

SINGLE PARENTING ACROSS CULTURES

KAITLYN FUDGE / INTERDISCIPLINARY THESIS



AN INVESTIGATION OF HOW
SINGLE MOTHERS IN CHILE AND
THE UNITED STATES NARROW
DISPARITIES

SPECIAL THANKS TO

the mothers and families who participated in this study. Who opened up to me, allowed me to come into their homes, and let me photograph them. Without these women, and my advisors Jaime Kucinkas, Robert Knight, and Edna Rodriguez-Plate, this project would not have become what it is now.



INTRODUCTION

This study was conducted in the interest of learning more about single mothers, how they cope in societies designed for two parent households, and how that varies across class, culture, and geographic location. Based on Chilean and American single mothers, this study compares and contrasts the support systems and attitudes about single parenting.

Chile has one of the lowest divorce rates in the world, of only 3% as of 2020. Yet, 2/3 of the single mothers interviewed in this project were raised by single parents themselves. Since divorce was only mentioned in Chilean law as of 2004 under the Civil Marriage Law, it is very possible that many of these single mothers were either never married to their baby's fathers or were never divorced from them. Contrary to Chilean statistics, the United States has a divorce rate of 40-50%, with 23% percent of families run by single parents, which is one of the highest in the world.¹





(left to right) Jackeline, Macarena, Leon, Doña Angela

JACKELINE'S FAMILY

Valparaíso, Chile

Jaqueline is a single mother of 2 who has lived in Valparaíso all her life. She currently lives with her mother Doña Angela, who was also a single mother, and her daughter, Macarena who is 26 years old and is a single mother to 4-year-old Leon.

Doña Angela grew up in a rural town before many major highways were built, and was a single child raised by her mother. Her mother had the help of her parents, Doña Angela's Nono and Nona, as well as her *consuelito*, or nanny.

Jackeline and her mom live in the same 3 bedroom apartment where Jackeline raised her children. Macarena lives in her own apartment down the hall, but spends a lot of her time in her childhood apartment. Leon spends the majority of his time in Jackeline's apartment as well, under the care of his grandmother and great-grandmother. Located in the center of the city of Valparaíso, their apartment is conveniently located to several major supermarkets and public transit stops, including the metro and the *micro*, Chile's version of a city bus.

Valparaíso was one of the first port towns in Chile. With vandalism being legal, Valparaíso has a uniquely lived in and artistic feel to it. Composed of various cerros, the neighborhoods are literally built on top of each other, from the coast into the hilly distance. Valparaíso is a little over an hour drive from the capital city Santiago, which allows for tourism from the capital.

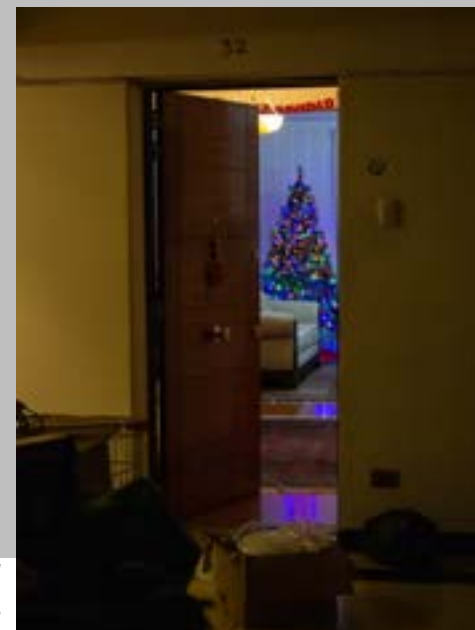
Similarly to rural areas, family is the center base of social life. This is especially enforced within the Chilean Constitution. With society organized with the nuclear family as the base social unit, single-parent households accommodate the “missing” member in unique ways, such as living within an intergenerational family structure. This is common among many single-headed households, for intermittent periods. However, there are exceptions. In both Chile and the United States, “Unpartnered adolescent motherhood - in the short term at least - led not to female headship but rather to the formation of family groups or subfamilies within larger households.”² These theories apply, especially in the case of Jackeline and her family.

Doña Angela grew up in a rural town outside of Valparaíso. Her mother had the help of her parents, Doña Angela’s nono and nona, as well as her consuelito (nanny). She did not have a good relationship with her mother, who was only 17 years older than her, but she described many times that her Nono was all that she needed; he taught her many of the values she holds onto today. Her mom was strict and wouldn’t allow her to play with other children, and her studies, which ultimately made Doña Angela hate school. Angela’s mother seemingly had enough financial support from her parents, and from their family restaurant, to maintain a comfortable lifestyle. The emphasis on education and the use of a nanny reflects this. Angela eventually ran away from home at the age of 16 with a boy she met. She left soon after the death of her Nono, and after her mother married a cousin and had two more children.



Valparaíso from the top of a building

Angela married despite protests from her mother. However, things began to crumble when she got pregnant with her only daughter, Jackeline, at 18. “Jacki’s father did not want a child, he said that children were the tomb of love. When the children are born the woman begins to worry only about raising the children and leaves the man aside, and that is what he did not want.”



Looking into their shared apartment at Christmas time

Growing up, Jackeline and her mother lived in a three-story house along with “[Jackeline’s] dad, three of my dad’s maiden aunts, my paternal grandmother, and an uncle also on my dad’s side...each one had their own space.” Jackeline described it as “a happy childhood, with my mother very present and my father very distant. But my mother supplied everything that my father did not give me... I spent

most of the time with my mom and we would go out together to buy ice cream, and basically that was it.”

Soon after Angela separated from her husband and moved out, she met another man, one who had a reliable job and helped them save money to get a new place.³ After an earthquake, they moved to their current apartment, in the center of the city. They got two units on the same floor, one for Angela and her partner, and one for Jackeline and her’s. Jackeline, once grown up, ended up repeated the pattern of single motherhood as her mother,



Doña Angela at her grandson’s asada

however, in her own way. Jackeline had two kids, on her own terms, at the age of 24 and 29. Her partner was also very distant and they only lived together for a little time before they split ways. She explains that “I managed to live alone with my son’s father for four and a half years. I had my house with my partner and my son. And when Macarena, my second daughter, was born, my mother came to live with us. So, I spent most of my time with my mom while raising them, living with my mom.” Macarena recalls the early years of living with her father as being “a quite violent environment.”

Jackeline dreamed of having the ideal family, having “the father, the children. We were all going to be happy, I was going to have seven children, but it didn’t work out for me. And yes, it hurts a lot that their father was not a present father, he was not affectionate, so unfortunately no one was physically affectionate with us. My mother didn’t have a present father, nor did I have a present father, nor did my children have a present father, sadly... When I had my own children, I was mom and dad... I spent a lot of time, I spend a lot of time with my children” Jackeline did not work outside of the house for some time, but eventually worked for the building she lives in and became a building manager. She also sells old clothes and goods at local *feria* markets for some extra income.

Both Jackeline and her mother mentioned the task of taking on the role of mother and father. While acknowledging the difficulties that the job entailed, both maintained that it was an overall positive experience for them, only regretting that they could not give their children the “perfect” normative nuclear family.



Jackeline preparing dinner

Macarena also became a single mother soon after having her son at 21. Her son was not a planned pregnancy, unlike her mother's and grandmother's. Her perspective and opinion of parenting is also quite different. "Well, there are many things that happened in my life as a child that determined how I wanted to lead my life or how to be with my son, or how to handle that I separated from Leon's father. It's because I didn't want my son to grow up in a violent environment like I grew up... having those negative experiences made me want to



Jackeline with her daughter, Macarena

break those circles of violence when relating or for example with my son or with the father of my son, which was also a relationship quite like that."

Like many urban Chilean families, it is rare for youth to move out before they graduate, since dorming in a college is often an unnecessary expense if there is family close enough to the university. This creates a kind of family unity that does not hold true

in many other countries. This delay in "pushing" children out of the house allows for the adult kids to set up their own life geographically close to their parents, therefore, maintaining extended family ties once they form their own nuclear family. It is rare for children to move far away from parents, and some older generations even find it disrespectful.⁴ Macarena's older brother Diego, for example, lived with the family until his late 20's, because he pursued a career in the medical field. He later moved into a house with his partner in the next town over. Because of this, it is common for a younger single mother to be living with her parents for an extended period of time. Following this logic, Leon spends a lot of time at his grandmother Jackeline's house. While Macarena works on trying to create a stable career to support Leon and herself.⁵ Jackeline drives Leon to school every morning, picks him up, and provides supervision and food whenever needed. Leon often spends the night in Jackeline's apartment.⁶

Jackeline describes the patterns in her family as "Sometimes one tends to repeat patterns. My grandmother raised her daughter. Her daughter raised me. I raised mine. One tends to repeat patterns, and in my family, it is very matriarchal. Always the mom, because of those coincidences in



Jackeline hugging her dog, Jade, with Leon

life, no one got a good dad, not a single one. Neither my mother nor me, nor my children. So, I tried to reverse the good that my mother always gave me and that my grandmother also gave her in different ways, with mistakes and successes. So, one always tends to repeat the patterns, but tries to do better than what one did before."



