

**Interview with Caity Gee**  
**Interviewed by Elliott Dynes**

Elliott: This computer. Okay it's recording. So uh hello. My name is Elliott Dynes. I'm in 30 East Balbo right now in Chicago, Illinois. Right now it is 2:05 p.m. on Sunday, November 29th. We're doing this for the Oral history project: Capturing Quarantine for honors Oral History at Columbia College Chicago. And with that I'd like to introduce my narrator Caity Gee.

Caity: Um, hi I'm Caity Gee. I'm also in Chicago, Illinois, sitting in my bedroom of my apartment in the south loop of Chicago.

Elliott: Okay perfect, awesome. So I guess to get things started I'll just uh- we'll just start with some background information. So, where were you first born?

Caity: Um, I was born in Memphis Tennessee.

Elliott: Okay. And were you also raised there?

Caity: Um, for the most part I moved away when I was in ninth grade when I started high school. Um but- yeah my family still lives there.

Elliott: Um, where did you move too?

Caity: Um (laughs), a lot of places I moved to Indiana. I moved to Carmel, Indiana and then I moved back to Memphis Tennessee and then I moved to Marbella, Spain and then I moved back to Indiana and moved to Chicago.

Elliott Dynes: Okay yeah awesome. Uh where were- where was your mother born and what year was she born in?

Caity Gee: Um, my mother was born in Memphis Tennessee in- 1975.

Elliott: (nods) Okay perfect. And where was your father born and what year was he born in?

Caity: Um, I wanna say my father was also born in Memphis and he was born in 1973.

Elliott Dynes: Perfect awesome. So with that we'll start with the narrative questions. Um so first off, for the first question, I'd like to ask: How do you self identify?

Caity: Um, I identify as a woman and I identify as a dancer and a college student.

38 Elliott: Okay perfect. And uh what are your preferred pronouns?

39 Caity: Uh she/her/hers.

40 Elliott: Okay awesome. So to start things off um. What was your earliest memory?

41

42 Caity: Um. My earliest memory was probably like I think I was like around four in junior

43 kindergarten and I remember like drawing in the classroom and um. Like my best friend at the

44 time took the crayon that I wanted so I bit her and I remember being reprimanded in the

45 teachers office or I think the principal's office. Um (giggles) for that.

46

47 Elliott: What a way to start life I guess. Um that's cool. So how do you feel like you got your

48 name?

49

50 Caity: My name?

51

52 Elliott: (interrupts) Uh yeah your name.

53

54 Caity: My parents said my name came to them in a dream from my dad because my mom's

55 parents died when she was like twenty-two twenty-three. Um and apparently my grandfather

56 came to my dad in a dream and said that your girl's name needs to start with a "c." So they

57 picked that and then my, my middle name is after my grandmother. Um, my last name is the

58 family name.

59

60 Elliott: Yeah that's that's that's really interesting. Um so. Here. Going off of that, um, how do you

61 feel like the place that you grew up influenced you as a person?

62

63 Caity: I heavily identify as southern. And I still consider myself very southern like with manners

64 and the- I don't have an accent but my parents both have heavy southern accents for chinese

65 people. Um, I think that especially the school that I was raised in taught me a lot of values about

66 like what it means to be a feminist and a women, to look for those positions of power I guess.

67 Um, because I went to private school when I was younger.

68

69 Elliott: Um interesting. So going off the southern thing. Um, what do you mean by identify as

70 southern?

71

72 Caity: Um, like the food there (laughs). Like that's a big part of the culture and like it's something

73 I miss a lot like I love biscuits and gravy. Um, that's kind of one of my things and um, just

74 southern hospitality. It's kind of different like up here a little bit. Um, and I remember going home

75 for quarantine and everyone was so nice and they would smile and wave to you on the streets

76 and being in chicago it's so different and I was like, why are they saying hi to me like that's so

77 weird. Um (nods).

78

79 Elliott: Yeah would you say you like miss that overall culture now that you're in Chicago?

80  
81 Caity: No I hate talking to people (laughs).  
82  
83 Elliott: Mood. I get that (giggles) um okay well um. Continuing with early life, what made you first  
84 want to start dancing?  
85  
86 Caity: Um, I actually started dancing kind of late. I started dancing when I was twelve and I had  
87 a friend who was actually (giggles) on track to be a professional dancer and her mom and my  
88 mom were very close and my mom- I used to have a lot of anger issues when I was younger  
89 and it's still kind of something that's in my life but my mom thought it would like me try to fit in  
90 with some of my classmates so I tried it and I ended up meeting this, at the time like pure  
91 coincidence, like director of like this really big ballet competition. His wife saw me and was like  
92 you need to go see my husband. And so we went and saw him and it turns out he was a really  
93 big deal and I ended up training under him for a while and moving with him when he moved to  
94 Indiana.  
95  
96 Elliott: Yeah that's great. So after mo- I guess after doing dance for a couple years what made  
97 you want to continue down that path?  
98  
99 Caity: (sighs) Uh, it's been a bumpy road I've been down a lot of things like I remember like  
100 moving to Indiana I was homeschooled and I really really missed school so I went back to public  
101 school the second semester and then transferred over to my private school the next year and  
102 then after that I was like I really miss dance I miss doing it and i miss like (pause) seeing my  
103 body like be that way. So, I went to Spain and I danced a little and then I went to Indiana and  
104 danced and then. (pause) I think it was just like I felt like I didn't have any other option besides  
105 dance that's something I had been working on so hard for my entire life and it never really felt  
106 like there were any other directions I could go. Um, yeah.  
107  
108 Elliott: That's interesting. Yeah. So you mentioned that you spent some time in Spain. How did  
109 you get the opportunity to do that?  
110  
111 Caity: I, so one of my friends from Indiana, she actually moved to Spain because she knew one  
112 of the teachers there. And it was like a tiny tiny town on the coast of Spain. Um it was like an  
113 english town so all the tourists would come there in the summer and it would be empty in the  
114 winter. And it was right next to Gibraltar which has all the monkeys and things. Um, but Like  
115 that's not really something that's like I'm really fond of in my life because it was a really tough  
116 time and I was very depressed at the time. But, it was like an amazing opportunity to go study  
117 abroad.  
118  
119 Elliott: Um, going off your mental state that you mentioned, What made you- Or like (pause).  
120 How did you- Um. (pause) When you were saying that you were depressed um. What were  
121 some contributing factors at the time like made you feel that way.

122 Caity: Um, well the program that I went to there were only three people in it and they all spoke  
123 russian except for me. And the host family I stayed with also spoke russian. So I kind of felt  
124 isolated from everybody else because I didn't really speak the language or anything like that  
125 and like. They also compared me a lot to this one girl who- like. In my head I knew I was better  
126 than her, like I would score better at competitions and things. But they always told me how awful  
127 I was. Which I guess is just a part of dance in general. But it didn't really feel like it was a way  
128 that was constructive.

129  
130 Elliott: (nods) Mhm yeah. So um, the family you were with they spoke Russian but you guys  
131 were in Spain?

132  
133 Caity: Uh yes.

134  
135 Elliott: Interesting. But yeah I just wanted to clarify that that's interesting. So after you graduated  
136 high school what were your ambitions for after you graduated high school.

137  
138 Caity: I wanted to be a professional dancer. I um actually took a gap year and I danced a little in  
139 Hubbard Street Dance Chicago's professional program. I actually um also did some freelance  
140 work doing Nutcrackers things. Um and I was um (pauses) sexually assaulted when doing that  
141 and I was like I never wanna do this again and it was just so much pressure and it was just like  
142 a lot of surrounding things that was like I can't do this anymore.

143  
144 Elliott: I'm (stutters) I'm I'm I'm really sorry to hear that. Um, so, since since graduating high  
145 school and I guess this gap year how do you feel like you changed as a person?

146  
147 Caity: I, I feel a lot happier I definitely feel like college is where I'm supposed to be. It's it's been  
148 really nice to kind of figure out like. What I want to do, have my plan outlined, and like be able to  
149 see it be achieved and like have different goal markers, and being told like hey I'm actually  
150 getting somewhere instead of feeling like I'm doing the same thing every day and like not getting  
151 anywhere. Um, I still really miss being like the best at what I do um (pause) not that I was ever  
152 the best but like really good at something. Um, but I just feel a lot happier and healthier.

153  
154 Elliott: Do you feel like you needed to quit dance in order to feel a lot healthier or happier?

