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HOPE FOR THE FATHERLESS ?:  
A GROUNDED INTERPRETIVE STUDY

by

Anna Manja Larcher

A thesis submitted to the faculty of

Brigham Young University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Masters of Science

Department of Psychology

Brigham Young University

April 2007

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

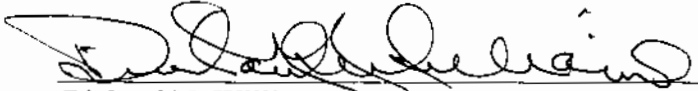
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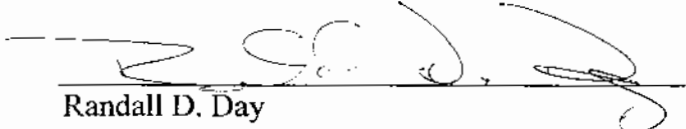
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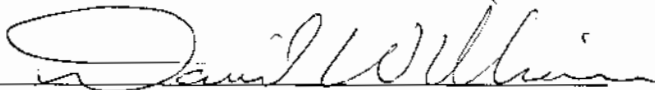
1-19-07  
Date

  
Richard N. Williams, Chair

1-19-07  
Date

  
Randall D. Day

1-19-07  
Date

  
David D. Williams

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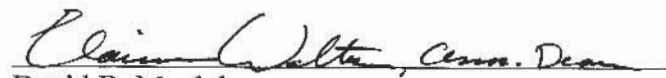
06 February 2007  
Date

  
Richard N. Williams  
Chair, Graduate Committee

Accepted for the department

  
Ramona Hopkins  
Department Chair

Accepted for the college

  
David B. Magleby  
Dean, College of Family, Home, and Social  
Sciences

## ABSTRACT

### HOPE FOR THE FATHERLESS?: A GROUNDED INTERPRETIVE STUDY

Anna Manja Larcher

Department of Psychology

Masters of Science

Psychology's literature regarding fatherlessness is not only grim, mainly pointing out the negative consequences of fatherlessness, but it also does not provide much specific information about fatherless individuals' experiences. A pilot study revealed that fatherless individuals do not always suffer from the loss of their father and that they also have the ability to overcome the negative consequences commonly associated with father loss. The research questions for this study presented themselves naturally after reviewing the literature and after considering the results of my pilot study, namely, "What do fatherless individuals actually experience in being fatherless, and what is the nature of the experience of being fatherless in people who seem to display successful coping and resilience?" Phenomenology and the Grounded Interpretive research method were employed to explore in depth the lived experience of three participants.

My interviews show that cultural, family, and educational background and the individual's interpretations of his or her situation significantly contributed to how

fatherlessness was experienced. In contrast to the generally grim literature on fatherlessness, the results of the present study suggest that the consequences of fatherlessness do not have to be as grim as they are generally portrayed. While fatherlessness is difficult, there is hope for the fatherless in that they can overcome the negative implications of their situation—a finding that contributes to a more holistic understanding and a perspective of fatherlessness that has not yet been sufficiently documented by the literature.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a *perfect brightness of hope*, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life  
(Book of Mormon, 2 Nephi 31:20).

Writing a Master's thesis or finishing any big project like that, is a trial of faith, patience, and endurance. I would have never been able to arrive at the finishing-line without the considerable support of many friends. First, I would like to thank my mother for sacrificing all she could to let me leave Austria and go to the far away United States to obtain a better education. Brigham Young University has enriched my life especially in strengthening me spiritually and in helping me better learn about my larger gospel-family, tradition, roots, and culture. I am grateful for the many individuals known and unknown, who, in living the gospel of Jesus Christ, have sacrificed financially to make stipends, scholarships, and reduced tuition at Brigham Young University possible. I also have always felt great gratitude for Brigham Young. With his faith, courage, and vision, he created a place more than a century ago that would become my new home and my possibility for growth. On especially long days or at discouraging times, I looked at Brigham Young's statue in front of the Administration Building, always feeling a reassurance that this was the place for me to be, and wishing to talk to him and express my gratitude for his service to the Lord despite the troubling times he encountered.

The legacy of sacrifice which brought Brigham Young University into existence was exemplified again in my mentor, Richard Williams. Although Vice President and active in other church and family responsibilities, Richard always had time for me and cared for my professional and personal progress. I am grateful for him and his family and the sacrifices they have made for Brigham Young University. I also want to thank Dr. Day and Dr. David Williams for their time, expertise, and friendship.

I want to thank my participants for sharing their story with me. I consider stories of people's personal experiences sacred ground, for these people had to do all of the hard work of living, experiencing, and learning first, before others can learn from them. My participants were the "fresh wind" in the creation of this thesis at a time I began to be exhausted from my work. Their stories are the life-blood of this thesis and everything I had prepared my thesis for over the past years.

Lastly, I want to thank my roommates Amy and Dellitt, the Oak Hills 1st ward, Bishops Parry and Holcombe, Gray's, Warner's, Purcell's, Holland's, Carter's, Calder's, Mugemanchuro's, Jan, Ron, and Lucele for their friendships, encouragement, and the "family" they provided for me away from home.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title page.....	i
Graduate Committee Approval page.....	ii
Final Reading, Approval, and Acceptance page.....	iii
Abstract.....	iv
Acknowledgements.....	v
Table of Contents.....	vi
INTRODUCTION.....	1
LITERATURE REVIEW.....	5
Historical Background of Literature on Fathers and Fathering.....	8
Fathers Matter.....	12
Negative Effects of Father Absence.....	15
Identity, Cognitive, Social, and Educational Development Problems.....	16
Sexual Activity.....	24
Crime and Violence.....	30
The Complex and “Thick” Nature of the Topic of Fatherlessness.....	33
Different Types of Father Loss.....	34
Attachment Literature.....	43
Psychoanalytic Literature.....	49
Socio-Cultural, and Historical Context.....	54
Qualitative Research Accounts.....	74
General Conclusion.....	83
CONCEPTUAL JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY.....	86
Pilot Study.....	91
Qualitative and Grounded Interpretive Research.....	95
METHOD.....	104
Recruiting Questionnaires.....	105
Data Collection.....	106
A Formal Psychological Account.....	119
MELINDA.....	121
EVA.....	133
DAVID.....	148
DISCUSSION.....	161
CONCLUSIONS.....	180
References.....	186
Appendix A.....	220
Appendix B.....	222
Appendix C.....	224
Appendix D.....	225
Appendix E.....	226

## INTRODUCTION

Much has been written in various disciplines about the topic of fatherlessness (Gouke & Rollins, 1990). Through my training in psychology, I have become increasingly aware of the predominantly negative implications of fatherlessness in the literature. In contemporary psychology (Holman, 1998; Kelly, 2000; Lykken, 1998; Trowell & Etchegoyen, 2002; Quinlan, 2003) and especially the popular literature (e.g. Blankenhorn, 1995; Popenoe, 1996), authors for example have often addressed the importance of fathering and the tragic implications of father-absence in childrearing. Being myself fatherless, I have experienced first hand some of the negative implications of the situation; however, my experience has shown me that there are many important lessons to be learned and that one can find ways to cope with and grow from being fatherless. In other words, I have not experienced fatherlessness as a hopeless situation.

In going through the current literature on fatherlessness for the present study, I observed that it not only is relatively grim, mainly pointing out the negative consequences of fatherlessness, especially the dropping of the performance level and chances for achievement of those who are fatherless, but I have also observed that the information about fatherlessness in psychology's literature does not provide much specific information about the greater context of participant's experiences. For example, in getting acquainted with the literature, I found countless articles generalizing about fatherless individuals to more likely committing crime, being violent, socially, cognitively, and educationally impaired, or sexually promiscuous. I found little in the literature that would resonate with my own experience of being fatherless, which was much less traumatizing, and when taking a deeper look at articles, I found little that even

helped me understand the experiences of the individuals from whom that grim data about fatherlessness was derived. The literature revealed little about the feelings and thoughts of fatherless individuals and thus, according to my judgment, the real reasons and dynamics for the grim outcomes and conclusions about fatherlessness in general. This experience with the literature resulted in my primary research question: What do fatherless individuals actually experience in being fatherless?

I hypothesized that the grim nature of the literature and its limitation in not providing more specific information about experience and context were related. I assumed that by looking at fatherlessness through more contextual, qualitative research, one might not only find more of the connections among, and causes for, the problems generally associated with fatherlessness, but one might also be able to find themes showing individuals' resilience and accomplishments of successful coping in the face of fatherlessness. Such themes, I assumed, would emerge by looking at how fatherlessness was co-created by the fatherless in their way of interpreting and making choices about dealing with their experience rather than through a framework of assuming a fairly diverse group of individuals necessarily being subject to pre-assumed and pre-conceptualized effects of their condition.

A pilot study revealed that I was right on the above points. In-depth interviews with six fatherless individuals showed intricate cause and effect relationships between the participants', for example, cultural, family, educational background and their experience and interpretation of fatherlessness, and added more to my understanding of fatherlessness than the general literature on fatherlessness had. Two of the participants' accounts revealed themes of successful coping, and reconciliation with their experience

in that they, for example, saw themselves as having grown more independent than their peers or that they never felt great loss because of what their mother made of the situation. Differing external circumstances and individual interpretations of these individual's life events, thus showed to have a strong influence on how fatherlessness was experienced and reported about. In contrast to the generally grim literature on fatherlessness, these accounts showed that fatherlessness can be viewed from a more hopeful point of view.

This thesis seeks to provide insight into a particular, in the literature yet neglected side of the experience of fatherlessness by providing some answers to the question, the nature, and the possibility of such hope for the fatherless in two ways: 1) By providing a sample and an assessment of the existing literature on fatherlessness, of the ways in which fatherlessness has been studied, and of what picture has generally been construed about fatherlessness. 2) By contrasting that literature to the voice of three fatherless individuals who have demonstrated success and growth in their life. I employed the Grounded Interpretive research method to explore the experience of these individuals. The Grounded Interpretive research approach (Addison, 1997) is a combination of traditional Phenomenology, Grounded Theory, and a hermeneutic approach to Grounded Theory. While my study for the most part is a phenomenology, which looks at the lived experience of fatherlessness, I borrowed Grounded Theory's approach to organizing and analyzing data. I believe interpretation to be central to every step of the study of fatherlessness and therefore have leaned heavily on Addison's (1997) hermeneutical approach to Grounded Theory research.

Conclusions of both my analysis of the literature and my research with fatherless individuals provide information that can make an important contribution to our

knowledge about fatherlessness. In the end it appears that there are key elements of the experience of being fatherless that relate to the development of resilience in the face of sometimes very difficult circumstances. More studies need to be done in order to more fully understand the particulars of such experiences of coping and resilience. The most general and important message of this thesis is that hope can be part of the experience of fatherlessness—it is a hope born through an individual's determination to grow from and rise above the constraints of his or her situation. It is a hope that has not yet sufficiently been documented in the literature.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Fatherlessness is a topic that appears in a wide variety of publications. A general search of the keyword “fatherless” in 10 psychology- related databases resulted in 303 references to journal articles, books, newspaper articles, and theses or dissertations. The keyword “father loss” resulted in 222 references and the keyword “father absence” in 1470 references.

Although the subject of fatherlessness is being widely addressed, most accounts provide limited information because they seldom directly address individuals’ experiences of fatherlessness. Most accounts are primarily theoretical speculations (e.g. Main & Goldwyn 1994), narrow experimental studies (e.g. Friedman, Ali & A. McMurphy; 1998; Mackey & Coney, 2000; Mackey & Mackey, 2003), or mere biased summaries of and commentaries on demographic reports about the incidence of fatherlessness (e.g. Blankenhorn, 1995; Popenoe, 1996a; Quinlan, 2003) rather than in-depth, contextual descriptions of the experience itself. In other words, researchers usually study fatherlessness in light of pre-conceived theories, following the traditional scientific research paradigm that guides such inquiry. I do not wish to argue against studying fatherlessness in such ways. However, I propose that studying the experience of father loss itself, as contextually as possible, without pre-conceptualizing or operationalizing it, can yield important information that has thus far largely been missed in the fatherless literature. Currently, the mainstream literature yields mostly theoretical and scientific conclusions about what it means to be fatherless, which may result in overgeneralizations and conclusions regarding key elements of the experience of fatherlessness but not contextually sensitive depictions of the lived experience of

fatherlessness itself. Because of the little insight into the actual, lived experiences of fatherlessness, and thus into the deeply contextual “why’s” and “how’s” of those experiences, accounts of fatherlessness in our current literature tend to be rather fragmented descriptions of what fatherlessness *might* entail, that is, descriptions of fatherlessness merely resemble individual pieces of a big picture that yet has to be assembled. Because little of such insight is provided in the current literature, information about fatherlessness is sometimes contradictory as, for example, in the claims made about the harmful or harmless nature of fatherlessness or the implications of fatherlessness for individuals and society. At the root of the contradictory nature of the literature are differing socio-cultural and political biases and attitudes about fathers which influence research. The underlying bias of the present work is that qualitative, especially phenomenological, studies can bring about enhanced understanding of fatherlessness, which may help harmonize and regulate existing data about fatherlessness by researching the direct context and lived experience of fatherlessness.

A few accounts of the effects of fatherlessness are based on contextual experiences of father loss; however, they are not sufficient in number to create a sufficient picture of what it means to be fatherless. For example, nine qualitative research studies were found in the current literature (Cheyne, 1988; Gaddis, 2003; Hsu, Kahn & Huang, 2002; Medway, 1996; Moore, 1996; Persons, 1990; Sina, 1997; Stokes, 2003; Turnbull, 1991), seven of which were phenomenological studies that look directly at the lived experience of fatherlessness (Gaddis, 2003; Medway, 1996; Moore, 1996; Persons, 1990; Sina, 1997; Stokes, 2003; Turnbull, 1991). Besides these studies, there are some biographical or autobiographical accounts which reveal some aspects about the

context and the experience of fatherlessness (e.g. Erickson, 1998; Kerstenbaum, 1976; Simon, 2001; Youdell, 2002). However, as will be shown below, these latter accounts are problematic because they describe the experience of one or a few individuals and then imply conclusions made from those experiences across the whole population of the fatherless. Such generalization from small data sets is problematic. The present study seeks for a deeper understanding of the experience rather than generalization. That is, generalization of a sort will still be part of this study as in any phenomenology; however, it will be secondary to the inquiry about the experience. In addition, biographical or autobiographical accounts tend to document the experience of fatherlessness with little of the systematization or rigor of qualitative or quantitative research literature that would allow the reader insight into the author's rationale behind his or her observations and conclusions.

As this literature review will show, there has been a major important movement in the general fathering or fatherhood literature, promoting an increased sensitivity towards and understanding of the context or environment and the specific "why's" and "how's" of fathering and father involvement. From my analysis of the available literature, the study of fatherlessness however seems to not yet have caught up with this general important movement, can profit much from looking at some of the developments in the fathering and fatherhood literature. For example, in looking at current conceptualizations and measurements of fatherhood and fathering, one can learn that fatherhood and fathering, as well as father absence or fatherlessness—dimensions of fatherhood and fathering—are complex concepts, rich in possibilities and thick in meaning (e.g. Day & Lamb, 2004; Day, Lewis, O'Brien, Lamb, 2005; Lupton & Barclay, 1997; Marsiglio, Amato, Day, &



Lamb, 2000; Marsiglio & Cohan, 2000; Marsiglio, Day, & Lamb, 2000; Silverstein, 1999, 2002). The assumptions made in this thesis, namely that fragmentation and contradiction about important aspects of fatherlessness can be addressed through an increased sensitivity to context and through methods that can capture the inherent complexity and richness of such context, is demonstrated and supported in recent findings of more contextual fatherhood and fathering research.

### Historical Background of Literature on Fathers and Fathering

Authors who have compared and written on general father research throughout the past and present century, note that real interest in researching fathers only began in the 1940's, when father's long-term absence (due to World War II) elicited questions about children's psychological and physical well-being (Day, et al., 2005; Gills, 2000; Lamb, 2000). Before that, fathers were not really a topic of research in the literature of the Social Sciences. The focus was more on mothers, despite the strong patriarchal nature of families, because fathers were seen as uninvolved in childrearing due to their primary role as breadwinners. General parenting was mentioned in some popular magazines, medical and religious books, journals, and biographies; however, usually they were aimed at telling mothers what to do (cf. Rohner & Venezioano, 2001).

Research about fathers starting in the early years of the 1940's was very basic. Day et al. (2005) mention the example of the early *binary research approach* in which research questions were simply tied to the concept of whether or not the father was present in the home (e.g. Stolz, 1954). Research questions were not so much directed towards the quality and diversity of father involvement (Day et al., 2005, p.8, cf. McHale & Grolnick, 2002). Lamb (2000) mentions that researchers were especially interested in

the quantification of concepts about father involvement/non-involvement because of the emergence and popularity of so called “time-use methods.” These methods simply measured father involvement/non-involvement through an assessment of the amount of time fathers spent or did not spend with their children rather than the quality and diversities of fathers’ relationships with their children. Much of the research during those early years of research was based on psychoanalytic theories in which the father had a central role in shaping sexual and inner-psychological identity and provide family stability. According to Day et al. (2005), the psychoanalytic theory underpinning early research also shows in the basic theorizing behind the research in that psycho-analytic researchers did not pay much attention to the actual father-child relationships. While early father research began in the 1940s, the focus of parenting literature at that time and continuing through the 1950s and 1960s was also still marked by a general preponderance of attention to mothers, or, in other words, fathering was studied through the lenses of motherhood (cf. Gill, 2000; Silverstein, 1999).

In the subsequent twenty to forty years, research became more broad and sophisticated. Marked by more serious research interest in different aspects of fathers and fathering, inquiries examined fathering, fatherhood, and father absence—particularly father absence through divorce— and teen problem behavior, especially including teen violence and teen pregnancies, in light of fathers’ involvement or un-involvement. Research also gained theoretical momentum in that different theoretical models were employed, such as attachment theory (Bowlby, 1988), social learning theory (Bandura, 1977), symbolic interaction and identity theory (e.g. Rane & McBride, 2000), neo-psychoanalytic theory from an Ericksonian perspective (Palkovitz, 1997), social capital

theory (Hofferth, 1999), developmental theory (Parke, 2001), cultural and anthropological change perspectives (Mackey, 1985; Hewlett, 1992), feminist theory (Silverstein, 1996), and family process orientations (Boss, 1986; Day, Gavazzi, & Acock, 2000; cf. Day, et al., 2005). Some of the intensification of the research focus on fathers was due to rising interest in resocializing fathers, and, in part, due to various feminist agendas (see Day et al., 2005; Gills, 2000; Lamb, 2000; Lupton & Barclay, 1997; McHale & Grolnick, 2002; Rohner & Veneziano, 2001. For more detail see socio-cultural and historical section in this literature review).

These developments marked a shift in psychological research, which, along with an increase in political voices and agendas surrounding fathers, and the specialization of different areas of psychological study, eventually led to more context-specific and context-sensitive research questions and methods (Trowell & Etchegoyen, 2002). In other words, the literature and research began to render more context-sensitive information on issues surrounding fathers from the different fields of specialization in psychology. Increasingly deepening divisions on issues surrounding fathering in public debates—including the nature, roles, and essentiality of mothering and/or fathering, the biological versus environmental roots of sexuality, the relationship between family structure and poverty, or the efficiency and desirability of alternative family structures—were incentives for more contextual research, forcing researchers to look at finer contextual differences that would address existing controversies (Daniels, 1998; Day & Lamb, 2004; Lamb, 2000).

According to Day et al. (2005), the binary research approach lasted through the 1970's, however, along with the heightened need for understanding complex and

controversial contextual issues and the increasing richness of theoretical perspectives to guide research, this approach was soon followed by more sophisticated methods (cf. Day & Lamb, 2004). For example, longitudinal studies made rich contributions to the field by observing previously studied variables of fatherlessness across the life-span of individuals (e.g. Cherlin, Furstenberg, Chace-Lansdale, Kiernan, et.al., 1991; Ellis, Bates, Dodge, Fergusson, Horwood, Pettit, & Woodward, 2003; Furstenberg & Kiernan, 2001). Day and Lamb (2004) report that in the 1990s, many researchers interested in fatherhood began to examine large longitudinal and nationally representative datasets that were provided by organizations such as the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSF), the National Survey of Family and Households (NSFH), or the Child Development Supplement (CDS) of the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID). Also national and cross-national research came to the fore (see Hewlett, 1992; Joshi, Cooksey, Wiggins, McCulloch, Verropoulou, & Clarke, 1999, cf. Day & Lamb, 2004; Silverstein, 2002). Surveys, which were able to reveal and broaden socio-cultural, political, and individual themes, also contributed to the expanded conceptualization of fathers and their involvement or non-involvement (Braehler, 2000; Marsiglio et. al., 2000; Marsiglio & Cohan, 2000).

Research with such data-sets not only provided more valuable insight into the developing socio-cultural, political, and economic trends and perceptions about fathering or fatherlessness (Day & Lamb, 2004), but also eventually inspired biographical accounts (e.g. Erickson, 1998; Simon, 2001), narrative accounts (e.g. Dollahite & Hawkins, 1998, Dollahite, Hawkins & Brotherson, 1996), and qualitative analyses intermixed with quantitative analyses (e.g. Cheyne, 1988; Gaddis, 2003; Hsu, et al., 2002; Medway, 1996;

Moore, 1996; Persons, 1990; Sina, 1997; Stokes, 2003; Turnbull, 1991). These research approaches revealed additional dimensions of the “thick,” rich, and complex context of father loss and surfaced ever new and different facets and effects of fatherlessness. (Cheyne, 1988; Marsiglio & Cohan, 2000).

In the following pages, I will sketch what currently and generally is found in the literature on fathering and fatherlessness, while showing some of the threads of early, more basic and subsequent research. I will make reference to the themes that most often emerge about fatherlessness when doing a general search of the literature about this topic. This will include themes such as problems in identity, cognitive, social and educational development, problems with sexual activity, crime and violence, and in more sophisticated and specialized literature, different types of fatherloss, fatherloss through the lenses of attachment, psychoanalysis, socio-cultural and historical literature, and qualitative research. The literature review will not only show some of the most frequently occurring themes, but also examples of some of the added sophistication, contextualization, and conceptualization in fathering and fatherlessness research throughout the past years.

### Fathers Matter

Often mentioned in the current literature is the conclusion that father-presence or absence has important and far-reaching implications for the development of both individuals and society (Amato, 1998; Biller, 1993; Day & Lamb, 2004; Doherty, Kounesky & Erikson, 1998; Furstenberg & Weiss, 2000; Furstenberg & Harris, 1993; Hawkins & Dollahite, 1997; Popenoe, 1996; Rohner & Veneziano, 2001; Snarey, 1993). In other words, fathers matter. While there are different positions on whether or not

fathers are essential and have a distinct biological predisposition to certain care-taking qualities (Day & Lamb, 2004; Pleck, 1997; Silverstein, 2002), it is commonly agreed that higher positive father involvement in child care is associated with higher positive outcomes for children. Often in the literature, father presence is associated with specific child development outcomes and father-absence is associated with negative implications for children's development.

For example, fathers have been shown to be important in helping boys and girls learn how to control emotions and behavior and how to establish a sense of self-control (cf. Biller, 1993, 1997; Lamb, 1997). Fathers have the important job of being role models in teaching their sons male responsibility, achievement, assertiveness, independence, and how to relate to the opposite sex, among other important traits and skills (cf. Biller 1993, 1997; Furstenberg, 2000; Lamb, 1997; Palkovitz, 1997; Palkovitz, 2002). Fathers have also been shown to be important for girls' development in that they especially teach daughters how to relate to men and how to trust in heterosexual relationships (cf. Biller, 1993, 1997; Lamb, 1997; Tessman, 1989; Trowell & Etchegoyen, 2002). Further, from being loved by their fathers, girls learn about intimacy, difference, that they are love-worthy, and they can practice being a woman (cf. Tessman, 1989; Trowell & Etchegoyen, 2002). While learning to appreciate their femininity, girls, like boys, learn assertiveness, independence, achievement, competence, and other important skills from their fathers, including skills for their professional lives (cf. Biller, 1993; Erickson, 1998; Lamb, 1997; Popenoe, 1996; Tessman, 1989).

Fathers are also held to be important because they have a different parenting approach than mothers (Day & Mackey, 1986); an approach evident in their often

different forms of playing and communicating with their children (Day, Lewis, O'Brien, & Lamb, 2005; Lamb & Lewis, 2004; Parke, et al., 2004; Zaouche-Gaudron, Richaud & Beaumatin, 1998). Fathers typically engage in more competitive tests of physical strength and mental skills and they teach control over self, emotions, and behavior (Dickson, 1997; McDonald, 1995; Parke, et al., 2004). Fathers also encourage more initiative and risk taking, more directive, focused and analytical thinking, and more independence than mothers in traditional play and communication with children (McDonald, 1995; Parke, et al., 2004; Ricks, 1985; Roopnarine & Mounts, 1985; Yogman, 1982; Zaouche-Gaudron).

Some studies have identified correlations between fathers' involvement and their children's improved cognitive and verbal skills, improved problem solving ability, and enhanced academic achievement including proficiency in mathematics (Biller & Kimpton, 1997; Bing, 1963; Goldstein, 1982; Hosley & Montemayor, 1997; Radin, 1981, 1986; Yogman, Kindlon & Earls, 1995). Correlations have also been found between fathers' involvement and improved moral sense and spirituality (Day & Lamb, 2004; Dollahite & Hawkins, 1998; Dollahite, Marks, & Olson, 2002; Vitz, 1999). Research also refers to the association between happiness and success in adults' lives—including, happy marriages, mental health, and good relationships with friends—and their experience with involved and caring fathers (Block, 1971, 1993; Franz et al., 1991; Trowell and Etchegoyen, 2002). Fathers are traditionally seen as protecting, providing for their children, helping their children attain self-identity, and make the transition to adulthood in society (cf. Dollahite and Hawkins, 1997).

## Negative Effects of Fatherlessness

If the father is thus seen as a generally important figure in a child's development, it is no surprise that the literature identifies many negative consequences of father absence. Most commonly, the literature on fathering and fatherlessness states that both male and female childrens' development without fathers manifests significant deficits. Such deficits are found in the psychological, social, moral, physical, and economic struggles experienced by many fatherless individuals and families. Developmental impediments in **cognitive** (Book, 2000; Booth & Crouter, 1998; Lifshitz, 1976), **psychological** (Bowlby, 1982; Bowlby, 1988; Erickson, 1998; Gallagher, 1998; Holman, 1998; Kelly, 2000; Lewin, 1994; Main & Goldwyn 1994; Timms, 1991; Trowell, 2002), **physical** (Braehler, 2000; Furstenberg, 2001), **social** (Bowlby, 1982; Bowlby, 1988; Holman, 1998; Main & Goldwyn 1994; Pedersen et. al., 1980; Trowell, 2002), **sexual** (Ellis, Bates, Dodge, Fergusson, Horwood, Pettit, & Woodward, 2003; Furstenberg & Weiss, 2000; Secunda, 1992; Stern, 1984, Quinlan, 3002), **moral** (Bronfenbrenner, 1990) **and spiritual** functioning (Erickson, 1998; Lawton & Bures, 2001; Vitz, 1999) have been reported. Furthermore, father absence has been shown to be related to **identity** crises of all sorts (Bowlby, 1982; Bowlby, 1988; Burgner, 1985; Holman, 1998; Lifshitz, 1976; Main & Goldwyn 1994; Pittman, 1993; Simon, 2001; Target & Fonagy, 2002; Trowell, 2002; Wattenberg, 1993), **educational delays** (Allison & Furstenberg, 1989; Lifshitz, 1976; Elshtain, 1998; McLanahan, 1998; Gallagher, 1998), difficulties in choosing and maintaining a **vocation** (Book, 2000; Simon, 2001), **crime** and **violence** of all sorts (Draper & Harpending, 1982; Friedman, Ali & McMurphy, 1998; Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990; 1982; Holman, 1998; Kotlowitz, 1992; Lykken, 1998, 2000a,b; Miedzian,



1991; Stern, 1984), and **financial problems** in affected families (Eggebeen & Lichter, 1991; Garfinkel & McLanahan, 1986; Lamb, 1986, 1997, 2000; McLanahan, 1998).

