projected onto the wished-for child, such as a sense of future and immortality, or one's hopes and wishes for the child's life, are, with the child's death, feared permanently lost. Thus one feels profoundly diminished"(21). Many women in these stories expressed similar feelings of their loss of hope and wishes for the new pregnancy after they miscarried. Once the woman has miscarried she not only has lost a pregnancy but all of the future dreams and expectations that she had for the future child. Linda L. Layne describes this loss as "a pivotal event" in a woman's life, in her essay, *`Never Such Innocence Again': Irony, Nature and Technoscience in Narratives of Pregnancy Loss*. She says, "Their life narratives become punctuated by the [miscarriage] loss, and other experiences come to be understood as having occurred either before or after this pivotal event" (132). For many of the women interviewed, the miscarriage was an event that they remembered quite vividly--a definite marker in their lives.

A woman's grief for the actual demise of the fetus is frequently not taken seriously and she is almost regarded as being "too emotional" or taking things too seriously because she feels such sadness and loss over something that was "never really there." Allen and Marks experienced these same feelings asking:, "What did that say about our babies? Were they hallucinations?...Suggestions for healing, such as holding our babies and obtaining footprints and photographs, were not options we would ever have. Our needs were unattended; the nuances of our invisible tragedy went unrecognized " (3). Allen and Marks reiterate this need to have some sort of ritual to allow women to grieve because all too often the "needs [of women are] unattended." These needs go unrecognized because miscarriage has not been traditionally considered a great loss, when

clearly all of the women I interviewed expressed a profound sense of grief and loss after theirmiscarriage.

Gretta shares that after miscarrying she "was very weepy and...I think you experience the baby blues" (211). She continues on describing her life afterwards expressing "I had no idea on how to go on with my day, you know, if I dropped a sandwich on the way to the highchair I would just cry. I would find myself in front of the bookcase to read books to Josh and I would be just like staring into space, how long had I been like that? Or, I remember being in the bathtub and just you know, crying. And how long had I been in the bath? I was just so, so in trouble" (213). Like many of the women, Gretta had not had the opportunity to participate in any kind of ceremony in which to channel her grief. The miscarriage was as though webbed through all of her daily activities and she was unable to separate the grief over the miscarriage from other aspects of her life.

McKenna also experienced the same sadness as she explains, "Going back to work was just miserable. I was kind of numb for so long...I would just come home and I just felt like I was in a stupor all the time" (146). McKenna admits that "I wasn't giving myself time off to grieve or....even think about it really. And it happened a few times where...I'd just suddenly break down and just bawl" (147). Mckenna expresses a key point--that many women do not allow themselves time to grieve. She also states that she didn't even allow herself time to think about the miscarriage. In part, because of the lack of a ritual in which to acknowledge their grief, these women struggled to know how to cope with such profound sadness.

Savage talks of parents who have lost a child saying, "The occurrence of the acute wish to die and the intensity of mourning remain enigmatic"(16). Both Rachel and Kathy recall that their grief was so intense that they were either "suicidally depressed" or wished to die. Rachel expresses this intense sadness when she says, "I was just really depressed....I was...really, really depressed. Like almost suicidally depressed" (162).

Kathy also expresses a strong wish to die after her miscarriage as she exclaims, "After about a week I had a really bad depression....It was the worst depression I've ever had....I just wanted to crawl into the bottom of my bed and die" (186). Both women refer to hormones being the reason for the deep depression but they were also struggling with the intensity of emotion that they were experiencing following the loss of their pregnancies. It is almost as though they wanted to join that which had been lost to them in death.

The grief that these women experienced is strongly associated with their feelings of loss--losing their pregnancy meant that they were losing a wonderful experience as Carol describes how she felt the same loss as she did losing her grandmother. She explains, "It felt kind of like when my grandma died, that it was just a loss....I didn't ever feel like that I'd lost a whole person, I just felt like I lost something valuable, wonderful" (66). Kathy described her sense of loss similar to losing a body part when she says, "I felt like I had just lost a part of me. You know, as if anyone were to even lose an arm or something....I was so used to feeling a life in me, even though I couldn't see it" (193). Kathy's point that she "couldn't see it" is one aspect of miscarriage that makes it so difficult: there is nothing tangible to see or touch, other than the blood and tissue. The loss is intangible and thus easier for others to ignore, as there is no body in which to care for and bury.

Guilt and God

A common response that many of the women experienced was guilt--guilt that somehow they had caused the demise of the pregnancy by their physical activities, their sense of regret for the pregnancy, their sense of failure that there was something inherently wrong with their body or even that their spiritual state somehow caused the end of the pregnancy. Savage quotes Palinski and Pizer in her book saying that, "Undoubtedly the strongest emotional response after a miscarriage is guilt. Without exception, every woman we talked with had experienced or was still experiencing feelings of guilt. They looked back for months seeking probable cause in their own behavior just

prior to the miscarriage" (12). Many of the women I interviewed had similar initial responses and even continued asking themselves these questions months after the miscarriage. Gretta had gone on a backpacking trip and because her muscles tightened up she took some aspirin and felt anxious about how this affected the baby forming and she said that she "let these things worry [her]" (205). Gretta asks herself in the interview, "Could it have been the hike I went on? I was carrying a 35 lb. pack and hiking through waste deep water and I was two months pregnant when we went on that hike. And you know, I took the medication. Was it because of that?" (219). Gretta questioned whether her physical activities somehow caused the miscarriage, putting blame upon herself for the end of the pregnancy.

Katie expresses similar guilt feelings about her physical actions as she questions, "You feel, you think, `Well was it that aspirin I took? or that cold medicine I took?'" (110). McKenna asks herself, "I drink all my milk, and I ate everything right and I treated myself right and you know you just think, `What happened?...What happened to me, how did I lose it? Was I not going to be a good mother?'" (149). McKenna not only questions whether she did or didn't do something but questioned whether she would be a good mother somehow projecting this judgement of her capabilities onto the lost pregnancy.

Robin's guilt not only came from her actions at the time of her pregnancy, "Should I have done something different?...Daryl and I had had...intimate relations right before I started spotting and I just, I just connected that and not really logically but I just connected that" (198) but also that she was under "so much stress" (198). A similar response about the level of stress in her life came from Kathy as she explains, "I did blame myself for both of them [miscarriages]. Because I felt like I was under such stress and that life was so hard and, and it really would have been hard to have a baby at those times. Um, and then almost felt guilty for being, a little bit relieved. You know, it wasn't really, I was relieved and devastated all at the same time" (190). In addition to her feelings

that she caused the miscarriage because of the stress in her life, Kathy expresses feelings of guilt because of the relief that she felt about the lost pregnancy.

These types of feelings are compounded within the Mormon religion because of the emphasis on motherhood. In fact, motherhood is considered, according to David O. McKay, a former prophet and president of the Mormon church, "woman's noblest calling" (229). Another former prophet and president of the Mormon church, Ezra Taft Benson, exclaims, "How glorious is the knowledge that you are dignified by the God of Heaven to be wives and mothers in Zion!" (70). A past prophet and president, Joseph Fielding Smith, also declared that "To be a mother in Israel in the full gospel sense is the highest reward that can come into the life of a woman" (119). This kind of emphasis on being a mother may exasperate the women's feelings of regret and failure at having tried and failed at their "highest" calling in life.

For Kathy she recognizes the difficulty of feeling regret over an unwanted pregnancy and the subsequent feelings of guilt that she caused the end of the pregnancy because of these feelings. She explains, "And to be honest I was not happy at all that I was pregnant...I was just very disappointed....I did have feelings of guilt. I had a lot of feelings of guilt because I thought like it was kind of my fault....I wasn't super excited to have them [pregnancies]" (194). Kathy adds, "You know, in this culture the idea of regret is just an impossibility" (185). Kathy's feelings of guilt were compounded because she did have such ambivalent feelings towards her pregnancy and as she succinctly states, regretting the opportunity to be a mother is at odds with Mormon culture and teachings.

Marie felt these same guilt feelings about her miscarriage because of her initial response to being pregnant, she explains:

> It wasn't that I...didn't want to have the baby when I found out that I was pregnant, but I wasn't totally excited right away either. I was sort of philosophical, like, `Well, ok,' you know, I guess, `here we go.' And so when I started having the miscarriage, I started feeling really bad about

that....I did feel kind of guilty when I started having problems like....[Somehow you had made that happen?] Ya, or something like that. (134)

These women had associated their feelings toward the pregnancy with the actual death of the baby. Not only were these women feeling guilty about their ambivalence towards being pregnant--a response that is rarely verbalized in the Mormon society as all women are encouraged to have children--but they were also feeling profound guilt because they felt that they were somehow responsible for the babies' deaths by their ambivalent feelings.

Some women expressed feelings of guilt because they felt that they had failed--either that their body failed or that because of the miscarriage they failed someone else--a spouse or family member. Savage states that "Parents who have lost a child to death cannot help but feel that they have failed in their enactment of the instinctual and human act of procreation and the perpetuity of their personal heritage" (17). Gretta expresses, "I did have feelings of guilt. Um, I failed the baby, I failed my husband. Why didn't my body work?" (219). Mckenna expresses some of the same feelings as she talks about after she had miscarried, people came out of the "woodwork" to tell her that they had as well experienced a miscarriage. She says, "And I was just like, `Wow!...It takes away that guilt and failure thing, you know? Instead of, `Well how come am I the only one that...ever lost a baby?' You're not" (151). Carol talks about her feelings of failure about herself as she says, "I think I felt like I had failed as a woman. That's the best way I can describe it. `Cause I hurt for me and I was feeling bad that I was my husband's wife in some ways, feeling bad for him that I would've miscarried" (66). She also describes her fear of telling her mother--fear that her mother would be angry with her, she says, "I think it made me feel better that she wasn't mad at me. Because I think that was my worry, that she wanted to have a grandchild so bad and I thought, you know, `She's gonna be disappointed. And it's gonna be my fault'" (66).Interestingly, Carol felt responsible for

her mother's response as well as her husband's. A few of the women alluded to the same feelings that they were responsible for other's reactions, unfortunately compounding their guilt.

Rachel talks about the difference between telling friends and her family, "It wasn't as really hard to tell them [friends] as to tell relatives for some reason. I don't know why....You feel like your relatives expect something. It makes you feel like you're not living up to something" (160). Having an unsuccessful pregnancy leads women to feel that they have not only failed as a woman, a wife, a mother, a daughter and daughter-in-law, as Rachel expressed, but that they have failed at one of their supposedly main purposes in life and so they have failed God. Instead of viewing their bodies as healthy and able to take care of a problem, some of the women viewed their bodies as defective and deficient.

The feelings of guilt extend for some of the women to their spiritual state, that perhaps they were sinning, that they did not have enough faith, or that they were being punished for something that they had done wrong. Mormon theology does not teach that miscarriage is a sin, as Jesus taught about another natural occurrence, congenital blindness, as it reads in John chapter 9 verses 2 and 3, "And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents:" As this scripture exemplifies, natural, biological processes are not considered a sin. However, it is difficult for many of these women not to make some association to sin as there is a common belief among many Mormons that when one is righteous, one will be blessed and when negative things happen, one is being punished for unrighteous living. This type of logic stems from teachings about and interpretations of scriptures that reinforce the idea of blessings with righteousness and punishment with sin. In the Book of Mormon in the book of Mosiah chapter 2 verse 41 it reads, "And moreover, I would desire that ye should consider on the blessed and happy state of those that keep the commandments of God. For behold, they are blessed in all things, both temporal and spiritual;" And in Proverbs chapter 28 verse 20 it states, "A

faithful man shall abound with blessings." Conversely in the Book of Mormon in the book of 2 Nephi chapter 23 verse 11 it reads as the Lord saying "And I will punish the world for evil, and the wicked for their iniquity." And in the Doctrine and Covenants section 124 verse 48 it reads, "For instead of blessings, ye, by your own works, bring cursings, wrath, indignation, and judgments upon your own heads." Therefore, it is believed that personal actions can be responsible for blessings or punishments.

In addition, Mormons link much of what happens to them to God because of the belief that each individual can have a very close relationship with God--that God is very aware of personal circumstances as it says in the Book of Mormon in 3 Nephi chapter 18 verse 31 where Christ says "I know my sheep, and they are numbered." And again in 1 Chronicles chapter 28 verse 9 it reads, "For the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee." When miscarriage occurs, some of the women's emotional responses led them to feel that they were maybe to blame or that God was somehow not happy with them--that they had sinned, because miscarriage is considered as a negative event [or in this sense--a punishment] not a blessing.

Often the silent question that is asked is one that Katie asked in our interview, "Why did God do this to me?" (110). Katie responds to her own inquiry saying "And sometimes there is no reason, and you just kind of have to accept that. But I still haven't. I still think, `Well there must have been something. There must have been something to learn'" (110). Katie questions whether her miscarriage experience is linked with a lesson from God, implying that God might be responsible for the miscarriage in order to teach a specific lesson. Marie also had a similar response after her miscarriage as she says she felt, "like I was being punished, or I did something bad" (134). Marie associated her spiritual state to the termination of her pregnancy.

Shauna expresses a frustration with God when all her personal circumstances were not working in her favor. After her miscarriage she questions whether she and her husband

had enough faith as she expresses in the interview, “I felt like the Lord didn't, you know, like why did all of this have to happen at once?...I just kind of felt like we'd been praying and praying, why didn't the Lord help us? We tried to have faith, and you know, we felt like things would work out, and things didn't” (77). Shauna infers that perhaps she and her husband did not have sufficient faith in order for events to take a different course in their lives and questions why "the Lord didn't help us?" inferring as well that the Lord had some kind of responsibility with her miscarriage. Katie also had a similar response questioning her faith when after her husband and father-in-law had given her a Priesthood blessing for the pain she was frustrated when the pain continued as she says, "Even just...with the blessing, you think, `Don't I have faith?...Why does it hurt so much?'" (103). Again, Katie draws a connection between her level of pain and her level of faith feeling as though her faith was not sufficient to be healed.

Robin expresses her doubt that God loved her after she had experienced five miscarriages and after her last and especially difficult ectopic pregnancy she expressed, “I remember thinking, I mean I was so emotionally drained, physically devastated in every way. That was the one thing that triggered this unbearable sadness that somehow I had lost favor with God. I've never experienced that before. In fact, my trials had always brought me closer to a realization that God loved me in a profound way....But on this, on this one I really questioned whether He loved me” (202). Again, as with some of the other women, Robin associated her personal experiences and circumstances as a direct result of her relationship with God. In Robin's case, she questioned whether God truly loved her. She had not been able to succeed at her pregnancy and felt guilt that somehow she had disappointed God to the point that she had "lost favor" with him. The responses by these women are not scripturally-based and may seem illogical, but what is important is acknowledging that the women indeed felt them and these feelings were overwhelmingly real.

Mormon Theology and Miscarriage

Because of the absence of doctrine specifically concerning miscarriage in Mormon theology, it is difficult for some of the women to know how to make a kind of spiritual closure to their experience. Some of the questions the women asked included what happens to the spirit? Did the body count? Will I ever be able to see or associate with that potential child?

What is said by past leaders of the church concerns only the body and spiritual state of stillbirth, but nothing on miscarriage. Carol Cornwall Madsen, a Mormon historian at the Smith Institute for Church History at Brigham Young University, suggested that in her research of early Mormon diaries that miscarriage, rarely, if ever, is mentioned and that any Mormon doctrine concerning the nature of miscarriage and the spirit is non-existent. Madsen does mention that we can infer from the strong stance against abortion that Mormon church leaders make, that there is a belief of life in early pregnancy. "But," she says, "it is all very vague," (Phone interview with Carol Cornwall Madsen, May 15, 1998). What is said about stillborn children can possibly be applied to miscarriage and perhaps give some comfort to women who do miscarry. Bruce R. McConkie quotes Joseph Fielding Smith that stillborn children "will receive a resurrection and then belong to us" (768). This gives the hope that parents will be able to have association with or even raise the stillborn child, perhaps the same could be said of miscarriage? Joseph Smith claimed that "all children who die before they arrive at the years of accountability [eight years of age], are saved in the celestial kingdom of heaven" (107). Again, this statement on the spiritual state of stillborn children could perhaps be applicable to miscarriage. At this point in time, one can only speculate what happens to the embryo in miscarriage, which is exactly what some of the women have done in order to bring peace to themselves about their experience, and perhaps it is this freedom of speculation that has allowed them some peace.

Gretta talks about her confusion as to what happened to the spirit of the baby. She questions, "That was a big issue for me....What happened to the spirit? Did it count?"

(216). She continues later saying, "I think we kind of hear other people's stories and thoughts and, `Ok, that sounds good, that gives me comfort. I'll sit with that for awhile. Or I'll accept that'" (216). But she adds that "I really wish there were something about it in church doctrine" (217). As Gretta mentions, most women do approach their miscarriage in the same manner--taking pieces of others' interpretations and fabricating their own type of "doctrine" or interpretation they feel good about and which helps make meaning of their experience.

Rachel as well had questions about the spiritual aspects of the miscarriage, as she says, "I don't really know how to see it doctrinally....I always thought that it's a confusing doctrine because nobody says anything about it" (169). Rachel talks about how her husband had helped a family where the wife had experienced a miscarriage of twins and that afterwards Rachel's husband felt that perhaps, "you'll be pregnant with that child in the resurrection" (169). She continues saying, "That's...one of the things that I think is kind of difficult to deal with. Because there's no doctrine about it, as far as church goes" (169). One possible reason why there is no definitive answer to what happens with miscarriage is that the questions simply haven't been asked. As well, there is still debate within the scientific community concerning the nature of life. McConkie quotes President Brigham Young saying that "when the mother feels life come to her infant, it is the spirit entering the body preparatory to the immortal existence" (768). But what does that mean for women who miscarry after eight weeks, four weeks, maybe even after two? They have not felt the baby at that point and yet, is it not considered living even if for a moment? These same questions about the spiritual nature of the embryo still exist for many of these women.

During Kathy's interview she gave a different explanation about what she felt happened to the miscarried embryo and spirit. She felt strongly that her miscarried children would be with her someday as she expressed:

> I do feel like Tara's little spirit, her little self, was one of the babies that I was pregnant with...that she just needed a stronger body to come down to. But I also feel like there's another one, at least one other one that is mine. And that at some point, you know, because of my beliefs...that I will be a mother to that baby. It will either come to me at a different time, in another healthier body, or, you know, in the Millennium I'll just be a mom of four kids, my kids. (195)

Although there is a real sense of frustration because of the lack of religious doctrine concerning miscarriage, conversely it is interesting and beautiful to talk to women about how they have interpreted their experiences. There is a great amount of creativity and freedom of interpretation involved in how they have made meaning of their miscarriage.

Allowing these women to not only talk about their miscarriages but also to grieve openly, whether they perform a specific ritual or simply share their pain with others is one step in opening the dialogue. For these specific women I interviewed, telling their miscarriage story became the "something tangible" that they lacked. Storytelling enabled them to recreate the experience in order to keep the memory of the loss present so as to and confront and work through the emotional implications of their experience. The more we can openly talk about the strong emotional effects of miscarriage the more we can ask questions about the spriritual and physical nature of miscarriage. For some Mormon women, answering some of these types of questions may help them sort through their loss. Most importantly though, understanding the grief, guilt, loss and depression that some women experience after miscarriage is a big step in acknowledging women's experiences as valuable and real.

CHAPTER IV

Speaking The Female Body

Somewhere every culture has an imaginary zone for what it excludes, and it is that zone we must try to remember today.

The Newly Born Woman--Catherine Clement

In Mormon society and the broader culture there are certain subjects that are appropriate for discussion and those which are not. Michel Foucault discusses this phenomenon in his essay *The Discourse on Language*. He elaborates, "In a society such as our own we all know the rules of *exclusion*. The most obvious and familiar of these concerns what is *prohibited*. We know perfectly well that we are not free to say just anything, that we cannot simply speak of anything, when we like or where we like; not just anyone, finally, may speak of just anything"(149). We all know these rules and for the most part, abide by them. If an individual does not abide by what is prohibited, then that individual is usually perceived negatively and as not supporting the status quo. As a result of these "rules of exclusion," many women do not talk about experiences that are unique to them. Foucault uses the expression "counter discourses" (Foucault qtd.in Waterhouse 109) to label those subjects and conversations that are not in accordance with that which is accepted. Women talking about their miscarriages and their bodies could certainly fall within the category of "counter discourses" as miscarriage and what goes on with a woman's body is one of those topics that is usually considered not appropriate for discussion.

Helene Cixous often writes about the urgency for women to write themselves into existence, as she says in her essay, *The Laugh of the Medusa*, "Woman must write her self: must write about women and bring women to writing" (309). This same urgency is needed for women to **speak** themselves into existence. They need to talk about their bodies--to talk about those subjects which are "prohibited" concerning their bodies and what they experience as a result of being female. Catherine Clement refers to this loss of

history of female oral tradition in *The Newly Born Woman* as--"a history arranged the way tale-telling women tell it" (Cixous 6). We need an oral tradition to **speak** and **discuss** what women experience and to learn from women about women. Julia Kristeva discusses the need for women to identify with themselves through their discourse in her essay entitled *Women's Time* where she states, "This identification...bears witness to women's desire to lift the weight of what is sacrificial in the social contract from their shoulders, *to nourish our societies with a more flexible and free discourse*, one able to name what has thus far never been an object of circulation in the community: the enigmas of the body, the dreams, secret joys, shames" (482 *my emphasis*). As a society, we can only benefit from women sharing from their experiences. This "flexible and free discourse" can indeed "nourish" and educate our societies and ultimately free women from societal pressures keeping them from verbalizing their experiences. It can allow women to identify with themselves, with one another, and with society as a whole. It is this "invitation to intimacy" that Stahl suggests as mentioned previously, that can unite and glue a society together.

This discourse to which Kristeva is alluding is not a new kind of language as much as uncovering topics that historically are not considered appropriate for discussion. Terry Tempest Williams describes this "language" as "[having] to do with identifying relationships that break through the veneer of what is proper, what is expected. The language that women speak when nobody is there to correct them oftentimes can make people feel uncomfortable because it threatens to undermine the status quo. It's what we know in our hearts that we don't dare speak,...the sense of women and secrets" (Williams qtd.in Pearlman 183). Historically, miscarriage has been a subject that makes people feel uncomfortable. There seems to always be an "aura of secrecy surrounding the subject...there is a need to keep secret, and to be seen to be keeping secret, information relating to childbirth" (Ballard qtd. in Cecil 180). If a woman does talk about the details of her miscarriage, it is usually whispered to another woman and the sense of secrecy is very

apparent. Bryan S. Turner in his book *The Body and Society* suggests one argument for this sense of secrecy and discomfort about women's reproductive functions is that, "Women are associated with nature rather than culture and hence have a pre-social or sub-social status. Women have not, as it were, made the transition from animality to culture, because they are still tied to nature through their sexuality and fertility" (126). Hence it is this sense of that which is natural--uncivilized, even savage (thus producing fear of the unknown, natural world), that is not appropriate for discussion in a civilized and cultured society.

An Intimate Death

This sense of fear of that which is considered "natural" extends to miscarriage because miscarriage involves death and for us as a society death is as Williams puts it, "an abstraction and a mystery. You can never really know what death is, particularly in our society, since we have such little experience with death. We turn it over to someone else, we abrogate our responsibility, and death becomes something that takes place in hospitals behind closed doors. It is antiseptic" (Williams qtd. in Pearlman 127). Women who miscarry deal first-hand in this death. In almost every story the women described passing enormous amounts of blood, placental and fetal tissue. Women are usually instructed by their doctors to save any tissue they may find so tests can be performed to know the probable cause of the miscarriage. Some of the women described fishing through the blood to find the fetal tissue and putting it in bottles that were meant for fruit preserves.

Once such experience happened to Marie as she explains that right after she miscarried there was, "A lot of tissue, and that was like the nastiest thing....So, I had to fish that out and save it in a jar. And um, Tanner, my husband was just, grossed out by it...I was feeling pretty philosophical about the thing by then, so I just put alcohol in a jar and I put it on the counter in the bathroom" (132). Marie talks about how she later took it to the doctor's office in a plastic bag and just handed it to the nurse. She says about that experience, "I mean it was so embarrassing, you know, it's like this part of you

(laughing)...[I've had this inside me!] Ya!" (132). Marie's embarrassment resulted from the intimate nature of the event--she was displaying tissue that and blood from her own body. There was nothing "antiseptic" about her jar of blood that she presented. Carol describes her experience saying that "I went to the restroom and some placental tissue came out of me. And when I noticed that I screamed (laughs) for my husband and I just started shaking....We put it in some container with water or alcohol or something" (65). It is frightening for these women to have this unfamiliar tissue come out of them, and then to have to touch it and save it to look at like some biology specimen can be traumatic and almost surreal.

Sherri's miscarriage was drawn out over a period of a few weeks and she describes her efforts to salvage any tissue, "I would collect all the tissue from the toilet and I spent probably several hours fishing this stuff out of the toilet and I didn't know what was the placental tissue, what was just blood clots, what was fetal tissue. And um, I had a little jar I put it in. I kept it in the fridge" (178). Sherri ended up saving tissue from three different occasions. One of these occasions was during a work conference and she describes going into the restroom and having passed more blood clots and some gray color tissue, she says, "I put it in a piece of toilet paper and kind of hid it in this bathroom, went out to the receptionist and I said, `I'm having a miscarriage, do you have a plastic bag I can use to put this tissue in?' [laughs]. And they had a plastic bag and I went back and I got it" (179). Sherri describes her disappointment when after saving all of the tissue they were billed for three different tests and never heard any result as to why she miscarried. Again, the details of Sherri's experience show that her confrontation with death was not "behind closed doors" as she was in a public vicinity and had to involve others by asking for the plastic bag and then take care of the contents of blood and tissue herself.

It is also evident from Sherri's experience, as well as other women's, that just like any death, miscarriage is not a discriminator of time or place. Katie realized this when

part of her miscarriage happened at a movie theater. She says, "I was in the bathroom and standing at the back of the theater and...it was just horrible. I can't believe I didn't go home" (106). Once Katie did make it home she talks about passing some huge blood clots and then the pain ceased. She says "I didn't save it or anything....And I heard that you should save it. But I just said, `I'm not.' I thought that would be too gross. I just thought, `I'm not gonna do it. That's too gross....I didn't even want to look at anything" (108). As some women like Marie and Sherri were willing to fish through the blood and tissue to find answers, others did not, as in Katie's experience. Having to face death in such an intimate way can be frightening and as mentioned before, very traumatic.

Rachel's experience is particularly poignant as she had to pass the fetus alone in her home in her bathroom. As she describes her feelings after she passed the fetus it was apparent during the interview that she was traumatized by the experience and how it happened. She explains:

> The worst part was passing the fetus...it was just really traumatic....Because I didn't know what to do with it....What do you do with this? Just flush it down the toilet?...This whole time you're thinking you have this baby inside of you and then, there's this big lump thing....So it was kind of weird. And then, I flushed it down the toilet, it felt weird to do that. Because for all this time you have to eat right...and here's this thing and then you flush it down the toilet.... I think that was the hardest thing. (158)

Rachel felt at a loss as to what she should do with the fetal tissue. Death was literally "staring her in the face"--she couldn't "abrogate [her] responsibility." Rachel had to deal with the death of her fetus on her own, as was the case with many of the women interviewed. Gretta actually saw the fetus when she had an ultrasound--"I saw a shape of a big kidney bean, and it was just there. And I realized later, it wasn't moving....They said that the baby, it looked about the size of a nine week baby. So here it had been two and a

half weeks that I had been carrying a dead fetus" (206). Again, women who miscarry are dealing with the death of the fetus first-hand, even carrying around the dead fetus inside of them--being forced to acknowledge the death in a very intimate and profound way.

Kathy also had an ultrasound after she started bleeding seven weeks into her pregnancy. She explains that she, "went in to the doctor and they did an ultrasound and saw that there were two embryos, and that one of them...there was no heartbeat but the other one there was a very strong heartbeat" (188).Kathy's husband had given her a blessing that she would be able to hold on to one of the twins. When she eventually lost both, she was devastated. In fact, Kathy describes her surprise as she went back in for another ultrasound to check on the other embryo, the doctor exclaimed, "There's nothing here....You've not only miscarried, you don't even have signs of a pregnancy" (188). She exclaims, "I was shocked!" (189). To know that at one time one of the embryos was alive and then to have it die was devastating for Kathy as she was so sure she would be able to hold onto one of the embryos.

Even though the termination of their pregnancies occurred at an early point in the development of the baby, it is difficult to know that at one time something was alive within the women's bodies and now it is dead. Most of the time the women have no idea when and how the death occurred. As a result, these unanswered questions make the healing process that much more difficult for the women. Most of the women are left with the remains of the fetus and pregnancy and are forced to confront the death in this most intimate way.

Pain During Miscarriage

Another issue that many of the women face is the pain that is associated with miscarriage. Pain associated with the birth of a full-term fetus is expected and for the most part respected. But pain associated with miscarriage is usually not acknowledged, perhaps because it is not the birth of a full-term baby and therefore it is brushed aside as being another period. The physical pain for some women who miscarry is very real as

Katie exclaims in her interview "So many people don't realize it hurts as bad as it does!" (111). Katie describes how her pain began like menstrual cramps but progressively got worse saying, "It was just horrible!" (106). Her husband and father-in-law gave her a blessing but she says, "But it just really didn't, you know, it didn't help at all" (103). She describes the rest of the night that her husband fell asleep and she says, "I didn't wake him up. Because I didn't think there was anything that he could do....I was crawling into the bathroom, and I then I would come out here and try to watch t.v....I was worried that I, I thought that I might pass out, 'cause it was so bad" (104).

Sherri describes her experience with pain saying, "I know what I felt in the miscarriage was not as painful as [labor], but it was very painful" (176). She talks about lying in her bed a couple of hours at a time and "every few minutes just kind of having to, to focus inward or breath very deeply and hard, in order to handle the pain" (176). Marie describes her pain saying, "It was hurting so bad and I was home all alone and I was putting clothes over my face and screaming, 'cause it was, I mean it, it was bad" (131). Kathy describes her miscarriage as "pretty messy" and that "the contractions were very painful. And just felt devastated" (186). Unfortunately, these women were left alone to deal with their pain and the blood and tissue.

Shauna experienced two miscarriages and describes her first miscarriage saying, "I couldn't move, it hurt so bad, I just kind of stayed there and I didn't groan or anything, I just kind of sat there and grit my teeth and told my husband I was really in pain" (76). This lasted, she said, about twenty minutes and then she felt a gush and the pain stopped. But her second miscarriage she describes as being much more intense because the pain lasted longer. She says, “By midnight the cramps got pretty bad....About two in the morning I just woke up and the cramps were just killing me. I just sat there and kind of, you can't get into a comfortable position, you just kind of writhe in pain, you know, in a fetal position” (90). With our modern technologies, Shauna and the other women who

describe their pain should at least have the option of receiving something for the pain of miscarriage, as in childbirth.

Shauna continues to describe the pain as it lasted several hours and her husband trying to reassure her, but she says, "What could he say?" Shauna continues describing her pain, "I'd had three hours of extreme pain....I have a really high pain tolerance, but there always comes up to that point where you just break....So after three hours of it I was shaking and I just couldn't take any more and I just thought, `I just want somebody to put me out. I need something for the pain'" (91). Again, for many of these women the pain was very intense and very real. But in our society, we have not always acknowledged the pain that can accompany miscarriage and too often pass it off as just `another bad period' when clearly for many of these women, it was not.

Perceptions of the Body

Catherine Hobbs in her essay "Locke, Disembodied Ideas, and Rhetoric that Matters," discusses a paradox that has taken place in our society concerning the body; she says, "The body is paradoxically represented as closer to truth, and yet it is feared, mistrusted, ultimately silenced" (154). This paradox is apparent in how some of the women responded to their own bodies during and after the miscarriage as well as how others responded to them.

In the Mormon religion, the body is considered a great blessing that we receive when we come to earth. Mormon theology teaches that to become like God, we all need a body. In the New Testament in 1 Corinthians chapter 3 verse 16 the apostle Paul asks the rhetorical question, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" Paul indicates by his question the holiness and sanctity of the earthly body. In fact, as it says in the Old Testament in the first chapter of Genesis verse 26, God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." This scripture teaches that we are like God in image and likeness. Thus because our bodies are similar to God's, they are in essence "holy."

And yet, paradoxically, as Hobbs says, the body, or more specifically, that which comes out of the body (ie. blood, bodily wastes and semen) is sometimes treated with fear and disgust. Some of the roots for this fear and mistrust within a religious context may be found in scriptural citations. In the Biblical Old Testament for example, blood and the color of red is referred to as life, but it is also referred to as sin. In Isaiah 1:18, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." In chapter 59:3, "For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity." And in the Book of Mormon, Alma 5:22 it says, "How will any of you feel, if ye shall stand before the bar of God, having your garments stained with blood and all manner of filthiness?" As well, it is taught by Joseph Smith that a resurrected body will have "spirit in their bodies, and *not blood*" (*my emphasis 200*). These specific references may give the idea that blood is something to be feared and mistrusted. Because women's reproductive functions are so closely associated with blood, the same negative feelings may be relayed to women's bodies, and thus provides one possible reason why miscarriage is not often openly talked about.

Within the Old Testament, there are scriptures that describe the process of cleanliness during a women's menses as well as keeping lepers and others with illness from individuals in the village so as not to contaminate them or their food. In Leviticus 15: 19 & 25 a woman who was menstruating had to be secluded and anyone who touched her during this time was considered "unclean." In fact, everything she touched became unclean. In Numbers 5:2 the children of Israel were commanded to put out of the camp "Every leper, and every one that hath an issue [Hebrew for any discharge], and whosoever is defiled by the dead." Although it is not clear what constitutes "discharge" it is most likely referring to men's semen and women's menses or any issue of blood that may come. One has to wonder if women who did have miscarriages were considered "defiled by the dead." Although some of these actions may have been used as a form of cleanliness, the actions are strict and extreme from a people with limited understanding.

One has to wonder how a woman would have felt being completely secluded from family and home for a number of days because she was menstruating. What effect would this type of seclusion have on her psyche? One can only speculate that she would view her body as unclean. Again, this emphasizes the disgust for blood, specifically women's blood--as Katie's reaction to saving some of the blood and tissue exemplifies when she said, "I didn't save it. And I had heard that you should save it. But I just said, `I'm not.' I thought that would be too gross. I just thought, `I'm not gonna do it. That's too gross'" (108). The messages taken from these specific scriptures may eventually influence some women to perceive themselves as filthy and view their own bodies with some disgust.

Dr. Judith Rodin in her book *Body Traps: Breaking the Binds that Keep You from Feeling Good About Your Body*, states that "For many people the experience of their own body is either quite distorted, or filled with guilt, or both" (54). Miscarriage is a highly charged emotional event and certainly one's emotions will navigate how one responds to the miscarriage. But the guilt is still misplaced and seems to always focus on the woman's body and how her body functioned. Many of these women questioned their body's ability to give and sustain life.

For Rachel, her perceptions of her body were distorted and exasperated by her husband's response. She talks about how she "was so embarrassed about it. And my husband would like try to cover it up too, which I thought was weird" (165). When I asked what it was specifically that she was embarrassed about she responded, "I don't know....I guess because of the weakness or something, or maybe I thought that there was something wrong with me, or something? Not that I thought that there was something wrong, but that other people would think [that there was something wrong?] Ya" (166). Rachel's concern was possibly realized by her husband's reaction to her miscarriage which made herself and him feel a sense of embarrassment. She says that she felt her body was weak and "that there was something wrong with [her]" (166). This same reaction was felt by Gretta who said that she asked herself following the miscarriage, "Why didn't my

body work?" (219). McKenna responded similarly as she said that after her miscarriage she asked herself the questions, "Maybe something's wrong with me?...Maybe my body's just ruined and I won't ever be able to carry babies!...Am I ever going to be able to have a baby? What if I can't have babies!" (150). Sherri as well questioned her ability to conceive a child after her miscarriage when she said, "I always think of a miscarriage in regard to one, my ability to conceive a child" (180). Kathy experienced a similar reaction after her miscarriages as she said, "At that point I thought, `Ok,... something's wrong with my body, I'm not going to have any more children" (190). These women experienced a sense of mistrust towards their bodies. Because we are not educated that miscarriage is a natural thing and that many women experience it during the childbearing years, these women feel that there is something inherently wrong with their bodies. All the blame and guilt that they feel at having miscarried is brought back and pointed at the body. Only one woman I interviewed, Carol, said that "I felt like my body recognized that there was a problem...and got rid of it" (70). Carol put more confidence in her body to do good and act naturally and less emphasis on how it had supposedly behaved negatively.