155  
156 Caity: I don't know if it was necessary that I needed to quit dance but I think it was like after I  
157 stopped dancing I went to a lot of therapy and I think that was like a huge help in making- in the  
158 transition to helping me be a happier person. Like after I stopped dancing I went to an intensive  
159 outpatient care for therapy so I was in like therapy for five days, or four days a week for like  
160 three hours a day which is a lot. So, I think that helped me with some like coping mechanisms.  
161 And how to better handle things.

162  
163 Elliott: So what originally um caused you to need to go to therapy?

164 Caity: I, my mom was trying to get me to go to therapy when I was at Hubbard street because  
165 I've always struggled with self harm and I was like (pause) I think that I had an eating disorder  
166 but I'm not particularly sure. If it's something I created in my head or if it actually happened. Um  
167 but at the time I had had a really bad breakup with my first boyfriend and we were serious. I had  
168 moved in with him and everything and. Uh it was just really dramatic and there was one point at  
169 hubbard street where I was like- It was just after the director of the program was like I don't think  
170 this is for you you shouldn't have come here. And I was at rehearsal one day and I was just  
171 feeling really awful and there was like this bridge right by my apartment and I was like (pauses)  
172 what if I just (pauses) jumped like what would happen. Um instead I called my mom which  
173 helped and was like you need to go home and like you should prolly be in more therapy.

174  
175 Elliott: Mhm. Yeah, how do you feel like your mental state or what what're some coping  
176 mechanisms that you've learned that've helped you since these events that've affected you?

177  
178 Caity: I keep a gratitude journal now since therapy I keep a gratitude journal and it's. It's not  
179 super full but it's got some good things in it and I like to look back through it and um. I think  
180 finding purpose in work has also been very helpful for me. Uh like coronavirus has kind of like  
181 been hard because I drive a lot of my self esteem from doing work and being involved in school  
182 and a bunch of different activities so. It's like something I'm struggling with right now but I reach  
183 out to a bunch of my friends a lot more I think. (smiles)

184  
185 Elliott: Ugh, going off of this- these things that you've been telling me. Um, if you could go back  
186 and change anything about high school what would you change?

187  
188 Caity: I wouldn't have gone to Spain. Yeah I just, I think I should've gone straight to indiana  
189 instead of going to Spain. Then maybe I would've ended up with a worse eating disorder I  
190 (shakes head). It's hard to go on the what ifs.

191  
192 Elliott: It is hard yeah (nods head). Well um, transitioning into college preco- before covid. Why  
193 did you first decide to attend Columbia College Chicago?

194  
195 Caity: Um. Because I thought I'd be a professional dancer and never took any standardized  
196 testing. I never took any ACT or SAT and I had been rejected from U Chicago and um colum- I  
197 had a friend from Hubbard street that was going to columbia full time and going to Hubbard  
198 Street and I had heard really great things from her. So I just filled out the application process  
199 which I found to be really easy. And I'm really thankful I ended up here too. I feel like it's the  
200 right place for me and I feel like I've really been able to excel here.

201  
202 Elliott. Mhm. In what ways do you feel like you've been able to excel at Columbia?

203  
204 Caity: Ah I like to set up office hours with my professors- I haven't done it as much this semester  
205 because it's been particularly hard. But normally I like to set up office hours and like make a  
206 plan with people for like how to get the internships I want to get. Um, I was able to get an  
207 internship at Lyric Opera Um I also am working as a manager at a country club like running the

208 whole dance program. Um that means last year I got to plan out their entire nutcracker and put it  
209 together. Which is a really cool experience and like I think that I'm working towards that I want to  
210 do.

211  
212 Elliott: hmm, do you? So, going off of what we've been talking about and what you have been  
213 doing during your time in college um. Could you- do you feel like you could envision yourself  
214 doing this- so like if we go back to your mindstate of before college um could you envision  
215 yourself doing this now based on what you were doing before.

216  
217 Caity: Um, yeah this is like something I wanted to do when I was dancing but I thought I  
218 wouldn't be able to get to until maybe like late- like maybe in my thirties.

219  
220 Elliott: How would you describe your schedule during your freshman year of college?

221  
222 Caity: I set my schedule up as a nine to five. I would like to have my 9 a.m. classes and then go  
223 take a break where I would either go study or grab lunch and then on Mondays or Tuesdays I  
224 would go to work. Um until five- then I would come home and you know hang out with my  
225 roommates and you know eat dinner. Thursdays were a little bit different because I didn't have  
226 class until 3:30 and I would wake up early and do all my homework and things. Um, but that's  
227 generally how I like to set up my schedule and even in second semester too I like set it up as a  
228 nine to five.

229  
230 Elliott: Interesting, yeah, um love that. What were some activities on campus that you enjoyed  
231 doing in college before the pandemic hit?

232  
233 Caity: Um, I was like loosely part of advertising club. Like I went to the meetings but I never  
234 participated in anything because I'm not an advertising major and I like know nothing about  
235 advertising. But just like hanging out with my roommates and going to events on campus like  
236 one of my friends he was like big in the pilsen community to he made a documentary and I used  
237 to talk to him about a lot and I dunno- like one of my friends last semester we'd have like a  
238 weekly dinner date after class where we would just go and eat and talk about our week and stuff  
239 and just uhh. It's not really happening anymore (giggles).

240  
241 Elliott: Yeah um, interesting love that. Um so, what's your current major right now at Columbia?

242 Caity: I'm an arts management major specifically for performing arts.

243 Elliott: Mhm. So, before you mentioned before that you were thinking of attending Columbia for  
244 dance. Did you- when you first came here did you know you wanted to go into arts management  
245 or was it something you decided while you were here?

246  
247 Caity: I never wanted to go to Columbia for dance um. Being honest I'm very picky about my  
248 teachers and I only like one teacher here so. (Pause) Um yeah so I tried to take a dance class  
249 once but it didn't really fit into my schedule. But I think I knew when I applied that I wanted to

250 quit dance. Like there were already a lot of factors in my life that were like mmm it's time too  
251 stop.

252  
253 Elliott: Yeah great. So, switching into early coronavirus, when did you first become aware of  
254 coronavirus?

255  
256 Caity: Um, I had first became aware of it in early february because my dad had like read reports  
257 about it and he told me I needed to go to Costco and stock up on toilet paper (laughs). So like  
258 beginning of February I had went to costco and had got the big thing of toilet paper and was  
259 panicking and my roommates thought I was crazy and (laughs) they were also talking about the  
260 bad virus and the chinese people and I'm like sitting right here and because me and both my  
261 roommates are white. So yeah that's how I first heard about it.

262  
263 Elliott. Okay awesome, what were some of your first reactions to Columbia closing it's campus?

264  
265 Caity: as expected. I mean. Like I remember distinctly the shutdown because like I was doing  
266 one of my favorite choreographer's performances and I remember standing in front of the  
267 theater when the mayor made her announcement that there shouldn't be any gatherings over  
268 five-hundred and that it was cancelled and I remember getting a call from my friend that the  
269 performance was cancelled. Um, so Columbia closing matched the progression after that.

270  
271 Elliott: Yeah. Awesome. That's great. Um, So, after Columbia decided to close it's campus what  
272 were some of the first things you noticed were changing in the days following?

273  
274 Caity: Um, (pauses) I remember everything kind of closing down. I remember- my roommate  
275 went home the next day to vegas. Cause that's where she lived and then she- my parents took  
276 me home like two days later so I thought I was coming home on a plane and my parents were  
277 like no we want you home sooner so they booked a train ticket and I took the overnight train  
278 down and I remember talking with some of my friends about like moving out of Columbia and  
279 what that process was like. It's weird cause I just remember a lot of like gossiping about it and  
280 overhearing peoples conversations but not like- anything was really really happening.

281  
282 Elliott: Mhm. What was going through your head during all this, during this entire time, during  
283 this entire week with the process of Columbia closing were you handling it well?

284  
285 Caity: Um, well at that time we all thought that Columbia was going to reopen back up after two  
286 weeks after spring break. So we all thought it would be fine like I thought I was going home for  
287 maybe two weeks and I didn't think it would be anything too crazy. So I- No I was just very  
288 hopeful and also Naive that it won't that long, I'll be back in school soon, I'll be able to do what I  
289 want to do but (Pauses) ya know.

290  
291 Elliott: Um, what eventually made you change that mindstate.