*Problems of Identity and Cognitive, Social, and Educational Development*

Lifshitz (1976) and Book (2000) argue that children who have been left fatherless before the age of 7 or 8 have impeded cognitive development and lack differentiation of themselves from their families. They especially lack differentiation from the identified missing parent. Consequently, these children spend much time and energy outside their family in their wider social circles trying to accomplish that differentiation with individuals who resemble the missing contact, and, in turn, miss out on important social contact and identification with their peers. This concentration on the search for identity and lack of contact with peers may lead to social isolation and diminish children's academic accomplishments.

Guidubaldi, Perry, & Nastasi (1987) studied the effects of divorce on over 699 elementary students in America, in which children from two-parent households were compared to children of one-parent (usually single-mother) households. The children from the single-parent households performed significantly worse in areas such as: (1) parents' ratings of [childrens'] hostility towards adults, peer popularity, nightmares, and anxiety, (2) teachers' ratings of school-related behavior and mental health, including dependency, anxiety, aggression, withdrawal, inattention, peer popularity, and self-control, (3) scores in reading, spelling, and math, (4) school performance indices, which included grades in reading and math as well as frequency reports about repeated school grades, (5) physical health ratings, and (6) referral to the school psychologist. The

researchers reported that their study suggested these were all long-term effects of divorce (cf. Emery, 1999).

Judith Musick (1993) wrote that girls:

...deprived of a *stable* relationship with a non-exploitative adult male who loves them, remain developmentally 'stuck,' struggling with issues of security and trust that well-fathered girls have already successfully resolved. The self's voice in these young women may remain fixed on the basic question "What do I need to do, and who do I need to be, to find a man who won't abandon me, as the men in my life and in my mother's life have done?" (p.xx, italics added)

Such unmet and powerful affiliative and dependency needs are then thought to be the cause of these women's having little emotional energy and motivation to invest in school work and further education (Erickson, 1998; Musick, 1993).

Holman (1998) notes that fatherless individuals are more vulnerable to struggling with social relationships, and as a result, more vulnerable to dropping out of school, becoming teen parents, and suffering depression as adults. Erickson (1998), who experienced father loss herself, in her book, *Longing for Dad*, examines some of the underlying forces of such problems. She notes that fear of commitment and intimacy, professional and academic failure, various addictions, and general malaise and melancholy are the primary effects of father loss. She argues that both males and females, although differing in their style of coping with father loss, experience corresponding and interrelated struggles that underlie these effects, namely, decreased self-esteem, fear of abandonment and exaggerated fears of being alone, feeling shame, counter-dependence, problems managing emotions, anger, having the need to control, and problems with trusting. She suggests that these struggles develop within the egocentrism

stage of young infants, in which children gradually learn to differentiate themselves from their mother or father and gradually start recognizing other people's needs.

Simon (2001), an author who also experienced father loss, states that if children during the egocentrism stage fail to learn that they are not the center of the universe, whenever something goes wrong, they will assume that everything is their fault because they expect themselves to be the center of every problem. Additionally, without proper development of abstract thinking between 11 and 16 years of age, individuals cannot make sense of some of their parents' actions, reactions, and responses, which, especially in cases of divorce or abandonment, causes the trauma of unresolved loss (pp.40-42). She notes individuals, who lose their fathers at an early stage of life, and who have little or no memories about the father, may be able to still learn many important life-skills, while constantly wondering what they are missing in a father. There may be a lot of uncertainty and fear of intimacy in both fatherless men and women because of unfamiliarity with men. According to Simon (2001), learning to identify oneself in light of such unfamiliarity takes much time and mental energy (pp.40-46).

Hetherington (1972), in her famous study of girls, fatherless through divorce and death, shows that girls from divorced homes often act overly dependent and promiscuous in interviews with males in contrast to girls who lost their fathers in death and were overly shy. She explains this difference, in part, on the basis of the conclusion that girls from divorced homes perceive that they have to try and win relationships or lose these relationships and such loss would be their fault. In contrast, girls who lost their fathers because of death simply do not want to get too close in a relationship because of a fear that this person might also leave them. This conclusion was made on the basis of

observations that girls from father-present homes and from widowed families showed a higher sense of identity and higher self-esteem than girls from divorced families (Hetherington, 1972). Appelon (1981) reports that daughters who have lost their fathers due to divorce are uniformly distrustful and have difficulties finding an appropriate balance between intimacy and distance in their relationships with men. Both Gallagher (1998) and Wallerstein (1991) observed that adult children of divorce were apprehensive about marriage and sexual intimacy and that the possible effect of divorce on their future children was an anticipated reality for them.

Individuals have a need for knowing where they came from and where they belong, says Erickson (1998). This gives them a sense of identity and understanding of themselves. This sense of identity and belonging is lost if the father is absent, and contributes to many problems within the individual's social relationships. Dependence on loving and caring fathers, according to Erickson (1993), makes independence at a later stage possible. Boys and girls who were not able to depend on loving and caring fathers often deal with father loss by becoming overly dependent on another by loving too much or by alienating themselves from others. Irreconciliation with such issues is manifest in that girls, for example, search for the "perfect man," or they attempt to become "Superwoman"—one who does not love or need others, one who does everything perfectly, and one who expects herself to be able to do everything a woman can do and everything a man can do at the same time (Erickson, 1998, p.119). However, since emotional connectedness is usually a woman's natural disposition, another version of "Superwoman" is found in girls who try to do everything for others without expecting anything for themselves in return. Often, this latter type of woman has relationships with

men who are really little boys “masquerading as grown men” (Erickson, 1998, p.118-119). They become a “mother” to them, which lets them have an emotional connectedness, yet controls safety in an intimacy that only goes one way (Erickson, 1998, p.118-119).

Erickson (1998) argues that father loss is especially hard for girls because of their socialization as relational beings, which typically adds to the fatherless situation an extra portion of egocentrism and shame, whereas men are more trained towards independence, separation and isolation.

Men learn to ignore feelings, and women learn to obsess about how they must have caused the underlying problem of the initial separation between them and the first man in their lives and any separation following. This dependency and lack of self-identity causes women to stay in relationships too long, at their own expense; their father’s literal or emotional absence creates a situation that is ripe for masochism. (Erickson, 1998, p.122)

For boys it is especially important to be validated, or as Erickson (1998) calls it, “anointed” as “man enough” by their fathers (p.110). Without that experience, boys always have to guess what men are like and will likely develop identity problems.

Along with Pittmann (1993), Erickson (1998) argues that identity crises, in which men and women wonder who they are, have resulted from hundreds of years of fatherlessness, in which each generation has passed down less and less emotional connection, wisdom, and love. Problems of social, cognitive, and educational development are related to problems with identity, in which individuals try to compensate and find themselves in ways that impede their overall development and activities.

Turnbull (1991), who acknowledged the co-constructing role of the mother in father absence, writes that a child’s development towards independence can further be thwarted in light of the mother’s ability to mediate father loss. Bereaved mothers, says

Turnbull (1991), often turn inward and lean on their children for support. This behavior of the mother forces her child to mature too quickly; the child grows up fast to be able to help the mother, instead of going through the development appropriate for his or her age. Bograd (1996), who lost her father when she was 14 years old, argues that “the death of a father may rush a child into maturity as she assumes emotional responsibility for her bereaved mother” (cited in Simon, 2001, p.43). However, the child might also regress instead of mature too fast and in that sense also not go through the crucial development that would be appropriate. According to Turnbull (1991), father loss may “urge a growing and increasingly independent young girl into an earlier, more infantilized state, as a means of comforting both her mother and herself” (p.39).

Poverty has also been found to influence the social and educational development of fatherless children (Ellwood, 1988; Garfinkel & McLanahan, 1986). For example, fatherless children’s educational level is often affected because poverty often prevents fatherless families from affording high quality education or additional help such as tutoring (Joshi, et al., 1999). Poor adolescent boys and girls also have difficulties becoming independent at the threshold of adulthood. For example, buying a car, going to college, making down payments on a house, buying furniture for an apartment or finding a co-signer for a bank loan, have been identified to be great challenges for fatherless children (Biblarz, 1993). Young adults, particularly girls, from fatherless homes and family-disrupted homes have been reported to have greater odds of entering low status occupations as opposed to high status occupations; especially if their single mothers were not working themselves (Kiernan, 1996). A direct link between present distributions of occupations in the US and fatherlessness has been shown (Biblarz & Raftery, 1993).

This literature shows that to some extent much of how a child finds his or her own identity and place in life depends on the child's ability to receive material support, but also on the child's ability to experience dependency and individuation in a secure and healthy relationship to both father and mother. It would be informative to have more insight into the conclusions the previous authors made in looking at how development of dependency and individuation processes, and suffering from depression, decreased self-esteem, fear of abandonment, shame, or struggling with social relationships or academic and professional pursuits might be tied to individual experiences of father loss. For example, the experience of children of never-married mothers could be very different from the experiences of children of divorced parents. Poverty might be more visible in homes of young never-married mothers, who perhaps did not have adequate education themselves, compared to homes of divorced mothers.

Hetherington's (1972) study might have been more beneficial had she studied fatherlessness not just through body language (e.g., how close to the male interviewer a girl chose to sit), interactive patterns (e.g., how much a girl talked in comparison to the interviewer), or personality assessment questionnaires, in a very structured and controlled laboratory research, but also through understanding a girl's multi-faceted experience of being fatherless in her daily encounters with the world and in her interpretation thereof. In fact, in her later career, Hetherington states that children from divorced families did not necessarily show themselves to be different from children from non-divorced families (see Hetherington, Bridges & Insabella, 1998, p.33).

Erickson (1998) contributes much insight into what being fatherless entails. Her insights, based on her work as a psychotherapist with fatherless clients, and on her own

experience with fatherlessness, help to connect many of the disparate observations mainstream researchers generally make about fatherlessness. Erickson's (1998) account heavily relies on her insights about individuals' lived experience of fatherlessness, including her own. She relies on experiences lived by the clients she saw in her psychotherapy practice and on the experience she herself had with fatherlessness. However, Erickson (1998) only gives an account of her conclusions about those experiences. She does not give the reader much insight into the narratives she obtained from clients, or her analysis thereof.

Similarly, Simon's (2001) account is based on her own experience of father loss and on interviews she conducted with fatherless individuals. However, she too does not detail these interviews, how she conducted them, or how she analyzed them, especially in light of her own biases resulting from her experience. She only mentions having conducted a study with fatherless individuals and documents her conclusions.

Both, Erickson's (1998) and Simon's (2001) accounts would be more informative were they to actually show some of the content of the interviews they conducted, discuss how the authors set up their research, and how they analyzed their data. Further, the accounts would be more informative were the authors to describe more of their own biases regarding fatherlessness. More insight into the narratives of individual experiences with fatherlessness, in both Simon's (2001) and Erickson's (1998) work, would facilitate better understanding of the contextual relations and details they talk about with regards to the lived experience of fatherlessness. It would give insight into how Erickson (1998) and Simon (2001) came to their conclusions and let the fatherless



speak for themselves through their narratives. They stand as a set of interpretations with little in the way of methodological rigor or clarity.

A careful phenomenological study of the lived experience of fatherlessness could provide valuable insight into the lived experience of being fatherless that both mainstream accounts and the accounts of Erickson (1998) and Simon (2001) are missing. A phenomenological study could show how the consequences of fatherlessness that were mentioned in this section are related to and contextually situated in individuals' lived experience, and it would do so by referring to and showing how these consequences and relations were derived from narrative data in a systematic and rigorous fashion.

### *Sexual Activity*

According to research conducted by Stern, Northman, and Slyck (1984), fatherless individuals, especially adolescent males, are more prone to problems with alcohol and drugs, and increased, early sexual activity than the average individual. Furstenberg and Weiss (2000) found that young men who did not grow up living with their own fathers or stepfathers were more likely to father children early, both during their teen years and early 30s. Furthermore, boys whose fathers did not live in residence with them throughout childhood also were less likely, as they became young fathers themselves, to live with their children (Furstenberg & Weiss, 2000).

A large-scale study of the National Survey of Family Growth (1982) by Sara McLanahan (1988) and McLanahan and Bumpass (1988), which looked at women from age 15-44, shows that women who spend part of their childhoods in single-mother families and especially women whose mothers' divorced in their early teenage years, were more likely to marry and bear children early, give birth before marriage, and have

their own marriages break up than women who spent their childhoods in two-parent families. Other studies report similar observations, arguing that father deprivation, especially for girls' development in heterosexual relationships, markedly affects sexual behavior often resulting in promiscuous sexual relations and teen pregnancy (Ellis, Bates, & Dodge et al., 2003; Erickson, 1998; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994; Quinlan, 2003; Secunda, 1992).

Secunda (1992) explains that fatherless women may become sexually active prematurely because they are trying to compensate for the lost intimate relationship with a father. However, they also fear intimacy, with a common inability to trust and believe that a man will not go away (Secunda, 1992). Blankenhorn (1995) explains that girls who grew up with *loving* fathers develop a sense of self-worth and autonomy, which makes them "less likely to engage in an anxious quest for male approval or to seek male affection in order to find themselves through promiscuous sexual behavior" (p.46). He notes that a lack of development of such self-worth and autonomy and loss of the trust and love of the first man in a young woman's life "cannot be replaced by money, friends, teachers, social workers, or well-designed public policies aimed at helping her. She simply loses. Moreover, as more and more girls grow up without fathers, society loses" (Blankenhorn, 1995, p.48).

Women who grew up without fathers are also often reported to lack sexual confidence and satisfaction (Fisher, 1989; Ojanlatva, Helenius & Rautava, 2003; Secunda, 1992; Wallerstein, 1991). Fisher (1989), who researched the psychological aspects of the later sexual potency of fatherless girls, states that sexual difficulties to a great extent stem from a preoccupation with fear of loss—fear of losing something that is

love-giving but not dependable. Fathers thus are seen not only to reinforce sexual inhibition, they also contribute to adult women's later level of sexual potency (Wallerstein, 1991).

Popenoe (1996), in his book *Life Without Father*, states:

For girls whose fathers are not involved, many positive character and personality traits fail to be developed. Girls deprived of *strong* relationships with their fathers tend to grow up with the perception that men are irresponsible and untrustworthy. As adolescents, they commonly become obsessed with heterosexual relationships. In a desperate search for substitute forms of male affection, some have inappropriate sexual contacts, become overly dependent on men, and allow men to take advantage of them

Men who have experienced a distant, rejecting, or absent father have been reported to possess a highly conflicted sense of masculinity, presumably because they have integrated the unresolved picture of the father within themselves (Osherson, 1986). Such men often engage in non-committal sexual relationships in an attempt to bolster their sense of masculinity. However, they are typically unable to engage in and maintain real intimacy (Erickson, 1998). On the other hand, it is also been noted that "men who did not have fathers to initiate them into manhood become very dependent on women to take care of them and even to define them" (Erickson, 1998, p.114).

While these findings might well apply to some individuals who are fatherless they certainly cannot be generalized to all fatherless individuals. For example, there certainly are fatherless adolescents who do not engage in early and promiscuous sexual behavior. There are many different reasons for and types of father loss, involving a wide variety of situational and cultural influences which make fatherlessness as diverse as are the individuals who are fatherless. While father presence might foster sexual maturity and discretion, as the literature suggests, father absence thus does not automatically have to

lead to sexual promiscuity. The above authors' conclusions, especially Blankenhorn's (1995) and Popenoe's (1996) conclusions, which suggest that fatherless individuals do struggle with such behaviors, might thus overgeneralize and, thereby, ignore individuals who through, for example, religious commitments, parental upbringing, or support from the surrounding family or community, do not engage in premarital or promiscuous sexual activity. Authors supporting such notion would be Silverstein and Auerbach (1999, 2000), who argue that men are not essential for a child's sexual development and sexual identity and that sexual development can be done under a variety of parent-types, such as, for example, step parents or gay and lesbian parents. Also influencing the analysis and report of sexual development and identity in fatherless individuals is a factor Day and Lamb (2004) have been attentive to, namely, that a general conceptualization of father involvement has changed over the last years. The notion of fathers being responsible for children's sexual development, for example, shows a Freudian influence that is 30-40 years old and outdated (Day & Lamb, 2004). McLanahan (1988) acknowledges that the type of single-parenthood and age at the time of parent's separation play a role in whether or not a person engages in pre- and extra marital sexual behavior.

Some authors, analyzing traditional science's mode of generalizing, have argued that it is risky to generalize the role a father has in his child's development to particular problems of individuals who do not have a father. Generalizations such as these easily become over-generalizations (Britton, 1998; Limentani, 1991; Youdell, 2002).

Quantitative research, in order to generalize, focuses away from context and toward general explanations. The risk in generalizing lies primarily in losing the very connections that made the generalization meaningful. Another reason to be cautious

about generalizing lies in that we are not yet aware of the many possible intricate contextual details of individuals' experiences with fatherlessness that would allow us to confidently make such generalizations and inferences. While fatherlessness is as diverse as individuals who are fatherless, and while it is difficult for us to know of all of the factors that contribute to this diversity, shared characteristics of the experience of fatherlessness can emerge from qualitative research. In contrast to the generalizations made in quantitative research, in which the meaning of that which we generalize becomes less contextual, generalizations made in qualitative research are based on richer contextual data. Qualitative data is not derived from hypothetical speculations about the experience of fatherlessness surveyed across many individuals, but through direct and in-depth inquiry into individually lived experiences of fatherlessness and shown in the particular contexts that accompany those experiences (Kvale, 1996).

A phenomenological study would investigate why and in what context fatherless individuals might engage in early, promiscuous sexual activity by focusing on behavior as an expression of the meaning of their fatherlessness and of their relationships with others here and now. Phenomenology and similar qualitative forms of research that do not rely on establishing causal explanations, do not seek to fit a subject's lived experience into previously established causal categories so as to establish, for example, a causal relationship between fatherlessness and sexual behavior. Rather, they seek to illuminate the meaningful relationship between father loss and sexuality by admitting the relevance of many other factors that not immediately seem to have anything to do with fatherlessness. In other words, phenomenological and similar qualitative approaches would seek to understand the meaning of both fatherlessness and sexuality by attending

carefully to the lived experience of real persons in real situations and carefully emoting more general discourses about fatherlessness and its infusion into daily life from the information gleaned from those persons and situations.

Differences in what kind of fathers were lost and in what type of loss might also affect adolescent susceptibility to problem sexual behaviors. Authors such as Blankenhorn (1995), Popenoe (1996), McLanahan and Sandefur (1994), and Musick (1993) make a problematic inference when they say that father loss (including all types of fathers) influences a child's early promiscuous sexual development and then explain this result by appealing to data of individuals who have missed out on *strong* or *stable* relationships with fathers and lost *loving* fathers (including strong, loving, or stable types of fathers). Father loss and loss of a strong, loving, or stable father is not necessarily the same thing and neither are the consequences. For example, there is a qualitative difference for a girl who loses a *good relationship* to the "first man in her life" (Blankenhorn, p.48) and a girl who loses a relationship with the first man in her life who perhaps was abusive. In the latter case, the girl might actually not "simply lose" (Blankenhorn, p.48) but gain. Furthermore, in both scenarios even more qualitative differences might be introduced if the fathers originally lived with these girls and then were lost through divorce, abandonment, or death.

Qualitative research generally has the potential to get at such intricate meanings of the experience of father loss in that it deals with the rich descriptions of behavior of individuals studied in their lived experiences rather than data aggregated from a number of anonymous subjects.

### *Crime and Violence*

It has been argued that the increase of crime and violence, beginning in the 1960s and continuing into the present, is a result of the increase in dysfunctional one-parent families and father absence (Lykken, 1998, 2000 a, b). Tracy, Wolfgang, & Figlio (1990) report that the crime rate in the U.S. went up by 128% between 1983 and 1990, with crimes increasingly being committed by juveniles. Although, as Free (1991) suggests, there is no evidence to say fatherlessness conclusively causes juvenile crimes to rise, nevertheless there is a strong relationship between family structure and increasing violence and delinquency. According to social analysts Kamark and Galston (1990), the relationship between family structure and crime is so strong that controlling for family configuration erases the relationship between race and crime and between low income and crime. Wells & Rankin (1991) found delinquency to be represented in broken homes 10-15% more often than in two-parent homes.

Authors have reported that there is a strong positive relationship between children's lack of growing up with fathers in their early years, especially due to out-of-wedlock births, and the rates of violent crimes in the community. This relationship was not found for children fatherless through divorce and authors attribute it to the early imprinting experiences through the potentially increased availability of interactions and sociability with fathers before the divorce. In other words, infants who did not bond with male adults at an early stage were more likely to develop anti-social behavior (Adams, Milner, & Schrepf, 1984; Bereczkei & Csanaky, 1996; Coney & Mackey, 1998; Demo & Acock, 1988; Shears, Robinson, Emde, 2002; Shek & Ma, 2001; Yang, 2004). An increase in juvenile delinquency linked to anti-social attitudes and behavior has

especially been observed in unattached individuals, that is, individuals who did not form attachments to fathers (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). Juvenile delinquency has also been linked to behavior problems occurring in the development of fatherless boys in relating to their opposite sex parent. Learning to relate to the opposite sex parent is an already bumpy road for children growing up in traditional intact families, but the difficulties are increased if there is no same-sex parent who can appropriately mentor the child into adulthood (Peterson & Zill, 1986).

Warren Holman (1998), quoting several authors who have written on violence caused by fatherlessness, explains the increase of crime and violence in terms of children's and adolescents' psychosocial dysfunction. These children and adolescents, states Holman (1998), are "vulnerable to developing emotional problems" and are "unhappy and aimless and strike back with pathological behavior and violence (p.101-102)." Further, Holman (1998) notes fatherless adolescents are more prone to identity formation crises and personal insecurity because of the absence of the role model of the father in which they are also missing a piece of themselves. These kids, states Holman (1998), look to peers in forming an identity and are especially susceptible to peer-pressure, which may set the stage for crime and violence. In citing one particular study, Holman (1998) relates that a group of boys without fathers exhibited rejection of authority, especially authority imposed by females (Draper & Harpending, 1982). These boys showed exaggerated masculinity in overcompensating for insecure masculine sex-role identification, rejection and denigration of femininity, interpersonal aggressiveness, and exploitive attitudes towards females in which sexual contact was seen as a conquest



to validate masculinity (Holman 1998; cf. Anderson, 1994; Draper & Harpending, 1982; Whiting & Whiting, 1975).

Phenomenological studies looking at the experience of fatherlessness could provide deeper insight into individual experiences and, thereby, shed light on what might lead them to delinquent actions. In so doing, previous author's statements about fatherless children's psychological dysfunction, emotional problems, unhappiness, aimlessness, identity crises and insecurity (Holman, 1998; Demo & Acock, 1988), references to anti-social attitudes of unattached individuals (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990), and exaggerated masculinity (Anderson, 1994; Draper & Harpending, 1982; Holman 1998), could be seen as consequences of particular experiences that might or might not be strongly linked to father loss.

Holman (1998) provides an excellent example of what could become a phenomenological approach to researching fatherlessness. The author describes how he lets children and youth establish a relationship with their lost father in writing to their father in a fatherbook. Most of the fathers never see these entries. However, the children and youth can work through anger and frustration about their father loss and regulate emotions by describing how they experience the loss. The Fatherbook, as intervention in assessing and processing emotions associated with fatherloss, emulates phenomenological research in that individuals give an account of their lived experience of their father loss and readers of these accounts have insight into rich and differing contextual descriptions of fatherlessness and its consequences for the individual. Holman (1998) reports that this practice has helped children to find ways to cope in their writing, which has reduced chances that these children will become juvenile delinquents and

increased the chances of individuals taking their own life into their own hands. Holman (1998) states that the narratives found in those father books give enlightening insights to what these individuals experience about their father loss.

### The Complex and “Thick” Nature of the Topic of Fatherlessness

A whole new and still growing body of literature in specialized branches and focus-areas of psychology, with literature focusing on particular aspects of fathering and fatherlessness, emerging in the 1970’s and continuing to the present, demonstrates some of the inherent “thickness” and complexity of phenomena such as fathering and father loss. In the following pages, I will introduce and illustrate such “thickness” and complexity in five specific areas of the literature: (1) research looking at the different types of father loss; (2) attachment literature; (3) psychoanalytic literature; (4) literature about the socio-cultural, historical, and ideological context of fatherlessness; and (5) qualitative research literature. This total body of literature makes evident the fact that fathering and father loss are complex and thick topics which lend themselves to interpretations from various viewpoints—some of which overlap yet never come together into a coherent picture, and some of which seem to contradict each other. Some of the fragmentation in the literature on fatherlessness comes from not knowing enough about the context in which arguments on the topic are made. This is so because arguments are often mostly generalizations about observations made across many contexts which disregard the more specific, in-depth context. When reading the following section, one may still feel that some of the arguments are problematic overgeneralizations notwithstanding the fact that more context is presented. However, what I intend to show is that through the increased contextuality and complexity surrounding the following

arguments, readers are given more alternative viewpoints for understanding fatherlessness. What might emerge out of such alternative viewpoints and understandings of fatherlessness is an understanding that fatherless individuals have, as diverse as their circumstances are, diverse roles in and opportunities for interpreting, making meaning of, and thereby determining what their experience will be like. That is, a perspective of different and more complex aspects of fatherlessness may possibly open us to viewing fatherlessness less in light of pre-conceived, pre-determined variables which govern the experience of fatherlessness, and more in light of the many possible alternatives present in the experience, as a circumstance that could mean many things based on how a fatherless individual may chose to make sense of his or her own experience.

#### *Different Types of Father Loss*

Day & Lamb (2004) note that family research in the 1980s started to examine at the implications of divorce on families and children. Lamb (1986, 1997, 2000), who summarized some of those implications, suggests that father-absence through divorce may create work-overload problems in childcare, housework, and leisure activities, and economic distress—all of which may create additional levels of distress to the already difficult situation of fatherlessness (see also Furstenberg, 1991). The actual or perceived abandonment of the father by children of divorce, and parents' post-divorce interparental conflicts, often have “cancerous effects” on a child’s well-being and are additional stress factors (Day & Lamb, 2004, p.6; see also Kelly, 2000).

Research with children of divorce by the well-known social psychologist Judith Wallerstein (1991), who studied a large number of children of divorce through qualitative

interviews and the collecting of children's narratives, suggests that in many cases the effects of divorce are only seen as late as five, ten or fifteen years after divorce occurs. In her study, five years after divorce, children showed signs of moderate to severe depression. Ten years after divorce the then young men and women appeared troubled, adrift, and were socially and academically achieving below expectations. Fifteen years after divorce, these individuals (now in their thirties) further experienced trouble forming their own intimate relationships (Wallerstein, 1991). Wallerstein (1991) states that "the multiple economic, social, and psychological life stresses of being single or [being] a visiting or a remarried parent, together with the unanticipated psychic reverberations of the broken marriage contract, have combined to weaken the family in its child-rearing and child protective functions" (pp.358-359; see also Wallerstein and Blakeslee, 1989).