A couple of the women shared as well how they felt that they didn't *deserve* to rest and pamper their body following the miscarriage. Rachel says, "After my miscarriage I was just so tired...I didn't feel like I deserved to rest because, you know [Because it wasn't like you had a full-blown baby kind of thing?] Ya. So I never rested" (170).Rachel's reaction was most likely in response to how society views a miscarriage--a bad menstruation--which for many women it is not. Kathy also experienced similar feelings, as she states in her interview that "I used to let myself, you know, relax and sit down, and...not feel guilty. And the second I had the miscarriage I couldn't do that. I felt like, `Oh no, I don't deserve to sit down because I'm not doing anything'" (193). Kathy's perceptions of her body while she was pregnant differed greatly from when she was not. Following her miscarriage, Kathy didn't feel like she was "doing anything valuable." She continues explaining, "I just felt like I was doing something so important while I was

pregnant. And once I stopped being pregnant...I just felt worthless" (187) She also says that she "felt distant from [her] body" (191) and that she noticed a change in her eating habits following the miscarriage because she felt, "My body's not worth as much now that I'm not pregnant" (193). Like many women, part of Kathy's identity of being a woman is tied to her ability to conceive and give birth to a child.

Kathy's response corresponds as well to the emphasis and importance on motherhood within the Mormon church as discussed in chapter III. Her perceptions of her body lay mainly on these functions. How negatively or positively she viewed her body, as with many women, depended on how well her body was able to perform these functions. For many of these women when this function to give life seemed to backfire, they suffered from guilt, fear and mistrust of their own bodies.

Providing a safe space for these women to talk about these feelings allowed them to venture into parts of themselves that perhaps they were afraid to acknowledge. During the interview with Kathy as she described her feelings about her body after her miscarriages she said "It's just kind of a feeling of not as much value" (194). To which I responded "But it's not true!" (194) And Kathy's response was "I'm just exploring" (194). It is this exploration of self that benefits these women by asking the difficult questions and acknowledging the periodic negative influences of our society. They speak about topics that are uncomfortable, like blood, tissue and their bodies, and in doing so they reveal a wealth of knowledge for us as the listeners/readers to learn from and inevitably it improves our perceptions and understanding of women who miscarry and what some may experience.

We learn from these women that there is an extraordinary amount of emphasis on a woman's ability to reproduce. This strong emphasis intensifies women's responses to their miscarriage and how they view their body. Most of the women I interviewed expressed guilt and shame that their body had "failed" in its attempt to produce a healthy

baby. If a woman's identity is so closely tied to her ability to be a mother, when she does miscarry, she may suffer a profound loss of self-worth and confidence in her body.

It is also evident from the narrative accounts that most of the women desired to talk openly about the intimate details of their miscarriage--the blood, tissue, and pain involved. We learn from this desire to share such detail that women need to talk about their experiences without being edited. It may make some people uncomfortable and squeamish, but for women who miscarry, this is their reality and they must acknowledge and be honest about this reality and not gloss over it as if it never happened. Being able to confront and be honest about the reality of miscarriage can potentially help the women heal from their loss as well as educate their listeners. Talking about miscarriage in this way takes away the mystery and secrecy and puts miscarriage in a space where it can be discussed and listened to with sympathy and compassion and not as something of which to be ashamed and to be hidden.

CHAPTER V--CONCLUSION

Hollow Echoes to Filled Reverberations

At its most encompassing, performance may be seen as broadly metacultural, a cultural means of objectifying and laying open to scrutiny culture itself, for culture is a system of systems of signification.

--Richard Bauman

I call this chapter *Hollow Echoes to Filled Reverberations* to signify the process of speech performance. The women's stories are the echoes--they have distinct similarities. Unfortunately our society, as well as the women who share their stories, often feel that the stories have no substance, significance or importance--hence they are perceived as *hollow* echoes. The purpose of this thesis is to reveal that the women's miscarriage stories are indeed *filled reverberations*--there is substance, importance and significance and much we can learn from the told experiences.

The three groups who can benefit from these stories on which I concentrated are the women themselves, the Mormon community and the medical community. For these particular women in this study, their religious affiliates and the medical community were two of the main groups with whom they were working at the time of their miscarriage. Obviously another group intimately associated with the women were their spouses and other family members and certainly they and all of society can benefit from understanding the emotional and physical implications of miscarriage. For specificity, I chose to concentrate on the two wider communities of religion and medicine. I will discuss how the women's stories can benefit these communities.

First, the women themselves. As I discussed in Chapters I and II, when women are allowed to have a voice it empowers them. When I asked these women if they would be willing to share their miscarriage experience with me in a more formal setting where their comments would be recorded, each one was happy and willing to participate. This is not to say that every woman I approached was willing to formally share her story--there

were a few who were not willing for personal reasons. But for those who did participate, I perceived this as a desire to feel heard and to have their experience validated and valued. Too often in our society we devalue empirical evidence when for these women "experience is all [they] have" (Williams 130).

This is also an opportunity to view the women in a different life circumstance as Stahl suggests, "Rarer...is the opportunity to experience someone else's past as though it were a present moment. A storyteller gives us a glimpse of someone who*was* but is now changed, a self that shares some consistencies with the person we now see before us, but a self that *could not be known* to us save through a story such as this" (22). As the listener/reader, we are given the chance to learn about the miscarriage experience as well as the women themselves and how they felt and worked through their experience. It also allows them to view that "self" that can only be seen as they tell their story. It is that sense of "self-exploration" that Kathy mentioned that enables the women to learn and empowers them as Bateson argues, "Self-knowledge is empowering" (5).

Many times the women are trying to make meaning of their experience. To not have the opportunity to talk about it can certainly prolong the healing process. Gretta expressed that immediately following her miscarriage she struggled with the question, "How do I process this information and put it on the shelf? I couldn't figure out how to do that" (211). Allowing women to talk about their experiences has the potential to help them work through the loss and devastation.

Their stories also can as Bauman suggests "lay open to scrutiny culture itself." Storytelling and specifically these stories comment on the women's culture and allows us as the listener/reader to make certain conclusions about the particular culture's habits and practices. It is a way to critique their communities' behavior as Layne suggests, "Given the lack of social support for such losses one may ask...whether the narratives of these mourners can be interpreted as a form of social criticism--of evidence of the lack of community, and of social life as a life of pain" (140). The women themselves as well as

their culture can learn how to improve any negative behavior within their community and make it more of a nurturing environment in order to meet more the of the women's needs.

We learn from these women's culture that it values motherhood and fertility. In fact, fertility and motherhood is a dominant metaphor in defining women. This metaphor defines women as those who can have babies (or do have babies) and those who don't. To be a mother is not inherently a bad thing, that is not my argument. It is actually, for those who choose it and would agree, a wonderful and miraculous event and opportunity. But to define women solely by their reproductive capabilities is an injustice to women for various reasons. Specific to my argument in this thesis, emphasizing motherhood and a woman's ability to reproduce as a woman's main reason for existence can negatively affect the way a woman reacts and regards her body and her "role in life" when miscarriage occurs. Instead of responding to her body negatively as though it failed or that it is somehow flawed, women need to be enouraged to regard their bodies as beautiful and functioning naturally. Ideally, we need to accept women as human beings capable of many ideas, talents and pursuits. Our culture also defines what is acceptable to discuss and what not to discuss--especially for women. Allowing a space for women to talk about their bodies and specifically miscarriage enhances what we as humans experience and what we value.

The second group that can clearly benefit from the women's experiences is the Mormon community to which all the women interviewed belong. Many of the women shared how the Mormon community responded to their miscarriage. Many times it was positive and helpful, as Gretta recounts that after going to church following her miscarriage, "The things they [the other members] said to me were incredible" (207). She said she "felt like this wasn't my load to carry. All these people had come in...and shouldered a piece of it and were helping me....I knew that they were thinking of us, and I could feel that" (207). Carol, as mentioned in chapter I, had her hometeachers come and give her a blessing and she says, "It was really good to talk to them....They were very

open about talking to me and...about the feelings" (67). Kathy talks about how her Sunday school teacher came up to her and told her, "'I am so sorry,'...and tears welled up. There is a man that can look me in the eyes and express sympathy....He was hurting for me" (191). Conversely, some of the women had more negative experiences within their church community as Katie talks about different people within her ward at church that would say comments, obviously trying to help, but Katie exclaims, "They never say exactly the right thing" (115). Shauna and Marie struggled knowing how to talk with their bishop about the miscarriages. Whether directly or indirectly some of the women experienced misunderstanding or ignorance from others within their Mormon community and within their own families within that community. The religious community needs to be more educated about what a miscarriage is and what it is not. It could be more open and allow, without judgment and without shock of one's openness and honesty, certain topics of conversation like miscarriage to occur, whether in public forums like Testimony meeting, or in private conversations. Ultimately when and where a woman talks about her miscarriage is up to her discretion, but to allow at least the choice to share without feeling ashamed and uncomfortable would be a healthy and productive alternative to the discomfort that many women feel currently. This would also allow the women and their spouses to work through the myriad of feelings that they experience following a miscarriage--some of which I have brought out in this thesis. Additionally, there needs to be a greater sense of sensitivity to the women physically--bringing meals over, sending flowers, offering to help with household chores and childcare or writing a sympathetic note can help the women feel that this was indeed something to sorrow over and that it is acceptable to grieve.

As far as Mormon doctrine that specifically addresses miscarriage--there is not a lot to be found. But the more women talk about their experiences with ot hers, the more discussion and questions that will take place within the Mormon church and possibly through prayer and revelation, some of the questions may be answered.

Women who miscarry can be reassured by the religious teachings about the importance of their own bodies and the hope that the gospel provides about the nature of our spirits and perhaps the spirits of the pregnancies that were miscarried.

The third group to benefit specifically from the women's miscarriage stories is the medical community. Doctors and nurses certainly understand miscarriage to some degree and the complexities of why it can occur and how often. But some lack the knowledge of the emotional results of miscarriage and can be educated in how to respond sensitively to the women and the involved families of those who miscarry. Taking the woman's call for help seriously is helpful when she is frightened about what she is experiencing. Rachel talks about when she began to bleed she called the doctor's office and they told her to call the hospital and she said, "I felt kind of bad calling the hospital because they acted like I was so silly to call them" (157). The hospital referred her back to her doctor and Rachel in the meantime was experiencing her miscarriage and just wanted to know what to do. When she finally got a hold of her doctor he said, "`Look, I'm not on duty right now can you call again?'...He didn't ask what was wrong or anything" (157). Eventually she went to a different hospital. Rachel comments that dealing with the medical community was one of the "frustrating things" (155) about her miscarriage.

Knowing how to respond sensitively to the women after they miscarry can help the women better cope with their loss. Kathy mentions that her doctor said to her "`Don't think of this as a baby,'" or "`The body couldn't have made it, so just go home and be grateful that this happened.' And there just wasn't a hint of gratefulness...you know?" (191). Kathy says, "To have these doctors totally and completely insensitive to it was just amazing to me" (191). By simply listening or saying, "I'm sorry this has happened, it must be a difficult thing for you," can help the women feel the support of their nurses and doctors.

Even understanding or acknowledging the physical pain that women experience is helpful instead of passing it off as just "like a heavy period" (186) as Kathy's doctor told

her and she exclaims, "It wasn't, it was very, a lot, lot more" (186). Monitoring the women more closely during this difficult and painful time could help the women not to have to deal with the messiness of the miscarriage alone. Women should not have to deal with this type of devastation when there are modern techniques available to help alleviate the pain or D&C's that can be performed to avoid the physical trauma of passing the fetus. Gretta's experience proved to be different from most of the other women I interviewed. She was able to find out by ultrasound that the pregnancy had indeed terminated and subsequently, her doctor had her come in immediately and performed a D&C. Gretta says about her experience, "I'm glad it happened to me this way. Rather than other stories I've heard--you know, where the women bleed and bleed and bleed at home. And that terrible fear they have...in the middle of the night, at the toilet,...crying, that's just terrible....I had a nurse, I had my husband, I had my doctor" (208). Whether the miscarriage is "helped" by a D&C, or closely monitored at a woman's home, either way can help the women to not feel so frightened and alone throughout the experience. It is also more safe to know what the woman is experiencing and how much blood she is losing. By the time I was finally examined by my doctor, I had lost enough blood that he questioned whether a blood transfusion would be needed. It should not have reached that point, as I had continually called the nurses and they kept telling me to `wait it out and stay down in bed,' and that eventually, `everything would pass.' I should have been examined much sooner.

Obviously there are doctors and nurses who are very aware of the physical trauma and emotional results of miscarriage and offer sympathy and help to the women. Shauna talks about how the doctor on call at the hospital where she had her D&C came to her and told Shauna, "This is not your fault. It's not because you went on a plane that you started having a miscarriage...there's nothing you could have done." Shauna responds that "She tried to allay these guilt feelings....That was nice" (92). I also found my ob/gyn sympathetic to my experience as I went to see him a week later to have a check-up he

told me that the day I had my miscarriage, two of his daughters-in-law had experienced one and that this "was hard on Grandpa, too." I thought it was an appropriate and kind thing to say, not only because I needed to know others were experiencing miscarriage, but it also verified to me that this was a difficult experience for family members as well--that they also may feel sorrow over the loss.

These feelings of connection that are shared by those who experience miscarriage and their loved ones and those who hear their stories are exactly what Stahl suggests storytellers invite their listeners to experience with them. As we share our life experiences with one another we truly do "bind ourselves to our community." Through my miscarriage experience I felt closer to my husband and other family members who shared mine and their grief with me, other women and men with whom I shared my story, the women who shared their stories with me, and my doctor, who shared his own story about his grief concerning his daughters-in-law. I felt an intimate connection that we had all experienced something difficult or knew someone we loved who had experienced a difficult event.

Telling our story has the potential to not only educate the three specific communities I've mentioned--the women who miscarry, and the Mormon and medical communities, but to create the bonds of intimacy that can glue these communities together and as a result, help them better understand one another and our human condition. We are all mortal and because of our mortality we experience death. Miscarriage is the death of a pregnancy and is therefore an integral part of our humanness. We need to be able to talk about this experience and share our feelings and emotions in a safe environment within our communities. It is important to acknowledge this part of the human experience and to share what it means for the women and for their listeners. It is only then, through our stories, that we can "assert our connection to one another" as Stahl suggests.

Awhile ago our daughter came home from primary having put together a "family chain." As part of her primary lesson in church they had talked about families then put

together a chain or necklace consisting of members of each child's family. Ashlin had colored and cut out Daddy, Mommy, herself and her baby brother. Interestingly in addition to our family, she had included another family member; an older boy. When I asked who this other mysterious member of our family was, she had only two responses; that it was her cousin or her brother. When pushed to talk about it more, she refused and skipped away happily. At the moment, I didn't think much of her answer. As I looked at her family chain again a couple of days later sitting on the counter it was then that I was struck by the thought that perhaps this little tyke knew something we didn't--or maybe not. But I loved the thought and quietly put the family chain in my journal to keep to remind me of the possibilty. The "family chain" holds its own story now.

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APPENDIX I

The following questions are those that I had each woman I interviewed look at and if they wanted to address them they were free to do so. These were questions and issues that I personally had thought about and I was curious if other women had experienced any similar feelings.

--Had you told anyone that you were pregnant? How did you respond to these individuals after the miscarriage?

--How did you tell family and/or friends about your miscarriage? How did you feel talking about it?

--Did you find it valuable to talk to other women who had a similar experience? Why?

--What sort of feelings did you experience during or immediately after your miscarriage?

--What feelings did you experience upon your arrival home from the hospital or doctor's office?

--Did you have feelings of guilt? Why? What were these guilt feelings about?

--How has your church experience helped or hurt the way you feel about your miscarriage?

APPENDIX II

Carol

Provo, Utah

April 3, 1995

Personal Narrative

INFORMANT DATA

Age: 26 Sex: Female

Place of birth: Seattle, Washington

Home region: Provo, Utah, U.S.A.

Religion:LDS--convert

Ethnicity: Caucasion

Occupation: Graduate Student and English teacher

Relation to collector: Personal friend

Marital Status: Married

CONTEXTUAL DATA

Social Context

Carol shared her miscarriage story with me in her own home in Provo, Utah on April 3, 1995. We were the only two people in the room. We had previously spoken together about her miscarriage and she agreed to share her experience with me more formally. We were both seven months pregnant with our second pregnancy at the time.

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C: My husband and I had been talking about getting pregnant for, a little while. We had talked about it, about getting pregnant, about a year after we were married, the following summer after we were married and we had prayed and fasted about it and neither one of us felt good about it. It was not the right time. But after we'd been married another eight months or so, we started talking about it a little bit more and I decided, or we decided together that it would be ok for me to not take the birth control pill anymore. So, I went in and talked to a doctor and he said to make sure that we waited a month after I got off the pill to try and get pregnant. And so I went off the pill like in March, I think, and we didn't try to get pregnant in April and um then we both graduated that April. May was our anniversary so we went on a trip and we got pregnant. We found out a couple weeks later that I had gotten pregnant, through a home pregnancy test. The day before I took the test, I was sitting in the JKHB writing some letters to uh, to friends and as I was sitting there in a room, which I was totally alone, I got a weird feeling that somebody else was with me. And the feeling made me wonder if I was pregnant. It was a different feeling than I'd felt before, but it was a happy feeling. So I told my husband, "You know, I think I might be pregnant, I feel like I am." So we took the home pregnancy test and um, it was kind of funny actually because we stared there at the pink line saying, "Do you see pink?" to each other [laughs] "I think I see pink," "I don't know if I see pink." Anyway, we both saw pink but Matt still wasn't sure that really meant I was pregnant or not. So anyway, that weekend, I basically just kind of adjusted to the idea of being pregnant and we talked about it with each other. And, uh, I told one other friend of mine that I was pregnant and then Monday I went to school to teach, and after my class I went to use the restroom, I noticed I was bleeding. And, it kind of scared me, 'cause I thought, "Maybe I'm not really pregnant? Maybe my period is just late." And I didn't know what was going on, because I had never been late like that before. But I had just gotten off the pill

not that long ago, so I wasn't sure how my body was reacting and I was just kind of spotting, I wasn't really cramping or anything, but I just felt scared. And so I came home and I got right in bed, [laughs] 'cause I didn't know what to do. And I was having a hard time telling Matt what was going on because I thought, "Well gosh, maybe I'm not pregnant. And maybe my feelings that I was pregnant were all wrong." And I started doubting my own perceptions and my ability to feel like I know what's going on with my body. And anyway, it was really scary. And I started doubting the home pregnancy test, I thought, "Well maybe it wasn't right." And "What's going on?" And I called the doctor and I talked to a nurse who basically said, "Well, a lot of women spot in early pregnancy and maybe nothing is going to happen, but on the other hand, you may be miscarrying. If you are there's nothing we can do about it." Which wasn't very reassuring. So she just basically told me to get rest. And, so that's what I tried to do, was get rest. And I brought the t.v. into our bedroom, and I tried to get my mind off of it, though I couldn't, at all. And, so, I guess I was still hopeful at that time that I was pregnant, that it was going to be ok, and that I was just spotting, that would be the end of it. But, I kept spotting that day. And then the next day, um, I took the home pregnancy test again, because I wanted to know if the hormones were still working in my body. And so I got up and took it and there was still a pink line there, but it was a lot lighter than the first time had been. And so I felt like the hormones weren't working like they were before. And, it scared me, um, or made me nervous. And again, it was so light that I thought, "Gosh, maybe I was just seeing things before and maybe I'm not pregnant. And maybe I am, maybe I'm not." Just back and forth, back and forth. And I didn't know if I wanted to be pregnant and to be miscarrying, because that would at least validate the feeling I had that I really was pregnant. Or, if I really wanted to not be pregnant just be late on my period [laughs] because that would mean that I really wasn't losing a baby. So I was having really mixed feelings and, and I was so confused. And it was hard to talk to my husband about it because I, I just didn't know to trust my feelings or to trust the test and he didn't know

what was going on, you know, totally either. We've always had a really open relationship where we could talk to each other about anything, yet I was just so confused and, and hurting, and just, I don't know how to express my emotions exactly, but it was just hard to talk about because I just felt so out of control. And I just didn't know what was going on with my body. And then later that afternoon I went to the restroom and some placental tissue came out of me. And when I noticed that, I screamed [laughs] for my husband and I just started shaking, 'cause nothing like that had ever happened before and, my mom had told me that if anything like that ever did happen to save it. And so, we put it in some container with water or alcohol or something. Something came out, besides, besides just blood. And so, I guess I'm saying that now, because the doctor told me that later, that it was placental tissue. But I thought maybe it was part of the pregnancy somehow and I knew the baby would be really small. But then, there was still part of me that thought, "Well gosh, maybe I'm having twins, and maybe I'm only half miscarrying." [laughs] I mean I was just trying to hang onto something. And I thought, "Well, this happened, but maybe I'm still ok, maybe my pregnancy's still in tact." And I still wasn't sure what was going on with my body. We called the doctor and the doctor said,"Come in." And so, I went in and, um, and I was crying. Then the doctor came in and said, "You're not having a very good day, are you?" [laughs] or something like that. And I just started crying, "No I'm not." [laughing] Anyway, he was really nice though, just in tone, and trying to be, you know, comforting as much as he could. And, uh, he gave me an exam and basically said, that the placental tissue had come out, that he thought I was in the process of miscarrying, that he thought I may miscarry further and um, tried to tell me what to expect, and basically said that the bleeding should stop in a certain amount of time and if it didn't then I needed to go and talk to him and stuff. So, anyway, I didn't really know until I got to the office and asked him several times, "Was I really pregnant?" He's like, "Yes, you really were pregnant" [laughs]. So, then I came home and I just, I just hurt. I had been so excited and there was such a loss of expectation. And, I think I felt

like I had failed as a woman. That's the best way I can describe it. 'Cause, I hurt for me and I was feeling bad that I was my husband's wife in some ways, feeling bad for him that I would've miscarried [laughs]. But on the other hand I was kind of relieved to know that my feelings about being pregnant were right. But then I was so sad that I had miscarried, or that I was miscarrying. And I didn't want to talk about it. I didn't want to talk to my family. I didn't want to talk to the one person that I had told. And I would cry and my husband would try and comfort me and then he would cry 'cause he felt bad his comforting wasn't working. And so I'd try and comfort him [laughs] to not feel bad for me, but, it just, it really deeply hurt. And it felt kind of like when my grandma died, that it was just a loss. But I didn't ever feel like, that I'd lost a whole person, I just felt like I lost something valuable...wonderful. And that I had lost an experience, I guess, because it was just so new, that we had just found out and then I miscarried and just happened so fast. I just felt like I was on a rollercoaster. Anyway, I ended up grading papers that night, because I had to. I had to get things done and I had no way to tell, I just couldn't tell my students and I couldn't tell anyone else so there was no way I could make an excuse for myself. But I taught the next day and then I went home and went to bed again and pretty much stayed there as much as I could for that week. Just because, I didn't feel good. The pain wasn't bad, though. I've had lot worse pain in regular periods and um, I mean the physical pain, the emotional pain was really tough. Eventually I guess I called my parents. My mom was good about it, she basically said, "You can try again," [laughs] you know? But, "It's ok," and that "those things happen." And um, I think it made me feel better that she wasn't mad at me. Because I think that was my worry, that she wanted to have a grandchild so bad and I thought, you know, "She's gonna be so disappointed. And it's gonna be my fault." So, I guess I think it made me feel better. I think she knew how devastated I was, too.... I talked to you, I talked to you before. In fact, you were the only person who I knew had one at the time so. And, right after I had it I felt like I could talk to you. But, I think I called you or you called.... Sometime within

like a week after and we talked about it a little bit. And that helped I guess just to not feel like I was alone, 'cause I did feel like everybody else that I knew who got pregnant had their baby. Anyway, I told my friend, I think I called her, I kept it a really short conversation. And, she ended up sending me flowers--which was really nice, just to say, "I'm thinking about you." She didn't know what else to do beyond that. Um, I'm seeing if I'm answering all the questions. Um, did I feel guilty? I guess I wouldn't have called it that, but I guess I did somewhat. You know, just the way I responded to my mom. 'Cause I was afraid to tell her 'cause I thought she'd be mad or disappointed.... I think, it was, I guess it was the woman thing. I felt like I'm not a real woman. It was like a whole identity crisis, in a way. Because, before, you know, all my life before this, I forgot to say this at the beginning. I always thought I was going to have a hard time getting pregnant. I just always thought that. I thought, "The pregnancy is such a miracle, it's gonna be hard for me and it maybe will never even happen to me." And then, my mom kept saying, "Oh no, you'll get pregnant right away." You know, "Nobody in our family's had a hard time getting pregnant," and [laughs], she always said that my body was built to carry children, 'cause I have big hips and she doesn't, you know. She had a harder time, but...she thought that, anyway, the way I physically was built was better to carry children than the way she was. And so she thought I wouldn't have any problem. And I got pregnant right away and I thought, "Whoa, maybe this is gonna be a piece of cake!" [laughs] And, and it didn't work out that way and I thought, "Oh no, now maybe I'll never get pregnant again." And then I didn't even want to try anymore after that. The doctor told us to wait for awhile. But it was a real rollercoaster experience. Feeling like, do I ever wanna try again? Or maybe I just don't want to have children for years now, because the miscarriage was so hard, I just didn't know if I could risk feeling that way again. I also had my home teachers come over and give me a blessing. And, it was really good to talk to them because I found out that both of their wives had had miscarriages. And they were very open about talking to me and, um, about the feelings. And I was really impressed to how open they were,

and how, how much they were willing to share about their feelings and you know, what they perceived their wives' feelings to be at the time and how they got through it. And, so it was really helpful. Really, really helpful. 'Cause then I felt even less alone. And both of their wives had harder, or worse experiences than me. They miscarried, you know, further along. And, um, and they were just harder ordeals physically and emotionally. So, anyway, but they were as empathetic, they said, "It doesn't matter when you have one, because once you find out you're pregnant, the expectation is there." So, I did find it valuable to talk to other people about it, at least a little bit. I couldn't do it much, I couldn't the first few weeks after the miscarriage. But eventually, the more I listened to other women and just keep my ears opened, I found that a lot of women have had miscarriages, and that everybody has had slightly different experiences. And I don't feel less of a woman, anymore, because of my miscarriage. It was just at that time. It was just unbearable. And devastating, and I just, I didn't feel like I could live with myself [laughs] I mean I wasn't suicidal, I'm not saying that. I just, it was just so overwhelming, like, what do I do? How do I get this hurt out of me? [reads] How has church experience helped or hurt the way you feel about your miscarriage? Well, I guess it helped me in terms of having home teachers that I did. So, that was helpful. I don't know if I've ever totally bought into the church concept or culture that women are to have children. I didn't grow up L.D.S. and in fact my parents never talked to me about being a mother someday. In fact I didn't talk to my mom about it until, you know, I had been married for awhile. And, I had even wondered, you know, part of my mind had even wondered if, "Do they want me to have kids?" [laughs] You know? They talked about being a grandparent, sometimes, but they never really talked about me being a mother, and I'm an only child [laughs]. They talked about my career, they encouraged education, you know, being independent and successful in a career setting. And it wasn't 'till I told my mom that we were talking about having kids and she says, "I don't even care if you ever use your degree!" You know? [laughs] "I'm glad you got it and that was, you know, important, but now, if you want to

have kids, well that's..." You know, she was really excited. But it was something I did know she wanted, at the time I had my miscarriage, to have kids. And I knew she would be excited to be a grandma, but, it wasn't something that throughout my whole life we talked about. And I never looked at motherhood as being this glorified calling....I think that would be even harder. So, I don't know if that answers the question? I think it would have been harder to have grown up in the church and have had a miscarriage. I didn't buy into those things [laughs], I didn't believe them. Um, I'm trying to think what else I can say. When we, when my husband and I, you know, talked about trying to get pregnant again after we had waited the time that, or after we were close to have waited the time that the doctors had suggested that we do, um, it was hard because, sometimes I wouldn't want to get pregnant, and you know, for like a year, and make statements like, "I'm just gonna get a job, maybe we'll get pregnant in two or three years." [laughs]... But I don't even wanna deal with it 'til then. And he would just sit there and listen, 'cause I don't think he really thought that that's what I wanted. But I needed to say it anyway because there was part of me that was just scared and I didn't ever want to try that again. And then, there were parts that, sometimes I wanted to try, and then he didn't anymore, you know, he was scared or I guess nervous or worried about miscarrying again, or maybe, you know, what would having kids mean? The whole thing was just brought into question. And, and that can effect, that back and forth really did effect our relationship a little bit. We still loved each other, and that was fine, but there was this certain instability about our future and what we were doing in terms of our goals with each other. And you know, when I wanted to get pregnant again, I wanted him to decide what he wanted and to make up his mind and just do it [laughs]. And when I didn't want to or didn't want to talk about it, then um, I wanted, I guess I wanted him to kinda encourage me or something. Because it was scary, I don't know what I wanted [laughs]. So, ya, it was kind of back and forth, back and forth. And, so, to try and get ourselves into sink again, you know, was challenging. And, you know, when you're trying to have a baby, or not trying

to have a baby, it totally changes your whole sex life [laughs] completely. Because everything that revolves around sex is, baby-oriented, somehow. Because everything is wrapped up in that, "Are we having a baby or are we not?" And, so, anyway, I didn't ever look at our sex life the same way. It was always an emotional related to baby thing rather than just, a sharing time that we would have with each other and focus on each other. There was more of future [laughs]. You know, scared I would get pregnant, or afraid I wouldn't, you know? Kind of this back and forth. ... And I feel like after I got pregnant, this, I did want to say this, that since, that after I got pregnant, I had, uh, the second time, just a real sense that it was gonna be ok and that I wasn't going to miscarry again. And that my pregnancy, I guess I felt like, in some ways my miscarriage was a blessing, because I felt like, my body recognized that there was a problem, and I don't even know if this is true, if there really was a problem, I have no idea why I miscarried, but this is still how I looked at it. That my body recognized there was a problem and got rid of it. And so, especially after I was three months of being pregnant, or so, just more and more sure that I wasn't going to miscarry, and that my baby would be healthy. And I knew my baby would be healthy because, if there had been a problem, just like before, my body would have sensed it and gotten rid of it. But I really didn't think I was going to. I just had a real peaceful feeling the second time I got pregnant, that this is really going to work. So, and since then I haven't questioned, or worried, or all the feelings about the miscarriage eventually went away. Although I do feel, in some ways I think I feel successful as a woman, because I'm pregnant, because my body is changing and everywhere I go, it's just, there I am, I am a woman (laughs). It's so interesting how much your identity is tied up in your gender. And how much for women pregnancy is a part of that identity. And for women who can't get pregnant I empathize a lot. I do remember what that hurt felt like. And, I, I feel bad for them. And if I think about it hard, I can really empathize. Because it's scary, you don't know. I mean for everybody you just

don't know whether you can get pregnant or not. And, I just think that would be so hard to never be able to have this experience and to be female.

Shauna

Provo, Utah

April 23, 1995

Personal Narrative

INFORMANT DATA

Age: 25 Sex: Female

Place of birth: Walnut Creek, California

Home region: Provo, Utah, U.S.A.

Religion:LDS

Ethnicity: Caucasion

Occupation: Graduate student and English teacher

Relation to Collector: Friend and colleague

Marital Status: Married

CONTEXTUAL DATA

Social Context

Shauna shared her miscarriage story with me in my home in Provo, Utah on April 23, 1995. My husband was in the other room, otherwise it was just the two of us. Shauna had shared some of the details of her miscarriage with me previously. She came to my home to share her story with me in a more formal setting. I was eight months pregnant with my second pregnancy.

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S: I've had two miscarriages. Uh, and the first one was very different than the second one. Um, the first one I was really, I was totally not expecting to be pregnant at all because, um, I had really irregular periods. And I have had that my whole life. Like maybe one or two a year, and so it was kind of like, we didn't have any money, and so we weren't really trying to get pregnant but at the same time we weren't using anything to prevent it. The doctor just basically told me I wouldn't get pregnant unless we went on medication or something. So we weren't using anything and um, I just all of a sudden started feeling fat, breaking out and um, and ah, my chest hurt really bad. And I'd go running and just be groaning, I'd need to wear two sports bras [laughs]. So that went on for about a month then I was going, "What's going on?" I didn't know what was going on. The pregnancy test that I took was negative, so finally I went to the doctor and we took a serum test, a blood test for the pregnancy. And uh, I got the results back and it said positive, this was last, it was the end of my first year, so when was that? 1993? April 1993. 94? Ya, 94--it was last April. And um, so I was really surprised. I went and told my husband and he was really surprised, but we were really excited about it. We didn't know how we'd pay for it, but we were still excited. And in my family, my mom's really open and blunt, and, sometimes, very assertive, so she feels like the minute you know, you ought to let everybody know. And um, my mom's had four miscarriages and my sister, my oldest sister's had almost that many and she has two kids now. So but I didn't, I didn't call and tell her right away. We were going home in three days because it was the end of the semester, so we were going home for my sister's wedding. And so I waited until we got there and because it was my sister's wedding, I didn't feel like I should make this big announcement to the family and steal the thunder from her show. And so I just kind of told my mom while we were on our way to the store. I told her, "Oh, by the way I'm pregnant." And she reacted kind of funny, like, um, "Oh, really, well that's good," kinda thing. And I was kind of taken aback. She didn't act real excited, but I think the reason,

now I understand was that she was hurt that I hadn't told her sooner. 'Cause it had been four days or something like that, and she thought that I should've called her. I didn't really realize this right away. And we weren't telling anyone because of the wedding. But, I told my grandmother, kind of quietly. Andy and I, my husband and I had decided not to tell people, but it was just really hard not to because I was excited. And then we were at the reception, they had a ring ceremony because her husband's family, my sister's husband's family wasn't a member, weren't members of the church. I was just bawling and my sister was like, "What is wrong with you?" And I said, "I am pregnant right now, and I can't control my hormones." So she got all excited and so it kinda got out that I was pregnant and uh, but, I didn't want it to, you know, again I didn't want to make this big announcement. And so, my sister knew, and then, um, my mom must have told her good friend...I mean, anyways, it was just painful. I had been spotting, and I didn't, in fact I spotted before I knew I was pregnant, and I just thought, "Oh, maybe I'm gonna have a period," I really didn't know because I'm so weird menstrually. So I had been spotting, and the doctor, when I found out I was pregnant, said, "Ah, don't worry about it, you're probably ok, everyone spots a little bit," and what not. So when I told people, when I told my mom and my grandmother that I was pregnant, um, I had kind of said that I had been spotting, so I'm trying to keep it quiet. What happened was, we got home from the wedding reception, and we're at our house and there's a ton of people around, old friends, but they're all in the living room. I come in and my mom's good friend who had known me my whole life, I think, I don't know if I had whispered to her, or told her or something like that, I had been alone with her, I think I told her that I was pregnant. Well she is making a video for her son who was on a mission who also knew me, said to me earlier, "Wouldn't it be fun if you made the announcement on the video?" and I said, "No, that wouldn't, I really don't want to make a big announcement." Well, in the middle of everyone, Lucy comes with her video camera and is video taping me, I mean there's just a ton of people around us, people I didn't really feel like making a big announcement to.

And she's like, "Shauna, do you have any news?" And I was like, "Uh no, this is a great wedding," trying to avoid it. And finally my mom was like "Come on Shauna, why don't you just tell everyone your secret?" you know, and at that point what could I do? I mean everyone's staring at me, and so I just said, "Well, I'm pregnant." And I was so embarrassed and so mad at my mother for doing that to me. And um, and Andy felt really awkward about it, 'cause everyone just kind of stopped and then they didn't really know what to do because, you know, and my parents thought that we were playing this big secrecy game, like we're trying to keep them away from our lives. And um, maybe this is off the topic, but see the reason I think my mother is so sensitive about wanting to know right away and being very open about it is because my sister who's older than me, I have two older sisters. Her husband and her are private and different and my mom has felt very excluded from their lives, they've kind of pushed them away. And so when my sister went into labor, it was a big deal to be there and be able to help out and everything. They didn't even call her. She got a phone call from my sister after the baby was born, after, you know, it's been a couple hours. And my mom it, I mean, just hurt her. My sister hadn't involved her. When my oldest sister had had her baby, my mom was right there helping her, you know, in the delivery room, and what not, right in the thick of it. And, being so excluded my mom had been hurt. I mean, I think it'd been one of the hardest things. And so, so when she sees me not telling her right away, and being a little more secretive instead of trying to involve her so much, defenses came up, right away. And so, both Andy and I felt really frustrated about this, and my family's very loud and aggressive and my husband's kinda quiet, and he was, he was just as frustrated as I was. So I communicated this to my mother and told her, you know, "Mom that really wasn't your right to make me make that announcement in front of everyone," and her response was, "Ah what do you care?" you know."Why do you try and keep some big secret? You're just playing this stupid game." And I said, "It's not a stupid game Mom, I'm spotting, I may be having a miscarriage. I don't want to announce to the whole world and

the ward that I'm gonna have a baby and then, and then miscarry." Her response is, "Well everyone, most women have had miscarriages," you know, "So big deal if you tell 'em and then you have one then so what? You had a miscarriage." So it was just a lot of tension. I was really mad at my mom. So anyways, the next day, I woke up in the morning, and my husband was gonna go golfing with his best friend and he asked me if I wanted to go and I said "No, I'm too tired." About an hour after that I woke up and I just saw blood everywhere, in my bed. And I hadn't had any pain, no cramps, I just, no cramps or nothing, I just saw blood everywhere. And I'd had a couple of spots, like I said. I ran to the bathroom, and just kind of gushed, you know, I mean, like I was, while I was running, I mean it was like a big splash almost. And I ran to my mom's bathroom, it was the closest one and I said " Mom, I'm having a miscarriage." And I was just bleeding everywhere, gushing. I stayed down because my sister said, you know, "I'd bled a ton and I still held on to my baby, so stay down." So I stayed down and just bled a ton. And I was just bleedin', bleedin', bleedin'. Um, and it bled the whole day, and then the next day we needed to drive home, you know, a twelve hour drive. And so, I just took, uh, a bunch of pads with me and bled pretty much the whole drive home. We got home late that night and early the next morning, um, we were trying to decide, if we needed to call the doctor or not, because I hadn't passed anything, yet, so we didn't...