292 Caity: Um, it was probably after my parents were like we want you to stay here. And just  
293 knowing all of my classes were online to like, I had one class that was a special events that was  
294 like a special events and commotions class and like our project for the class we were working to  
295 literally plan an entire event and that got changed to all virtual programming and like my work  
296 got changed to virtual programming as well. So kind of like hearing more about what was  
297 happening through my work than from school so like as I manager I had to be updated on the  
298 coronavirus like plan there so. (pauses) I don't know it was just like very stressful. I was very  
299 sad because my parents are very concerned about the coronavirus. My dad has OCD so it kind  
300 of like manifested itself in like hoarding and cleanliness and control so he wouldn't let my mom  
301 and i leave the house (pauses) but um he would still go to work. So it was just stressful because  
302 being with your parents after not really being with them for a longtime.

303  
304 Elliott: Mhm. How would you describe your transition to remote learning?

305  
306 Caity: It wasn't terrible. I did online school through most of high school. So like my beginning of  
307 freshman year and then my sophomore junior- sorry junior senior year I did remote learning  
308 anyways so it wasn't a huge transition. Um, but it was like- I also miss, from doing online school  
309 in high school, I miss being able to make my own schedule and work ahead. Because I couldn't  
310 really do that with the learning at Columbia.

311  
312 Elliott: Mmm. How do you- how do you feel like remote learning now differs from the remote  
313 learning you were doing in high school.

314  
315 Caity: Um. it's different because I actually have to attend lectures. I never attended any lectures  
316 when I was in high school I just, like if I was having issues I just kind of googled it. So, here it's  
317 like I'm kind of more able to talk to my teachers and professors and have them understand more  
318 like I've had some professors who're really great, really attentive. Um, and others who haven't  
319 been in contact with for most of the semester. Like one of my professors I think has emailed us  
320 twice about our course load and graded one thing and we're almost done (laughs).

321  
322 Elliott: Yeah that's awesome. Transitioning to I guess the living situation during early  
323 coronavirus, how did the announcement that college would close impact your living situation.

324  
325 Caity: I was living in an apartment off campus. In an apartment so it didn't really impact my living  
326 situation that much. Like I still had to pay rent (laughs) like that doesn't change a whole lot. But I  
327 went down to my parents for about a month and a half. And then I was like, when may hit I was  
328 like I have to get out of here I need to go back so they drove me back up to my apartment.

329  
330 Elliott: So living in Chicago during may I know a lot of the things were still pretty much closed.  
331 So, was the city pretty much dead when you came back here? Like much less lively than it is  
332 right now?

333  
334 Caity: Um, yeah it was a lot quieter, the grocery stores were still pretty busy. But like, where I  
335 lived in Pilson there were still like little farmers markets and things going on. So it didn't seem



336 that bad and I live right next to university village too and like you can kind of still see people like  
337 going around. It seemed much quieter.

338  
339 Elliott: Yeah, um interesting. So, transitioning to lockdown. How did your plans for summer 2020  
340 originally change? Like did you have any like before covid hit that really changed?

341  
342 Caity: Yeah I was supposed to intern at the auditorium theater and I was supposed to study  
343 abroad with Columbia going to the edimburgo French fest. So both of those things dissolved  
344 (laughs).

345  
346 Elliott: Yeah, were you like very bummed about not being able to go to the edimburgo french  
347 fest was it?

348  
349 Caity: Yeah, I think I was more disappointed in not being able to go to the auditorium theater  
350 because, Like I had said, the person that had picked me up when I was twelve years old and  
351 said I needed to go to her husband, I've been trying to follow in her footsteps. And she was, I  
352 wanna say three years ago, she was the CEO of the auditorium theater and i was like I have to  
353 work there. And then when I couldn't it was really disappointing like I remember crying for like  
354 two weeks.

355  
356 Elliott: Mhm. Do you feel like- um. Have, Have you had that chance to like work there since most  
357 of the things in Chicago have opened back up?

358  
359 Caity: Um my schedule doesn't really align this semester but I've been working at the Country  
360 club which has been very helpful so I've been doing that this semester and being a student  
361 ambassador and giving tours out at Columbia. So, I haven;t been able to do that but I've been  
362 able to supplement it with other things.

363  
364 Elliott: So, I remember you mentioning the student ambassador part where you're giving tours of  
365 Columbia. Are you, how does that work with coronavirus and giving tours to people who you've  
366 never met or aren't sure have been socially distancing?

367  
368 Caity: We give virtual tours actually. So I sit here at my desk and I give a powerpoint with  
369 another student ambassador and we kind of run through what housing looks like and the  
370 student center when it's not closed down. And also like what some of the academic buildings  
371 look like as well. Um, I know we were doing on campus tours for one family but I don't think  
372 we're opening that back up until january or february when they actually have admitted students.

373  
374 Elliott: Mhm, how do you feel about the online format of being a student ambassador did you  
375 enjoy it more like um-before the pandemic hit or this is like more accessible for you more kind of  
376 easy for you or.

377  
378 Caity: Um I actually started being a student ambassador during the pandemic. I had my  
379 interview from my parents house and I um remembered doing the orientation in like the

380 bedroom of my old apartment. So, I haven't really known anything else and I'm like kind of  
381 looking forward to doing them in person because I'll kind of get to walk around the buildings  
382 and get to know the route. But also I'm like terrible at making small talk so I don't know how it's  
383 gonna go (laughs).

384  
385 Elliott: Yeah, so I'd like us to continue with lockdown now. So going off of just an average day in  
386 quarantine, what did an average day in quarantine look like for you?

387  
388 Caity: Then or right now?

389  
390 Elliott: Yeah I'd say back then either at ur apartment in may or your house what did an average  
391 day look like.

392  
393 Caity: I woke up pretty late honestly, uh I think it was my 9 am classes I think I only had one  
394 going. Uh so I think I would wake up kind of late like around 10:00-ish. I dunno watch Tv with my  
395 mom, play with the dog, sit and chat, and make food, and then I'd go upstairs and only do one  
396 thing on my computer because I needed alone time from my family. Um, and then I would go  
397 downstairs and have dinner with my family. We'd talk, that's about it and honestly it didn't really  
398 change that much like when I went to my old apartment like I still get up late, I still do my school  
399 work, talk to my roommate, make dinner, make lunch, and I don't know, do nothing (laughs).

400  
401 Elliott: mhm, do you feel like this affected your mental health during the pandemic?

402  
403 Caity: oh yeah, I feel like it's so easy to fall into that state of I don;t feel like I should do anything  
404 or I don't think I can do anything. I base so much of my self worth on how much I can get done  
405 and kind of like what my accomplishments are so like taking that away for me is just really hard  
406 and I see my therapist once every two weeks and even sometimes it feels like that's a stretch.  
407 Um, but it like ebbs and flows like sometimes it's worse and sometimes it's okay.

408  
409 Elliott: Yeah so, going off your mental health at the time what- so, what made you feel like, so  
410 going off of your mental health and your routine at the time, what made you feel like okay with  
411 your routine. Did you ever feel okay like this was your new routine or did you still feel like you  
412 weren't doing enough at the time?

413  
414 Caity: I still feel like I'm not doing enough it never feels like I'm not doing enough. I work two  
415 jobs and go to school full time (laughs) so, nothing ever feels like enough. But i think htat has  
416 something to do with the environment I was raised in and dance and everything. Um, I feel like  
417 where I'm at in life makes me feel like, oh being in quarantine means I can slack off more than I  
418 do. Like I'm the kind of person who'd apply for jobs in my spare time for fun and I just feel like  
419 I'm so much more lazy and I just do nothing now.

420  
421 Elliott: Do you feel like this is a positive change to your routine or like a negative change?

422 Caity: I feel like it's a negative change because again I derive so much of my self esteem from  
423 doing things and having accomplishments so. It's just been really really hard not to do that. Like  
424 the other day i saw this study where they ask people if you were depressed what would you do  
425 to make yourself more depressed? And a lot of the people were like oh I do- Like if I were  
426 feeling more depressed I'd stay in bed or I would do nothing and they realized oh, this is what I  
427 do anyway and I had this realization of. This is what do anyways and if I wanted to stay in bed I  
428 would just do. (nods)

429  
430 Elliott: Um, what does not slacking off look like in your eyes like would you ever reach a point  
431 where you like feel like you are not slacking off at all like you have enough things in your  
432 schedule.

433  
434 Caity: I don't think I could ever reach that point. I just remember dancing and I would wake up at  
435 6:30 every morning and I would go work out and then do school work and then dance at 2 p.m.  
436 and then come back and do more homework and then I'd go back to dance from 5-8 p.m. and  
437 then I'd come back and do more homework. And that still felt like slacking off to me and I don't  
438 know how it did because that seems so crazy now. And that still looked like slacking off and I  
439 don't know I look up to my dad a lot and he still does so much. He Iron mans in his spare time,  
440 he's also a lawyer, he's president of the bar association, part of the NAACP, part of the black  
441 lawyers association, eighty hours a week and still manages to work out forty hours on top of  
442 that and like nothing I ever do will feel like enough compared to that.