Jackeline with her son, Diego

For all 4 women in this matriarchal lineage, extended and intergenerational family has been a big resource and support in managing the trials of single parenting. Statistically different than other families,⁷ at least

two generations have maintained their intergenerational households long term, and this has worked well for creating and maintaining a relatively stable home life for any new children along the way. For these women, support is engrained in their definition of family. "Family is a place... where you know you will always... have support."

PATRICIA'S FAMILY

Putre, Chile

Patricia is a 56-year-old mother of three and has lived in Putre her whole life. Eduardo, her partner, is the father to their 3 kids, one adopted and two of his own. Both grew up in the agricultural town, which has been rewarding but has also brought many hardships, especially with the harsh climate of the altiplano and persistent poverty. Their house has 2 covered rooms and others that are open-air. The kitchen is heated with the fire on the stove, and has a very cozy and warm feeling to it. This room is where they pass most of the time with their family. There is a space to raise baby goats in one of the other open-air rooms. Other members of the family, such as Patricia's sister and parents, filter in and out of the house throughout the day, and typically all eat together for lunch.



(left to right) Coni, Coni's son, Raquel, Patricia, Eduardo

In the north of Chile, close to the Peruvian and Bolivian borders, deep in the altiplanos of the Andes mountains, there are many small agrarian towns. Many of these towns have become a part of Chile as a result of the Wars of the Pacific. Today, the native Aymaran people that inhabit many of these towns are dispersed among the 3 different countries. Historically, the Aymaran people are an agricultural and pastoral group that persevere in the harsh climate and high altitude that they call home.



Putre at sunset, from a recently built lookout point

Putre, one of these Aymaran- populated agricultural towns, is a fear instilling two-and-a-half-hour drive from the nearest city, Arica. Many people in the town work on family-owned farms, either their own or for another family, raising animals or growing alfalfa, potatoes or other crops. Putre is very small and walkable, however, the farms and pastures surround the physical town, which requires workers to drive together to get to them. There is a school, a medical clinic, and a military base on the edges of the town, mixed in with the residential areas. In the center there is a square with a playground, a church, and several small shops selling convenience food items and woven goods in the Peruvian style, such as alpaca fur hats and sweaters.

As in many native societies, the Aymaran populations believe strongly in reciprocity and family. Although society is predominantly based on nuclear families, it is very common for elder parents to live with their adult children. In general, there exists a traditional division of labor between men and women, however neither is considered less important than the other. Everyone helps with work and chores, both in the house and on the fields. When getting married, women typically move in with their husband's family, and the extended family and community is heavily involved in keeping the children in line.⁸



In the case of Patricia, life hasn't always been that simple. Patricia is a 56-year-old mother of three and has lived in Putre her whole life. Sitting at an altitude of 11,000 feet, one would think that daily life there is led at a slow pace, but that is true only for visitors who have to deal with the altitude sickness.

Patricia had her first child at 19, while still living at home with her parents. She said that she “always had support from my family... any little thing we needed was not left missing. We support each other or my sister helped me, but thank God I never lacked...I cannot complain, nothing has been missing”. Since it is such a small town, when she moved out, her childhood family which lived around the corner, assisted her in raising her first child. She grew up with 7 other siblings and acknowledged that their tight-knit relationships really helped her through times of hardship. Mothers in Aymaran culture have a lot of responsibilities while raising kids, and many feel under the public eye⁹. Patricia recalled that her days were primarily filled with taking care of her daughter.



Patricia preparing lunch for the family

Even with the support she received from her family with some of these responsibilities, she described feeling “lonely when I had my first daughter, when I was a single mom. It was difficult for me.” She also acknowledged having to play both roles and “raise the children as both mom and dad.”

This could be because, despite the family support, there was a heavy stigma around being a single mother. She recalls her mother telling her that “when you’re a single mom nobody looks at you, but that we’re looked down upon.”



Eduardo walking from his car to help herd the cattle


Her situation got better after she met her partner, Eduardo. Eduardo is a teacher at the local high school and was raised by a single mother. Eduardo recalls that a primary focus for his in his early life was his schooling, as both he and his mother saw it as a way out of poverty and to start a family of his own.

In both Eduardo and Patricia’s opinions, coming together and forming the “ideal” family with a mother and father has helped keep their children on the right path, stating that: “I believe that the family is the pillar from which the father and mother are born, with the commitment to educate the children, give them love, affection and understanding... It is the

family nucleus, as they say where the father, the mother, the children are, where a home is built and where the values... are born. That is... if we do not give them a dad and a mom, our children will perhaps take other paths... and thankfully they have followed a good path, both in the religious part, in the values that have been instilled and in the education that we have given them that is the most important.”



Raquel preparing the milk for the baby goats



Although, historically, it is uncommon according to Aymaran culture and societal norms for a woman to have a child without a present husband, there is a long historical connection to single parenting in Chile, that can be traced back to colonial times, when there became a surge of “mixed-race children by Spanish conquerors who had intercourse with native women but seldom married them.”¹⁰ The prevalence of this has led to coining a term “huacho” derived from Quechua. This term refers to children who have been abandoned by their father.¹¹ As in many other countries, fathers’ absence is also associated with unemployment, poverty, and economic crisis. Economic troubles have been a stressful part of Patricia’s experiences being a single mother.

A majority of female-led households fall below the poverty line in both Chile and the United States. This could be due to many reasons such as missing an income stream or not receiving a full education and therefore being disadvantaged in the job market.

Patricia struggled with finishing school while growing up, both due to work commitments as well as prioritization of male education. Since there is no university in Putre, children have to leave for Arica to attend university. Then, they stay in the city to work post-graduation. However, for Patricia, and many other women, this was not an option. Many women of her generation did not finish school past the 6th grade.¹²

ISABEL'S FAMILY

Chapod, Chile

Isabel and her 3rd child, Celeste, live in a small house with a lot of land. Living with various farm animals, including cows, chickens, and dogs, Isabel spends a lot of time outdoors tending to her land. She also has a greenhouse where she grows vegetables and plants. She has installed solar panels as part of a government funded project in attempt to use solar and hydroponic power to create a hot water shower in the outhouse of her property. Isabel has lived in Chapod her whole life, and believes she is of Mapuche descent, because she was adopted as a child by a Mapuche mother and father. She was raised within the Mapuche culture, primarily by her father, since her mother died when she was young. She recalls as a child learning about the various aspects of her culture from her father, who taught her things including the language, Mapudungu, as well “drinking mate from a very young age and respecting nature... to ask permission from nature to take medicinal herbs... He was my everything, he was my brother, he was my mother, he was everything to me.” Isabel has two older children, who have since moved out and started their own families.



(left to right) Emma [close friend of Isabel], Celeste, Isabel

Chapod is a small rural town in the south of Chile, about a 45-minute drive from the nearest city, Temuco. A Mapuche town with a long history, the people here are struggling to keep their culture alive, on top of an informal war with the Chilean government, intense poverty, and a decreasing population due to people leaving for job opportunities in the city. The town is composed of dirt roads with spaced out houses, and has very limited cell phone service, with only a few houses offering Wi-Fi. Additionally, there is limited water, especially hot water, so many people bathe with a bucket of recently boiled hot water. There is one convenience store in the town, and it is located near the soccer field and the *Ruca*—the traditionally built meeting place for the people in the town.

Much of the information about the Mapuche culture and history is unavailable on the internet, and field research seems to be severely outdated. Part of the reason for this is that there is a strong habit of passing information through oral stories. From Mapuche belief comes the importance of having children to complete the cycle of life and rebirth. When a family has no children, it creates problems and disorders in the spirit world and the life cycle, and in the world of the childless people. Additionally, there is great importance placed upon unity with nature, and the spiritual significance of the environment.

The Mapuche people living in rural areas, lead a rather traditional lifestyles, especially in terms of gender roles. Historically, the mother remains in the house during the day, and does house chores or outdoor work near the house, such as harvesting plants, while the father works away from the house, typically with the animals. This division of work, among other things, creates inequality between men and women, that is often perpetuated through the silencing of women in politics and environments outside of the house.¹³

Similarly to Patricia, Isabel had a hard time staying in the education system, and never finished high school. There is a particularly strong connection between education and family in this culture.¹⁴ As mothers typically educate their kids, Isabel relied predominantly on what she learned from her father about the world.



