

Voices on Motherhood:

Stories of pain and hope

A Book of Experts

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Prologue:

I have heard many stories about the experience of motherhood in women and how all of these stories entwine together not only in my country, but also in Australia, Southafrica and Uganda.

Today, I would like to share with you diverse voices of motherhood from Chile, particularly narratives of identity in women who decided to assume an unexpected pregnancy.

This book intends to highlight the narrations that emerge throughout the construction of motherhood of these women and stop and listen to their experiences, difficulties and the strength that implies to decide to bring a new life to the world.

You will take a walk through the stories from a group of women who re-authorize their lives in a context of acknowledgement and validation of each one of their tales.

I would like to invite you to be witnesses of the power of their testimonies through their words, images and memories that honor their values and the local and collective knowledge that they share in their points of views.

Macarena Maturana Suárez
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Introduction

In my country, Chile, motherhood is associated with, among other things, worship, unconditional love, instinct, and to an exclusive and intensive bond. Despite the substantial changes in the construction of female subjectivity that have been occurred in recent decades, assumptions and prejudices about the exercise of motherhood remain alive and continue to restrict women's subjectivity. For instance, the upbringing and care of children is still thought of as the sole responsibility of women. The school, society, family, couples and their own children, see the mother as responsible of the social and emotional development of each child.

This discourse of motherhood brings with it burdens for women. In my clinical practice I find myself constantly working with overstretched mothers, who are blamed for anything that goes wrong with their children, whether they are a single mother or a part of a two parent family.

In this project, women's stories about unplanned motherhood without a partner have been gathered

into a 'Book of Experts'. Each 'chapter' tells the subjective experience of a different woman in relation to motherhood. Through the metaphor of a book, and the use of narrative practices, the stories of five mothers are honoured. Space is created to rescue the values and skills that accompany these women as they respond to the difficulties surrounding the exercise of motherhood. The narrative perspective adopts a political position which places each woman as the protagonist of her story, and as an expert and theoretician of her own life. Each woman has decided how and where to begin and end each chapter. Now you, the reader, are placed as a witness to their lives and efforts.

These mother's stories mean a lot to me.

As a woman, they help me to challenge dominant narratives about motherhood and femininity and help me to consider motherhood and its demands as a cultural construct. By delving into various voices that constitute local Chilean stories about the experience of unplanned motherhood without a partner, I have come to notice how our voices as women are so shaped by cultural contexts.

As a daughter, these stories evoke a deep admiration. In them I recognise the weight of sacrifice involved in motherhood for many women, including my mother. My mother was eleven years in a fertility treatment so that I could come into this world. Our story has been loaded with a long wait, much pressure and relentless pursuit. Through the following stories I could think about her stress of constructing motherhood through her difficulties to conceive, the tension between her pursuit of happiness and the struggles of motherhood, and how her identity was challenged as a woman first, and as a mother later.

As a psychologist, these stories remind me that while motherhood is a subjective experience, it is also embedded in a social practice. These women's voices challenge me to deconstruct restrictive notions about the maternal and expand my understanding of women's stories that I hear in my clinical practice.

As the Director of the Fundación Santa Ana Emprende, an organisation that works with women in La Pintana, a working class area of Santiago, this 'Book of Experts' is a political and ethical attempt to recognise and honour the skills of the women who meet with us. It is also

considered a consultation document that we will share with future women who attend our Foundation. Through these stories, these future women, who may be struggling with motherhood and their identities, may be able to construct a wider perspective of who they are.

This 'Book of Experts' is also a consultation document for professionals working in our institution. There is much that we as workers can learn from these stories of women's local knowledge. Together we can then construct alternative stories to the dominant discourse on the shortcomings associated with the process of unplanned motherhood without a partner. Together we can recognise and establish for many of women who meet with us the possibility of having a career: a space of resistance to the woman = mother myth.

Parenting is not only a personal responsibility but a social responsibility. So too is broadening the discourses of motherhood and womanhood.

***"Narrative identities in women who decided to
assume an unplanned pregnancy:***

***Some stories related to the Construction of
Motherhood "***

By Macarena Maturana Suárez

*"A story is not just a story. Once the forces are awakened
and set in motion it can not be stopped at someone's
request. Once accounted for, this story is destined to
circulate, this can have a temporary end, but its effects
last and the end is never really an end".*

(Trinh, 1989: 133).

Modern consciousness has led to the cancellation of the category of the self, and no one can determine with certainty what it means to be a type of person, and what means being a person at all. Gergen (1991) thinks that the individual, as a category, disappears. What we

are or who we are is not so much the result of our "personal essence" but the effects of how we are constructed in different social groups. We seem to be alone, but we are manifestations of relationships.

Postmodern knowledge poses significant challenges to fundamental assumptions of individual knowledge, objectivity and truth. Instead, we find an emphasis on the collective construction of knowledge, objectivity as a relational achievement and pragmatic language as a medium through which local truths are constructed. In this sense, what we take to be "real", what we regard as a transparent truth about human performance is a product of communal construction. (Gergen, 2007).

This research, *"Narrative identities in women who decided to assume an unplanned pregnancy: Some stories of Motherhood Construction"*, has been influenced by the social constructionist approach, which consider the researcher as constitutive of social reality and therefore any scientific production would be part of this social construction too. Social reality is also studied by different and unique ways in which social processes appear in the expression of individual subjects.

There are various perspectives that address the issue of motherhood as a social construction. One of them, the gender perspective offers advantages for understanding the cultural and historical development of the concept of motherhood. This view, propounds that motherhood would be a symbolic, social and historic construction, denaturing the concept of motherhood in contrast to essentialist theories, which postulate motherhood being a natural instinct (and desire) for women. Gender as a symbolic set of orders, dictates what it means to be a male or female in our society and in our time, subjectively and collectively. In Fuller (1993) words, the concept of gender as a cultural policy, implies that "each culture symbolically draws their own gender identities from the biological fact of sexual difference".

The various social practices that construct gender configurations crystallize imaginary representations of men and women. The myths created around motherhood give rise to a particular social imaginary. The notion of social imaginary refers to the production and reproduction of a universe of imaginary meanings, constituting feminine and masculine subjectivities and

social forces that can be analyzed from the social myths of motherhood. Those myths refer to an implicit ideology that prioritizes social values, indicates what is permitted and what is prohibited, giving rise, in a subjective way, what can be imagined, acted, thought, muted, theorized and desired in a particular historical moment. (Fernández, 1993).

The social myths which implies that being a woman is the same than being a mother does not allow you to consider the diverse meanings of motherhood, and leaves women out of the possibility to access to their owns possible desire of a child, or the absence of it. All possible desires of women are substituted by one: the desire to have a child.

The woman-mother myth implies that the dissociation of the mother and child is not natural, like it was something beyond right. Facing this, the woman who has a conflict with her pregnancy and motherhood, becomes the denial of naturalization of motherhood as a fundamental reference for defining and representing the women and children. Her natural mandate, idealized and divine, is broken. (Lira, Rivera and Turina, 2009).

Thus, to the extent that it is imposed; unplanned pregnancies challenge the idealized mandate and straiten the narratives and the provision of meanings around the construction of motherhood and the stories that constitute it.

The narrative mode places the individual as a protagonist in his own world. It is a world of interpretive acts, a world in which re-tell a story is to tell a new story, a world in which people participate with their peers in the "re-authoring", and therefore in the molding, of their lives and relationships. It is precisely the fact of relating to an audience what determines the meaning to be attributed to the experience. In an effort to make sense of life, people are faced with the task of organizing their experience of the events themselves and the world around them. Stories are full of gaps which persons must fill in order for the story to be performed. With every performance, persons are reauthoring their lives. (White & Epston, 1993).

In order to maintain the identity, is required each time a successful negotiation. In this sense, the construction of the self require a cast of supporting actors, so

narrative and its validity relies heavily on the statement of others, being a fundamental aspect of social life the reciprocal network identities. (Gergen, 2007).