K: You hadn't passed tissue or anything?

S: Ya, I mean I had passed huge clots, I mean gigantic clots, but I hadn't passed anything that looked tissuey. Um, and so, that morning uh, about, really early in the morning, about seven, all of sudden I started having cramps, and I thought, "Oh, ok, here's the miscarriage." Um, and it didn't, I really didn't know what was happening. I just kind of laid in bed and all of sudden was going [groans]. And I couldn't move, it hurt so bad, I just kind of stayed there and I didn't groan or anything, I just kind of sat there and grit my teeth and told my husband I was really in pain. And I only had about twenty minutes of pain. And then it stopped and, I got up and, and um went to the bathroom, and then I

passed, I just plopped, it just came out, it was something that looked like a sack. And so, the miscarriage was over. Well the trauma was, I was frustrated because what had happened with my mom, and the day after I'd announced to everyone, you know, now people in the ward knew and all this kind of stuff, I had this miscarriage. I was away, you know, I was in Utah now, again, and so, you know, I just left my mom to deal, tell people, whatever. But, um, that same day we heard from, we were waiting to hear whether my husband got into medical school, and it was pretty much this was our last hope, this school that we heard from, we heard that about an hour after my miscarriage that he hadn't. So it was just kind of like all the trauma hit at once. And so, you know, I just kind of bawled all day long, you know. I'm really not an emotional person, I mean I cry when I bear my testimony and stuff like that, but, I don't cry very often. But I just bawled because, uh, well I felt like I was kind of alone, you know? I felt like the Lord didn't, you know, like why did all of this have to happen at once? I think it was a combination of my husband not getting into med school, we didn't know what to do, all of a sudden all our plans were thrown into turmoil. And then I had this miscarriage and I'd had this huge fight with my family and um, I just kind of felt like, uh, you know, like we'd been praying and praying, why didn't the Lord help us? We tried to have faith, and you know, we felt like things would work out, and things didn't. And um, and so I went to the doctor and he basically said, "Well, just, just go ahead and bleed naturally and you'll clear up." And uh, so that's pretty much...

K: Did you feel like you'd been punished or anything?

S: No, well, not really. Um, because I hadn't really done anything. So I didn't really feel that way. I just felt, I think just the combination of things I just felt really frustrated. I felt like, again, I felt like, you know, why was this happening? And I think it was the stress of all the things being thrown into turmoil with my husband also. All of a sudden we weren't going to med school. What are we going to do? We planned on being gone. We pretty much counted on getting in. And so, it just threw everything up in the air and, and

uh, and so I was, I mean I just pretty much cried for one day and that was about it. After that, you know, I gained my strength pretty fast. Uh, I didn't feel too weak for too long. Maybe a couple days, and then I was back going strong.

K: Did you lose a lot of blood? Was the doctor concerned about it?

S: Um, I did, when I went into the doctor that morning, I said, you know, "I don't understand how people can lose this much blood and still live, [laughs] I feel like, um, do I, do I need some medicine? Is this ok to be losing this much blood?"

K: Do I need a transfusion?

S: Ya! I was amazed. Especially that first day when I was at home I just lost so much, again, I mean, as big as my fist I had one come out. He just said, "Well, let me give you some iron pills." And so that's what he did. Um, it seems like I bled for almost two weeks after that. A week and a half, two weeks? I mean it was a lot slower, but, the first three days were really...ya, and so, I think the part of the emotional problems with that one was, it was mainly because of the combination of the events.

K: Like the context of all these things happening?

S: Ya, you know, and it was a big surprise anyway, so it was like "Well, ok, I had miscarriage, um, get on with it," type of thing.

K: And how far, so how far along were you? Were you like six weeks or something like that?

S: When I first went in he thought I was eight weeks or something like that. But, I think he's been off because of my second pregnancy he told me I was eight weeks and then I went and saw the doctor who was going to carry me through the pregnancy, he's like, "Well, I think you're, you were probably four or five weeks max," you know. So I think, because I think I get a pretty early reading on my pregnancy. Like before a real pregnancy test can tell, because my chest gets really sore, I almost know right away. Several weeks after I'm pregnant, even. So my guess is that I was probably around six weeks. Although I thought I was about nine weeks. And you know I had been spotting fairly early, so it was

probably dead on arrival you know [laughs]. Um, but it was my first pregnancy, and you just really don't know what's going on with your body at that time, you know?

K: And it is common to spot, so it's really hard to know.

S: Ya, and I didn't spot a lot, you know, just one or two. And, you know, after the miscarriage, I started to feel a little bit skinnier, my bra started feeling a little bit better. And so [laughs] I started to feel good, like "Hey! This is nice to be..." and you know, I started jogging again. So I felt, I was kind of glad to be feeling normal again, because I had just felt so fat right there at the beginning. So that was in April. Let's see if I missed anything. I didn't really talk to many people about it. I didn't feel like I could really talk to my mom about it, because, um, of the tension that was already there. Some people are really good at listening, but my mom is one of those people that when you talk to her, uh, she starts telling you exactly what you should do and if you don't agree with her then you're the one who's dumb, you know. And so, I didn't really agree with her and so I just didn't really talk to her about it, um...

K: Which is again ironic because she had experienced miscarriage and you want to talk to someone who....

S: Ya, well that's her thing, you know, "Well I've had miscarriages, big deal!" you know, I mean, "It just happens. Every woman has had it." You know? And that's kind of, it's insensitive...

K: But maybe that's how she works through it.

S: I actually think it was partly defensive mechanism against what happened with my sister. So I couldn't really talk to her. Um, you know, I talked to my older sister a little bit, because she's had several, and I can talk really easily to her, but, not all that much because, you know, I was in Utah. I talked a little bit to some of my single friends who are really close, but, you know, they have no concept. So I didn't really talk to very many people about it. Did I tell you?

K: I think I saw you on campus one day and we talked and I don't know how it came out, but it came out that you had one and I've had one.

S: Ya.

K: And we were both like, "No way!"

S: Ok, ya, I think maybe I asked you later, "Didn't you have a miscarriage?" And I just said "Oh, I just had one." But, I don't know if I talked in depth. It wasn't that I was so sensitive about it, but I just, how do you bring it up, you know? It's not like this weepy woman who has to tell her miscarriage story, so. I just kind of kept it to myself.

K: Plus it's not a subject you're usually on talking with someone, to all of a sudden bring it up, "By the way...."

S: Ya, and I didn't really tell my neighbors either because, um, I live in Wymount and like the neighbor who lives right below me, uh, she has three children, and is pregnant with her fourth and they're on welfare and they just keep having babies and they can't afford 'em. And, you know, she just has a totally different mentality. She's not educated, I have very little in common with her. Her perspective is, a young couple who's been married three years "Why don't you have children?" And she'd come out and say things like that, and was fairly insensitive. And so I didn't feel like sharing my story with her because I've resented some things that she's said in the past, even though I didn't actively resent it. I just thought, "Oh, well, you have your own views, I'll keep mine" [chuckles]. So I really didn't even tell anyone. I don't remember even telling a visiting teacher or anything. I just kind of, I was really busy so I just got back in school, didn't want to think about it. Then, uh, so that was in April, kind of in the end of April, I think I actually had the miscarriage in May--beginning of May. So then my husband and I, the doctors advised to use something, I don't use birth control pills 'cause I hate 'em. So to use something, some sort of birth control. So we did, but, again, then I thought, "Well, I probably wouldn't get pregnant again, if I do, hey, wouldn't be a such a bad deal." So we didn't use anything. Um, and I don't know that we were actively trying again though, but, but, you know, we

weren't trying to avoid it. In fact, we really wanted a baby. I was, pretty baby hungry. Um, and so, I'm trying to think when it was that I, about the beginning of November this year, um, I don't know what I was doing, if I was jogging, or, something, because I had had such an early sign from my chest soreness and breasts. Because I really didn't have any morning sickness or any of the other things. Um, when I was wanting to feel pregnant, I would always check, you know, [laughs], and um, so I had been doing that a lot, just because, I was hoping that I would get pregnant kind of. And, one day all of a sudden, there was some tenderness there, and um, and so I thought, "Ok, it's too early, a pregnancy test will say `no'. So I'll just wait and see if it stays." And um, it did, and so after about two weeks, um, I said, "I can't stand this any longer." So I went and got a pregnancy test at the, uh, you know, store bought, and it said negative. But I thought, "Last time it said negative and I was pregnant."

K: That's strange.

S: Ya, so then finally I went to the doctor and asked if I could have a serum test again, because that's what needed to work. And, it was positive. And the doctor at the Health Center, I think he's pretty lame, personally, said he thought I was about eight weeks again. And I thought, "Wow, I'm eight weeks!" So this is right before Thanksgiving. Uh, I found out, I got the for sure positive from the doctor Wednesday and Thursday was Thanksgiving. And so we went up to Logan for Thanksgiving where Andy's family was going to meet us. He has grandparents there. So his parents were down there. And Andy's the oldest in his family, and so they have no, my in-laws have no grandkids. And I have a really good relationship with my mother-in-law. I think I had told her I had a miscarriage after I had it, you know. She kind of shared her miscarriage story with me. So they'd been sympathetic. I knew she'd be really excited to know I was pregnant, and plus I thought I was eight weeks. So, kind of in the middle of things...

K: You thought you were further along?

S: Ya, I thought I was farther along than I actually was, because I hadn't been in to see, after you go to the BYU Health Center then you contract out to a different doctor who will take you through the pregnancy. So I hadn't done that yet, but I leaned over and whispered to my mother-in-law that I was pregnant right there at Thanksgiving dinner, you know. I just said "I'm eight weeks pregnant." And she screamed and was so excited but again we were trying to keep it quiet. But I said, "I'd like you to know," I told her, "I'm kind of waiting to see if this is going to take." Because I was wary, you know.

K: Well sure, this is your second one.

S: Ya, I thought, "For sure this pregnancy will keep. But let me make sure." So, she was real excited and we went shopping the next day kind of for Christmas presents, she wanted to take me and look at maternity clothes and I just couldn't. We looked at some of it and I just looked at it and turned away and said, "I can't do this yet, it's not for sure." I just wasn't feeling totally comfortable yet. And said, "And plus it's just so big, all the clothes are so big!" [We both laugh]. So she was real excited and I think she must have told her husband, um, but no one else knew. Um, and so I would talk to her a little bit about it when we were out shopping, but, just about the pregnancy. And Thanksgiving, you know happened, and then we came back to school and uh, I think maybe the second week in December or the first week in December I went and made an appointment to go see my real doctor 'cause at about the tenth week they like to see you. So I thought I was about ten weeks, and um, I went to see my real doctor. He did a pelvic exam and said, "Oh I think your not quite..." he, every time they say, "Can you tell me the day of your last period?" You know I don't have periods so I'd say "No, I can't. I think I had one in October, but I really don't remember. I didn't write it down and besides, if you're trying to track my ovulation, I mean that's, it won't work, 'cause I just don't ovulate. Uh...

K: On a regular kind of schedule?

S: Oh ya, I'm so erratic. And so we really couldn't tell how far along I was and I told the doctor that I had, um, taken a pregnancy test and it had said negative but then a week later

I had a positive test at the doctor's and so he dated it from then. He said, "Oh, well if it said negative then you know, that just means, you weren't, you know, you weren't, your HCG wasn't strong enough to register." So he dated me and said I was probably six weeks that day. So I was probably four weeks at Thanksgiving. I mean I just get an early reading. So I was a little bit disappointed because, you know, I was not quite as far. He said six to eight weeks, but a little bit more like six. We hadn't been able to hear a heartbeat, of course, we checked just in case, and we couldn't hear a heartbeat. So, we had about two more weeks before we had to go home for Christmas vacation and it was my year to go home to my house again. The day before we left I was maybe, I could possibly be around ten weeks, you know. And sometimes I can hear it at nine, nine and a half weeks. And so we went in just to see if we could hear a heartbeat. And the nurse checked and couldn't hear anything. And, so we were trying to decide, I said, you know, "I'm going home, and I'd like to know one way or another if I'm going to have a miscarriage or not." Um, "Should we get a sonogram?" The doctor said "Sure, you could get one," but it was gonna cost us like a hundred and fifty dollars and you know, we just didn't have very much money.

K: And insurance wouldn't pay for that?

S: Well they would pay for one, but if later in the pregnancy we wanted one at four months, they, they would only pay...[conversation was inaudible at this point] ya, so we would have had to pay for one or the other, and the second one would have been more expensive. So we thought, "Ok, we'll just, no, no sonogram." So I went home thinking I'm about, um, well by then I was thinking I was about nine or ten weeks. And I had called because of what had happened with my first pregnancy, I had called my mom on the day I found out, you know, so she could not accuse me of not including her and told her I was pregnant. And, um, you know, told my sisters that I was pregnant. And I said, "But please don't tell people, please don't go spread it to the whole ward." Because my mom is a talker. "I just want to make sure I keep this one. I don't want to have what happened

last time." Again my mom's response is, "Well, big deal!" You know? And I said, "Well Mom, this is my second time, I just, I just want to make sure." And she you know, told me I was stupid and that was dumb. She's just really insensitive. I love my mom, but she's just, it's just the defensive thing, you know? She just thinks she knows best, and uh, she just kind of told me that that was dumb and being overly sensitive. So I came home and we had a good Christmas. And all of a sudden, I can't even remember exactly how it happened. Um, I think one day all of a sudden, oh, I know how it happened! Ok, shortly after Christmas, um, this is going to take you forever to write.

K: Oh, it's ok. Now, are you now in California?

S: Ya, I'm still in California. I have something called Anafelaxsis, it's severe allergies that has put me in the hospital, so like a life-threatening thing. And, I'm allergic to a lot of foods. I'm allergic to all anti-inflammatories which includes Ibruprofen, if I take those I threaten my life really. And so, I've almost died from it before. Um, and doctors have tended to relate it with stress but, when I was a freshman and sophomore in college it was pretty much out of control I was having reactions that required shots, like this little B-kit adrenaline shots, every other week, or something like that. I had these special blood tests and they found out what it was. So it's been under control recently. I haven't had one for about three years and I know what to avoid. Well, I don't know if I'd been, sometimes I can cheat and get away with eating things and it doesn't cause a reaction. And I don't know if I'd cheated a little bit, I don't remember cheating, but, it might have been that I was just a little bit stressed over things. But, I came home from something, shopping or something, and all of a sudden my head started to itch which, it's a different kind of itch, it's not mosquito bite itches it's like inside, deep. Like you want to dig and break your skin open. Usually the itch starts in the head and what happens is once the anaphylaxis, anaphylactic reaction kicks in it can get your heart and your heart rate drops really fast and so you crash. And um, so, I was scared because, it started to itch, and I start to panic because the itch is, it starts to get scary, and um, I didn't have a kit with me. I had a kit

with me, but it was outdated. I hadn't renewed it because it's been under control. And um, and I was having the stomach cramps that I sometimes have with it. I called my sister, I'm having this reaction, I'm kind of panicking and my husband is out golfing with his friend again.

K: Tell him not to go golfing anymore!

S: I know! It must be that golfing. [laughter]

K: I know. [laughing]

S: I was scared because I didn't want to take my adrenaline shot because I didn't know how it would affect the baby. So, we were scared. And my husband got home right as we were getting ready to leave. So we went to the emergency room, but when I got to the emergency room, before, I mean I've had reactions so bad that like I've gone blind because I just wasn't getting enough blood to my brain, and um, and pretty much just passed out. It was in the same emergency room. But, by the time I got there this time the itching had started to subside, even though I hadn't taken anything. So it wasn't as severe a reaction as I initially thought. But you just don't fool around with these things 'cause they just come so hard and so fast you can never tell what's going on. Again I panicked 'cause I hadn't had one for so long it scared me because I was pregnant. So I just kind of waited, the reaction stopped. I'm sitting in my little emergency room waiting for the doctor, he came and I said, you know, "I'm pregnant, would it have been ok to take the adrenaline?" And he said, "Well, um, you know, if, if you, ya you need to, I mean if you're going to die the baby's going to die anyway, so you would need to take that adrenaline shot. But here's some Benadryl." He gave me some Benadryll and he checked me out. I didn't even think to ask him to give a pelvic exam or anything like that. I mean maybe I should have asked for a sonogram, I just didn't even think of that. I just thought, "Good, thank heavens the reaction's over." So I went home, and when I got home, you know, I'm usually really weak after these reactions. I was feeling kind of weak. I went upstairs to the bathroom and after I went to the bathroom I noticed kind of pink, not blood, but pink on the tissue,

on the toilet paper. And that scared me, I thought, "Oh no." So that was the first notice. The next time I went to the bathroom it was a little bit red. And then the next day it was blood. And then pretty soon it would start to show up, you know, on my, I mean on my garments, whatever. And so I was wearing pads. I was just bleeding very lightly, and it was kind of dark.

K: Dark red?

S: Ya, dark kind of blackish color almost. And again, my sisters are like, "Oh my gosh, stay down! Stay down." But it was vacation, you know, and I wasn't really feeling all that bad. It was just a little spotting and I thought, "If I'm going to miscarry, I'm going to miscarry. I can't afford to be down the whole pregnancy anyway." So it would probably be better just to have the miscarriage than to be bedridden for nine months, I can't do that. I'm the main moneymaker in our family. But I wasn't stupid, I tried to take it easy, I tried to stay down. We had a three week vacation and so I had two weeks left. The bleeding just got a little worse every day. The doctor's office was closed for most of Christmas vacation, so I had to wait a couple of days. And then I called, I don't know, maybe, I don't remember when it was, but, a couple of days after this happened and I finally got a hold of the doctor, I think maybe four days after, I got a hold of the nurse and I told her what happened and she said, you know, "Just stay down as much as you can, that's about all you can do." And so I did that. But I wasn't having any cramps and I wasn't bleeding real heavy. So here it was, I was really tentative about it, you know? And I was really, I didn't know whether I was going to keep it or not. It's just I had so many days of bleeding where I just didn't know and it wasn't real heavy bleeding, so was I going to miscarry? Was I not? The whole time, you know, I told my mom, "Oh, I'm spotting." And my mom's reaction was, "Oh you're going to miscarry for sure." And I was like, "Oh great, that's the last thing I want to hear." so I didn't talk to her very much about it. Then I didn't want to tell people I was pregnant because of this, and I ended up telling my close friend who isn't L.D.S.. We went out with them one night. She was planning on coming

up skiing in January and so I said, "Well, I'm pregnant right now and might not be able to go with you if I'm still pregnant but I might be having a miscarriage, I don't really know." And I kind of mentioned it to her. she's married but, I don't think she's ever been pregnant, least not that I had known. Um...

K: And she wouldn't let you know even if she has?

S: No, um, I'm pretty sure she hasn't, um, unless, if she would've gotten pregnant and had the abortion earlier she wouldn't have told me about it, just 'cause she knows I don't believe in abortion. So, she didn't really say much, she was just kind of like, "Oh, uh...." I had told her the first time that I was pregnant and that I had a miscarriage so she knew about my first miscarriage. I guess I talked to her a little bit about it, but not very much. So we went to this New Year's Eve party and I remember I'm bleeding a little bit and her sister, my friend's sister, we were over at her house New Year's Eve, was gonna come up skiing with them, so we're talking about the skiing, and I said, "Oh I'm hoping to be able to go with you but," I didn't want to say, "I'm pregnant and having a miscarriage," so I just said, "I'm having some health problems, so I don't know if I'll be able to." It was really weird, I didn't know how to...

K: Say it?

S: Ya, how I could commit one way or the other? I said, you know, "Terri could probably tell you about it, but right now basically I'm having health problems so I don't know if I'll be able to go skiing or not." I just remember being very aware that at that point I was bleeding a little bit heavier. We left early and it was just the worse. I think I was feeling the most depressed about it during that week, during the bleeding because I thought I was going to have a miscarriage, and I didn't want to have one, but at the same time I didn't know. So you still have this hope. I think the hormones were going crazy at that time too. And so, the situation stands out, this is before I had the miscarriage where somehow we were sitting in the living room, again this whole time we've kind of had this on-going, you know, occasional conversation with my mom where, "Well, what's the big deal?" you

know? "All women have had miscarriages! Why are you being so secretive about it?" You know, "Just tell people you're pregnant. I was so excited when I was pregnant the first time I had to share it with everybody." She felt like that I should be the same way. And Andy and I are more private than my mom. But my mom doesn't understand, you have her viewpoint or you don't, or you're stupid. So we're sitting around the living room and somehow it came up, my two older sisters and then my younger sister have gotten married and then lived within a block or two or within a mile, they've all lived around, and so my mom has had the grandkids right across the street. And Andy and I are really the first ones who are gonna move away. And so my mom's guilt trip to me, she would never admit this, but is, "Well I'm not gonna know your children anyways." So this is her defense mechanism. You know, "What do I care, you go ahead and tell people! You don't have to tell people your pregnant or not but I think it's stupid and I'm not going to know your grandchildren anyway, so, big deal!" So, you know, she's trying to throw a big guilt trip on me from moving away. I mean, I'm making my mom sound like this ogre...

K: I was gonna say, "Gee Shauna, I don't know if I want to talk to your mom." [we laugh]

S: My mom is really nice, um...

K: I'm sure she is.

S: Most people really love her you know? She's the bishop's wife and everyone just loves her. But, it's just, it's this defense mechanism, it just makes her so defensive about it and she's real scared of being excluded and we would be far away. And so she wouldn't be able to be a part of my kids' life like she has been my sisters'. And so we're sitting there and, and somehow, I don't even remember how the conversation came up, but I was saying, "Mom I don't want to tell people right now, I might be having a miscarriage." And she got on her kick and was saying all these things. And my family was sitting right there, the youngest girl in our family, she's nineteen, was sitting next to me and I just burst into tears and said, you know, "I," I said, "I don't wanna," you know, "I don't want to tell

people because I hate it when," you know, "I get back and people come up to me and say `Oh you're starting to show,' and I have to look at them and say, `I've had a miscarriage." You know? So I'm starting to cry and my sister next to me just starts laughing hysterically because she doesn't know what to do. That's her way of reacting. [laughing]

K: This is a great family! [laughing]

S: I know, it sounds like they're so insensitive. They aren't really insensitive to things like this if, you know, it's just my parents are very Type A personalities. And so, my sister starts laughing hysterically, my mom is just kind of rolling her eyes, and I stormed upstairs, just bawling uncontrollably. And my little niece is four years old, came up and gave me a hug and I told her that Grandma was mean and that she ought to go tell Grandma [laughs] that Shauna's feelings are hurt. And Andy was golfing again! [laughter] I don't know where he was! I don't know where he was! But he wasn't home. And so when, as soon as Andy got home my little niece said, "Oh Andy you've got to go up to Shauna, she's feeling so sad, Grandma was mean to her!" And my mom, uh, just kind of, my mom will be, once the confrontation is over she'll just, ignore it. So I'm upstairs just bawling uncontrollably, I really think it was the hormones out of control. And later my little sister apologized to me. She just, you know, hadn't ever really seen me cry like that, she just said, [laughs], "I didn't know what to do. It was just so funny all of a sudden you burst out crying!" We just have a real blunt, uh, maybe insensitive sometimes, aggressive family. And so Andy came up and was--my husband's very sensitive and very good at listening and stuff and so I just sat there and cried up in the bedroom. When I finally ended up coming down several hours later my eyes were still swollen, it was just, “don't talk about it,” you know? We didn't approach the subject. Well, um, about the day, the night before we had to go, finally we were gonna fly home, we were gonna come home a week early so I could work on my thesis. I was gonna get all kinds of things done on my thesis while I was at home, but with this miscarriage and the trauma and everything, I mean, I had a good Christmas, I'm making it sound so horrible. I did have a good

Christmas, it's fun to be around family. But I did have this other confrontation with my mother and my hormones again were out of control, so I was responding very, I was very sensitive about it, and I thought that she was really insensitive about it. I went over to my sister's house and talked to her how insensitive I had thought Mom would be and she was very sympathetic. And so I had people to talk to. And, my sister, um, tried to console me and stuff. She had just had a miscarriage herself. The night before we were supposed to fly out, early the next morning, um and so it's Sunday night and we were going to fly out Monday, um, I started having cramps. And I thought, "Ok, well, here's the miscarriage." "Well," I thought, "my last miscarriage was twenty minutes, twenty minutes of cramps." So I thought, "Twenty minutes of severe cramps." But you know, I have a high pain tolerance, because I was an athlete, I was always hurting when I played. So I thought, "Twenty minutes, I can take twenty minutes." And so, they were really light at first, and I was kind of being jovial, you know, walking around and just feeling like it didn't hurt all that bad, you know, sort of like menstrual cramps. I was bleeding a lot heavier at this point. All of a sudden I was kind of gushing, you know you sit down on the toilet and it just kind of streams. And I was like, "Oh well, I'm having a miscarriage." I knew it was coming. But by midnight the cramps got pretty bad. I finally went to bed, and just kind of sat there and dealt with it. And I think I might have even fallen asleep for a little bit, but about, I think about two in the morning I just woke up and the cramps were just killing me. And I just sat there and you can't get into a comfortable position, you just kind of writhe in pain, you know, in a fetal position. And I kept Andy up, of course, and of course I kept running to the bathroom and clots started coming, but, I wasn't passing anything. And I was bleeding really heavy. And I was just hurting really, really bad and, um, I thought, "Ok, this can't go on much longer." So three o'clock in the morning I'm still thinking, "It's gotta end soon." Four o'clock in the morning I'm thinking, "Uh!" You know? It's just getting worse and worse and it just hurts so bad. About four o'clock in the morning I just started to cry and said, "This is hurting so bad, when is this gonna end?"

And my husband just kind of sat there, you know, trying to help me and hold me, you know, be reassuring but what could he say?

K: What could he do?

S: Ya, he knew we just needed to wait this out. By five o'clock in the morning I'd about had it. I'd had the whole night of cramps, I'd had three hours of extreme pain. Again I have a really high pain tolerance, but there always comes that point where you just break, you know? So after three hours of it, I was shaking and I just couldn't take anymore and I just thought, "If this goes on any longer, I'm just, I just, I want somebody to put me out. I need something for the pain." I can't take any medication, I can't take Midol, because of my allergies. So, I finally got a blessing. I'd asked for a blessing because I'd been up crying and I was bleeding so heavy that the pads just weren't doing anything. I was just bleeding everywhere. So my mom had these like Depend diaper things because she used to [laughs] she used to take care of uh, of a woman who was paralysed. So we put on one of those because you know, I was just bleeding so much and I couldn't, it was painful to get up and go to the bathroom every second. And yet it's so gross, just disgusting.

K: It is.

S: So, and here I was supposed to be going on the plane the next morning and they were non-refundable. So I was sitting there in my mind thinking, "How could I do this? Maybe I could wear one of these diapers?" You know? "under my clothes and just deal with it." You know? But, by five in the morning I was realizing that, I mean all night I had been trying to figure out a plan but by five in the morning I realized, I cannot sit on a plane. I can't even sit, you know, because you just writhe, writhe in pain. So, finally I asked to be taken to the emergency room. So we went to the trauma room and I was just dying and they admitted me fairly quickly because they could tell I was just losing it. But they didn't give me anything, she told me to lay on my left side. They made me stand up, I can't believe they made me stand up, I gushed all over the floor and all over my slippers and, you know, they were just sticking I.V.'s in me for liquids and stuff. But they didn't

give me any pain medication. And I just sat there going, "Could someone give me something!" I mean, that's the whole reason I came in here. By the time the doctor actually came in, I think it was about seven in the morning, the miscarriage had pretty much, the pains were a little bit there, but they had subsided. I think I had pretty much passed most of the tissue. And so, it might've been better if I had just stayed at home, but how could we know? And I was in so much pain. So the doctor did a pelvic check and he used his tweezers and pulled out kind of the sac tissue material. Um, and so he basically didn't do anything 'cause it would've come out eventually. This was the day after New Year's, so it was a big football day, you know, most people like to be home. But, I guess the gynecologist or the obstetrition was there for another woman who was in labor, so she was there, she came down and talked to me and tried to tell me, you know, "This is not your fault. It's not because you went on a plane that you started having a miscarriage," you know, um, "It's not, there's nothing you could have done." You know, uh, she tried to allay these guilt feelings. I wasn't really having guilt although my mom has this myth that traveling makes you have um...

K: Oh really?

S: Ya, she thinks that some of her miscarriages occurred because she traveled. So she had thought, well maybe it was because of this and the doctor reassured me, "No, you have no responsibility." You know, although that wasn't the primary thing on my mind that was nice. And she was really good. She was female and this is the first female obstetrition that I've worked with, and I think, I really feel like she was more sensitive, because she was female, a lot more sensitive to what was going on, um, than even my, I liked my doctor at home, here in Utah, but, you know when I had asked doctors, male doctors here in Utah they all said, "Oh don't worry about your irregular periods. Unless you're trying to get pregnant then you can go on, um, hormones." But this doctor said, "Oh I totally disagree. You need to get, get on that," You know, "You should be having a regular period. You should," you know, "this, I totally disagree with their diagnosis." And I think it was

because she was female. Right now I'm feeling like I should be going to a female gynecologist, because I just feel like they're a little bit more sensitive to what women are going through. It's so easy for the men to be so scientific about it, you know? So she was really, really good, and so I kind of just waited around, and I'm really weak, you know, I'm sure you can imagine.

K: You lost a lot of blood.

S: I lost so much blood and I, uh, I hadn't slept the whole night. It'd been so painful. So I, I remember walking to the bathroom and just looking like this old lady because I could hardly walk. Um, so she wanted to do a D&C on me. I think they treat things a lot more aggressively in California. So they did the D&C, and um, and I felt good about that. My mom had felt good, my mom was good when I was actually having the miscarriage, you know? She was suddenly sensitive, [laughs] helping, helpful. So, I had the D&C, and I came home and we got a note from the doctor and found out that the flight, if we had a note, that the flight people would allow us, they wouldn't charge us extra to fly home. And so we waited an extra day or two, I can't remember how long. And I pretty much just slept most of the time and just stayed down. And so, um, my mom never apologized for that fight. Uh, you know I still think she thinks she was right and so now I just know that I'm not gonna get much sympathy from my mom in regards to this because she feels like, "I've had miscarriages, I know what you're going through." You know, "You ought to deal with it the same way I did." And, you know, I've been wondering, "Am I, can I get, am I going to be able to have children?" The doctors here, again my male doctor, "Ah, don't worry about it." You know, um, and that's not what the female one had said at all, she'd said, "No, I think we could start doing some tests on you." But the doctor, when I went for my six week check-up after my D&C had said, "Ah don't worry about it, you have to have three in eighteen months to be considered high risk anyways. And you're healthy, you're" you know, "strong. I just think you'll..." you know.

K: The fact that you don't have regular periods is really...

S: Ya, he said, "If you want regular periods go on Clomed." But then when I talked to my sister, all the doctors in California are really strict about Clomed right now, because they're connecting it with cervical cancer, things like that. It increases your chances and stuff. And so, I don't really want to go on Clomed, plus I got pregnant twice. I just know if I can keep it. So, he didn't run anything on me. We don't have the money to do anything now. So we kind of just, and then there's the insurance thing. So we haven't really been trying. And if I'm gonna get pregnant, we can't afford to have a close monitoring, I don't want to have another miscarriage. I will do anything I can do not to have another miscarriage. 'Cause that second one was so much harder than my first one. Emotionally, uh, for months afterward, I was so tired. Um, school started, you know, I was so tired. I felt like I needed a three hour nap everyday. And I had constant headaches for at least a month.

K: Probably because you lost so much blood.

S: Ya, and I was taking my vitamins and stuff trying to get my strength up, but I just felt a lot weaker.

K: So, so the difference between the second one was physically you were out?

S: Oh ya.

K: And what about emotionally?

S: Oh emotionally I was...

K: Did it kind of affect you a lot?

S: I think so, because I'd had this big trauma right before the miscarriage. And I think after the miscarriage actually happened, I was a lot better with it. I came home, when we flew home, I called Marie because she's my good friend. I knew she'd had a miscarriage. And so I just called to say, "Hey we're home." And then I told her I'd had a miscarriage. And she was great to talk to, that was really good to have someone that was sympathetic. She didn't say, "Oh, let me tell you...." She just said, "Tell me about it." And so I told her about it, and, she was really sympathetic. And it was really good to talk to her about it.

So, since then, I don't know how many people I've talked to about it. I mean, I told my bishop in a little interview about a month ago. He was like, "Oh my gosh, I had no idea. Why didn't you tell me?" Well, what am I going to do? "Hey bishop! I've had two miscarriages!" You know?

K: Ya.

S: I mean he was genuinely concerned, but um. I mean, how do you just come out and tell people? I mean I didn't tell my neighbors, you know, again, I think I may have told them later. But it was much later, you know. Several months after. And now I just seem almost scared to get pregnant again because I don't want to have another miscarriage. And so, we're using birth control right now. And then the cost of having this miscarriage has been astronomical. The total for the miscarriage, the total bills, including hospital bills and doctor bills has been over five thousand dollars. I think it was about fifty-seven hundred dollars. And we've paid, um, well we've paid about five hundred ourselves. Granted we are on student loans and everything. We have no money. And we just got a bill for, a thou-, we need to pay a thousand dollars of this four thousand dollar hospital bill. And so I'm kicking myself for going in for the D&C because, I mean I'm feeling guilty for that because, if I could have just held out for another hour, we would have saved, you know, fifteen hundred dollars. But I just broke. It just got too much. I gave in, you know.

K: Was the D&C, wasn't it pretty much they needed to do it?

S: No, because...

K: Or would you have kept hemorrhaging?

S: I don't know what I would have done. I think in Utah, from what I can gather, in Utah most doctors don't give D&C's, unless the hemorrhaging's bad. I think in California what I've gathered, you have a miscarriage, you have a D&C.

K: Oh, ok.

S: They can make great money on it. When I talked to Dr. Judd, my doctor up here, he said, "Oh ya, in California," he did his residencies at UCLA and he had been educated at

Stanford and then UC California, he said, "They always do D&C's, because it's easy money, I mean you can make, it's an easy operation, you can make a thousand bucks." So I think it's a money thing, and also it was easier because the bleeding is so much less. And I bled for three or four days afterwards and it was done. Whereas my first miscarriage I bled heavily for two weeks.

K: Two weeks? That's interesting.

S: But I had more after-effects, but I think I was more farther along. By the time I actually had the miscarriage I was probably ten or eleven weeks, as opposed to four, so it was a lot worse. And um, and I'd began to hope more that I would keep it.

K: How were like, did you have expectations on the second one because it was going longer? And then how, I mean, did you start to formulate expectations as far as thinking about what gender, what sex it is?

S: Oh ya, I mean...

K: Things like that, and how did that affect you when, you know, when you had your miscarriage?

S: Oh, I don't know, I mean I, we had started talking about how fun it would be to have this or that, you know. I kind of want a boy and Andy kinda wants a girl. Um, and we talked about names, and things like that. So, you know, we had, and I had, once I had gotten pregnant again I started reading all my books, you know, *What to Expect When You're Expecting*, um, and you know, *A Child is Born*, these books that tell you all about babies and stuff and, so you know, that adds to the excitement and the anticipation and so it's just kind of like a big let down. And I don't know that I was so emotional after. I mean, like I said, I think that I was most emotional the week before the miscarriage. Partly because of the tension, I just felt like my mom was really insensitive about it. Still feel like my mom is really insensitive about it. I love my mom and she's a great grandmother and she's really not a big jerk, but I think, I think it's all because of what happened with

my sister. And we're gonna be moving away. It's really, this going away is hard for her, because, you know, all the other girls have stayed right next to her.

K: So she can see her grandchildren?