The roof inside of the Ruca

Additionally, growing up in poverty most likely affected her trajectory perpetuating the cycle of poverty into her adult life. The transmission of poverty through generations is a very common trend, especially among single parents.¹⁵

This pattern is especially exaggerated for Mapuche people, as “Mapuche Indians are socially and economically segregated in Chile... they are, in practice, largely discriminated against by the rest of the population.”¹⁶

Isabel married her first husband at the age of 15 and had her first child at 17. Shortly after her second child, the father of her children left. Despite the hardships of raising 2 children alone, Isabel recalls this time in her life fondly, “It has given meaning to my life... it was good because I saw them grow up. I played with them, I really enjoyed their childhood, their adolescence. It was a very nice process.”

Several years later, at the age of 44, she met another man and had another daughter, Celeste, who is currently 9 years old. This father walked out as well. Isabel describes the early years of raising Celeste very similarly to that of her older children. “As a mother I feel fulfilled, I feel very happy, happy because I have worked a lot for my family. José and Lidia, they are already grown... now they work hard for their families, and they studied and have their profession. Being alone has pained me a lot, but I managed to do it... and now it’s my turn to raise Celeste. I have to work for her, but also being nine years old she has given me a lot of satisfaction. She has a good grade in school and has won first place in one of her classes in September. And that is even more incentive for me to work for my family.”

Similarly to Aymaran culture, child rearing is considered a more communal task, which includes extended family. “The growth and development of rural Mapuche children is a task that is assumed as a family and community. The arrival of a boy or girl represents the continuity of culture and people, implies enduring as a social and cultural identity; In this sense it is a social project in which adults, adolescents and even older children have a share of responsibility either teaching, protecting, caring, or alerting of dangers.”¹⁷



The outside of Isabel's house

Isabel had a decent amount of family living nearby to her but maintained a relatively small circle of support in her life. Due to religious and personal differences, she states that she sometimes feels alienated, and primarily relied on “the people I can count on who are closest to me, or who are always willing to help us... my “brother” and my uncle. They are always looking out for us. If we are missing something or need something, they always come to us to help us.” Isabel acknowledges that her biggest support during hard times with Celeste is her friend Emma (pictured), who is an unmarried friend. Emma has a car, so she is able to drive Celeste and Isabel places they need to get to. She also provides emotional support.

Even though they live a good distance away and they “don’t see each other much,” her adult children support her “when I’m sick or have a problem. They always come to help us. José is always aware when I need something. He comes to help.” She still relies on her family and community for support when needed, but prefers to keep to herself.



Home cooked meal, bread and soup



The greenhouse on Isabel's property



The only river in town



One of Isabel's 3 cows, which gave birth 3 days later

Isabel describes more so with Celeste than with her other children, the challenges living in poverty brings to raising children. The pandemic only worsened things, because her main source of income is street vending in Temuco twice a week, selling her plants and food. With the pandemic, business essentially halted. She gets a lot of the food that her and her daughter eat from their own farm/garden or from those of neighbors. "Poverty hurts me a lot," she said. "I put a lot of work into my jobs. I do everything I can so that it is not there. It's the anguish, the pain. I try to ensure that Celeste does not suffer." She has worked hard to break the cycle of poverty with her older children, pushing them through school and supporting them emotionally to leave the town and find work in a city, and she hopes to do the same with Celeste.

The importance of having children in the Mapuche tradition, in the case of Isabel, overrides the stereotypical stigma of being a single mother, and she never mentions feeling shamed for that by others. The only shame she mentions feeling is that her family is "not a very well constituted family because there is no father, but I consider that somehow I do both roles... it is good" This could be both because of the spiritual and cultural importance of having children and continuing the family line, as well as the common belief that "Infancia mapuche es la continuidad del pueblo y su cultura."¹⁸



(left to right) Aniya, Christina

CHRISTINA'S FAMILY

Nyack, New York

Christina is a 39 year old nurse and mother to her daughter, Aniya. Christina was born and raised in Nyack by a single mother as well. Currently living on the top floor of a 2 family house, Christina and her daughter try to find a balance between school, work, sports, and family time on a daily basis. They have a lot of family in the area, both on Christina's side as well as from her daughter's father's family.

Located in southern New York, Nyack is just 30 minutes outside of the city of New York. It is a small suburban town with an ever-growing central downtown area. Nyack is becoming an increasingly affluent area, however, this has not always been the case. As a suburb of the city,

Nyack has a distinctly urban feel to it, with many low rise buildings and most residents renting apartments or condos. The town is located on a hilly terrain, with lots of hiking trails nearby, it touches the western side of the Hudson River. According to the 2020 census, only about 12.3% of households had a female householder with no partner present.

Although raised by a single mother, Christina did not feel a lack of support growing up. As she explained, she lived in a large, intergenerational household. Her grandmother filed for everyone in her family to come to the United States from Jamaica in the '70s. She explains that "within the home, I had my grandfather, my grandmother. I had my mom and my mom's sister. My mom's sister also had a daughter, and we were two months apart. So, we're both born in '84 and I'm two months older than Jessica. So we all just grew up in the same house... I have a very large family on both sides. So it was a lot of support. Like there was always someone home. I never felt alone. My cousins are my brothers and sisters. My grandmother was always there for us, regardless. So I never felt the absence of my father not being there because I spent a lot of time with them. I grew up with a lot of family, a lot of support. It was just that my parents were young, so they weren't married. We just kind of grew up in two separate households. But equally." Unlike in the other families interviewed, Christina's father was never completely out of the picture. However she acknowledged that "most of the responsibility was more so on my mom's side of the family. However, my dad's side still stuck around... I'm close to all my dad's sisters and brothers and all my first cousins on his side... so if I needed to go over there to stay over for the day, or someone to take me off the bus, someone was always available to do so."

She goes on to mention the pattern of not only single motherhood in her family, but also young motherhood. Christina's grandmother, who she lived with, was not a single mother for as long as her and her mother, but she still experienced some episodes of single motherhood, as she explained "my grandmother had my aunt Jennifer and had her at a very young age, had her at 17... there she met my mother's father. And two years later, she was pregnant with my mom. So she had my mom at 20. So I call it the 2020 crew because my great grandmother was still alive. She turns 99 next week. So my great grandmother's 99, The my grandmother is 79. My mom is 59, and then I'll be 39 in about two weeks."



Aniya helping her mother with the dishes

At the age of 24, just as she was finishing nursing school, Christina had her daughter, Aniya. She separated from her daughter's father when Aniya was 8 years old. Still living in Nyack, she has the support of her family that lives in the area, despite the stigma and occasional passing comment about her marital status.

"I come from a very traditional family, so of course I'm going to say first comes love, then comes marriage, then comes the baby in the baby carriage. But that wasn't my plan. So I had a couple of family members that, you know, they were judgmental, they thought that I wouldn't finish school. But I had zero intentions to stop school. Like I never even had the thought. So, when they found out they were kind of upset with me. And I get it, that's not what they envision... Her father and I were not married, so again, we were not living with each other¹⁹. So it's like the same pattern again, going back and forth. But his family was very supportive... Everyone helped out and I worked, and I was a full-time student and I was a full time mom... I've always wanted to be a nurse since the day I was born. And when I did it and they saw and they see this and they're seeing that I'm okay, I don't hear anything from anyone. Now they're saying, go find a husband."

Since she had such strong support from her family, Christina feels thankful that she "never had to put my daughter through daycare. There's enough family in town that I ask if anyone could watch her. I have enough cousins in town. I just always made it work on my end. When I went on bed rest, I was still in nursing school. I didn't have a great paying job. I think I was making like maybe \$11, \$12 an hour at the time when I found out I was pregnant. So I did have to rely on government assistance like I was on WIC, which helped me out with baby formula. And that helped me out for like a year because I graduated a year later. So, once I became a nurse, you know, I was able to provide for myself, be more self-sustaining. I didn't have to rely on anyone or anything. But like I said, I had enough family support to get me through." This is another aspect of American culture that affected

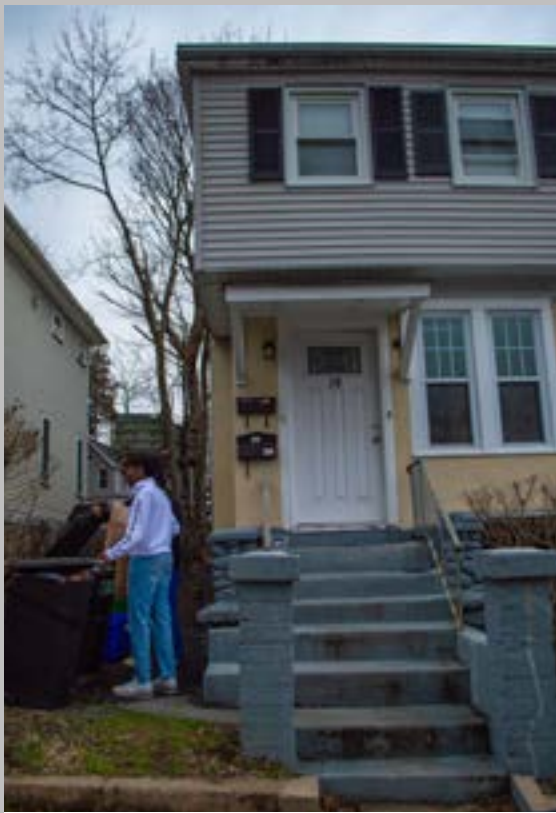
Christina's experience with motherhood. American culture places a great emphasis on individualism and independence, which is not the case in many other cultures. This is especially visible through the typical push or expectation for American children to go to college away from home and move out soon after graduation. With this in mind, having to rely on family for help and support after that age does not match that independent mentality.