443  
444 Elliott: Do you feel like this mentality has changed at all in quarantine or do you still feel like at  
445 heart you're not doing enough.

446  
447 Caity: I still feel like at heart I'm not doing enough. I've always kind of been the lazy one in my  
448 family (shrugs shoulders) um. Which I guess is saying something. Bu- (laughs) I think it's kind of  
449 ingrained in me that nothing you ever do will be enough.

450  
451 Elliott: How- how do you deal with that on a daily basis?

452  
453 Caity: I read a lot of articles about mental health. And when I went to therapy I became really  
454 interested in crystals and tarot cards and just having something else to focus on. I don't really  
455 know because I'm not shut down as much and I'm not really doing those things. I like talking to  
456 my friends, I talk to my mom every day. I don't know if that's helpful. But I like having a  
457 designated day for each of my friends so I can talk to them.

458  
459 Elliott: Have you ever gotten to a point where you were like my schedule is too packed or this is  
460 too much for me to do at once?

461  
462 Caity: It's possible for me to be stressed but it's never this is too much for me it's always I'm not  
463 doing enough. So even if I'm overwhelmed by my schedule it's like pull yourself together you're  
464 in the real world you just need to suck it up.

465 Elliott: Yeah great. Throughout the pandemic, were there any changes in your physical health?  
466  
467 Caity: I mean not really. I still eat the same thing I do every day which is rice and tofu. It's come  
468 to rice and tofur. But everything's still pretty much the same but I still try to go out on walks if I  
469 can.  
470  
471 Elliott: Yeah awesome. So, during the pandemic and now, what were some methods you used  
472 to keep in contact with your friends? To keep in contact with friends of yours during coronavirus.  
473  
474 Caity: I call my friends I'm not a huge fan of texting so I call my friends a lot and actually during  
475 the pandemic I went to visit one of my friends in Milwaukee. Um I hang out with my roommate a  
476 lot and her boyfriend when he comes over and my boyfriend I'll go over to his place and hang  
477 out but that's kind of it.  
478  
479 Elliott: Great awesome. So for this next part I think we'll be transitioning out of lockdown and  
480 into the BLM section. So how did you learn about the killing of George Floyd?  
481  
482 Caity: Um I learned about it on Instagram and I just remember a lot of videos being shared of  
483 dancers and activists because the issue was very important to them. So, I just remember  
484 staying up to date from them.  
485  
486 Elliott: Great. What was your initial response.  
487  
488 Caity: I mean honestly, I was just kind of numb to it at this point. I mean it's horrifying but also at  
489 the same time it's not anything new.  
490  
491 Elliott: What was the reaction from the people around your area?  
  
492 Caity: Uh, my room-  
  
493 Elliott: so-  
  
494 Caity: What?  
  
495 Elliott: So I guess we can broaden the range of people to like people you were following on  
496 Instagram and the place you live what was the reaction you saw.  
497  
498 Caity. My roommate is pretty white to put it bluntly so talking about some of these issues with her  
499 is like in a screaming I was just going in circles like I couldn't explain how much racial justice  
500 meant to me and how much it meant to me being a person of color to have Trump in office it just  
501 didn't hurt her as much as it did me. Her business is her business. But yeah I was pretty  
502 shocked and outraged. Um, it's. And I attribute that to trying to surround myself with like-minded  
503 people. And I think that's why it came off as such a culture shock when my roommate didn't  
504 really respond in the way I wanted.

505  
506 Elliott: Do you feel like that's changed your guys's relationship?  
507  
508 Caity: Yes, the person who she's currently dating is republican, I'm not a huge fan, I try to be  
509 nice, but that means I still don't really like him. But (pauses) they're just so white. Like I don't  
510 know how else to explain it. Okay, so here's the best way I can explain it. We were going to the  
511 black lives matter protests and we were hearing about all the people getting arrested and we  
512 were all pretty terrified but we were still protesting but she was still like "oh well I have blond hair  
513 and blue eyes. If we get arrested I can just ask the police nicely to let us go. And for me I was  
514 like WHAT?! NO!! That's not, that can't happen, that's not how it works and we're both victims of  
515 sexual assault so I thought she'd be on the same page as me. Um and she was like, I think a lot  
516 of the women who came through with the sexual assault allegations against Trump are just  
517 probably lying I mean like there are a lot who lie about that. And I was like. There are eight  
518 women. Not all of them are lying. Like maybe one and four has to be telling the truth. So, that's  
519 definitely changed the way I see her but we're still able to talk to each other and have theoretical  
520 conversations and we talk about religion a lot because she's Mormon and I'm Agnostic, but at  
521 the time it was really hard for me to run my head around those things.  
522  
523 Elliott: Mhm, so I remember you mentioning you went to a protest. Did you go to a protest in  
524 Chicago?  
525  
526 Caity: Yeah I went to I think it was the largest protest in Chicago.  
527  
528 Elliott: How did you feel about participating in a protest like that with the possibility of getting  
529 coronavirus.  
530  
531 Caity: It was scary but I think the other thing was like I hadn't read about any spikes from the  
532 protests so I thought that it was okay as long as people had masks and everything and as long  
533 as we all stayed with feet apart it and it was outside which wasn't as bad. I feel like everyone  
534 was mindful of those around us um but I just remember being so scared that we were going to  
535 get tear gassed or something because I remember at that point Chicago had called in the  
536 military to, to come and keep a watch out so seeing the tanks outside and the fear of getting  
537 arrested.  
538  
539 Elliott: Mhm, what were what were some of the things you saw during the protest that really  
540 stuck with you.  
541  
542 Caity: Just everyone marching for solidarity like everyone was there for a cause and people  
543 were there for a cause and I just remember walking next to this person drumming to all the  
544 protest chants and lifting everyone's spirit and like, there were so many people who were just  
545 watching from the sidelines and being so liberal and being in a liberal city it seemed very near  
546 and dear to everyone's hearts.  
547  
548 Elliott: Awesome, did you see anyone get arrested while you were out protesting?

549  
550 Caity: I never saw anything happen, I had heard reports about because where I work my office  
551 is right off of the mag mile above the cartier and rolex stores and they owned that property. And  
552 I just remember hearing like oh the club is closed because people had smashed in the windows  
553 of those stores and like we needed to repair them. And that was crazy but I never saw anything  
554 myself.

555  
556 Elliott: Yeah great, so, to conclude this section, just in general, what are your media news  
557 sources?

558  
559 Caity: Um I'm on buzzfeed a lot, and vice news, and huffpost which are very liberal news  
560 sources. Uh, I also like to look at the new york times and their daily briefing. Yeah.

561  
562 Elliott: Uh, how do you feel like how accurate their depiction was of the BLM movement  
563 was?

564  
565 Caity: I actually feel like Buzzfeed did some pretty solid reporting like when they report on  
566 something it's actually pretty good from what you'd expect. And I feel like the New York Times  
567 did a great job covering it as well.

568  
569 Elliott: Great, so next we're going to move onto the U.S.Election. So, moving a little bit more  
570 foreword in time. How did you originally cast your ballot.

571  
572 Caity: I went to the supercenter in chicago and voted the second day it opened.

573  
574 Elliott: Awesome, and were you, similar to the BLM protests, were you scared of being in  
575 contact with someone who had coronavirus voting in person?

576  
577 Caity: I mean, yeah but at this point I feel like we just know to stand six feet apart from each  
578 other and like the line was outside like, they kept us socially distanced.

579  
580 Elliott: Awesome. How has the coronavirus pandemic influenced your vote in the 2020 election?

581  
582 Caity: Um, it's been a lot like as a Chinese person experiencing racism from coronavirus and  
583 like Trump calling it the China virus and, like I told you, My roommates saying it was caused by  
584 gross chinese people eating bats. I've been yelled at in the street for spreading the virus and  
585 I've never been to China. I'm third generation chinese so I identify as very wholeheartedly  
586 American. Um, so like just knowing that that's kind of the rhetoric that our current president is  
587 okay with spreading is a lot. And I think we should've gone into a much heavier lockdown like  
588 New Zealand and Australia but none of that happened and I feel like it was just very immature.

589  
590 Elliott: Do you feel bothered by these phrases that people call you?