S: Ya, so, I mean I've always just been different than my sisters. And my mom and I are a lot alike and so we bash heads a lot. So I mean, I don't know how to answer that question so well. My husband was a little bit relieved. I mean he was sad, but financially he had worried, "How are we gonna afford this baby?" And so in that respect, he was a little bit relieved, although, I mean he was sad and hurting for me just as much, he would've rather of me not have gone, and he was excited about it, you know, too. So I called and told my mother-in-law and she was real sympathetic, I mean I can talk to my mother-in-law about it better than I can talk to my mom about it. I'm like her only daughter, she doesn't have a daughter, I'm like the first daughter in their family. So, she really likes me a lot. So I talked to her about it for, for quite a bit. Basically you know, I mean, I have two under my belt, you know I think, what could be worse? If I can have one more then I can get this high risk stuff. But I really don't wanna go on fertility pills and what not.... But a woman stood up in church today and said she had had three miscarriages and so I thought...

K: Oh, it could be worse.

S: Ya, could be worse.

K: Which doesn't alleviate your pain, I mean as far as what you've had to go through, but.

S: No, no. But I did get a job out of it. I told Grant, well, because of the teaching thing, I was supposed, I was signed up to teach, um, Spring, and I was supposed to have my thesis done by April 27th, but I was a month off. I mean that month after I was just so tired and headaches all the time. I was just fighting to stay and keep up with my school work. So I was a month behind on my thesis, so, I petitioned and said, "Can I still teach?" [laughs]. I used the miscarriage to my advantage [we laugh]. It sounds kind of bad, and I didn't do it in any emotional set way, I just said, "I've had my second miscarriage, I was off balance for a month, um because of the emotional and what because of the physical

after-effects, I didn't even say emotional, and if I hadn't had had that I would be meeting your deadline." And it worked so I got a research assistantship out of it [we laugh].

K: Yahoo!

S: So, we have to end on something positive.

Katie

Provo, Utah

July 11, 1995

Personal Narrative

INFORMANT DATA

Age: 23 Sex: Female

Place of birth: Louisville, Kentucky

Home region: Provo, Utah, U.S.A.

Religion:LDS

Ethnicity: Caucasion

Occupation: Graduate student and English teacher

Relation to collector: Colleague and friend

Marital status: Married

CONTEXTUAL DATA

Social Context

Katie shared her miscarriage story with me in her home in Provo, Utah on July 11, 1995. We were the only two people in the house at the time.

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Katie: Well we had told everyone that I was pregnant, because it was our first pregnancy and, we told...

K: When was this?

Katie: This was, it was in November, that I had my miscarriage. Of `94. So, it was just not even a year ago. And we found out in September, and so, we told all of our families as soon as we got the test results, you know. I told everyone at school, and at church. And I wish that I hadn't told everyone because, and people always warn you, "Maybe you don't want to tell everyone until about three months." And I always thought, "Oh, that's just--be, you know, optimistic, that's just pessimistic." But now I think if I got pregnant I wouldn't say anything. Did you wait to tell people the second time?

K: The second time, um, I was going to, but the first time we did. We just planned on three months, we were just gonna wait and so actually that made it a little easier for me, 'cause I, we, we hadn't even told my family, that was like in my eigth week. So in a lot of ways it helped me not to say anything.

Katie: Ya.

K: And so, um, but a few people knew. And so I did have to tell them. And, um, the second time, we were going to do the same thing 'cause I was absolutely paranoid that I was going to have another miscarriage, and the thing was, is I got so sick.

Katie: You were so sick.

K: That, I just had to.

Katie: You couldn't really hide it. I think I have um...[laughs]

K: The twenty-four hour flu? [laughter] Ya, my 115 students were like, "She's been gone for two weeks now!"

Katie: What's wrong?

K: Bad flu!

Katie: Ya. I told my students and I told people at school, like, some teachers, 'cause I had been, well, just tired. And so I missed a few classes and stuff. And so it was really awful to have to tell, 'cause I told my mom. And she kind of took care of the ward, you know, make sure I didn't go to church for awhile, so to make sure that everyone knew.

K: Good.

Katie: And, um, I called the graduate carrels, and talked to John [laughs] and told him to tell everyone. I said, you know, "I don't want anyone to ask me about it, so please tell everyone." And, then I had uh, and Carl called his parents. And then I had Diane, go, 'cause I had to cancel class. And she had to tell my class. And they were so, they sent me flowers.

K: Oh how sweet!

Katie: My class did! [laughs]. It was really sweet.

K: See now that was good, 'cause when I told, I never told my class, and so I'd missed two class periods and when I came back they were like, "What's wrong, did you have the flu? Gosh!" I mean they were, they were really insensitive, but they didn't know, so it made it really hard.

Katie: Oh ya, I was kinda glad that they knew because, I had missed, um, I had to push a paper back, and just things like that I'd missed a bunch of stuff so.... So then they sent me flowers that night which was really nice. I was really shocked. But it's really hard because at school, everyone doesn't hear and then people are like, "Oh how are you feeling?" In fact Greg, after I finally came back to school, and I thought he knew 'cause I told the whole composition office. You know, Sylvia knew and I told Diane. And he's like, "How are ya feeling?" And I thought he was asking about the miscarriage. And I said, "Well you know, I'm doin' o.k." [laughs]. And he says, "Oh, how many months are ya now? About two?"

K: Oh no.

Katie: And then I was just like, 'cause this was just like two weeks after, and I just said, "I thought you knew." [laughter].

K: Start crying.

Katie: "I thought you knew. I had a miscarriage." And then he of course felt so horrible. And that's part of, the worst part about it, is, you know, people feel so awful.

K: They do. And then they feel really bad for even having asked. And you don't want them to, but you understand why they do.

Katie: And some people asked me how I was, and I said, "I'm fine." I didn't tell some people just because I knew it would be so awkward. But then Grant was nice and told me about his wife, she apparently had, just had one right before they adopted the little baby girl.

K: Oh really? I didn't know that.

Katie: But, so...

K: Tell me about your actual experience, if you don't mind.

Katie: Oh, ok. Well, it's a lot different than people I've talked to. It lasted for three days. Was yours just...?

K: Two days, I think.

Katie: And it was just, well on Halloween, of all days. We went to the doctor, it was a Monday, and we were going to hear the heartbeat. And we didn't hear it. And so of course I'm freaking out, and everyone's like, "Don't worry." You know, "It's probably, your due date's probably wrong." And, everyone's psyching me up and I was thinking, "Oh my gosh." You know? Trying to be positive. And the doctor's like, "Come back in in a week, it'll be fine. I'm sure we'll hear it, don't worry." And then Thursday, like I started spotting and then Thursday night, I remember I was watching Sienfeld [laughs] and I started to have cramps, just like you have your period you know?

K:Right.

Katie: And then, that night, by about midnight, it was just horrible! It was so, I can't believe how bad it was.

K: Did you have huge clots coming out?

Katie: No, just...

K: Just bad pain?

Katie: I had some blood coming out but it wasn't big clots, it was just running, I don't know if you want gory details, but...

K: Ya, sure, whatever you feel comfortable with.

Katie: Ok. And so, and Carl gave me a blessing, we didn't have the two people blessing, we just had the one person blessing. [laughs]. Whatever,

K: That's alright.

Katie: I don't know a lot about it, but...

K: Right.

Katie: And so, and I just, it didn't help at all. I mean it helped at first and I fell asleep. I've always been really helped by blessings, because my dad isn't Mormon. And we never had a priesthood holder. And so then when I married Carl, we always think it was really special. And I get these bad migraines, that are just horrible, do you get those too?

K: Yes.

Katie: And I got one that was just awful, and he gave me a blessing and I was fine. And so I think I must have lots of faith to be blessed. [laughs]

K: You must.

Katie: And I got one on graduation day, that morning I woke up with one and so his dad came over and they gave me one. And so it was just fine. And so I was really hoping, I thought, "Ok, good." But it just really didn't, you know, it didn't help at all! [laughs]. But I mean, what can you do? You know?

K: Nature--I know--nature's gonna take its course.

Katie: So, I mean, you have your religious thing on here.

K: Right.

Katie: Even just that with the blessing, you think, "Don't I have faith? Why does it hurt so much?" Anyway, but so then it was like midnight and he knew that I was having cramps, so then he fell asleep. And I didn't wake him up. Because I didn't think there was anything that he could do. And he just kind of felt bad afterwards. So he doesn't even

have any idea, because I was like, crawling into the bathroom, and then I would come out here and try and watch t.v. and I called "Ask-A Nurse" and I called the doctor [laughs]...

K: And this whole time Carl was sleeping?

Katie: He was asleep. Just because I thought, "What, if he wakes up, what's he gonna do?"

K: Right.

Katie:. Just feel bad that he can't help me.

K: That's true.

Katie: So I didn't wake him up. I think he probably felt, feels bad that I didn't. But I don't think he has any idea. I just, I mean, it was so bloody and so gross. But it was just like running blood, like your period, it wasn't a big clump. I wish it had been then it would have been over. But, so I was just soaking all these pads and I was worried that I, I thought that I might pass out, 'cause it was so bad. And that's when I called "Ask-A-Nurse." I always call them [laughs]. I can't afford to go to the doctor. Then I finally called the doctor, and he was great because he picked the phone up on one ring, it was two in the morning and he's just totally alert. I mean I guess that's how they have to be to be a doctor. And he just said, "Well you know at this point you can take whatever pain killers you want." And, you know, and "Sorry. You're having a miscarriage." I knew that it was gonna happen 'cause I started cramping but it's that horrible...

K: Confirmation?

Katie: Anticipation and then, it happens. Before I started really having the cramps I thought, "Goll, I wonder if I've had one and I just didn't notice." [laughter]

K: You would know.

Katie: And now I look back and think, "You would for sure know if you'd had one."

K: That's true.

Katie: So, I took some Tylenol and stuff, but I guess I was still so in that "don't take medicine" mode because you're pregnant, 'cause I had tons of pain killers from my

migraines, you know, I had heavy duty stuff and I didn't even think to take it. I wish I had [laughter] now, 'cause it was horrible. I thought I was gonna die, it was the worst pain I have ever had. And I think that's why it stopped, I think I couldn't stand it any longer.

K: Wait unitl labor.

Katie: Ya. [laughter] That's what people have said!

K: But now you know. Because that's kind of what it feels like.

Katie: Ya. So that was like until three in the morning. And then it finally stopped, 'cause I don't, I don't think I could've stood it any longer. I think it was so bad that it just stopped. So then I thought that it was over, and then, the next day, let's see, the next day we were in here, we had this bed pulled out. We ordered pizza, watching t.v. and stuff and then it started again in the afternoon, like at eleven or twelve. And I went for a few hours then. And I just, I couldn't believe it! I thought, "Goll! I can't believe this is happening again, I thought it was over!" And so, it happened, and then that was Friday. And so then it stopped for the rest of the, well that was about six hours during the day. It just, and it's just like, you know, squeeze and then it stops for about one second and then it's, uhhh, it really hurts.

K: It's like a labor pain.

Katie: And I remember we had a fight because we were both so, upset. That was horrible, because I was thinking, "I'm having a miscarriage! I can't believe that we're having a fight!" And then it made me realize that he was, you know, having...

K: A hard time?

Katie: as hard of a time too. But I remember I was so mad at him at the time. I thought, "I can't believe you're doing this now. Even if I'm being rude you should just be nice! "[laughter]. But I remember we had that fight and that really worried me 'cause I thought, "We're having a fight at this horrible time." But I guess that's when you do fight, when you're having that stress.

K: That's true.

Katie: And, that was about six hours. So then I thought it was over. 'Cause I thought, "Well, two days." And then on Saturday, we went to a movie with his dad, with Carl's dad Jim. And it started during the movie. We saw Frankenstein.

K: Oh no.

Katie: And people still say, "So do you like the movie Frankenstein?" And I cannot give [laughs] very, you know, objective viewpoint because, and I stayed through the whole movie! [laughs]

K: I was gonna ask "Did you leave early?" You stayed the whole time?

Katie: Well I just thought, "I'm gonna go home, and, it's not gonna be any better at home." 'Cause sometimes it felt better to stand and it didn't really help to lie down, and so, I was in the bathroom and standing at the back of the theater. It was just horrible. I can't believe I didn't go home.

K: I know, I can't either! [laughter]. I'm just kind of looking at you thinking--wow!

Katie: But I just figured, what good would it do? Then, and his dad didn't even know. He didn't even really notice that I'd gotten up to leave, and then after the movie I was like doubled-over, and we were going out to the car, I really felt bad for him 'cause I know he felt horrible, having to see me [laughs] like that.

K: I'm sure he did.

Katie: And I was just sitting in the back seat, just like, writhing in pain, it was the worst. And then, we got home, and I was in the bathroom, and I just couldn't believe that it was still lasting, 'cause after each sort of episode I thought, "That's it, I can't believe, that was my pain threshold. I can't believe I [laughs] withstood that much." And then it started again the third day. And "Ask-A-Nurse" was calling back, 'cause they always call back to check up on you, and, um, ahhhh, I was, it was just horrible! And I was just sitting in the bathroom, and then, that was when the big clots came out, like, really big.

K: Huge clots, ya.

Katie: And it was so, gross when it, it's such a sick feeling. 'Cause it's like a big thing coming...

K: Out of you.

Katie:...where you're not used to [laughs].

K: Ya, exactly.

Katie: I guess having a baby is, much worse. But it was just like...

K: But, having a baby, like there's a big nice clot.

Katie: Ya, you're getting something.

K: Ya, whereas, I remember a miscarriage is like this useless clot.

Katie: It's just sick!

K: It was.

Katie: And it felt so gross. But then as soon as that came out I was fine. And the pain stopped and, I ate some yogurt, and so that was it. I didn't have any more.

K: And that was it?

Katie:That was it. And I didn't save it or anything.

K: So you never went to the doctor?

Katie: No, 'cause I was just barely ten weeks. And so he said, "You need a D&C after ten weeks, but since you're barely ten weeks..." I did go back, but he didn't do the D&C. But I didn't save it. Did you save it?

K: We tried saving something, but we ended up throwing it away just 'cause...I didn't ever see any tissue, I didn't know really what to look for and. I had a D&C. And um, uh, but my doctor could see some tissue. I never saw it, you know? It all just looked like blood to me.

Katie: Ya. I didn't save it. And I had heard that you should save it. But I just said, "I'm not."

K: Ya, we did.

Katie: I thought that would be too gross. I just thought, "I'm not gonna do it. That's too gross."

K: We did, it was sad. Oh gosh. That just brought back so many memories!

Katie: I'm sorry! [laughs].

K: No, I just...'Cause I remember Bryan had those, those one yellow gloves that you work with? He put on one of those. He was up with me the whole night. He had on one of those yellow gloves and he like reached in the toilet and got something and put it in a little baggie. That's what we saved.

Katie: I just, I wasn't gonna do it.

K: I know [laughter].

Katie: I just thought, I know... I just thought, "I can't!"

K: Unless you can really tell.

Katie: Well that's why I probably could tell, but I didn't even want to look at anything. 'Cause it was, I don't know, it was like a golf ball.

K: Really?

Katie: But, it was just, I didn't want to save it.

K: I don't blame ya.

Katie: And so then, the doctor was, pretty good. I didn't have to have a D&C but I did go back in and I was really mad that I still had to pay a lot. [laughter]. A good percentage...

K: That's true.

Katie:... of my doctor bill, I was like, "Goll, I can't believe..." I mean it just made me so mad having to write out that check. 'Cause I'm like, "I didn't get anything out of this."

K: I know, I know.

Katie: And that's what makes it so horrible.

K: When all the bills start coming and you're just like....

Katie: The bills and you went through all that pain and I mean I'm sure labor is worse. But you get something!

K: But you do. That's the thing. That's, now that I, now that I can compare you get something, I mean it's something beautiful. But, ya. Miscarriage is, like I remember the bills coming and it was like. I was, I was angry.

Katie: Ya. And I had a friend who, she'd had a miscarriage about eight months before me. And then, I was married and she always cuts my hair and I'm like, "Well we're gonna try and have a baby. You should try again. You should try again!" 'Cause she was still kind of like, "I just had a miscarriage." So we tried again together, and we both got pregnant. And that's when I had the miscarriage and she had, her baby. But she'd had a miscarriage before, so this was, but I was so excited thinking, "Our kids will grow up just like we did." And, I remember, she said that her labor wasn't even as bad as her miscarriage.

K: Really? I'm sure everyone's different.

Katie: That made me feel better. But um, so then I remember thinking, "Well, she's already had a miscarriage. And so, it's fair that I have one now when she has her baby [laughter]. And then next time, maybe I'll have a baby and,

K: And, and everything will, even out ok.

Katie: Ya. And someone else will have a miscarriage. 'Cause you think about that. You think, "Well how can, why, is this fair?" But anyway, so...that's pretty much,

K: Your experience?

Katie: what happened. And then I was kind of just tired, and sad for, about a month I was kind of, I would cry and stuff. And then, after that it started to get better. And the wierd thing is, like before I had, got pregnant, I didn't want to have a baby at all, well before we started talking about it. Like our first year of marriage I was like, "No, I don't wanna have kids for a long time. And I don't want to breastfeed ever." [laughs] I just felt really strongly about it. But then when I was pregnant, then we started talking about it and praying about it and thinking, "Well, we should have a baby." And then when I was pregnant I was totally excited and I thought, "Well I'll breastfeed, I'll do everything." I had all this--I don't know if it's chemical or psychological?

K: Probably a lot of hormones.

Katie: And so I was totally excited, and then afterwards, probably a month or two, I was still quite sad and I was never glad that it happened, but, all that was gone and I was thinking, "Ya, well, you know, we can save money now, and..." And, you know? It's just--I don't know. It isn't that I was glad that it had, since I wasn't pregnant anymore and the hormones were gone, which was a real blessing because if I still felt that way it would've been a lot harder to deal with. And so, that was kind of interesting, to notice the changes. And just thinking, "Well, we can plan it more differently now. Maybe we can save more money." Just be able to see some,

K: Good out of it?

Katie: Good out of it--ya.

K: And you almost have to like you're saying in order to get over it ok--to deal with it.

Katie: Ya. You, you wonder, like I've found this, guilt question. You feel, you think, "Well was it that aspirin I took?" "or that cold medicine I took?" And you wonder, "Why did it happen?" And instead of just, you know, physical things, and you get beyond that and think, "Well, what lesson was I supposed to learn?" "Why did God do this to me?" So you really think about it a lot. And sometimes there's no reason, and you just kind of have to accept that. But I still haven't. I still think, "Well there must have been something. There must be something to learn." And I was thinking because I planned for that one so carefully, and I think, "Well maybe God's just trying to tell me not to worry about planning it, and to just keep trying. When it's right it'll happen and why don't you just be grateful." 'Cause I'm really big about, I plan everything out, I have all these little schedules and stuff.

K: Me too.

Katie: And I think, "That must be the lesson I'm supposed to learn. I should just go with the flow. And when it's right maybe I'll get pregnant." [laughter] But, I don't know, that's probably not, I mean...

K: Well, it's hard to know.

Katie: You just think...

K: I mean everyone's different and if that's how you deal with it, that's what's important.

Katie: So, well, then you wonder, "Should we just keep trying? Should we wait until we have better insurance? What are we supposed to do? There must be, there must be some lesson to learn?" It's kind of hard 'cause you just keep agonizing over it. Trying to figure out what it was, maybe it was just nothing but....Anyway, so that's just one thing that....But for my friends, like the one who had had a miscarriage, I called her, or she called me, it was probably three or four weeks after, 'cause she heard from her mom. My mom had told her mom. And she called and it was really great to talk to her 'cause she had had one. And we talked a lot about it. Everyone else was kind of talking about how sad I probably was emotionally. But I was really still, I was sad, but, I was really hung up about how bad it hurt! [laughs]

K: Oh really?

Katie: I was like, so many people don't realize it hurts as bad as it does.

K: No. And I'm sure, and I'm sure there are different levels and I wonder if it depends on how far along you are.

Katie: That's probably true. But, I was really glad to talk about it to her, 'cause she was like, "I know it hurts so much! And nobody realizes how much it hurts." And everyone's so worried about you emotionally, which is a valid concern.

K: Right, but there is a real physical part too.

Katie: But nobody seems to realize how awful it was. It was kind of like, you know it really hurt! [laughs] And so, it was good to talk to her. Then I had another friend who I didn't call for, you don't want to call them 'cause you know you're going to start balling and so you don't call for a few months. But everyone pretty much found out, and if they didn't, they know now if they see me, I guess. I don't have a baby [laughs]. And I'm not pregnant.

K: Did you, um, did you feel like as soon as you got preg--or as soon as the miscarriage happened, that everyone in their dog was pregnant? Or how was that for you?

Katie: Actually, everyone in their dog had had a miscarriage is what I first found out.

K: That's interesting.

Katie: But then, it's also all the people who had had miscarriages were now pregnant. And so it was, 'cause my other, my friend that I told you about was having her baby. I was happy for her but, ya, it did seem like a lot of people were pregnant. But I didn't really feel, sometimes I felt a little bad and sorry for myself. I didn't, I was really, I didn't want to have a baby, I didn't want to try again. There was this one woman in my ward. She's kinda wierd. She's really nice but she's just very open. And she um, had talked to me when we were talking about having a baby. And she was like, "Oh you should do it--blah, blah, blah." Then she heard that I had a miscarriage, and she was just always saying, "Well you know, my doctor told me just have three--this would be like in church, three periods, you know, in three periods you can start having a baby again," and "start trying again" and [starts laughing] starts saying all this stuff to me in church! "Have you had a period yet?"

K: Oh my goodness!

Katie: And I'd be like,

K: Kind of personal!

Katie: I don't want to talk about it with you. But so, and she was always, and people were always saying like, I have that book *What to Expect When You're Expecting*.

K: Ya, I've got that.

Katie: And you just read it like it's your Bible, [laughter] and it says, "One thing that helps is to get pregnant again really soon," but I didn't want to at all.

K: See, that's the thing, I heard conflicting uh, views, on that, I, you know, things like that they say, it's mean to a woman to tell her not or to wait because it's an emotional, it's a

difficult thing for her emotionally, and so she can start trying as soon as she wants. But my doctor said, "Wait for a few months," so we did.

Katie: Ya, my doctor told me I could wait for, he said three months or four something, but I didn't, I didn't even want to.

K: Really?

Katie: After four or five months I was like, "I don't want to for another, few years." I really didn't want to. 'Cause I was just...

K: It probably scared you.

Katie: Ya. I was scared and I thought, "Well, what were we thinking? Maybe it was, God was just showing us that we were dumb [laughs] to have a baby." I mean, you know, you never know? And, and Carl didn't want to either. And we couldn't, we didn't really, we could hardly even talk about it. We were just like, "Well we don't want to. We don't want to."

K: Try?

Katie: Ya. And so, but then after about six or seven months we started thinking about it. Just 'cause we're trying to time it with moving and everything, we wanna have one before we go. But it's still kinda touchy when we start talking about it. And I'll get really touchy about something like, he'll say, "Well, it's no big deal, you can get pregnant now. And you can have it in our new state." And I'll get all upset like, "I don't wanna have it in a new state, where I don't know anyone, and..." And then and he'll say, "Well you know, you'll have the ward," and "it'll be fine." And then really we're both upset because we're thinking about the miscarriage. And we're, kind of fighting and being kind of touchy about all these dumb things. And then we realize [laughs] that's what it is. So it still is hard. And I didn't ever really want to talk about it. I didn't want to talk about it with people who, 'cause like my sister, she just said, "Well you know, I know you probably don't want to talk about it, but I'm just really sorry." And I didn't want to talk about it with people like that, who

obviously didn't feel comfortable. But I didn't mind talking about it like with Susie, my friend, who had had one. And so...

K: It's a little more natural.

Katie: Ya. 'Cause, they knew and they didn't think it was gross and they weren't worried that...

K: Did you find it easier, have you found it easier to talk to people who have had one?

Katie:Ya. Ya, I think for sure. And then....

K: Has anyone in your family...?

Katie: My mom has had, I didn't even know until I got pregnant and I was calling everyone and telling everyone. And my older sister, I was so mad at her at the time, she's like, "Well," she's the one who said, "Well, maybe you don't want to tell anyone. You know Mom, she had like two miscarriages."

K: And you didn't know?

Katie: And I was really mad at her ![laughs] And I said, "Oh, well..." and I, you know? Of course I didn't think anything would happen. And then I called Mom and I was like, "You had two miscarriages?" And you know, started to cry, "I didn't even know." And my mom was like, "Oh don't worry about it, nothing will happen." 'Cause they all think I'm a hypochondriac, 'cause I get these migraines, and they all think I'm really wierd [laughter]. And she's like, "Don't worry about it," you know, "You're gonna make yourself sick. Don't worry about it." Giving me this big lecture about not worrying about it, and then, of course I had one. But it's not like it's ,

K: Her fault?

Katie: her fault [laughs]. But I didn't really talk about it to, I didn't like talking about it as much right after it happened. And then now I don't really mind. But it's always harder talking about it with people who are all worried about you.

K: Well and, I think people sometimes can, I don't know how you've found like, have you found people to be insensitive at all about these kind of subjects? Or, or like your sister,

sometimes I wonder, one of the main projects, one of the main reasons I'm doing this project is because it seems so taboo to talk about.

Katie: I think because people who think it's taboo I don't feel comfortable talking about it with them. Like her, she made it into, I mean it's a big deal but she made it worse.

K: It is a big deal, but yet, and, and, and at the same there are times when I felt like, I didn't want to talk about it 'cause it's, it is a private thing and I'm a private person, and yet at the same time, it helped to talk about it.

Katie: Right.

K: And I thought, "This needs to be talked about more" So it's kind of a....

Katie: But people need to know how to....

K: Really talk about it?

Katie: 'Cause there are a lot of people at church who would say, you know, "My daughter, she's had six miscarriages and she's now pregnant." And, [laughs] and I know that was nice, but, they never say exactly the right thing. Like, "Great, I'm gonna have five more?" [laughter].

K: So I've got four more to go? One down. [laughter].

Katie: But some people are really, and some people said that and said the same thing but they just had a different way of saying it and it was really nice. Because they do need to be sensitive, and they do need to kind of not just say it out loud in Relief Society. The ones who are more, I don't know, you can say the same thing in different ways. And some people I was like, "Goll, I can't believe you said that!" [laughs] And others I was really appreciative that they had shared, a lot of people had shared that they had had a miscarriages and. And it did help. And we have this one thing, we're in this, it's like a Family Home Evening group. And they're really kind of dumb. They call themselves "The Childless Couples." And I just, I think they must not know that I've had a miscarriage because they're always like, "Ya, we're the childless couples!" 'Cause we go to a normal

ward, families and everything so, there's not that many young singles, young single people. And they call themselves that. Don't you think that's...

K: 'Cause none of them have children?

Katie: No.

K: But none of them know that you had a miscarriage?

Katie: I guess not.

K: And that you're interested in having children?

Katie: Right. And I'm sure that there are people in the group, that--because there's a lady whose, she's like twenty-eight or twenty-nine, and they've been married as long as us and I'm sure they've tried. I bet she's even had a miscarriage. And I just think, it's kind of tacky. And they always talk about, "Ya, we're the childless couples. It's so great. We get," you know, "a good night's sleep. We don't have to get baby-sitters and," I just think that's really really dumb. To assume that other people

K: See, that's the thing. People assume too much.

Katie: But, but it was really wierd when I was pregnant too, because, especially in the graduate carrols because everyone seems to be so liberal, and people that I didn't even know, like, Dan, you know, the tall one?

K: Ya.

Katie: I couldn't believe him, he found out that I was pregnant and he said, "Well, don't you think it's a little soon?"

K: Really?

Katie: Ya. It was wierd because you get like....

K: That's a little presumptuous of him to say!

Katie: Ya, and there were all these feminists-type people who were like, "Oh I can't believe you're just gonna have a baby!"

K: Really?

Katie: Did you get that at all?

K: No. I didn't. That's wierd.

Katie: I don't know. I was really surprised. I couldn't believe it.

K: There's probably a different crowd in there then there was when I was there.

Katie: Ya, I'm sure that's what it was. And that was really odd. And then when I had a miscarriage, I'm getting just the opposite, these people like, "Ya," I don't know. It was just wierd. People are really nosey [laughter] about when you have children, assuming that you don't want them or that you do want them and then it's bad if you do and that you're gonna give up your career, and just be, a homemaker, like it's such a bad decision.... But this Family Home Evening group, we feel, it's fun, but I really feel uncomfortable when they start talking about it. I know I could make them all feel really really bad. In just one sentence. [laughter]

K: You oughta do it.

Katie: "By the way. I don't think any of you know this, but...."

K: Thought I'd let you know.

Katie: Ya, but anyway, so, um, when we told, like when we told my mom, it was so horrible 'cause I started balling. And then to see Carl when he called his mom when he told her he just broke down and started crying. It was just real horrible. It was really sad. But, and like I said, afterwards, I was really sad and I would cry all the time, a few months after, like I told ya, then I started feeling better.

Marie

Provo, Utah

July 12, 1995

Personal Narrative

INFORMANT DATA

Age: 24 Sex: Female

Place of birth: Salt Lake City, Utah

Home region: Provo, Utah, U.S.A.

Religion:LDS

Ethnicity: Caucasion

Occupation: Graduate student, English teacher, Writer

Relation to collector: Colleague and friend

Marital status: Married

CONTEXTUAL DATA

Social Context

Marie shared her miscarriage story with me in her own home. No one else was present. Marie, at the time, was living in Provo, Utah and the interview was conducted July 12, 1995.

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M: When I found I was pregnant we weren't going to tell anyone for awhile. Just because I, I just don't like telling news like that, I'm always too embarrassed.

K: 'Cause you're more private?

M: Ya, well, it's not really even that, it's just that I don't like, like when I was in high school I never knew like, how to tell my friends that I got asked to a dance. I'm just wierd that way, I don't know really how to like,

K: Spread news?

M: Spread news. Ya, I'm not a gossiper about myelf, only other people I guess, I don't know. [laughs] Anyway, I'm not really a big, `tell people news' person. And, um, so we weren't going to tell anyone. But, then, I ended up telling, well, we ended up just telling people, little by little. I think we had told Tanner's dad is all. And we ended up telling my mom. And my brother found, I mean it just kind of, it got out of control. So, and then really ironically, we didn't really tell people until, well, we hadn't told people in our ward anything yet. And I was actually Relief Society President, and so I, I didn't really want to tell people. But then it was kind of hard because no one really understood why I was sick and stuff after, it was kind of an awkward situation. But anyway, ironically we really didn't tell a lot of people until the weekend right before I had the miscarriage, and I was already starting to spot. Since we had told a couple members of my family, it happened to be my little sisters' farewell and they were supposed to keep it a secret, but they didn't so that pretty soon my whole extended family knew that I was pregnant. And I didn't tell my family that I was starting to spot just again because I didn't really want to share you know? [laughs].

K: Ya.

M: And um, I didn't really think at that point anything was wrong because it was just really light. And um, I wasn't feeling very well, but I didn't necessarily think there was a problem either. So, um....

K: Were you kind of hoping too that there wasn't a problem?

M: Well, it just didn't even occur to me that there was. You know? I mean, I knew that that wasn't good, but on the other hand....

K: Well, how long, what month were you in by that time? or week?

M: I guess I hadn't been to the doctor yet, but I think that it was actually about eleven weeks. Ya, after I went to the doctor that week he said, "How long are you?" And I thought I was nine, so I didn't think I was this far. He said, "No. What..." He said, "What are your dates?" And I said, "Twelve-eleven." And he said, "No, you're eleven." Like, I was counting wrong, I don't know why.

K: Ya, they do that wierd.

M: Ya, so, um, I was actually eleven, but I hadn't been to the doctor yet, which made me think, that was another reason I thought I wasn't as far along, because they said, "We'll have you come in at ten weeks, but then they set my appointment after that, and they knew that it was after the time they wanted me to come in, but I didn't know how far after, 'cause he was just really busy, so, I hadn't been to the doctor yet. We have those baby books and I read the book and it said, you know, don't worry about it if it's light, unless it goes on for a long time. So I just wasn't really, I mean I was kind of gettin' a little tense about it, but I wasn't really that worried yet. But I wasn't feeling well, which wasn't a good sign. I mean that, like I...

K: Like cramps?

M: Well, no I didn't have cramps, see that was another thing, I knew that cramping was bad, but I wasn't cramping at all. But I did, I was like really dizzy and light-headed and kind of nauseous and so I didn't know like, if I just had the flu or something wierd, or if, I

mean that's kind of a sign of a problem too. So, what happened, I'm just gonna tell you the whole story--sorry [laughs].

K: That's ok! That's what this is for!

M: Um, like I said, it was my little sister's missionary farewell that weekend. She had come down that Saturday and we'd gone to the temple early in the morning and in the temple, I kept getting really light-headed. And then I came home and I was just really feeling pretty sick, but, um, we had to go up to Salt Lake to be with my family. She dropped us off and went up there and we were just supposed to get our stuff together and go. And I remember making, it was like a huge effort for me to like, you know, just throw some things in a bag to go up to Salt Lake, I really wasn't feeling well. And my family told me after, they were like, "We were wondering what was wrong 'cause you were such a grouch the whole weekend." [laughter].

K: Thanks!

M: And I was like, "Ya, thanks a lot!" But, anyway, I had to speak at her farewell and everything. K: So you did all this?

M: Ya. So, and I hadn't written my talk yet at that point [laughter]. Sounds like an exciting weekend! But....

K: That would be hard!

M: Anyway, what happened is, we went back to Provo Sunday night, and I was still spotting. No, I think it was a long holiday weekend, that was the other thing, oh that was another reason I was stressed out because, it was a holiday weekend, and I hadn't been in to see my doctor, and you know, we had BYU insurance, which, like the first thing they say is you're supposed to, it says like right on there that if you have problems before you see your doctor go to the Health Center. And I didn't know why. And you know really I think they just tell you that so you don't end up paying doctor's bills, because at the Health Center you can just go for free, you know? Um, and so I think that's why they say that, but I didn't know like, if they were trying to tell me that insurance wouldn't

cover it, or, you know, I just, 'cause the insurance does cover it, but if you see the doctor, I think the insurance ends up paying like sixty percent, and you pay forty, or something like that. So um, but that's, you know, standard for the whole thing, so I wouldn't have really minded that you know? But, um, but I didn't really know why or anything, and it's a holiday weekend, and I didn't want to call a doctor I'd never seen, and the Health Center was closed, and so, that was kind of a stressful thing. And so we didn't get back in town until about Monday night and by then I was still bleeding, so it was starting to make me nervous. 'Cause it'd been like three days.

K: Was it starting to get heavier?

M: No, it was really still just spotty, you know, nothing that would be a concern really, but that it had gone on for three days I was sort of concerned. And I called my sister in Phoenix, who, like, for some reason she's the one I call with all my wierd questions and stuff. She has three kids, and for some reason that makes her an expert I guess [laughs]. And, so, I always call her about stuff.

K: That sounds like me, it's easier to talk to [my sister].

M: For some reason it's easier to talk to her than my mom. Anyway, I called her and it actually ended up being, I, I can't remember how the time worked, with Arizona and Utah. And I called at like eleven o'clock Utah time and I was thinking it was ten in Arizona, but it was really twelve, [laughs], so I totally woke her up! I felt so bad. And um, I just was like, "Well this happening what should I do?" And she was like, "Well, go to the doctor." And so, I ended up going into the Health Center the next day. And the doctor was really nice, but basically all he did was say, "Uh, ya, you're bleeding," kind of. And um, basically he just, I mean he did an exam and Tanner's with me and then he said, "Uh," you know, "judging by the cervix," you know, "I can't tell you anything, because it's still," like he said it softens and changes color if you are going to miscarry soon. And he said that hadn't happened and that it still looked firm and in tact, I guess. I don't know what that really means, but um, but he said that, you know, a lot of women do have

bleeding in the first three months and uh, fifty percent of those, everything will be fine, and fifty percent it won't. He said, "I can't really tell you which one you are." But he just basically said, "If you are going to miscarry, there's really nothing anyone can do about it anyway." So, just, you know "Don't worry about it and do whatever you want." And he said, you know, he just told me, you know, 'cause I think what happened actually, I had worked out and it kind of got worse. And I said "Well, should I not work out?" And he said, "Well, you can do whatever you want, it doesn't matter." But, it was still kind of like, eh, well, whatever. And so, I went home and I still wasn't cramping and by now it had been, you know, four days or so. And I went home and you know, the next day, same thing. And finally I thought, "You know, this is really wierd." And I just wasn't comfortable with his answers really, like I didn't, that wasn't very comforting to me. And actually I called Christie who's my other person I call [laughter]. And we have the same doctor, and so, I said, "Well, what should I do?" And she was like, "Just call him, he'll, you know, he will be nice." And I called and talked to his nurse, course she said, "Well you need to talk to the doctor," and he called me back, you know, and was, really good about it. And he...

K: This is the same doctor?

