

Feeling Their Way: Four Men talk about Fatherhood in Valparaíso, Chile.

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Who did I talk to?

Why did I want to
talk to them?

How did I go about
it?



Monica: And... did you plan to have your daughter?

Luis: Yes. I mean, the first... actually, no.

Monica & Luis: Hahaha

Luis: The daughter just appeared. But it was like, we just didn't protect ourselves. Like I, wanted to have a daughter and...

Monica: And you didn't worry about, you didn't think about getting pregnant at all...

Luis: Well, we were sure that she was going to get pregnant. But it was the first time that we did it... ok, whatever happens, happens. So, it happened... (2009 pers. comm., 17 Mar.)



“At that time, I was a punk. I went around with my clothes all ripped up, and my hair standing up like this...

Monica: Really?

Rai: Yup. Totally unpresentable. So [my pregnant girlfriend's] family was really angry... her mother, her aunties, her brother... And they banned her from seeing me when she got pregnant. And it was really crazy because we had to meet up in secret...



...But it was too stressful for her. So, one day we decided to stop seeing each other, because, it wasn't good for her pregnancy. And I couldn't find out anything about her, they changed their phone number, it was like, she disappeared. In those days, her brother also chased me around trying to smash me up!

Monica: Her brother?

Rai: Yup. I had to run away from him a couple of times. And... I didn't hear anything more of her until my son was born. Well, it was pretty weird because they gave him [the same name as] the brother who chased me around trying to smash me up!" (2009 pers. comm., 14 Apr.)



“Her father spoke to me. “Hey, we don’t need a father for the child.” Like that. And, I felt really bad. That was the first time I went to her house” (2009 pers. comm., 9 Apr.).



“I always missed my first child, I wanted to go and see him but there was no money.

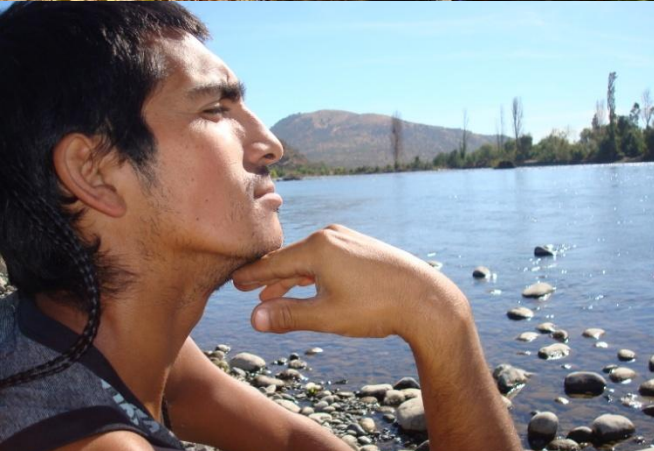
And just then there was a friend who helped me out a lot.... And he's a father and he told me, “You know what Ángel? Your son is going to feel really bad... If you're going to wait till you have money to see him, maybe you'll never have that money and you'll never see him, you'll lose him...” And so I set out with my [second] son to see him. I mean, I did make some money but you know that life is expensive here in Chile...”



Monica: And you felt like you needed more money, so you could give it to your child?

Ángel: Yeah. And even then, giving him money just one time, it wouldn't be like stability for always, like every week or every month. Because I didn't make so much money. So I travelled like that with, just the coins I needed to travel... and but the most important was to see him, you know?

And... I went with [my second son] to ask for his forgiveness. [My second son] was four years old. And [my first son] was five. And so that was the most amazing moment of my life. The happiest... The two of them together, and me, asking forgiveness and recognising him and loving him... And it was incredible. And I was with him, for his birthday party, we went out on a boat... (2009 pers. comm., 9 Apr.).



Luis: Umm... I don't know after talking with you the other day, I did start feeling like, more calm about it, and... and it makes me think that, after all I did do a lot of things, for example, with the whole thing about my daughter. I did a lot of things to be with her...