The narrative structure has an advantage over other related concepts such as metaphor or paradigm that emphasizes order and sequence, in a formal sense, and is more suitable for the study of change, life cycle and other process development. The story as an interesting model has dual aspects: it is both linear and instantaneous. (Bruner, 1986: 153).

The story resolves the contradiction in her own way: first, giving the character an initiative, the power to start a series of events, without this beginning to be established as an absolute beginning, a beginning of time, and, moreover, giving the narrator power to determine the beginning, middle and end of the action. The person understood as a character in the story, is not an identity distinct from their experiences. The story builds character identity, narrative identity, in constructing that of the story told. Is the story's identity who builds the character's identity: So random becomes destiny. (Ricoeur, 1996).

By using these narrative conventions we generate a sense of coherence and direction in our lives. In consideration of this research, the story of the relationship of these women with their experience of motherhood, which they stand out and reserve, their position on taking an unplanned pregnancy and the story of themselves that they build after this experience, acquires meaning and construct their narrative identities around the construction of their motherhood. What happens is colored by meaning and explanations of the events that make up the chapters of their lives, giving continuity breaks and meaning to their story.

Narrative inquiry takes as its object of investigation the story itself. According to Mishler (2000) the study of personal narratives is a type of research focused on the case study that illuminates the intersection of biography, history and society.

Storytelling, in simple words, is what we do with our research material and what our informants do with us. The narrative metaphor emphasizes that we create order, and construct texts in particular contexts. The purpose is to see how respondents impose order on the

flow of experience to make sense of events and actions in their life. The methodological approach examines the informant's story and analyzes how it is put together, the linguistic and cultural uses, and how it persuades the listener of authenticity (Riessman, 2002).

Langellier (2001) argues that when we tell stories about our lives, on a reciprocal event between a narrator and an audience, we represent our preferred identities in which we can represent active or passive positions.

The interpretation requires detailed attention to how the narrators position themselves and their audiences and conversely as the audience position the narrator. Identities are established through performative actions, where the context of the interview is a performance itself. (Riessman, 2002).

Riessman (2001) argues various levels of analytical positioning input to these narratives. First, are developed in an immediate discursive context, at this level are positioned in a dialogic process where preferred identities are represented in front of a

particular audience. Second, these narratives are positioned on a broader cultural discourse about the proper place of women in a particular culture and third they are positioned in relation to the institutions involved in the process captured by the narrative.

Precisely because they are essential to give meaning structures, narratives must be preserved, not fractured, by investigators, who must respect interviewee's forms of constructing meaning and analyze how they are achieved. (Riessman, 2002).

Narratives are not necessarily organized around a linear time but contain flashbacks, future intentions, speeches focused on a topic and circular times: a type of traveling time where past experiences and future possibilities are used to create present meanings. (Beach & Japp, 1983 en Riessman 1991).

This research includes looking at several tellings, in other words, a polyphonic design (Bertaux, 2005) with a selective sampling approach, where the important thing is to ensure that respondents represent a wide range of individual experiences. The data obtained to construct a life story are organized diachronically in a

"lifeline", in which respondents find more continuities than ruptures.

The total number of interviews was 10, because they were two interviews by each narrator. This was intended to find a space for reflection, revision, and re-authoring. In the analysis of the "interview data" or, indeed, any "data obtained through the research", the data becomes inseparable from the "life" (Phillion, 2002), the researcher selected inevitably, the stories that were most significant to her.

During the process of analysis, transcripts interacted with the interviewer, and the records were heard again and again, allowing the interview to remember not only the story by each narrator, but also other past events related to them.

In an attempt to find a balance between the need to obtain a rich storyline, on the one hand, and the practical constraints of time and data, on the other, Lieblich et. al. (1998) introduced the task called "stage outline", which consists of the following motto:

"Everyone's story can be written as a book. I would like you to think about your life as if you were writing a book. First, think about the book's chapters. Here I have a paper to help you in this task. Write the years in the first column, since the day you were born. Where did this first chapter finish? Continue until you get to your current age, you can use as many chapters as you want".

After this, each chapter is named with a title by the narrator and they answer each one of these questions:

1. Tell me about a significant episode that you remember from this chapter.
2. What kind of person were you during this time?
3. Who were the meaningful people to you during this time?
4. What was the reason you chose to end this chapter when you did?

(Lieblich et. al, 1998)

For purposes of this study, I adapted this tool for collecting data, delving into the chapters that have some relation to motherhood, as well as some of the questions I mentioned before, were not asked every

time. Each story took each own time, and rhythm. I also added the following questions in the form of prologue in the document:

- a) And if we thought this was a book, and someone found the book of your life, and would read these pages we have been writing. What do you think they would think of your story?
- b) And how would she picture you?
- c) And what do you think your story would aloud another woman to think about motherhood? In which ways do you think it could help her to reflect about motherhood?

This perspective opens up a number of issues regarding the congruence between interviewer-interviewee. It becomes necessary listening with fewer interruptions and follows those who have been interviewed, if we want to help them remember and report experiences in their own voices. In the analysis of their narratives we can serve their forms and meanings, leaving the voices of our subjects speak for themselves. If a sensitive collaboration has not happened in the interview and in the analysis: we may not have heard anything. (Riessman, 1987).

Life histories seek to express through the story of a life, problems and issues of society, or a sector of it. Talking about someone's life means to show how sociabilities in which this person is inserted, and that contributes to their actions, are speaking of families, social groups, institutions to which it is linked, and that form part of the subject's life. (Miller, 2000 in Mallimaci & Giménez, 2006)

The unit of analysis of this investigation corresponds to life stories produced through narrative interviews conducted under the adaptation of the methodology created by Lieblich et. al. (1998). The sampling was selective. Case-types were selected, ensuring that met the inclusion and exclusion criteria proposed. The sampling considers five female narrators between 25 and 55 years who are participants from *Fundación Santa Ana Emprende*, located in the area of La Pintana in Santiago de Chile, those of who have lived an unplanned pregnancy, without the support from a partner, during the process of their construction of motherhood.

This age range is related to the importance of a temporal dimension that accompanies the experiences

and identity transformation processes; which can be deployed in the stories of women who participate in this research. The sample considered women whom their unplanned pregnancies were fruits of consensual sex and non incestuous relationships.

The stories usually work in narrative research on a political form, transforming "voices" that are excluded or have been abandoned by the dominant political structures and processes, as indeed has happened throughout recent western history. The application of narrative methods shows how paying greater attention to the voice of the subject, you can enrich qualitative research. As Hayden White (1986) would say: It is through narrative that we can translate "the knowledge to the telling."

The interviews took place in the offices of *Fundación Santa Ana Emprende*. This foundation is located in a vulnerable social context, marked by uprooting, prejudice and stigma of poverty and crime. The foundation is inserted as a possibility to benefit women of their community through job training and facilitating their personal development, considering the occupational integration as a tool for social

empowerment. The invitation to each woman was made directly; emphasizing their partaking was free of commitment. The research's objectives, the type of interview, the confidentiality of their identity and the recording and transcript of the meetings were shared with the participants. All this, on a form of informed consent documents signed by the researcher and the reporters who authorized the interview, the use of data and were aware of the possibility of each one of them to end the conversation when they felt like it, or if they felt like it.

The chapters presented and reported by the narrators were transcribed and shared with all respondents in a second meeting. After the recording process, the interviews were transcribed at the richest possible way without editing. It was them who became their own hearing and after listening to the transcript of their story, an epilogue was made with the questions I added to Lieblich's methodology.

This collective document was delivered to the participants in a consistent manner with the narrative principles seeking to build local knowledge which would not remain only in academics circles but also in

whom make it possible. For this purpose it was given to each participant a copy of their stories where besides their words, a drawing of the psychologist and illustrator Pablo Hernandez was included, who through his creation became an outside witness who pictured them, listened to their description of how another woman would picture them if they read their story, and recreated this through an art expression.