²⁰ Christina indicated she felt that pressure both through the disappointed remarks by her family that she would finish school, and

her future hesitation to go back for more support after Aniya got older.



The decorated fridge



Christina and Aniya taking out the garbage

Christina says that things “got rougher as she got older because you have to start incorporating school. I had to really adjust, because even though my parents weren’t together, it didn’t feel like they weren’t together. But it’s more divided now. Like my daughter will spend X amount of days with her father and then as you know, she lives here. So I’m the custodial parent and I’d even had to go as far as going to like legal matters of making it permanent.” This idea of bringing legal matters into account

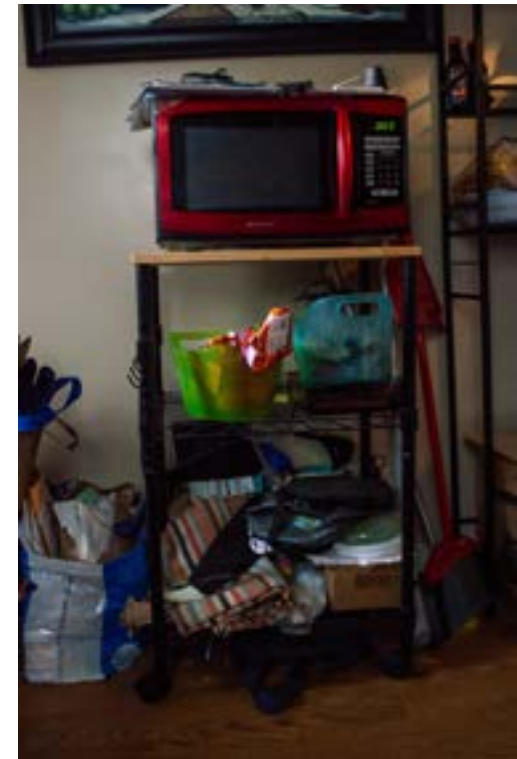
and co-parenting in general is a concept that was not commonly practiced with the Chilean families interviewed for this project.

Aniya, now 14, has more of a say when it comes to whose house she wants to be at, and when. This is beneficial for Aniya, but it also brings added hardships for Christina. She explains that “I have the heavy parts, she lives here, so I have the cooking and the sports and the travel... And I just feel like as she’s getting older, it’s kind of harder to ask family members. They’re 14 years older. And a lot of my family have moved out of Rockland County to Florida. So, it’s mostly me. And the other portion is her dad.” This touches on the stress and feelings of loneliness as support groups change. It is more common practice in Jamaica and in other countries for extended families to be as close as nuclear families. Even being a second generation immigrant and more accustomed to American culture and values, Christina may not have felt the same need for closeness as her parents or other first generation immigrants.²¹



A sign in the kitchen that Christina made sure I took a picture of

She loves watching her daughter grow, and continuing to make things work, balancing both of their lives. “I don’t want anyone to ever think that single parenting is like the worst thing that can happen. There are some awesome single parents. There are some awesome children who were raised in single parent homes who are thriving, who are great. And I’m very, very grateful. It could work if you make it work. Now, if you feel like you have to depend on other things in order for you to make it work, then that’s the part where you go wrong. You’ve got to figure it out, and if you have a strong support family system, utilize them. That’s, you know, family is that’s what they’re there for. You shouldn’t always think, like, someone’s going to judge you. If you are a good person, believe me, that energy follows. So, I don’t want anyone to ever think that it’s the worst situation to ever be in.”



Dual purpose microwave and storage stand

It is statistically more common in the United States for single mothers to rely on extended family for only a short period of time. Most ultimately move out and become heads of their own household.²²

Despite the ups and downs of single parenting, Christina maintains a positive outlook and considers her daughter a blessing.



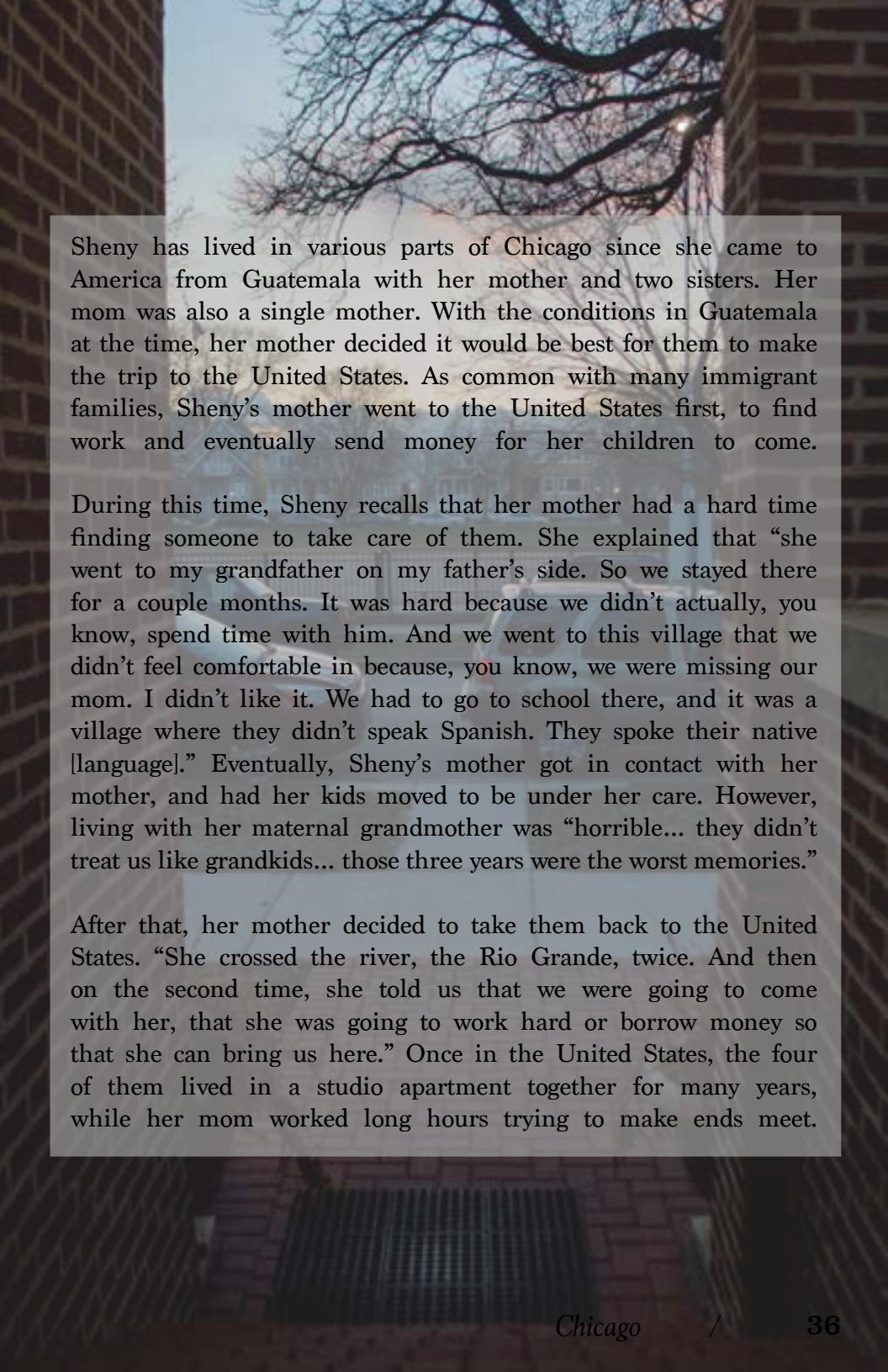
(left to right) Sofia, Alejandro, Sheny

SHENY'S FAMILY

Chicago, Illinois

Sheny, a 53 year old mother to two, lives in the north-western side of Chicago, in a relatively quiet residential area. Where they currently live, Irving Park, is defined by bustling main roads and quieter residential streets. They live across the street from a park, and are only a couple minutes walk to the nearest train station and bus stop, and a 20 minute ride into the downtown area. Public transit is heavily used by the residents in this area. The houses and apartments all have a distinct brownstone

look, that keeps them appearing old, yet well maintained. Sheny and her kids live in a building like this, on the upstairs level of a multi-family house.