However, feminist author Judith Stacey (1996, 1998) states that in some cases divorce brings children into closer contact with their fathers due to the removal of certain adverse factors influencing the development of good father-child relationships (Stacey, 1996, 1998). Hetherington et al. (1998), report that 75% of children from divorced families show no negative effects, and, according to Cherlin (1991) and Silverstein (2002), when negative factors existing prior to the divorce are controlled for, negative effects of divorce are even lower, especially for boys. Hetherington et al. (1998) mention interrelated key factors in children's adjustment to their parents' divorce that prove essential to determining the impact of the divorce on children. Some of them are (a) individual risk and vulnerability including individuals' resilience and coping strategies before the divorce, children's personality and developmental stage; (b) gender; (c) family composition; (d) socioeconomic status; (e) parental resilience; and (f) family processes

including relationship between the divorced couple and between the custodial parent and child, relationships of the custodial and non-custodial parent, and relationships between step-parents and step-children. This suggests that more subtle and complex factors are at play when conceptualizing fatherlessness through divorce.

Furstenberg and Kiernan (2001) note that research on the consequences of divorce has made progress at both theoretical and methodological levels, and has moved away from rather simple models of divorce to portraying divorce as a complex process (cf. Elliott & Richards, McLanahan & Sandefur, 1991). Divorce has increasingly been seen as a complex entity, not a single event, but rather a cycle of events, involving a series of negative pre-divorce tensions and experiences, economic stress, disrupted attachments, and often separation from family home and neighborhood (Furstenberg & Kiernan, 2001; Hetherington et al., 1998; McHale & Grolnick, 2002). According to Furstenberg & Kiernan (2001), this cycle of events is as important, if not more important than, the actual event of the parent's separation itself. Children's reaction to their parent's separation has been said to vary according to the children's age, sex, developmental stage, temperament, or the way the divorce is managed and mediated by their parents (cf. Allison & Furstenberg, 1989; Emery, 1999; Furstenberg & Kiernan, 2001).

Furstenberg and Kiernan (2001), after having conducted longitudinal research on divorce with data sets compiled from 17, 414 research participants in Great Britain, concluded that divorce is indeed a complex phenomenon. Their results showed that men who experienced their parent's divorce between the ages of 17-20 were no different in their early mating behavior, social relating, educational qualifications, and economic

situations than individuals brought up in non-divorced families. However, men and women who experienced parental divorce at an earlier or later age had lower educational and job qualifications, received more state benefits, and were more likely to have lived in social housing. Children who experienced divorce at any age were more prone to illness in early adulthood than children from non-divorced families. Women from early-childhood-divorced families were more likely to become heavy drinkers, while men were more likely to become heavy smokers. The researchers call for more research to clarify these findings.

Some authors have stated that fatherlessness through divorce is worse than fatherlessness through death (D'Onofrio, Turkheimer, & Emery, 2005; Erickson, 1998; Emery, 1999; Gallagher, 1998; Luecken & Appelhans, 2005; Rodgers, Power, & Hope, 1997; Wade & Pevalin, 2004) and that children who lose their fathers due to divorce or abandonment are (in general) less successful than children who lose their fathers through death (Adams et. al., 1984; Herzog, 1982; Kierman, 1992; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994; Wandersee, 1991). Gallagher (1998) argues this is so because “death, unlike divorce, is not a failure of love. [Dead] parents did not choose to leave [their children]. Moreover, in death, unlike divorce, the mother who remains still loves and admires their father; She usually even idealizes him far more in death than in life” (p.173).

Popenoe (1996), observing that fatherlessness through divorce and the break-up of families outgrew the rate of fatherlessness through death in the 1960s, stated that divorce is the worst type of father loss because of the nature of the presence of “uncontrollable interrelational factors” that are entirely different than the “uncontrollable external factors” present in the death of a parent (p.152). In other words, father loss through divorce introduces different and more complex stress factors than father loss through death, such as hostility and discord, which contribute to a much greater family trauma (cf. Erickson, 1998).

Similar arguments are made by other authors, who have examined the differences between fatherlessness brought about through death and fatherlessness brought about through abandonment or divorce (e.g., Herzog, 1982; Adams et al., 1984; Kiernan, 1992).

For example, James Herzog (1982), a clinical psychologist concluded that:

Children without fathers experience father hunger, an affective state of considerable tenacity and force.... When a father is absent but revered (idealized or presented as an important and valued family member), as in times of war, or following death, the resulting state of father hunger seems less pronounced, [yet] the ambivalence, hurt, and hatred characteristic of divorce or abandonment seem to maximize for the child the felt absence of a masculine parent and seems to exacerbate father hunger. (p. 172)

Father hunger was first seriously addressed in the 1980s and 1990s and has been noted to occur even in relation to fathers who were present to some extent, but were emotionally unavailable. "Most children do not give up on their fathers, even if they are ne'er-do-wells who have abandoned them without a backward glance...Children turn around and construct a credible image of the father they never knew from any scraps of information that they can collect and tend to idealize him in the process" (Gallagher, 1998, p.169; Erickson, 1998; Herzog, 1982; Simon, 2001; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989).

Simon (2001) states that those who lose fathers to death may be in a better position to heal than those whose fathers just disappear from their children's lives because of abandonment. That is, while children who lose a parent in death may feel burdened by the finality of the loss, they are also released of uncertainty and the often pointless hope that the parent might eventually return. However, in contrast, "the awful pressure of waiting, of not knowing, with its lure of false hope [for the father to come

back], can be worse than knowing” (Simon, 2001, p.73; see also Boss, 1999; Wakerman, 1987).

Blankenhorn (1995), in further distinguishing among father loss through abandonment, death, or the father’s service in wartime, seems to suggest that the experience of father loss greatly depends on what meaning is ascribed to a particular loss by the fatherless individual, but also by the collective society:

The 1940s child [the war child] could say: My father had to leave for a while to do something important. The 1990s child [the abandoned child] must say: My father left me permanently because he wanted to. (p. 61)

Yesterday, when a father died, our society affirmed the importance of fatherhood by comforting and aiding his family. Today, when a father leaves, our society disconfirms the importance of fatherhood by accepting his departure with reasoned impartiality. Historically, we have viewed the death of a father as one of the greatest tragedies possible in the life of a child. Today, we increasingly view the departure of a father as one of those things that we must simply get used to. (p.24)

Clarke-Steward (2000) agrees with Blankenhorn (1995) on the point that the experience of father loss depends on the meaning individuals and society place on the loss; however, she herself addressed other factors that can affect the meaning and consequences of divorce. In her research, Clarke-Steward (2000) found that divorce did not impact children’s psychological, cognitive, and social development when mothers had good income, education, and mental health. She concludes that whether or not divorce had negative effects on children depended on factors such as the mother’s social status, educational level, ethnicity, childrearing beliefs, depressive symptoms, and overall behavior. Other arguments have been made that contradict Blankenhorn’s (1995) statements about divorce (e.g. Silverstein, 1999). They will be treated in more depth below in the section dealing with feminist perspectives.



Other authors have made important distinctions about different types of father loss, such as Beth Erickson (1998), who mentions that death is easier to handle if it is death by natural causes (p.58). Clea Simon (2001), based on her own experience with father loss, mentions that the death of a father can actually open the door to self-finding and self-examination, and, thus, may be the beginning point for important changes in one's life. She supports her argument by addressing Jung's theory of the importance of individuals' learning to set interpersonal boundaries, to become independent selves, rather than identifying solely with the parents. If we don't go through that process, Simon (2001) argues, "we are stuck in our development and prone to blindly accepting other people's and society's goals. "Death," she continues, "can be a motivating disaster to step out of one's comfort zones and potential unbeneficial habits" (p.8). However, Simon (2001) also acknowledges the perspective of Edward Myers (1997) who wrote, "death may bring relief ...you may end up feeling...relief that you are now spared further effort, emotional upheaval, and family conflict. But with the end of active conflict also comes the end of any possibility for reconciliation [with the person you lost]" (cited in Simon, 2001, p.67). Thus, the meaning a father's death has to the bereaved is an important factor to consider in defining the meaning and the effects of father loss.

Simon (2001) and Myers (1997) also found that the way in which the death of one's father comes is of great significance in how one deals with that loss. For example, they both argue that sudden and unexpected loss gives individuals less time to mourn and to prepare for the loss emotionally, spiritually, or financially, all of which puts heavy strains on the bereaved. Finally, Erickson (1998), although not giving more insight into evidence, or further explanation, asserts from her experience with psychotherapy clients

that losing a father through death, abandonment, or divorce is harder than never having had a father or than having had an emotionally withdrawn or unloving father in the home.

Authors have discussed two other main reasons for fatherlessness besides divorce, abandonment, and death in today's society, namely non-marital births and the new rising trend of donor insemination births (Blankenhorn, 1995; Erickson, 1998, Leo, 1995; Marsiglio, 1998; Popenoe, 1996a, 1996b). Popular author Popenoe (1996b), who pushes an agenda of the irreplaceable father, asserts that there has yet been little research done about sperm-donor births, but that consequences arising from this type of fatherlessness might be much worse than the consequences arising from any other type of fatherlessness. The author supports this assertion with an expert witness's statement made in the New Jersey public hearing about sperm-bank insemination (Popenoe, 1996b). The witness maintained that we should think of how it might be "for children to find out their father sold the essence of his lineage for \$40 or so, without ever intending to love or take responsibility for them" (p. 92; cf. Macklin, 1991). Further, Popenoe (1996b) makes his point in light of a psychiatrist's remarks concerning the self-esteem of donor insemination children:

It is a big issue for the children. The way they came to be, with no passion, no intimacy, no affection, throws them into a turmoil about who they really are. There isn't even a good basis for fantasy. It is bound to affect their personality development and their sense of self-esteem. (p. 93; also quoted in Hochman, 1994)

A well accepted author in the professional circles of father-research, William Marsiglio, writes about the detached and mechanical way in which anonymous sperm donors contribute to the conception of new life and notes that most social parents of the conceived child prefer to withhold from the child the true nature of their origin (1998,

p.128-134). The assumption underlying such findings perhaps is that such knowledge of his or her origin would disturb the child who has an intrinsic need to know who he or she is. Liezl van Zyl (2002), however, sees the issue of donor insemination in a different light. She argues that the development of reproductive technologies has opened important doors for the perseverance of families—that is, traditional families including one woman and one man, voluntary single mother families, or families being comprised of two men or two women (cf. Hill, 1990; Mazor, 2004; Shultz, 1990). In this case, fatherlessness may occur through adult's choices of life-style, cohabitation, and sexual orientation and is not seen as a disadvantage (e.g. Grill, 2005).

Opposing arguments such as those of Popenoe (1996b) or Blankenhorn (1995) and van Zyl (2002) represent two different, opposing social and political positions that will be discussed in more depth in the 'socio-cultural and historical' section below. What is important to note at this point is that these opposing positions and arguments bring to the fore increasingly different contextual dimensions relevant to the issue of fatherlessness. The increase of accounts more contextually sensitive or attentive to such different contextual dimensions, has added more depth to the literature on fatherlessness, not only regarding the identification of implications of fatherlessness, but also regarding the various definitions of fatherlessness. It is evident, from these and similar studies that a rich variety of meanings related to how father loss may occur in an individual's life became increasingly obvious in the literature in recent years. To catch all the possible meanings, intricate relations, and implications of fatherlessness is difficult, if not impossible in traditional quantitative research because such meaning and such relationships cannot be easily and adequately be quantified and experimentally tested.

Qualitative research, however, offers ways in which such meanings can be preserved and brought to light. For example, in contrast to quantitative research, a qualitative or phenomenological approach starts inquiry more open-minded with respect to meanings and possibilities by avoiding having theories, especially formal theories, and by allowing for the possibility of a wide variety of meanings to be manifest throughout the research process.

### *Attachment Literature*

Authors specializing in attachment have written on the importance of attachment to social, interpersonal, and cognitive development and to the development of a competent self. Early attachment to the father disrupted through separation, abandonment, or abuse has been said to result in serious developmental deficits, involving problems with concentration, relationships, disorientation, and a lack of creativity, curiosity, and life's overall enjoyment (Bowlby, 1982; Bowlby, 1988; Main & Goldwyn 1994; Solomon & George, 1999). Britton (1998), an object-relations theorist, writes about the importance of a parent as an internal reliable object, providing the individual with a sense of continuity and a basis for hope (p.152). If the internal basis of security and protection fostered by a reliable parent is absent, serious psychological distortions about the self, lack of direction, and hopelessness often result.

Bowlby (1988), well known for his interest in attachment, writes that where a relationship to a special loved one, or to a primary attachment person is endangered, "we are not only anxious but are usually angry as well. As responses to the risk of loss, anxiety and anger go hand in hand" (p.79). Primary attachment relationships are shot through with strong emotions (cf. Ainsworth et al., 1978). As Bowlby (1988) noted:

[To a] high degree indeed, a person's whole emotional life—the underlying tone of how he feels—is determined by the state of these long-term, committed relationships. As long as they are running smoothly he is content; when they are threatened he is anxious and perhaps angry; when he has endangered them by his own actions he feels guilty; when they are broken he feels sad; and when they are resumed he is joyful.” (p.80)

Such tendencies, according to Bowlby (1988), are shaped during the course of evolution. The need and potential for attachment thus comes innately with the new-born child and is either encouraged or frustrated during the course of an individual's life. An individual's potential for attachment can be frustrated and to a great extent destroyed by events such as early separation, abandonment, or abuse; However, consequences growing out of the natural propensity for human beings to need attachment will always accompany whatever life circumstances someone is in—they will always be present.

Bowlby (1988) wrote that:

. . . success in the maintenance of . . . long-term relationships should usually bring satisfaction and contentment, and that failure should bring frustration, anxiety, and sometimes despair are . . . the prizes and penalties selected during evolution to guide us in our activities. (Bowlby, 1988, p.81)

Pathological cases of individuals lacking secure attachment show that these individuals are often impulsive, isolated, passive, inaccessible, unhappy, disorganized, anxious, or angry (e.g. Ainsworth, 1978; Bowlby, 1988; Delucas, 1997; Solomon & George, 1999; Wolkenhauer, 1996). Bowlby (1988) states that even though these individuals might still have great dependency needs, they are extremely distrustful and consequently unwilling or unable to have close relationships.

Individuals who were not able to experience good attachment with their own parents often become socially isolated and, if they have children, because they have no one else to turn to, might seek care and comfort from their own children whom they treat

as though they were much older than they are (Bowlby, 1988, p.84, also see example of Mrs. Q, p.86-88). This last statement might also be looked at in light of previously mentioned coping styles of mothers who lose their husbands and excessively lean on their children for support. Not only in relationships with one's parents or children, but also in the relationship to one's partner, attachment plays an important role. If any of such relationships fail or come to an end, people's lives are usually greatly impacted.

Relationships and their nature, the natural consequence and reflection of attachment, are strong factors that need to be considered when studying fatherlessness. Many authors have noted that the quality of the relationship and the attachment between father and child influences how a child experiences father loss. For example, Wallerstein (1989, 1991) relates that what mattered most to children after father loss through divorce was not the amount of time their father spent with them, but rather the quality of the relationship they had with their fathers and how they perceived their fathers. The sense of loss children experienced was not a factor of how often they were visited but was dependent on how they related to their fathers (Wallerstein, 1997 cited in Gallagher, 1998, p.173, see also Amato, 1994; Thomas & Forehand, 1993). In other words, the image children had of their fathers, and the image they had of their relationships with their fathers were important in how they dealt with their father loss: "Boys who saw their fathers as moral and competent, and who felt valued by them, did very well. When fathers were seen as bad, weak, or unconcerned, boys were likely to suffer 'low self-esteem, poor grades, and weak aspirations'" (Gallagher, 1998, p.171; see also Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989).

Carlson (2006) notes that growing evidence suggests fathers' high-quality involvement is beneficial to children's well-being and development (cf. Lamb 2004) and that father-child relationships present, to a great extent yet unexplored, but promising mechanism for understanding how differences in family structure may influence differences in child outcomes (p.137). The father's emotional availability, sensitivity, and his responsiveness to the child's needs, have been identified as predictors of good father-child attachment relationships and healthy child development (DeWolff & van Ijzendoorn, 1997; van Ijzendoorn & De Wolff, 1997; Day, et al., 2005), but further, as more important to healthy child development than children's growing up in two parent families (Silverstein, 2002). Gallagher (1998), who further emphasizes the importance of the nature of the relationship between father and child in the child's experience of father loss, states: "Close ties after divorces are important, but evidence increasingly shows that frequent visiting [of the father] is no balm for father hunger. Even when fathers stay, children may feel abandoned [by him]. Children of divorce who see their fathers do, on average, no better than children of divorce who do not" (p.173).

Psychologists have found strong connections between problems in relationships, especially problems of intimacy, and the *unresolved loss* of a parent or attachment person (Osherson, 1992; Strean, 1995) and that the ability to resolve loss depends on an individual's relationship to the person whose loss they are resolving (Erickson, 1998; Osherson, 1992; Strean, 1995; Trowell 2002). Simon (2001), while arguing that father loss is a traumatic event, interjects that the effects of fathers' deaths or divorces may not be such a traumatic event for women who, at an early stage in their lives, had formed bad- to no attachment to their fathers—especially those women who were maltreated by

their fathers. In other words, deaths or divorces of abusive fathers or fathers who had not formed healthy and strong attachments to their daughters, were no more traumatic events than the mal- or dis-attachment these daughters experienced early in the relationships with their fathers. These women did not seem to be affected by their father loss through death or divorce because they experienced the “real” loss of their fathers much earlier. The question is, however, did these women *resolve* their loss? While Simon (2001) does not answer that question, she does offer yet another perspective in sharing her own experience that shows concern about resolution and further includes a witness of the *powerful and long-lasting influence* of an individual’s attachment and relationship to the father lost—an influence that endures even beyond death:

To write about my father is once more to interact with him, and that brings up all the unresolved issues and personal contradictions I bring to our relationship. Although many pop psycho books want to freeze our relationships with our fathers into specific categories [...] the truth is more fluid. Any less kind of a simplification of our dance [the relationship between the author and her father], leads to error. (Simon, 2001, p.xi)

Now that his active presence is in my life is through, I can begin to see [my father] as a complete and separate entity. I can begin to understand his continuing effect on me. For despite his no longer being a commonplace presence in my life, this complex and contradictory man is very much part of me. No matter how I approach the subject, I am still my father’s daughter. And no matter how much my life has changed since his passing, he is influencing me. By example, by comparison, by his shadow, and by the passing of that shadow, my father remains very present in my life. (Simon, 2001, p.xi)

Attachment is an important area to look at in order to understand fatherlessness because attachment is at the heart of relationships and father loss is about a relationship. The quality and nature of the attachment or the relationship between an individual and his or her father, the fact that an individual has had to reconcile him- or herself in his or her attachment to the father and has done so, and whether or not an individual has reconciled



him- or herself with the loss of the father, influence how fatherlessness is experienced. Because attachment and the nature and quality of the relationship between an individual and his or her father are so central to understanding father loss, the methods with which we research father loss should be sensitive to the relationships between people, and reveal those relationships in as full and meaningful a manner as possible. Such methods need to be able to pick up on the “fluidity,” as Erickson (1998) has termed it, or the dynamic and complex nature of relationships. Amato and Rezac (1994) reemphasize this point in suggesting that father-child relationships are also influenced by the relationship between the father and the mother. In their view, one gets insight into the dynamics and complexities of father-child relationships when looking at the larger or extended system of family relations in which father-child relationships occur. For example, it was found that higher involvement by nonresidential fathers, measured by the frequency of paternal contact, was associated with fewer behavioral problems *only when* there was less interparental conflict. The authors note that this finding “supports the importance of a systemic and ecological model for fathering [and father absence], rather than a dyadic model that focuses only on the father-child relationship” (as cited in Doherty, Kouneski, and Erikson, 1998, p.281; cf. Clarke-Stewart et al., 2000; Solomon & George, 1999).

Silverstein (2002) differentiates between earlier and later attachment literature, stating that the earlier literature was mostly focused on mother-infant attachment, which, especially through Bowlby’s (1951) publication of the maternal deprivation syndrome, sustained the myth that mother-infant attachment was what produced the emotional basis for all subsequent attachment relationships. Fathers and all other relationships in the child’s life thus were seen as peripheral (Silverstein, 2002; cf. Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters

& Walls, 1978; Bowlby, 1969). Later attachment literature gave fathers a position of much more equality. Silverstein (2002) notes that especially Rutter's (1974), but also subsequent publications in the general psychological literature since the 1970's (e.g. Delucas, 1997; Kippley, 1998; Lewis, 1997; Waters, 1985; Wolkenhauer, 1996), were aimed at deconstructing the maternal deprivation syndrome and shifting the focus in attachment theories towards fathers and the more complex system of relationships in which a child's development is embedded.

Psychoanalytic therapist Herbert S. Streehan (1995) notes that specifics about a person's experiences and problems with attachment often only come out in re-experiencing attachment in relationships. In psychoanalytic therapy such re-experiencing can happen in the event of transference in the relationship between therapist and client, in which the client re-lives and a therapist simultaneously experiences some of the meanings of the client's earlier attachment experiences. The therapist has to be aware of his or her own biases in order to analyze the transference. The meaning gleaned in the transference by the therapist is then interpreted together with the client. This relationality in psychoanalysis is in many ways similar to what happens in qualitative research in which important information is obtained through dynamic interaction and interpretation between researcher and research participant.

### *Psychoanalytic Literature*

The psychoanalytic literature is closely tied to the attachment literature because a great deal of work reported in this literature concerns itself with relationships between parents and children. While the tradition of psychoanalysis has long been aware of the importance of contextual issues and of being contextually sensitive (e.g., in looking at the

contextually rich narratives of individuals' experiences), some psychoanalysts, who I will discuss in this section, have cautioned that psychoanalytic researchers still need to be careful not to overgeneralize their findings.

Psychoanalytic authors talk about the difficulties of father absence with regard to normal psychosexual development in which the child has to be able to form an attachment to a caretaker of the opposite sex and then again separate to some extent from that attachment (Burgner, 1985; Target & Fonagy, 2002). For example, if no father or father figure is present with whom girls can bond, girls have been observed to develop an adhesive, ambivalent attachment to the mother. The triangular Oedipal relationship between mother, father, and child, allows the daughter to healthily attach to both sexes and not carry narcissistic impulses that would likely form in the attachment to only one parent into their self-development and sexual identity (Burgner, 1985, p.319; Target & Fonagy, 2002). Father-involvement, in which identification with the parent of the opposite sex is possible, has been shown to generate greater ability in children to withstand stress and to become more socially responsive (Pedersen et al., 1980).

Davis (2002) infers from the fact that men have traditionally been less emotionally involved in childrearing in the family, that the father plays an important part in establishing equilibrium and a sense of emotional control in the child. For example, when the child is inconsolable by the mother, the father, often more objective and calm about the situation, can step in and more easily console the child. The inner or emotional control the child learns in such situations, which, at later developmental stages, is manifested in the capacity to think in the face of intense emotion, according to Davis (2002), can be accomplished through any fatherly or male attachment person in the

child's life, but there must be such an attachment person at the child's disposal (as cited in Trowell & Etchegoyen, 2002, p.77; cf. Erickson, 1998). Healthy attachment to and healthy separation from either parent is accomplished when the child feels that he or she has gained control over his or her emotional life while resolving "split-offs," that is, "residual frustration about unfulfilled needs by a parent" with the other parent (Trowell & Etchegoyen, 2002, p.77). In short, according to the psychoanalytic literature, the presence of the father is important in helping individuals achieve a healthy balance between dependence- and independence-needs and a sense of their own (especially gender) identity.

However, research has also shown that there is significant overlap between the role of the father and the mother, and that different personality traits and other contextual circumstances play into the influence of father absence. These overlaps and contextual differences create dynamics and processes in the development of a person that cannot be simplified or reduced to fatherlessness alone. For example, Target and Fonagy (2002), in looking at processes of individuation throughout development, have critically asked how the absence of fathers can generate so many very different pathologies (p.53).

Fakhry Davis' (2002) work on the Oedipal complex, however, may answer this question. Davis (2002) states that it is *individually and culturally differing meanings* ascribed to the roles of father and mother in each family that are reflected in the Oedipal configurations, not one meaning of the Oedipal complex that holds across all situations and families. In other words, the dynamics of the relationship between father and mother and between parents and children, and the dynamics of any kind of lack within these relationships, will vary with the meanings ascribed by individuals to the role and

personality of each parent and child in the particular family, as well as the culture the family is part of, along with other contextual features. The dynamics do not depend on one reduced and causal meaning derived from one general psychological theory and conclusion (Trowell & Etchegoyen, 2002).

Psychoanalysts Britton (1998) and Youdell (2002) both express their disappointment about *exclusively theoretically-driven* (instead of context-, or object-driven), generalizing explorations of father-child relationships, which fit the father and the child into generic, gender-specific and psychodynamic roles through which individual, idiosyncratic aspects of the father-child relationship are overlooked and richer conceptions of fathers' contributions are lost. Theory-driven and generalizing explorations seem to do the job when trying to get at the meaning of fatherlessness and seem able to be prescriptive, because theories often are seen as universally established and true. However, real life experience shows, as Target and Fonagy (2002) indicate, a less generalizable and more complex picture of fatherlessness. Palkovitz (2002) states that while he expects that scientific theories "should present a reasonable rendering of the reality they intended to symbolize," he views them as "incomplete representations of reality" (p.xvii). One thus has to remember that the theories with which one describes causes and effects of fatherlessness, are at best only partial descriptions.

Authors who argue in this fashion do not make fatherlessness a *causal antecedent* of impeded development, even though they believe that fathering is important and that father absence *can* have negative effects on an individual's development. Every individual's experience of father loss is deeply contextual, rich, and diverse in meaningfulness, and as such differs from that of others and cannot be captured by simple

causal generalizations. Fatherlessness is thus neither a sufficient factor to determine or predict problems such as have been listed in this literature review, nor need it even be a necessary factor, although, as Henry Biller (1993) observed, current assumptions held by many psychologists still seem to indicate otherwise:

It seems that psychoanalytic clinicians need merely hear the words ‘absent father’ to infer a range of child psychopathology from distorted oedipal development (Neubauer, 1960) to homosexuality (Siegelman, 1974), exhibitionism and voyeurism (Rosen, 1979), and anti-social behavior. (p.53)

While some of the above mentioned research—more contextually sensitive, sub-discipline specific, and topic focused research—still acknowledge fatherlessness as difficult, they also inadvertently bring a perspective to light that has not yet been studied much but that is very important. This perspective is that father absence may not be as detrimental as is often portrayed and that there may actually be hope for the fatherless.

I use the term and construct of hope throughout my thesis, because it sets a contrast to the still dominant literature which seems to say to fatherless individuals that there is not much to do about their situation. That is, our current literature seems to suggest that no matter in which situation individuals find themselves, if they are fatherless, they are affected and will stay affected by some negative consequences for the rest of their lives, because they are subject to predetermined consequences of fatherlessness. I use hope in the context of fatherlessness to express the possibility that fatherless individuals *can* escape the negative consequences of fatherlessness. Given my own experience, I believe such hope in the face of fatherlessness emerges when one can find meaning in the experience or if one can make the experience meaningful. Meaning is found in context and in how an individual interprets life events, and therefore I believe

we have to look for such hope by looking deeper into the contextual situatedness of being fatherless in seeking to understand the individual and his or her interpretation of his or her lived experience of being fatherless. Fatherlessness is a multi-faceted, complex, and dynamic experience. In order to have a more contextual understanding of this experience, as I have argued in previous sections, we have to look at fatherlessness with the help of more contextual and hermeneutic methods of research that are sensitive to the more intricate details and relations of the lived experience of fatherlessness.