It should be noticed, in this process, the researcher's position in terms of power as well as in terms of a more privileged social class than the tellers. The researcher serves as the Executive Director of *Fundación Santa Ana Emprende*. While every effort was made so the invitation was entirely voluntary, and there are some women who were invited to participate in the project and freely chose not to, it has to be considered the existing power difference and the effects it might have had, either in opening or restricting some topics by the rapporteurs or possible difficulties of understanding on the part of the researcher's interpretation.

While we still leave aside the importance of considering motherhood as a volunteer subjective experience, there will be no way to achieve true pregnancy

planning and mitigation of the negative effects we currently endure, but on the contrary, will continue to strengthen the social myths about motherhood and its effectiveness in symbolic and social function, as its coercive effects on personal narratives.

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"She would picture me brave, my sister says that if she had to get through what I went through in life, she would not be here.. She also says I kept going and I did not care what people would think or say, I did not care at all"

Karin.

"

Chapter 1: The Bubble

Since Daniel was born, I have been the best mom that I could possibly be, but it has been very difficult because his dad has never been there for me. We were living together, but for me life was very sad, sad, from the beginning. The most important thing for me was the effort I had to go through to raise my son after all the bad things that happened. Walk him through life, because really I was the one that brought him forward through life. His dad was good for nothing. It was very hard, very sad, but I did it on my own.

When Andrea was born, it was even harder, because there were two kids now. When she was six months old, my partner back then, did not work at all, he would work for a month and then be unemployed for six months. So we depended mostly on his mother, my mother, my father, and my brothers, but I could never depend on him. So it was then, when I decided I would return to the work place, and I would be able to say that this is it, is over. The relationship was finished.

Chapter 2: Waking Up.

I went out to work and I was very lucky, because I did well at the start. I worked as a promo girl, it was good money, and the hours were very convenient. It was hard to leave my kids alone, but I knew why I was doing it, and I went out to work and I started on my own when my daughter turned two and a half years old.

I realized I did not deserve to be with a man like him and I got divorced. Before all of this I had many problems, he was violent. If I was five minutes late he would be furious.

I met a friend and he helped me to open my eyes. In the end, he really helped me a lot. I have great memories of him, but he was always just a friend. A friend who helped me to get out of the situation I was in so I got divorced, and for me it was extremely liberating, a liberation of my soul, of my spirit, of myself. I kept working and I managed to advance to where I never thought I could, because I only studied until 8th grade. I am very grateful of my dad, because

my dad always gave us a good education, good teachings, and good manners, which helped me through life.

Chapter 3: The Independence

Since I started working and I got divorced I have become an independent woman, who makes her own decisions, which I had never done before while I was with my children's father. I used to depend on the decisions that he would make. I could never make my own decisions.

I realized I could do it, I used to think that everything was worthless and useless in the world, and now I think: How could I have been so foolish not to have realized that was how he wanted me to feel. Sometimes I think I was too young, very much a homebody.

I was 13 when I met him and then we were together until Daniel was born. He always made me feel I was less important than him, and I believed him, I believed him, and now after the years have passed I think: How

could I have been so silly? How is it that I did not wake up to this before?, but that is how it was.

I started dating again, and I found someone very nice, sweet, everything I wanted my husband to be back then. He was great with my kids until he started asking me for a baby and I wanted to keep working, it was not my priority to become a mom again, because I was being a woman, I was being a person, I did not wanted to be a mom again. I had dreams, I had hopes for the future, and I don't know how, I don't know if god wanted it like that, I got pregnant. I used to be very careful, I took anticonception pills, I would make him wear condoms, I don't know how I got pregnant, and the relationship suffered. It failed because it was not what I wanted, I wanted something else, I wanted to advance with my projects, I wanted to continue my promotion work because I knew I could better my position.

At that moment, I was convinced that I could, that I did not want to get stuck there, and our relationship started to die, I used to blame him. After that, he was not nice with my son anymore, so nothing was the same. I don't want my kids to go through this again, like it was with their father, so I ended it.

4: One step behind.

I started by myself. When I was three months pregnant, I had a strong depression. It felt like all of my dreams went down the drain but I kept going, I kept working. I kept fighting for my kids; however I felt alone, because I was not living with my parents anymore. I was alone with my three kids, without any support, without anyone to talk when I came back from work, because all of my kids were little. But I made myself better. I looked at my kids and they were everything to me, that makes me sad, because they do not know everything I went through for them, and even if I tell them, they don't know how hard it was, the sacrifice I had to make.

When I started getting ahead with my work, I felt strong again, I felt like I could get through it, like when I only had two kids. When my daughter arrived, I realized I could do it with three, and that I did not need anyone else I could not afford to feel lonely because I had my children to look after.

I was feeling a lot better and then we all got fired, and that is when tragedy came back into my life again. I was living for a year with the money I got when I got fired, while I was looking for a job. But I had to pay the rent, three kids, paid bills, and the jobs I found did not offer enough, so there it came a part of my life that I never tell people about. My job used to be to work for a laboratory visiting doctors, and now I was working with the minimum of clothes and in a terrible place and I could not care less, I was doing it for my kids. Those were hard times. When I started working there I wanted to die, but I knew that was the way to get my kids through life. And thank god I worked at a place where the owner's brother was a good man, he had an education, like my dad, he was a teacher and we became friends, so I became his assistant. And I swear to god, that life is not the easy life, it is the hardest.

Chapter 5: The Decision

I started to realize that my job was good for my kids; I will never again have to humiliate for them to have

food on the table. So it did not matter what I had to do, so my kids would never have to go through that again.

That stage of my life brought me good things; I learnt to value myself as a woman. It was that time when I started to feel that I could decide who I wanted to be with and that it was not about whom wanted to be with me.

For example, with one of my kid's father, when I found him I needed so much love, someone to rescue me, so it was like a little window that opened for me and I got in.

It was at this time, that I realized the decisions were on me. And that was when I met an older man, I was 24 and he was 45, and even if there was big age gap, he taught me so much about life, he taught me patience, because I was very explosive, I did not have respect for anyone, I did not respect men, to me men were the worst thing of the world. They taught me all over again. I now think I had to go through all that stage because if I did not I would not be where I am right now.

After I met him I was two years with him. I yelled at him and he used to look at me and say don't talk to me like that, I am not yelling at you. He taught me how to talk,

how to say what I want with words, no fights, because I was so disappointed from life, and he taught me to think different. I owe him so much. It makes me sad that we are not together anymore.

We were living together and things did not work out. He asked me to stop working there, but I told him that is he was not going to assure me economic stability for my kids, I could not do it. He tried, but he could not do it, he had his responsibilities, a wife and two kids. He said I deserved better, and I was in grief again, it was very sad to lose him. And then I met José.

I felt bad lying; I felt bad hiding what I did for a job. And I also started thinking that there was nothing wrong with what I did. Because people think that when you work at a place like that it means prostitution immediately. I used to think the same, I thought that it had to be the next step, but it's not true. I spent years working there and I never did it. There was no need, there were girls who did it but I had decided here what I wanted to do with my life.

I decided what I wanted to do with my life, and what type of mother I wanted my kids to have.

So in the morning I worked administrating the business, and at night I worked selling drinks. I saw the kids during the weekend, so I thought it was better that their dad was responsible for them, that he could make some calls when I was not there however that was one the worst decisions I have ever taken. He started to say bad things about me; he told them I was sleeping around with men, instead of working.

This was not true, I was working all the time, and maybe I was obsessed with giving them what they never had. I did not think of my tiredness, I used to sleep two hours a day at an office, I worked for 48 hours in a row and he took advantage of that. My kids used to love me before he came to our home, even if I did not see them enough, but they respected me.

After that, I blamed myself every day for not being there as was supposed to. I sometimes think my life has been full of mistakes but I always had the conviction that even if I had made many mistakes everything I have done it has been for my kids I never intended hurt them.