Sheny has lived in various parts of Chicago since she came to America from Guatemala with her mother and two sisters. Her mom was also a single mother. With the conditions in Guatemala at the time, her mother decided it would be best for them to make the trip to the United States. As common with many immigrant families, Sheny's mother went to the United States first, to find work and eventually send money for her children to come.

During this time, Sheny recalls that her mother had a hard time finding someone to take care of them. She explained that "she went to my grandfather on my father's side. So we stayed there for a couple months. It was hard because we didn't actually, you know, spend time with him. And we went to this village that we didn't feel comfortable in because, you know, we were missing our mom. I didn't like it. We had to go to school there, and it was a village where they didn't speak Spanish. They spoke their native [language]." Eventually, Sheny's mother got in contact with her mother, and had her kids moved to be under her care. However, living with her maternal grandmother was "horrible... they didn't treat us like grandkids... those three years were the worst memories."

After that, her mother decided to take them back to the United States. "She crossed the river, the Rio Grande, twice. And then on the second time, she told us that we were going to come with her, that she was going to work hard or borrow money so that she can bring us here." Once in the United States, the four of them lived in a studio apartment together for many years, while her mom worked long hours trying to make ends meet.

Sheny's experience in the education system was partially defined by her mother's beliefs about it. She remembers being really excited about starting school in Chicago, but she became less comfortable going to school as time went on. She says that her mother's values were elsewhere, so she had less inclination to go. "Honestly, I missed a lot of days of school because I wasn't feeling comfortable there. The first maybe two, three years were good. And then when I didn't want to go to school anymore. My mom was not the kind of person who pushed me... She said that if you don't want to go to school, don't go to school, it's okay."

She has tried to change this dynamic and places more value on education with her kids, while still maintaining a low-pressure environment. She says that although she is not one to push her kids to do things that they don't want to, "I tell my kids that they have to go to school. They have to become somebody. I don't want them to go through life like my mom and I."

Once Sheny, her mom and her sisters moved out of the studio into a 2-bedroom apartment, and Sheny had finished high school, she got a job as a cashier, where she worked for the following 20 years. She kept this job, despite her description of it as not "bad, but sometimes... they put you down. They make you feel like... you're not ever going to be anybody," partially because of her educational and immigration status. This is part of the reason she stressed education for her kids. "It's not easy, you know, but you have to, because you need to provide for your family. So you have to take everything in. I guess if you're not prepared to go out there into the world, people are going to just basically see you like, oh, this person doesn't have anything. She doesn't have no school, I should just treat them like garbage,"



Alejandro helps by washing the dishes



Sheny bringing home take-out after work

She met the eventual father of her children after working as a cashier for a couple of years. Even before he was officially out of the picture, he was never really in the picture. “So when he left, I was scared for a little

bit. I was like, what am I going to do with two kids? Then, I was like, wait a minute, he was never there for me. And then I was like, okay, fine. I could do it myself. My mom did it with three of us. And as soon as I got pregnant with [Alejandro], she's like, I want to retire so I could watch the baby. So that was a blessing for me.”

After she had her first child, Alejandro; “It was just the three of us, my mom, him and myself. Every day, you know, I would go to work. She would watch him. She was my everything. She took care of my Alejandro... she was a lot of help for me. I didn't have to look for a babysitter, ever, with neither Alejandro or Sofia.” Sheny lived with her mom for all of her life. As common in intergenerational households, boundary setting is an issue. “my mom was always there, to watch over him and she would just sometimes overdo it. She wouldn't allow me to like, be a little strict with Alejandro when he was young and obviously kids love it when somebody else is like, “Oh yeah, she doesn't care”, but she did whatever, you know. But I would tell her not to do that, that she was doing something that I wasn't agreeing with... But then I understood too that she was just in love with Alejandro. He was everything for her. I understood that. But I was the mother, and I had to tell her, you know, don't let him do this or that.”²³



Sheny said government assistance programs such as food stamps helped her through especially hard times, because “my mom had a social security thing and that’s it. And with the rent, paying for school fees and uniforms and providing for everyone... a coworker told me...it was a lot of help. You know, it wasn’t much, but it helped a lot. Plus, the medical insurance cards, because they are citizens, it’s given to the kids. So that also was a lot of help.”

Sheny just recently quit her job of 20 years, and has begun a new one as a house cleaner for a Hilton hotel, thanks to her legal citizen status changing. Although excited to be out of her old work environment and to be receiving more employee benefits and pay, she is having a hard time adjusting.



The TV corner in the living room, with Sheny’s late mother’s wheelchair

Sheny recalls that growing up, she never thought of having kids.²⁴ “I saw my mom how she went through everything... I would also say I don’t want to ever get married. I don’t want to have kids. I didn’t want to go through what she was going through, seeing her struggle with rent, paying the bills, being upset that her check wasn’t a lot of money. She didn’t have enough money to buy this, to buy that. And I would always say I don’t want to go through that... I didn’t want to have kids. I didn’t want to marry anybody.” This mentality perpetuates the “Pervasive message that women should not have children until they can afford them, despite the reality that many will never escape poverty.” This message goes against the cultural norms of many countries around the world, where intergenerational living is more common for economic and care reasons. The expectation of kids taking care of their parents as they age, inadvertently implies the necessity of having kids to take care of the next generation as they age.

Despite all of the hardships, Sheny maintains a positive yet cautious outlook onto single parenting, stating that “I did it with two kids. My mom did it with three kids. You can do it. You can do it if you want to. But then... they’re like, Yeah, I can make it. But then they met somebody else and they get pregnant with one or two other kids. And I’m like, you have to think, do you think can you provide for all of them? You have to work, you have to pay for a babysitter.”