591 Caity: Yes of course I do (laughs). But like at the same time you, (takes deep breath) you deal  
592 with racism right. Like it's not a fact of life but like people and people and everyone's going to  
593 have their own opinion and I've definitely been called a T\*\*\*\*k before and like I was ready to  
594 throw hands and like. I don't know. It's like I know this isn't okay but I know it's going to happen.

595  
596 Elliott: What steps do you feel like we need to take to prevent more situations like this or  
597 coincidences?

598  
599 Caity: Um, I think black lives matter is a great step forward I. I think it's something we need a lot  
600 right now and just especially more conversations around it and I wish. (pauses) That there were  
601 more conversations around race and other things like I remember when I was young maybe five  
602 or six my mom sitting me down and being like you're Asian and you're a woman and that means  
603 you have two strikes against you and that means you have to work twice as hard than the  
604 person next to you to get ahead or just be level to the person next to you. And I think it's more  
605 recently come to my attention that that's a conversation every family has to have with their kids.  
606 And so I think having those conversations with your kids early on is more helpful.

607  
608 Elliott: Awesome. Um, how do you feel about the outcome of the U.S. election.

609  
610 Caity: I'm thankful. I'm relieved. It doesn't mean the work is over there's still so much more work  
611 to do. I mean it's still another white man in office. But, I think, with Kamala Harris hopefully that  
612 will help a bit. But, I think that the biggest thing we can do is have more women of color run and  
613 specifically more native- or just like women. Women of color if I'm being specific to run for  
614 different offices. Um, and I think it can just bring more ideas to the table I think that that will help  
615 more than a president like this and hopefully one day we can look at having like a black women  
616 as president instead of vice president.

617  
618 Elliott: What opportunities do you think are brought to the table by Joe Biden becoming  
619 president?

620  
621 Caity: I hope that he'll handle the coronavirus a little bit better than Trump has. I'm, again I'm  
622 hoping that one of his people will help student debt. That hopefully it'll um get abolished I guess.  
623 That's not the right word but cut down. Um, I'm looking forward to being a part of COP 21 again  
624 and being put in the environment in the forefront. That's something that's important to me. Um,  
625 and I'm hopeful that he'll tax these big corporations more, I don't think that'll happen because  
626 obviously. But I'm hopeful that he'll tax these corporations more than Trump did.

627  
628 Elliott: Awesome. How has the election affected your relationships with family members?

629  
630 Caity: Um my- my family is all pretty liberal so like my dad, he has like a picture with Jow biden  
631 that he sent to me like four times. He's like "I have this picture with Joe Biden." Um, and he's  
632 always donated to the more liberal campaigns and my mom is more liberal than I am so that  
633 hasn't been affected much um my roommates didn't vote. She said that she didn't feel informed  
634 enough to vote. Her choice. Her boyfriend um actually voted for Biden even though he's

635 mormon. And the mormons have notoriously been republican voters. So most of the people I've  
636 been around have voted for Biden and like I still see comments from him about being liberal but  
637 it is what it is. But yeah most people are on the same page as me.

638  
639 Elliott: Awesome. And kind of same thing with your friends?

640  
641 Caity: Yeah um. My friends like they all voted for Biden and I remember like my best friend was  
642 from Nebraska and she was like "Oh my gosh where's my ballot like I have to vote for Biden I  
643 have to vote for Biden" and I was like walking her through the steps to get registered and shot  
644 got to go vote. And my boyfriend, he voted for Biden and both of his parents voted for Biden and  
645 we were all expecting his dad to vote for Trump. So it was a nice welcome surprise and then his  
646 dad voted for Biden.

647  
648 Elliott: Great Awesome. Um, how do you think the outcome of the 2020 election will impact your  
649 personal life?

650  
651 Caity: I feel like I live in such a liberal city so there's not like anything crazy- I remember the day  
652 after the election I was like walking to a dance class and like people down the street were  
653 yelling ya know "Biden!" It was really nice. But honestly I feel like. I say this from a place of  
654 privilege I guess. That my life won't be too heavily impacted by the election that's happening.  
655 Because um, it's. I don't know I just feel like I'm going to go about my every day life and that's a  
656 privilege to do so.

657  
658 Elliott: Great. So, next we're going to transition to online classes and like reopening and you  
659 know. Columbia fall 2020. So. To kick things off. Why did you decide to start coll-. No. Why did  
660 you decided to return to college during a pandemic?

661  
662 Caity: Right now's probably the best time to be in college. I would not want to be looking for a  
663 job right now. (laughs). Ooo. I think that would be the worst thing right now because I'm in a  
664 performing arts industry and everything has been shut down. And I specifically want to work in  
665 special events and obviously there are no events happening so that makes my life much more  
666 difficult so. It just felt like that was the best option coming back to school.

667  
668 Elliott: Mhm. Do you feel like your Columbia experience is being cut short or kind of degraded  
669 by the pandemic?

670  
671 Caity: Yes I do. I had mentioned I wanted to go to study abroad and foreign travel is restricted  
672 for the next two years or it's looking like it probably will be. I'm probably not going to have the  
673 chance because I'm going to be a junior next semester. So that pretty much gives me one more  
674 year maybe. Maybe two summers I'm not sure. But yeah I miss seeing everyone in person and  
675 being able to utilize the resources that columbia used on campus because it has a lot of good  
676 resources.

677  
678 Elliott: Great awesome. How are you and your professors communicating right now?



679  
680 Caity: I'm not really communicating with any of my professors. I talk to. I talked to my professor  
681 for this course like maybe once Erin. Because I needed my grade changed. But that was it. My  
682 law professor was pretty funny even though it's an online class. Even though his videos were  
683 filmed a long time ago and like- the last one was of him doing shot which was like pretty funny  
684 and explaining what we needed to do. And he's had ones where he's fishing and like on the  
685 video he's like partying. They're pretty funny.  
686  
687 Elliott: Well that's awesome. Yeah. Do you- do you feel like this is helping the online format like.  
688 Videos like that, do you think it's making the format a little more tolerable.  
689  
690 Caity: Yeah I think it helps the format a lot just knowing what your professor looks like and  
691 knowing he's like grading your papers. Like I had that one professor where she's been a wall for  
692 the like the entire semester so it doesn't really feel like she cares and she's just as checked out  
693 as we are which I guess is comforting. But I feel like you want the people you look up to to be  
694 uh, more invested in you so you can look up to them.  
695  
696 Elliott: Mhm: Um, This actually just came to me, how do you feel like your classes would've  
697 gone this semester if they weren't online if coronavirus hadn't happened? Or everything did  
698 happen but everything was back to normal now.  
699  
700 Caity: I mean hey probably wouldn't have gone that differently. I mean I probably would have  
701 talked to my professors like much much more but like my grades would still be the same. The  
702 amount of work put in would still be the same.  
703  
704 Elliott: What're some challenges you faced this semester with remote learning?  
705  
706 Caity: Zoom fatigue is very real. Having three hours in class is awful I hate them. I hate staring  
707 at a computer for that long. I don't know. Just like staring at a screen for that long is exhausting  
708 and feeling like you have to put on a face. Because like I've noticed this in one of, in specifically  
709 this class. One of my classmates would be like Oh you always look so tired or about to fall  
710 asleep and I'm like. Well I mean it's 9 a.m. I just rolled out of bed to come to this class I'm not  
711 making coffee in the morning. But yeah I think it's zoom fatigue because like I'm smiling the  
712 whole time especially for tours they're like oh I have to be smiling this entire time even when I'm  
713 not speaking and I'm just like that's just exhausting.  
714  
715 Elliott: Yes uh. Feel that. Um, what has been your experience with hybrid courses this  
716 semester?  
717  
718 Caity: I don't have any. The entire business course is all online.  
719  
720 Elliott: Okay, great awesome. Mm. so this is a cool one. So since moving to an online formate  
721 what has changed about your studying patterns?

722 Caity: Um, I've never been one to study. I know that sounds bad but I've like never really been  
723 in school to- like I remember one time when I was in high school when I was in memphis my  
724 friend was like "it seems like fairies do your homework like I never see you doing homework. It's  
725 just all done somehow and you just always get good grades." So like that doesn't change. So I  
726 spend a minimal amount of time on my homework. As much time as I need to and it's just done.  
727 (laughs) I don't know it's like I put it on my check mark or my check list and it just gets checked  
728 off and we're done.

729  
730 Elliott: going off studying patterns do you feel like it's just like with your memory you kind of just  
731 remember things and you don't feel like you need to study like when it comes to tests or exams I  
732 guess.