M: No, this was my actual doctor, my OB, not the Health Center. And he said, "Well come in tomorrow afternoon" or something, "and we'll try to listen for a heartbeat." And so I was like, "Ok." And he basically said, you know, "If you're eleven weeks we should be able to hear a heartbeat almost always." And he said, "If we can hear a heartbeat then we'll be able to tell you everything will probably be fine and not to worry about it." And he said, "If we can't, then" um, you know, "there's probably a problem." Well, no, actually that's not what he said, he said, "If we can't hear a heartbeat, then that doesn't necessarily mean anything's wrong because, it's still early," but he said, "if we can't hear then we'll send you for an ultrasound to find out what's going on." And so, I had an appointment to go in like, the next afternoon or something. And um, I think that, that

when I woke up that next morning. I was starting to cramp. And so I knew that was bad. And I called them and said, "Should I come in sooner?" And they were like, "No, just go ahead and, and wait." And they said, "But," and this is like the scary part, and the, the doctor at the Health Center had said this to me too, everyone just kept saying, "But if you start hemorregging then,"

K: Then you better come in!

M: then, she said "then don't even wait for an appointment, just go straight to the Emergency room and call us from there and the doctor will come meet you." And so I'm like, "Well, so what? Am I gonna like die?!" I mean ....

K: It's like waiting for the worst to happen!

M: I know! Everyone keeps scaring you. Like the other doctor had said, "Well if you really start bleeding someone ought to see you." And I was like, "Who do you mean someone?" And this is at the Health Center and he's like, "Well, whoever, me or you know, a doctor." Well, what am I supposed to do? That's what had really scared me is he was so vague about it. But she was at least, you know, "Then call us and the doctor will meet you at the emergency room." So I felt kind of better about that at least [laughs]. Like I at least had a doctor, you know? [laughter]. And um, and uh, and so I was like, "What do you mean by hemorregging?" You know? I mean what does that mean? You know? [laughter] And so. "Well if there's blood running down both your legs, then you better go." [laughs]. I was like, "Ok." [laughing]. So I'm like, "This is sounding better and better!" But anyway, so what um, happened is, what happened after that? Oh! Then we started telling, I think we told Taylor's family because, um, his uncle was in town, who we're pretty close to. And I wanted a blessing. And so, we told him, and obviously my sister knew, but I hadn't told my parents yet. So I hadn't really told people what was going on. Oh and also, my sister, that, that day that I had the doctor's appointment my sister in Phoenix had her baby. So my mom had gone down to Phoenix to be with her. [laughs]. And which is....

K: Horrible timing!

M: Interesting timing, ya. And so, I went into the doctor's office and they listened for a heartbeat and the nurse was, you know was really helpful and nice, but they couldn't find one. And by then I was starting to cramp, so I knew, you know. And so they sent me up for an ultrasound, but at that point I really felt like, you know,

K: It wasn't there?

M: Ya. Like there was definitely a problem. And um, so I had an ultrasound appointment the next day, and the other hard thing was, I really felt like it was scary for me to go anywhere, because, like you just, like everyone had scared me about this hemorregging thing! (laughter). Ya. Like do I go teach my classes? You know? What do you do? Because I felt ok, but I was just panicked that would happen all of a sudden, and didn't want me to go anywhere. And when I had called my obstetrition the first time it, he had contradicted the other doctor by saying "No, you better stay lying down."

K: See, that's what had surprised me about the first doctor because you don't do anything, you're supposed to stay down.

M: Well, I think that his thing is, and this is what the other doctor said that, if it's a viable fetus, it'll live, no matter what, and if it's not, it'll miscarry no matter what, so. If you want to exercise....

K: True

M: But on the other hand, if it was a viable fetus but you had a low lying placenta or something, that it wasn't actually threatening miscarriage but could be a problem, then you would want to stay lying down.

K: And also any time you have bleeding, I was under the assumption that you need to lie down, even if it's going to be an ok pregnancy, just to kind of help it out.

M: I don't know.

K: Maybe it'll stop it?

M: I don't know. I know that like, Christie had, she had a low lying placenta, well, actually, she's not sure she did, but she had a little bleeding and so they thought that's what it must have been. So she had to be down a lot. But, I don't know. But anyway, um, but you know, doctors at the Health Center aren't really my favorite people anyway. [laughs]

K: I know I've heard horror stories.

M: Anyway, so what happended is the next day, I was starting to cramp really bad, I went into the ultrasound and uh, what I was worried about is the nurse, I said, "Well will the ultrasound people be able to tell me?" And she said, "Well, they'll be able to, but sometimes they won't. Especially if it's bad news. So they'll wanna call the doctor and have the doctor tell you." But I knew that the doctor, that that doctor was probably in his office, early on Friday, I just wanted him to tell me. So we went in, and the whole ultrasound thing was, an experience in itself, 'cause you have to drink so much water, you know? And my husband was like forcing me to just drink tons. I think I drank more than I was supposed to. I felt like I was just gonna die, you know? Anyway, but, and then they had to do uh, an internal one.

K: I've never had that.

M: You haven't?

K; No. Is that scary?

M: Uh, well, you know [laughter]. Well, it's not that bad actually, you'd be surprised. 'Cause they were like, you know, stick this thing in you, and I was like, "Well that doesn't look very comfortable." But it really wasn't as bad as it sounds.

K: Oh that's good [laughter].

M: But anyway, and it was a woman, I mean, it wasn't that big of a deal. But um, you know, Tanner was there with me again and I couldn't see the screen but you know, they could and the nurse could and she was like, "How far along did you say you were?" "Eleven weeks." And she's like, "Are you sure?" 'Cause I mean it was just, and Tanner

said he was looking at the screen and it was just, like you could see the sac but it was totally mishapen, and like nothing in it, by eleven weeks you should be able to see like,

K: Fingers?

M: Arms and ya there was just nothing in it, I mean it was just.... And you know, by then, it was actually that was a big relief for me, to know that, um, it wasn't, like, the whole thing that was traumatic for me was to feel like something was going wrong right now. Whereas it made me feel a lot better to know that like a long time ago something just didn't develop right and my body just didn't catch on.

K: And you finally knew.

M: Ya, that was a lot easier for me to deal with. And so, that was really helpful for me actually, but then that was like a Friday. Then I had like, I didn't actually have the miscarriage until Monday. So what happened is they called the doctor obviously, they couldn't reach the doctor, they called him on his pager and, couldn't get a hold of him right away. And so, luckily, the ultrasound tech, whoever she is, just told us, you know, what she thought, and confirmed it with the radiologist. And uh, that was really good just to have that done. And um, then she just told us to go home and the doctor would call us. And, I, that was kind of hard because I didn't, I didn't really have any questions for the doctor. I mean, that sort of answered it for me. So, we kind of actually, we took our time getting home, I don't know if the doctor tried call me or not or whatever, but... We were like, we had just saved some money to have a baby, and then [laughs] we realized that we weren't going to, and we were kind of depressed about it you know? So we went out to lunch and then we took the money we'd saved and bought a printer [laughs].

K: Did you really? I guess that helped you feel better? [laughter].

M: That was like our consilation. I mean we had been going to like the same stores, a lot of them, like, looking at, like baby furniture and stuff like that, you know, like Best and stuff, and so we were looking, we went to Best, and you know, instead of looking for baby furniture we started looking for computer stuff [laughs]. And so we ended up

buying a printer that day. Which was you know, a nice consolation prize I suppose [laughs] I mean not really.

K: Were you bleeding at this time?

M: Ya. But not heavy, it still wasn't heavy. Enough that if I wore a pad....

K: It would be ok?

M: Ya, like everytime I talked to a doctor the common thing was, "Well how many pads do you soak an hour?" I could soak a pad in a day. You know? It was just really light, you know? So, you know, got home and the doctor actually called right when I got there. It was really funny 'cause he was just like, "Hi, this is Doctor Bigler," and just kind of, I expected him to say something. And I was like, "Hi." And I didn't really have, I didn't ask him to call, [laughs] the hospital did, you know? And so I was just like "Hi" and finally like it was silent for a minute and I go, "So, did the hospital call you?" And he was like, "Ya." And he goes, "It looks like we're looking at a miscarriage?" And I said, "Ya, I guess so." And, and, I can't remember what else was said, basically, I mean, it was good to talk to him and because he told me what to expect and um, what to look for as far as tissue. That was hard, like did they talk to you about tissue? I kept going, "Well, maybe?" Because you know, I kept seeing the clots, and so I kept thinking, "Well, maybe I already passed tissue?" And he was like, "Um well, you would probably know it if you did."

K: I don't ever remember seeing it.

M: Really? Did you have a D&C?

K: I did. And my doctor saw it.

M: That's different.

K: When he checked me, he said, "Oh ya, here's some tissue." But I never saw it. I just saw blood.

M: Oh really? I saw tissue. Anyways, 'cause I didn't have a D&C, my doctor was actually really, he's more like, "Let it work itself out, unless there's a problem." Which I was actually grateful for because I mean, A. it saved us a lot of money, and B. I mean, my

body did handle it just fine. And I kind of preferred that. So, um, he just said, "You know, if there's a problem at all, call me and I'll meet you at the hospital," and he's like, "I'll probably beat you there because I drive fast." [laughter]. He was kind of funny about it.

K: He sounds nice.

M: Ya. He's like, "If you're hemorregging, just call." But, he was like, "This is what to expect, and you know, unless this or this happens, you should be fine. And, and this is what the tissue will look like." And you know told me everything. Then I was starting to have pretty bad cramps, and they lasted all weekend. So I felt like I couldn't really go anywhere and you feel like just kind of all bloated and, like you don't want to read.

K: You don't feel that well.

M: Ya. But by Monday I was like, you know "I have missed class for a week and I've got to get back doing stuff." Like Tanner wouldn't let me go to church, I don't think, I didn't go to church. But um, and that's another wierd thing 'cause with my sister's farewell and other stuff I'd missed a couple weeks of church already, and I was Relief Society President. And so, that was sort of a problem. I think I did go to Relief Society. But like Tanner felt like he didn't want to be away too much because, he didn't want to like leave me alone, we only have one car, and everything. And so it was really kind of hard that way. By then, it was like, when is this gonna happen? You know? And so, then I called my parents, which was, you know, kind of, like it's hard to really tell them, like when I started telling them I like started crying and everything.

K: That's when it hits I guess.

M: Ya, and so that was, you know, that was hard. And then my mom made, she had told my grandma, which I didn't want her to even do. And she's like, "Well call Grandma and tell her." And I was like, "Great!" So she made me call my grandma.

K: Other than her?

M: And I was like, "Oh super. Grandma Kline." [laughter].

K: How did she take it?

M: Oh she's just like, "Better luck next time!" [laughs]. I mean, actually like, I didn't really know, I knew at the time my mom had had several miscarriages but she was telling me later that one of my aunts had like more than she did. My mom had like five and my aunt had like seven or eight and now has twelve children. So you know, I guess, you know, miscarriages are sort of just, and my family tends to have, a lot of, they like, my aunts and uncles will have lots of kids and they've had miscarriages and I mean, it's like no big deal. It's like, "Oh well." So it wasn't like a big issue with my grandma. But I think she honestly just said, "Better luck next time." [laughs]. So, ok. And so, you know, but I wish, I didn't really didn't want even call. But then um, what happened is I just went and taught class and everything on Monday. I was really a big grump about the whole thing [laughter].

K: What was it, 315 or?

M: No it was actually I was T.A.ing 251 and it was with Heidi. And Heidi knew, I had told Heidi what was going on because I was missing all this class.

K: This one class?

M: Ya. So I told Heidi and but Heidi and I were in charge of class that day and I just didn't wanna leave Heidi up in the air. Cause we had the whole like hundred and twenty people, you know? And, but Heidi did most of it, I just did like one overhead [laughs]. "OK, that's uh, how you scan a poem!" [laughs]. I mean it was something dumb like that. But, by then I was just sick of the whole thing, you know? I was just like, "Ok,I have cramps and I'm a big grump, but this has been going on more than a week and you know and I need to get back to my life. And you know it wasn't like I was concerned about a baby at that point because I had seen that there obviously wasn't one (laughs). So um, so that night after, Tanner wasn't even home, and the cramps got like really, really bad and like I was, like, I was just like, "Ok, is this going to go on for three days?" I mean, that was the hardest thing is not knowing "Am I going to have these kind of cramps for another week?" You know? I was actually like, it was hurting so bad and I was home all

alone and I was putting clothes over my face and screaming 'cause it was, I mean it, it was bad. I mean now I think it seems kind of funny to me but at the time I remember thinking, nothing had ever hurt that bad, you know? And I have had back surgery and and things, and so it wasn't like I'd never been sick.

K: Or in pain?

M: Ya. Um, but anyway, then all the sudden, and the other dumb thing was, like, my mom, when I was talking to her on the phone, she's like, "Well, don't be afraid to take whatever drugs." You know, I had Tylenol with Codine in the house because of other pain, I could have taken stuff. And for some reason I just didn't.

K: Still in that pregnancy mode?

M: Ya. I don't know why! I mean I should have been taking at least like Ibuprofen or something the whole week, and I just didn't. I was being a martyr I don't know? (laughs). So anyway that night I finally did take some. And then all of a sudden the cramps just completely stopped. I mean, I don't know whether they really did, I think they must have because I didn't take that many Ibuprofen. And even, you know even with normal menstrual cramps like you can still sort of, like Ibuprofen doesn't totally get rid of them. So like all of a sudden it just completely stops and um, about then Tanner got home and I was like, "Ya," you know, "I feel great." Like I was totally happy all a sudden because it was like the first time in a week I felt ok you know? And um, I think, I can't remember, I was like sittin' on the couch and just hanging out watching tv or something and all of a sudden I just felt this gush of blood. And um, I just, you know, got up and ran to the bathroom. And just blood and tissue, everything everywhere. But then, I mean, it stopped, it was just like a gush and then, it wasn't like continued bleed--well, I mean, it still continued spotting after that, but...

K: It all came out in one...?

M: Ya. So you know, when I talked to my mom after and told her about it, she um, she was like, "So why didn't you got to the hospital then?" And I said, "Well, it seemed like..."

K: That was it.

M: Ya, I mean, there wasn't much point in it `cause it sort of just came and then that was it, you know? But um, there was like, a lot of tissue, and that was like the nastiest thing because they told me that I needed to get it analyzed because I guess you can have like a molar pregnancy, I think their worried about. So, I had to like, fish that out [laughs] and save it in a jar. And um, Tanner, my husband, was just grossed out by it, because I was feeling pretty philosophical about the thing by then, so I just put alcohol in a jar and I put it on the counter in the bathroom and he was like, "That is so discusting!" [laughs]. So we had to put it in a bag and another worst thing too was like the whole dealing with the insurance Health Center mess again with the tissue. I had to call them, I cannot be the only person in the world that's had to go through this. But I got transferred to at least four people and I had to tell them the whole story and that I needed to tell them that I didn't know what to do, I mean I had to tell the whole thing to like four people.

K: That's ridiculous.

M: And then I had, by the time they finally figured out what to do with it, and then they said, "Well, bring it in to us, and we'll send it to the hospital. And that way you won't have to pay for it." So I was like, "Whatever." So I did that. Like I took a, I put the jar in a bag and just, you know, a plastic bag and just held it, and so I was like, "You are just going to have a fun time looking inside that bag!" (laughs). I mean it was so embarrassing, you know, it's like this part of you! [laughing]

K: I've had this inside me!

M: Ya! [laughs]. Like, "Hmmmm, this is nice," you know? But anyway, ironically at the same time I had um, I had prenatal vitamins on a prescription that I had never picked up. So ironically like while I was up there the doctor had told me to take the prenatal vitamins

to like help build up your blood, so ironically I remember I stopped and picked up my prenatal vitamins. I did it right there, I dropped off the tissue and picked up my vitamins! [laughs] So anyway, um, uh, let's see, I kind of got off track on the questions.

K: Oh, that's alright.

M: Uh, afterward I guess, at that point I was really pretty much ok about it. I was a little bit, I was kind of sad, I think, well the thing that was hard for me is that like what happened is that, I had gotten pregnant really fast, and it had been something that like I felt was important to me to do, but that I wasn't necessarily totally excited about it, do you know what I mean?

K: Ya.

M: Like we had kind of talked about waiting a year, and my husband was anxious to have children, and at about the year stage, you know, I really did feel like inspired like it was important for us, but I was having a really hard time,

K: Accepting it?

M: accept--well, you know, just getting excited about it. You know? 'Cause it was going to interfere with my school, and my teaching, I really wanted to teach 115 and stuff. And I honestly just thought when we started trying to have a baby that it would just take a while you know? And because a lot of people it just does.

K: It does, right.

M: And I got pregnant like immediately, and so I was just shocked. And it was also, like, when I got pregnant I really didn't, that month in particular didn't expect to be just because I, we both actually had the flu all month and it just, you know, it wasn't a month that I was really expecting that. In fact I found out late that I was pregnant because I just kept thinking, "My period must be late." Because I was just, there was just no way I could be pregnant, you know? So, and actually it was kind of an interesting time because everyone in my family was having babies right then. And it was kind of a wierd thing. So,

like my brother had just barely had a baby when I found out I was pregnant--his wife.[laughter]

K: I figured that. Another*Junior* thing? [laughter].

M: Uh, ya [laughs]. And my sister had one right when I had my miscarriage and my other sister was due, so you know, it was kind of a family baby time. So it was kind of a wierd time. Like in a way I was almost a little bit embarrassed about that like I didn't, well like I was embarrassed that, when I got pregnant I was embarrassed because it was like I didn't want it to seem like I was just....

K: Following everyone else?

M: Ya, just jumping on the bandwagon kind of thing but um, anyway, so like it, it wasn't that I was upset I didn't want to have the baby when I found out I was pregnant but I wasn't totally like excited, excited right away either. I was sort of like philosophical like, "Well, ok," you know, I guess, "here we go." And so when I started having the miscarriage, I started feeling really bad about that. And I felt bad about, like I had a hard time deciding to get pregnant. My husband wanted to earlier than I did. And so it had been, kind of we'd been discussing it several months beforehand and I was always the one saying, "Let's wait." So I did feel kind of guilty when I started having problems like....

K: Somehow you had made that happen?

M: Ya, or something like that. Or like I was being punished, or I did something bad or, you know what I mean? It made me feel...

K: For having those kind of feelings?

M: Ya, ya. I just felt guilty about that. So, that was kind of hard, but afterward I was really ok except that, all of a sudden you know, when I started having my miscarriage, you start, I mean I had just gotten to the point that I was really getting excited about it, I mean we had been looking at you know, baby furniture, and I had gotten it pretty much worked out with with school and teaching and everything, I felt like everything was going to work out ok. And then that happened, so I'd just gotten to the point I was excited and

we were, we were moving into this apartment which is a two, we'd gotten a two bedroom 'cause we were expecting a baby and we had got--you know, we were, we were supposed to move within the week that I had the miscarriage. And moving into a ward with all two bedrooms I was worried that you know, that when we moved in everyone else would have children but us and that would be a wierd thing. So, you know, that was a concern, kind of. It was kind of hard and like a lot of my close friends, I didn't, I actually like, people I worked with closely in my church calling, I told them after the fact that I had a miscarriage without them knowing that I was pregnant. There were two, two people that, you know, that did know that I was pregnant and so I told them. And it was actually really good, I liked having a friend to talk to about the whole experience. So afterwards I wanted to talk to people about it, I really did. So that was good. And then there were a couple other people that I told after the fact that, and like Heidi, like I never told Heidi I was pregnant, but then when I had the miscarriage I ended up telling her about that. So there were a few people, and that was easier for me to tell than, you know, I don't know. Um, so I did feel kind of guilty but then afterwards the main feeling was that I had just suddenly started to appreciate like having a baby, and so like for a few weeks it was hard for me like to see people with babies or see people pregnant. It made me feel really sad, like I was really mad at them 'cause they had a baby and you know, I did, I really felt like though it was a real growing experience for me because you know, three months ago I would have never felt that. You know, it was a good thing for me to realize.

K: After that experience?

M: Ya, like you know, to realize if it is exciting to have a baby, but it is a good thing. And you know, it was something that, to realize that I could be excited about it I guess, you know to have, like maybe you don't appreciate it until it's taken away kind of thing. 'Cause I always just assumed I could have a baby whenever I wanted one, you know so why do I have to have one right now?

K: You know it seemed like my desire to have a baby augmented right after, 'cause I felt the same way, something that I couldn't have right then it was almost like it made me want it even more.

M: Ya. Ya, exactly. In fact like um, actually after um, well right after I had the miscarriage I totally said, "Let's try again as soon as I can." And then it's interesting you get caught up in school and other things and then I sort of actually felt, "Well..." (laughs). I mean it's wierd, you go in stages. And actually we ended up waiting for, well the doctor told us to wait a few months, and then we ended up waiting a little while after that 'cause I was having some back problems we needed x-rays, so we had to wait then. And then immediately after that, my husband got sick and so we ended up waiting about six months, which is longer than we needed to. But then I really thought that, I mean I had gotten pregnant so fast the first time I thought I would get pregnant really fast again, and um, so then it was really hard for me when I didn't. You know, like, I remember um, like I was really hoping to get pregnant by December so that I could have the baby before we moved. And when that didn't happen I remember that being even harder, that being really hard for me you know.

K: It just didn't happen?

M: It just didn't happen. Ya.

K: How sad. I know it took me nine months.

M: It took you nine months?

K: Ya.

M: But, you know you kind of get philosophical about it, now, at this point, after all that, and then we actually, I'm getting really deep here, I don't know if this is exactly [laughs] what you wanted?

K: That's ok.

M: But um, then we actually, we decided, well, even though, like the problem wasn't that we needed insurance or anything it would just be a lot harder and a lot more expensive for

us. But we decided to go ahead and keep trying for another few months after that and still, nothing happened. And so by then I was sort of like, "You know, maybe it's just not the right time for us." And you know, then it was easier to be more philosophical about it saying, "Well, we've tried our best, but you know, other things are good too." It would be really good to have a baby, we'd like to have a baby.

K: In the meantime, kind of thing?

M: Ya, I'm glad I've been able to teach and plus like with my husband when he was sick it, it was really lucky I would have been due right when he was like in the hospital. So....

K: That would have been hard.

M: Ya. So and plus like the medical bills were just so incredible. And you know, I really needed to be working a lot, so we really felt lucky that I was able to work and um, you know.

K: So it's like the timing it almost worked out?

M: Ya, ya like you know we feel actually really blessed, that the timing, like I feel it was a good experience for me to go to, go through, and even a necessary one, and good for our relationship because otherwise it would have been him saying, "Let's do it," and me saying "Wait." You know? And that was kind of a conflict. So I think it was good for us and good for me to learn but I also kind of feel like you know, more philosophically, maybe this is not the time for us and there's other things we can be doing and it's important things, you know and so. So, it's been easier to be more philosophical about it and knowing that we tried our best know what I mean?

K: That it's not like you're not trying at all?

M: Ya. So, you know in a way I feel like it's been a blessing, and now, you know I feel like, even though I still sometimes think about, like you know, with a new job, I think, "Well," you know, "they're going to really love me if I quit here." You know? So, in a way, I still worry about the timing there a little bit, and sometimes I think, "Well," you know, "I wouldn't be upset if it did take me awhile to have a baby." But I also, a lot,

really think you know. I really would like to have a baby that would be really nice. I would enjoy that, you know. So now it's more like for me, I am excited about, even though the timing is still sometimes a concern. So I think it was really a growing experience. And I don't feel like a total sense of urgency at this point about it. You know, I feel like it's something I want, and when it happens, I'll be happy. But, I feel a lot more philosophical. Well I think, like I remember you were saying that no one in your family had really had a miscarriage, especially since it happened, I've talked to my mom about it more and um, gosh, I mean, well I mean, I don't even feel like I'm necessarily like my mom, because you talk to a lot of people who have their first miscarriage and then no problems, but um, you know, even my mom had like three or four before she had her first child and really thought that she couldn't carry a baby full term. And in between her children she had a couple more, but the ones she carried full term she never had a problem with. You know, she never had to be in bed or anything. So, you know, you just, I kind of figure that, you know, it'll work out. And like I said I have an aunt who has twelve children and had like seven or eight miscarriages so. I don't know. I mean it's not a fun thing, it's not something you wish for.

K: No. It's still a scary thing. You don't want it to happen again but you know that there's a possibility it can. At least you've gone through it once and you know what to expect.

M: Well and I think it's probably a little less traumatic for me since I didn't have to have a D&C. I was talking to Shauna about her experience in the hospital and I was just so glad that I didn't do that. I mean that just sounded so awful. It was like a bad week, but other than that, you know like it, it was a private thing for me, like I could, it happened at home and besides, you know, carrying tissue around [laughs] it really wasn't that major of a problem. And you know, like I did talk to the doctor or at least his nurse afterwards about, like after when she got the tissue back and they actually, they said from analyzing the tissue they didn't find any fetal material and they thought it was just an empty sac. And I said, "Well, what, what would cause it?" And they just said, "It just happens?"

You know? So. I mean it's kind of a wierd thing that way. And in a way that kind of makes me feel bad, like I said, it's hard to think that you have a baby and that something is going wrong and it's dying that's a scary thing. It's easier to think that,

K: Something went wrong.

M: way back when it was four cells something just went wrong.

K: And so it wasn't ever like it was something--a whole baby in there.

M: Anyway, that's kind of an interesting thing. But, um, I don't know, I mean since, since this happened I've ended up telling a lot more people about it just because, a kind of bonding thing I guess.

K: Does it help you to talk to people about it?

M: Um, I don't know that it helps me, it did right after, after, it really did, to talk to people about it and kind of, you know, have sympathy, I don't know, share the pain. But, and it also I think made me a lot less scared about labor like I know more about what labor would be like, a little, I mean not really....

K: A little bit, ya.

M: But, I know I walked around [laughs] because, I mean, you know, I was like, "Man, that hurt!" And if that were like eight hours, that would not be a cool thing [laughs]. But you know like in this ward, it's actually I've, well the thing is, and it's been a little bit interesting is, we're living in this ward where most people do have children, um, like we haven't like advertised it, and we almost felt like we wanted to tell people, when it was a good time to do so, like when the opportunity arose we, we didn't hide it because to let people know.

K: To let people know that you're trying?

M: Well, almost. I think Tanner, my husband, feels more that way than I do.

K: You're kind of like "It's none of your business?"

M: Exactly. I'm sort of like, "Who cares what you think?" But he kind of worries about that more, you know. But um, but also just to, I don't know, just to kind of, it's kind of a

bonding thing among women, more than anything that's the reason I end up telling people just, I mean everyone keeps talking about their labor experiences, it's kind of, it's the only way I can relate you know, kind of thing. But, it has been difficult being in the ward with a lot of people with children because they talk so much about their children and about labor. I mean everyone, you know, you'll be at a table at Relief Society and people are talking about labor you know? I mean it's like a wierd thing.

K: And no one ever seems to talk about miscarraige.

M: No, they don't. Well, you know if they do....

K: It's really not a happy subject.

M: Well, you know, ya, it's like small intimate groups you talk about it. You know? Like I've talked about it a lot with a few of my friends in my old ward, we used to like have long conversations. And women there had miscarriages, but the whole baby thing you know? Um, but um, either I've talked to people here, you know, in intimate conversations about it. But it's not something that you bring up at Homemaking you know?

K: Right, no.

M: But um, it's been hard for me just because I feel like, like at times I'm not interested in their labor experiences [laughing] you know what I mean? And so I go to Relief Society and I'm like, "Man, do these women talk about anything else besides this?" So I mean, I've probably been a little callous about it. But, I realize it helps to have people call and say, "Are you ok?" Like I was always afraid to call people, because you just like, "Oh, they're so busy with all that's a problem that I don't want to bother them." Kind of thing. But I realize that it really does help to have someone call up and say, "Hey, are you ok?" You know? And it's been interesting like my bishop, I didn't tell, like I didn't tell the bishop that I was pregnant, and like I worked closely with him. You know, because of my calling. And then I didn't tell him about the miscarriage. But I told, my counselor and my counselor's husband was the Elder's Qourum President and he told the bishop. So it was like this chain thing. And the bishop, what really kind of bugged me, and it wasn't his

fault, he was really trying to be considerate, he really was. But what bugged me is he would like soft tail around me, all the time, you know what I mean? Like he wanted to give me room to like feel better or whatever. I mean, he didn't know what was wrong or how I felt or anything. I mean, I hadn't said anything, and, and I was actually probably kind of rude to him. Like, like we had some meeting and it was my first day back to church after the whole thing and he was like, "Well, you don't have to be at this meeting if you don't want to be." He's like, you know "Greg," he says, "Greg told me and I'm sorry, is there anything you need?" I said, "No, no, no I'm fine." Kind of, like I was really kind of brisk about it. He was like, "Well you don't have to go to the meeting." And I was like, "No, I'm fine." You know, I was like, I just wanted to get passed it at that point I just wanted to go on with life, you know, so I was almost kind of like, but he was trying to be really nice, and I was kind of rude about it. And then later, he ended up saying, like, "Is everything ok?" And I kind of was more open about it. You know, like a few weeks later he said, "Well I could tell that you really didn't want to talk about it before [laughing] so I didn't say anything." And I was like, "Ya, well." But, um, and his wife, he and his wife actually don't have any children, and so, and you get wierd reactions from people, I don't know if you felt that way? Like people say things trying to be sympathetic, and you're like, like "So what?" You know? Like, I can't remember she said something that was a little funny. Anyway, she like one day went off on this kick about, apparently she had had a miscarriage her first pregnancy too.

K: That's common.

M: Ya. And, and then talked about after that how um, everything had been fine. And then she got off on this thing, "Well at least you know you can get pregnant." And then she said, "I would just feel so unfulfilled as a woman if I didn't have children," or something. And I was like.... I mean, it was just for me such an uncomfortable thing for somebody to say. Because I just don't think of it really that way, you know? It's just, "Ya, well, sure, whatever." [laughs] So that, I mean, that, other people's reactions are the hardest for me,

and then, actually the night I had the miscarriage, while I was having really bad cramps this guy called me, he was in my Caplin class that I teach, he's a respitory therapist. Tanner was also taking that class and apparently Tanner had talked with this guy asking about doctors, because this guy worked at the hospital, and his wife, no not his wife, his sister was actually a nurse in labor and delivery and so, and Tanner said, "Oh, well find out about," you know, "our doctor for us." And he talked to his sister and called me and was calling me to tell me about that. And so he called like that night and said, "Oh well, you know, I just wanted to call back and you know, I talked to Tanner," and it had been a few weeks by then. And he said, you know, "Tanner said that you were seeing Dr.Bigler." And, and I said, "Well I was." Oh I think I said something like, right then, I obviously didn't feel very well and I think I said something like, "Well, when did you talk to Tanner?" And he said, "Oh a few weeks ago." And I said, "Oh well I was." And he's like, "Oh well did you change doctors or something?" And I said, "No, I had a miscarriage." And so then he was really, "Oh I'm so sorry I called, I'm so sorry." You know? But, I said, "No, no it's fine." And I actually was still kind of curious about you know, what he said because I was thinking at that point you know, I mean, I'll probably be pregnant again, someday and you know I wanted to find out about doctors, and so I kind of talked to him for a few minutes and asked him about doctors and what his sister had said and things like that and um, and you know I really tried to make him feel ok about calling because I really, it wasn't a big deal for me, you know? I didn't, I wasn't like so upset about it I couldn't talk about it. But then he like, Tanner told me that later he was like apologizing profusely, "I'm so sorry I called. And I wanted to talk to you first because I was worried about that, but she answered the phone and I said, "You know, it's really ok." So. Oh and then, I had a roommate that I had seen while I was pregnant, and I, when I wasn't really telling people, but she asked me directly. Like, which is a wierd thing to do really. She's like, "So, when are you going to have a baby?" Or "So you're pregnant?" I mean she really said something like that, so I ended up saying, "Well, ya I

am, but I'm not really telling anyone if you hadn't asked me so directly I wouldn't have told you." You know, I think I even said that. So she knew and then I saw her just a few weeks, well two months ago. So like quite awhile after the miscarriage, so it didn't even occur to me. I saw her at the grocery store. And she said something like, I think she said, "So did you have a baby?" Or "Did you have your baby?" And I was wearing kind of a big sweater that day [laughs] and I thought she said, "So are you going to have a baby?" And I took it as like she was saying I looked pregnant. And I was like really insulted, you know? And so I guess I kind of looked at her funny, and was like "What?!" And um, Tanner was with me and he was like, "Man you were so rude!" And then she said, "Well I thought," and she just kind of stood there, "well I saw you and you said you were pregnant." Then I realized I had told her I was pregnant and she was asking if I had my baby you know. And so I felt really bad because I was really kind of rude to her you know? I was like, "Oh no." You know. But then she was like all really embarrassed about it. And so, anyway it's always kind of an awkward thing.

K: It is, it is. And even, even since I've had one, I mean just talking to other people, sometimes it's awkward for me, people I don't know very well who talk about it, to know how to respond to them. You know? But I know better. I know better now how to respond, but still....

M: Well, and it depends.

K: It's still awkward 'cause you don't know how some people are.

M: Ya, you don't know if they're totally upset about it or what.

K: Are they going to break into tears as soon as you say something or if they're going to be like "Oh ya" you know and talk to you about it.

M: Ya.

McKenna

Provo, Utah

July 13, 1995

Personal Narrative

INFORMANT DATA

Age: 22 Sex: Female

Place of birth: Burly, Idaho

Home region: Provo, Utah, U.S.A.

Religion:LDS

Ethnicity: Caucasion

Occupation: College student

Relation to collector: Personal friend

Marital Status: Married

CONTEXTUAL DATA

Social Context

McKenna shared her miscarriage story with me on other occasions. I conducted this formal interview with her in Provo, Utah, July 13, 1995 in her home. We were the only two people present. McKenna was currently pregnant with her second pregnancy.

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M: I had felt kind of yucky that week, and that day I started to feel really bad. I had nasty tightening and cramping so I went to the bathroom and started to bleed. And I'd been bleeding a little bit and my mom told me it probably wasn't a big deal and so I said, "Ok," and I didn't think it was a big deal. So but then I called Dave and I'm like, "This is not good." So we went to, we were going to the University of Utah Medical Center up there, so we went up, we were just living in Salt Lake, so we went up there and by the time I got there I was just, you know, it was just gone. And they were like, well, they asked me how far along I was and I was at twelve weeks. So it wasn't very far, so I went in. They took me into the emergency room and they checked me out, that's where we went, into the emergency room, and they checked me out and they, then they did a D&C, which I didn't like. It was very uncomfortable. I didn't like it, I was terrified, you know? They wouldn't let Dave come in, 'cause it was, well they said it was kind of a surgical thing. I was wishing he could be there, I was just like, it was kind of scary and you know, it was over very fast. So, I mean, it was kind of a whole big blank, you know, that whole day was just kind of... (cassette is inaudible) of stuff that happened. And they put me in recovery, and I felt really yucky 'cause they gave me anesthesia and I, uhhh, I was sick and I was tired and Dave was there, he was very comforting, just like, "Are you ok?" You know and all this stuff. I was just kind of in a daze, I was just kind of like, "Ya, I'm fine," you know, "I just wanna go home." Is what I really wanted to do, I wanted to go home and go to sleep. And then they told me I probably was going to bleed for awhile afterward and stuff, and I was just, and I was, this is nasty, this feels horrible! You know, I didn't feel well for awhile after that. And then when we went home, I made him stop the car [laughs] 'cause I had to be sick, it was awful. I thought I was fine and I felt fine a long as I was sitting down, but once I stood, and they said it probably would make me sick. And it did. And I did eat, they had crackers and things like that. So it was a miserable thing. I mean it wasn't even the fact of losing the baby that day, it was just a whole bunch of miserable stuff. Just that whole day. Even losing the baby didn't hit me that day, you

know, it was just like there was just too much stuff going on. And then in the next weeks I started to be more upset about, you know? 'Cause, you know, all the stuff that was going on that day.

K: It wasn't until later?

M:Ya, I started to think about it you know. And I didn't even tell my mother until, a few days later and I told her, I was like, "We lost a baby." You know, I didn't, I didn't want to call her right away. In fact, did she call me? I don't know, but she was coming that weekend and I thought, "We need to tell her." And so I, and I, I didn't go to work. I didn't want to go back to work, a couple of other people at work did know that I was pregnant. Um, and I, you know, it was kind of embarrassing, I didn't feel well when I was pregnant so I was sometimes late to work and stuff and then I called her and I'm like, "I'm not coming in." You know? [chuckles].

K: You didn't tell her at all?