Chapter 6: The Tranquility

I met José, and after I got pregnant with my fourth child. I often say that someone looks at me and I get pregnant. I have tried everything, pills, condoms, injections, so sometimes I think maybe God wanted it that way. Maybe he sent me all these kids because he knew I could do it. Because if he thought I could not do it he would not have sent me so many of them.

When I met José, he thought that every women that worked there were what everyone thinks. So he did not treat me with respect, we had many problems when we had a baby together, so we broke up. After three months he came back for me, but he was different. He left everything, his fears, his prejudices, and I gave him a second chance and I have not been wrong until now.

For me it has been a stage of tranquility, of support. He is everything for me. There are moments I don't want to get up that I have no strength, but he calls me and says: Get up and go to study! He is my great support; I don't think I could have gone through this without him. Perhaps that is why God put him in my life because

maybe I was too tired to be alone at this stage of my life.

Epilogue:

It is different because I see it from my point of view, because I went through all of this so I would not be able to think about what other person would think of my story. Maybe one person would say that I left my kids apart because of my job, I don't know. After all I have been the one who has lived my life, I think that person would think this is a story of great effort and determination and extremely sad but that at the end of the story there is a happy ending.

And how would she picture you?

Brave, my sister says that if she had to get through what I went through in life, she would not be here. I say that maybe she would, because we always think we can't make it and at the end we all can do it. She also says I kept going and I did not care what people would think or say, I did not care at all.

What do you think your story would allow another woman to think about motherhood? In which ways do you think it could help her to reflect about motherhood?

To make an effort to look at their kids and want to get them through life, and to keep your head up as a person, as a woman, just like it happened to me. I would never let my partner hurt me like my ex used to, he would insult me, let me down, make me think I was the worst. You have to love yourself, know you are worthy, that you can go on; on your own.

I am not with José because I can't be on my own, I am with José because I decided so. I wanted a quiet life, time to take care of my kids, because I wanted company, a support, not because I needed it because I chose it.

carolina



"This course for me it has been very useful, it has helped me to feel better about myself, to feel that I can do something worthwhile. It makes quite a difference, because before I used to say: the only thing my kids know I can do is cleaning houses and subways. Now they can see their mom has a career, and they are proud of me and the fact that they feel proud of me makes me so happy!

Carolina.

"

Chapter 1: Happiness.

When I had my first daughter I did not work, I did not study. I was just expecting her, like it was before. A woman goes through stages, before a woman would not work or study. I was 22. I did not think like I should have back then. I was to layed back, I was always the youngest in my family, I think I was the same when I was pregnant.

I got married in 1987, and a few months after I got pregnant. I waited for her, happy, not like it was with my youngest, which was not in my plans. I did not use birth control after my first one that is why my son came right after. I was happy, because it was my son, but it was not like the time expected my oldest.

I have good memories, because I was happy, relaxed. I never had trouble; I had his father with me. We were just married, it was nice, because we all thought it was a boy, because you did not know back then. We were all waiting and then we knew it was a girl. We had her things, we were all happy everything was ready for her.

I remember when I was with her, getting her dressed in bed. I always remember that, because she had brown skin, and I used to dress her in white, she looked like a little bug, she was so little. She looked so pretty. When I think of that, I feel sad...

Also with my son, but I did not expected him like is other occasions. No one expected him really but in the end since the moment I knew I was pregnant I was happy but with my youngest it was differente. I did not have a good pregnancy with her.

I could nor breast feed my first daughter, I did not have much experience and I did not know how to do it. My son, he was better at it he had breast milk until he was four months old. I always think of that. People say that you can forget your kids's faces from when they were little if you don't have pictures, but I don't forget any of them

When my third one came along, I remember being alone with them. Before it was the three of us and now the family got bigger. Because now we are, the four of us, my daughter's husband, my granddaughter and my son's wife. I always tell them: Do you remember when it was just the 3 of us? And now the table is full.

Chapter 2: *Something Unexpected*

She came along suddenly, it was bad. I never expected to have a third child. I never thought I would get pregnant again. I had a really difficult time I did not live with her father at the time then I moved in and he started doing drugs again so once again I was alone.

It's funny you never say I don't know other moms who would say: this son will be more important, I will love him more, even if they are harder to raise than others. My oldest were quiet. Well my son not so much but my youngest used to be terrible. I was telling one of my friends the other day that her daughter was like my little girl, but mine used to be worse. She was restless, but now she is 10, she is handling things better now. I am more at home as well because I used to work at night before.

In the subway I used to clean up there at night, for four years. She was hard to handle for my mom; she would run away from her. Now that I am at home, she is quieter. I hope she stays that way.

My oldest, was introverted, even her professor used to tell me that maybe she had a problem because she was

so quiet but that wasn't it; she has always been like that. From my youngest I hear the opposite; I have to go to her school every week. She wants all the attention. Sometimes people tell me, she might be trying to get my attention, but in a bad way.

This little girl makes me suffer; I could never relax with her. For example I would take her shopping and if she liked something she would ask for it or she would hide in between the clothes. She never stayed still around me. Now she holds my arm, she is more relaxed.

I believe I was naive before I did not think things through well. When I was with my youngest's it was not a good time for me. I thought to myself how could I love him so much? How could I be so silly? I tell myself, now I am stronger and I don't let anyone to treat me like that again. No one is going to touch me ever again!

My mother has been always there for me. My dad is the same, but my mom has been closer, she has always been concerned for me and my kids. She is always asking me about my daughter whether I should let her go out or not.

When I was younger I was very immature when I was expecting my children. Later, I thought maybe if I was more careful, I would not have ended pregnant. But when I got divorced, something changed in my mind, I thought about doing more with my life trying to do more things for myself, so I can better myself and that way I hope my kids will be better off. My youngest is the only one I have left living with me so I have to work hard and do everything for her.

Epilogue:

If we thought this was a book and someone found the book of your life, and read these pages we have been writing. What do you think they would say about your life story?

I think it would be interesting if I could write all of this, everthing I went through, maybe someone could use it as a guide so they don't commit the same mistakes I did. The mistakes I made; like living with someone who treat them badly. I hope young women are thinking about birth control so they do not have kids when they have not plan for them either.

I would like to think if I read a book like this, I would hope someone would to do alot better in a similar situation. I would not like to go through this again because you think everything is going to be fantastic and sometimes it is not the case. Most times you think you know someone but you don't.

And how would she picture you?

Perhaps she would say I am a good person, who had bad luck, but I am not a bad person. They would think that, because I don't have bad kids and I think I have been a good mom, because my son...where I live is very dangerous... and my son is a good man. My oldest daughter is; she is always, always one of the best behaved. She has always been an exceptional daughter, and I think that has something to do with the way I have raised her.

What do you think your story would allow another woman to think about motherhood? In which ways do you think it could help her to reflect about motherhood?

To take care of them selves, get to know the people before you move in together. I wanted my daughter to be raised with her dad. It was not possible, with his drug problem and everything. I could not handle it anylonger. I was so silly, I forgave him so many times, always waiting for him to change, until one day I realized I had enough. He was a bad example for my kids, so I said: not anymore.

I used to work day to day cleaning houses and then I would go to the local market to sell stuff. Thats when I said I will take care of my kids, I will not worry about a guy who does not want get better, so I left. I started working full time and I have done well until now. I was so much better with my kids after living without anyone leting us down.

I would not like that other women go through the same experience I did .They must value and love themselves and see that you can always make it alone with your

kids. Imagine I have three children. If a woman has one or two children maximum, I feel confident she can go on with her child and take care of her self without being exposed to abuse. Sometimes older people think that getting a divorce is bad for the kids but being all your life in a a marriage, of those old ones, who hit each other and treat themselves bad because they want to stay together for the kids is worst.

What do you teach your kids? How to value their family? What is the value of respect? and what will they remember when they are older? Imagine all of the bad memories they would have because they always saw mom and dad being nasty to each other and fighting regularly.