733  
734 Caity: I google a lot of things. Cause I, I feel like in the real world you can google everything like  
735 you don't have to memorize a lot of things like even with my boss I ask him a lot of things and  
736 there isn't anything crazy- I don't know I took an accounting exam and we did the practice test  
737 beforehand and that took me like two and a half hours and the actual exam took m thirty  
738 minutes because I did the actual exam before. And it's like. I don't think anything is particularly  
739 challenging or hard I just do it and I never- but that's the other thing about Columbia. We don't  
740 really have exams or tests. For me at least. So I don't have to study for anything because it's  
741 just a group project

742  
743 Elliott: So transitioning into your living situation right now with like roommates and everything.  
744 Can you describe your current living situation like today?

745  
746 Caity: Yeah, I live in an apartment in the south loop on pilson which I moved to in august. My  
747 one roommate I mentioned lives in Vegas she doesn't live with me anymore because Hubbard  
748 Streets dead. It actually dissolved. I'm actually not sure what the state of the company is  
749 because they lost their building. So that's no longer happening but my other roommate who was  
750 there when I had two roommates she still lives with me and I don't know we just do our own  
751 thing. There are days where we go without talking to each other and days where we talk till one  
752 o'clock in the morning just depending on our schedule. But, we most like stay in our rooms and  
753 do zoom calls. I have like a lot of rules where I don't do any zoom calls in the kitchen because I  
754 want to be able to walk around to get myself food. Uh yeah we just. (pauses) kind of do our own  
755 thing.

756  
757 Elliott: Great. How have your practices to avoid getting covid evolved?

758  
759 Caity: Uh, I feel like they're like devolved (laughs). I- when in like april I was going home to my  
760 parents and go to the grocery and immediately after coming back from the grocery store we'd  
761 like strip, wipe down all of our groceries with clorox wipes, or like if we had anything that wasn't  
762 perishable we would like leave it out in the garage for like two or three days and know it's like  
763 oh, well I got my food from the grocery store it's fine. And we just take it. Or like I take my  
764 packages and open them without cleaning them before hand. I still wear a mask everywhere.  
765 I'm still pretty religious about wearing a mask but it's like a cloth mask so it's not an N95 or

766 anything. Um, my boyfriend is much more careful than I am. He washes all his groceries still he  
767 wears his KN95. My parents are. I feel like they're not doing as much as they used to either.  
768 Like my dad goes into work every day and he has his clorox wipe in one hand and his hand  
769 sanitizer in the other. And he like shuts the door to his office and has people speak to him  
770 through his door. My mom is a massage therapist. A lot of people she massages are  
771 republicans and obviously Tennessee's a red state so obviously we can't really do much but  
772 they don't really care as much about wearing masks or anything like that as here. All the  
773 restaurants are still open and everything and I don't know. I try not to- like maybe once this  
774 entire lockdown I've eaten inside of a restaurant once and outside maybe two or three times so I  
775 try not too. I cook most of my food at home. But like yeah I feel like that's mostly it. It's hard  
776 because we started doing in person classes at the beginning of the year for the kids at the  
777 dance studio and trying to get three year olds to keep their masks on or even six year olds it's  
778 hard for them because they don't get to see their friends every day and they have to keep their  
779 masks on and they don't really understand why they can't hug their friends so it's just. Tough,  
780 but yeah. I think I'm the least scared of the coronavirus of all because when my parents came  
781 over for thanksgiving we wore masks the entire time and when we ate food we opened up all  
782 the windows even though it's like thirty degrees outside. But yeah.

783  
784 Elliott: Cool, how would you describe your mental health pre pandemic?

785  
786 Caity: Uh, it was okay. I had just broken up with my boyfriend at the time. Lik early february I  
787 had broken up with my boyfriend and I had just got on some questionable dating sites and I  
788 think I was trying to look for the wrong thing. (Pauses) Um, but other than that it was okay.

789  
790 Elliott: Cool, Um, I think we've kind of covered this a bit before but how do you deal with feelings  
791 of depression?

792  
793 Caity: Call somebody. Or I'll be like you know what. The entire world isn't doing well right now i  
794 think it's okay if I feel like sh\*t for a little bit. Um, yeah I don't know. Sometimes I try to do things  
795 but. I don't know. Most of the time I'll either call somebody or just sit in it.

796  
797 Elliott: But do you feel like you have the ability to be pulled out of it like it doesn't consume you  
798 or your work habits or your lifestyle?

799  
800 Caity: It depends. Like i said earlier, it ebbs and it flows like. Sometimes if I feel like there's a  
801 bunch of things happening in my life I'll feel very consumed by it. Like- Like a couple months  
802 ago, well maybe like two months ago, my grandfather was admitted to the hospital with  
803 pneumonia and my parents were like we have to start talking about our wills. We have to make  
804 a plan for what's going to happen when we die and I was like I can't handle this. And then I went  
805 to visit my friend in Milwaukee and she was like "I think I'm going to be alone forever" and that  
806 was just the icing on top for a bad mental state. It took me a while to pull myself out of that one.  
807 But like yesterday I wasn't feeling too great but I was still able to like walk to the grocery store  
808 and order christmas presents and maintain a little level of productivity.

809 Elliott: do you- do you find that like- you have a lot of anxiety about kind of like getting the virus  
810 or like dealing with, you know, living with coronavirus?

811  
812 Caity: When my parents were here my moms boss had just gotten coronavirus from going to a  
813 wedding. And her goes and has lunch with her every week and my mom sees her every day at  
814 work and so. I was extremely scared that my mom had corona and I was like trying to stay away  
815 from my parents. Um, but other than that I'm not really that scared because like, my work is  
816 online, all of my school is online, there's really no reason for me to leave the house besides like  
817 going to the grocery store.

818  
819 Elliott: what are some coping skills you use to deal with anxiety from this virus?

820  
821 Caity: (pauses) uh, I talk to my friends a lot, I talk to my boyfriend a lot because he does some  
822 of the current virus charts for chicago and for like the government. So talking to him about  
823 prevention and numbers helps. Sometimes he scares me. Like when the cases shot up after  
824 Halloween he called me and was like "don't leave your house." But, yeah. I recently started to  
825 go to some pole dancing classes and that like really really helped because everything's like  
826 socially distanced and. That like really really helped as a serotonin booster. But, also that closed  
827 down last week because of all the new guidelines so like. Yeah, so if I can exercise just doing  
828 that and if I can exercise just doing that and talking to people.

829  
830 Elliott: So, going off of that and like talking to people, who do you talk to about your concerns?

831  
832 Caity: Um, I talk to my roommate. Even if she's probably not concerned about it as I am. And I  
833 talk to my boyfriend and I talk to my friends from Columbia. I used to like go to their apartment  
834 every week. Especially when the election was going on I used to go over to their apartment and  
835 watch the debates. Um, so I talk to her a lot. And I talk to my mom every day. But like  
836 sometimes my dad. And like yeah. Those're mostly who I talk too.

837  
838 Elliott: Great. Um, how has the pandemic changed your relationship to your parents.

839  
840 Caity: Um, it's pretty much the same. Like even before the pandemic I still talk to my mom every  
841 day and um. Yeah (pauses. I don't know during the pandemic I tried to get in touch with my  
842 grandmother more because we don't have a great relationship and, probably because of me. So  
843 I was like yeah I'm going to reach out and talk to her more and she didn't seem that interested in  
844 my life. (laughs) So I kind of stopped talking to her. But she still sends me masks and things so I  
845 know she cares. And- but with my parents it hasn't really changed like it's the three of us. We're  
846 really close and I'm the only kind.

847  
848 Elliott: Cool, but with anxiety or kind of the living situation or the paranoia you guys have still  
849 been able to maintain a strong relationship?

850  
851 Caity: I mean i don't live with my parents right now but it was really scary when they came over  
852 for thanksgiving. But everything seemed pretty fine. We had our normal fight we have whenever

853 I go see them (laughs). But, I feel like everyone fights with their parents it's pretty normal. But,  
854 it's (pauses). Yeah it's the same. My mom and I kind of keep each other afloat. My dad kind of  
855 does his own thing. I don't know how he lives his life he just does and goes and goes and never  
856 stops and never has any emotions or anything. But, my mom and I talk to each other all the time  
857 about anxiety and depression because I know that when I moved out of the house she was like I  
858 don't know what my purpose is anymore. So we- we kind of talk to each other about what we're  
859 scared of and try to manage it.

860  
861 Elliott: Great. So that concludes the narrative portion so i think w're going to move onto  
862 reflection now. So, um. After all that you've experienced these past eight months, how do you  
863 feel like you're going to utilize the lessons you've learned this past pandemic after a vaccine is  
864 created?

