

Chapter 21 Summary: Women's voices: narratives of the abortion experience

The deVeber Institute collected the narratives of 101 post-abortive women and organized its findings into three parts. First is a detailed account of one woman's experience of abortion in a developing nation. Her story sheds light on the coercive pressures currently placed on women, regardless of education or status, to limit the number of children they bear. These pressures were exerted not only by her husband, but also by her parents, employers, friends, and medical personnel.

The second section synthesizes the results of 92 interviews with post-abortive women from Canada and the United States. While these women may have undergone an abortion anywhere from three to sixty years prior, the results of the study indicate that a vast majority of the women found their abortion to be an "emotionally devastating experience," and all regretted having the abortion.

The final section details eight stories from post-abortive women approaching the end of life, indicating that a significant number of women experience acute spiritual pain on their deathbed stemming from an earlier abortion.

In light of these testimonies, it is clear that the characterization of abortion as a 'minor operation' often found in the scientific literature may be directly challenged. In addition, these narratives indicate that the notion of abortion as 'a woman's choice' is illusory for many. Over two-thirds of the women who answered the question said that if they had not been pressured and/or coerced, and had received at least minimal support from medical personnel or significant others, they would not have had the abortion. Every one of the women who shared her story stated that if she had it to do over again she would go through with the pregnancy, and all but one would counsel others not to have an abortion, no matter how difficult the circumstances.