M: Ya and I didn't, uh, oh I did I told one of the people why, you know, and he, the guy I told, did not know I was pregnant, but he was a nice guy. You know, I couldn't just say, "I'm not coming in." I told him why, you know 'cause I didn't want him to be mad at me. It wasn't like an avoidable thing, you know, so. I told him too, and you know. Going back to work was just miserable. I was kind of numb for so long and it just, I would just be like, I would, there would be a few days where I would be, I would just come home and I just felt like I was in a stupor all the time. And I wouldn't think about it. And my mom would be, "Oh think about it and cry," and stuff. We're very much alike. When something bad happens it's kind of, you just kind of shut down and you just kind of try and get over it as fast as you can and get back to normal, and it wasn't working very well you know. For the next couple of weeks, um, one day, I was just like having a panic attack, and I couldn't, I couldn't go to work. I was bawling and bawling and Dave was like, "What is wrong with you?" You know, he didn't understand. And I just bawled, I mean I had to sit down, you know, I was about to go to work, and he was just, "Are you ok?" You know?

He didn't understand. I couldn't really explain it to him why I was bawling. I was just crying and crying and, and I was just terrified, I didn't want to leave the house and go. I just wanted to stay home. You know, and just go back to bed or whatever. And he was like, "What's wrong with you?" He kind of calmed me down and I went to work, and I was late. And I felt bad the whole time 'cause I was, it was just like, work was nothing to me anymore, I didn't care about going to work. I was too depressed and stuff and I just didn't care about it. And I wasn't giving myself time off to grieve or you know, even think about it really, you know. And it happened a few times where I'd do that, I'd just suddenly break down and just bawl you know. And I wouldn't even be thinking about anything, I'd just, it was like this big crash and bawl thing that I'd do. And I just, I'd be like, "Am I going insane?" You know? I'm just like, "What is wrong with me?" I was just like, "I am so wierd!" You know? And my mom was like, my mom would call me all the time, "Have you let yourself grieve today?" She's like, "You need to." And I'd be like, "Uh-huh." You know and I really hadn't, I didn't even think about it, if I could help it. It slowly started to be more feeling, more, I mean, I was just kind of, it was a really wierd feeling, like I was dead inside and I liked kids, and I spent a lot of time around kids 'cause I was working in the toy department. So there were kids around me all the time. This was in Salt Lake at ZCMI, I was working with kids all the time. You know and, it, it was a distraction in a way because people always had babies you know, it was like I was playing with kids all the time and stuff and you know, and some of the ladies would be like, "Do you have kids?" And I told a couple of ladies you know, "I had a miscarriage not too long ago." And you know a couple of the women who had miscarriages themselves, you know were just like, "Ya." And my mom had one three months before. So, and I was really, I was glad that the baby wasn't four or five months so that you could feel it moving, I really, you know, that's when, I think that's when you really start to concentrate on, "There's," you know, "There's a baby."

K: There's a life inside of you.

M: Ya. And, see even like right now, I'm a few months along again, it doesn't feel like a whole lot, even though the other day I felt these really wierd feelings in there, but I just thought, "Nah, it's too early to feel a baby."

K: Not necessarily.

M: I hear that some people do feel it earlier. And I, and I didn't, you know, beforehand and so I was glad, that was one thing I was glad that I didn't have a big, like have a stillborn or something like that. You know I said, "Well I'm grateful that this didn't happen," but I never let myself think, "I'm sad that this happened." You know, I was always,

K: You were always trying to look at the positive?

M: Ya. And the negative, I think you need to have some of the negative, because, after, after about four months we moved here and I was working at ZCMI alterations here, and I had a lot of lady friends and, you know, let's see, I don't know, I think, I think two of them had miscarriages, you know and, we would, it was easy to talk to them. It was all women so we kind of had, it was almost kind of a support group there and it was really fun. But I began, I began to really notice that it bugged me more and more that I didn't have a baby. And then, the closer it got to the time when the baby was going to be due, the more I started thinking about it, and the more upset I became about losing a baby, and I would think, I would see people walking their babies and I would just, I couldn't look at 'em, 'cause I would just be like, you know, that should have been me, you know, and I would, then I would go to church and see behind these women with their teenage kids and think, you know, "My baby will never be a teenager like them." You know? And I was so upset. And I would have, I had a hard time sitting in church watching them. I couldn't stand to look at moms with their little kids. You know and I would just, and I would, and I started to doing the crying thing again too. Where I'd cry and cry and Dave would just be like, "Now what's wrong?!" You know and, I mean it had been months you know and he didn't really understand.

K: Well, you know it's really like there's a person that died, so we forget that.

M: Well it was wierd because I would look, I remember one time I was walking through the mall on my way back from lunch break, looked over at a mom with her little baby and I thought, and it was just, all of a sudden I missed holding my baby, I'd never held it, never touched it, I missed it, I missed holding it, I missed the cuddling, you know I never nursed it, but I missed that, you know, and it was a really wierd feeling. It was very significant feeling of loss like I had actually held it, actually had it and it was gone. And it was a really strange feeling. I'd had that feeling for a couple of weeks. And it almost drove me nuts, I was just like, "This is too wierd. I can't stand it," you know? And that's when I started being sad all of the time about it. And I told Dave, "I'm just so sad. This is so depressing for me." When my mother had a miscarriage my sister-in-law was asking about it at Christmas 'cause she's never had one, she has two babies, but she hasn't had a miscarriage. And she was like, "What, is it hard?" And I said, "Yes it's hard and it's a very strange feeling, you feel like, it's never going to go away until you have another baby so you can kind of forget that you lost that one. And," you know, "have a positive instead of sad." And my mother-in-law was shaking her head and she was like, "Ya, I think that that's true." And my mom felt the same way. And I thought that, you know, and even though I was planning on waiting a long time to have another baby, I was glad because finally once I was able to realize that I really missed that baby, you know I hadn't had it, but even though I missed it, it certainly made it so much easier to, me to get passed it. Because like after I had that really bad month where this is the month the baby was going to be born and I, you know I missed it and all this stuff, but I really admitted to myself you know, how awful I felt about it you know and. It's just like you think, "Well I've done everything, I drink all my milk, and I" you know "I ate everything right and I treated myself right" and you know you just think, "What happened?"

K: You start to think "What did I do?"

M: Ya, ya what happened to me, how did I lose it? Was I not going to be a good mother? You know you just kind of get this scared feeling like, you know and then I'd just be like, "Well am I ever going to be able to have a baby? What if I can't have babies?" You know, you start to worry. "Maybe something's wrong with me?" You know, "Maybe my body's just ruined and I won't ever be able to carry babies!" You know? And Dave would be like, "That's ridiculous!" You know? And I'd just be like, "Well I feel that way." You know, it's scary. Even now I just feel like, "I don't want anything to happen right now." You know? I just, I won't let myself get stressed. When I feel my body get tense, we're relaxing, we're going to eat whatever we like, we're going to do everything we like, you know. 'Cause I just really, it's scary. Now that I'm getting to the thir--end of the third month and I feel fine and I'm getting over the sickness a little bit and all of this stuff you know, and I had a pretty good experience with this trimester and I feel a little better. I feel a lot better. I'm looking forward to this baby more than I was the first one you know I think I appreciate the experience more too. I'm just like, I'm more excited for this baby than I was for the first one. You know? I look forward to this baby. Of course I probably appreciate it more hoping that I'll be able to have this one. And I don't have any bad feelings. I don't really feel like I'm gonna lose this one. I don't feel that way about it at all. You know, it's helped, I'm so glad that I was able to get over the miscarriage before I got pregnant again too, because I might have still stayed depressed you know and it might have been really wierd starting another baby and then thinking, you know, being still depressed and you know, upset over the first one. And I was happy. By the time I got pregnant again I was fine about everything. Things didn't bother me, you know and I was better you know? It was sad, it was a sad experience but it wasn't as profoundly painful as it used to be. That's really what helped me out. So as soon as I was able to admit to myself that there was a bad side to it as well as a positive, it took me awhile to get to that negative part and say, "This is bad. This was painful. This is how it was." Instead of "It'll be ok, it'll be ok." You know and I guess I've always done that you know with bad in

my family. And it's different when it happens to your own body and things like that, it's a lot stranger. Then you realize, I'm responsible for a life now. You know? And what happened? You know? There's no, there's no explanation. You know? It wasn't, it wasn't like I had tests done to see if the baby had anything wrong, and my RH factor's fine, I know I don't have to worry about that, you know, so it was things, things that you really don't understand and may not know why it happened, but it did. And you always wonder why. You'll always wonder what really happened. And you don't know. So, I mean I guess that's the agony. Is you never really know exactly what happened, but it's ok now. That's the most important thing. It's changed a lot about how I feel about women too.

K: What do you mean?

M: Well, I mean you just, you think of pregnancy as this happy little thing that happens to people and you don't think of miscarriage as a common thing but it is a very common thing.

K: Did you know that before you had your miscarriage?

M: My mother had told me that she had had a miscarriage, and I was kind of surprised and then once I had mine it was like out of the woodwork all these people were like, "I had one and I had one." And I was just like, "Wow!" You know?

K: I'm not alone!

M: And it's so, it's, it takes away that guilt and failure thing, you know? Instead of, "Well how come am I the only one that," you know "ever lost a baby?" You're not. You know, my, I have an aunt who lost about four or five, she only had two kids. And she wanted babies more than anything, and she only was able actually to have two. You know, and it was so strange, and you hear her, how she was able to be strong through a bunch of miscarriages just to have those two kids, you know? Because that was so important to her. And I just think, if I had miscarriages like that I would be so discouraged, I would just be like, "I don't care anymore, I'm not going to have babies." You know? That's how I

would get. And she was just like, "I wanted lots of babies, but," she's like, "I only had two." And I'm just like, "Wow. How could you be so tough and resiliant?" That really helped me out too. She's a very nice lady. They're not LDS, but, they live in Salt Lake [laughs]. And they, and they really, she's a really understanding woman, I've always admired her a lot. That helped me out too. To be surrounded by people who could say, "I've shared...(cassette is inaudible) and it's not abnormal." It's not abnormal. And that really changed my opinion about how, you know, how women are, you always think, "Well they're just happy little mothers."

K: They don't have any problems.

M: They probably all lost one. You know, you have five or six kids, you probably lost one somewhere along the way.

K: Sure, your chances are a whole lot higher.

M: You know, I mean you look at them, you go to the ward, and all these moms with lots of kids you just think....

K: They've probably experienced miscarriage.

M: They probably have now, they change their mind about that kind of thing. You know it makes you realize how resilient women are if they can you know carry something inside of their body lose and still get over that. I think that would be hard. I think it's also important for one reason that you are ready to be a mother before you try to ever have kids because if you have to lose one and you're not at the maturity level, you know you can see why you know there is this cycle in things that happen. And that would be harder to I think with my sister who's eighteen wants to get married and I was thinking, "She's probably gonna have a baby right away." And I was thinking if the same thing happened to her, "How will she deal with it?" You know, how would she, does she have the life skills and has she been through enough things that you know, this could really ruin her. And she does have a real support group with Mom and me right there. It's helpful now, now. And I always think that things happen for a reason. I think I've been through all

kinds of stuff that I think were sort of unnecessary, but as soon as one of my friends goes through it after me, I'm like,

K: Now you know why.

M: this is exactly why. This is exactly why things that happen to me that I hate you know, happen because I have always felt like that I am kind of a big testing ground for all of these things and that when something that happens to me that I don't like, I always think, "Somebody's going to have this happen that I know sometime soon." And it always happens that way. So I figure, I'm just this storehouse of exotic experiences and I can share with you anyone you want [laughs]. You know? And it, it's kind of a thing to be grateful for, I mean if you are able to do that. Having problems all the time and being able to help other people that's very fortunate. That's one thing I've always thought is, is the reason I've always felt positive about that experience and try to think on the positive side is that I always think that sometime it's going to happen to one of my friends or someone. Where I can say, "I've been through that." You know, and we can talk about it.

Rachel

Provo, Utah

July 14, 1995

Personal Narrative

INFORMANT DATA

Age: 24 Sex: Female

Place of birth: Washington, D.C.

Home region: West Jordan, Utah, U.S.A.

Religion:LDS

Ethnicity: Caucasion

Occupation: Graduate Student, Technical Writer

Relation to collector: Colleague and friend

Marital status: Married

CONTEXTUAL DATA

Social Context

I had previously spoken a little with Rachel about her miscarriage experience. I conducted this interview with Rachel in Provo, Utah, July 14, 1995 at the home of my parents-in-law. No one else was present in the room. Rachel was currently pregnant with her second pregnancy.

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R: It just started, I bled a lot before I actually had the miscarriage. So um, like it started one Thursday night I just noticed I was bleeding a little bit, but I didn't really worry about it. 'Cause I figured it was ok, 'cause there wasn't a lot of blood or anything it was just... .

K: Did people tell you it was common? 'Cause that's what people told me.

R: Ya. And um, so on Thursday, that was a Thursday night, and then I didn't bleed at all. It was just like, pink. It wasn't hardly anything. And then I waited until the next day to call the doctor. I actually waited until after I got home from work, so it was like two o'clock. So I called them and left a message on a machine, this was one of the frustrating things about it is 'cause the doctors, the nurses never answered the phone or anything.

K: Oh you're kidding?

R: So I leave a message on the nurse's phone machine. [laughs] It was still kind of stupid. And I said, you know, "I was bleeding last night," was all. And then they called me and said, "Well, just rest." And then, 'cause they asked me how much I bled and stuff. And then like right after I hung up I discovered that I was bleeding a little more and it was like red, so. I called them back and I said, "Uh, it's kind of different now" [laughs].

K: It's getting worse.

R: Ya, so, so then they told me, you know, "Just take it easy, rest, it's probably just your uterus shedding." Or something like that, they tell you that. I'm like, "Ok." And, so I was a little worried after that, after it started again. And then uh, so I just got in bed. And they told me to stay in bed.

K: To rest?

R: No, they said, "Stay in bed." So I thought that I couldn't get up or anything [laughs]. And then um, then my husband came home and I told him. He didn't think it was a big deal either. And then, (laughs) so he was like, he wanted to uh, invite some friends over that night and stuff [laughs]. And then, like I read about it in books and it said, you know, usually, it doesn't necessarily mean you're having a miscarriage when you're bleeding. But

then it, it said, I don't know, but the symptoms they gave for miscarriage weren't exactly what I was experiencing. It seemed more sudden. So I didn't worry about it too much, but then it said, "Sometimes" you know, "you bleed for like three or four days. And then that's the same thing," you know. So, um, the longer I kept bleeding the more I'd read about it, because, and I just wanted it to stop.

K: And did it start to get heavier?

R: It didn't get a lot heavier until like Sunday morning, it just started getting really heavy. 'Cause I didn't really have to wear like, all I had to wear was like, one of those little pads. You know, the little thin ones?

K: Pantyliners?

R: Ya, pantyliners. But then on Sunday morning it just started getting heavier and I started getting cramps and stuff, then I knew, you know. And then, um, it was really wierd because my husband didn't really believe it was happening you know? So he wouldn't give me a blessing [laughs] or anything. He's like, "Don't worry about it." But then finally when I had cramps and stuff ....

K: Was he in a state of denial or something?

R: Ya. I guess so. And finally when I had cramps and stuff he um, he agreed to give me a blessing. I woke him up like four in the morning [laughs]. And it was pretty good, it was nice, 'cause he sat there for awhile trying to be inspired at four o'clock in the morning [laughs]. And then um, he blessed me that I would be able to have all the children that I wanted to things like that, so he helped me. So it was, it was basically a good blessing. 'Cause I've heard of other, I've had friends who've had husbands say that they wouldn't have a miscarriage and then they did.

K: Oh really, and then they did?

R: Ya. That would be really traumatic.

K: It would.

R: That would be a lot worse.

K: That would be hard.

R: So um, anyway. I called the hospital because the doctor's office told me to call the hospital. And I called Utah Valley, and I, I don't know, I felt kind of bad calling the hospital because they acted like I was so silly to call them [laughs]. And they said, "Well you should be calling your doctor." I talked to a nurse at Utah Valley. So I talked to her and she said, "Well call your doctor." So I called the doctor, and they had this pager thing. And I couldn't figure out how to work it. You're supposed to dial in your number or something. But it was just like this beep you know on the end of the phone. So I've never done that before my husband hadn't either. So I just, couple times called it, then hung up. Then a couple of times I called and finally the doctor called me back. And he said, "Look, I'm not on duty right now can you call again?"

K: He said that?

R: Ya, he didn't like ask what was wrong or anything. So I called him again and by that time I just said, "Well, let's just go to a different hospital." So, 'cause it was frustrating. That was one of the most frustrating things. And so we went to the Orem Community Hospital, which is where my other doctor works, and they were really nice. They treated me really nice and stuff, put these blankets over me and stuff.

K: So you'd gone into the hospital?.

R: Ya. And then they just checked me to make sure I was dialated and all this stuff. I guess I'd passed some blood clots, you know that stuff, and so I wasn't sure what that was, 'cause I'd never seen anything like that.

K: Did you read that you save some tissue?

R: Ya, so I saved that and brought it into them.

K: I couldn't tell.

R: I didn't know what it was.

K: It all looked the same to me.

R: Your husband didn't know either huh?

K: No, he like fished in and got some and I just said, "It looks like a blood clot to me."

R: Ya. And then um, so anyway the doctor was really nice, and he said, you know, he talked about how it was Mother Nature's way of saying just try again, you know? Which is, I mean he said it in a way that was better than most people say it [laughs]. Because most people are like, "Well, it happens to most people," you know, something like that. Which is not very comforting. But um. So anyway. They were really nice. So after that I felt pretty good. I didn't feel great but. And then, we went home and then it started. And I hadn't passed the fetus yet, so after I got home my cramps started getting worse and stuff so I just took an Ibuprofen. It helped a little bit, but it still hurt. But, I mean it wasn't really really painful. And then, I guess the worst part was passing the fetus, I didn't feel it or anything, but it was, it was just really traumatic. You know? Because I didn't know what to do with it. You know? What do you do with this? Just flush it down the toilet? [laughs].

K: You actually saw it?

R: Ya. And that was hard because, you know, it doesn't, I don't know, because this whole time you're thinking you have this baby inside of you and then, there's this big lump thing. Well it was, you could tell that it was, it was the fetus. But you really don't think of it that way, you know? So it was kind of wierd. And then, I flushed it down the toilet, and it was, it felt wierd to do that. Because for all this time you have to eat right and stuff and here's this thing and then you flush it down the toilet, it's really wierd. And, I think that was, that was hardest thing, just not, not when it actually happened but remembering that is the hardest thing just because, I don't know, it's wierd. K: Sure it is. It's like this, this little, I don't know, human that you're throwing away, or the beginnings of a little human.

R: Ya. Um, I don't know, I had all of these wierd feelings like, you know, then I started thinking about abortion, whether or not it's good, trying to think about all of these different things. And it was, it was just really wierd. And then I remember one of the

things I felt was um, you know, oh, well actually on Sunday, I felt pretty good, about it. not, "Yay, I had a miscarriage!" or anything but, I was pretty calm and things like that and like, we got home and I was just sitting on the sofa, and for that, that weekend for some reason, you know, do you get the Deseret News and the Church News, you know that one section where they have those questions? It was "How to Cope With Miscarriage" or something like that.

K: That's interesting.

R: So, he was going through all of the newspapers, throwing them away and stuff, and, um, he said, "Do you want to see this Church News?" 'Cause I hadn't seen it. That was one of the things that was in it, so it was kind of cool.

K: That, that was in the Church News?

R: Ya. So I kind of felt like, you know, somebody was watching out for me at least.

K: Right, well what timing.

R: Uh-huh. So that was kind of cool.

K: Did you tell people or who did you tell and how did you deal with that?

R: I didn't really tell a lot of people. We had told my husband's parents and his grandmother and a couple of his cousins. And it wasn't like we wanted to tell them, it was like something that they kind of guessed. So, and, um, my husband's parents called the day that I had my miscarriage 'cause they always call on Sunday. And so he said, "Well," you know he told them about it and stuff. Then I guess they called my husband's grandmother and she called me and wanted to know if I wanted to come over for dinner [laughs]. I'm like, "No thanks."

K: Did she know?

R: Well she never had a miscarriage so, you know, it's not the day to go out to dinner. And then, even if you felt like going out to dinner it's probably best not to do it. No, you couldn't 'cause there's all this stuff falling out of you [laughs] you know?

K: Well and a lot of people, I mean, you're in pain, for some people it's worse than others.

R: Ya, it hurt too. And it hurt for a couple of days. But I guess the first day was the worst, I don't know. And then, let's see, I hadn't told my parents. I told a couple of people at school and stuff, but. It wasn't as really hard to tell them as to tell relatives for some reason. I don't know why. But because, I don't know, you feel like your relatives expect something. It makes you feel like you're not living up to something, I don't know, it's so dumb!

K: No it's not, I mean I think that's a common thing.

R: Ya. And another thing that happened was like, all my relatives, all my husband's relatives knew about it, you know, they all knew about it even though we only told like one person [laughs].

K: That's the grapevine.

R: Ya. And so, so months afterwards people were asking me when my baby was due, and I'm just like, "Well, I had a miscarriage." So, and then, I don't know, when, like people that I told about it, 'cause some people asked me why I wasn't in church or things like that, and you tell them and they act, like, they don't say anything, it's just wierd.

K: I don't think they know what to say.

R: It's either like people tell you that all these people had miscarriages, but I don't think as many people I know have had them. You know, the people that I told because, 'cause they just acted really dumb.

K: Like what would they say or do?

R: They would, well a lot of people just didn't say anything. And um, and then you know some people, I liked the best one I liked was when some people just said you know, "I'm sorry," you know, stuff like that. But, some of my relatives wrote me letters, like, my husband's mother had a miscarriage when she was like five months along.

K: How many weeks along were you?

R: I was ten weeks. And uh, let's see, and she wrote me a big long letter about how she was really depressed and stuff. And that was nice. But, I can't really talk to her about it because her experience was so different from mine. And I feel like mine wasn't as traumatic you know, which it probably wasn't.

K: But it's traumatic, I mean it's traumatic for you, you know, but I guess I'd put it that way if I compare to someone else's. That would be hard.

R: I think so. And then uh, my sister-in-law wrote me and she, she had had a miscarriage that she didn't know about because she had gone to the doctor and had a pregnancy test and then she'd gotten her period, so hers was really early. So, her letter was like, you know, "Almost everyone I've talked to has had one." Which was nice to know, I mean the way she said it was nice. But some people were really dumb about it [laughs]. So. I didn't tell, I hadn't told my mom I was pregnant, but then I told her. She was kind of mad at me.

K: I did that. My parents didn't even know I was pregnant and then when I told them, it was miscarriage. How did you feel about that?

R: Well, well, I don't know, it was nice to be able to talk to her about it so. I don't know. It made me think, "Well, next time I'll tell her." [laughs]. So next time I told her, this time.

K: Had your mom experienced miscarriage?

R: No.

K: No one in my [immediate] family has, so I [felt I] was this wierdo.

R: Ya. Ya, it's just, my family, I mean nobody ever talked about miscarriage so. I just thought, you know, like I, I told you before I thought it was like a hereditary thing.

K: So did I [laughter].

R: After I was like, "Man, I was dumb!" [laughs] And I think that's the way most people think. And then one of the things my sister-in-law said was, that I should read books about miscarriage. I don't know if I should've done that because they were really scary, you know? And the ones I read were for people that have repeated miscarriages and stuff I think.

K: Not just first time?

R: I'm not sure, but at the same, at one time, well, you know at the beginning it gave all these statistics and that was kind of encouraging, because it told you if you have one miscarriage, um you have about an 89% chance of not having one the next time. So, I mean, that was comforting to know. But, you know I read all these stories and I'm just going, "Uhhh." You know? Because I just did not want to be like, the women in those stories. It was really sad what happened to them. But, where am I going with all this? [laughs] The first day I was ok, you know, I was sad about it. And then like the second day, I stayed home from work and stuff, and uh, I was just really depressed. And, and I think I must have had like, 'cause I delt with it on an intellectual level, I delt with it pretty well. I mean, I reasoned it out. Spiritually I dealt with it, but somehow emotionally, I think maybe like the hormones had kicked in by the second day or something because I think, like I was like really, really depressed. Like almost suicidally depressed. It was just really wierd, and it, I don't know. It was hard and I think um, and it was just like, every once in awhile I'd just get that way, it was just like this, I'd feel fine and then all of a sudden I'd just get really depressed. And then I'd feel fine, you know? So, I think it might have been some hormone thing.

K: Oh I'm sure it was.

R: Because, and then when I was reading in that book it said that, women who have miscarriages in their first trimester have, it's like, a lot worse than having postpartum depression, that's what I was reading. And, and that made me feel kind of good, because I thought, you know, [laughs], I must have been crazy when I was going through that. And uh, I don't think people understand that either. Because, I don't know. Well, it's not that I couldn't handle it.

K: There's a huge difference when you think about it; miscarriage, you've lost something, whereas postpartum depression is just an overwhelming feeling of "look what you have."

R: Ya, ya. And um, they actually, they said that actually your hormone levels are highest at the beginning of pregnancy, so, uh, when you lose it, then it's even worse than at the end of pregnancy, I don't know. I don't know, I think maybe I had, now I'm scared for postpartum depression, that I might be wierd about it [laughs].

K: No, you'll be fine.

R: But um, but I think, I don't know, that was kind of hard too, just having to go through that. And uh, just made me think about things differently. And I kind of felt resentful, a little bit sometimes. Like you know, that, like my mom said that she had gone into this, this clinic, the health clinic and you know all these teenage girls were going in for pregnancy tests and there are all these pregnant teenage girls, and I was just thinking, "You know, here are all these, here are all these pregnant teenage girls, and Christie Brinkley was pregnant too!" [laughs]

K: I know, didn't it seem like everyone in their dog was pregnant? How did you feel?

R: Um, you know the people that I knew were pregnant I was like fine. But sometimes I'd see people in the store, and I'd just, rrrr, you know, I'd just have these really hateful feelings towards people and I was like, "Man this is so wierd!" And I was so jealous! And I, I don't know, I, I've never been like that before, so that was wierd to deal with. You know after a month, a month went by I wasn't really like that anymore.

K: Did it seem to get better with time or did time make it worse for you as far as this jealousy mode?

R: Um, I think it got a little bit better. After awhile I was just like, "Oh who cares?" [laughs]. You know? But I think the first month or maybe it was the first two months, I don't know. I was just so tired, and I didn't realize how tired I was. 'Cause when Christmas break hit, because I had my miscarriage November 13th, and Christmas break ....

K: So this was just this last November?

R: Ya. When Christmas break hit, I had no classes and I could go to work whenever I wanted to. It was, I slept a whole lot. So I think that I really needed sleep and things and that wasn't something that I realized as much. Because when I was pregnant I thought, "Well," you know, actually I kind of pushed myself the first time I was pregnant more than I should've.

K: Well, you don't know. Did anyone bring over meals and stuff, did the Relief Society bring you over a meal?

R: No. In fact, they were calling me to take people meals.

K: Did they know that you had had a miscarriage?

R: No. Nobody told them. So I didn't expect them to. But I think that was, that was one of the things that I thought, you know "That would be so nice," because I didn't cook anything. I didn't have any energy to. In fact we called my cousin's grandma and we just said, [laughing] "Can we come over for dinner?"

K: Well, it's like you had a baby, although it's early, it's not maybe like the same, but you know, you've lost a lot of blood.

R: Ya, it's pretty tiring. I think people think of it as like having your period or something.

K: And maybe for some people it is like that but still.

R: And I think, I think it probably is for some people. 'Cause just from the way that I've heard people describe it, it's like, and it did feel a lot like that but it was a lot, it was a lot more painful. And I think it did make me more tired, than it would before. Course my period really makes me tired [laughs]. Um, no, but actually I, one, you know when my friend had a miscarriage and I knew about it pretty early when she had it, you know I knew about it like the day after, I took her dinner, 'cause that was one of the things I thought that I would have wanted. You know.

K: You kind of know better now.

R: Ya. And I think people are just kind of ignorant about it.

K: I do too, I don't think they mean to be mean or insensitive.

R: Ya. But if someone has a miscarriage later on, they will. It's just the early ones they just think, "Oh it happens so often." Um, did anyone fix you dinner?

K: Luana, 'cause she knew. And I was Relief Society President and so what am I going to do? Call the compassionate service leader "Can you bring me over dinner?" It was really awkward. So I didn't get any others, in fact no one in my ward knew. In fact I moved from the ward and no one knows, except for one person I think. What was stupid was I, I wanted that and yet I hadn't told anyone, but I felt bad that no one knew.

R: I was so embarrassed about it. And then my husband would like try to cover it up too, which I thought was wierd.

K: It is.

R: You know, but, because my father, well my father's a lot different than my husband is, and he just like always blabs everything, you know, to everyone, and I'm kind of a little bit like him, you know, if we have some problem I'll tell somebody [laughs]. But um, but you know Sam is just like, I guess he was afraid that I would be embarrassed, so he didn't tell people. And like I was supposed to, on Wednesday I was supposed to drive up to Salt Lake with the, with the Young Women and he said I could, you know they called me and he said I was asleep and, and they asked if I could drive up on Wednesday and he said, "Ya, she'll--," [laughs] you know? And by the time Wednesday came I was just like, "Uhhh, I don't think I'll go." I mean, I, I started going to work, well let's see, I went and taught English 115 on Tuesday, which is ok, actually I liked doing that, 'cause it was kind of a diversion, because you know you have to be happy and stuff like that.

K: Well, you kind of have to deal with life again.

R: Ya, ya and, but going back to my regular job was harder than that. It was, it wasn't as much fun. Because, I had a lot of time just sitting there writing, writing on the computer and stuff and that was kind of hard to get back into. But I didn't start going back to that until Wednesday. Then after my job I came home and I, I was like, "I don't want to drive

up to Salt Lake." [laughs] And it turned out that they had, they cancelled it. So I was really glad.

K: But, you mentioned you were embarrassed, why were you embarrassed as far as people knowing that you had a miscarriage?

R: I don't know why I was embarrassed, I guess, I think um, I don't know, when I talked to my friends they're embarrassed because um, like, they were so happy about it, and they didn't expect it to happen and they're embarrassed because of that. And maybe that's why I was embarrassed. I don't know.

K: Did you talk about it to people?

R: Ya, but see, I didn't, I wasn't really, I didn't talk to a lot of people about it. So, but the people that I did talk about, the two about it, I was embarrassed, you know, for that reason. Because I'd talked about it and I was excited about it and stuff, so, you know. 'Cause I was so dumb that I didn't expect it to happen [laughs].

K: That's not dumb, you know?

R: But that's, that's what I think my feelings were. And then um, but I don't know why I would be embarrassed, I guess because of the weakness or something, or maybe I thought that there was something wrong with me, or something? Not that I, I thought that there was something wrong, but that other people would think.

K: That other people would think that there was something wrong?

R: Ya, ya. And sometimes my students were such a pain, at the end of the semester because I had a Shine class, and I was like, "Uhhh." [laughs]. And um, and sometimes I just wanted to say, you know "Do you know what's been happening to me lately?" [laughs] But I never did.

K: I remember, I remember coming back um, after like two, after missing two class periods of 115 teaching, and they were like, it was on a Friday, I went back Friday and they were like, "What's wrong? What did you have? What's your problem?" And I said, "I just didn't feel well." And they were like, "Well we, I had the flu and I came," and you

know, you know I thought I should just tell them and then they'd feel this big, you know? But I didn't. I just thought,"Well, whatever."

R: Ya. And I'm glad I didn't tell them. Otherwise you know then you bring this whole other thing into your classroom, "I miscarried when I was married for seven months." So, it's like then people started bugging me about it, I was like, "Leave me alone!"

K: It's almost like throwing salt on a wound, I mean, especially when you've had a miscarriage. R: The worst one is when people talk about what it feels like to be pregnant. "When you're pregnant, your husband will be more sympathetic towards your sicknesses." Things like that. And I'm like, "Uhh, I don't think so." [laughs]. I think most people that I talked to had different experiences than I did. But it helped a little. I think it was more helpful when, when I got to play the part on the counselor instead of being counseled. Church I think helped. I talked about my blessing and stuff. 'Cause that was one thing I think you know I felt pretty good about. That, um, I thought you know, Heavenly Father wants me to have children. I didn't really feel like he had some personal vendetta against me or something. But I was like, "Oh, I hope you don't make me, make this a never-ending trial for me." You know?

K: You didn't see it as something that you were being punished for?

R: No, I didn't really see it as a punishment, sometimes I kind of slipped into that. You know, when I was getting depressed. But, um, I, I knew that it was wrong, even when I felt that way. So. And I think that that is one of the stupidest things about people in the church to feel that way. 'Cause I'm like, it's totally against any doctrine we have. But people still feel that way. I think they're dumb [laughs]. So. And I tell people that too, 'cause, some people say something like, "I think God was punishing me." I'm like, "God doesn't punish us, really," you know?

K: I agree. And I think that's one of the hardest things in our church.

R: And especially he won't punish us with miscarriage, you know, I don't think at all.

K: That's a pretty, I mean to talk about a loving Heavenly Father, that's a pretty mean thing to do if that were...

R: Right, ya. And I think, I mean it was probably a good experience for me to have 'cause it makes me more grateful and things like that, but, I can look at it that way, maybe, you know, if it happened to me because of that, or because it would have been, I mean, maybe the fetus had some defect or something. I don't really, I don't know, I kind of, I kind of think you know with your first pregnancy, that it's like, it must have something to do with like, immune system or something. 'Cause it happens so much more.

K: 'Cause your body's just getting it right. I've read that it's actually much more common for a woman to have a miscarriage on the first time than any other time.

R: It's like one out of three.

K: I guess your body is trying to get used to this thing.

R: I, I don't know. I don't know.

K: I don't either [laughter].

R: But that's one of my little theories.

K: Doesn't it help you to look at it that way, to look at it more or less, this is mortality, this is how things happen? Or do you see a lot of intervention of God, you know, "I guess he didn't want me to have this," or....

R: I don't know. It's kind of wierd because I can't, I can't really, I don't really know how to see it doctrinally. 'Cause I've had people, you know, the only thing I know for sure is that you know your miscarried um, children aren't sealed to you. And your children aren't sealed to you unless they're born alive, which some miscarriages are born alive, so I don't know. But um, but anyway, and then, um, so I thought, you know, then, it's just nothing. But then, um, and that's kind of the way we viewed it at first, my husband and I. But then when I, one of our friends, you know the one that had the really hard experience of five months miscarriage and stuff? She had, she actually had twins and one of them she miscarried like the one at the end of the first trimester. And then the other was like at

twenty-two weeks. And he gave her a lot of blessings and stuff because he was her hometeacher and stuff and we were pretty good friends with them, we took care of their kids.

K: They already have one other child?

R: Ya, and I think that's good for them to already have one too, when that was happening. But um, I think he kind of changed his point of view a little bit and, I, I'm still like, I don't know what's going on. [laughs]. But he kind of views it that you'll be able to be pregnant with that child in the resurrection, you know, or something. And I think a lot of people do see it that way.

K: I've never thought about it that way.

R: And, and uh, 'cause he said, you know, and, I was talking to another friend of mine, we were just discussing the doctrine of it. 'Cause I always thought that it was, it's a confusing doctrine, because nobody says anything about it. You know, and she said, she said, that she had had a religion teacher who actually told her that. So that was kind of interesting to me that a religion teacher would actually say that. So, I don't know. I'm kind of like, "Whatever!" [laughs].

K: I never really looked at it, not to sound callous, but I never looked at it as a human being, I just felt, like early on something had gone wrong. You know the pictures that you see and two weeks, four weeks, it, it just never looked real human to me and so I guess that's kind of how I dealt with it is that it wasn't ever really human, 'cause it just never fully developed.

R: Ya. And I don't know how, like at first we were like, "Well, we'll just have to wait until the next one, 'cause that body wasn't good." So, you know, and then now we're like, "Oh, who knows?"

K: No one really does, I certainly don't know.

R: That, that's kind of one of the things that I think is kind of difficult to deal with. Because, there's no doctrine about it. As far as church goes. Oh, and I was going to say,

you know, I was, I was like really sick after having my miscarriage, I still had morning sickness and stuff. And I would get these really nauseating headaches. And I'd have to like, like, I don't know whether, maybe it was stress. 'Cause my mom gets headaches sometimes.

K: Did you get morning sickness when you were pregnant?--the first time?

R: I didn't really have it that, as bad as I did the second time.

K: I think it's common not to, and that if you do is usually kind of like, but some women don't have any and, you know they have a healthy baby that's fine, but the sicker you are supposedly the better is.

R: I was glad I was sicker the second time, 'cause I was like

K: I know, same here, even though I was so sick. Like, how did it help you to, to feel sick?

R: To feel sick? Because I really felt like I was really pregnant. And I, and I'd talked to you about that before.

K: Ya, I remember that.

R: So I was like, "Hmm, that's good."

K: Ya, it was kind of a mixed blessing, you know, because I was like so sick I thought I was going to die.

R: And I actually wasn't, it was funny 'cause I wasn't as sick like, I was only sick like during the second month, or second into the third month, towards the end of the third. I didn't feel very sick. But, even compared to how I felt after my miscarriage, I think (laughs), ohh, it was better than that. Because, after my miscarriage I was just so tired, well I think one of the things was, is I didn't feel like I deserved to rest because, you know

K: Because it wasn't like you had a full-blown baby kind of thing?