865  
866 Caity: I think- knowing it's okay to take a break. Because I'm one of those people who'll  
867 probably work myself to death. Um, and everyone was telling me I needed a break and so this  
868 was kind of a forced break. And so knowing I don't, (pauses) I can still live my life and don't  
869 have to be crazy ambitious.

870  
871 Elliott: Great awesome. How would you describe your college experience during the pandemic?

872  
873 Caity: Mmm, kind of isolating. It's hard to make friends right now. It's like the worst time to make  
874 friends. I'm really thankful for the group chat we have in this class even though I never  
875 participate in it. Uh it's just nice to hear from everybody and get to know everybody. Um, ut yeah  
876 it's kind of strange because a lot of my classmates don't turn my camera on during class and  
877 like was the semester has gone on I've stopped turning on my camera too. But, I always feel  
878 bad for my professors who have to like talk to a black screen and just teach to like that and I  
879 know it can feel very disheartening. (Pauses) I still feel like I'm really involved on campus as a  
880 student ambassador and I don't really feel like it's mard my experience too much but I wish i  
881 could do more.

882  
883 Elliott: Okay, do you ever miss that human interaction during class because I know you  
884 mentioned a lot of your class mates turn their cameras off.

885  
886 Caity: Yeah I do, even though I was never really one to talk with my classmates I still miss  
887 having somewhere to go and seeing people other than just my roommate and my boyfriend.

888  
889 Elliott: Great awesome. I think this is an interesting question next. How has your perception of  
890 the word normal changed since the coronavirus pandemic?

891  
892 Caity: I feel like normal has always been a very relative term for me. Obviously my high school  
893 experience I considered it normal but you probably wouldn't consider it normal. It's just  
894 something different for everybody and as we just keep adjusting and growing we continue to  
895 evolve what our definition of normal is and should be.

896 Elliott: Great awesome. Okay, well um so going off next- going to the next question. What has  
897 being in quarantine taught you about being mentally healthy?  
898  
899 Caity: That, (pauses) I have to learn to pick myself up sometimes. In therapy we talk a lot about  
900 opposite action. Doing the opposite of what you actually want to do. So like if you want to stay in  
901 bed than you should probably get out of bed and take a walk or something. So kind of thinking  
902 about doing things um. (pauses) Yeah.  
903  
904 Elliott: So you mentioned opposite action can you broaden upon that a little bit more? I think  
905 that's really interesting.  
906  
907 Caity: Um, so it's like something we talk about in therapy. So specifically with depression. It- do  
908 the opposite of what your depression wants you to do. Like I said like if you want to stay in bed  
909 then you should go outside and go for a walk. If you want to isolate yourself from your friends  
910 than you should probably call somebody. I those skills to know like "Oh, this is my depression  
911 talking and I should probably do the opposite of what it's telling me" doesn't mean going on a  
912 manic binge or something but like (pauses). Like littler things. Like sometimes you'll see people  
913 with depression will be like man I really don't wanna clean my room you should probably start  
914 with cleaning maybe one or two things or just getting rid of all the plates or cups in your room.  
915 Um, yeah things like that.  
916  
917 Elliott: Have you needed to utilize this technique a lot during this pandemic?  
918  
919 Caity: I did it yesterday. I just wanted to stay in bed all day yesterday and I forced myself to go  
920 outside and it was actually a really nice day outside it was like fifty degrees which is warm for  
921 Chicago. Um (laughs) and it's something I have to tell myself to do but when I tell myself to do it  
922 I find it really helpful.  
923  
924 Elliott: Awesome, how do you feel about the future? Going forward.  
925  
926 Caity: I'm scared, I'm always scared about the future. This is what I had like a big fight with my  
927 mom about. Like she was talking about me getting married and I was like I can't I can't get  
928 married. It's like looking for a job scares me like the job market right now. Oh my gosh, it's-it's  
929 really, it's a very scary prospect. I'm scared I won't be able to find a job I'm scared I won't be  
930 able to do what I want. I'm scared of being alone forever, I'm scared of getting married, I'm  
931 scared of not having any friends. But I feel like these are normal things to be scared of outside  
932 of a pandemic. Um, but, huh i think the best thing you can do right now is live in the present and  
933 take things for what they are and I say I'm scared of getting married because my boyfriend is  
934 like thirty and like he's probably looking to settle down soon and I'm like really not at that point in  
935 my life at all. So um, it's just taking things for how they come to you and accepting things for  
936 what they are.  
937  
938 Elliott: Great, um. Do you feel like you feel like you've been able to deal with these feelings of  
939 fear as the pandemic has continued or as time has continued on?

940  
941 Caity: Uh you know its like. I know this is probably unhealthy but I just brush them down. Like  
942 these are things I don't have to worry about yet like I'm still in school I know I don't have to  
943 worry about yet. I don't have to worry about getting a job yet I'm still in school for another year  
944 and a half, two years maybe. Um, my boyfriend knows my stance on marriage and I don't want  
945 to get married any time soon. I think that there are enough jobs in the city though if I need it.  
946 Something will happen. It'll be okay. Everything will be okay eventually and I'm going to live the  
947 life that I- that the universe has set out for me.

948  
949 Elliott: Awesome. Uh, what do you feel like Columbia should be doing differently? You know  
950 when it comes to online school and just right now.

951  
952 Caity: I don;t think they should've opened back up the dorms. But that's also a personal opinion  
953 and I know that's how they make a lot of their money. But some of my friends live in the dorms  
954 and just hearing stories about the dwight scares me so bad. About how the kids would take their  
955 I.D.s because they weren't here for orientation to take pictures so their I.D.s don't have pictures.  
956 So they would drop them out the window to their friends on the street. And then have their  
957 friends come in with their I.D.s. And that scares me so bad because that is just so irresponsible  
958 and I know like a lot of my R.A. friends would like have to repeatedly tell people to put on their  
959 masks. And so I just feel like that could've been handled a lot better.

960  
961 Elliott: For sure. What aspects of life do you feel like you took for granted before the virus  
962 struck?

963  
964 Caity: Going to school everyday. I actually miss the daily commute every day like I used to go  
965 read on the bus. Uh as I got to work every day and now I walk the two and a half miles every  
966 day to go to the office and I only have to do it once a week but you know it's a walk. But I know  
967 it's good for me. So, I miss having designated places to go. Like I would go to school every  
968 morning ad then i would go and get my lunch at the designated place every day and to work.  
969 And then i would go to school and i would hang out in the lounge and do my homework and I  
970 miss having those designated places to go besides my bed and my desk.

971  
972 Elliott: do you feel like you've had more designated places to go as the pandemic continued or  
973 as time continued on since the summer or since may?

974  
975 Caity: I mean since moving into this new apartment I was able to get a desk so I don't have to  
976 do all my homework sitting on the floor. Uh because I used to do all my homework sitting on the  
977 floor. I remember doing that in high school but also I didn't have enough room to do that in my  
978 old apartment. So I think a desk is really really nice but (pauses) I still feel like I do the same  
979 thing like go from my bed to my desk to the kitchen and then back to my desk and back to my  
980 bed. I don't know. Those are all the places I go.

981  
982 Elliott: Awesome. What was the most significant change in your life due to the virus?