Living room decor

ZORANA'S FAMILY

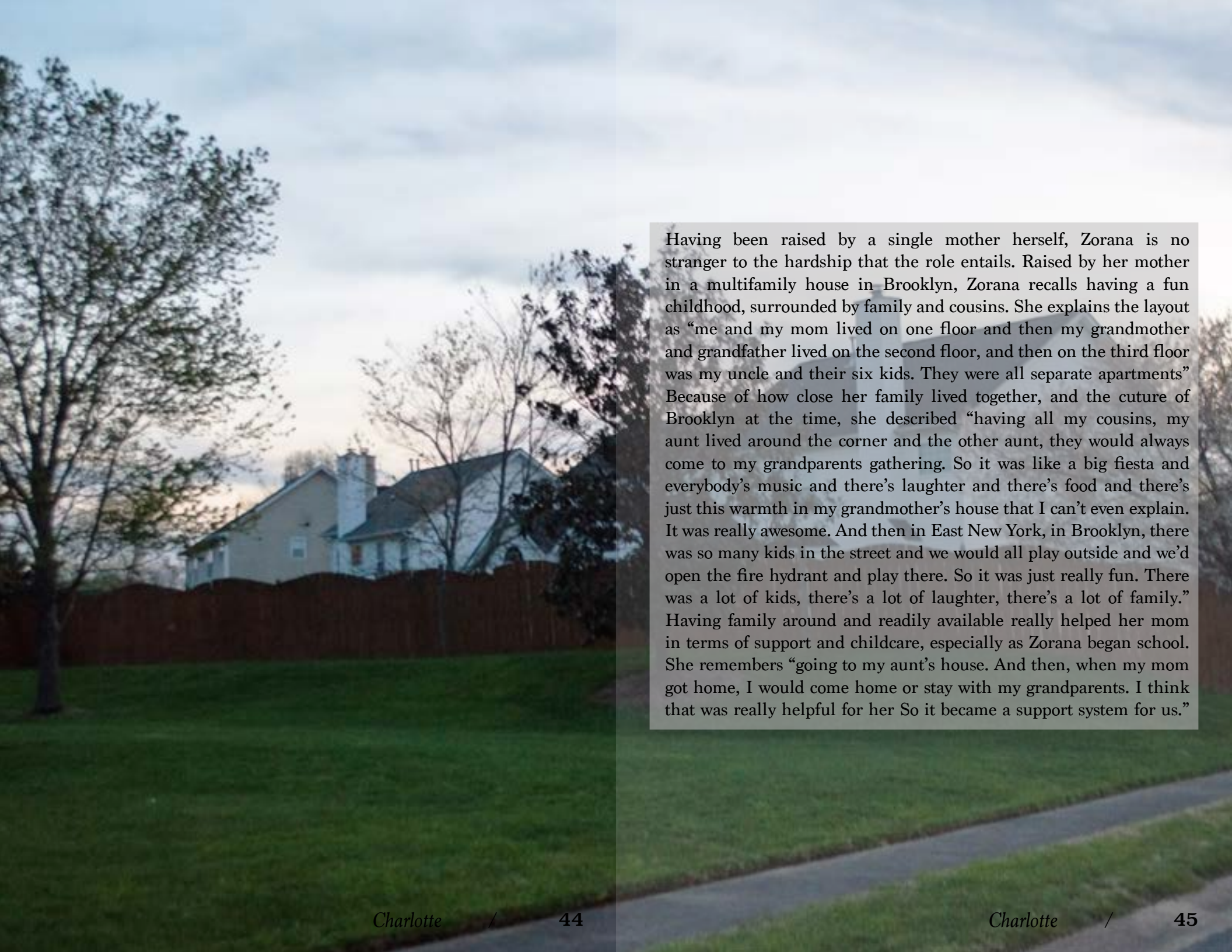
Charlotte, North Carolina

Located in one of the more suburban areas of Charlotte is a single mother named Zorana, a mother of 2. She is currently living in a 2 floor house with her 12 year old son, as well as her 26 year old daughter, her daughter's husband, and their baby.

Charlotte is the most populous city in North Carolina, and is also one of the most sprawling cities in the United States. This can be seen on the edges of the city. What only a few years ago used to be farms and residential areas, is now increasingly commercializing. The area where Zorana and her family live is changing very rapidly to accommodate an increasing population, with business parks, strip malls, and new housing developments full of cookie cutter houses.



(left to right) Jewlz, Zelyn, Zorana, Virginia, Mateo



Having been raised by a single mother herself, Zorana is no stranger to the hardship that the role entails. Raised by her mother in a multifamily house in Brooklyn, Zorana recalls having a fun childhood, surrounded by family and cousins. She explains the layout as “me and my mom lived on one floor and then my grandmother and grandfather lived on the second floor, and then on the third floor was my uncle and their six kids. They were all separate apartments” Because of how close her family lived together, and the culture of Brooklyn at the time, she described “having all my cousins, my aunt lived around the corner and the other aunt, they would always come to my grandparents gathering. So it was like a big fiesta and everybody’s music and there’s laughter and there’s food and there’s just this warmth in my grandmother’s house that I can’t even explain. It was really awesome. And then in East New York, in Brooklyn, there was so many kids in the street and we would all play outside and we’d open the fire hydrant and play there. So it was just really fun. There was a lot of kids, there’s a lot of laughter, there’s a lot of family.” Having family around and readily available really helped her mom in terms of support and childcare, especially as Zorana began school. She remembers “going to my aunt’s house. And then, when my mom got home, I would come home or stay with my grandparents. I think that was really helpful for her So it became a support system for us.”

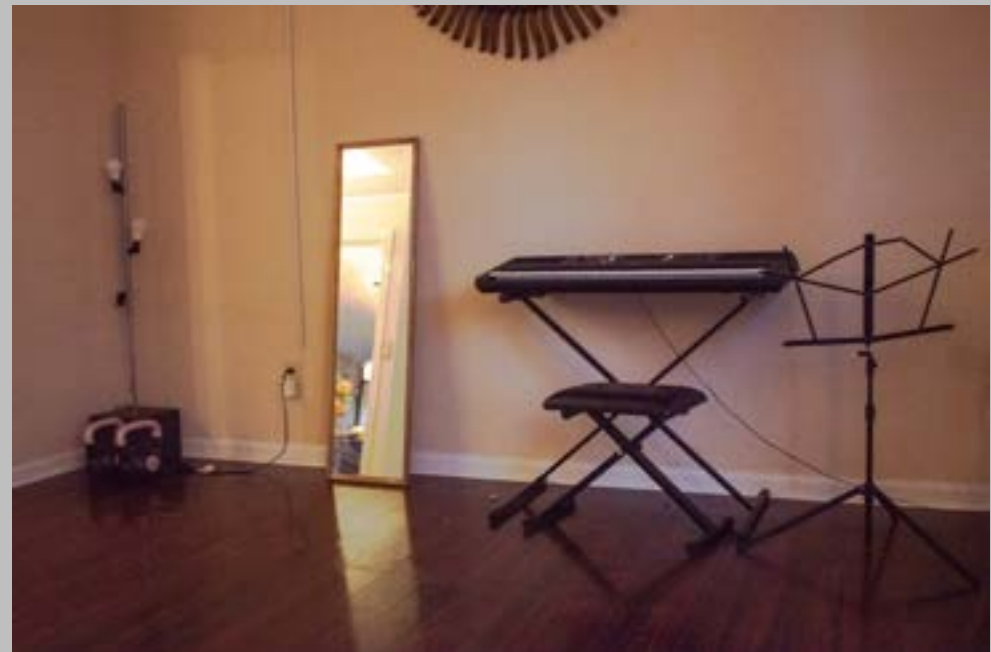


Zorana's house

Zorana went to a Catholic elementary school and middle school in the city. Before high school, her mother thought it would be best for her to move to Puerto Rico with her dad, “because your dad has more resources.” After a few years there, she returned to New York where she finished her last year of high school. She began college in the city. Shortly after that her mother and grandparents moved back to Puerto Rico.

Zorana got pregnant with her first child at the end of her time in college at the age of 22, with a guy she had been dating throughout her time there. He joined the military, and was stationed at Fort Drum, in upstate New York, far from her family. When her daughter, Selene, was 2 years old, they moved to Charlotte, North Carolina, and separated a few years after they both secured jobs and a place to live.

Zorana credits both the school system and her daughter’s father’s family network to having successfully raised her daughter. She explains that “we did have before school and after school. Those programs, having that support, having a place where she could go and be safe and do all those recreational activities to me was important... it was nice because her father’s mother was here, the grandmother, the aunt, they were all close by. So, she would be with them. She would see them and him and I, we worked a good co-parenting thing where she would be with him every other weekend. And then my mom and dad, although they weren’t here, I would have them on video, you know, calling, checking in on her, those kinds of things.”

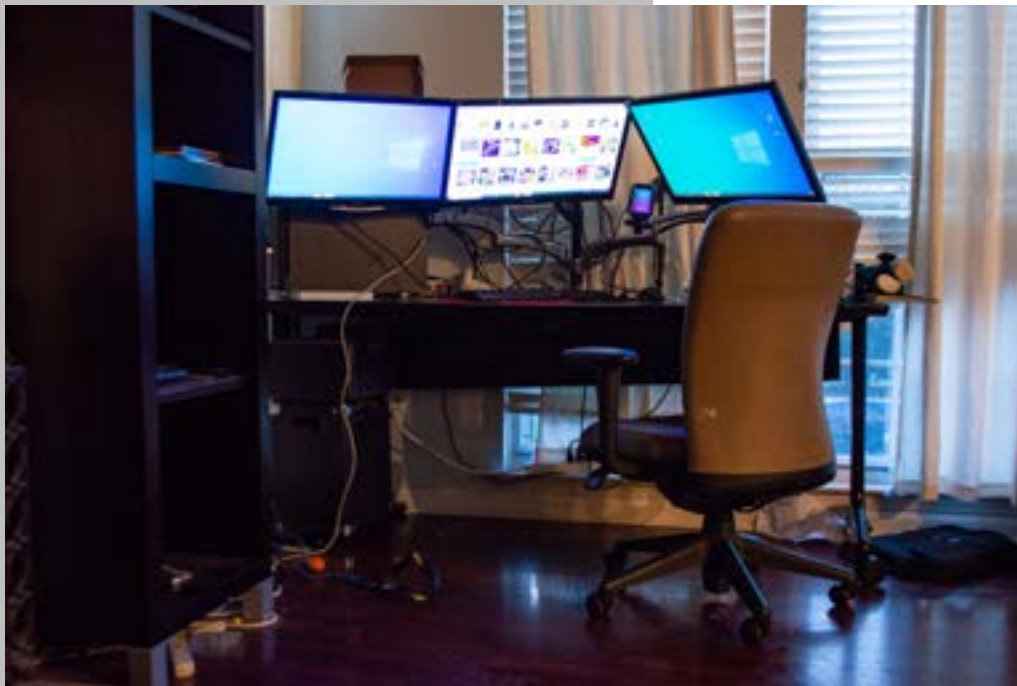


The entry room to the house, containing a keyboard and mirror reflecting into the kitchen