So I would tell this woman sometimes is better to be alone with your kids because if you have problems at least they are your kids's problems. They are your kids and they are growing up. There are things you have to go through, things that happen.

There are women who think everything is bad and that they have bad luck, and that is always going to be like that. I would like to tell them that they are wrong. All of these terrible things happened to me I believe so I could finally find someone who truley loves me,

respects me and respects what I want to do and supports me.

My kids also support me, the oldest are so happy I am studying again, and my youngest is so proud I am a hairdresser, so it is a nice feeling.

I would never have had the guts to do all of those things if it was not for them. I worked hard but I did not have the confidence in myself. I always have liked to work I enjoy earning my own money to buy things for the kids well I guess this is what any woman wants to be able to buy the food you need to eat, dress well etc, the first step saying I want more, was very hard.

There are women that have had bad times like me or even worst, and I hope they know that something new can come and change their life. Hopefully that would make them dare to do what they want with their lives.

It is like when women get depressed, they don't see an exit, but there is always one somewhere you just need to learn how to find it. There is always something positive that will happen eventually that will help you out.

This course for me it has been very useful, it has helped me to feel better about myself, to feel that I can do something worthwhile. It makes quite a difference, because before I used to say: the only thing my kids know I can do is cleaning houses and subways. Now they can see their mom has a career, and they are proud of me and the fact that they feel proud of me makes me so happy!

Nancy



"I "As a woman I think they can take something from it. There are still women who are submissive, there are still women who live under the men's feet and they expect them to feed them. The world is not like that"

Nancy.

Chapter 1: The Surprise.

My relationship with motherhood started when I was 19. When I was 19 I got pregnant. I had him on my own and it was the most beautiful thing in my life amazingly I had no pain. I was big as a cow because my mom used to think that I had to eat for 2. I was 54 kilos and I ended up being 74.

It was so beautiful because I was in a room with 6 more women and they were all yelling, I did not know why, I was quiet and I didn't say a thing: Why do I have to yell if it does not hurt?

When I saw first saw his head and his little feet it was incredible. They sewed me up then they told me I had to be layed back but for some reason I did not want to. I did not even have anesthessia so I just had to be brave. I hope I never forget I had a son and that he came to this world with no pain. Even after everything I went through that was the most important thing in my life.

I still felt abandoned my child's dad did not care but I did n't think about it, I was very young. Men come and go, it's the same. Luckily for me at that time you did

not pay a dime at the hospital. I was still so disappointed He was not there.

At the hospital, many women after 35 did not have milk well I had plenty. The babies destroyed my breast, I had no nipples, but I left them drink so it was ok and that healed me.

At the beginning, when someone gets pregnant, the surprise and everything, you never get out of it, but you become a mom and you have to keep going because your road is going to be alone you will now have to walk for 2, for you and for your son.

Chapter 2: The coffer

I had turned the page in my life, he left through that door and I started a new life. Well one day I asked him if he was going to give his last name to our child. He used to say he did not have money to do so and that is when I started saying he did not want to recognize him as his son. I did not know he was married; now I know he was afraid I was going to sue him and that everyone would know.

We got home and I said this is it: What have you thought about us? Do you think I am goint to wait for ever? Are you ever going to marry me? No yet he said.

So I asked him how long I would have to wait, but he did not say anything. I told him, either we get married or you can leave. If you don't give me a date there is the door. Go and live your life, I will live mine and he left like nothing never happened. My son was six months old, and that day everything was over. So then it started the second part of my life.

You tend to see life differently after that; it is not only you anymore. You have to think for 2 now. I closed that page, and I kept it for my self. For no one else, I did cry or suffer. I have known how to keep things for my self, leave them in a box. Put things away in a sort of coffin what you had, your history, is a treasure. It was there, no rancor, nothing.

I turned the page and told mom tomorrow I will start working again and so my life started again.

Chapter 3: Starting Over (New beginings)

You must keep going, I decided he was going to be a part of my life. I had to live for my kid and myself. I was going to try to get through life and I managed it. I do not envy anyone elses life anymore because I have always said I am the happiest person in the world, despite everything I went through; I have had only a few moments of sadness.

I raised my kid and when he was seven months I was working as a maid. I have worked since I was 14 years old. I never went to school, I had 5th grade and I left it there stagnant I also left that in a box without realizing I always put things away.

As the years went by I started helping mom with the house. She was all alone with us. My dad left when we were very little after we grew up everyone left it was just my mom, my sister and I. My sister is like a baby she is mentally impaired. So it was like having another baby. She always used to say I was the man of the

house because I made the money. She always said I was the husband she never had. She never had a man who supported her, but she had me for everything.

I always used to say I was never going to be a mom again. It's not that I did not want to, but I always knew I was going to be alone for this. I was not going to have a father figure that would help me. No one you can count on. When I was much younger even if you had a bad husband at least you had one, My Partner was not there, I didn't have that support and I was not going to.

I have worked since I was little I got used to having my own money and that made be very independent to buy things also it made me think men were good for nothing. For me men were something you used for pleasure and you left them stranded like they do with women.

Well that was other time of my life that you levae behind, I dated for a while but I never fell in love again. It is different you meet someone and you think they are great but it's not what you need. What you really need is your job and your family. So it was always my mom, my son and me, and we have been happy ever since.

You always know your mother and father at the same time. When my son was 8 years old, I went crazy and I got married, I was not in love but I thought I needs someone to be my partner, to help me out I was wrong. It was not what I wanted.

He was a sailer, so we left to Argentina. That was a very sad part of my life. When I had to ask to my son's dad the authorization to take him out of the country, I found out he was married and after he dated me for two years when I was 17, you never imagined that he could be married.

Chapter 4: The Break Up

Then another part of my life started: the break up, I had a really bad time he followed me for year, but I never wanted to take him back that marriage lasted 6 months, between the sailing and the fights, it could not have lasted longer.

Chapter 5: Starting Over

I went back to school and I finished even highschool. For me, motherhood it has been sad and happy because you are always happy when you know you are going to be a mom. I always wanted to have a boy and I got one. I had to educate him take him to school and I never had his dad's support. Is not that he never wanted to help me I simply never asked for it besides I would never sue him or anything.

Chapter 6: La responsability

I think that a child is like the triumph of your life that to me is what success means. What I have now is a blessing a good healthy son, well educated, everything he has I gave him.

When he was 14, his dad came back feeling guilty, but it is not the same when you raise him he would always say that. He has no one else to thank for his life than me. I did not have money for university and he did not get a great score so he would not be able to go to college. He decided to study in an institute, so I said ok. You study I will work. If you need something, I will give it to you. I used to work in 3 different places.

If someone tells me you live alone you don't have a partner I would always say I don't need one. What I need is my freedom and my son because I am not going to share him with anyone else. My son is 32 years old, he is single and he is still by my side. He has been my best partner and even if I have not had a partner he has been there for me my main supply of endless support.

Epilogue

If we thought this was a book and someone found the book of your life, and read these pages we have been writing. What do you think they would say about your life story?

Many things, may be at a first sight, without knowing who is the protagonist, how her life has been, I think they might think is an example for other because now people can decide to have kids or not. I have always said one is better than none because you have to leave something that is yours in this life.

As a woman I think they can take something from it. There are still women who are submissive, there are

stillwomen who live under the men's feet and they expect them to feed them. The world is not like that, there are women whom don't take pride in themselves, they don't make them selves look pretty, and they think their man is going to love them like that. That is a lie in my opinion they are looking for someone else and women pretend to be blind to it.

And how would she picture you?

I think they would imagine me as I am. An outgoing person, very driven I think they will know I am cheerfull and strong woman.

What do you think your story would allow another woman to think about motherhood? In which ways do you think it could help her to reflect about motherhood?