### *Socio-Cultural and Historical Context*

One more example, and probably the best, in which it becomes apparent that fatherlessness is more fully illuminated by increased sensitivity to its context, is found in the literature that focuses on fatherlessness and its embeddedness in the socio-cultural and historical environment. The socio-cultural and historical context contributes heavily to how the meaning of fatherlessness is constructed and experienced (cf. Gills, 2000; Grill, 2005; Johansen, 2001; Lamb, 2000; Marsiglio & Cohan, 2000; Marsiglio, Day, & Lamb, 2000; Marsiglio et al., 2000; Pleck & Pleck, 1997; Rohner, 2001; Ryan-Flood, 2005; Silverstein & Auerbach, 1999; Silverstein 2002).

The various authors who study fatherlessness in its socio-cultural and historical, context still differ on whether or not fatherlessness is harmful and on many other details; however, through deeper insight into the many ideological parts of the context, individuals can construct more informed opinions about the implications of fatherlessness, make those opinions known more explicitly, and thus create better platforms for the discussion of social and political interventions and solutions. For example, Marsiglio, Amato, and Day (2000) argue that our literature and research are

always influenced and biased by socio-cultural and political ideas and attitudes and are thus in need of continued and enhanced awareness and understanding about how these biases and attitudes influence our conceptualization, research, and documentation of fatherhood. Public debates about issues surrounding fatherhood, such as divorce, single parenthood, welfare reform, teenage pregnancy, the definitions of a “family,” and others, reflect socio-cultural attitudes about fatherhood that influence what kind of research is performed and what researchers look at when they study fatherhood. Results of that research then affect social policy decisions. According to Marsiglio et al. (2000), it is especially important that socio-cultural reflections and attitudes about fatherhood are understood by researchers so that they can be considered in researchers’ analyses and conclusions about fatherhood which influence social policy decisions.

An example given by Marsiglio, et al. (2000) of a possible dogma represented in our literature resulting from research not having paid enough attention to the socio-cultural and political biases behind our conceptualization of fatherhood, is that of the increased body of literature about pathology resulting from father absence which reflects a strong underlying socio-cultural fear about fathers’ estrangement from their children. That is, the reason behind there being so much literature on the negative effects of fatherlessness, is that certain parties suddenly became concerned about the negative effects of fathers’ absence from families and began looking for negative effects of fatherlessness through research to prove their point that fathers needed to be home. Research confirming the concern about fathers’ absence then greatly influenced political and juristical actions, which, for example, made divorce harder and less desirable and life in traditional families easier (cf. Silverstein, 1999, Pleck, 1997). Research that looks at



the negative implications of father absence only, and not at the underlying socio-cultural bias about the negative implications of father absence, is prone to only confirm its socio-cultural bias, without greater understanding of the “why’s” and “how’s,” or the deeper implications of this and other current sociological problems.

Another example of where socio-cultural biases have influenced the research on fathers can be taken from the historical context preceding the 1980’s when socio-cultural fears about fathers’ absence became dominant. Interest in father involvement has only gradually increased throughout the 1970’s, 80’s and 90’s, shifting cultural conceptions of fatherhood from the distant breadwinner, to the genial playmate dad and gender role model, to the co-parent who shares equally with his mate in the care of their children. Early research predominantly focused on mothers. Ronald Rohner & Robert Veneziano (2001) state that the effect of internalizing cultural beliefs about the importance of mothers in private as well as public realms in the past has led to sometimes unintended and unrecognized but nonetheless real consequences. In citing an anonymous author’s response to their article on the influence of cultural values in research the authors perfectly illustrate their point: “We spent a lot of time studying mothers because we thought they were important, not because we thought fathers weren’t!” (p.6). In other words, the socio-cultural values about the importance of mothers have influenced father research in that the study of fathers was neglected.

Common definitions of mothering or fathering further illustrate some of the prevalent socio-cultural biases and values about mothering and fathering:

The word ‘mothering’ elicits, for many, a warm, fuzzy, nurtured feeling, whereas the term ‘fathering’ elicits feelings of something stronger, colder, harder, and less affectionate....The term father love is not used in everyday discourse, but mother love is...Popular literature is filled with

references to both mothering and parenting when referring to caregiving. But the term 'fathering' is almost never used in this context...the gender-neutral term parent is often used or interpreted as being synonymous with "mother." (Rohner & Veneziano, 2001, p.386)

A reason why scholars need to be challenged to study and understand the familial, social, and legal biases, attitudes, and processes behind fathering or fatherlessness, is to see and understand complex issues about fatherhood or fatherlessness in context and thus help our research and literature to be less fragmental and more informative. As Silverstein & Auerbach (2000) state, data (quantitative as well as qualitative data) is always interpreted from the point of view of the researcher (p.684). What is important is that the researcher makes his or her point of view clear throughout the research (Silverstein, 1999). When we are aware and open about our socio-cultural biases and values, we can better create platforms for the discussion of fragmented and often politicized pieces of information about fatherhood and open better ways for social and political interventions and solutions. With awareness and openness about our biases and values, our research can thus, as Silverstein (1999) further puts it, help the public define their best interests instead of manipulate the public to serve the interests of policymakers (p.398).

While research data, as Silverstein and Auerbach (2000) put it, is always interpreted from a certain point of view or bias of the researcher, I think it important to note what exactly happens when we interpret data and what the place of interpretation is in research. For example, Silverstein and Auerbach (2000) note that they agree with authors Daly and Wilson (2000) that the rate of child abuse is higher in stepfamilies and that "the absolute numbers of birth parents surpass parent substitutes among child abusers" (Silverstein & Auerbach, 2000, p.684). However, while Day and Wilson (2000)

emphasize the high risk of abuse in stepfamilies, Silverstein and Auerbach (2000) in interpreting the same data emphasize that living with biological parents does not prevent children from abuse. Day and Wilson (2000), with the interpretation of the data from their point of view, want to push for the importance of traditional nuclear families, while Silverstein and Auerbach (2000) want to make an argument for alternative family units. When controversies like this exist, which often turn into political arguments around which social policy decisions are made, I would argue all researchers should take a deeper look at the context in which research data are obtained. Existing controversies, in my opinion, are opportunities for increased dialogue between both researcher parties, in which both parties can discover and address further questions or weak spots in their research.

In researching deeper into the socio-cultural context and attitudes concerning family and fatherhood issues, interdisciplinary, cross-cultural, and also qualitative research, although still in the minority, have become increasingly popular. Marsiglio & Cohan (2000), for example, have shown that sociologists, who are naturally interested in studying human beings within their socio-cultural contexts, can contribute much to the psychological literature on fatherhood. Sociologists study formal and informal social networks and socio-political group formations in order to understand socio-cultural attitudes in the community. Marsiglio and Cohan (2000) with regards to sociological fatherhood research specifically mention groups like the Promise Keepers, who are rooted in a Christian-based ideology and promote Christian fathering that highlights the father as a moral and spiritual leader as well as the primary bread winner. Further, they (Marsiglio & Cohan, 2000) have mentioned The Fatherhood Project, which is a program

sponsored by the Families and Work institute promoting positive father involvement in terms of fathers sharing the emotional and physical care of the child with the mother (cf. Levine & Pitt, 1995). Fathers' rights advocates voice concerns about fathers' being oppressed by the legal system, which, according to them, favors women in custody cases (Marsiglio & Cohan, 2000, pp.81, 83, 84). Marsiglio & Cohan (2000) note that these "meso level groups and organizations" promote "multiple and often contradictory messages and use a wide variety of means for pursuing their ends" (p.83). It is important to study the messages of these groups since they have had a part in bringing fatherhood into the foreground as a public issue (Marsiglio & Cohan, 2000).

Deep divisions on issues surrounding the topics of fatherhood, fathering, and fatherlessness which affect social policy decisions should not be overlooked by researchers. These divisions include debates about the nature and definitions of mothering and fathering (e.g. Hyde, Essex & Horton, 1993; Rohner & Veneziano, 2001; Stacey, 1998), the biological versus environmental roots of sexuality and parenting (e.g. Daly & Wilson, 2000; Gallagher, 1998; Pleck, 1995; Silverstein & Auerbach, 2000; Stacey, 1996, 1998; Tasker & Golombock, 1997), the relationship between family structure and poverty (e.g. Eggebeen, 1991; Ellwood, 1988), and the efficacy and desirability of alternative family structures (Gallagher, 1997, 1998; Jost, 2003; Patterson, 1995; Patterson & Chan, 1997; Stacey, 1998; Tasker & Golombock, 1997).

Scholars who have looked at socio-cultural attitudes note that there are differences across cultures and sub-cultures in how much fathers become involved in child care, depending on work demands and governmental arrangements mediating between employment and family demands (Lamb, Hwang, Broberg, Brookstein, Hult &

Frodi, 1988, Ishii-Kuntz, 2000; Hyde, Essex & Horton, 1993). That is so in part because some governments have instituted more family-friendly employment policies (for example paternal leave in which fathers can care for children while mothers are at work), while other governments have not (Fuligni, Sidle & Brooks-Gunn, 2004; Sandberg & Hofferth, 2001). From the effects of governments not regulating such parenting demands, yet another type of fatherlessness may be construed, namely, fathers' migration in search of work. Commonly these fathers are to be found in Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa and Asia, however, as Day and colleagues (2005) note, this type of fatherlessness has not yet received much attention from academic researchers.

Perhaps fathers' differing involvement in play across cultures could also partially be explained by a culture's attitudes and social policy decisions with respect to fathers. For example, significant differences in father's engagement with the child in play were noted by Lamb and Lewis (2004) across African American, Hispanic-American, English, and Indian fathers, who were very engaged, compared to Swedish, Chinese, German, and Israeli fathers, who were not as engaged (cf. Frodi, Lamb, Hwang, & Frodi, 1983; Sagi, Lamb, Shoham, Dvir, & Lewkowicz, 1985; Silverstein, 2002). African American fathers have been observed to be significantly more involved in the socialization and nurturing of their children than other fathers (McAdoo, H., 1988, McAdoo, J., 1988; Silverstein, 2002). This was noted especially in dual-shift working class families or in families where fathers were continuously unemployed (Ahmeduzzaman & Roopnarine, 1992; Bowman & Forman, 1997; Hossain & Roopnarine, 1993; Pleck, 1997, Silverstein, 2002), but also in the case of non-residential fathers (Lerman, 1993).

Although the African American culture will not be discussed in great detail in this thesis, it needs to be noted that it is well represented in the recent psychological research literature available on the topic of fatherlessness (e.g. Anderson, 1993, 1994, 1997; Anderson, Kohler, & Letiecq 2005; Furstenberg, 1995; Marsiglio & Cohan, 2000; Sellers, Caldwell, Schmeelk-cone, & Zimmermann, 2003; Tucker & Mitchell-Kernan 1995; Hunter, Friend, Murphy, Williams-Wheeler, & Laughinghouse, 2006). This is probably due to the fact that fatherlessness is more prevalent among the African American population than among any other American population. The fact that fatherlessness is such a presence in the African American culture undoubtedly also impacts how fatherlessness is seen in this culture.

For example, one aspect influencing the perception of fatherlessness in the African American population lies in the socio-cultural attitudes and expectations about the father's responsibility to provide economic support in his role as the breadwinner of the family in the context of reduced employment opportunities available for African American men. How many employment opportunities there are for African American fathers has been seen to influence how much fathers get to be involved with their children. As Allen and Doherty (1996) mention:

African American men receive strong messages about men providing for their families and the importance of fatherhood as a significant aspect of masculinity [...] such messages may intensify the conflict they feel when they cannot meet their own or society's expectations of fatherhood [...] Typically, curtailed educational opportunities worsen the already restricted employment horizons these young men face by virtue of the ethnicity.”  
(p.143-144)

College-educated black women, who are usually in a better financial position than their black college-educated male counterparts, and who serve as the gatekeepers for

the father's presence in the child's life, often perceive African American males as a "poor marriage risk" (Marsiglio & Cohan, 2000, p.79). Furstenberg (1995) and Tucker & Mitchell-Kernan (1995) have found strong connections between high unemployment rates among African American males and their un-involvement as fathers, and have concluded that many fathers may be discouraged from formally establishing paternal identity and from being co-participants in their children's homes (Marsiglio & Cohan, 2000, p.79-80). However, according to Marsiglio & Cohan (2000), fathers and mothers may also not that simply give into the path of least resistance in the face of such socio-cultural and structural norms and black African American males may establish identities as nurturant fathers over their occupational identities regardless of the financial difficulties their families may face.

Anderson (1993, 1994, 1997), who has studied African American inner city youth over many years, has also observed that fatherlessness is highly represented among this population because of the hopeless prospect of low education, unemployment, and low social status, in which adolescent males feel they have little to lose by having an out-of-wedlock child. In a 14 year study, in which ethnographic and anthropological methods were used that allowed for rich insight into the lived socio-cultural meanings and dynamics influencing the role of fathers, Anderson (1994) found that young poor black males, who largely were excluded from society and most acceptable public avenues of prestige, defined sexual conquest as a route to gain social honor. Sexual activity was often used as a contest between a young man and a young woman who often saw no other ways of establishing relationships. However, Anderson (1994) also states that research is

sparse on inner city youth and ethnic minority groups and that more studies have to be conducted especially to understand African American sub-cultures.

Grill (2005) recognizes a condition of single motherhood that seems quite different to that of African American women, yet that also reflects socio-cultural attitudes. Statistics on single mothers reveal that divorce is still the most common reason for women to become single mothers, however, more than 40% of today's single mothers by their own choice have never been married. A large number of these single mothers have chosen motherhood by way of artificial insemination. Most of these women are white, middle-class, educated women. Artificial insemination has become a way for many women to become pregnant and to become mothers without a male partner. Such cases have legal implications, for example, in the decision-making process related to adoption processes when the mother dies, but also in regard to subsidizing therapeutic treatment to support these single women (for more information see Grill, 2005; Mazor, 2004). Researchers have begun to increasingly study such populations in order help determine these legal decision processes (Hill, 1990; van Zyl, 2002; Shultz, 1990).

Most current socio-cultural attitudes or biases regarding fathers, fatherhood, and fatherlessness probably lie somewhere between conservatism and liberalism. Both sides are pushing certain agendas and can only be understood in their historical context. For example, Blankenhorn (1995), who is counted on the strongly conservative side, argues that one factor that led to a fatherless America is a "cultural attitude *problem*" (p.15). This problem, says he, is brought about by democracy, the shrinking of patriarchy, the industrial revolution in which fathers gave themselves more and more to the working force to provide for their families, wars, and the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century change in the



role of fathers from nurturers and providers, to non-domestic, self-sufficient individuals who play no real or necessary parts in their families. The result of males losing their central role in the family was that “increasingly, men looked outside the home for the meaning of their maleness. Masculinity became less domesticated, that is, it became less defined by effective paternity and more by individual ambition and achievement” (Blankenhorn, 1995, p.15).

Silverstein (1999), a feminist author who raises her voice against strong conservative arguments, describes Blankenhorn’s (1995) perspective as a neoconservative, “essentialist” perspective, which “defines mothering and fathering as essential, distinct social roles that are not interchangeable while marriage is the institution within which responsible fathering and positive child adjustment are most likely to occur” (p.2). Through the term “neoconservative,” Silverstein (1999) is linking Blankenhorn’s (1995) perspective to the early extreme conservative perspective that thought mothers were most important. Neoconservative authors propose that a wide variety of social problems can be traced to the absence of fathers in the lives of their children. Silverstein (1999) explains that this perspective reflects a widespread anxiety about who will raise children.

Auerbach and Silverstein (1997), based on their qualitative research with 200 men from 10 different subcultures within the U.S., counter this perspective in reporting their conclusions that “neither mothers nor fathers are essential” and that “a wide variety of family structures can support positive child outcomes” (Silverstein, 1999, p.398):

Children need a least one responsible, caretaking adult who has a positive emotional connection to them and with whom they have a consistent relationship. Because of the emotional and practical stress involved in child rearing, a family structure that includes more than one such adult is

more likely to contribute to positive child outcomes. Neither sex of the adult(s) nor the biological relationship to the child has emerged as a significant variable in predicting positive development....We have found that the stability of the emotional connection and the predictability of the caretaking relationship are the significant variables that predict positive child adjustment. (p.398)

According to Silverstein (1999), the feminist solution is the reconstruction of the cultural ideology about gender roles and the redefinition of the father-child bond as independent of the father-mother relationship. Comprehensive governmental family policy should support men in their fathering role without discriminating against women and same sex couples, that is, it should provide paid parental leave, governmental financed day care, and economic subsidies for *all* families with children, which includes gay or lesbian families.

The feminist movement of the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century has made people aware that fathers are replaceable, especially in cases of domestic violence. Beginning in the 1970s, women who identified with this movement celebrated the fact that divorce was becoming easier and mothers could be free from male domination to lead their own households. Previously, stringent anti-divorce and pro-family laws, which, feminists claimed, made it hard for women to leave destructive marriages and regain social and financial status in society once they did leave, made feminists push for more liberal views about traditional patriarchal families. Since then, divorce and single parenthood policies have become less stringent, allowing women to take their lives into their own hands. Single women, in these feminist portrayals are seen as capable to manage their families and households by themselves. The absence of fathers in families in this light often looks less detrimental, and in some cases even beneficial.

Feminist authors have widely claimed that divorce did not necessarily have bad influence on children (cf. Gallagher, 1997, 1998; Whitehead, 1997). Some claimed that research reporting negative effects of fatherlessness and divorce did not have enough evidence, and that divorce could be good for all the involved parties (Burns & Scott, 1994; Herzog & Sudia, 1973; Stacey, 1998).

Feminist writer Judith Stacey (1998), critiquing Simons' (1996) research that concluded children of divorce to be at least twice as likely as those from intact families to display problems of delinquency, early sexual activity, emotional distress, and academic difficulties, states:

As our findings and those of others make clear, there is great variability among children whose parents divorce, and most children of divorce do not develop long-term difficulties in functioning. A child is not immune to problems simply because he or she lives with two parents. A significant proportion of children living with both parents develop psychological problems (Simons, 1996; Stacey, 1998, p.67).

Silverstein (2002) similarly critiques Blankenhorn (1995) and Popenoe (1996) and says that they are oversimplifying the evidence regarding divorce. She states these authors are simply "failing to acknowledge the potential costs of father presence in some families" (p.42).

Feminists also claimed that previous stringent laws and policies on the perseverance of marriage and traditional families had done more harm to the children of these families than actual fatherlessness when, for example, family relations were destructive or abusive. Stacey (1998) writes that "...parental divorce clearly liberates some children, as well as adults from deeply destructive relationships ....which ushers in a form of fatherlessness that provides welcome relief" (p.69). Other authors argue that fatherlessness may be far less detrimental to the child than the greater hazard of exposure

to parental conflict, together with affective distress, and psychological disorders within parents (e.g., Furstenberg, 1991; Johnston, 1993).

Stacey (1998) also argues, somewhat controversially, that we should see divorce “not [as] a new and devastating decline, but [as] a transformative era in which women can finally free themselves and their children from abusive or neglectful husbands and fathers,” and that we should get over the “social hysteria” of the idea of father absence. “We have exaggerated both the extent of father absence and the harm done to children because of growing up in fatherless homes” (p.3). Stacey (1998) continues, “accounts which thus exaggerate, do not adequately address complex questions of causality (i.e. does poverty or fatherlessness cause poor health?), and collapse important distinctions between different kinds of fatherless families” in order to make fatherlessness look harmful to individuals and society (p.5). According to Stacey (1998), it may not be fatherlessness that produces behavioral and emotional problems, but, for example, the new economic difficulties and pressures women experience trying to find a job after a liberating divorce.

However, more than arguing for or against divorce, feminists are interested in dispensing with the “myth” that all individuals need and benefit from traditional family units, as family scientists have claimed for decades, and instead argue for a re-definition of “family” and a diversity of life styles (Silverstein, 1999; 2000; Stacey, 1996, 1998; van Zyl, 2002). Stacey (1996) writes that while traditional families are fine if they work, there is no one type of family structure that is superior to all other forms for all children, adults, and for society as a whole.

What matters most is the character and quality of relationships, of parenthood, and of the conditions in which these occur, whether parents

decide to marry or divorce. Neither marriage, nor fatherhood, in and of itself, protects children, not even from the [so called] risks of fatherlessness. (p.69)

Also the importance of the masculine role model in fathers for their sons is dismissed as a myth in these arguments against the necessity of traditional families. Silverstein (2002), for example, in an effort to disperse myths about traditional versus alternative families, mentions research contradicting fathers' masculine role models as necessary for boys' healthy development of masculine gender identity (cf. Pleck, 1995; Patterson, 1995 a,b; Patterson & Chan, 1997). Studies on the developmental outcomes of children raised in lesbian families support this claim by showing that there are no significant differences in the development of gender identity of children raised in alternative versus traditional families (Patterson, 1995; Patterson & Chan, 1997).

Stacey (1998) criticizes Blankenhorn's writings, calling him "one of the most nostalgic, and inflammatory, chauvinists among today's secular dada-ist preachers" [on the problem of fatherlessness] (p.57).

The United States leads the industrialized world in both youth violence and unwanted teen pregnancies, to no small extent because we fail to provide sufficient education, employment, nurturance, and supervision to, especially male, youth. It is proving much more difficult to retrofit masculinities than femininities to survive the challenges, opportunities, and hazards of postmodern conditions of work and family life, and our failure to do so carries significant social costs for men, women, children, and social stability. Dada-ism taps into our guilty suppressed, collective awareness of this failure. Instead of addressing it head-on, however, dada-ism resorts to nostalgic fantasies that we can return to a mythic world where Father knew best. (Stacey, 1998, p.76)

According to Stacey (1996, 1998), while fatherlessness can be difficult, it can also not be an issue at all, depending on the quality of the remaining relationships and support network in the child's life. Traditional families can produce just as many troubled

individuals as alternative family units. What Stacey (1996, 1998) argues *is* central to solving our problems, is the love, nurturing, guidance, and education that can be given by adults to the next generation.

Gallagher (1997, 1998), who argues for the importance of traditional family units, criticizes the view of the anti-family feminist movement as a reaction to the traditional family movement. To her, the feminist movement, in its fight for diversity in human cohabitation and development, and the relativism it perpetuates, is just as dogmatic as the feminists' claim about the dogmatism of the traditional view on families. Her criticism of the feminist movement shows that the feminist's argument is circular:

Isn't it feminism that first taught us to escape from this "myth" of family unity – that the interests of wives and husbands, parents and children, are always and everywhere the same? Yet we see here, under the guise of "diversity," a resurrection of this same myth: that human interests never conflict, that we always can follow our desires at no cost to our children's hearts. (Gallagher, 1998, p.179)

I believe that for us to get out of the polarized arguments about the *harmful* nature of fatherlessness on one side and the *harmless* nature of fatherlessness on the other, to escape either dogmatic or relativistic claims, and to make fewer generalizations, we must go deeper and deal with fatherlessness, as Stacey (1998) puts it, "face-on" (p.23). One best way to deal with something "face-on," I will argue, is to employ a rigorous phenomenological method that investigates the phenomenon directly.

Williams (2000), who studied gay and lesbian literature which makes similar arguments about non-traditional families as the feminist literature (Jost, 2003; Sherman, 1992; Stacey, 1996, 1998; Tasker & Golombok, 1997), notes that the quantitative studies on the topic lack the methodological rigor sufficient to permit them to make judgments about the harmfulness or harmlessness of non-traditional families. He says that

quantitative research is not equipped with what it takes to discern all the important intricate contextual details and to bring the context of investigation under sufficient control in order to make reliable predictions about the harmfulness or harmlessness of traditional versus non-traditional families (Williams, 2000). For example, he maintains that statistical significance is too conservative a criterion for the study of the many very subtle and non-robust effects inherent in family relationships and is too conservative to alert us to the potential harm of non-traditional parenting or enlighten us on its moral dimensions.

Phenomenological research which is not conservative in the way quantitative research is, as described above (Williams, 2000), can get at the heart of the meaning of fatherlessness with every participant that is interviewed in the research, and illuminate whether and how fatherlessness might be difficult for someone. In the manner of Grounded Interpretive research, one can then derive a formal account of the various experiences of participants' fatherlessness, and, thus, the general meaning of fatherlessness. In thus looking at more and more of the contextual facets and the intricateness of fatherlessness in our lived experiences of them—as fatherless, researchers, or both, I suspect we can gradually make more sense of fatherlessness, and see it in less grim ways. Although I certainly do not think fatherlessness is easy, my bias is that our conclusions about and our literature on fatherlessness would be more realistic were they to involve fewer overgeneralizations and provide a more contextual account of the experience.

Feminist arguments make an explicit effort to meliorate some of the claims that were made, especially in the earlier literature, about the detrimental effects of father

absence. Some feminist arguments raise important issues about fatherlessness that are not voiced clearly elsewhere. I want to acknowledge three arguments Stacey (2001) and other feminists make: (1) that children in traditional patriarchal families are not immune from abuse or from developmental, psychological, emotional, or behavioral problems and that fatherless individuals are not automatically vulnerable to such problems because they do not live in traditional families; (2) that some children are better off in a single households than if their parents were still married, and that psychological effects seen in a child of divorce might not come from being fatherless but from the family environment and dynamics that existed before the divorce and from the economic situation of the family after the divorce; (3) and that emphasizing and educating about the nature and quality of relationships, especially parent-, or father-child relationships, is more important than some abstract, socio-cultural ideal of the father (including seeing fatherlessness as a universal problem) in solving today's problems.

Blankenhorn (1995) and Popenoe (1996) are seen among professional father researchers more as popular authors who write for a specific social and political purpose and, rather than truly considering and researching the diverse dimensions of fathering and fatherlessness, merely use research that supports their agenda without looking deeply into the nature and quality of that research. As other authors have noted, the problem of Blankenhorn's (1995) and Popenoe's (1996) literature is that they radically trace diverse social problems back to the absence of fathers and portray fatherhood or father absence in a rather simplistic fashion—as a variable that is of a rather unyielding and unchanging quality within a context that has long been identified as complex by other researchers (Day & Lamb, 2004; Marsiglio et al., 2000; Silverstein, 1999, 2002). Day & Lamb



(2004), for example, while making a case for the importance and benefits of fathers in the home, do not necessarily subscribe to the notion that fathers are “essential and irreplaceable *per se*” (p.2, italics added). Many contextual factors, as I have tried to show in the previous section, need to be considered in research about fatherhood and fatherlessness. Through the increasing diversity and complexity of the literature, it becomes increasingly obvious that fatherlessness involves complex social and cultural, as well as individual factors.