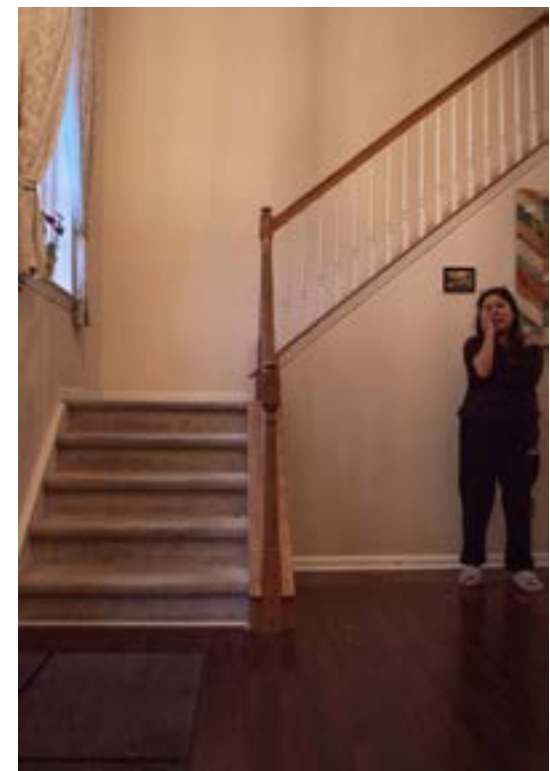
Zorana preparing dinner for her family

Years later, when Zorana was about 36 years old, she had a son with another man. Zorana separated from her son's father when he was about 10 years old as well. A main reason for this separation was due to the fact that he had an issue with Zorana allowing her 26 year old daughter and husband to live in the house with them. For Zorana, even though her daughter is not a single mother, she is accustomed to a multigenerational house. "I want them to always have a place to land. You know, that's important to me. But he didn't see it that way. He felt like, you know, once you're 18, you're off to the races and that's it. And so it was really trying for me to make that decision because I wanted my family to work with him, but he wanted it to be me, Mateo and him and not my daughter."



Mateo's gaming computer setup in the living room

Due to her intergenerational home, she has more support network for Mateo than for her daughter. "I'm at work from 9 to 5, typically, and his dad was living in Puerto Rico. So it was just me, him and my daughter's family. Which was nice because the bus gets here around 5:15 and my daughter's already home, so she's with him because... I'm usually here around 5:30... I also have a significant other to and he'll come over and he helps me clean up the kitchen



The stairs that lead upstairs where Zorana's daughter's family sleeps

and then he also helps Mateo while I'm cleaning... [Mateo's father's] sister lives close by and his sister has four kids, too. So the in-laws are involved. The cousins are involved. Again, my mom and dad, although they're not here, my dad lives in Orlando... I needed the school system, the after-school system to help. They played a big role in helping me raise him. And it was because I had an after school director who really cared about the kids. And so, for example, if I had a late meeting, she'd be like, 'don't worry, we got him. It's okay. We're community.'"

IN CONCLUSION

Coming from a range of different ethnicities, geographic locations, and socioeconomic backgrounds, these mothers all exhibited their own versions of perseverance and strength amidst the challenges of being a single mother.

As seen with almost all of the families, the utilization of extended families is more common than sending children to daycare or finding a babysitter, in both the United States and Chile. This contributes to the fact that separations from the baby's fathers oftentimes "led not to female headship but rather to the formation of family groups or subfamilies within larger households"²⁵

The parents in the United States generally had a more positive attitude and outlook about single parenting, placing more emphasis on how they were making it work, despite the hardships and limitations. This phenomenon paired with individualistic values and prized independence, also made it harder to rely on others for support long term. This is evident in the second-generation immigrant families, (Christina and Zorana), trying to prove that they could make it on their own. Sheny, a first-generation immigrant, did not mention feeling any pressure to move away from her mom, which portrays values more common in Guatemala and other Hispanic countries²⁶. On the other hand, many of the Chilean moms expressed guilt about not having a proper family for their children, which included a father figure. This is representative of the more traditional family style and values that are common in Chile and other Hispanic countries.

Another difference between the Chilean and American families is the utilization of government support or social welfare programs. Two of the parents from the United States mentioned relying on government programs, such as WIC (Woman, Infant, and Children, nutrition support) or food stamps and after school care. Despite two of the Chilean parents explaining the stress of poverty while parenting, none mentioned using any government programs. Another important resource that seemed to be lacking except for one of the middle class families was the use of childcare or after school programs. Had this been more accessible to other families, it would have helped lighten the load on single mothers, as childcare is one of the most common challenges when working away from home.

All of the mothers also mentioned taking on the extra role of being both mother and father, which was relieved with help of extended family in many situations. Since most of the participants were in the lower to middle income range, the reliance on family also helped them financially. With the extra support, the mothers worked to break the transmission of poverty with their children, through sending them to school and pushing them to take opportunities that were not accessible to them in their youth.

There are several studies about the transmission of wealth and fortune across generations of single parents, but not many talk about the likelihood of people raised by single parents becoming single parents in their adult lives. The transmission of single parenthood was prevalent in 5/6 of the single mothers in the study. This was tied to several factors, including the transmission of social class,²⁷ and the transmission of morals and standards set

CONCLUSION CONT.

by the women to not take mistreatment from men, despite lack of protection under the law, especially in Chile.

Above all, every mother discussed the importance of her children in her life, and expressed gratitude and appreciation for their families and the resources they have. Single parenting is a difficult, around the clock job, however mothers all over the world make it work with varying levels of support. Even though “the idea of the traditional family is a powerful one for these women, even though that family form has failed them,”²⁸ these women persevere, adapt, and do the best that they can for their children.



APPENDIX

METHODS

Drawing from interviews and observations conducted with 3 families spanning across Chile, as well as 3 families from the east coast/midwest parts of the United States, I aim to draw connections and bring to light the differences between parenting styles and relationships that are unique to single parents.

Utilizing observations, interviews, photographs, and research, I hope to create a more well-rounded picture of what these women are facing on a daily basis, how they deal with hardships, and how they create and use their support systems to help with the task of being a single mother.



NOTES

- 1 Kramer, S. (2021, May 28). U.S. has world's highest rate of children living in single-parent households. Pew Research Center. Retrieved May 1, 2023, from <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2019/12/12/u-s-children-more-likely-than-children-in-other-countries-to-live-with-just-one-parent/#:~:text=A%20new%20Pew%20Research%20Center,living%20in%20single%2Dparent%20households>.
 - 2 Buvinic, M., Valenzuela, J. P., Molina, T., & Gonzalez, E. (1992). The Fortunes of Adolescent Mothers and Their Children: The Transmission of Poverty in Santiago, Chile. *Population and Development Review*, 18(2), 269–297. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1973680>
 - 3 Jackeline and her mother had the fortune of Angela finding a second partner who was financially stable and helped them secure apartments together. This supports the idea presented in another study that states “There remains in Chile a cultural barrier to independent living arrangements for partnerless women that probably played a part (along with economic factors) in the less-pronounced tendency of single and separated women to form their own nuclear families.” Buvinic, M., Valenzuela, J. P., Molina, T., & Gonzalez, E. (1992). The Fortunes of Adolescent Mothers and Their Children: The Transmission of Poverty in Santiago, Chile. *Population and Development Review*, 18(2), 269–297. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1973680>
 - 4 Herrera, F., & Teitelboim, B. (n.d.). La Mirada de los Chilenos a la familia. Retrieved April 24, 2023, from https://prepre.udp.cl/cms/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Mirada_chilenos_familia.pdf
 - 5 There is this “Pervasive message that women should not have children until they can afford them, despite the reality that many will never escape poverty”. (Freeman, A. L. (2017). Moving “Up and Out” Together: Exploring the Mother-Child Bond in Low-Income, Single-Mother-Headed Families. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 79(3), 675–689. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12378>)Even though Macarena is not living in poverty, she is fresh out of college with an art degree and without a stable job. She acquired the apartment that Angela lived in, so that she could have her own space, but still uses the support, both financially and emotionally, of her mother and grandmother, while trying to figure out what path she will take in life.
 - 6 Macarena recognizes her family as her current main support, but acknowledges that “although, for example with my mom, who we do not usually get along because we have many differences, is also a great support. My grandmother too, they are always willing to help me and Leon. My brother too, even if we have differences and everything, I always know that I can count on them.”
 - 7 “At any given time, nation-wide, only 11% of single mothers live with their parents... However many women might have experienced this life arrangement after a separation until they “get back on their feet”
- Nelson, M. K. (2006). Single Mothers “Do” Family. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 68(4), 781–795. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4122872>
- 8 “caminan cargando uno y a veces dos niños por días enteros, soportan sus enfermedades, las que a veces son difíciles de sanar con medios locales, los mudan y lavan hasta que son mayorcitos, etc. Su reconocimiento como adultas está mediatizado por todas estas tareas. Una descalificación