I think they would think the best thing in the world is becoming a mom. Sometimes when woman can't have babies and they want to it is like they have nothing at all. It is not the same having a partner than having a son. Your son is your prolongation of your own life. Even if you have a bad son you will love him, because you took care of him, you breastfeeded him, you held him inside.

For example, if I wanted to adopt a son and they would not give me one because I am on my own, they would never realize that a woman who is alone, and who really wants a child, would work as much as they need to keep their children out of danger or trouble. They will always find a way to get through life. It is not worth it to stay together with a man for your kids, when a man says I am with my wife because of my kids it is a lie, the kids are going to grow up well we did and my dad left us.

I don't think you have be a mom so many times. Maybe some people would think that I am selfish but what do you want having many kids from diferent fathers? So they think bad of me and my kids because that is what people think about motherhood. For me it was better to have only one well recognized.

Marcela



"She would picture me I like a smart woman, smart, because my idea of selling folders was a good idea and I am a good mom, even if I have made many mistakes, I am a good mom. Not for being immature, I left my daughter aside.

Marcela.

Prologue:

Since I was a little girl I wanted to be a mom, and have many kids, because I was abandoned when I was born. I was abandoned when I was 8 months old. My mum left me like as if I was a puppy, like as if you were to give away a present or something she gave me away to those people that are now are my parents. I grew up very lonely because my parents could not have kids and they never let me have friends. I was always inside the house until I went to school. I went crazy there, I had many friends and I wanted to have a boyfriend so that I could have a lot of kids. When I was 17 I met my son's dad.

I was very naive I believed anything people would tell me someone would say something nice and I was ready. My parents never let others show me love. When I started dating with my son's father I was like a prize for him. He only wanted to show me at some places, for certain occasions. Then you feel like you are the dumbest girl in the world.

Chapter 1: Happiness, so much Happiness.

When I was little my idea of being a mom was very different to what it was when I got pregnant. I was alone with my son because my partner said he did not have any time for us. He helped me with money for a year. After that I had to go out and sell folders. No one would take care of my son, so I had to take him with me. I used to receive a lot of criticism from other people.

When Facundo came into my life he destroyed my body. I was so skinny, I was so pretty. I used to look myself in the mirror and say, I look so awful but I didn't mind because it was not because I eat like a pig. It does not matter because it is for my son and I am so proud of my self. I had a good pregnancy even if it was hard for me to accept it. I was 20 years old and I wanted to study, I also wanted to work but I don't care I was now a mother.

When Facundo was born the contractions even though they hurt, I was happy. When he was born I could not cry, I could not scream, I could not even move, but I was

happy. I squeezed him, kissed him and I cleaned him. After all the pain it did not matter that it hurt it was because it came from me.

The first time I breastfed him it was so important to me because I always knew that during my childhood my family knew my biological mother and they told me she never breastfed me. She always had an excuse not to breastfeed me. They had to feed me with cow's milk and bread. I could not eat bread for years. I always said when I have a kid even if it kills me I will breastfeed him. The delivery of my son was the most beautiful moment of my life and even when it was the two of us we slept always together. Many times I fought with him and even thought I was wrong about many things it has made me stronger and made me be an even better mom.

It has been a big sacrifice, and I only wanted to have one kid, that is what hurt me the most.

Chapter 2: The Transformation

After Emilia arrived everything fell apart when you have that idea and then you get pregnant, you can't wake up. When Emilia was born, I cried my eyes out and the doctor would tell me if I was not happy with my baby. My baby's dad had to tell her that I had a really difficult time. When I held her, it was like it was just something that came out from me.

It was not like when Facundo was born, that it was all happiness. It was always just the two of us, even if he was terribly behaved that did not matter. I never left him with someone you never know what could happen to him so he was always by my side. I would never leave my daughter behind but it is a different feeling that has been harder to develop with my daughter.

After 3 years, I got pregnant with her and I used to think I wish I would fall down the stairs. I do not want kids; I cried everyday, until the day she was born. When they brought my daughter back to the room, I looked at her and said: she is not my daughter, I would touch my belly and would say: I am not pregnant

When I found out I was pregnant, even if I was 5 months, I would say I was not pregnant. At anytime I

will have my period and I will get on with my life. When I had an ultrasound and they told me I was pregnant, I was thinking there was a mistake. Even when I heard her heartbeats, I cried. I did not eat for two or three days. I lost so much weight. I was 48 kilos and I was 5 months pregnant.

At my house I had to hide my pregnancy until I had 8 months, I had 7 months pregnant and I did not have a belly, but it was because I could not tell my father I was pregnant again. Because if I was they were going to hurt me, they would kick me out the house; they would take my son away. Thank god, even if he treated me awfully he did not hit me or kick me out and the next day, I woke up and I felt my body swollen and my belly was huge!

I have lived my motherhood in both ways, with Facundo with so much happiness, but with Emilia with so much loneliness, so much sorrow, depression and disappointment in many ways I hope one day she will be better than me. When she becomes a mom, to be there with her, not like when I was pregnant that everyone left me including her dad.

Her dad was very nasty he would see how much I worked, how I went up and down the stairs and it was

like he was the pregnant one. He would not get up to work, I wanted to eat something and I had to wait until the next morning, so I could work and have money to buy food for my cravings. It was like I had to do it on my own because I already had a son. I should know what to do by now.

He always expects me to do everything, I have to work, I have to make the effort, I have to find the solutions, if there is no dipper that is it. If I was not like I am ; if I would not sell the world for my kids, I would not even have dippers for them. That is why I say, I have lived both sides of what it means being a woman.

I left my house and went to live with him because my parents were always saying to me that I was a prostitute because I had kids from different fathers. They said that decent women have kids from only one man. It was so hard for me because they said I was just like my biological mom, we are four brothers and sisters from four different dads and all abandoned. So sure, it looks like I am just like that, but I am not. I don't throw my kids away, I work everyday for them. I work so hard for them, even if it rains, if I don't have anyone who would take care of them I take them with me. At the beginning, I was with Emilia on my back and

Facundo at the kindergarden. She was three months old and she had to go to work with me on the streets. I did it because I needed the money.

With Emilia, came a part of me that I never knew before, and it is the part of rejection, of not wanting someone in my life, I wanted to abort and I never thought I could think something like that.

Her chapter was a new stage in my life, and I think that it was one of the most important stages of my life, because with her I could see things from real. Sometimes with so much happiness in life you can't see right. My parents always supported me with Facundo not with money but certainly emotionally they were there for me. They were not supportive with my daughter. It was then when I realized, that even if they are my parents and they raised me, they left me alone when I needed them the most.

With Emilia, I had to work with her constantly. I learnt what it was like being poor, not having dippers, not having milk and the fact that you don't have enough clothes for them, I don't have money to buy them new clothes, like you would like to do with your kids, and that frustrates me. Because even if there is a little difference, I always want the best for both them.

Epilogue:

If we thought this was a book and someone found the book of your life, and read these pages we have been writing. What do you think they would say about your life story?

They might think this is a story where effort has been hurried. I think that not every woman has the joy to say she is a motivated hardworking woman. I think I am the same as a woman who sells food on the street. My dad says he is ashamed of me he says he raised me to be a professional not to sell things on the street until one day I told him, if I was to study now it would not be for you or mom but because I want my kids to say: "My mom studied, worked so hard for us and why not, why not tell, it is also for my say: To prove I can do it because there are things you block, and you think it will never happen to you, like you did not deserve it. But, when you realize you can do it, and you get a little push, with someone who helps you it is beautiful.

When they say: How do you think you are? I think I am the best mom, the best worker, the best nurse, because there was a time when I put my self down and thought I could not do anything because I had another

kid, I was worthless. It was like this because I had kids from different fathers, I was ruined.

I wake up every day and I look at my kids and I realize I can't stay in bed, I can't send them to school and then comeback home and watch TV all morning, I would not feel good doing that. I am used to working and bringing home the bacon, like my dad used to say. I don't want my kids to have to be humiliated because they don't have something to eat. I don't want them to think I failed them. I know I hurt my daughter, saying I can't believe she is my daughter; not thinking it was real that she actually existed.