In conclusion, historian Robert Griswold (1998) argues that fathers have been absent from homes throughout history, due to industrial and agricultural work, or due to the demands of governing or war-making, and that fatherlessness does not all of a sudden become harder for individuals just because we have made the condition more public over the past few decades. While pointing out some of the problems fatherlessness has introduced to society, he argues that not all is lost. The history of fatherlessness in society across the ages, says Griswold (1998), can teach us much about solving modern-day problems arising from fatherlessness. The author states we have to keep in mind that problems assigned to fatherlessness are central to liberal theory and modern individualism in which people can live the life-style they want without too much social constraint on them (Griswold, 1998). For example, while the norms and laws associated with families and fathering have grown more diffuse, individuals have gained greater freedom in constructing their own normative realities. Also, the shift in our modern culture to mothers or government organizations of role expectations, responsibilities, and economic power previously attributed to fathers, has made it easier and more popular to

accept fatherlessness and the absence of fathers' influences and contributions in the home (Griswold, 1998).

Griswold's (1998) solution to the problems modern society identifies with fatherlessness is to find ways to balance the self-interest of adults with the needs of children. Whether we can conclude that fatherlessness is harmful, he says, depends on individual cases of negotiation between the self-interest of each involved adult and the needs of each involved child (Griswold, 1998).

The study of the socio-cultural and historical context of fatherlessness has contributed to illuminating additional features of fatherlessness. For example, this literature suggests that fatherhood and fatherlessness have been looked at from too narrow a standpoint in earlier research. The authors I have cited have tried to show fatherlessness in a more global light by illuminating social-cultural, historical, ideological, and political issues surrounding fatherhood or fatherlessness. These and many other contextual issues need to be taken into account when examining the nature of fatherlessness, especially in answering the more difficult "why" and "how" questions about fatherlessness.

As some of this literature shows, the nature of fatherlessness (i.e. necessarily detrimental or not) is not yet a settled issue. The literature on fatherlessness is only beginning to address the issue that fatherlessness might not be detrimental or harmful in all cases and that much early research seems to have reached oversimplified conclusions. The feminist literature especially contributes to the study of fatherlessness in that it reminds us that fatherlessness will not always be detrimental. The question remains how much of the feminist research has been driven by their own political biases in such a way

that it confirmed those biases. It is my contention that increasingly context-sensitive research, especially qualitative research, can answer this question and many others related to the effects of fatherlessness by looking at specific contextual cases of fatherlessness.

### *Qualitative Research Accounts*

During my literature research I encountered a total of nine qualitative research studies that dealt with fatherlessness or father loss (Cheyne, 1988; Gaddis, 2003; Hsu, Kahn & Huang, 2002; Medway, 1996; Moore, 1996; Persons, 1990; Sina, 1997; Stokes, 2003; Turnbull, 1991). Seven of those studies were phenomenologies that look directly at the lived experience of fatherlessness (Gaddis, 2003; Medway, 1996; Moore, 1996; Persons, 1990; Sina, 1997; Stokes, 2003; Turnbull, 1991). Most of the qualitative studies I found on the topic of fatherlessness or father loss are doctoral dissertations. The dissertations I have reviewed support the idea that although there is an abundance of quantitative studies on the topic of fatherlessness, they do not supply sufficient insight into the experience of father loss, especially, as Stokes (2003) states, from the child's or adolescent's perspective (cf. Moore, 2003).

The number of participants in the studies I reviewed ranged from 5 to 30. Cases of fatherlessness included desertion and physical or emotional abandonment, divorce with or without visitations, being in prison, psychological neglect and/or emotional unavailability, and death. Medway's (1996) and Turnbull's (1991) interest was in illuminating the continuum of the degrees of different types of father loss, while Turnbull (1991) specifically looked at the fatherless experience from points of view before and after the loss. Moore (2003) looked primarily at dimensions of the experience of father

loss in men's later stages of adulthood, from ages 27 to 60 and Persons (1990) and Cheyne (1988) at the experience of paternal abandonment in adult women's lives between the ages of 18 and 60. Gaddis (2003) studied the consequences of early paternal loss through death in women between the ages of 32 and 64. Further distinctions in paternal loss through death were made in Hsu et al. (2002), who studied consequences of paternal death through cancer, accident, non-cancerous disease, and suicide. The study by Hsu et al. (2002) was the only international study, having been conducted in Taiwan. One study on fatherlessness involved a minority group (Stokes, 2003).

Some authors built their research around psychological theories such as Ambiguous Loss, Attachment, Contextual or Systemic Family Therapy theory (Stokes, 2003; Turnbull, 1991), object relations and psycho-dynamic theory, Heuristic and self-psychology (Medway, 1996; Persons, 1990), or feminist theory (Gaddis, 2003). The general message of the reviewed studies, with the exception of Moore (2003), who will be mentioned at the end, was that father loss is difficult and that individuals who experienced it struggle. Generally, deeper insight than that which was gained in the quantitative researches I reviewed was given through more insight into researchers' own biases which influenced and directed the research process, and through direct quotes of fatherless individuals' narratives.

While some authors, e.g., Stokes (2003), Moore (2003), Sina (1997), and Persons (1990) did explicitly spell out their biases in their analyses, some authors did not. This became evident in and had negative implications for researchers' methods, specifically in their recruitment of research participants and in the questions that were asked during interviews. However, most of the authors of the dissertations I reviewed

have experienced father loss themselves and fortunately included their own experience in their writings, which let readers make the connections between authors' biases and the results of their studies. In other words, authors' accounts of their own experiences with father loss were crucial in that they revealed researchers' potential biases and attitudes about the subject. For example, I found there to be a strong connection between authors' own negative experiences and their selection of research participants who already were identified as struggling or who came from troubled backgrounds (e.g. from clinics, troubled youth programs, therapists, or word-of-mouth recruiting; see Gaddis, 2003; Meadway, 1996; Stokes, 2003). Such connections were often not clearly acknowledged (e.g. Gaddis, 2003; Medway, 1996; Persons, 1989; Turnbull, 1991).

Stokes (2003) is aware of this weakness in his recruiting approach, acknowledging that all of his participants were delinquent. However, he states while reflecting individual's experiences and generating general themes from their accounts, phenomenology does not seek to generalize to the whole population and therefore does not need a sample that is representative of the whole population. While agreeing with Stokes (2003) on this point, I would also add, however, that a researcher has to specifically indicate he or she is merely studying certain populations, such as, in the previous case, already troubled populations, for a reason. Not clearly explicating such detail may result in research findings appearing as overgeneralizations. For example, studying merely troubled or delinquent youth raises research questions specifically tied to such populations, which cannot be applied to the general population of fatherless individuals.

Another area that was affected by researchers' own biases and negative experiences of father loss was evident in the questions participants were asked in the research process. For example, Moore (2003), in his letter of intent/consent form, or Cheyne (1988) in her recruiting flyer, made father loss sound detrimental and pitiful from the beginning, giving subjects the impression that they are invited to share their difficult experiences rather than all types of experiences regarding father loss. In my own study, I have asked what I perceived to be open-ended questions which allowed participants to share a broad range of experiences with fatherlessness. Especially with my underlying strong interest in resilience and successful coping, I asked questions I perceived to be more open towards answers that would suggest the experience of fatherlessness was not as difficult as might be expected.

Moore (2003) clearly describes an interesting and thorough process of interview question selection, involving his dissertation committee, which helped him arrive at five well thought out "grand-tour," open-ended questions:

- What dimensions, incidents and people intimately connected with the experience stand out to you?
- How did the experience affect you? What changes do you associate with the experience?
- How did the experience affect significant others in your life?
- What feelings were generated by the experience?
- What thoughts stood out for you? (Moore, 2003, p.80)

Stokes (2003), with regards to his study acknowledges the weakness that there were "no questions regarding resiliency" (p.98). In other words, there were no questions that could have disproved the bias in his study about fatherlessness being difficult, which represents the approach of looking for disconfirming evidence. Turnbull (1991) also shows weakness in that regard in her study. While stating her bias about death always

being a “significant and potentially traumatic event” and that she came to the research as a “clinician, researcher, and a *survivor*,” yet, granting that not all participants might perceive father loss as traumatic, the author asks interview questions in a way that suggests the fatherless experience is inherently difficult and detrimental.

Some authors did state their feelings and reactions throughout their research (Stokes, 2003; Moore, 2003; Persons, 1990). For example, Stokes (2003) writes:

I was interested in the individual experiences of each participant. I was not prepared for the heartache that would come by listening to their stories. There were times I wanted to stop being a researcher and become a clinician.[...] Having a child of my own, a daughter, I found myself relating a bit differently to the two female participants. As I listened to the tape-recorded interviews during the transcription process, I noticed my voice was softer at times, more concerned at others. There were times I deliberately superimposed my daughter’s face on the face of the two young ladies before me. To imagine my daughter one day telling a stranger that I, her father, was no longer involved in her life, made me sick to my stomach and my heart ache. I silently pledged to her (and my wife) that, short of death, I would always be involved in her life.” (p.44)

In this text, Stokes (2003) not only shows how personal bias can influence the way in which questions are being asked, but also illustrates the relational nature of qualitative interviews in which both the researcher and the participant may be influenced and meanings of narratives may change because of the relationship between the two.

Another potential weakness that may be part of some of the qualitative studies I have reviewed clearly comes out in Persons’ (1990) dissertation. Although Persons (1990) takes her data only from herself and 11 other subjects, she summarizes her findings in a language that suggests her findings apply to the general population (in her case the fatherless due to abandonment). The same effect exists in Cheyne’s (1988) study. Generalizations from qualitative studies to the larger population are overgeneralizations and just as wrong as I have argued in previous sections with regards

to quantitative researches. One benefit, however, of Persons' (1990) qualitative and phenomenological study over quantitative studies I have reviewed in making overgeneralizations is that Persons (1990) shows the interviewing process and actual data next to the author's interpretation and write-up of the data. Thus, the reader at least has full insight into and can separate the author's biases and participant's narratives; the reader can still learn important and useful information from the represented narratives while being able to disagree with the author, particularly on issues regarding generalizability.

One major strength in Moore's (2003) and Persons' (1990) dissertations is that they provide an entire interview in the text of their dissertation, which, as Moore (2003) states, "provides an opportunity for objective analysis by other readers" (p.84) and lets the reader "make her or his own interpretation of the material, which represents an effort on [the author's] part to get out of the way of the data so that the co-participants [the research participants] may tell their own story" (p.85). I will likewise employ this strategy in my own research.

Further, a consistent strength in some of the qualitative studies I reviewed was that researchers usually employed "member checking" (Gaddis, 2003; Medway, 1996; Moore, 2003; Stokes, 2003). For example, in Medway's (1996) Heuristic Research approach, participants were "co-researchers." That is, they were actively made part of the interpretation and re-interpretation of their narratives. Medway (1996) also included her own experience of father loss and the experience of some of her colleagues in the clinical field, who then "checked" and interviewed each other. Stokes (2003) had outside reviewers (graduate student volunteers) go over his data a second time after he had



analyzed them, so that they were addressed from more than just his own perspective. Gaddis (2003) let her “co-researchers” read her write-up of their accounts, give her feedback on it, and help her improve on potential misinterpretations or misrepresentations.

Hsu et al. (2002) give an excellent example of qualitative research (interpretive ethnographic, self-narrated personal interviews, and participant observation, and a hermeneutic data collection process) that pays special attention to the socio-cultural context in their paper. The responses of bereaved children and adolescents and their mothers to fathers’ deaths were highly influenced by Taiwanese culture. For example, according to traditional Taiwanese culture a widow is expected to live without a man for the rest of her life. The loss of a father has lifelong implications for childrens’ lives, because they can no longer live the cultural ideal of a complete family, which includes a father. Children from these families are subject to rejection from their paternal grandparents, cannot talk about the death anywhere, including within their own family, because it is seen as a taboo, and feel tremendous strain from the damaged family dynamics which now fall on the mother primarily. The shame and the cultural pressures that are on the family often elicit suicide, depression, insecurity issues, developmental impairment, anxiety, and loneliness. Hsu et al. (2002) cite participants throughout their paper which gives especially rich insight into individual experiences of father loss influenced by perceptions about fatherlessness within the Taiwanese culture. For example,

It is difficult for me to tell others that my father is dead. [...] they make me feel that I lost something and that something is wrong with my life. I am not the same as them and I am not one of them. I told my classmates and friends that my father is in an overseas business and resides outside the country. (Hsu et al., p.47)

I don't talk to my sister [about death] because she looks so sad. My sister doesn't talk about it either. Neither does my mother. We share stories about something funny that happened at school, but we don't talk to each other about the death...(Hsu et al., p.48)

It happened in our science class. I was the little teacher [leader] of our group. I saw a boy in our group [do something the wrong way] and I made him aware of it. He shouted "I'm not going to fight with you because you don't have a father." [...] Everyone looked at me. Our teacher came between us and said "That's OK, take it easy." I felt that everyone was giving me sympathy. Sympathy is not a part of friendship. I felt I was being looked down upon. (p.48)

Not until I communicated with [my father] did I develop a father in my life. I do the self-talk all the time. So...it is not difficult for me. I just imagine I that I am talking to my father...I think he is still alive in a different form and somewhere we cannot visualize. I think he is still there and is looking after me. (Hsu et al., p.51)

All three quotes show how bereaved fatherless individuals react to and deal with father loss in the context of cultural influences in Taiwanese culture.

Especially significant themes or results that uniformly emerged from the qualitative studies I have reviewed, that did not as clearly come to the foreground in the literature reviewed in the previous sections, and that I specifically would like to point out are: the influence of mothers' reactions to and style of coping with the loss of the father in relation to the child's experience of father loss and the importance of re-experiencing or at least facing and working through the loss. Especially researchers who had training in clinical psychology suggested that a re-experiencing or re-processing of the loss was an important step in individuals' healing processes.

While the above qualitative studies show much of the context of the lived and interpreted experiences of fatherlessness and show how individuals, despite difficulties in many instances coped well and rose above the absence of their fathers, none of them openly addressed interest and none of them specifically inquired about the experience of

resiliency and successful coping and continued to follow the general, dominating tone of the fatherless literature by focusing mainly on the detrimental and harmful nature of fatherlessness. Only Moore (2003) notices, in the conclusion of his study,

...the amazing adaptive capability of the human being to prevail despite extraordinary odds and psychological inequity. The men who tell their stories here give proof that being deserted by a father does not doom one to perpetuate the intergenerational process of boys growing into men who cannot contribute to family or community. In the experiences of these men, we can learn about the very worst and best of our humanness. We can with certainty encourage the need for one to face one's worst fear... We can take heart from the knowledge that serious psychological laceration need not perpetually and irretrievably afflict us, and that in fact our losses can be turned into one of life's allies. Through facing our worst fear, we no longer have to fear our own mortality, and can live fully every day, while being the best father and man possible. (p.172)

I find that there is an opportunity to see fatherlessness from a more hopeful perspective in Moore's conclusion. Likewise, I think this hopeful perspective could be elicited from many similar yet less pronounced messages the majority of the other studies contain through their insightful contextuality. While the experience of father loss may be difficult and many problems may arise from it, fatherless individuals can grow and learn from it. I believe that individuals can grow from life's experiences by facing or accepting these experiences and by working through or re-processing them with an adequate support network behind them. Almost all researchers unanimously acknowledged that re-experiencing fatherlessness in the interview, or just the opportunity to be heard by someone who is interested in their experience, helped the fatherless. In other words, the interviewing process during qualitative research, although monitored to not become a therapeutic enterprise, has been seen to be very effective in letting subjects re-experience their loss and in bringing more closure to their experience (Medway, 1996; Moore, 2003; Turnbull, 1991). My own study was intended to specifically serve the purpose of

bringing themes of reconciliation, growth, and resilience of fatherless individuals to the foreground and to thus address a deficit in the literature.

### General Conclusion

I have tried to show in this literature review that the experience of fatherlessness depends on many different and complex contextual factors. Such factors include the type of loss, attachment, the nature of the relationship of the bereaved to the father, the personality of the child, the mother, and the father, reconciliation with the loss of the father, and family economics on a micro level, as well as socio-cultural attitudes or biases and political and historical developments on a macro level. Thus, effects of fatherlessness vary according to many individual and contextual factors and can best be understood through research that looks at the lived experience of individuals who are fatherless. Increasing attentiveness to such factors and to the contextual situatedness of fatherlessness has cast research and information about fathers and about fathers' absence in a more complex light than the early research mentioned at the beginning of this review. Our increased understanding about fathers and father absence helps us make fewer overgeneralized statements, achieve more insight, and depict fatherlessness more realistically (cf. Day & Lamb, 2004; Palkovitz, 2002).

Increasingly, context sensitive literature is beginning to raise new questions about fatherlessness and my research is intended to be part of this movement by asking what resilience and successful coping in fatherlessness would look like. As generally reported, the effects of fatherlessness paint a rather grim picture about what it means to be fatherless. As one who is fatherless myself, I cannot say that this experience is easy. However, I would like to propose that there is more hope for the fatherless than one

might suspect given the general literature. I maintain that while looking at the experiential side of fatherlessness, as much as possible in its rich and multi-faceted context, this hope can become more salient (also see p. 53). I think that this is so because the more we understand about the context and thus the meaning of difficult experiences such as fatherlessness, the more we are able to find ways to reconcile with them and even turn them into strengths. Similarly to Boss' (1999, 2006) and Harris' (2006) writings about the process of reconciliation, I want to define reconciliation throughout this thesis as the making sense of having lost a father, or as the finding of positive meaning in the experience of having lost a father. I believe that fatherlessness is experienced and reconciled with as it is interpreted by the individual. In other words, the individual has a range of opportunity to control how fatherlessness is experienced. On this note, I am postulating that the fatherless can overcome the effects of fatherlessness.

Qualitative research, phenomenology in particular, allows researchers to attend to the meanings that arise in experience without imposing much of a conceptual framework or bias about it before the research begins. That is, the researcher may have biases about the topic, but he or she does not impose them—he or she rather works with them. Because research is a value-laden enterprise and we can never escape our biases, the phenomenological researcher seeks to identify his or her biases and then works them into the research process while making sure the research participant has shared his or her own interpretation and experience. As Boss, Dahl, and Kaplan (1996) put it, “when we use a phenomenological approach, our a priori assumptions about how families work—or do not work—become the core of our inquiry because no one method is prescribed in phenomenology” (p.85). Phenomenology is not intended to be a test of any particular

theory; rather our inquiry and the “grand tour” questions of our inquiry are developed from the perspective of “not knowing” what the experience and the perception of father absence is for individuals. Further, in the words of Boss et al. (1996), while not imposing a reality on our research participant, our questions “do impose a structure, consistent with the general framework for phenomenological research” (p.97; as cited in Stokes, 2003, p.10). In other words, the researcher attempts to approach the phenomenon under study as if he or she did not know anything about it and lets the phenomenon reveal itself. Thus, qualitative studies can reveal meanings in their multi-faceted, differing, rich or “thick” contexts. For these reasons, I think, qualitative research is best suited for exploring fatherlessness, acknowledging what it means, and finding hope in the experience of it. After reviewing the literature, and studying the complexities inherent in the topic of fatherlessness, I hope readers’ interest might, as was mine, be kindled to look more closely at fatherlessness in its rich and multifaceted contexts.

## CONCEPTUAL JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

An examination of the literature on fatherlessness reveals much controversy about whether or not fatherlessness is harmful. This is so because fatherlessness has not yet been looked at in a sufficiently contextual manner. Fatherlessness has mostly been addressed in terms of pre-selected, abstract variables and formalized theories about the experience rather than in terms of the contextual experience itself. My first working hypothesis is that if we examine fatherlessness in a more contextually-engaged way, generating a variety of contextual meanings out of individual's personal experiences with it, we will be able to address fatherlessness in a way that is more informative. My second working hypothesis is that if we do this we may learn of ways individuals have been resilient and have successfully coped with their fatherlessness, and are thus able to portray fatherlessness in a more hopeful light than the current literature does.

I think that especially for those who are trying to answer the question of hope for the fatherless, it is important to look ever more closely at the particulars of the contexts in which fatherlessness is experienced. I think that this is so because hope is something very personal and found only within the particular context and circumstance of an individual. Along with Victor Frankel (1959) a psychologist who wrote out of his own experience with concentration camps, I believe that human beings are meaning-creating and meaning-needing creatures and that an individual may find hope in seeing life and its diverse events—especially extremely difficult events—as meaningful. Meaning, Frankel (1959) says, is found by thinking of ourselves “as those who were being questioned by life” (p.85) and by answering life's questions with a decision. Suffering, he says “ceases to be suffering at the moment it finds a meaning” (such as, for example, the meaning of

sacrifice) (Frankel, 1959, p.117). This process of meaning-finding and answering to life's questions is a spiritual process:

[What] sort of person the prisoner became was the result of an inner decision, and not the result of camp influences alone. Fundamentally, therefore, any man can, even under such circumstances, decide what shall become of him—mentally and spiritually...The way they [prisoners] bore their suffering was a genuine achievement. It is this spiritual freedom—which cannot be taken away—that makes life meaningful and purposeful. (Frankel, 1959, p.75-76)

I believe that meaning and hope is found contextually, and research that makes it possible to gain insight into the context of lived experience is best fitted to the study of such meaning and hope. Most of the literature that has been reviewed in the previous chapter, and indeed most of the literature about fatherlessness available in our discipline, consists of quantitative or experimental research. Quantitative research, however, cannot get at the meaning of an experience. Quantitative research does not get at the many fine and important details and nuances of deeply contextual experiences because it cuts out such details in the process of scientific pre-conceptualization, operationalization, quantification, and testing of formal hypotheses. In order to pre-conceptualize and operationalize for traditional scientific study, one has to know about all the important variables that need to be included in the study. However, fatherlessness is a very complex and multi-dimensional topic and there are still many variables we do not know enough about in order to conduct good quantitative studies on the topic of fatherlessness. Limentani (1991) and others similarly state that the scarcity of details with regard to fathers and fathers' absence hinders our capacity to conceptualize fatherlessness and thus examine it more accurately in quantitative research (pp.575-576; cf. Target & Fonagy, 2002, p.52).



Palkovitz (2002), who catalogued variability of meaning and variables in contexts for fathering relationships, indicated that fathering relationships are influenced by a complex array of countless variables which are difficult to control in traditional experimental studies. Palkovitz (2002) maintains that fathering “represents a complex set of ongoing transitions and developmental processes extending across time, exhibiting varied configurations of investment at different times, concomitant with other ongoing role prescriptions, life-course transitions and investments in men’s time, attention, and energy” (pp.9-10). He further argues that qualitative research could survey these complex transitions, processes, or configurations best (p.xii). Surely, fatherlessness, which not only involves complex transitions, processes, or configurations about fathering, but also about the *lack of fathering*, should be counted as a phenomenon too difficult to adequately study through traditional experimental methods.

Qualitative research has become especially popular within family research in recent years and it is especially well suited to learning more about the different variables at play in fatherlessness because little pre-conceptualization and no scientific operationalization and quantification is needed for this type of study (Day & Lamb, 2004; Trowell & Etchegoyen, 2002). Conceptualization of fatherlessness and of questions that further explore fatherlessness happens throughout research. In a phenomenology, for example, the researcher learns about fatherlessness through the narratives told by participants in the study. The researcher in a way experiences the meaning of those narratives as he or she records and interprets them, restates the narratives and his or her interpretation of them to the participant, gets feedback on whether his or her interpretation seems correct, and further probes for meaning. Thus fatherlessness is

conceptualized, but it is conceptualized and re-conceptualized in and through the collaborative event of inquiring about it.

Dollahite (2004) argues that human beings live in narrative and are “uniquely skilled at creating [and interpreting] meaning through [...] the ongoing unfolding contextual events in their lives” (Dollahite, 2004, p.125). Events and meanings experienced by individuals are unique, multi-faceted, and contextual, and need a method that can comprehend them as such. In order to understand people and the specific yet complex contextual meanings of their experience, one needs to hear their story and make an account of how they interpret the events of their life (Dollahite, 2004, p.125).

It is difficult to conceive of, much less control for, all the possibly relevant variables in quantitative research on fatherlessness. For example, what does it mean to be fatherless? Does it mean that a father was present at one point or another in an individual’s life, that he never was there, that a father was or is physically nearby, but emotionally unavailable, distant, or abusive? Fatherlessness could mean for a researcher that a subject has been without physical or emotional contact to their biological father since a very early age. Children at different early ages go through different developmental phases, and that would influence how fatherlessness was and is experienced by them. Fatherlessness could also mean that a subject has grown up with a father but has lost him recently. In any of these scenarios of fatherlessness, the age of the individual at the time of fatherloss, the relationship between the individual and his or her father, the type of fatherloss, and many other factors have to be considered in setting up adequately controlled quantitative research.

Another problem is that so many of these variables are meanings that resist quantification. Meaning in quantitative research is, unlike qualitative research where stories or narratives are important, documented in numbers. However, meaning is something that is very hard to quantify. For example, if I conceptualized that the experience of fatherlessness might be indicated in how someone might miss a father and one of my participants recorded that he or she missed a father a “7” on a scale of 1-10, this answer would not provide much information about his or her actual experience of fatherlessness. Broad research questions involving meaning that can not be so easily counted or expressed through numbers, such as “what is the experience of being fatherless,” or “what is the relationship between father absence and child development,” that is, research questions that are qualitatively and contextually rich in their meaning, call for research methods that are able to capture those meanings. In other words, not everything can and should be quantified.

Conclusions from quantitative research that express contextually rich experiences and meanings through narrow and stringent scientific pre-conceptualization and quantification, often puts information on the market that is too general and too abstract. Palkovitz (2002), for example, hints at the shallow nature of such information. “As a developmental psychologist, I have mostly seen text books that present a broad array of theories and data on developmental issues, yet students at the end of the course still don’t know why they are the way they are” (p.xv). The theories and data are too sterile and too general, making them fail to capture unique realities that would bring a subject closer to students (Palkovitz, 2002, p.xv).

Even though there has been an increase in recent years in qualitative research that is able to present information more contextually in the area of family research (cf. Day & Lamb, 2004; Palkovitz, 2002; Trowell & Etchegoyen, 2002), qualitative research is still in the minority. The qualitative research I have found and some of the more contextual accounts that have been referred to in this review, such as Erickson's (1998) and Simon's (2001) more autobiographical accounts, or accounts that considers fatherlessness in its socio-cultural, political, and historical context, have significantly contributed to the understanding of fatherlessness by providing more informative descriptions of it. However, these accounts seldom give insight into the actual data or any kind of systematic analysis of the data, typically being only theoretical summaries of the author's own experiences or opinions.

#### Pilot Study

I have gained much valuable insight into the actual experience of fatherlessness and derived a hypothesis about hope for the fatherless through my own study with fatherless individuals in a pilot study conducted prior to this paper. A systematic analysis and interpretation of the written and verbal accounts fatherless individuals gave me, showed two major themes emerge: (1) fatherlessness is not experienced as difficult by all fatherless individuals and (2) those individuals who experienced fatherlessness as difficult in my study did so because they (a) had not reconciled with the experience and their relationship to the lost father, or because they (b) did not have a supportive mother (for example the mother was mentally unstable or distant, mother did not have income). The two themes under individuals experiencing fatherlessness as difficult usually showed up in connection to each other.

The types of fatherlessness studied in the accounts were death, divorce, and abandonment. Factors that influenced how fatherlessness was experienced were gender, personality, ability to differentiate between fatherlessness and other issues such as abuse, nature and quality of the relationship to the father, the mother, and siblings or other family members, and overall support network including friends, teachers, or a religious community. Represented within the overall themes (see Appendix A), from which I gradually selected the two major themes mentioned above, two occurred most consistently throughout all accounts, however, they were not experienced in the same manner by each individual: a) increased responsibility/sacrifice (i.e. financial, educational or vocational, emotional, spiritual, relational) and b) financial hardship.