- a la mujer es: “esa no sabe tener hijos”. Con más frecuencia que las madres, los padres abandonan el hogar, adquieren vicios, relajan su preocupación por la familia. De ellas se espera que estén asistiendo los hijos, cualquiera sea la situación o circunstancia.” Scribd. (n.d.). Pautas de Crianza Aymará. Scribd. Retrieved April 24, 2023, from <https://www.scribd.com/doc/137670709/Pautas-de-Crianza-Aymara>
- 9 Buvinic, M., Valenzuela, J. P., Molina, T., & Gonzalez, E. (1992). The Fortunes of Adolescent Mothers and Their Children: The Transmission of Poverty in Santiago, Chile. *Population and Development Review*, 18(2), 269–297. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1973680>
 - 10 Scribd. (n.d.). Pautas de Crianza Aymará. Scribd. Retrieved April 24, 2023, from <https://www.scribd.com/doc/137670709/Pautas-de-Crianza-Aymara>
 - 11 Scribd. (n.d.). Pautas de Crianza Aymará. Scribd. Retrieved April 24, 2023, from <https://www.scribd.com/doc/137670709/Pautas-de-Crianza-Aymara>
 - 12 Scribd. (n.d.). Pautas de Crianza Aymará. Scribd. Retrieved April 24, 2023, from <https://www.scribd.com/doc/137670709/Pautas-de-Crianza-Aymara>
 - 13 Chile. Countries and Their Cultures. (n.d.). Retrieved April 24, 2023, from <https://www.everyculture.com/Bo-Co/Chile.html>
 - 14 “Traditional Mapuche education was rooted in the family daily routine. The concepts of building knowledge or “to learn by doing” took form in labor, social, cultural and productive actions that Mapuche people developed, in which the teaching – learning process involved different family members, where the main methodological aspect was centered in communication.” Trabol, H. L., Pi, O. R., & Brice, C. (n.d.). Traditional Mapuche Education. Traditional Mapuche education. Retrieved April 24, 2023, from <https://immi.se/oldwebsite/nr16/llanquinao.htm>
 - 15 One study found this to be so because of “social rejection as well as to economic deprivation” Buvinic, M., Valenzuela, J. P., Molina, T., & Gonzalez, E. (1992). The Fortunes of Adolescent Mothers and Their Children: The Transmission of Poverty in Santiago, Chile. *Population and Development Review*, 18(2), 269–297. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1973680>
 - 16 Chileans of Mapuche backgrounds usually work in poorly paid jobs with little or no prestige— as nannies or cleaners or in construction. Since the restoration of democratic rule in the country in 1990 tensions between Mapuche organizations in southern Chile and the state have increased. Mapuches have strongly protested against discrimination and demanded the return of their ancestral land. In addition, some of them have participated in violent actions directed against the exploitation of native forests by large timber enterprises and the construction of water dams in their historical homeland. This increasing conflict, however, has not altered the traditional pacific nature of ethnic relations between Mapuches and the rest of the population because the Mapuche reaction is not directed against Chileans but against the national authorities.”

NOTES CONT.

Chile. Countries and Their Cultures. (n.d.). Retrieved April 24, 2023, from <https://www.everyculture.com/Bo-Co/Chile.html>

17 Alarcón, A. M., Castro G., M., Astudillo D., P., & Nahuelcheo S., Y. (2018). LA PARADOJA ENTRE CULTURA Y REALIDAD - THE PARADOX BETWEEN CULTURE AND REALITY: EL ESFUERZO DE CRIAR NIÑOS Y NIÑAS MAPUCHE EN COMUNIDADES INDÍGENAS DE CHILE. *Chungara: Revista de Antropología Chilena*, 50(4), 651–662. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26667939>

18 Alarcón, A. M., Castro G., M., Astudillo D., P., & Nahuelcheo S., Y. (2018). LA PARADOJA ENTRE CULTURA Y REALIDAD - THE PARADOX BETWEEN CULTURE AND REALITY: EL ESFUERZO DE CRIAR NIÑOS Y NIÑAS MAPUCHE EN COMUNIDADES INDÍGENAS DE CHILE. *Chungara: Revista de Antropología Chilena*, 50(4), 651–662. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26667939>

19 Buvinic, M., Valenzuela, J. P., Molina, T., & Gonzalez, E. (1992). The Fortunes of Adolescent Mothers and Their Children: The Transmission of Poverty in Santiago, Chile. *Population and Development Review*, 18(2), 269–297. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1973680>

20 Mothers in other studies have expressed thoughts such as “her reliance on her mother gives her mother control over her.” Nelson, M. K. (2006). Single Mothers “Do” Family. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 68(4), 781–795. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4122872>

21 “The cultural idea of nuclear family dampens extended family ties.” Sarkisian, N. (2006). “Doing Family Ambivalence”: Nuclear and Extended Families in Single Mothers’ Lives. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 68(4), 804–811. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4122875>

22 Nelson, M. K. (2006). Single Mothers “Do” Family. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 68(4), 781–795. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4122872>

23 “They want to be loved by their mothers, and they want their mothers to love their children. As new mothers, they want to develop their own style of childrearing and to have those styles supported and even, perhaps, applauded by their mothers even if their mothers do not approve them. They also want, and need, support for the difficult job of raising young children without a father. They are grateful to their mothers for stepping in, even as they want to limit their mothers’ involvement. In these multigenerational settings, doing family involves simultaneously building on an earlier mother-daughter relationship so as to get needed support and disrupting that relationship and reestablishing it on different footing.”

24 She faced some judgement from her mother and sisters for this belief, but maintained that “it takes time to get to know somebody. And when the time comes, I’ll do it. Yeah, yeah, yeah. One day, Mom, I’ll give you grandkids or whatever. Don’t rush it.” This insistence on continuing the family line is part of the perceived next step of the life cycle for many people, for a variety of reasons. One is the expectation, especially in cultures that aren’t American, of kids taking care of their parents as they age, which inadvertently implies the necessity of having

kids to take care of the next generation as they age. This is evident within almost all of the Chilean families interviewed, as well as many 2/3 american immigrant families. Even without being a single mother, the intergenerational housing structure is more common in Latin America and elsewhere in the world, because of cultural values as well as incompetent health care or social protection available to older adults. A study conducted in Chile about their system concluded that “the family has the main responsibility of caring for, supporting and protecting older adults. Intergenerational relationships play a significant role as a result of the limited coverage offered by the social protection system as well as the traditional multigeneration culture of care, preferably among Latin American indigenous older people.” It was almost instinctual for Shený to live with her mom all of her life, as she mentions that she never had plans to leave her.

25 Buvinic, M., Valenzuela, J. P., Molina, T., & Gonzalez, E. (1992). The Fortunes of Adolescent Mothers and Their Children: The Transmission of Poverty in Santiago, Chile. *Population and Development Review*, 18(2), 269–297. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1973680>

26 Intergenerational living is also typically more common in Chile and other Hispanic countries as opposed to the United States. In the United States, “by 1900, one half of adults aged sixty-five and older lived in a multigenerational household. Then, in the period after World War II, the prevalence of the extended family household declined. In 1940, about a quarter of the population lived in such a household, and by 1980, just over 10 percent did. Today, extended families sharing a household remains relatively uncommon (although slightly higher than rates in the 1980s). A range of shifts likely contributed to this decline, among them the rapid growth of the nuclear-family-centered suburbs; and the sharp rise in the health, economic well-being, and autonomy of adults aged sixty-five and older resulting from the enactment of social programs such as Social Security and Medicare and improvements in medical care.”

27 since including the transmission of social class, since “father’s abandonment occurred more frequently in the poorest families Buvinic, M., Valenzuela, J. P., Molina, T., & Gonzalez, E. (1992). The Fortunes of Adolescent Mothers and Their Children: The Transmission of Poverty in Santiago, Chile. *Population and Development Review*, 18(2), 269–297. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1973680>

28 Nelson, M. K. (2006). Single Mothers “Do” Family. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 68(4), 781–795. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4122872>

“A FAMILY, ANY
FAMILY, IS A SOCIAL
CONSTRUCTION, OR A
SET OF RELATIONSHIPS
RECOGNIZED, EDIFIED,
AND SUSTAINED
THROUGH HUMAN
INITIATIVE. PEOPLE
‘DO’ FAMILY,
BUT ALL OF US,
REGARDLESS OF
THE FAMILY FORM
WE INHERIT OR
CREATE, MUST WORK
TO SUSTAIN THESE
RELATIONSHIPS”

(Nelson, 2006)