I now realize I could not live without her and I feel it is fundamental that a mother works hard for their kids. You can't be asking for help from the government or at someone's house to get something; because if your arms and hands are good to work, you can work. You don't need to sell drugs or be a prostitute, because you don't want that example for your kids, and that is not what they want from you. They want you to be there for them. They want you to do homework with them, to play with them, to bath them, to have dinner with them, ask them how they did at school. It's not the money, the best toy. It was not worth it for me to have

the best toys or clothes, it was useless. I have to do what every woman has to do, go out to work, comeback, clean the house, cook, do the laundry, iron, all day doing something.

And how would she picture you?

Like a smart woman, smart, because my idea of selling folders was a good idea and I am a good mom, even if I have made many mistakes, I am a good mom. Not for being immature, I left my daughter aside. Becasuse my mom left me because I was useless, I was an obstacle for her and she said I will give her away. I could not do that. Because it hurt me to have these kids, breastfeed them, raise them, so despite my feelings, I could not live without my kids. I consider my self a very good mom.

I have been more realistic, I have opened my eyes. I don't care if a man does not love me. What I care is that my kids love me because I love them I would gladly give my life for them; I would give anything away for them because kids are the only ones who deserve your sacrifice.

What do you think your story would allow another woman to think about motherhood? In which ways do you think it could help her to reflect about motherhood?

I think it would be useful, because sometimes you feel nobody is there for you, nobody supports you, no one listens to you, even your partner has left you alone, but you have yourself. Even if you suffer, cry at night, you even want to die. I think that God gives you that strength to have someone, even in your imagination, who is listening to you, drying your tears, and God knows that everything you do is looked at and given back. And I have seen it with my kids. I have tried so hard, but I have really good kids. I am with them and if I go to China I would take them with me, and I know they will do the same and if they don't it does not matter. I am happy with what I did, I got them ahead, I studied and I gave them studies, I sacrificed many of my best years and even if they don't love me one day it does not matter. God saw my effort and sacrifice.

Sometimes it is not what you expect, sometimes you expect everything to be great all wonderful things such as the company of the family but really there are always different experiences throughout life.

There are women, who have been mothers 4 or 5 times, and they have been happy for all of them but sometimes you have to grow through bad times. It is difficult but you can do it.

After a while, you see them playing in the park, and you forget everything bad that has happened. If I had to get pregnant in this moment I think I would also have a bad time but I would think that I would make it. When it would be all bad again, I would have to look at them and say no, I am studying, and I will keep studying, I will have the baby, and I will work anyway if I thought with one I thought I was going to die but now I think I can do anything.

I would like them to see that you can do anything, you can study, you can get good grades, even if you think you are too old for that, you can do it, for your kids. They can see you happy and everything bad goes away. Sometimes the sadness is longer than the happiness but the idea is to keep going.

María



"I will go with my kids everywhere, even if we do not have food, even if I have to scratch food from the garbage. If I have to do that, I will, but I will not leave my kids, my kids are my priority next to my father. Because my father gave me so much courage, he said I know who I raised, and I know you are not what they are saying you are"

Maria.

Prologue

I got married when I was 25 and my whole family thought I was going to be a nun, because all my cousin were married, some of them even had a baby when they finished high school. But not me, I was working, I did not care about men back then. I had one goal: I wanted to work, study, leave the place I was because it was hard for me, I lived in a dangerous neighborhood, like everyone so I did not want to stay there, I did not want to become my mom, even if we are very similar I was the slightly improved version.

Suddenly, I met this guy like my baby calls him “the guy”, I met this man, and I fell in love with him. I was very disappointed back then so I thought it would help me to move on, but I ended dating him for 8 years, I met him when I was 20.

When I got married, everyone thought I was pregnant. Even my dad said, do not get married, you won’t be the last woman with a baby and by her self, I will help you, and I was trying to tell him I was not pregnant.

I wanted to study that year, so I could study History after which was my goal, to become a teacher. I

thought if we ever had kids, it would be something it would help me to support them. Maybe to have something to answer their questions, and not having to say: shut up, and go, like my parents used to say to me when I was little, after I realized it was because they did not have the answers.

Chapter 1: The Unexpected.

I was in my second year of college, when one day I felt very bad, and I went to the doctor., he asked me if there was any chance I would be pregnant, and I said: No way; I have so much to do!

My partner always used to say; I came home so late, that I worked so much, where did I get so much energy. When I told him to go with me to the doctor and he heard they news he was in shock, just like me. I could not tell you I was happy. The baby was hidden until knew about it, I was 4 months pregnant and no one could tell. After six months, the belly came out and at that moment I did not feel joy or sorrow, or anything: I thought Oh no what am I going to do?

My world was blown away I could not see straight because I did not know what to do with a child. I was

not prepared, I thought about the money I would need, I did not want my child to go through the hardship I did...

We went to eat something and we did not even talk we literally did not speak for days. After a few weeks I told mom I was pregnant and she hit me. I have always been silly enough to let my mom to hit me even now as an adult. My dad was happy, it was his first grandson.

The "guy" told me one day in a fight, that no one could ensure him this was his baby, because I was never home. I was married but I kept living my life like I was dating. So he took his things, and left. I felt so sad, I cried my eyes out. I already have found a name for the baby, because I dreamt with him, four times I saw him dressed in white.

He would tell me in dreams he was my son, he looked like he was 3 years old, and the dream came true. I look at him and I remember that dream and said: I will go through this for you.

My mom was upset; she was saying it was my fault she left home. His mom was more supportive. He came back after two months and I took him back because in my family no one was divorced. It was frowned upon if I

was pregnant and we were getting divorced, it was like it meant it was not his.

I took him back, because I loved him as well. I did not want my son to grow up without a father.

When my son was born, his dad took me to the hospital with my mom and they left me there. I already had accepted the baby, I would talk to him, read him stories. I had to stop working and studying, because I had problems with my pregnancy, so the doctor made me choose.

I had to leave everything behind, and he was born one month before. I was cooking that day, dancing, I felt I could do anything, I was not sick. It was my responsibility.

I love him, but I felt that the belly was not mine. I was in a conflict with my self. The next day they told me at the hospital that no one stayed with me during the childbirth. I was alone with the baby and when I held him I looked at him and I compared him with a little kitten. I had a cat that had kittens, and I helped her with the delivery. He was like a little kitten to me, he was not a baby he was little, black and hairy. I would think what am I going to do him? I felt so lonely,

because the visitors came at certain times and that is when he came also, like a guest. I would think in 3 months I would be working and studying again, I have not even left the hospital and I was taking my life back already.

After a few months I started feeling something weird was going on, so I told my mom I was getting suspicious, because I thought if you have a problem the best person to talk to is your mom; my mom would always say, maybe he had another woman. That was it and I found out that other woman was my mom's friend; she even came to my house for tea.

And my mom knew all of this; she even introduced them to each other. So one day, we were having breakfast and they both came, and I said I knew everything I had proof and this woman recognized it and said that everyone thought my kid was not his even my mom.

I realized I had to keep going, I had to work, I had to study again, I had to be someone in life, I could not think my kids would be an obstacle to succeed because for me that is what they were. So when the truth came out my mom kicked me and my son out.

I went to live with his mom and she believed in me. She helped me even if her son was living there. We would not speak to each other and even though I felt terrible for taking my son to a place where they did not recognize him and who even wanted me to abort I knew we would get through it all.

I would go to see him every weekend and everyday I had off, I had to stay at night at the office, and I even slept there. I slept on the floor, well if you can say sleeping, but you can't sleep with mice around you. I stayed many nights at a park, there was a lady who sold coffee there, and we started talking, and I spent a few weekends there. I would help her selling coffee, and she would give me a hot coffee and a sandwich at 3 am, that made my night easier.