One individual explained his experience with increased responsibility/sacrifice as follows. The excerpt also shows themes of non-reconciliation which I explored and which solidified further in a follow-up interview:

Being fatherless is like a nightmare from which I can never wake up. For me, most of my life I relied on my father for help and counsel.... All of a sudden he divorced my mom. It was such a terrible breakup that we never spoke to my dad again. A year and a half later he killed himself [*theme of non-reconciliation*]...Without my dad's income, my family was forced to move into a house half the size. In order to make the move, we had to sell almost half of our possessions. I also had to sign for the mortgage. Instead of going to school and getting married, I was forced to find as many as three jobs at a time...Both my brothers fell away from the church and would not listen to anything I ever had to say to them. I obviously could not be a father figure for them [*theme of emotional, spiritual, and economic responsibility*]. At first I was able to cover my feelings and just work, but over time I collapsed emotionally [*theme of non-reconciliation*]...

Another male participant had a different experience, showing themes of hope:

I did not in particular miss anything that I saw my friends have in their dads. My mother overtook that role. She came to my football games and

she would play catch with me. She often did many things with me that I wanted to do...

During the identification and analysis of the overall themes, it became apparent that there were central themes underlying all accounts (the broader version of the main themes mentioned above): (I) Some individuals do not experience fatherlessness as difficult. (II) Whether fatherlessness was a challenge for the individual or not, was found to be dependent on six important key factors: (1) availability and support of a healthy mother and/or (2) other family members, (3) whether the relationship with the absent father was positive or negative (only in cases where the fatherless individual at some stage knew the father) and whether there was reconciliation to the father and his absence, (4) personality/resilience of the fatherless individual, (5) financial situation of the fatherless family, and (6) gender of the fatherless individual.

One predominant need for reconciliation regarding the absent father raised by the two female participants of my study was evident in the issue of inadequate physical contact with a father. To make sense of and reconcile with the loss and importance of a non-romantic relationship of love and affection with a male, for these women meant to acknowledge not having been mentally, spiritually, emotionally and physically protected, guided, and accepted by a male and to learn to relate and get used to males and to prepare for later stable intimate and romantic relationships with these losses in mind:

It was very hard for me needing that kind of emotional and physical relationship with a male – a relationship that showed caring and warmth but that was not romantic. I just wanted to be accepted, you know, to feel that self-worth, that love...That's why I have married this guy...I wanted love from a male...I was really looking for love, acceptance, guidance, and being cared for, but I confused that with romantic love. I could never just get unromantic love from a guy, they always wanted romantic love...that's why I thought I had to give romantic love...then I would get the friendship I longed for. There were some older [male friends] in

church who would give me hugs occasionally or just asked how I was doing and touched my arm or so. That was very scary for me because at first I was not used to physical contact with a male. Inside I really liked it and longed for it, but I did feel uncomfortable when they did hug me. If they would have been persistent, I would have probably gotten used to it and actually enjoyed it, I think...

Reconciliation of father loss for male participants was indicated by a close relationship with one male having been important in developing the ability to relate to men, fitting in with groups of friends, developing male traits, and feeling developmentally on top of things or complete. For example, one male participant related:

I withdrew from social events, especially those that reminded me of my father. I put on weight due to over eating. I don't know why, but I feel ashamed to tell people that my father passed away. I feel like my relationship with my mother suffered and dwindled also. I never used drugs, but I became fascinated with death. I feel a strong need to feel accepted ... I feel my life is incomplete or inadequate, and I will be until I am married.

However, another participant reported:

It has never really bothered me not to have a father. Sometimes I was a little uncomfortable when people were talking about 'father and sons' activities, but I was always taken under the wings of my friends fathers...Being raised by my mother, I learned about how women think, to take care of them, to treat them well, and to be sensitive...I never really had socially typical male views...I guess I don't follow the traditional 'macho-manliness'... Throughout adolescence I was sometimes made fun of as being gay, though I am definitely heterosexual and never questioned my gender.

My hypothesis about being able to find hope in the experience of fatherlessness, which I explored in the following study, first emerged for me from the accounts of this pilot study. As I have indicated before, I am using the phrase hope in the sense that I believe fatherless individuals are not influenced simply by some universal force produced by the condition of fatherlessness but that they create much of their own meaning and experience by way of their interpretation of their particular situation. In order to better

understand these interpretations it is important to look at the particular and individual contexts of the fatherless, including family and economic circumstances, personality and cultural influences, religious beliefs, or mental health, for example. What emerged from my pilot study were not only the specific circumstances of a fatherless person and his or her way of dealing with the situation, but also that there can be positive prospects for fatherless individuals if they are able to make sense of their particular experience, find meaning in it, and answer to that experience as to sort of a calling in life and thus reconciling with the experience. The driving motivation behind the following study was to learn more about the experience of resilience, successful coping, and thereby hope in fatherlessness by particularly paying attention to such themes and diverse elements that might be connected to it.

#### Qualitative and Grounded Interpretive Research

Qualitative methods assume that the meaning of human experience is not adequately reducible to numbers and causal theories but rather is to be understood in terms of the interpretation of meaningful action that is always a larger relational and moral context (Creswell 1998; Kvale, 1996). Creswell (1998) puts the basic assumptions of qualitative inquiry and its role in answering basic questions of research into five categories: The ontological, epistemological, axiological, rhetorical, and the methodological.

The question of ontology (i.e., “what is the nature of reality?”) is addressed by qualitative research in that it uses the language of the participants in presenting reality as it is experienced by them, and further by the researcher’s and participant’s collaborative effort to interpret the language and the narrative it delivers. In documenting and



displaying this collaborative effort of researcher and research participant, evidence from different perspectives, which speaks not only of the subjective but also the multiple or multi-dimensional and inter-subjective nature of reality, is provided. The question of epistemology concerns the “relationship between the researcher and that which is being researched” (Creswell, 1998, p.75), and is addressed by qualitative research in that the researcher becomes a participant in that he or she lessens the distance between him-  
herself and that which is being researched. The researcher thus is considered to be the primary investigative tool, since all interpretation and questioning happens through him or her. The question of axiology is “what is the role of values?” and is addressed by qualitative research by the researcher openly discussing values (his or her own, of the participant, of the research method, etc.) and acknowledges their being part of the narrative at any stage. The question of rhetoric addresses the form of language that is being used in qualitative inquiry, which is more informal, direct, and personal, strongly depending on verbal or written account of both researcher and participants. The question of methodology (i.e., “what is the process of the research?”) is addressed in qualitative inquiry in that the researcher first works with the particulars before he or she generalizes, describes in detail the context of the study, and continually revises questions until satisfying and meaningful information is obtained (Creswell 1998, p.75).

I patterned the present research after the Phenomenological and the Grounded Theory approach, which belong to the family of qualitative methods (Creswell, 1998). My research started out as a phenomenology in which I looked at lived experience of fatherlessness, the individual’s experience of fatherlessness, and his or her interpretations of that experience.

Phenomenology was first based on the work of Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) and was later developed and influenced by Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) and others such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961), Karl Jaspers (1883-1969), Gabriel Marcel (1889-1973), and Jean Paul Sartre (1905-1980). The purpose behind phenomenology is to go “back to the things themselves” (Husserl, 1970, p.252). For Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), the father of phenomenology, this meant that phenomena should be studied as they appear to consciousness in order to get at an invariant essence of the object beneath the object’s representation in consciousness. Husserl thus focused on the pure description of conscious experience. Heidegger, however, who was Husserl’s student, focused on the interpretation of a type of experience by relating it to relevant features of context and not just to consciousness. In this vein, Heidegger and, more particularly, his followers spoke of hermeneutics, the art of interpretation in context, especially social and linguistic context to get at the essence of a lived experience (Smith, 2003; cf. Kruger, 1988; Stumpf, 1977). Others, such as Creswell (1996) and van Manen (1997) take that interpretive dimension to another level and make it the center of the essential meaning and existence of a phenomenon rather than the possibility of an objective representation of that phenomenon outside of a perceivers’ consciousness.

In harmony with Creswell’s (1996) and van Manen’s (1997) conception of phenomenology, the ultimate goal behind my phenomenology is to discover the essence of the interpretation of the lived experience of fatherless individuals, and then, if present, an invariant structure about the shared characteristics of their experiences, which is commonly focused on in Grounded Interpretive research (see below).

Phenomenological studies generally do not start out with any formalized theory, only a curiosity about a particular phenomenon. For example, a qualitative study might begin by asking “grand tour” questions, such as “what does it mean to be fatherless?” or “Is there hope for the fatherless?” While such an initial, broad research question usually stays intact, smaller and more intricate research questions are often subject to change in the course of phenomenological research, based on the information given by the participants. The researcher’s inquiries thus do not follow any particular rigid method, but rather, the research follows the meaning of an experience as described by a participant, and it follows the research questions that naturally derive from the discovered meanings until the researcher seems satisfied about having answered his or her general and initial research question. Creswell (1998) describes this process of going back and forth between initial general research question, data collection, analysis, and the comparing of the obtained information to emerging categories of meaning until saturation as a “zigzag” process (p. 57). Questions within phenomenological research are subject to change as many times as it appears to be meaningful, according to the information given by the participants, and does not follow a certain universalized, standardized method as is the tradition in quantitative research.

The researcher in phenomenological research is considered to be the primary research tool since all interpretation and questioning happens through him or her. Thus, interpretations, biases, and assumptions of the researcher need to be acknowledged and are made part of the research. Spelling out and drawing the reader’s attention to those biases is the way objectivity is accomplished in qualitative research (Kvale, 1994). Kvale’s (1994) remarks on objectivity in qualitative research suggest that there are three

understandings of what objectivity means: (1) Objectivity as *free of bias*, which refers to knowledge that is reliable, checked, controlled, undistorted by personal bias and prejudice, neutral, factual, and confirmable, (2) Objectivity as *intersubjectivity*, which involves rational discourse, reciprocal critique, and negotiating among observers identifying and interpreting a phenomenon, and (3) Objectivity *reflecting the nature of the object investigated* (1994, pp.152-153).

Objectivity as being free of bias is impossible. We cannot avoid having biases. For example, even the notion that we can be bias free in itself is a bias. However, knowledge can still be reliable, checked, controlled, factual, and confirmable in an intersubjective way, reflecting the nature of the object investigated (cf. Giorgi, 1985). Kvale (1994) notes “objectivity is reached through the intentional acts of consciousness and is an expression of fidelity to the phenomena investigated” (p.151). It is of vital importance that biases and assumptions are spelled out in any kind of research, quantitative as well as qualitative research. However, in qualitative research it is even more important because the research process is so specifically tied and sensitive to individually interpreted meanings. When a researcher spells out his or her biases in every step of the research, he or she lets other parties such as research participants or readers have insight into the understanding and interpretation of the data. Objectivity is accomplished when other people read the research account, can make judgments about the researcher’s biases, assumptions, and interpretations, and can agree that the research account is a truthful representation of the object or phenomenon studied. The reader will be able to have clear insight into my biases and how I have applied them throughout my

study in that I will document my biases throughout the initial set-up phase of my research and throughout my interpretations and conclusions.

A good example of literature providing such objectivity is found in Simon (2001). This author acknowledges her bias about the sampling in her study which makes a great difference in how her book is read:

I realize that to some extent my subjects – the women who agreed to talk and write to me of their deepest, most personal experiences – are what a formal scientist would dismiss as a self-selected group; a population, in other words, that already had a vested interest in my questions and my conclusions and was not, perhaps, an accurate sample of all women who have lost their fathers. I have no way of correcting for this flaw, although by acknowledging it I hope to bring it to the attention of the reader. And I do not think it invalidates the truths that I have uncovered. I have spoken to enough women from all over the country, from various fields and faiths and stages of life, to convince me that despite the disparities that make all our lives unique, there truly is something like a shared experience for many of us here. (p.xvii-xviii)

While the phenomenological researcher brings him or herself into the study, with his or her own biases, interpretations, and assumptions, the researcher's role is that of an "active learner, who can tell the story from the participant's view rather than as an 'expert' who passes judgment on participants" (Creswell, 1998, p.18). The way active learning took place in my study in that I relayed the meaning that surfaced for me in a participant's narrative *back to the participant* as a way of ensuring that I have understood and interpreted him or her correctly. The participant's experience of fatherlessness thus was interpreted by both researcher and participant, and as thoroughly as possible so that the most accurate and full account of the participant's experience could be obtained. If a participant rejected my interpretation of his or her account, and, after reviewing my analysis of that individual's account, I still believed that I was right about my interpretation, I documented this discrepancy by giving an account of both, the research

participant's and my interpretation. Since the first inquiry about participant's experiences happened by the means of written accounts (see "Data Collection" in the method chapter), this active learning phase began in the second, the interview phase, which included dialogues about the accounts previously written by the participants.

Phenomenologies usually only describe what has been observed about a certain phenomenon or experience and they do not create a theory about that phenomenon or experience. I wanted to generate from my observations and descriptions of my participant's experiences of being fatherless a formal psychological account about their shared experiences of fatherlessness. I borrowed and used two select aspects of Grounded Theory in order to construct this account; namely, (1) presenting central phenomena and (2) looking for disconfirming evidence (for more in-depth discussion, see "Data Collection" in the method chapter).

Grounded Theory was first formulated by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in their joint work The Discovery of Grounded Theory (1967) as an alternative methodology to more traditional approaches of scientific inquiry that heavily rely on hypothesis testing, verification techniques, and quantitative analysis (Babchuk 1997). Grounded Theory has since been widely used in many different areas and practice settings (Babchuk 1997, Creswell 1998). It is a time-honored qualitative research method, providing viable means for scholars and practitioners to generate theories grounded in the realities of their daily work (Babchuk 1997).

Babchuk (1997) argues that Grounded Theory now often serves as an umbrella term, encompassing an entire spectrum of procedures and practices, but that all approaches to this methodology ultimately derive from Glaser and Strauss's original

work. Some researchers use Grounded Theory more loosely, using only one of the Grounded Theory postulates, or using the theory in conjunction with other methods, some use grounded theory more strictly, attempting to establish and follow a full complement of rules and dictates allowing them to make inferences about causal relationships. The diversity of interpreting and implementing Grounded Theory and the multiplication of Grounded Theory methods, according to Babchuk (1997), has its origin in discrepancies in the co-founders' philosophies about and works with Grounded Theory following their 1967 joint book.

Glaser, for example, sees Grounded Theory more as a "laissez-faire" attitude, which is inherently flexible in its method based on the accounts of participants and their socially-constructed realities (Babchuck 1997). Strauss, on the other hand, emphasizes the importance of "principles of good research," such as replicability, generalizability, and verification, which, according to Babchuck (1997), places him much closer to the traditions of quantitative research. Glaser argues that some of Strauss's "principles of good research" could too easily lead the researcher back into overlooking relevant meaning of the data by again "forcing it into a preconceived framework" as it was the case in quantitative research which Grounded Theory originally wanted to oppose (Babchuck 1997, p.3).

It could be said that by merging Phenomenology and Grounded Theory, I was leaning more towards Glaser's "laissez-faire" approach of research. While not having been unsystematic or arbitrary, I did not follow a too stringent set of methodological rules that conceptualized and categorized meanings and variables about fatherlessness before the actual experience was studied. I was guided in my method by the meaning that

manifested itself in my inquiries; that is, the meaning manifesting during my research guided the little “twist and turns” in my method. A documentation of my biases about my interpretations and methodological steps throughout the research, and full insight into my participant’s accounts, provides the reader with the possibility to judge whether or not my method was appropriate to the subject of study.

Addison (1997) merged Grounded Theory research with Hermeneutic research in order to avoid the mechanical view that might be perpetuated through heavy reliance on methods (as in some of Grounded Theory’s reliance on “principles of research,” a la Strauss). The practice of interpretation and openly making interpretation part of the research in every step conveys that the research and its conclusions are guided by the researcher’s and participant’s interpretation of experiences and not solely by one standard method. In fact, the researcher’s and participant’s biases, assumptions, and interpretations are cornerstones of the research method! I accepted and expected that interpretation was a part of every step in my research.



## METHOD

This research was conducted to answer one main question, namely “*What is the nature of the experience of being fatherless in those who seem to display successful coping and resilience?* Or, “*What is the nature of hope in fatherlessness?*”

### Participants and Recruiting Procedures

One participant for this study was recruited through a referral from a friend who knew this individual could qualify for participation in my study. One participant was recruited through my own efforts, and another participant heard about my study and volunteered to participate. All participants were acquaintances of mine. I considered these individuals as good candidates for my study because they grew up without a father or stepfather in their family of origin, yet seemed to display a relatively successful and productive life and thus successful coping and resilience. Other and more specific criteria pertaining to my definition of “fatherless,” “successful” and to the selection of these individuals for my study were solidified after having collected and read initial recruiting questionnaires (see below) and were justified in the write up of the data. I did not give a definition of the kind of fatherless individuals or of what experiences of fatherlessness I was looking for during the recruiting process. I did not tell my participants and the friend who recruited one participant for me anything about my specific interest in people who displayed resilience and successful coping. The reason for doing so was for research participants to freely be able to share their experience and to have themes of resilience and successful coping emerge on their own accord if they were part of their experience. I was careful that participants did not feel like having been labeled or that participants would not label themselves too much from the outset, so that

truly authentic experiences of successful coping and resilience, uninfluenced by my or recruiters' biases, could be solicited. I also did not mention the terms "successful coping" and "resilience" during my data collection to not suggest or trigger any expectations in my participants about these concepts. Instead, I looked what themes would arise in the accounts of my participants that could be labeled under "successful coping" or "resilience" and then identified successful coping and resilience in light of those themes.

All of my participants lost their fathers due to death, however, I was not aware of this fact in my recruiting and thus it was not purposefully part of my sampling strategy. As it came out in my data collection, two of my participants' fathers died because of disease. One died because of suicide and in this case the participant also experienced fatherloss through parental separation prior to the father's suicide. My participants have also all been of the Latter-day Saint (Mormon) faith, of which I was aware during my recruitment of them.

### Recruiting Questionnaires

Initial recruiting accounts came from a recruiting questionnaire which included questions pertaining to the time-frame and time period of an individual's fatherlessness, a request for recruited individuals to describe how the father was lost, and what individuals' experience with fatherlessness was like. The questionnaire also asked for the individual's first name and phone number for identification purposes and age, gender, religious affiliation, and ethnicity for the purpose of balancing my sample regarding these demographics (see Appendix B). This questionnaire took about an hour to fill out, depending on the individuals' expressiveness. A form with the consent to be a research

subject (see appendix C) accompanied the initial recruiting questionnaire, describing the future commitments of the participants and making a clear statement that all the information given on these questionnaires by participants would be kept anonymous and that data would be kept confidential except for the accounts published in my thesis.

### Data collection

My rationale behind having had individuals fill out a questionnaire to describe their experience with fatherlessness in a written format first was to allow them to “warm up” to the topic and have the opportunity to do some thinking as they were by themselves before they were interviewed. I was also assuming that some experiences might initially be hard for individuals to talk about and that they might be more likely to mention these experiences in writing.

After having read the initial recruiting questionnaires, I analyzed the essays about individual’s experiences of fatherlessness according to the following three basic steps of phenomenological research which I will describe in more detail below:

1. Again read accounts in their entirety.
2. Extract significant statements from each account.
3. Formulate these statements into meaning units and clustering these meanings into themes (Creswell, 1998, p.32).

#### *Reading accounts in their entirety*

First, essays were read again in one piece to get an overall impression. This, as Wertz (1985) indicates involves the researcher’s *empathic immersion in the world of description*, in which the researcher places him or herself into the world of the subject and makes it his own, and *slowing down and dwelling*, in which the researcher tries to

understand details of descriptions in an attitude that does not suggest he or she already understands the descriptions (p.174). Further, reading the essays in their entirety involves *magnification and amplification*, in which details the subject's world and account entails become large in importance to the researcher, and *suspension of belief or employment of intense interest*, in which the researcher breaks his original fusion with the subject in order to reflect about "where he or she is, how he or she got there, and what it means to be there" (p.174). In reading an account to get an overall impression, the researcher is not interested in the truth or falsehood of the subject's experiences but in the genesis, relations, and overall structure of the subject's experiences. After the researcher has a general sense of the situation, he or she can obtain a sense of the interpretation the subject gives to experiences, and thus of the subject's participation in and creating of the meaning arising from those experiences (Wertz, 1985, pp.175-176).

#### *Extracting significant statements from each account*

After having obtained a general impression of the accounts, all statements that seemed to be expressing something about individuals' experiences with and surrounding fatherlessness were extracted from each account. I, for example, looked for statements possibly concerning the individuals' emotional, physical, psychological, and spiritual state or events within their experience of fatherlessness that seemed important or that seemed to have the potential to become important later on during the follow-up interview (e.g., "I don't have a lot of memories of him" or "I don't feel that I was able to enjoy many of the activities of youth," or "I left home when I was 16"). Attention was paid especially to statements surrounding possible themes of coping or resilience (e.g., "I did

not feel I had grown up without a father,” or “I feel this taught me a strong work ethic that has prepared me for my current role as a father”).

*Formulating statements into meaning units and themes*

The selected statements were then formulated and demarcated into meaning units (e.g., “feelings,” “events”). In my analysis of the written accounts and later in the transcribed interviews, I used red and blue marker to distinguish between facts/events and feelings/interpretations. I treated blue as facts or events that would not further be analyzed, but that would be included in the write up of the analysis. Statements that were underlined in red were explored further and often determined the direction of the interview and analysis. Some statements would have blue underlining and red borders, which meant that these statements were facts or events that would be further explored in the context of fatherlessness (see an example in Appendix D). The researcher’s task is to create a list of these meaning units and to cluster them into themes (e.g., “wondering about loss”—two times, “anger”—three times, “insecure”—one time) (Creswell, 1998, p.150). I added indications of how often a certain theme emerged because it became important in subsequent steps of the analysis to see how strongly some themes were represented.

Usually, at this point in a phenomenological study, the fourth step would be the integration of the obtained themes into a structural, narrative, or textual description of what happened in the individual’s experience of fatherlessness and of how it was experienced (Creswell, 1998, p.32, 55). However, because I wanted to follow Addison’s (1997) interpretive approach and add a hermeneutic dimension to my research and, further, because I wanted to go beyond a mere description of individual’s experiences to

the generating of a formal account about those experiences, a few more steps were taken in the research at this point. These steps took me away from a classical phenomenology and included: (1) Follow-up interviews, (2) Formulating central phenomena, (3) Dynamic and interactive interpretation, and (4) Looking for disconfirming evidence.

### *Interviews*

After having obtained a general sense about the initial recruiting accounts, I formulated questions for additional follow-up interviews, which were, depending on individuals' preferences and availability, either face-to-face or telephone follow-up interviews. I conducted these interviews for the purpose of increasing and verifying my understanding and my interpretations about the previously read accounts and for the purpose of further increasing the range and depth of my understanding about a participant's experience.

The length or frequency of these interviews varied according to satiation of my questions and according to the desire of the participant to share information. Usually, I examined features of the participant's account until I felt that I exhausted my thoughts, feelings, and impressions about the possible meanings and connections inherent in the account. Interviews usually took an hour or more and occurred at least twice. Both of these activities were efforts of *prolonged engagement* and *persistent observation* (cf. Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Williams, 2006), which served to better determine important meanings and themes and to assure credibility of the account. By expanding the range, variety, and depth of contextual aspects immediately and distantly surrounding the issue of fatherlessness, a researcher is also better able to overcome possible distortions caused by his or her presence in the site.

Interviews with two of my participants took place in their homes. With one participant I had to do the interviews over the phone because that individual was out of town for a longer time period. I first made sure there was a harmonious atmosphere between the participant and myself in preparation for the interview. I, for example, made sure with the participant that we would have privacy as we set appointments for our interviews (e.g. that no children would be interrupting). Before the interview, I always took a few minutes to just chat with my participants about how they were doing, what they were doing in life right now, common acquaintances—in one instance the acquaintance that had brought the interviewee and I together for my study—among other things. I did so as long as it took to overcome initial awkwardness and unfamiliarity on both sides of the interviewer and the interviewee. This was especially important in the case of the phone interviews I had to do with one individual due to her being out of town. Chatting before the interview somehow created for that individual and I the closeness we were lacking, which we would have had through face-to-face encounter. This initial “chatting-time” also allowed me as the researcher to arrive at a place from which I could “bracket out” any distractions and concerns of the day and focus on the interview and on being with the person in front of me. This time also allowed me to clear my mind of preconceived ideas of resilience, successful coping, and hope for the fatherless and to truly listen to the account the participant would give me.

As it is common in phenomenological research, the nature of questions I asked in an interview changed with the immediate presentation of meanings within the account of a participant (cf. Creswell 1998). Questions were guided by the “object,” or the individual and his or her experience researched, and thus differed from one interview to

the next. However, what stayed constant across all three participants was that I began all of their interviews by simply letting them share what they would share by themselves and by asking detailed clarifying questions that for me came out of the written accounts my participants had sent me. After I have asked these detailed questions, I again, like in the questionnaire, asked some “grand-tour” (Moore, 2003) questions such as, “Looking back, did you learn anything through your experience? What did you learn? In summary, what dimensions, incidents and people intimately connected with your experience of fatherlessness would you say stand out to you the most? What affected you the most? Who do you think you became through your experience you would otherwise not have become? How did the experience affect significant others in your life? What feelings were generated by the experience?” (cf. Moore, 2003, p.80). After having asked those grand tour questions, and when no new information seemed to come from the participants, I began asking more probing, and often challenging questions, often purposefully leading in a certain direction and probing more deeply into the experience or expression of the participant. This was the phase in my interviews in which I also did negative case analyses (which are described in more detail below) followed by sharing my own biases and interpretations.

I always explained to interviewees my game-plan to the extent to which I would not give away important strategies as in the case of doing negative case analysis or looking for disconfirming evidence, which are described later in this section. For example, I would tell my interviewees that I first asked detailed questions, which revealed some of the multi-faceted and deep context of my participants’ fatherlessness, and that I would now move out again to a more general perspective, asking more general



questions that would in a way summarize or give an overall picture of the experience. In doing so, both my interviewees and I sometimes saw initially unrecognized biases and values come to the foreground and even change. For example, what was first reported as noninfluential to the experience of fatherlessness, was now seen as influential or vice versa.

During the interviews, I also carefully asked my participants questions that explored their experience of resilience or successful coping. I say carefully, because I did not do so openly. I did not want to impose my bias about themes of resilience and successful coping to be part of my participants' stories onto my participants. I rather wanted them to express their own authentic stories, uninfluenced by my bias, and see if such themes would indeed surface on their own accord. In addition, as I explain under "negative case analysis and disconfirming evidence" below, I asked leading questions that would rather allow participants to voice the opposite of what my bias was about their successful coping and resilience in order to substantiate authentic accounts about resilience and successful coping if they were truly part of my participant's experience. In other words, if my participants really coped successfully and learned to be resilient, they would answer my negative-analysis-questions negatively and affirm their successful coping and resilience.

At a later phase of my interviews, I told participants about my bias of successful coping and resilience and in more detail what my study was about. I thus involved them more consciously in the research process and let them help me interpret and analyze their experience. At the end of each interview, I usually asked a question such as "In the end, is or was there anything else you wanted to tell me about your experience of being

fatherless?” At the beginning of the second and third interviews, I usually asked my participants if anything else had come to their mind since our last interview.

As in the analysis of the initial questionnaires, significant statements and themes were identified and probed further during the interview. Significant statements and themes, for example, were identified in the intensity or tone of voice in which they were brought forth, in their quality and depth, or how often they were mentioned. I recorded my impressions about the accounts given and the reasons for why I chose certain themes to be significant in my field notes throughout the entire research process in order to trace and later be able to analyze together with outside reviewers my changing biases, interpretations, and expectations, a process which is also called *progressive subjectivity checks* (cf. Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Williams, 2006).