983 Caity: Like I said not having anywhere to go like (pauses) I'm used to having places to go and  
984 be but now we can't do anything. I used to always go to the theater every weekend. Because I  
985 had the teen arts past and if you're 19 or under you can pretty much go and see any show for  
986 five dollars and I remember lying that I'm 19 even though I'm twenty to buy five dollar tickets  
987 and I couldn't go to the theater anymore and that was such a huge part of my life (nods).  
988  
989 Elliott: Do you-Do you still miss or do you feel like you kind of adjusted to not having these  
990 routines by now?  
991  
992 Caity: I miss it a lot but it's also like, that's what the past of my life looked like and this is what  
993 the present looks like and who knows what the future will look like because we get a lot of  
994 people saying our work environment will permanently change because we've learned so much  
995 about how we can do remote learning. But, I don't know how much of it is going to change. It'll  
996 be interesting to see what the world looks like coming out of this pandemic and if we'll still have  
997 our normal nine to five. I mean I think we still will because of capitalism but how (pauses). How it  
998 will change.  
999  
1000 Elliott: Awesome. Um, going off of that what are some positive takeaways you can find from  
1001 going through this pandemic?  
1002  
1003 Caity: I think that it's important to realize that everyone wants to feel love. So maybe you should  
1004 reach out to those people who you might've not talked to in a while. I reached out to some of my  
1005 high school friends and dI hadn't seen some of them in two years and we like talked on the  
1006 phone for like two hours last week. Um, and so like getting to catch up with people I don't  
1007 normally talk to was a huge positive takeaway. Um, I've also been on my shopping a lot more.  
1008 So I bought these candles with crystals inside and I'm just really enjoying them. So just being  
1009 able to enjoy myself a little bit more even though I'm not making as much money is fun. Um, and  
1010 just being able to accept people where they are and not trying to change anything. Just meeting  
1011 people where they're at is a big thing.  
1012  
1013 Elliott: Mm. How do you feel like your process of indulging yourself in the past has changed  
1014 since the pandemic?  
1015  
1016 Caity: Um, my parents think I'm a notorious penny pincher and that I save all my pennies and do  
1017 nothing. It's just like, it's kind of nice because I've found a boyfriend that buys me dinner and  
1018 stuff because like, my previous boyfriend we were long distanced and I had to pay for his ticket  
1019 to come see me and pay for dinners and things cause he's like you make more money for me.  
1020 But now I like have someone who I know can support me so like I feel like I can indulge myself a  
1021 little bit more. And also it's boredom shopping.  
1022  
1023 Elliott: Great. What are some ways this pandemic has ne- negatively affected your well being?  
1024  
1025 Caity: Uh, the staying in bed all day. I do- Or probably do not work out as much as I used to  
1026 because I like used to have to walk to work and things and. I would clock in four to five miles a



1027 day. And now maybe get out of the house once a day (laughs). So, I just haven't been  
 1028 exercising as much.

1029  
 1030 Elliott: Do you feel like staying in bed or not exercising to an extent is good for you?

1031  
 1032 Caity: Uh no I don't. I don't feel like theres any unless like your sick theres any like terms where  
 1033 that's a good things like I feel like most help experts be like yeah you should probably get out of  
 1034 bed and just do exercise and do things.

1035  
 1036 Elliott: So I guess uh, have you kind of learned um- I guess to (pauses). So, going off of that, do  
 1037 you feel like uh you're kind of like- you're thankful for this new time you've kind of gathered  
 1038 since quarantine has hit?

1039  
 1040 Caity: Yeah, I am thankful. I'd like to make me think that I don't have a stick up my butt as much  
 1041 but i mean it's probably still very much there. But- but I am thankful that I've gotten to relax and  
 1042 indulge a bit more. I've been able to go back to playing video games which I haven't done in a  
 1043 while and it's just a lot of fun.

1044  
 1045 Elliott: Awesome. How do you think you're going to live differently after the coronavirus  
 1046 pandemic?

1047  
 1048 Caity: Um, I think having more of an appreciation for right now is important and like I mentioned  
 1049 before taking life as it is is important and living in this moment like there's no worse use worrying  
 1050 about the future. Especially the past, worrying about the past is (pauses). It's just not helpful at  
 1051 all. There's a big thing in therapy which I like to say a lot which is depression is thinking about  
 1052 the past and anxiety is thinking about the future and the way to not really have either of those is  
 1053 the live in the present. Um, (pauses) So just kind of accepting myself where I am and my  
 1054 limitations and. Yeah I'm not like able to have these internships and things but like the whole  
 1055 world is struggling too but my privilege, like I am so privileged to have a job, I'm so privileged to  
 1056 have a roof over my head, I'm so privileged to have both of my parents like. And, and those  
 1057 three is (pauses). I think is really helpful for me.

1058  
 1059 Elliott: Great. How do you think you've implemented this guideline of depression thinking about  
 1060 the past and anxiety thinking about the future during like um this pandemic? Even just day to  
 1061 day.

1062  
 1063 Caity: Just, just trying to like focus on what's happening today like, and what's- and like trying to  
 1064 be present during class. I know like I don't a lot of times like I look at my phone a lot of the time.  
 1065 Um, Or just be present in whatever school work that i have to do. For like one of my classes we  
 1066 had to watch a movie and I actually sat down and watched the movie instead of reading the  
 1067 synopsis of it. So kind of (pauses) really taking the times I have with my friends and my family  
 1068 and really talking to them and really listening to them and hearing what they have to say instead  
 1069 of like tuning them out or being like "oh what am I thinking I'm going to say next?" Or "oh what is  
 1070 my response?" Like really listening to the people around me.

1071  
1072 Elliott: Awesome, great thanks. Um, (pauses) so next is uh. How would you recommend future  
1073 generations stay mentally healthy in a case- In case a pandemic were to come up again?  
1074  
1075 Caity: Having something healthy that grounds you. I don't always stick to this but meditation is  
1076 an amazing tool. Um, I think that those fidget spinners, those things you can play with, are  
1077 great. Um, but just having something that's very grounding. That like if you're struggling and  
1078 thinking like oh it's not gonna be okay, but having something to bring you back down to earth.  
1079 But (pauses). That's not something to worry about right now. All we have is what we're feeling  
1080 right now and you know just something to remind you about like I, when i was younger, Like I  
1081 use to like, press my nails into myself or things like that to remind me where I am right now but  
1082 now I like, any would, so, I don't know, do other things that can help me remind myself that the  
1083 present is where you need to be.  
1084  
1085 Elliott: Um (pauses), wha-what things do you have that grounds you?  
1086  
1087 Caity: I have my gratitude journal that i like to- I listen to a lot of music. I sing the same songs  
1088 over and over. Um, like I mentioned I have my candles. I feel like those are very grounding. Um,  
1089 and actually I have cooking which is very ground it's something that I do every day that reminds  
1090 me like "hey, my body needs this and it's good for me and it reminds me to be in the present so  
1091 I don't burn my food.  
1092  
1093 Elliott: Great, what else would you like too add?  
1094  
1095 Caity: Oh I think it's so important to be aware of other people. I know that I'm myself and not  
1096 always aware of other people but, just meeting people where they are and if they're going  
1097 through something really hard and they might not say that then just being like- If someone's not  
1098 being nice to you "hey, maybe they're not having such a great day and (pauses). Just being like  
1099 more open and accepting of people in general is really important.  
1100  
1101 Elliott: How do you feel like you weren't more aware of people pre pandemic?  
1102  
1103 Caity: Um (pauses), I think I have a tendency of being very self centered. Uh so- I don't know it's  
1104 kind of like that mind set of step on everyone else to get to the top. Uh, I'm trying not to do that  
1105 so much anymore we all need people. Um (pauses), but I- I think just trying to talk to people a  
1106 bit more because I think it's easy for me to get into my own head and be like "oh, I'm a burden  
1107 on other people, nobody wants to talk to me, I should just go around my own thing. But knowing  
1108 like, people might want you to reach out and it's okay to reach out to other people even if they  
1109 don't reply.  
1110  
1111 Elliott: What steps do you feel like you've taken um to kind of get out of that mind state of like  
1112 maybe stepping on other people?

1113 Caity: (breaths deep) For me like I have had to take a step back from a lot of the things that I do.  
1114 I feel like stepping on people is I guess the words. Um (pauses), but I feel like throughout  
1115 quarantine I've had to take a step back from where I am and then make, achieving all these  
1116 things, to like focus on what's happening right now and like my health and safety and the people  
1117 who I care abouts health and safety. Um, but I think being like forced to not do anything has  
1118 kind of made me soft. So (giggles).  
1119  
1120 Elliott: What does taking a step back look like to you or in your situation?  
1121  
1122 Caity: I am not constantly applying to jobs. I'm not running around with my head cut off trying to  
1123 do whatever I can do. Um, I'm not volunteering for like a billion things at once. Like (pauses) I- I  
1124 think that like having- taking a step back for me means having down time for myself where I'm  
1125 not working.  
1126  
1127 Elliott: Go-(coughs). Mmm sorry. Going foreword do you feel like you're going to continue this  
1128 mindstate or do you feel like it's going to be altered once we get back into the swing of things?  
1129 Like out of coronavirus.  
1130  
1131 Caity: It's hard to say you know. I don't want to speak for myself in the future because again I  
1132 haven't been in that situation so I don't know what I'm going to think. Um, but (pauses). I  
1133 (pauses) would like to think that like knowing that I come from a place of privilege like (pauses).  
1134 It's going to be okay like I'm still going to have a roof over my head, I'm still going to have  
1135 people that love me, um (pauses). And just knowing those things is- makes me hopeful for the  
1136 future.  
1137  
1138 Elliott: Great. Thank- thank you so much Caity. I appreciate it (puts up the peace sign). Okay  
1139 and (ends recording).