So I feel comfortable about the issue, because I'm not... I'm not an exemplary father... But, on the other hand, I didn't just abandon my daughter. Because I tried to, to make it work. And I tried more than once. So... although at the same time I think that, I don't know, a thousand times is not enough... (2009 pers. comm., 23 Mar)



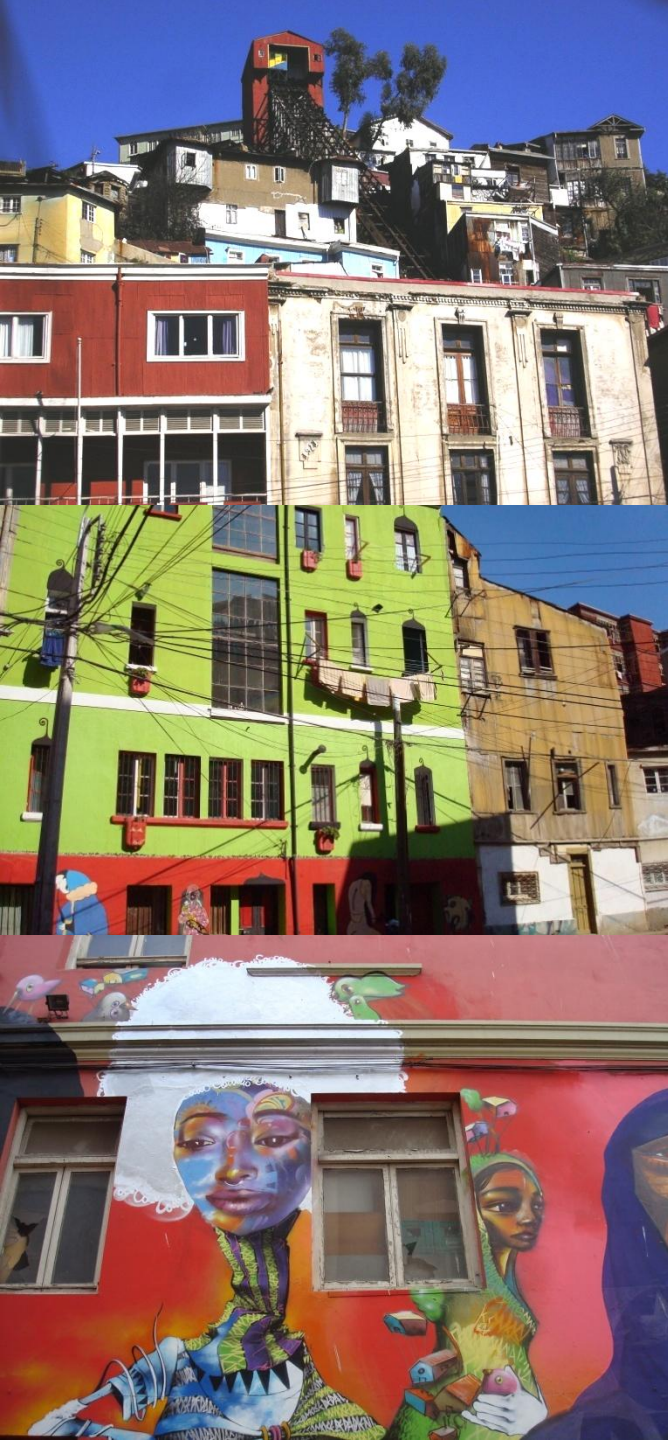
“You know when [my girlfriend] told me, you know what, she’s a friend, who’s doing a study, and all that, I said, no, you know what, first of all people who go round doing studies really annoy me (haha), people who go round analyzing things as if they were a, I don’t know what, you know? And on top of that someone from overseas, especially someone from Europe, so it was like, or from Oceania in this case, like, far out, I was really reluctant.

But, all that reluctance is over for me when I get to know somebody. That’s why I had all this reluctance, and said no, and all that, but then I said ok, cool, bring her here. Let me talk to her. Right? Let me figure her out...



...And from there, straight away, a direct relationship is created. That is, to me, when I'm talking with you, you stop being a New Zealander, you stop being a woman, you stop being everything you could be physically, materially, and I start to talk with you directly.

Like, you are you, you are not your body, nor anything else, so (haha), you aren't either a New Zealander or a woman to me, but someone who is sharing something. That's all" (2009 pers. comm., 29 May).



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