After finishing an interview, I took a moment to reflect on the overall interview and took notes on further cues I might have picked up on that might reveal something about the participant’s experience of fatherlessness, such as long pauses, fluidity of the narrating, emotionality, or in face-to-face interviews, body posture. Also, I recorded impressions I might have had, such as surprise about the surfacing or development of a certain theme and thoughts that came to mind as I was reflecting on the overall experience of the interview, such as what other questions I would have to ask in the next interview, or methodological procedures I would have to implement. One important thought, for example, that came to me after conducting the first interview with the second participant was to let participants know from the outset that I would let them read my write-up about their experience before my thesis would get defended and published and that they could thus participate to the very end in how their experience would be reported.

I thought that this might be important to further the trust and involvement of my participants and eagerness in sharing their whole experience.

The interviews were taped so I would have the opportunity to go over them again as often as needed to understand an account. I also listened to the tapes while taking another look at the initial questionnaires to put both accounts together as a whole and to again follow the remaining basic phenomenological steps I have outlined above for a final analysis. Parts of the protocols, which would be used in my thesis, were transcribed.

### *Generating Central Phenomena*

In the process of conducting and analyzing the interviews, and in the process of analyzing interviews together with the written accounts of the recruiting questionnaires, I identified, based on the meanings and themes in my analysis up to that point, several *central phenomena*. Central phenomena are derivative of the themes which occurred most and were held constant across all of the participant's accounts in the foregoing analyses. Further, they are focal points to which all previously acknowledged meaning units and themes can be related (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p.147).

I generated central phenomena by looking at the most frequently and strongly occurring, previously identified themes, and by looking at the individual experiences and context of these themes, how they related to each other, and how they related to my initial research question (i.e., "*What is the nature of hope in fatherlessness?*"). In generating central phenomena, a researcher has to interpret and weigh emergent meanings and themes of the previous analysis, giving more weight to some than to other emergent meanings and themes, explain why he or she has preferred or selected some meanings

and themes over others, and lay out his or her biases which were part of this selection process (Wertz, 1985). Central phenomena derived from the analysis of my data do not have the same status as the themes I selected in the beginning of the phenomenological analysis. The central phenomena have more analytic power than previously generated themes, because they were derived not only through interpretation (as in the selection of significant statements, the creation of meaning units, or the creation of themes earlier), but further through *theorizing* about the analyzed data (e.g., Strauss & Corbin, 1988, p.147).

Different researchers could see different emerging central phenomena in the data because they could differ in theorizing about and interpreting accounts. For this reason, it is especially important that researchers spell out their biases, assumptions, and interpretations about their data analysis. Readers can then discern how researchers came to a certain conclusion and decide for themselves if interpretations and analysis of the phenomenon of fatherlessness were correct and well executed (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). As mentioned earlier, I have made an effort to spell out my impressions and biases in my creation of themes and central phenomena throughout my entire analysis. This involved documentation in field notes, analysis-logs, and participant or member feedback checks. The documentation of impressions and biases surfacing in my study can be found throughout the discussion section of this thesis which gives an account of my experience of analyzing the data, in the sample page of my analysis of one of the initial recruiting accounts in Appendix D, and throughout the transcribed interviews in Appendix E.

#### *Hermeneutic and Relational Dimension*

Again, spelling out my impressions and biases was not only important in the conclusion section at the end of my research and for the readers of my research—it was also an important undertaking for myself in the overall process of conceptualizing the information I gathered from my participants. The acknowledgement, spelling out, analysis, and conceptualization of impressions, biases, interpretations, and assumptions is a mark of the especially hermeneutic and relational nature of my phenomenological analysis. It became part of my research at the point where I conducted interviews and especially in a second phase of my interviews in which I started to check my interpretation and analysis with the participants of my research. To check one's impressions, interpretations, biases, and conclusions with the participants of a study also is called *member checking* (cf. Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Williams, 2006).

Member checking goes one step beyond just acknowledging biases, assumptions, and interpretations about the collected data and about the process of analysis to myself and to the readers of my thesis, in that it further includes “*checking*” those biases, assumptions, and interpretations openly against those of my participants. For example, I asked my participants for feedback about my interpretations during and after the interviews, and also after letting them read what I had written up about their experience. This process helped me *engage* myself in the study *together with the research participant*, who at this stage became a co-researcher (cf. Gubrium & Holstein, 1997), in a joint effort to make sense of his or her experience of fatherlessness. I thus did not formulate central phenomena alone, but rather in an ongoing interaction with my research participants.

I wanted to make sure I understood the participant as he or she experienced fatherlessness and not suggest interpretations that were not authentic to their experience. Simply because I believed there to be resilience, successful coping, and hope to be found in the experience of fatherlessness did not necessarily have to mean I was correct or was to find much supporting evidence for my belief. It was important, therefore, for me to be able to step back from my engagement with the participant and the research topic in order to open myself up to new and perhaps unacknowledged meanings, biases, assumptions, and interpretations (Giorgi, 1985; Wertz, 1985). This “tacking back and forth between engaged study of [a] subject matter and clarifying about [...] prejudice is often called the hermeneutic circle” (Slife, 2005, p.6; see also Gadamer, 1989). It has the potential to open up our inquiry to meanings that up to this point have not been considered or acknowledged.

Once again, besides prolonged engagement and persistent observation, this hermeneutic and relational step in my research was also important in acknowledging and working with my bias about resilience, successful coping, and hope for the fatherless. I was aware of the fact that my presence at the interview would influence the relationship that was formed between me and the participant, that it would influence the identity of the participant as a fatherless individual, and that it would influence how meanings would be constructed while participants told their stories. As the subject of the analysis becomes not only the talk but also the interaction and the relationship between interviewer and interviewee, there is a much better understanding of interpretations and biases and the ability to make biases actively part of the research and analysis process. While a relational-interpretive practice gets at the fine and intricate personal experience

of an individual, it thus also gets at the larger “system” (cf. Marsiglio & Cohan, 2000, p.90, 91) surrounding fatherlessness, which involves the greater socio-cultural and historical context or whole of the fatherless individual and his or her experience, including those who talk and write about the experience. An example of a hermeneutic and relational approach may be seen in my inquiring of my participants about their experience in the preceding interviews with me as the facilitator of those interviews (e.g. “How did I come across to you?” ...).

#### *Negative Case Analysis and Disconfirming Evidence*

An important practice in the process of “tacking back and forth,” as just described, was also to look for disconfirming evidence regarding certain biases, assumptions, and interpretations. This practice, on the one hand, was to make sure the research participant was not just following my lead in the meaning-making and in the interpretation of his or her experience. That is, perhaps the participant was not sure him- or herself how to interpret the experience. It was important at that point that I did not project my interpretation onto the participant but that I truly let him or her tell me the meaning of his or her experience first. On the other hand, I also needed this step in my research in order to check myself against my biases, interpretations, and central themes I was gradually beginning to formulate. In any case, I wanted to avoid forcing my interpretations onto the participants. I was looking for disconfirming evidence on my side and on the side of the participant during the interviews.

Looking for disconfirming evidence especially helped me in the suspension of my bias about successful coping, resilience and hope for the fatherless. I did not want to project that bias onto the experiences I am analyzing. For this purpose, I asked

participants leading questions that would invite them to share difficulties and report on their experience of being fatherless in a more hopeless, negative, or struggling tone. For example, I would ask them questions such as “Was your experience of being fatherless a stumbling block in your social development?” If participants’ answers did not affirm that their experience was entirely difficult, they confirmed my bias that the overall attitude about fatherlessness, which suggests fatherlessness is detrimental and harmful, was painted too grimly in psychological literature and that there were individuals who were coping successfully and showed resilience. This procedure is called *negative case analysis* (cf. Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Williams, 2006). Negative case analysis is the searching for cases or instances within the site which contradict the conclusions represented by the hypotheses. If no contradiction cases were found, the hypotheses are considered more credible because no evidence has been found to negate them (Williams, 2006, 2). Doing a negative case analysis, or looking for disconfirming evidence, is a major aspect of Grounded Theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

#### A Formal Psychological Account

A formal psychological account of the most shared characteristics of my participant’s experiences of fatherlessness was gradually be generated along with the identification of central phenomena. Strauss & Corbin (1998) note that formulating a formal psychological account includes conceiving, intuiting, and formulating ideas and concepts into a logical, systematic, and explanatory scheme, which then is “considered from many different angles or perspectives” (p.22). I believe the only way to do so is through a hermeneutic approach in which the researcher frequently “checks” him-or herself against his or her own interpretations and meaning making. Addison’s (1997)



work provides a good example of what I am trying to accomplish. His approach merges Grounded Theory and Hermeneutic approaches to research, in which a researcher can only generate a formal psychological account as he or she constantly “questions gaps, omissions, inconsistencies, misunderstandings, and not-yet understandings” on both sides of the researcher and the research participant (p.41). The reader will in the end be able to review my activities of data gathering and analysis, based on what was recorded in my audit trails, transcribed interviews, and final write-up, to access whether or not my inquiry was consistent and the results of my study are dependable.

#### *Documentation of the study*

The write-up of my research will, like a phenomenological report would, facilitate “better understanding of the essential, invariant structure (or essence) of [an] experience, recognizing that [...] unifying meaning exists” (Creswell, 1998, p.55), and further will present a formal psychological account about how this structure exists. It will include some quotations of the participants, audit trails, and accounts of the questions I asked, in order to let the reader gain insight into the actual narratives as opposed to just letting the reader see my analyzed summaries of the narratives. The write-up of my research will also include some references to the literature I have reviewed in order to make my arguments more sound and to strengthen confirmability of my study (Williams, 2006).

## MELINDA

Melinda, age 31, grew up in Frankfurt, Germany. Her father committed suicide when she was five years old. Her parents separated one year before the suicide of the father due to the father's drug addiction. Melinda's father was her primary care taker before her parent's separation, because Melinda's mother took care of the newborn sister. Melinda's father was unemployed. Melinda has memories of her dad making food for her, of going to the park with him, or of going to the drug rehabilitation center with him where he worked as a volunteer. She remembers an overall positive bonding with her father in those early four years of her life. Her mother remarried when she was 13 years old, but Melinda only saw this second husband of her mother only a friend, not a father. Melinda did not miss a father; however, in her engagement time to her current husband she struggled because of her fatherloss and because of fear of abandonment. She had dreams of her father every night that made her scared, unsettled, and worried. Melinda now lives in Provo with her husband and three children. She enjoys her responsibilities as a mother, wife, and leader in a church calling.

I knew Melinda through mutual friends and have met her occasionally, but have not really had the chance to get to know her more closely until this day. Our common background as Germans has given us some familiar ground upon which we could easily build a friendship-like association with each other. When I met her once, I told her that I was studying fatherlessness and that I was going to interview fatherless individuals for my thesis. She said that she was fatherless and that she would be interested in participating, if I needed someone. I took her up upon her offer.

Melinda and I met in her home to conduct the interviews after her children were in bed and had a comfortable and soothing environment in which we could speak without interruption. The interviews were conducted in English. Melinda's response to the initial questionnaire and the transcriptions of the interviews I conducted with her can be found in Appendix E.

### Analysis

Melinda throughout my interviews with her appeared to be very “matter-of-factly” about the situation of losing her dad. What surprised me, after having read her account in the initial questionnaire, was that she did not experience the loss as difficult. On the initial questionnaire, Melinda's account appeared to have a darker tone than what I gleaned from her in the interviews. At times Melinda would laugh or smile in the interview when it came to themes dealing with the death of her father, yet Melinda did not downplay the importance of her father in her life.

And I also didn't have such a need for a father that much. And...I really didn't. And I can't say that I ever missed him, I think...sometimes I think that I had enough time with him. For some reason it gave me enough security or something, you know, in my back somewhere, in my memory, ...that I never really had a need for a father figure.

Melinda appeared to be a very independent, articulate, resolute, and energetic woman. This was good because, as I soon discovered, she would feel free to disagree with me or think in different terms than me—an assurance that I in the first place would truly get her account and not only my interpretation of her account.

I: You said when you were a teenager and started dating, or when your mother remarried, you did not really feel the need to look out for a father, also, if I remember right, because you felt you had a father and you feel like you had enough time with him...

M: Well, or more like I did not really want a different one. This is my story... I have a father and he is dead. I did not really need a substitute father or something like that.

I: Do you think that you didn't have a need was also in part maybe because you had this time where you had this imaginary father, where you made stories up about him...?

M: I don't know. I really think it is because I knew so very much that I was so loved during those first years of my life, by my father. I really think that that's the main reason.

Whenever I tried to dig for themes that expressed any difficulty about her father loss in order to try to counter my bias of resilience, I felt like I was hitting bedrock. I thought that either these themes were not there, or she resisted them. I became suspicious because I did not expect my bias of resilience and successful coping to be supported so drastically. I had a hard time forming a picture of Melinda's experience and was not sure how to get at her experience on a deeper level. This whole situation intimidated me a little bit.

M: But it also took me a while to figure out also how to read men, because I did not have that experience, you know...

I: How was that for you? Do you think your mom was helpful in that process at all, or?

M: No, because she had just had two more children in that second marriage, and so, in a way, ...I sometimes, ...I am glad about that, because she was so busy and involved with those children that I could kind of just figure out my own way, and she did not get very involved in it, which is actually a good thing I think, you know.... And so I think that that actually really helped me to figure out what I wanted. And then I was also very secure in my decisions because it was my decision.

One underlying bias of this excerpt, influenced by my reading of the fatherless literature, was that Melinda's difficulty in knowing what to look for in a male could be a significant obstacle resulting from her father loss. Another underlying bias, influenced by the results

of my pilot study, was that such obstacles could be overcome if the individual had a supportive mother. Both of my biases were negated. Melinda learned on her own what to look for in a male, and having had to do so made her stronger.

In the second interview, I was much more probing and forthright regarding questions I had about Melinda's reconciliation with the death of her father. I tried to employ her help in defining her source of strength instead of continuing to dig for things she might have experienced as difficult. This is where I felt the interview really came to life. As I started to believe her story, which hardly seemed to contain any themes of struggling or hardship, I felt like I got closer to Melinda and was able to begin to understand her experience. For example, Melinda helped me understand that she felt she really had just enough positive time with her dad before the parental separation and before his death, so that she could bond with him and carry a knowledge of his love with her into her later years of life. Melinda several times made reference to the supportive role of her mother in facilitating that knowledge as well as in being supportive by explaining the "sickness" and death of her father in a way that was not degenerating but compassionate. Melinda thus learned to make good sense of the loss of her father. An important belief with regards to the father's death, which also was strengthened in Melinda by her mother, was expressed by Melinda when stating that her father's death was necessary for him to progress. Her belief was that his drug addiction would just have continued to hold him back and not let him make progress and that her father's death freed him from his addiction, allowing him to progress.

And sometimes I think...I just didn't take [his death] that badly for some reason. I must have understood somewhere deep down that was the best way for him. I truly believe that today. I don't think it would have been good if he dragged this out and I don't think he could have gotten over it,

you know. This was like, it must have been such a relief when he died, like 'oh finally all this is over,' you know?

Although Melinda knew her mother was sad at times, Melinda saw in her mother a very strong woman and the perfect parent who kept the family going. She expressed several times that she felt a responsibility to make the best of her life out of respect and gratitude for her mom. Perhaps that is where the only struggle Melinda has had began in her story. Melinda's struggle with anxiety and sleepless nights might have come from a sense of responsibility to measure up to her mom, especially when Melinda had her own children. As she expressed herself, Melinda has seen her mother sad at times about being lonely. Perhaps there was a fear factor in how much control Melinda herself would have over being abandoned again. Melinda seemed to emotionally understand that she could trust her husband to not abandon her, but did it really lie in her control to prevent anything like his death? He could be trusted and had no problems that would even come close to problems such as drug addiction, yet she was overly worried when he came home later or when he was out of town.

Melinda herself said that that fear was "all in the head," but I wonder if it is not the emotional side of her experience with fatherloss which she was not able to understand and deal with fully at the young age at which she lost her father. Although her mother explained the loss of the father in a good way and Melinda grew to understand it logically, I am not sure she wholly grew to understand it emotionally. This might have caused an element of uncertainty in her experience that was the root of her fear of further abandonment or loss. Melinda's unresolved emotions, although she understood her fatherloss intellectually, come up again and again in her story, indicating an opportunity to face, understand, and gradually resolve her father loss emotionally. As can be seen

throughout Melinda's account, besides the themes indicating fear of abandonment, there are an outweighing number of times when themes of resilience and successful coping occur. In other words, Melinda has and is dealing with her fears very successfully. My theory about the roots of her occasional anxiety is just one more of the many other theories Melinda has already come up with herself. As she said, theories help to put a name to the anxiety and to have something with which to explain it. When it comes down to it, however, it really is faith in life and in herself and persistence that truly help Melinda conquer. The following excerpts highlight some of the things Melinda does or has experienced that make her story a success story—a story of successful coping, resilience, and hope in spite of fatherlessness.

First of all, her unique way of coping with the loss of her father's death socially can be seen in the stories she invented about her dad in her childhood:

...In school, I think because I was always asked, you know how other kids say, 'my dad does this' or...I think I always had an image of my dad and I just..., you know, that would always change, like one day he would be a king, because he could be all of that, you know, because he wasn't there. And for a while I thought, 'O gosh' I was just lying about it, but I don't even think I was lying about it. I just really think that was my image of it. So, I think there is a difference between lying and telling a different truth, you know [laughter] where I'd really...it was true for me. And I remember one time I told somebody that my dad is a king and he is far away, so I remember that for sure, and then, I know that I made up other stories about him too, or I..., I thought other stories. I don't even know if it's made up. I think they were really true for me at that point, you know, and that was something that I must have needed.

What I see in this statement is that Melinda not only demonstrates creativity in finding ways to solve her problems and needs, but also honesty towards and acceptance of herself and her needs. In a way Melinda understood at an early age how to take care of herself.

Another quote illustrates her endurance and persistence in dealing with the unknown and associated fears and again her ability to take care of herself:

So, I think that parallel experience (of her husband being similar to her dad) really freaked me out. [laughter] And it's not totally gone, but I think there is also something to be said about accepting some things, you know, and just saying 'I know I have that, I know I get tense when I am alone at home,' and, you know, 'I have this abandonment issue, but its O.K.,' you know. 'It's really fine, I just have a bad night and that's that.'

In another place in Melinda's account, a dream is mentioned that helped her resolve some of her anxiety in a very interesting way. This dream, I think, shows how also the unconscious is creative in solving problems and, as Melinda also mentions, that human beings have inbuilt mechanisms to help heal themselves. One might also see the dream as a spiritual dimension in which Melinda was given help in a way she could make sense of her anxiety and resolve it on an emotional level.

M (written account): After the engagement I started dreaming of my father every night. I would always see him at the bottom of an escalator I was coming down in a popular mall in the town we lived and he died. For some reason those dreams were scary and unsettling to me. I often woke up worried. I had a hard time falling asleep. At that point I started therapy and "Autogenes Training" (Autogenic training) to figure out what was going on with me and to be able to sleep better again. During that time I dreamed the same dream again, but in the dream I had a chance to get down to the bottom to where my father was standing and I had a conversation with him. He embraced me. When I woke up that time I was not scared or worried. I could not remember any details of the conversation after waking up. I have not dreamed of my father since.

M (interview): [That dream] was an opportunity to really make peace with [the fatherloss]. I didn't ever really have the feeling that I wasn't at peace, but there has never really been an occasion to make peace with it, you know.

I: And now it was triggered by your...

M: By those dreams, yeah, it was triggered by commitment, marrying somebody where hopefully you know there won't ever be an



abandonment, all these..., and I think it really was a purely emotional trigger and emotional memories that came up.

I: And you said the dream reoccurred couple of times...[M: Oh, all the time] ...Until you were ... finally able to, I think you said, you hugged him?...

M: Yes, and I would never get down all the way (of the escalator). And then at some point, I think I just surrendered to it. And I said 'I am not afraid. What am I afraid of?' You know. I think it's always fear that keeps us away from something.

M: [The dream] helped me because it was like a needed meeting with my dad which I could not have with him anymore, but I could..., like I had the feeling afterwards: 'it's O.K. I can go into this new chapter of my life,' that was just before we got married you know, and, 'it's going to be O.K.' That meeting was also something where I did not have that feeling that I was abandoned anymore, because I had that moment, you know?

Melinda had a chance in her dream to go all the way down on the escalator and meet her dad one more time. It was an important step in her emotional understanding and reconciliation with her father's death.

Very helpful in Melinda's successful coping and resilience with regards to her father loss were certain beliefs she either obtained through her upbringing—beliefs her mother taught her and her religion, or beliefs Melinda formed herself while experiencing life and relationships with other people. Underlying her beliefs and experiences was a fundamental belief and expectation about her own ability to progress and change:

I think that I believe in an afterlife for sure has to do with [the dream]. I don't think if I didn't have that belief..., I don't think that would have been the form of the dream.

I just believe that we are surrounded by people who want good for us, like, I can feel that, and those are our ancestors or people that love us, you know, no matter who they are.

I know the fact that I dreamt of my father...that he is still there, and he is somewhere, and that he can meet me still, has to do with the fact that I believe in an afterlife.

I really think, like I have a lot of hopes about [the afterlife] and..., I don't have a lot of knowledge about that,...I hope that life is going to be pretty similar to how we live now, but, that we can be with the people we can't be with right now and that it is going to be easier hopefully.

I: So, having reconciled with the experience in that way, what do you believe about your father now?

M: I really truly believe that everything will be forgiven. And especially because there are things, even though we are adults we are not responsible for it..., because there are long lines of guilt, you know, in our history, and so... I truly believe there won't be any...he is forgiven. He already paid the highest price we can pay, you know, never being with our families [...] And, I always think he is proud, he is very proud of what his children did. My sister has a family of her own [...], and we have this family and are building our lives. You know, and I always just think he must be so happy that someone broke the cycle...

I don't think Heavenly Father cares if we make this or that decision. But I really believe He gave us all the tools and it is up to us sometimes to figure it out. I don't know, I mean I feel guided, and if I look at my life I think, 'gosh, I could complain more' [ um-hum], and I have made some dumb decisions, but then I think 'no, even those decisions bring us to other places.' But I don't think we see strength in ourselves. It's easier to see it in somebody else. Like, I can see it in my mom. But then I look at myself and I think, it's easy, not so much is required. But I look at my mom and I think she was born that way, you know, children are born a certain way, I see that also in my children...

That is actually something I learned from my mom..., that we have everything in us to heal ourselves, physically, emotionally, you know what I mean, like all the tools are there we just have to use them. And that is really true, you know. Like we can listen to our bodies and to our minds and our hearts and we can know what we need.

Melinda's mom was probably the most helpful influence in facilitating successful coping and resilience for Melinda. As the results of my pilot study already suggested, stable and healthy mothers add a lot to a child's experience with fatherloss and may compensate for most of the negative consequences usually associated with father loss. My analysis of Melinda's account showed that Melinda mentioned her mother at least 24

times in connection with successful coping and resilience themes. The next quotes demonstrate some of the helpful qualities Melinda mentioned of her mother:

I can also today say that I never felt abandoned because my mom was fully there, she was the perfect mother or parent figure that you can imagine, you know.

She has never talked bad about him, even the things that were difficult about him, like the drug abuse or that he was not living with us anymore, or whatever, you know, she always explained to us in a very neutral way, and there was never any animosity

My mom sat down with me and with my sister and she really explained it—like, ‘he is dead and he was really sick,’ you know, that was the first explanation, like he is really sick and he died. And then the older we got and the more we would ask there would be more and then one day she would just say that this is how it was, you know.

She is the protector. She was always protecting. I mean, the reason why he moved out was that she said really clearly ‘Here are children at home. If you are not clean you cannot stay in the same house.’ So, she always was the protector. And all through our childhood and growing up she always had that role, like towards the outside,...like if there was a situation where she didn’t feel comfortable with something that would happen in our lives, she would always step in and very strongly,...and she is not—she didn’t have a lot of school because she had a very, very difficult upbringing, so she taught herself to read and all these things, but for herself, she is more..., she is a little bit shy and all these things, but if it concerns children she is out there, [laughter]—full force!

My mom is very quiet and she is a really instinctive mother. That’s her calling. She is very strong for her children, not so strong for herself. And she is a very spiritual person, actually the most spiritual person I know. And she..., she has a lot of insecurities, but she does not try to fix them—its something she just tries to learn how to live with. And her upbringing was very difficult and she taught herself to write and to read and she went back to school when we were kids, and she is very self-sufficient, you know she really makes do. She is very quiet but she is a very strong person.

Who was more abandoned than [my mother] was with two small children?!...And also, before my dad died they also had a third child together and he died right after birth, and there was like all this trauma, you know...So, I always think if there was someone who was truly abandoned it was my mother.

Note here that Melinda mentions the same qualities of persistence of working on her weaknesses and having patience with herself which I saw in her, in her mother. It can be said that Melinda's mother was an example and influence for good in all ways.

Melinda's persistence and acceptance of herself and her fears have paid off as she, through Autogenic Training, has coached herself to become calm in the face of fear:

I: What do you do in Autogenic Training?

M: I just lay very flat kind of, no crossing over limbs or anything, just on my back. It's just like self-suggestion, I think, and then I just empty my mind. I don't have any thoughts in it and I only think about my breathing and I think calmness in and fear out, and that's all—I totally empty my mind and that works really well for me.

I: Where you just kind of get rid of all the anxiety thoughts?

M: Um-hum. No thoughts. And I mean it's not perfect, I still don't sleep that deep when I have that, but it's not bad, it does not bother me at all anymore. It used to be very bad and I did not sleep at all and that was not like good at all, you know...

Another factor that probably played into Melinda's experience becoming so positive is her self-confident and independent personality, which to a great extent also was nurtured by her mother:

I: Did you feel like a second-class kid in there or something?

M: No, and I really think as a kid, and even today, I was really self-confident. And, for example, everything would come easy for me, like, in school,...so, I just had this trust in life. And also my mom, like, she would stand up for us. And we were also very self-reliant, like we did not have a car and the church was not so close, but we would just walk and find the prettiest way to church and we would always make a trip out of it, you know. My mom did not like relying on other people. And I am the same way. [Oh really?] Oh absolutely the same way! [laughing] If I can do it myself I will never, ever ask! And even if I can't do it, I have a hard time asking.

Lastly, also conducive to Melinda's experience of father loss being less negative was the socio-cultural environment she was raised in. For example, she states:

I remember being concerned about my dad. That I remember. I just don't know if I was so concerned about my parents being together, you know what I mean? I think I was concerned about him as a person or about my mom as a person, but I don't think that I was so concerned about..., and it might just be that they were also not the typical..., well, and I also have to explain: Up to that point we lived in a commune, like with lots of people and there were kids...and it was like very Hippie and out in the country, so, I don't know that I, like, really had a picture about a family unit, you know what I mean? [...] ...in the 70s and for very alternative people... And it was like a bunch of families lived in three or four houses together and had their gardens that they shared and so it was like that environment, and so it wasn't like one person is missing, you know. [...] I just think when you are that little and there are so many people, and then you are just with your mom..., its like...I really don't remember that as being traumatic. I remember the moment when I found out that my dad was dead, or when I was concerned about him smoking, but not the family thing...