R: Ya. So I never rested, and maybe that's why I was, I mean I had these awful headaches and they were, they were bad headaches, they made me like neausous.

K: Probably because your iron level was low.

R: I don't know what happened. 'Cause I was still taking, I took prenatal vitamins and stuff. 'Cause I figured, well I'm so, you know, so weak.

K: But really you lost a lot of blood. I don't think we realize how much blood we lose.

R: Ya. I bled for like two weeks. Someone was telling me, "After I had my baby I bled for two weeks," like she was some martyr or something [laughs]. I'm like, "Hello, I'm still bleeding from my miscarriage!" [laughs].

K: In fact, I think I bled longer after my miscarriage than I did after giving birth to Ashlin.

R: Did you have a D&C though?

K: Yes.

R: And you still bled?

K: Yes.

R: I didn't think you bled after, I'm so dumb.

K: Oh no you're not! Ya, I did. Well, I think they tell you that, they tell you that, now see I thought, well I didn't bleed as long as maybe, if you didn't have one.

R: 'Cause I think that's why, my doctor said, you know, "You can have a D&C if you want." And I said, "No thanks!" Actually he said I could have a D&C or I could have an ultrasound to see if I needed one, so I just had an ultrasound. That was wierd too, 'cause the woman's like, "Now if you were pregnant, the baby would be right here." [laughs].

K: Gosh, thank you. Let's rub it in that I'm having a miscarriage. I'm sorry. I feel like I have to apologize for all these people that say dumb things.

R: People are so stupid. I can't believe it.

K: They just aren't sensitive. They just don't use their brain.

R: And you know, over and over, when I hear everytime, this happens to someone, people in the hospital or somebody are stupid like that, and I just think, "Man!" K: At least, at least it helps me be like, I'm not going to be that way.

R: Ya. That's one of the things that I, that was one of the consolations about the whole thing, I felt like, you know, at least I can help people, 'cause of that.

Sherri

Provo, Utah

July 31, 1995

Personal Narrative

INFORMANT DATA

Age: 31 Sex: Female

Place of birth: Lafayette, Indiana

Home region: Alpine, Utah, U.S.A.

Religion:LDS

Ethnicity: Caucasion

Occupation: Homemaker, Part-time graduate student

Relation to collector: Colleague and friend

Marital status: Married

CONTEXTUAL DATA

Social Context

Sherri shared her miscarriage story with me at my parents-in-law's home in Provo, Utah, July 31, 1995. We were accompanied by two children, Sherri's little girl and my little girl.

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Well it's been awhile since I thought about my miscarriage. And I think I thought about it more often when I was pregnant with Madeline. Um, and when we were trying

to conceive her than I do now. I find that now that I have a baby, it, it's not as initially a painful memory. But I did have an experience recently, a woman in my neighborhood had a miscarriage, um, she had been, she was like four, four and a half months along and went in for her first ultrasound and she took her other children with her and when they went in the baby was dead. And it was very hard for her and I just wrote her a little note, she didn't really seem to be wanting to talk about it with many people. I wrote her a little note and as I wrote it a lot of the feelings of the miscarriage came back to me. Because I was remembering, you know, how it felt. But, we had, um, we didn't have any children at the time.

K: So this was the first time you tried?

S: The first pregnancy. And um, and we had been married about a year and a half and started trying to have a baby, and then um, we conceived her about, not her, I'm thinking of her now, but we conceived this baby about um, oh maybe after three months. And we told very few people. We told my mother, you know my parents, and we told one of my brothers, um, who lives in Minnesotta because we think we conceived the child at their house [laughter].

K: Did you let them know that?

S: Yes, that's why we called them.

K: And how far along were you when you were telling people that you were pregnant?

S: Um, well I told them like within the first month, but didn't tell anyone else. Um, I didn't tell anyone, we didn't tell my husband's family, for example, and I didn't tell anyone else in my family, that I can remember. I might have told one of my sisters who I'm really close to who's in college. Um, but I'm not sure of that, I think she'd actually just left on her mission, but I'm not sure of the timing. So, um, anyway, I, I made a real point of not telling people at work. Because I was in a, I managed a group of about a hundred people, and um, and I knew that people would speculate a lot if I became pregnant about what I was going to do. And I didn't want that kind of speculation interfereing with my ability to

do my job, or, I just didn't want to have people talking about it. So, that made it particularly difficult when I had the miscarriage. Um, everything seemed to go pretty well with the baby, until, right before I was supposed to meet with the doctor. Um, you know, I'm sure I've forgotten a lot of the details. Um, no I know that's not totally true. I think, I think I was about a month along is all, um, five, you know four or five weeks when I started bleeding.

K: Was it spotting or was it bleeding?

S: Um, it wasn't just spotting, it was often enough, and enough blood that I was worried that there was a problem. And I called the doctor and he, he had me go in for a, an ultrasound to see um, how things were. And you know, I'm sorry I really don't remember just how many weeks I was along when this happened, 'cause the miscarriage itself didn't occur for several more weeks. So um,

K: It was a long one.

S: Ya, and so um, we went in and had the ultrasound and they saw a fetus and heard a heartbeat, we heard the heartbeat. It was very exciting.

K: Well that's interesting. And you heard a heartbeat?

S: Uh-hmm, we heard a heartbeat, but they said the baby was smaller than it should be for the number of weeks it was along. Anyway, I do remember going one evening with my husband to um, what's it called now? It's now called Sam's Club and it used to be Pace, I think? You know, the big discount warehouse? We went there one evening, and I remember gushing, I remember it was so much blood. It was, it was more than you'd have in a period, like if you were to forget you know your pad, just gushing. And having a few experiences like that you know? You know I'm sure I'm forgetting a lot of little details, I remember a lot about how I felt. I remember having some problems and going to the doctor, because I was spotting and he, he was concerned and said I should be resting and that I should not be doing a lot of stressful things. Well I went the day before I was supposed to travel to California for a work thing, and my manager had come and asked,

asked me to do this. Our company was acquiring another company, a small company, and I was supposed to go to California and work out the arrangements for how, uh, we would, um, take over some of their product lines and stuff like that. And I was really about the only person who knew enough about the product to do it, it seemed, I mean I knew more than most people about it. So um, I had to go in the next day and say, "I'm sick, I can't go, I'm well enough to be at work but I can't go," you know? [laughs]. And so we found someone else to go. So I felt like, "Oh you know, people are going to see through this." And um, anyway, so I had a lot of, pretty continual bleeding, a little, then a few gushes, and stuff, until um, ten months along, ten weeks along, ten months--well, that was a long pregnancy wasn't it? [laughter]. Ya, ten weeks. And the doctor, I, I tried to do a lot of reading, you know, I think I had the *What to Expect When You're Expecting* book and some things. And I was very, you know the doctor said, well, he didn't know, maybe it was a fetus that wasn't going to, you know, survive. Um, if it was small I thought, "Well, well maybe it's not getting enough blood." And I thought, "Well, if this baby lives, will it be um, physically or mentally you know, retarded because it's not nourished well enough?" Or I thought, "Am I going, you know it could be a problem with the placenta. And would I then be in bed the whole time?" You know? And, we did really want a baby, you know? And um, anyway, so, so I had a lot of fear and and didn't know what to happen, and I, I kind of wished it would all be over, you know. And I think, I think I had a blessing perhaps before the miscarriage occurred. Anyway, when I was about ten weeks along I had the actual miscarriage. And the miscarriage itself lasted about a week long. I, I was bleeding very heavily and had all the tissue and stuff for a week, and a lot of the kind of labor pains and stuff and, now that I've experienced real labor and her birth was a long, arduous labor [laughs] um, I know that what I felt in the miscarriage was not as painful as labor, but it was very painful. And um, and I remember lying in bed for you know, a couple of hours at a time, um, and every few minutes just kind of having to, to focus inward or breath very deeply and hard, in order to handle the pain. And um, it was going

on so long. And sometimes I wouldn't have the pain, it's kind of like I think the uterus would start contracting at certain times to move out the tissue. And my husband you know didn't stay home from work because it seemed to be going on you know for so long. And I remember one night in calling the, um, I had him call my doctor, like it was at one in the morning, because I was in so much pain. And um, it just seemed to be going on and on. And, and it had been going on you know? I remember when I started to have the miscarriage, you know, just kind of feeling a mixture of sadness and, and relief. Um, and at the point was glad really that I hadn't told a lot of people I was pregnant. On the other hand I was home for a week from work because of my position, anyone we were hiring in the department, I was supposed to approve and we happened to be doing a lot of hiring and some other things. So I had some managers who reported to me who needed to speak with me so I'd be at home and I'd call in for an hour you know, do some things and they'd say, "So, is everything ok?" "Ya, just kind of sick," you know. "Well hope you get better." And, and it was very hard for me because, it was one of the most, it wasn't just that week of the miscarriage that was hard, but the whole maybe five or six weeks before that. It was one of the most exhausting um, emotional experiences I had had, because it was so, it was so uncertain. And I couldn't talk to anybody about it. Um, because I, because I just didn't, they didn't know I was pregnant, and I didn't want to have that you know.

K: So, it would almost be like you have to announce you're pregnant and then have everyone get excited and say, "But I'm having a miscarriage."

S: Well, right, especially after I was a month along and started having the bleeding I didn't want to tell anybody about it. Because I didn't want to go into a lot of that detail, you know, to go into that kind of detail especially a lot of the people I worked with were men, I didn't want to embarrass them with details of blood, you know, stuff like that. Another thing that happened during the miscarriage was um, I really wanted to know what had gone wrong, especially because it had lasted so long. And because we knew there had been

a heartbeat you know we knew there had been a living fetus. And um, so, I would collect all the tissue from the toilet and I spent, probably several hours fishing this stuff out of the toilet and I didn't know what was the placental tissue what was just blood clots, what was fetal tissue. And um, I had a little jar I put in, I kept it in the fridge you know and. Washed my hands a lot.

K: Was your husband at home during this time?

S: Well he was at work, you know, he'd come home from work, but, he didn't come in and fish it out or anything like that. But he'd see the little jar, but, um, and I ended up taking in three different samples to the hospital. What happened is, I had a lot of pain and blood and tissue and kind of one day and thought that was it. And so I took that into the hospital. And then, then it kept coming for another week and then finally I thought it was done, um it seemed to have stopped for awhile and um, ah, so I even went back to work, after I'd been away from work for a week. So I think I took three different samples in and I remember being very disappointed because we eventually got billed for three different lab tests, but we didn't get any information on why the pregnancy had failed. So anyway, we were disappointed about not getting any results back. And, like I said there was a, there was an initial time when I thought I'd been done, then it just dragged on for about a week and um, then I thought I was done and I went back to work and um, I had this big management training seminar that the company was over. I was over in the seminar with, you know, all the managers who work for me and my manager, the director was kind of in the back and in the middle of all this, I realized that I was having some more bleeding, within a building that wasn't you know, where my office was, and so I went to the bathroom and, um, felt like I needed to collect the tissue still. I mean, I, because I really wanted to know what was happening and some of the tissue that came out this last time was a gray color.

K: So you could actually see tissue?

S: Ya, there was the red clot stuff and then there was gray tissue, but I never saw anything that was in the shape really of the fetus. I think the first, when it first, like that first day when I thought it was all over, there was a lump of tissue that came out that, oh it was maybe two inches long and I thought it might be the fetus. But, and that was one of the reasons that I thought it was all over, was because of the shape of the, but in retrospect having seen so much other tissue, I realized it was probably just a lump of tissue. And it's hard for me to know if the gray tissue was placental tissue, or fetal tissue or, but it wasn't the clot stuff. Anyway, so I had to save it. And so [chuckles] I put it in like a piece of toilet paper and um, kind of hid it in this bathroom, went out to the receptionist and I said, "I'm having a miscarriage, do you have a plastic bag I can use to put this tissue in?" [laughs] And they had a plastic bag and I went back and I got it and I um, when I came back to work that day, early in the morning, I had gone and talked with my manager, who was a very close personal friend of mine, and probably the, close enough that I probably would have told him I was pregnant, but I had decided not to. But he and his wife, um, had tried, you know, for five years to have a child, and not been able to, well they had tried for like four years, had a baby, then tried another four or five years and been able to conceive. So, so they do have, they did have one child and um, I knew he understood kind of the concern, she had never had a miscarriage, the wife, his wife had never had a miscarriage. Anyway, but that morning when I got back I thought, "You know, I'm sure he can see all through this," you know, like "Sure Sherri's been sick a week, sure blah blah blah." You know? Anyway I, I talked to him very briefly, I said, "I've had a miscarriage, I'm back," I said, "I'm very weak, um, I'm not going to be able to do a lot right now, but this is what is been happening," and I said, "I've been really concerned you probably thought I was really flakey, or that you hadn't, you know, figured this out." And he was very concerned, um, but I was anxious to leave, you know when I talked to him. And in retrospect, I wish I had talked to him more because, because he was a very close friend, I consider one of the closest friends I've ever had, and um, he,

you know, we spent hours talking about my relationship with my husband when I was dating him and, we broke off our first engagement and got engaged a second time and then this manager this friend, you know, knew a lot of it. But he and I had talked a lot about his concerns about infertility and stuff. And so, I felt, but anyway, after I had been in this other building and everyone was in this seminar, and I'd left in the middle, I went back in and whispered to him that I was still having problems and I needed to go home and you know, but. But I think that one of the things that I feel the saddest about regarding the miscarriage is that I felt so lonely, I felt like it was one of the most, painful physical experiences and emotional experiences that I had ever had and, and I couldn't really share it with anybody. I just felt so lonely, 'cause I thought, "No one can understand what this means to me." And um, and I wish I had talked to him more about it, because he was a good friend and was someone I could talk to. There was a woman at work that I did talk to about it, right about the time it happened. Um, a friend. And, and that was helpful. Um, but even afterward, I just, I just really didn't talk to many people about it. Um, and I think part of it for me, I, I feel like, you know, to tell someone about your, your giving birth it's a happy experience but to describe a miscarriage, I don't know if people really want to hear about it.

K: Unless they've had one themselves.

S: Ya. But even then, you know....

K: Well, it's a depressing thing because really it's involving death.

S: Well, ya. And I, there was a second friend I spoke to at work after it happened, she was a lay midwife and she recommended a book to me, which I read. Um, I don't remember what it was called, but, it had collections of women talking about miscarriages, stillbirths, early miscarriages, late miscarriages, children who died early, um and that was helpful. But um, then for me, I always think of a miscarriage in regard to one, my ability to conceive a child and we tried for about a year after that to conceive and I don't think a year after a miscarriage is necessarily a long time, you know a year to conceive, but we,

well we had this friend, good friend, who, um, we spend a lot of time with, this manager of mine and, and we were building a house near where he lived and we'd often stop in and talk and he and his wife were having problems and we had friends who were having problems and we kind of convinced ourselves we weren't going to be able to have a child thing, you know? And I think the experience has given me a lot more empathy for people who do have miscarriage or who have trouble conceiving. Um, the other thing I always remember regarding that is that, like I said I only told one brother about it and I have another brother who, is always full of advice and a little self-righteous and, he didn't know that we had been trying to have a baby and that we had lost this baby, so he said some things to us a couple of times when all this was going on. Um like, "Well you know, you don't want to put off starting a family." We were building a house you know, "It's a nice thing to build a house but children are important," you know.

K: He didn't know about...?

S: No, and I thought it was really insensitive. Then, he and his wife, I found out they were pregnant, they were pregnant um, just a few months, maybe five months after we'd had the miscarriage and I remember when we found out that they were pregnant, I felt a lot of jealousy and anger, you know? Especially because he was very ambiguous about having this child, his fifth child. He, and he was under a lot of pressure at work and um, kind of, through things he would say kind of gave us the impression that his wife wanted the child more than he wanted the child, you know. It just didn't seem fair to us, you know? We were very excited for them to have this baby, but we wanted one so much you know? And then that he was saying these things to us. Well, we were visiting their home maybe um, couple of weeks after we found out that we were having this baby and, and had been you know talking, in moments when we weren't angry and resentful, 'cause we weren't the whole time, you know [laughs] um, about how you know funny it was here we were thirty, just starting to have children, and they were having their fifth, and were only four years older than us, and, and um we had kind of thought that maybe that they

weren't having more children you know and then realized that if we stopped having children when we were you know thirty-four that we would only have a couple. Anyway, so we were sitting around their kitchen table one night and talking to them about this and said you know, we realize that our perspective was funny you know, that we'd been thinking of you as so much older than us and we realized you weren't and, and said something like you know, "We realized that if we stopped having children at the age of thirty-four we wouldn't have very many." And my brother said, "Well, before you can stop, you've gotta start!" You know? And it was just so hard and I was, I was so hurt.

K: Did you want to say something to him?

S: Well in fact I wrote this letter to him. And um, I showed it to my husband and he said, "You can't send that letter." He said, "In spite of your brother being insensitive, he probably didn't mean to hurt your feelings." And he said, "What's your brother going to say if he reads this letter, he's going to feel very bad. And it will probably just make things very awkward." So, and I think it was true, but it helped to kind of write out my feelings in a letter.

K: Sure, I mean in some way you probably wanted to make him feel bad.

S: Well, or, well the thing that was hard for me was, and in fact I still think he thinks this about us a little bit, that um, that we are kind of this yuppy couple, money, house, um, career thing, don't care about children and religion and stuff like that, which really isn't true and I think the thing that was really hurtful for me as much this, that he would say this and it would remind us of our pain, is that it connoted that he, he thought we weren't doing what we should do. That we should be having children and we weren't and I felt so misjudged and um, it was, that was really bothersome. So I always think of that when I think of miscarriage and stuff like that. But it's ok, you know, now that we have a baby, but during the pregnancy, I remember being very frightened because my doctor, she was small for her gestational age, she weighed plenty when she was born like 7lbs 3oz, but for the first couple of months, she was small and the doctor would mention that. Well she

wasn't small enough that he was concerned, but just for him to say that brought back memories of a small fetus with something wrong going to happen, things like that.

Kathy

Provo, Utah

August 1, 1995

Personal Narrative

INFORMANT DATA

Age: 26 Sex: Female

Place of birth: La Grange, Illinois

Home region: Provo, Utah, U.S.A.

Religion:LDS

Ethnicity: Caucasion

Occupation: Housewife, Water Aerobics Instructor

Relation to collector: Personal friend

Marital status: Married

CONTEXTUAL DATA

Social Context

Kathy shared her miscarriage story with me in her home in Provo, Utah, August 1, 1995. We were the only two adults in the room. We were accompanied by my baby daughter who was sleeping and her two children were napping in other parts of the house.

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Kathy: Well, my first miscarriage, I was three and a half months pregnant. Um, and my, I had already had a successful pregnancy, and so I had a two and a half year old daughter and had never even considered the thought of miscarrying. And, when I started bleeding, it was kind of an interesting set of circumstances. My husband had just lost his job, and so the stress level was really high. We didn't know what we were going to do. We had just purchased this lot, purchased our lot and we were planning on building a home and had, were in, we were in a contract to finish our home and so we had no idea how we were going to do that. Um, and we just bought a big car [laughter]

K: So you're just going, "What?"

Kathy: It was such a shock. And so, um, you know we had decided that we would, you know maybe see, we didn't have any insurance and so if we needed Medicare or something that would take care of it. So the level of stress in our lives was pretty high at the time. And to be honest I was not happy at all that I was pregnant. And you know, that's kind of the irony of the whole thing. I don't know. I was just very disappointed. And you know, but after a month you just deal with it and you know, it's just a part of your every day life, it's part of your reality, you will be having a baby and, and you know, in this culture the idea of regret is just an impossiblity, you know you just go on and have your baby. And so um, I was about three and a half months along, started bleeding and just was shocked! I didn't even consider it. My mom had six children, never had a problem with miscarriage, nobody I had ever known, I had heard of one woman when I was young that had a bunch of miscarriages and I just thought, "Oh man, that would be the worst thing." You know?

K: But you never think that it's going to happen to you.

Kathy: I never thought it would happen to me. Um, and I, I, it was actually the day before Mother's Day, I'll remember now, because I had my miscarriage on Mother's Day. And I, and I went to the doctor and he was very, you know, not really sensitive to it, he said, "Well, ya, you will probably," you know I took a pregnancy test it was positive,

and he said, "Well you're bleeding so much you'll probably lose this baby." And just, "Here is some medication to get through it, you don't have insurance so let's not do a D&C, 'cause it will probably be too expensive." And so since I was, I was pretty far along it was pretty messy, you know? A lot more than I had aniticipated. And I just, he told me it would be like a heavy period, which it wasn't, it was very, a lot, lot more. And it was, uh, I really felt, not very many people knew I was pregnant, um, the reaction of my husband was very odd. He was supportive at first but then he like left all day Mother's Day to go visit his mom [laughs]. And so I was home alone having this miscarriage and it was extremely painful. Um, you know, going through the labor pains or whatever, the contractions were very painful. And uh, just felt devastated. Very sad. Thought I was gonna just, thought my heart would break. And I hadn't told his family, I hadn't really told anybody. So I called my mom and she was, you know, helpful. But my little girl was home with me and we had just potty trained her. She was two and a half. It was just very traumatic for her. Because I was bleeding so much and then I would run to the toilet and just gush. And she, somehow she saw. I had just potty trained her and somehow she saw what was in the toilet. And it was just tons and tons of blood. And she, immediately stopped using the toilet. So that was hard. It was just a really bad thing. I was very, it was bad. So after about a week, I, I had a really bad depression.

K: After that?

Kathy: Ya, afterwards. And I think a lot of it was uh relating, related, 'cause even a week later I was still testing positive to a pregnancy test, which was wierd. So I still had those hormones in my body apparently, is what the doctor said. And uh, it was just a really uh. it was, it was the worst depression I've ever had. You know, and it was good 'cause it helped me be more sympathetic. I'd always been on the other end of people's depressions. And I just wanted to crawl into the bottom of my bed and die. And my husband just was very, Gary, was just very, not. Not, didn't understand, didn't give me remotely what I needed. And I, I felt, very distant from him. And very estranged from

him. And that was something that I felt like, "Ok, now we're separate." And what had brought us so close, you know at one point, having....

K: Having Melissa?

Kathy: You know when we had Melissa., I just felt this tremendous bond with him, and even being pregnant, while I'm pregnant I just feel this immense closeness and bond with him, even more than when I'm not pregnant, I just feel like very bonded to him. And it was just such a drastic cut-off and I just felt, "I am separate, this, I'm alone on this. Even though it's his baby, he is just not even, um..." And you know, I can see now he really didn't know what to do or how to give me the support. He just wanted to avoid it and get out. So he was gone a lot. And uh, you know I'm sure I was a pleasure to be around [laughs]. But I was just so, oh, just such hopelessness. I'd had, it was like a huge paradigm shift and one day I was pregnant, you know and that was where I was geared and the next day, all of a sudden I wasn't and my plans were different. I mean all of a sudden I just felt like, I wasn't doing anything valuable. Which was uh, I just felt like I was doing something so important while I was pregnant. And once I stopped being pregnant I did, I just felt worthless. Like, any activity that I was involved in was just worth nothing. Um, and I wasn't headed towards anything, just a real hopelessness. Um, so anyway.

About six months later, got pregnant again, and the doctor said to wait about six months and again, Greg was still unemployed. And again it was, not planned. And, then we were just moving into the house, in fact we were in the house, in this house and so it was in a brand new ward. And uh, and we'd just, I mean, been in two weeks. But Gary still didn't have a job, we were in this huge house that we didn't know, and we'd closed on this, we had already taken out the loan so we had to, you know, we just thought, "Ok, we're in this house, we'll just sell because we can't ever make the payment because we were living on unemployment," you know? And, so again the stress level was still so high, and I was always worrying and always just, you know, just trying so hard to just go back to work, I knew I could, you know, I knew that I had a job for me and feeling like I had to be home

with my daughter and anyway. So, I, then I started bleeding again, and this was after about seven weeks. Went in to the doctor and they did an ultrasound and saw that there were two fetuses, and that one of them had, was, there was no heartbeat but the other one there was, a very strong heartbeat. And he said, "You'll probably pass this one, and you may or may not be able to, as you're passing that, hold on to this one.

K: The other one?

Kathy: The other one. And at the time I was teaching water aerobics and I had a pretty good uh, thing of support with my classes. The ladies knew, that I was pregnant and they knew that I uh, you know, they heard that I'd miscarried. And a lot of them I think blamed, you know, blamed, "Oh you're exercising too much." You know? But at least they were there and they, just the phone calls and the support, you know they brought flowers over and that was nice. And because I think I was exercising I didn't hit the depression like I thought that I would. Um, and the only thing is that I think that I was exercising. And I was a little bit earlier, the pregnancy was shorter. Um, but there was, it was very interesting during that week. I um, I was waiting to see if I would still keep the baby. And my husband gave me, Gary gave me a blessing and it said um, that you will have this baby. You know it said that one baby will pass but you'll have this baby. And so I just, I went on that. And even though for three or four days I continued to just bleed and bleed and bleed and bleed, I thought, "Well," you know, "it's just the other baby, I will have this baby." There was no, I didn't even consider that I wouldn't have this baby. And so, after about, it took a week, you know, of just, you know, and everyone around was saying, "Kathy, you've probably lost the other baby, there's no way you could keep bleeding like this and have it." And so finally I went in to Dr. --------, I was just brand new, you know, in the ward, and I said, "I'm in the ward and...," So they did an ultrasound and he looked in there and he said, "There's nothing here, there's just nothing here. You've not only miscarried, you don't even have signs of a pregnancy, and you don't even have," you know, "It doesn't even look like you were pregnant." I mean he

said, "You were," but. And he said, "We need to do a D&C." And he was just amazed that I thought I was still pregnant. But I was shocked! Just, "What?! Let me see! There's no baby in there?" [laughs]. And I was just shocked and at that point, I just was so confused and questioned my faith and questioning what had happen with that blessing. And so then I, Dr. ---------- gave me the D&C, which hurt like crazy.

K: They didn't give you anesthetic?

Kathy: He didn't give me anything. We didn't have insurance and I just said, "Just keep it as cheap as you can." And he just scraped it. And I thought I was gonna die. It just hurt so bad. And, so anyway, while I was in there with him, I knew he was my bishop, and I, you know, I didn't know him very well but I just said, "I, I have some questions. I, I received a blessing that said I would have this baby, and it was a very," you know, "it was just a very powerful experience." And he said, "Well you know, you just never know," and just didn't offer anything that made any sense.

K: To you? Thanks bishop! [laughter].

Kathy: Just didn't give me anything. So I was, that was a very interesting time, because I felt like, I had been promised something that I didn't get. You know, and tried so hard to make sense of it, "Well maybe, you know, maybe I'll have this baby in the Millenium, or whatever." You know, I'm still a mother to these children.

K: What about Gary? How did he feel about the blessing?

Kathy: He, I mean at the time I just, I just stood there, you know and just said, "I'm gonna have this baby!" And I just felt like, "Ok, it's alright." I just felt so peaceful and you know it was just such an inspired blessing, I mean just even the way he gave the blessing, I knew that it was just, it wasn't him, he was just a voice for the Lord and it was just a very powerful experience between us. And uh, he immediately withdrew again [chuckles]. The second he found out, I mean he was right by my side, until we found out that I lost it and he immediately just withdrew. And uh, which was just, wierd, didn't understand it.

K: Is it just a boy thing or what? [laughter]

Kathy: Ya. Just a boy thing.

K: You'd think after one time, maybe he'd learn.

Kathy: I know, he just couldn't give me a thing. And I don't know if I wasn't good at telling what I needed. I mean I would try. But I was just so, just grasping, "Help me. Help me to understand this. Help me to figure out what's going on." And I did blame myself for both of them. Because I felt like I was under such stress and that life was so hard and, and it really would have been hard to have a baby at those times. Um, and then almost felt guilty for being, a little bit relieved. You know, I wasn't really, I was relieved and devastated all at the same time [laughs]. It was just wierd. All of the dynamics that go on. And so at that point I thought, "Ok, I can't, something's wrong with my body, I'm not going to have anymore children." Um, and [laughs] six months later got pregnant again.

K: Fertile Mrytle.

Kathy:Ya, no fertility problems. Found out that I was pregnant again, and I was just confident that I would miscarry again. I didn't even, I didn't even let myself get excited, I just thought, "Oh well, I'll just have a miscarriage." Just, "Great, just great. I'll just have another miscarriage and just be pregnant again." And with both of those pregnancies I was very sick--had all the morning sickness stuff.

K: The ones that you miscarried?

Kathy: Ya.

K: Now that's odd.

Kathy: Especially the first one, just violently, violently, sick.

K: Well I guess 'cause it was longer than the two and a half months.

Kathy: Ya, ya. The second one wasn't quite as strong. Um, anyway, went on to have that baby and that was baby Tara. But the interesting thing to me was the way that the men dealt with it. Um, there, like Gary's dad and my dad, really felt uncomfortable saying anything and I could tell they felt extremely awkward and didn't quite know what to say

um, just, "Sorry." You know looking down just not able to say anything that would mean anything, I mean it was just like a token apology. Almost, almost offensive at the time. When you're in that much pain to have somebody just struggle because they feel like they have to it made just like, you know, just don't even try because you're, you don't know what it's like and you don't really care that much, I mean it means nothing to you. I didn't look pregnant, I didn't, you know, it wasn't a baby. You know? And Gary kept saying, "It's not a baby Kathy. It's just not a baby." And all the token things that people say, I mean, it was just amazing how, you know, the body wouldn't have been strong enough for the baby, and the doctors were extremely insensitive. You know, "Don't think of this as a baby," um "The body couldn't have made it, so just go home and be grateful that this happened." And there just wasn't a hint of gratefulness, really, you know? Um, no, and I remember thinking, "You know, if I ever have an opportunity I'm really going to try to promote sensitivity in the medical profession for us." Because it was just so odd. It was just an odd experience, just going, I mean it was kind of, I just felt distant from my body anyway, because it hurt and I didn't feel good and it was such shock and just to have these doctors totally and completely insensitive to it was just amazing to me. Just really, "Sorry kid, you'll feel better in a few days." You know, "You'll feel sad, expect to feel sad." Dr. -------- said, "Expect to feel sad for a few days." And I said, "I will expect it all." But anyway, there was one man who was a Sunday School teacher in my first pregnancy in my last ward where we lived before, and he, he came up to me and he said, he put his hands on my shoulders and he said, "I am so sorry." He said, "I found out and I am so sorry." I just, I mean, I just, you know, tears welled up, there is a man that can look me in the eyes and express sympathy and he felt terrible. I mean, he, he was hurting for me. And he shared some of that pain. And I, I told him later, I just said, "You know you are the only man," and I didn't even know him that well, you know, he was a great Sunday School teacher and just a really nice guy. Um, but just a really genuine, didn't feel uncomfortable at all in expressing sympathy to me.

K: Was he married?

Kathy: He was married.

K: Do you know if his wife had had a miscarriage? You wonder?

Kathy: Ya. And I never knew. I never knew if his wife had had one or not. But it was just, but even though, 'cause Gary had experienced it and he didn't give me that at all. At all. I mean he was never able to just, even, he felt uncomfortable just letting me cry. You know? He'd always try to talk me out of it. You know. "It'll be fine, dadadadada...." And it was just wierd. Um....

K: Have you talked to him about it since?

Kathy: No. I mean it's, and when we do have a hard time, I, you know when we're talking about how I need things from him sometimes I'll say, you know, "And you weren't there for me on my miscarriages." You know when I find other places, times that he's just not there for me emotionally. And he'll just [makes a motion of being quiet]. And I know it's a boy thing and I know that so many women have a problem with their husbands. And he's like, "Well, I'm an emotionally sensitive guy usually." You know and I said, "Well for me, you're not." You know? And, I don't know. But it's interesting. You know and I thought, "Ok, maybe he's going through his own sense of loss."

K: I think so.

Kathy: And he needs something. And I didn't feel any sorrow for him. I just felt anger at him not being able at giving me what I wanted. And I think if I would have said, "I'm sorry this has got to be hard on you too. Let's just do this together." That it might have opened up a door. Because I don't think he really knew.

K: I wonder if he didn't, he didn't probably know how to deal with his sorrow and that was the only way he knew how to do it.

Kathy: Ya, well he says, sometimes he'll say, "Well I hate to see you suffering. And I hate to see you sad. I always rely on you to be strong and happy. I can't stand coming home

and seeing you sad, a sad wife," is what he kept saying, "I can't stand having a sad wife." And you know, and I, I appreciate that [laughter], but it's still hard for me.

K: I need to feel bad sometimes.

Kathy: Ya. But I did find it very valuable to talk to other women. Once I started, you know, once people kind of found out that I had, it was amazing to me how many women have had miscarriages! I was just, "Really, you had a miscarriage?!" You know?

K: Because it's not talked about at all.

Kathy: It's not talked about.

K: You know it's interesting, interesting how it's not. To me it is a death of an individual and maybe not, I mean depending on how far along you are, I don't know, everyone looks at it differently, but it's still something was alive and then probably died. Even if it were just, you know, for a real short time. And, and that idea of feeling like you're pregnant is real. You start thinking, you have these expectations and get excited or whatever, and then it's gone.

Kathy: And you have this sense of loss. I felt like I had just lost like a part of me. You know, as if anyone were to even lost an arm or something. They say that after you lose a limb or a body part that you still have the sensations of, of having that body part, and I was so used to feeling a life in me, even though I couldn't see it or really, I mean my body felt different, I mean, almost instantly my body started feeling different once I lost the baby. You know? And uh, it's just a really, you know, and there would be sympathy if you lost any other, it's a part of you that you lose. And I thought of that more than I thought, "I've lost a child." I felt like I'd lost a part of me and now it's gone. I'm different now. I'm not busy doing anything. You know and I felt, I used to let myself, you know, relax and sit down, and just kind of relax and not feel guilty [laughs]. And the second I had the miscarriage I couldn't do that. I felt like, "oh no, I don't deserve to sit down because I'm not doing anything." And um, and I noticed a change in my eating. All of a sudden I'm like, "Oh I don't care if I have sugar. I don't care if I," you know, "My body's not worth

as much now that I'm not pregnant." Which is interesting. But I do, even now that I've stopped nursing, I feel, I'm not as careful. I thought, "I'm not gonna waste my money on taking good care of my body, I want to spend it on the kids, because my body just..."

K: It's done what it's done for my children and now I'm off on my own?

Kathy: Ya. It's just kind of a feeling of not as much value. Which is interesting.

K: That is. But it's not true!

Kathy: I'm just exploring [laughter]. One thing, I really wanted to talk to my mom. Um, that, as soon as I found out, I really, really wanted to talk to my mom.

K: Even though she's never experienced....

Kathy: Even though she's never experienced it. I just, I knew that she would be able to sorrow with me. Uh, and she did. You know, she didn't come down, but she sorrowed. You know, and it was interesting, and I think she felt this, a loss. You know because that was her grandbaby, whatever. I don't know. I really, and you know, she's the one I really wanted to be with too when I have the baby. You know, when I have the baby I want my mom and my husband there. Those are like the two main people that need to be with me. But it was nice to have, you know, the people that did find out and were able to express their sympathy. But I did have feelings of guilt. I had a lot of feelings of guilt because I thought like it was kind of my fault. Like I wasn't super excited to have them and, I was super stressed out. I thought, you know, "Isn't this interesting that I miscarried the two babies that I couldn't have paid for anyway." You know? And now the baby that I did have insurance for I kept. You know, and it's, just not understanding the whole thing. You know? Like it did work out nicely but at the time it didn't. It makes me wonder if there really is a divine plan of when you have your babies, or when it all works out, you wonder how divinely inspired it is.

K: Or if it's a combination of all of them? Do you wonder how, it does seem like there is some kind of divine help, just because when one looks back in retrospect, like when I look back at my experience, this was a better time for us. Even though it would have been fine

and we would have handled it, this is a better time. And yet you feel bad because you don't want to think that that other one wasn't important.

Kathy: Right. I do feel like Tara`s little spirit, her little self, was one of the babies that I was pregnant with.

K: Really?

Kathy: Ya. I absolutely do. That, that she just needed a stronger body to come down to. But I also feel like there's another one at least one other one that is, is mine. And that at some point, you know, because of my beliefs or whatever, that I will be a mother to that baby. It will either come to me at a different time, you know, in another healthier body, or, you know, in the millenium I'll just be a mom of four kids, my kids. The worst part is, I hate the very most, being pregnant. I love having kids, but I hate being pregnant. And that's the thing that I keep having, is the pregnancy [laughter] and I don't get to reap the benefits.

K: Especially when those doctor bills start coming after your miscarriage it just hurts. Because it was like, "What do I have...."

Kathy: To show for this?

K: Lots of pain, lots of money and ya, there's nothing. Because once you have a baby, it's like you have to pay those bills....

Kathy: But it's worth it!

K: You're not happy but it's like, but we have something precious. We don't mind paying these bills, it's worth it. But ya, that was hard.