Sometimes she would let me sleep next to her feet beside the heater, she used to work all night and she would watch me and take care of me all night. I don't know if she is still at that park.

I always say that God existed for me because I met many good people and maybe if God was not there, I would have been around other kind of people. When you are feeling so down any friend is a good one, even if you think you are strong in those moments you see

only grey. Many times I thought about killing myself, both of us, because I was not going to leave my baby here. When I went to see him, I thought many times about throwing us in front of the subway or into the river, many things went through my head...put something in his milk and then drink it myself. No one would know at the end of the day, it was just me and him.

They wanted me to give them my son. They sue me I had to fight and show I never abandoned him, I was working all day to have the resources I needed for him, while her father was all day watching television, my son could cry all day, and he would not go to see him.

I was sleeping on the street, but every penny I earned was for my son and they were saying I did not spend anytime with my son.

It was very hard for me, and I still look at my son and I say he should not be here. It's not like I don't want him to exist just not at that stage of my life, I wanted to have a kid when I was 30, I could not keep studying, I just had to keep going for him, and working for him.

Many times at work, I did not have someone to take care of him, so I would take him from school to my

office and he would sleep on the office floor for her nap. People at work would help me, so I could keep my job. I met someone that would support me, I think that without him, I would have made it, but not without all the help from people that God provided for me along my way.

I know I slept at the park many nights but never had any problems, no one tried to hurt me and I actually met a lot of beautiful people and friends not friends from life but friends that felt like they were a part of my life.

The nice things are the least, but they weigh more because people tend to think more about the bad stuff than the good ones that people do for you. I am not with my partner because I have to but it is also important what he has done for me and my kids, asking for nothing. Now we have a kid together, and it was so different when I was pregnant the second time.

Chapter 2: Carpe Diem

It is not like I did not love my first son, but many years after I accepted him. Just a few years ago I accepted him as a son, 3 years ago and now he is 10. Before that,

he would come to me and I would ask him to get away, unconsciously I rejected him. He came to my bed, and I would tell him to go to his bed, that is what you have a bed for.

Three years ago, with psychological help, after a deep depression, I just then realized it was not his fault. I knew he had to be here, but I didn't know there was something ugly in me that made me reject him. Even my son tells me: "You have changed so much mum, I love you so much and I thank god for that. And my other son, when I knew I was pregnant, it was like a second gift, for me it was a second opportunity for me that God gave me to make things better to make amends the bad things I have done and that I was still doing.

He stayed with me at the clinic and he stayed all night. He called to his work and said we were not going because his women were on labor. And he stayed the night, and slept at the waiting room. He saw the childbirth, he took our son, we has always present. It was so nice. He has helped me to accept my first son.

My son looks just like his father, even if he denies it, and rejected him, he looks just like him. I heard one day that blood is heavier tan water, and it is true. I learnt to

love him, I learnt to thank god for my two kids. They are completely different to each other, both they were both conceived with love, one without wanting it, because he was not in the plans.

I love them both. They are both god's gifts, and when my son tells me is not through, because he knows he came from my vagina, but I say if god did not want me to have them, I would not have had you, How many women have vaginas and they can't have babies?

Everyone is going to judge you because you are a woman, you can't leave your kids, you can't leave your husband. I don't know if you know what I mean, but my family is like that. You have to take it, that they think you have to respect your husband, and if you leave him, it is because you have someone else.

It has been for me to accept me as a woman, accept I have to work, I have to be a mom, I have to study, I have to be with me, as a person, it is hard for me. I learnt from my dad you had to work and bring the bacon home and that is it. When I got pregnant for the second time it was a surprise, and even if I thought no not again! I knew this time was different, because I have someone next to me. We did not plan it, but it was joy. The first one was always anguish and he still is.

Now I learnt how to live day to day, (*cease the day*), I learnt to enjoy that I was pregnant, I would not even think about the name, his dad named him when he was born. For the first one I had everything ready, but the second one was a pleasant surprise like a gift but I did not have a thing for him, not even dippers, not even the clothes they ask you at the clinic.

It was like everything went down, my projects, my son was guilty, the guy was guilty, everyone was guilty, I was guilty because I did not take care of my self. And I was very unhappy for a long time, frustrated. It was not just a storm for the baby but for me as well. It is like I am just reuniting with my self. I feel as if the water is getting calmer but they are still moving.

Now, I am like a mother hen with all my baby chickens under my wings and while they are warm and well, I keep moving ahead in a positive direction. I know I will be ok; it used to be the opposite.

Epilogue:

If we thought this was a book and someone found the book of your life, and read these pages we have been writing. What do you think they would say about your life story?

I don't know really, because I can't even think that myself. Many times I wanted to give up, leave everything behind. Even with my second child. But it was different, he left and I stayed with two kids. I was without a job, because my work had costed my relationship again. He used to say I worked too much. So when he left and I was full of debt, I was going to leave my second child on the street, in his stroller. I was going to take the bus and leave him behind, so someone would find him. In this life, when a person is in crisis. When you are feeling down...And then I said no, I said is not his fault, if I did not do it with the oldest if I had so many chances and I did not do, why now? and I came back, I walked three steps with him there and I had to walk them back, because I knew I was a mom before than anything, after that comes being a woman well he would know if he comes back or not, but I have to keep going, because I am a mother and no

one asked me, so I came back for him. Sometimes, I walk through that street again and I think about what I did that morning and I feel so stupid. I am glad I reconsidered.

I will go with my kids everywhere, even if we do not have food, even if I have to scratch food from the garbage, like I have seen so many people doing at night while I slept at the park. If I have to do that, I will, but I will not leave my kids, my kids are my priority next to my father. Because my father gave me so much courage, he said I know who I raised, and I know you are not what they are saying you are.

And how would she picture you?

I don't know, that I am worthy, that I am brave, to keep going ahead. There are no obstacles, you can't say my husband is in jail, I have 5 kids I don't have a job, for me that is not an impediment. There is people who are worse off than us. While you are healthy that is the most important thing, even if you have to sweep the streets, or collecting cartons, you can get your kids through life. There are many things, many people who can help you out, because if you are honest, and you ask god for help, you can make it through.

What do you think your story would allow another woman to think about motherhood? In which ways do you think it could help her to reflect about motherhood?

Motherhood is a opportunity you get once in your life. Even if you have 10 kids, it is only once in your life you must have to accept it and not make the same mistakes your parents made with you. It is in yourself to change the course of your life be the owner of your life and of your destiny.

Macarena

Epilogue

"Life is not what you live, it is what you remember and how you remember to tell it".

Gabriel García Márquez.

To finish I would like to share my experience as an interviewer, considering this project has been full of challenges, personal and profesional learnings. Even though it has not been easy to dedicate the time this research requires it has been worthwhile.

The stories these women share generously with me, not only allowed me to get close to the difficulties and tensions that come with the process of cosntructing motherhood, but also touched me the way these women try to revert the difficulties in very complex contexts.

Thanks to their generosity, they potentiated in me a new perspective to my work and to the narrative practice: A more curious and less predjudice point of view, where particularities of the construction of motherhood as a social practice emerge with the details from each one of these women experiences.

I hope this book would bring some new thoughts to profesional Discourses about motherhood and would becomes an invitation to reflect on it from a critical

Each participant from this project got a copy from this document as a political and ethic attempt to recognize their authorship, and to be considered a document of assesment to women comming to this foundation and for professionals who work at the institution. This tries to give back, partly, the generosity and richness that these testimonies contributed to this research.

My intention is being able to discuss the possibility of constructing an alternative story to the Dominant Discourse about the shortage asociated to the experience of a unplanned motherhood without a partner. I consider that it is necessary to propose the upbringing of children not only as a personal responsibility, but also as a social responsibility who needs more discussion in private and public spaces.

At the end, I would like to thank everyone who participated in this project, mainly to the authors of this Book of Experts, who through their learnings, streinghts and courage have portrayed one of the many faces of motherhood in Chile.