Kathy: You know, that was hard for me to.

K: Getting them in the mail I just remember getting tears in my eyes--it made me so mad! We shouldn't have to pay for this!

Robin

Provo, Utah

August 6, 1995

Personal Narrative

INFORMANT DATA

Age: 38 Sex: Female

Place of birth: Burly, Idaho

Home region: Provo, Utah, U.S.A.

Religion:LDS

Ethnicity: Caucasion

Occupation: Writer, Reading teacher

Relation to collector: Personal friend

Marital status: Married

CONTEXTUAL DATA

Social Context

Robin shared her miscarriage story with me in her home in Provo, Utah, August 6, 1995. We were the only two people in the room. Two of her three sons were upstairs.

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R: I had six miscarriages. Two of them, were, further along and I guess I'll probably compare those two because the other ones, I hadn't really become terribly attached to the pregnancy. And they were all during very, very busy times of my life, very stressful busy times of my life where I just didn't have time to, to dwell on it much. The first miscarriage was, uh, my youngest was two, Daryl had just gotten out of the hospital and was at home, flat in bed. And I was three months along. And everyone knew that I was pregnant. In fact, because he had been in the hospital, people had been really helpful, you know, wonderful and uh, I was away from home and was in Denver. It was my first time away from home, so, which is just silly, I mean I was the mother of three boys, I was, you know, I don't know, I think twenty-six or something, you'd think I would just, have been fine with it, but the first thing I did when I realized, Daryl couldn't help me at all, he had had this back problem and he was flat, there was nothing he could do. So, uh, I called my Relief Society President who had been in close contact with me and she drove me to the hospital. And uh, they were able to get me in and do a D&C. And I didn't realize that that was really a blessing, that I didn't just have to lay there in agony for, for how much longer. But, um, when I woke up, I remember wanting more than anything else to know if it had been a boy or a girl. Not because I would be really sad if it was a girl, that she had not progressed to full term, but because I wanted to know if I could have a girl! [laughs]. You know?

K: I keep making boys! You had three?

R: Uh-huh.

K: So all of your miscarriages happened after you had your boys or in between?

R: They've all happened after. And um, my friend, who was with me, she came in after, right after I woke up, and I said to the nurse, "Could you tell if it was a boy or a girl?" And the nurse looked at her and then she looked at me and she said, "No, it was too small. You don't want to know anyway." In other words, they were trying to protect me and my friend just, "No way, no, do not even talk," and of course, I guess they were assuming

I was in a state that I couldn't make a wise decision. In fact I was really kind of irritated with them. I mean I respected the fact that they were trying to be careful and help me, but, really irritated me after I went home. I thought, "That's an ok question! There's nothing wrong with that! I'm really ok about this." And I was ok about it. I was ok about the whole thing. My mother had had twelve children, and she told me right from the beginning that if you're going to have children, expect to have miscarriages, that's a part of life.

K: That's interesting. I wish someone had told me that. I had no idea.

R: Ya. I was grateful for that, because she just wanted me, you know, she had had two or three I guess and she just wanted me to know that that was part of being a mom. So, uh, I accepted it without a whole lot of problem. In fact I went in to my six week check-up and the doctor was so concerned, you know, "Are you ok?" And, I said, "Ya, I think this is probably good timing as far as all this has worked out." Because Daryl was still down and datadatadata. And I had these three little babies, my arms were full. Not that I wouldn't have had room for another one, or was very excited about having another one, but, I didn't have that empty longing for, for a little baby. And so I pretty much dealt with that one, without too much problem. It wasn't until I realized that I was going to have problems getting pregnant and then probably staying pregnant that it started kind of building, that's when I started regretting the miscarraige, was years later. And um, wondering if I had, should I have done something different? If I hadn't been under so much stress and um, oh Daryl and I had had relations right before I started, intimate relations right before I started spotting and I just, I just connected that, and not really logically but I just connected that, you know? "I shouldn't have done that, or..." [laughs]. So, my doctor said, "How did you do that if he was flat on his back?!" [laughter]. "Men find ways." [laughter].

K: That desire is very strong.

R: Yes, it is. Anyway, and, so I, the next few I just lived through, like I said, it was, not really a problem. But I remember, I would tell my very close friends, and my husband of course, that I was pregnant and then I'd miscarry, and it was, not really terribly traumatic, it was just, "What's going on?" So I went to a doctor or two you know and nobody really could tell me what needed to happen except that they wanted to test Daryl and he wasn't terribly interested, you know? In fact he worked in a clinic and he just was embarrassed that everybody would know, and you know, it's ok, so I didn't push him. Anyway, so I got, we moved up here and I got to a point where I had just pretty much decided that there just weren't anymore children and, I'd had my last miscarriage in Mesa. And so, and no pregnancy, for I guess after two years we got here. And, and so when I got pregnant, I was like, I guess I better compare that one. That was the most, that was by far my most traumatic one. Because we had, we had pretty much put it aside, "It's not going to happen, we'll go on and be happy with these three boys." Um but, in the meantime I was writing stories about miscarriages and adoptions, so it was still very much apart, and I was having these dreams. You know, just very, not even just after miscarriages but just every so often it was, there's this, you know, in Arizona, it was, on the Indian Reservation we went to visit, and uh, a Native American woman walked up to me and handed me a baby. And I knew that was ok, and she knew it was ok and I was so happy! [laughs]. And I woke up and it was so real, and anyway. So, this, this fifth miscarriage was, I was so sure, I was absolutely certain that this one was going to happen. I had no doubts, so sure, that I didn't hesitate for one minute to tell, the world. I got on the telephone and I called my friends all over the United States, and I told them I was pregnant. And they were so excited, you know. And um, and I was excited to share it with them and, and I was sick.

K: Were you?

R: But that, that was ok.

K: That's interesting. So you were sick?

R: Ya. I was sick, and then a week before I miscarried, it was gone. And Brenda said to me, "You're still sick?" Everytime I'd see her, "You're still sick, right? You're still sick?" Because for her....

K: It's a good sign.

R: It was. As soon as she wasn't sick anymore that she knew that eventually she was going to miscarry. Well, I didn't believe her. [laughs] I wasn't going to think about it. I believed her, I just wasn't going to think about it. And, and I didn't tell anybody that I wasn't sick. But about a week later I started, um, I had left, I had told Noreen that I just couldn't take a risk of staying in the presidency. I just couldn't do it. And we had this big social, they released me immediately, and we had this big social, that I would have been in charge of. And that night at the social my back just ached so bad. And I kept thinking, I, I still refused, I was in denial, you know? It was, just gas or something. So I, I went home with just this terrible backache and in the middle of the night I woke up and just hurt and went to the bathroom and realized, I was spotting. Actually, I was bleeding, pretty heavily. And I just, I knelt down, you know, I, I didn't want to wake Daryl up, I knelt down and I just begged Heavenly Father to not let it happen. I just, I couldn't believe it 'cause I was so sure, I was so sure that this one was going to be real. And I just couldn't face it. I just didn't, I didn't want to face it. But the pain got so bad I had to wake Daryl up. And I didn't know quite what to do. I didn't, I kept hoping that maybe if I stayed down, layed flat, took a bath, Paragoric or something. And so I called Dr.--------, and I told him what was going on and I remember what he said, he said to me, "Are your nipples still tender?" And I hadn't noticed for four or five days.

K: Hadn't thought about it?

R: No. And I just burst into tears because I realized they weren't anymore, that the hormone was gone. And at that point I knew for sure that, that there was just no hope. And so, uh, the thing that, the thing that was so sweet about that experience was being with Daryl and a profound amount of healing took place in his um, his willingness to take

care of me and to do whatever was necessary to rub my back, you know, I just went in to the tub and, because there was no way to get to the hospital it was happening too quickly. And, and he rubbed my back and he pulled my hair into a ponytail and he talked to me and he wiped up the blood and he cleaned me up and put me back in the bed where it all had started and you know. And I knew, that I was safe, and loved, and just treasured by this man. And that we had shared something very, very sad but that we were ok. I'd almost forgotten this.

K: I'm sorry, I hope it's not bad memories.

R: No, it's ok.

K: You're making me cry because it reminds me of Bryan.

R: And for me, Bryan is, in my estimation, just naturally very tender and sweet guy. And Daryl has had to learn that. He hasn't had that, I think he's naturally that way but his childhood just kind of squelched it out of him. And he's had to relearn it. And that was one of the first profound indications to me that he really had, that we had developed a love for, you can't develop it unless you go through those kind of experiences together. Anyway, I just remember I wrote up a paper that I should give to you right after that happened. I don't know if it will be helpful to you but it, it's almost a little too sentimental but, when I read it I go, "Man! I was really into this!" [laughs]. And it's very personal but, it, I think, it might help somebody. It might be beneficial for you. Because it was, I had just spent, but from the moment I heard to the moment I miscarried I had spent every waking hour praying that this child would live. Even though I had tried desperately not to, I looked at my profile in the mirror ten times a day, to see if I was, I mean I was really into this. You know, every little baby that I saw I was just, I could make this, I could hope again. I had been given permission to hope again which I thought I couldn't. You know everytime I would see a picture of my little boys as a baby I would kiss them and you know I was just like, "Oh my gosh! This is so wonderful!" And, and one of the profound things with that miscarriage was, I had, I had literally let go uh, of

any future family and I had redirected my future and I had made plans and I had dreams and aspirations and they were exciting ones and I was gonna have a lot of fun. You know, I wasn't gonna mope around after, I was gonna have a lot fun in my life and when at the moment I knew I was pregnant, it was so easy, it was so easy just to turn my back on it, to just let it go completely. It just was so, it just faded in comparison to be a mother again, because I knew, I knew that there was nothing like that. All of this, all of this was nothing in comparison. And so, at that point to have to fold those, those memories for this, for the baby up and put them in my heart somewhere deep down where I just, you know, didn't have to even think about them again [laughs] because it was just too, they were too vibrant. But, I turned again, "Ok, alright, I'll go this direction." I wouldn't trade those experiences because they, I learned so much. Actually, I think, I think that happened, I think the thing that taught me the most, that I, I'm almost reluctant to express it. I remember thinking, I mean I was so emotionally drained. Physically devastated in every way. That was the thing that triggered this unbearable sadness that somehow I had lost favor with God. I've never experienced that before. In fact, my trials had always brought me closer to a realization that God loved me in a profound way. I always had, always, a sense that all would be well, that this was for my good. I never questioned it. But on this, on this one I really questioned whether he loved me. And uh, and it was something I needed, I needed to experience. I needed to know that feeling and to come to a point of faith. In fact it came as I helped my sister through a very difficult birth. "Everything's fine, etc." But she just had this horrible, horrible breach birth. And as I talked her through her feelings of loss of faith, 'cause she had been so faithful and so prayerful and so hopeful that it would be an easier experience--it wasn't, it was harder. That, um, we both, it was the talking her through it, that, that really brought me to an understanding, that faith is not that something won't happen, or that things would be better or, or that a miracle will take place, that faith is going through unbelievable trials

and still be able to say, "I know God loves me and I love him." And I found that, so it was certainly well worth it.

Gretta

Boston, MA

April 1997

Personal Narrative

INFORMANT DATA

Age: 28 Sex: Female

Place of birth: Wiesbaden, Germany

Home region: Salt Lake City, Utah, U.S.A.

Religion: LDS

Ethnicity: Caucasian

Occupation: Homemaker

Marital Status: Married

Relation to the collector: personal friend

CONTEXTUAL DATA

Social Context

Gretta shared her miscarriage story with me in her home in Boston, Massachusetts in April, 1997. We were the only two people in the room. Gretta's son, age two, was napping in another room in the apartment during the interview.

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G: Well, I remember the day, the numerical day, and, that was the day of my first appointment with the obstetrition. I was eleven, eleven and a half weeks at the time. And I, I was very anxious with this pregnancy. Anxious to get into the doctor, because I had these, these feelings of anxiety. I think it was because I had done some things, I had taken some Motrin on two occasions. I forgot, it was before I realized, no, I knew I was pregnant, I just forgot that that was off-limits. I had had a migraine and I'd had a really intense back-packing trip where my quadriceps had frozen up so I took some Motrin for that. And I let these things worry me. I got home and Robert said, "You can't have those!" Anyway, I was worried with this pregnancy. I kept, I called the doctor's office to make the appointment. And so finally, finally the day came and I was so excited. And I went in, I just love my doctor. So,

K: This is your second pregnancy?

G: This is my second pregnancy. And um, my obstetrition I just love--she's a wonderful woman. Anyway we went through the nurse, you know, and then Dr. Wu came in, she was listening for the heartbeat and just kept going on forever and ever and ever, and I'm hearing like, "Is that it?" and she'd say, "No, that's your body." And she kept doing it forever and ever and I put my head back onto the table and I'm thinking, "Oh no." And then she turned off the machine. And then I really thought, "Oh no." And she said, "I couldn't get the heartbeat, but it's ok. Sometimes you can't this soon. Let's do an ultrasound anyway." So, she, she said if if something is wrong it'll come back to me and if not just go ahead and make an appointment for a month down the road. So I, I left the office and I realized how terrible I was feeling so I went to a pay phone to call Robert, to page him. And I just burst out crying, I couldn't even talk to the pager. And finally did tell him, you know, that she couldn't get a heartbeat. So he, he was just going into a case and his doctor just told him to go ahead and leave. So he was going to meet me over at the ultrasound. Anyway, I waited my turn, the woman helped me up and looking at the screen and I saw a shape of a big kidney bean, and it was, just there. And I realized later,

it wasn't moving. And so she left pretty quickly and another woman came in and pretty quickly told me. "Well, I'm very sorry but we. we don't get a heartbeat, the baby is dead." And so I remember just lying on the table, just crying thinking that I couldn't believe that this was happening. I just never thought, you know, I was worried, I just thought those were crazy fears. So, uh, they said that the baby, it looked about the size of a nine week baby. So here it had been two and a half weeks that I had been carrying a dead fetus. So they had me get dressed and go back to Dr. Wu's office. As I was leaving the building that's when Robert walked in. And so, of course told him and it was terrible. We had the presence of mind to put quarters in the meter--that's like the Boston mentality. [laughter] So we went back to Dr. Wu's office and waited for her. She was sad to see us, because she knew. But she took us in her office and was wonderful. This was Friday, May 10th. I remember. So, she called because I had to go have a D&C. I hadn't started to miscarry, I never had any signs or symptoms and I still felt very pregnant, I was tired and nauseated and stuff. And she told me that I would still feel pregnant a week or two after the procedure, um, that the hormones are still flushing themselves out. But, she called the OR, or whatever, so she got me in on a Tuesday morning. And so this was Friday and Tuesday morning she said "You can call me if anything comes up." So we went home and I think I went to bed. Robert, his doctor was really great, he just said, "Just don't come back." Not even knowing that this was going to be the case. Um, but Robert is the one who called our families and told our parents. I just couldn't. We had, we had called them right after we had found out I was pregnant, I was about six weeks along. We had told all our friends, we just can't keep that news all to ourselves. I don't know how people do that. [laughter] So everybody knew. This was pretty close to three months by now, we were very well settled in this and so excited, you know, entrenched in this new pregnancy. And so were our friends and family. Anyway and I just couldn't call. And so I went to bed and slept while Robert called. I remember him saying that "Your parents want me to tell you how much they love you." I remember him saying that after I woke

up. Getting to Tuesday was pretty hard. That day was Friday it was just a wash out--terrible. Saturday was a birthday party for Andrew. And I went to that. I couldn't stand the thought of being home with these terrible feelings and thoughts, staring at these four walls. So, I thought this would be a nice diversion and I went to the party and I'm glad because that was kind of like the first step to, to go out. Friday I came home and closed up and that opened me up. And somebody said to me, "Oh I heard your pregnant, congratulations!" And you know, I, I think that was good. I wasn't ready to talk about it yet, but it, it helped me....

K: To make the first step.

G: Ya. You know I had to say one of those, "Oh..." You know, "I was and, I'm not." And I was very raw, my feelings were on the surface. Um, the same thing happened at church the next day, but more and more people were finding out. And the things they said to me were incredible. Like, a close friend at church who knew that I was going to my first appointment on Friday, said, "I haven't had time to call you because things have been really busy but I've been thinking about you, I somehow knew that this was going to happen." And she said "You're in my thoughts and prayers." And you know, just, things like this, by the time Sunday rolled around, and after the things people came up to me and said, I felt so different from the way I felt Friday. I felt like, um, this wasn't my load to carry. All these people had come in, you know and shouldered a piece of it and were helping me. And I knew that they were thinking of us, and I could feel that, you know beyond a shadow of a doubt. So I was getting better but I started to feel lousy and I think I was starting to dilate. Sunday morning I called the doctor before I went to church. We went to church and I was fine but Monday is when I got pretty sick. I was like on the couch with cramps, and uh, and I was thinking that I was not going to make it to Tuesday morning's appointment, I thought we'd have to go in. But I went to bed and I woke up and it was morning so we went to the Family Planning Center, which was an experience in and of itself. Although not as bad as some other women's stories that I have heard. But,

well, you know, first of all to make the appointment there I had to tell the secretary, you know, I had an HMO for insurance, and she said something to me like, "Well you realize don't you that they'll only pay for it if it's a medical necessity." And you know I would have stayed after learning this news, and I just thought to myself, "How can you say that? What, what do you define as necessity if I was just told that the baby I'm carrying is dead?" So, I felt like I was dealing with a different mentality. And the words too, "Family Planning Clinic" bothered me. But um, it's tucked away right in the front of Brigham and Women's Hospital. And um, you go up and you park--I felt a tinge of, I don't know, like dirtiness or evil because you had to tell the parking attendant, the valet where you were going and he said, "Oh over there," you know and there's a private little lot. I just, I just didn't like it, going there. I didn't want anybody to think that I was going there of my free will and accord.

K: That's what surprises me is that your doctor herself wouldn't have performed....

G: She did.

K: Oh, ok. They had to do it at this place.

G: You do it there. She said, she did tell me that she could do it in her office, but everything is easier over there. They've got a nursing staff specifically for this. And she said, she actually asked my permission, and when she said it's easier over there, I trust her such that, even thought I didn't like the idea, I said it was ok. Um, I just love this doctor. And too, she was going to be the doctor performing it. And so I said ok.

K: So you felt better.

G: But still it bothered me but the trust was greater than the bother. So we went through the security and the guard was there, and it was eight in the morning so nobody else was there. And they took me back to a room, put me in a gown, and thinking, well, at this point I, I guess I was already thinking, "I'm glad it happened to me this way." Rather than other stories I've heard--you know, where the women bleed and bleed and bleed at home. And that terrible fear they have you know, in the middle of the night, at the toilet, you

know crying, that's just terrible. So, I had a nurse, I had my husband, I had my doctor, um, anyway I was having contractions. And so um, Dr. Wu said it was made much easier because my body had already prepared for it. So anyway they gave me an I.V. I wasn't out but I had, I had medication clearly. I just uh, they started, um, I remember just looking at this mobile on the sealing, you know, Robert was holding my hand. Uh, it didn't last very long. Um, that surprised me. I thought it would take longer. But it was uncomfortable and Robert I remember saying afterwards that, "I know that hurt you," and I said, "How did you know that?" And he said, "Well, your heart-rate, your heartbeat accelerates when your, you know when your,

K: Experiencing pain?

G: experiencing pain. And he said you know, "I could hear...." and he's so used to being in an operating room, you know, you know he know these little nuances that others wouldn't notice. But um, anyway, it was over pretty quickly and I think we came home at about eleven o'clock. And so eight to eleven. They were just, really really nice to me. Um, when we left, the waiting room was full. And I'm glad I got there before all that because I just wouldn't have wanted to sit across from people who may there electively. But that's not fair to say. Um, that's like making judgments. But I didn't want anybody to think that I was there electively.

K: You didn't want any--, I mean, in a way I had the same experience as far as a woman, one of the nurses came in to me while I was waiting for my D&C and she said, um, "Oh you're the one who, um, must have the spontaneous abortion," I think is what they call it? And I just remember, you know, saying, "No, no!" You know, "No." I mean, just the word abortion to me, um, you know, that's a whole--the pro-choice pro-life thing is a very complex thing, but for me personally I just didn't want them to think that, you know, because I wanted this baby! So that was just the main thing, you know, it was like, "No wait, I wanted this baby. This wasn't something I wanted to happen." So that, you

know, and then she felt really bad and apologized, and said, "Oh," you know, "I'm sorry. It's the wording." But for me it just had a different kind of meaning. So....

G: Ya. Well, let's see, so we came home and my brother and his wife, Pete and Susan were at our house with Josh and um, um, the ward was wonderful. They brought us dinner for five nights. That's more than, than we had when Josh was born.

K: That's interesting.

G: People brought presents by, called, um, wrote letters.

K: I think you're very much loved in the ward.

G: This ward is amazing.

K: Well, you do a lot.

G: I couldn't believe it. And too, women that, they told me their stories or shared their experiences and I think that, that we've come a long way. Because people used to keep it so private and I think I've been a beneficiary of all these women's experiences leading up 199- well, that was 1996. You know, and your experience with this subject. Um, I've clearly benefitted as a result of what has happened to people before.

K: Right. How have you benefitted?

G: How?

K: Ya, can you be more specific how it's helped you?

G: For one thing the openness. People willing to talk. Um, because, even though people were willing to talk, some people would say things like, you know, "I don't know if you realize, but this happened to us last year." And they didn't tell anybody. Not a soul. And, at this point, you know, coming home after this procedure, just several days into this experience, I couldn't fathom not talking about this. How could you go on without the help and support of your loved ones and friends and you know acquaintances? So, that's, that's one way which I think things are changing. And that, change for the better, at least it helped me. And then too, especially in our religious community, people were praying for me, um, saying things that were very meaningful to me, and they also knew how to

handle this. Um, saying the right things, things that were not offensive or touchy. I don't know, I can't say enough good about them. I really did feel so bolstered, I felt ok. I felt sad but I felt that we're ok and I'm so glad now that I have this experience so that I can help somebody else. You know, this is just another, it's a really stupid cliche but, notch on my belt. It's another life experience for me. And now I can use it because I had no idea about this subject at all. And how can I, in fact I think I avoided the discussion when it would come up at Homemaking meeting or wherever. Just 'cause I had nothing to say I had nothing to put in.

K: You had no experience.

G: Ya. So, I, in a way I was grateful that I had this experience now I could use it to help in a way that people were helping me. Um, so actually, what happened, everybody was so great and I felt so strong. And my testimony was strong and um, I, I felt that Heavenly Father was there for us. However hard this was, you know he was with us. Um, I don't know exactly when it got hard. But, I felt kind of like I was riding this wave and the image in my mind is that the wave crashed into the sand. It wasn't that the support somehow dried up or disappeared, because it didn't. It was just that I now needed to figure out how to deal....

K: How to make meaning out of it?

G: Ya. You know, the phrase I'd always use was, "How do I process this information and put it on the shelf?" I couldn't figure out how to do that. That might be when the grief began. I didn't know what this meant for us as a couple, or how this would affect childbearing in the future. If something was wrong with me, or something was wrong with Ben, um, I, I just didn't know what to do with it. I was very weepy and, I think, I think you experience the baby blues.

K: I've actually heard that many women who miscarry have a sort of postpartum depression.

G: Ya?

K: Ya. I've heard different things like that.

G: Did you have that?

K: Um, I, I don't even remember, ya, well yes I did. I mean I think I just was, just profoundly sad because I think it was scary for me because it was my first pregnancy and so I had this great fear that I may never get pregnant. You know, that was like heavy on my mind was "Will I ever be pregnant again?" Ya, and I just didn't know if I would. Which isn't to say that your second pregnancy or your third or any pregnancy after, after you know, having a successful pregnancy doesn't make miscarriage painful. But I think that was my main fear, it was just very heavy and so I think in that sense I was almost obsessed with that idea.

G:That's interesting because um, not having had a pregnancy before your miscarriage you probably had no idea that women have a period of blues afterwards. And, and I did, and it was hard for me to deal with. So, I wonder how much harder it would be for somebody who didn't necessarily know what to expect physiologically and emotionally. Um, let's see. I went and saw Dr. Wu two weeks after the procedure for a check-up and at that time I was expecting to have the results back because she saved the tissue and was going to send it in. The pathologists were hopefully going to be able to tell us what happened. But the results weren't back yet. And I felt let down at the appoinment because I, I really built myself up because I really wanted to know. But she said, "It takes four to six weeks to grow these cells," you know, "It will be coming." But I was ok. So, it was hard. And I don't remember specifics about this time but the next real thing I remember was waking up in the morning because the phone was ringing. Josh and I had had a hard night, we were up late. And so I had slept in, the phone rang at nine and I thought, "Who is calling this early?!" [laughter]. Came out and it was a message from Dr. Wu and she said, "We've got some really interesting news, please call me when you get a minute." And so I called her right back, and they said "Well, we got the path report back, it's very interesting. It's Turner Syndrome." And um, you know I had no idea what that was. And she told me

briefly on the phone, she was busy and had to run. But it's um, it's a missing chromosome. It's called 45 XO. O for the negative chromosome, the chromosome that isn't there. So, it could be 45 XX or 45 XY, but there's nothing. So, anyway what this means is that the baby always develops as a girl, because she's got the one x. It's diagnosed either at birth or at puberty, which doesn't go through puberty. Because she doesn't have secondary, she doesn't have ovaries, and so she won't have secondary sexual characteristics. She looks like a girl but um, well she's got a flat chest and a thick neck and short in stature and um, Dr. Wu said on the phone, I said, "What about retardation?" You know, "What is that like?" And she said, well she said that "Some of them are retarded but most of them are fairly normal intelligence." And I remember her saying "Of fairly normal intelligence." I don't know, this conversation was very profound. But it was short and it didn't give me very much information. She was in a hurry and recommended to me that I go see her friend who was a geneticist and talk about the implications of this finding. So, I made the appoinment immediately to go see this geneticist. But it wasn't until the end of June, so I think this was the beginning of a very tough time. I think the grief had already come in but after I had this little bit of knowledge, and too, what do I do with with this knowledge? This is really when it came into play, I was just a basket-case. I had no idea on how to go on with my day, you know, if I dropped a sandwich on the way to the highchair I would just cry. I would find myself in front of the bookcase to read books to Josh and I would be just like staring into space, how long I had been like that? Or, I remember being in the bathtub and just you know crying. And how long had I been in the bath, I was just so, so in trouble. And um, that was, that was an eternity to make it to this appointment [laughs].

K: I wish you would have called me!

G: You know it's a strange time, you don't know how or what to tell.

K: No, you don't, you don't. That's true.

G: And still people were being so great to me. But I was kind of like, "I have to get my feet back on the ground, and I don't know how somebody can help me do that." Um, but anyway, so we waited for this appointment and Robert was on a terrible rotation. He was going to come and he didn't make it. I had a list of questions, and this woman, it turned out she was the head of the department over there. And she was very intelligent and was able to answer my questions for me. And when I had these questions answered and explained in more detail, and I'm not saying this is Dr. Wu's fault, because I understand how busy she is and I have so much respect for her, I love that woman. But it wasn't enough for me to know and then survive for this time. But finally I was able to get some knowledge. And unlike you when you had your miscarriage I remember you had this craving for knowledge, you went to the library reading up about it, I wasn't able to do that. I think I was holding it at bay. And trying to keep a safe distance, although it was always there. She talked and answered questions and said that it was a fluke, that the way the tests were read it's not going to be happening to us again. And um, if, um if the miscarriage is due to chromosomal reasons, Turner Syndrome is the leading reason why. The leading cause. But so many people don't know because so many women experience their miscarriage at home. And um, and then again, I was so grateful how this happened because I had medical help all along the way. And I was in a safe environment you know, with a doctor and a nurse and my husband who could explain things. Anyway, I remember this appointment with the geneticist being very healing and answering questions and if I was still stuck on something there and I said, "But I don't understand this," and she was able to explain it to me in more detail. And now looking back on it I don't quite remember what all the details were but it satisfied me. And that kind of helped me, you know, file this and process this and you know, say, "Ok I'm going to put it here." Um and go on and try to go on. It wasn't instantaneous but, sometime last summer I was at the sink cleaning dishes and I remember stopping and pausing and thinking, "Uh, I feel good and I feel happy like the way I used to. Maybe I'm," you know, "getting

better." But, but, I, it's not gone from me, and like you have your shoes that remind you, I was thinking the other day, I feel like I'm wearing, I'm wearing something like a sweater. You know how, I don't know if you're this way but when I come home I like to take off my coat and my sweater whatever and just get comfortable, be in a t-shirt.

K: Yup, in sweats [laughter].

G: Ya. And, and I kind of feel like I have this shirt on, like it's always going to be there. Not necessarily heavy, sometimes, sometimes I'm sad but, um, I think it's just going to be a part of me.

K: Would you ever not want it to be a part of you?

G: No. No. I, I honor this experience and, and I knew that from the very beginning. One of my first thoughts, I was on the bed at the ultrasound and I thought, "I can't believe this is happening to us. I would have never have guessed." Then I also thought, "Ok, I can turn around and use this to help somebody else." That was one of my earliest thoughts about this. And so, no, it's not what I wanted but, I think that Heavenly Father, you know, has a plan, you know, that I need to learn, and Robert need to learn. It was a hard year. Very, very hard. Other things about the year were incredibly hard. Um, but I, I'm glad to have gotten through, and I still think about the baby. It was due Thanksgiving Day and you know, so many people in the ward were expecting babies. So I saw the progression of their pregnancies and then the babies started to come and I was so excited for them but I can't help but think that "That would be me. I would be walking around with a little infant in my arms right now." And um, it was interesting going home, it was our first time going home for Christmas in four years. So we were home and Robert's two cousins were pregnant the same time I was. We were all expecting weeks of each other. And one of his cousins had the baby early and had the baby on Thanksgiving Day. And it was a little girl. And I remember looking at this baby at his grandmother's party and just looking at her thinking, "This is my little girl." Thanksgiving Day, and it's a girl. And it's

not to say that this baby would have been a girl, well I guess she would have with the Turner's Syndrome. Anyway, that was a little bit strange.

K: I bet. So do you feel like, do you kind of feel like that the spirit of your baby had gone into that baby?

G: No. No. And that was a big issue for me. Right around the time of the miscarriage. What happened to the spirit? Did it count?

K: Because there's really no doctrine. Well there is no doctrine and sometimes you make meaning for yourself I guess.

G: Well, to get back to our cousins baby I didn't feel like that was mine. But um, I wanted to know, we all come to earth to get a body and did this body count? Is that spirit now moving on? Or did the body fail, and somebody in the ward said this to me, somebody in the ward who had had a miscarriage said, "My husband and I just looked at it like, ok, it didn't work out, we're all going to try again. The baby, my husband and I we're going to try it again." And so that same, she, she felt like that same spirit....

K: Would come to another body?

G: Ya they're going to prepare another body. So, you know, I don't know. And I'm getting goosebumps now thinking about it. I hadn't thought about this in awhile, but I think, I think we kind of hear other peoples stories and thoughts and, "Ok, that sounds good, that gives me comfort. I'll sit with that for awhile." Or I'll accept it.

K: That's really the only option that you have at this point in time.

G: Ya. And uh, somebody else, my parent's neighbor Mrs. Hughes said something that was at the time very comforting but I can't remember what it was.

K: Darn! [laughter]

G: I know. But something like those spirits are, are in your family and, and they'll come to you.

K: Ya. I think that's one thing that I have found as I talked with other women, because I never, I looked at it so like, almost biologically, scientifically, because um, maybe even of

Bryan's influence, not that Bryan felt, that he didn't feel emotion, but I think, I looked at it so differently in the beginning and then as I went on the hurt and pain were still there and then talking with other women on top of that. I began to realize I really did feel like that I was missing, um, like. I guess it brought me comfort to know that `yes, this was, that that was a spirit and that that is, I mean it's a spirit that maybe I could've had the opportunity to, to, give life to and that perhaps I will be able to meet that spirit again someday. You know, who knows when? Um, I, I don't know if that same little spirit is Ashlin or not, you know, I don't know, I don't know how it all works.

G: That's right.

K: I almost tend not to feel that way, I mean I know a couple of the women who, I don't know if you remember reading their stories, but they felt like that their subsequent babies, you know, that those were the same spirits that they had miscarried. Um, I haven't felt that way. I think, I've kind of felt like I want it to be a separate individual that I'd like to get to know.

G: Do you think you've done that to put off the pain?

K: Maybe, I don't know.

G: Or it's just an impression?

K: I think it's almost more of an impression. But it also maybe a desire you know, almost a desire to have more children. It's this idea, you know, you want to keep them separate or something.

G: But see now that's interesting because your miscarriage came before Ashlin and see I haven't had anything subsequent to the miscarriage. I just took from people who had comforting things to say. Um, I felt good with them. I really wish there were something about it in church doctrine.

K: Wish we could get some more information [light laughter]. We just need to ask the questions.

G: Ya, I do too. And this is so common. Like after this happened I was just astounded by the number of people, especially in our ward, who came up and said, "I had one last March." Or, you know, "We had two." And, and, additionally, Mormon women who are living a certain health standard, we're healthy people, both the men and the women, and I was really astounded that this is so common. Even among healthy people and people who place a value on family. And um, and too, my doctor said 1 out of 4 pregnancies end in miscarriage. It's just, unbelievable how common it is.

K: And, but isn't strange 'cause I, I didn't ever, I mean I never thought it would happen to me because no one that I knew of at the time in my family had miscarried, you know. So I really felt like a freak almost. But then you know as I would share or talk about it, then ya, more and more women came out of the woodwork.

G: See, now that's where I think we run up or hit the brick wall. If more people would talk about it we would be able to go somewhere with it.

K: Right, not feel so isolated. Because I remember I felt a real sense of isolation.

G: Maybe we could get some answers. Maybe there could be a teaching from the church on, on what this means to us in terms of an eternal family. Or, um, you know, like I said before, I felt like I benefitted so much from the experience of others, before me. It's interesting. But because it's so common, I wonder why there aren't more uh, teachings on it or hard-nosed facts about it. They all seem to be speculations or wives tales.

K: The only two things I can think of is one we're just not asking the question you know for revelation to, to maybe be allowed to come, I don't know. Or secondly I think also, it's a really, it's a very complex issue. And typically, you know, scientists have a difficult time knowing when, I mean one we don't even know when the spirit enters that body, you know, is it at birth or is it earlier? I mean I have my own personal feelings and beliefs when it enters into the body but um, you know, we don't even, there's no doctrine on that. Um, not really anyway. And then, and then there's no doctrine--well I guess with that, you know, when does life actually begin? So, ya, it's just a real complex thing. These

are good questions. Did you have feelings of guilt? Why? What were these guilt feelings about?

G: I did have feelings of guilt. Um, I failed the baby, I failed my husband. Why didn't my body work? And I wanted to know why this hap---, I wanted it pinned down, like, what was the cause of the miscarriage. Could it have been the hike I went on. I was carrying a 35 lb. pack and hiking through waste deep water and I was two months pregnant when we went on that hike. And you know, I took the medication. Was it because of that? Is it because of something with the sperm, you know what happened? And we did find out, they know that in Turner Syndrome it's the only chromosomal problem that happens because of the sperm. Every other chromosomal abnormality comes from the mother, Downs and you know whatever. But, um, and that, that helped me. And it wasn't because I could say, "Ha, it was your fault!" [laughter]. But it helped me to know what it was. That it was a fluke. It was just a random thing and we don't have a predisposition for this to happen again.

K: And did that help alleviate the guilt that you felt?

G: Ya, very much so. You know, I felt like, "Oh, the poor baby," you know, "We couldn't give this baby a body." But I don't think that was overriding in any way, shape or form. Um, luckily for us, we were able to explain the guilt away. We, we could say from a medical standpoint, "No, it wasn't you." And I remember a friend in the ward saying too, the same thing, they failed, you know, they failed that baby. But she was the one who said they worked through this in her mind and just thought, "Ok, my husband and I and the baby we're all going to try again. This time it didn't work, we're going to do this one again." And I found that way of thinking to be very comforting. Friends and family are really great. And I think it's so helpful always when you acknowledge it and don't try to sweep it under the rug. You know, you don't go around necessarily wanting people's pity, well, you just don't, but it's, it's nice when you have people saying, "So how are you doing?" You know? "I bet that was a tough thing." You know, they just kind of

acknowledge it. Even though it's hard to bring it up and they're probably fearful of hurting you. I think it says a lot about their integrity and also their concern for you. And see this is the hard thing, because thinking of myself I would have been too afraid to approach somebody else. And I think it shows a level of maturity and I don't think I, I know I didn't have that. I was clueless. And I appreciate other people who acknowledge this. So people continue, people in my life continue to be really great. How about you?

K: I definitely think so. I mean I think it's um, having another child--Ashlin (cassette is inaudible) so much and it happened, you know, quite awhile ago now. So it's hard to compare myself. Um, but I'm still finding, I think people who experience miscarriage...**[cassette tape ran out]**