Overall, Melinda's experience of being fatherless is most untypical when compared to the general fatherlessness literature. It truly shows that fatherlessness does not always have to be detrimental or life altering in a negative way. Melinda's case especially shows how death through suicide—one of the most difficult assumed reasons for loss—can be overcome. The above highlighted excerpts from my interviews with Melinda show many positive themes suggesting that resiliency and success in managing to live happy and successful lives in spite of father loss is possible.

## EVA

Eva, age 67, grew up in Utah. She lost her father due to tuberculosis when she was 15 months old. Eva has no memory of her father; however, her grandfather (her mother's father) played an important role in her life and was sort of a surrogate father to her. He died when she was 23 years old and in her first marriage. Eva's mother had a hard time with the death of her husband and Eva and her siblings lived with their grandparents for about a year as their mother tried to recuperate and as she returned to school and work to make ends meet for her family. After 30 years of marriage and three children, Eva's first husband divorced her. She remarried at the age of 58. Most of the knowledge Eva has about her father she obtained through her mother who made a constant effort to talk about the father and to thus keep him alive for her children. Eva missed her father growing up, but was not able to really confront those feelings until she went to college. Eva has learned to deal with these feelings of loss, but continues to miss her father's presence and influence even today. Eva is currently accompanying her husband who is a doctor on a humanitarian mission and is writing her family history, for which, as she said, this research contributed much because it has inspired her to think about and understand a few things in her life.

I was briefly introduced to Eva through a shared friend and referred to her as a participant for my study by another shared friend. This friend did not tell Eva any more about my study than that it was about fatherlessness and that I am interviewing people. I felt what I observed about Eva in the short time I knew her was enough to be interested in her as a participant in my study. In other words, I thought that Eva's account would render themes of successful coping, resilience, and hope.

## Analysis

Eva appeared to be very interested in the topic of father loss herself. From the outset, as she was telling me her story, I could sense many questions occupying her mind about this topic. Especially in the second interview, in which I felt I was getting a little more in sync with her story, I sensed that she was really searching for answers with me. This was not the experience I have had with Melinda who seemed to be willing to think about new facets of her experience when they came up through our conversation but was not so much interested in solving a problem with me. For Melinda there seemed to be no problem. She seemed to already have had a pretty firm idea of her experience in her mind. For Eva, I could sense that there were still many unresolved issues she wanted to resolve, and she was eager to explore.

Eva definitely had a positive image of her father. Most of her knowledge about her father, in relation to herself, Eva obtained through her mother who faithfully continued to talk about him. The father lived on in the hearts and thoughts of the family through the things Eva's mother told about him.

She would comment on how he would have enjoyed 'this meal,' or how he would have loved to be with us for certain family activities. She kept us aware of his sense of humor, his favorite color, and often spoke of how proud he must be of an achievement we had just made.

In fact, my mother kept Daddy so much a part of our lives, that I felt I really had a father and was not really missing much in growing up when he was absent ...

Eva's mother thus was very supportive. Not only through her keeping the father present in that way, but also through her strength as a widow in keeping the family going.

[We were raised being taught] that daddy is just away for a time. My brothers still laugh about a time when a man came to a house call as a veterinarian. Our dog had broken his leg and a veterinarian came and set

his leg and quoted the price to mother, and he said 'but seeing that you are a widow lady we'll just charge you half price' and my brothers still laugh about that. I don't know why it really struck them funny, it's probably because they haven't given mother that title either. I mean, my older brother was 12 or 13 years old and never conceived of mother as a widow.

Eva's mother, however, herself had a very hard time with the death of the father, which comes through in one place of Eva's narrative. After the father's death, the mother needed "time off" and the children lived with her parents for several months. Eva did not have much of her mom then. She was a pre-schooler and in a certain way, although her mother tried everything in her power to not make her children feel that way, it could be said that Eva was abandoned by her mother for some time too. Eva's felt close to her mother in later years as they were good friends and as she followed her around to several activities. Nevertheless the mother's absence in her childhood years surely had an impact on Eva. The greatest struggle for Eva probably was in the time both her mother and grandmother were gone. Eva's mother tried to finish her Master's degree in New York City to better be able to take care of her family and took her mother with her for emotional support. Eva and her siblings, already bereaved, were split up for three months to live with other relatives. Furthermore Eva recounts that her mother was so affected by the death of her husband that she, upon returning from New York due to her nervous breakdown, was not even able to remember her children's names. Eva's mother went to live on her parents' farm away from her children and there had people to grieve with. Eva said that as a child she was not able to analyze what was going on and she was not able to really reconcile with the family trauma later, because her mother did not talk much about her grieving.

I only in recent years have realized, since I had my own children, that little children regard that time and love are one thing altogether, you know. And



if you don't have enough time for a child you really don't love them...And if you don't have time to sit and read to a child and talk to him, you know those kind of things, I think they don't really feel loved. And my dear mother, trying to be mother and father together..., I think that's the greatest source of my lack of self-confidence, was that I just didn't know...I felt loved by my grandparents, I felt loved by my mother, but I also did not have a lot of time with her, and she had a total nervous break-down at my father's death and was away from me for a time.

I: So how was that?

E: It was rough, I mean, she had a break-down when I was almost two, [um-hum] and was fairly functional by a year later, [hum] but then she, my mother had a break-down in NY city, working on her master's degree and she had to return to NY and my grandmother went with her and so both grandmother and mother were gone [hum], in the most terrifying time of my life, I am sure. And I was just kind of shuffled from friends to family, just passed around for two or three months.

I: How old were you then?

E: About four or five.

I: Were your brothers with you when your mother had this difficult time, where you together then?

E: They stayed with my aunt and uncle because they were both in school...

Without the needed emotional availability and support from her mother, I believe Eva inadvertently developed the father hunger she herself acknowledged. I believe bereaved children need at least one stable, available care taker or attachment person to lean on and then they can triumph their loss. The time of Eva's father loss and subsequent years were difficult for Eva, because she needed to make sense of a lot of things, not solely the father's death, including, for example, her mother's unavailability, or the constant changes being passed around from place to place. It was hard to blame the mother, because she did her level best and wanted to be there for her children. In subsequent years, because Eva did not get to see much grieving in her mother and rather

was raised in a spirit of independence and pulling through everything, Eva might not have felt like she could, was allowed to, or even ever had the idea of, grieving. The father was always talked about from a standpoint of gratitude and strength, which might not have allowed Eva to face and deal with her emotions and father hunger. Until she went to college, such emotions were not even apparent to her. They were freed for the first time during a therapy session.

When [the therapist] asked me [how I felt about growing up without a father], I guess I had missed a dad. It was really a moment of truth for me. I was totally in denial about missing a dad. And mother made such a point of talking about him and keeping him part of our home, and you know it was just ...this is how we do it, and he is just away for a time, and we went along, you know. So, it was just...I just did never allow to feel sorry for myself, or to, you know..., I did not feel like I lacked anything because I had everything I needed as far as I could see.

I: You feel in a way that you didn't actually got to grief until that age, where you realized...

E: Probably not, because I was a baby when he died. You know the grieving thing was not in my capacity.

In the interviews, Eva did not really expose the fact that her mother failed to provide anything she would have needed beyond the quote given above. Eva only talked well of her mother and, even when she almost spoke out that she did not feel loved by her mother at times, she hesitated and did not complete the sentence. Mother was seen and, I would say, truly was a hero, and any criticism seems to be too harsh to put besides her name. At the same time, however, I think, it needs to be acknowledged that the mother, through her own grief, was not able to facilitate the so needed grieving and debriefing period in her children.

Eva has continued to maintain an attitude of gratitude with regards to her mother and an attitude of strength with regards to her upbringing, which is commendable, but I think it might have exasperated her father hunger over the years.

I feel that there is inside of me a little girl that yearns to have a Daddy who will love me and protect me. I know it is a need that will not be satisfied in this life. I have just come to accept that and live with it. Some of us have physical disabilities. I have been blessed with a healthy body, but deep inside there is a little girl that longs to be doted upon and loved by a father. It is okay. I have a lot of wonderful, fulfilling relationships in my life that give me joy and enthusiasm for living. Eternity will take care of the rest.

My theory about Eva's father hunger developed from my surprise about her experiencing that father hunger still in her late 50's. I wondered what kept this hunger going, for I myself have experienced it and have overcome it and thus believed it was possible for Eva to overcome it. Eva did not feel the need and did not make an attempt to fulfill that father hunger through relationships with other potential father figures in her childhood and youth, because she had a perfect picture of a perfect dad in her mind and memory.

I think I would have felt like I was being untrue to my daddy [if I would have looked for a father elsewhere]. I mean he was such a big part. He was talked about so much. He was definitely an influence as to, you know his presence, he was a part of your home, he is a part of our family, we don't see him, but we know that he is with us and worried for us and wants us to be right, you know. I probably would not have allowed myself to bond with anyone that way...

It is interesting to compare Eva's situation to Melinda who likewise did not want to substitute her father yet who found closure and did not experience father hunger at all. I think that is so, because Melinda found comfort in the belief that it was best for her father to go due to his drug addiction and the belief that when she would see him again he would be better. The death of Eva's father did make sense over time in that the family has received spiritual confirmation that the father had completed his mission on earth, as

Eva mentioned to me (see appendix E). However, this sense came to the family slowly and was not as imminent and contributory at first to Eva's reconciliation with her father's death as in Melinda's case.

All of this struggle was not only the reason for Eva's father hunger, but also for her lack of self-esteem, which was very closely related.

I: One thing that I picked up on in your written account was that you still liked observing other people and you still have some questions about your having grown up without your father. What are some of those questions?

E: They are mostly on a socially successful level, just because that was always what my first husband was dinging about. And it's really odd, because he was very awkward socially. [...] I think that the need inside for a daddy..., I think that is probably the most prevalent thing that I feel affects..., that continuously affects my life, is that hunger for a daddy who would dot on me and love me and listen to me, you know, the things you miss, that are not there.

And with both of my spouses, I have come to a point where I have realized I was expecting them to give me that, that nurturing, dotting on me, caring kind of thing, that a good father innately gives. And I think in both of them, I expected them to give that and realized that I was expecting too much.

I think the first time I was married I was a very needy soul. I needed a man...I expected all of my needs of a father to be fulfilled in marriage. And I think that it really skewed my views in terms of what kind of companion I really would have needed. I think I would have chosen someone really different [it was just that feeling of meaning...] something to someone of the opposite sex, yeah. That someone thought I was really neat, and was concerned about my feelings, you know, the general things you hope for. But, I think that I was really needy for approval of the opposite sex, and really needed to feel like I meant something to someone to the opposite sex. You know tremendous hunger...

It seems like the loss of her father and her father hunger was a good theory upon which Eva could base her lack of self-esteem and need for love, security, and attention. And while some of her struggles might definitely be related to that, I still think a great part was that Eva needed to experience those things through her mother.

Despite Eva's unresolved loss, her account displays themes of successful coping, resilience, and hope. One place in which these themes come out, for example, is in Eva's personality, beliefs, spirituality and religious beliefs, and in how she deals with her loss of comfort, love, and security. The following quotes exemplify that Eva is open and honest towards her pain, which I believe is the first step in the healing process. Further, Eva is persistent and enduring in her trials and sees those trials as learning opportunities. What also comes through in the following quotes is Eva's participation as a co-researcher, that is, her reasoning with me about the meaning of her experience as I made her more part of my interpretations and biases.

I: Yeah, but the other side to that father hunger was that you also learned that you also can't fill that hunger within your marriages and I wonder how you realized that and perhaps, if you are willing to share that how that father hunger played out....

E: When you are aching and hurting, when you need comfort, you know, and neither of my spouses have given what I wanted in terms of comfort, and I realized probably in the second marriage, 'wait a minute you are starving for something that you cannot expect a spouse to give' [hum!] And at a younger age, I probably would have said, you know it's a lack in him [um-hum] but when you are 60+ years old and you are feeling this desperate need, and I know I'd married a wonderful man, and I thought, 'I can't expect him to be superman' you know?

I: So you mean you just missed the kind of father role in a way?

E: Yeah, I realized that that was what I was expecting and that that was not fair. That's not fair on my part. Don't love him less or respect him less, I am expecting too much.

I: Now isn't that interesting in contrast to your not wanting to really replace your father with anyone, to not have anyone fill that role, yet at an emotional level maybe somehow...

E: Yeah, and I think that what I figured was that when I got married, that when there was a man in my life through marriage that I would get it. You know that's probably the expectation I built. And so when it wasn't there and there were lots of other emotional things lacking in the first marriage,

I just figured, I just figured 'it's not going to happen' and then when he asked me for a divorce, I thought 'ugh' so you know it's just not going to happen. And then when I married a second time, which was a total surprise to me, I think my heart still said 'well, that was just that man, I can find it with another man.' I was 58 when we were married. And so, you know, in reality, yes, I was still thinking maybe someone else would do that. And it took me two or three years and I sat back and realized, 'No!' It's just not going to happen.

I: So even through that disappointment, because I think even through this disappointment there comes a point where you think 'O.K., I am sick of this, I am over this, I am stronger now' I mean the hunger is still there, but on one side I think perhaps it makes us stronger when we have such disappointment it makes us stronger, I don't know what do you think about that?...At least I see that in myself where I have had disappointment in that way and still had some of that father hunger and thought, well maybe if this is so disappointing maybe, you know, I should just give up on that...?

E: Yeah, that's basically what I've done. You know I've said this is not going to be satisfied in this life. And it was interesting that I've come to terms with how much that we are emotionally needy and that we do have a need for affection and love and that kind of thing.

All of life is a growing process...

You know how adversity can make you strong or can kill you? I think it made me stronger...because it was a difficult marriage.

You are supposed to be growing all the time and surely you have to be stretched to the last degree most of the time.

I am one of these that believes pretty heavily in those survival courses where you put kids through agonies until they can't stand it and come out feeling, or, you know, adjust their sight and they figure out what's important in life. And I had some pretty rough experiences that gave me a great deal of self-confidence. [...] I mean Oh my, it was awful, it was just awful. After we came through that I thought, you know I just felt much more confident, I lived through that, I have done it, there was automatically more confidence. [hum]

I: That is interesting how that works...

E: Yeah, it really is...I know that really hard experiences, you end up with a lot of confidence when you have lived through them.

Eva had spiritual experiences that helped her cope with her father loss, especially in a way that helped her feel a connection to her father that she did not have time enough to form before he died.

I: Are there other beliefs that helped you with your fatherless situation?

E: Hum. Not anything that is not freely discussed in the Gospel. I firmly believe, as my mother taught me that they are with us when we need them. They are not always with us but at times that we need them they are there, those that have passed on to the other side. I got a blessing once that was a very, very sweet experience to my oldest brother who gave me the blessing and to myself, during the time my marriage was getting more and more difficult. My brother did not know that I had problems in my marriage—I just came to him to get a blessing to have the strength to keep going. After the blessing was given, he said that that he knew my father had been present and that he had never experienced something like that before. So he said ‘I want you to know that the blessing I gave you was truly a father’s blessing.’ [hum]. That was a very sweet experience. [hum!] So, you know, I have a very firm belief that they are near us when we need them and that they are near us if we need them at a moment’s notice, you know in danger..., I think angels help us and guide us. And I don’t know if it is exactly my dad sometimes, but I know that there is a lot of interaction with the other side and a lot of knowledge about what we are doing, the veil is not very heavy. They are aware of what we are going through. Also, both times my mother had a hysterectomy, I was about 9 or 10 years old, and she said that my uncle attended—my father’s brother—and my father’s sister was a nurse—they were both in the operating room, and they said that daddy was there, they could feel them there. [...] And there are a lot of stories where my father was kind of the spiritual leader in the family and all of his families have acknowledged that daddy was the bonder, the peace-maker, and then he died so early, but they all really loved him, and so, several have seen him, you know, at the grave side, or, at my mother’s funeral a neighbor saw daddy, and I thought... ‘Oh, why wasn’t it one of us?’ [laughing] you know, that’s something else, why do some people have those manifestations instead of others, but we know it was daddy. And she wasn’t a soul-friend, you know, she was just a good neighbor. She saw daddy up on the podium smiling and holding hands with my mom and they were laughing at the stories and just enjoying themselves immensely. And then she said, I figured that the man with your mother was your father. And then she said, the one, you know, that cousin who gave the closing prayer, really looked a lot like the man who was with your mother. Well, this cousin has always looked more like daddy. And so that was the confirmation that is was daddy.

Eva's inquisitive nature and strong interest in learning from life what life and life's experiences have to teach her is especially well represented in the third interview I had with her. Similarly to Melinda, Eva showed an underlying belief in the ability to progress and change and that this ability lay in their own hands.

Since I found most of the third interview with Eva important to quote, I decided to provide the entire interview below. This interview also holds an account of some of my own experience with fatherloss and father hunger, which might be important to some readers in identifying the bias underlying the manner in which I asked Eva the question of reconciliation with father hunger above, namely that there comes a time when one just might want to grow out of it because it always will be frustrated and because it is not going to be filled in this life. The interview also shows at how much of a deeper level Eva and I talked at that time, which again, and in Eva's case especially because of her inquisitive nature, started to happen as I opened up about my biases, started to share some of my own experience with fatherlessness, and truly made her part of our inquiry process.

### Third Interview

I: Is there anything you wanted to tell me since our last interview? Anything that came to mind?

E: Yeah, there was one thing. It occurred to me, and I wonder if it is true, that I did not find a substitute for a father figure because I kept my own alive so thoroughly, and I wonder you know if that was detrimental...

I: Hum. That is an interesting question! I think, like in my situation it was very important that I looked for a substitute. I think what I learned in looking for a substitute, well first of all, I had no memory of my father [E: no, neither do I].. yeah, and also my mother did not recreate that for me, [E: um-hum] and in my case there were even some negative stories about him, you know [E: um-hum], so I kind of wanted to learn how it feels like to be a daughter and, you know, what's the big deal about fathers...[E: sure!], so I was kind of missing..., you know after all we teach in the LDS church about the importance of fathers and what they are supposed to do and all that, I thought, oh well, I



miss that...[E: um-hum, um-hum] and so I was looking. And it was very hard on one side because I kind of came to a point where I really, really wanted a father, like teenage years especially, I also did not have such a good relationship to my mother, and so, I literally wanted to be adopted, and it was really hard for me to realize that that was not Heavenly Father's plan for me. [E: yeah]. I mean some people are adopted, you know, and some aren't [E:um-hum]... and I have a mother still, and the Gospel helped us very much, to grow, both of us, and I see my mission now in my family, you know, I feel I have a mission, for example just alone in doing family history, ...my mom can't do all of that anymore, and our family line would just end here if I would not continue it. I think that there are people that need us, and I think there are people in my family on both sides of the veil that need me, and so I kind of saw my mission in my family and that it was the Lord's will that it is this way and that helped me in dealing with my hunger for a father and in fact for a family. But until I realized that it was really, really hard for me because I always felt like a second class..., like I am getting the crumbs that fall off the table, [E:yeah, yeah!] ...because, even if I had a good fatherly friend or found a family that really befriended me and that I got close to, it could never be like my own family, and in that was it was very hard. But I think it was important for me too look because I learned things that I would not have otherwise never learned, like how it feels like to be a daughter, or... For example, I lived with a family once and he thought I was his daughter coming in through the door; he was sitting with his back towards me and did not turn around to look who came in and said 'Hi Sweetie!' And it just hit me like lightning and I thought, 'Wow, that's what this feels like!' and I just experienced what love between a father and daughter could feel like. And it meant a lot to me when he then saw that it actually was me and he said 'Well, you are a Sweetie too!' [E: yeah]...[laughing]. So, I am grateful for those kinds of moments, they were really important. But I could not have that constantly, and for sure I could not make up for or re-live so many years of not having grown up with it either. So, one day, I just dropped it. I was grateful for what I had gotten through so many friends and I decided I was done with it.

E: Aha, how interesting!

I: Yeah, but I've asked myself that question too, especially when it became so painful, I said to myself, well, maybe I am just stupid looking around for a father and maybe that's not a good thing to do. I even was on a guilt trip for a while about that, but I think it was very important and I think I have a theory that, I mean there are so many different people and scenarios, but I think that if people don't look for what they need, first of all if they are not honest with themselves about needing, and that honesty is often only found in experiencing one's need and looking for it to be fulfilled, or if they then feel shame about their need, they have not reconciled with the need or with the loss. [E:yeah] I don't know if that is true, but it is a theory I have.

E: Yeah, no I think that's probably true. Is it not that we need to reach a positive level on all these things?!

I: Yeah, and it balances out in the end, I mean...it is interesting that this question came up for you, but I experienced your account as fairly positive, you know...the way you dealt

with everything and...I just think somehow life comes around to us again anyway and teaches us what we need to learn, you know...

E: Oh yeah, and you know everybody has their lacks, everybody has their things that they struggle with, I mean that's life, we each get our portion [I: Um-hum] .

I: Is there anything else that came to you?

E: No, but maybe something else will come while we talk again today...

I: Well, I think I pretty much have everything I need; I just wanted to ask you one thing...I don't know if you were able to skim through my thesis proposal I emailed you..?

E: Oh yes! I enjoyed reading that. Yeah, I thought, 'wow, she has done a lot of work!' I think you really covered it...

I: [laughing] Good! Well, after you have kind of read my bias and where I am coming from, how do you feel about having been a participant and about my agenda of recruiting someone who might be able to tell a more positive story and to kind of give us hope in the first place? ...

E: I think it is fine, I have been grateful to be involved and think it is great that such research is being done, you know...

I: Do you think you would be someone who, I mean would you agree with your experience of fatherlessness, that 'yeah I guess mine was kind of positive' or were you surprised, like 'interesting that I would fall into that category,' or did you not think about that at all?..

E: No, I mean I've always had an identity that I was 'yeah, I'm different because I don't have a daddy' so it did not come as a surprise...

I: And in connection to resilience or successful coping, ...I don't know what you've read, ...it comes up especially in my introduction, ...that I've tried to recruit people who I thought could provide a more positive account...and I think that I've seen a lot of themes of successful coping and resilience, and hope in your account [E: That's good, that's good...], so I wondered if you picked up on that and had some thoughts, or...

E: No, because I don't consider that I am a stellar in coping, I really don't. I feel like, probably because of my first husband's emphasis in dealing with me, you know telling me that I just did not do it right because I didn't have a dad, you know that's 30 years of hearing that does not really make me feel like I am successful at coping...

This last statement is interesting because previously, Eva said that she did not feel guilt or shame because her first husband tried to make her feel those feelings. The lack of

confidence shining through this last statement and its controversial nature in light of the other statement made, suggests to me that, while just having come to understand a little more about the root of her father hunger, Eva still has not resolved some of her feelings of low self-confidence. It might just be, as Melinda mentioned, that one does not see one's own strength, but, I wonder if Eva does not again fail to see and therefore downplays her success and accomplishments with regards to her upbringing and father loss because of her continuing father hunger and her unresolved understanding about the root of these problems, which, as I have mentioned above, may lie in her inability to grieve and emotionally reconcile with her father's death.

#### Third Interview (cont.)

I: Hum, interesting! But you know I think you have a lot of themes in there, like for example some of your beliefs, mostly coming from the Gospel [E: Um-hum, definitely!], but also something, you know something I learned from you actually..., was where you said that you come to a point where you either break from a trial or you grow from it, and..., I kind of identified with that where I have come to a point where I was just sick of being the victim, or something like that, and I just want to be strong again and snap out of it or something, and then, you know,...you just do it. So, I saw that in there...

In fact, another participant I interviewed, and he is about your age group, and you will be able to read all of this, he said something kind of along those lines too. He told me it seemed to him like time changed a lot from back when he grew up, where today people are just much more...I think he said 'whiners' you know... [E: Ha, ha, that is interesting, that is probably true, I would agree!] Like back then you just, I don't know...you just coped, you had to snap out of it and you just moved on and you live your life, and today in our society we think and talk a lot about it and we analyze everything to death...

E: Yeah, we do, we analyze to death and we also have lots of litigation and stuff and talk about victims...I think there is far too much of that kind of thought.

I: Yeah. So those are some of the themes I am seeing that I think will help lighten up the literature a little bit...

E: Yes, and I think your contention that the literature is too dark is very good; I think that's a real point! ...

In my reflections after Eva and I had completed this interview, I wished I had touched on the point that, despite of what we had just talked about, namely the importance of just moving on nowadays as much as in earlier days instead of dwelling too much on the negative implications of fatherlessness as the general fatherlessness literature seems to do, it was still important to also speak of and allow for grieving. As it became evident in my analysis of Eva's account, the ability of grieving is important before reconciliation and healing can take place.

## DAVID

David, age 51, grew up in Provo, Utah and lost his father at age 10 through a heart attack. He was very close to his father. David came from a big family and has a lot of memories of dad spending a lot of time with him because he was the youngest. After the death of his father, David had to take on a lot of responsibility and help out his mom, who he did not have such a good relationship with. Nevertheless, David has done well and was strong. Family members would come to him in years for emotional support and advice. David seems to not have any unresolved issues from his father loss. He is honest about the difficulties of his loss, yet shows acceptance of it and having made the best of it. He is married and has 3 adult children, and is a very passionate, warm father and grandfather. David also is a bishop and has been very successful in his business.

I know David from my work place and have had a lot of, to me dear, interaction with him over some three to four years. I consider him a good friend. Although I consider us being somewhat close to each other, I never really talked to David about his experience of being fatherless. From what I knew about his general personality and traits, I suspected that he would be a great candidate for my study. He did not know anything more about my study other than that I was interviewing fatherless individuals. To do my interviews with David, I visited him at his home where we could talk uninterrupted in a peaceful atmosphere.

## Analysis

It was interesting that with David I did not really have two phases, one in which both I and the interviewee warmed up to the topic and to talking to each other, and another in which I started to share more of my interpretations, biases, and personal

experience with fatherlessness and thus made the interviewee more part of the inquiry process. David already knew about my experience of being fatherless and thus it was part of our relating to each other from the beginning, however it did not influence the account he shared with me of his experience. In fact, when I did make a remark about my experience at the end of the second interview, I felt David was somewhat surprised as if he had not thought about my background at all and as if he did not think it could come up in our interview. David and I had no problems getting into both interviews. I knew how to talk to him since we have had many good talks in the past. Like good old friends we went right into talking, the only difference being that our conversation was taped this time. David is a very “cut-to-the-center,” or “to-the-meat” kind of character and that helped our interviewing process in that I did not have to dig for anything. Everything was just right there in front of us. David was very honest about and aware of some of the difficulties in his life of being fatherless, but he reported those difficulties in a very matter-of-factly way. He seemed to not have any unresolved issues stemming from his fatherlessness and gave a very accessible and easy understood account.

One thing that was definitely in David’s favor was that he had the longest time with his dad out of all my participants of this study. His dad died when he was 10 and he had a lot of good memories of his dad. Some of the humor and good nature that comes out to be in David’s father definitely also is a character trait of David himself:

We used to live downtown, he’d walk in the mornings to a little café and he’d drink Postum, which is like coffee, but, you know, [I know!] [laughter], so he would, I would sneak and follow him and he wouldn’t make me go back home, he’d just invite me to come in and buy me a hot chocolate.

I remember that he loved to sing, he’d forget the words and just kind of... I have the records...he used to make records himself, you know with him

singing [wow!], or practicing some sales pitch, or some fourth of July speech, so he was kind of colorful.

David is honest about his difficulties of having lost his father. Yet he shows strength in how he dealt with those difficulties. Part of his most dominant trait, I would say, is his resolution to just accept his situation and to keep going. A dominant theme in his account is to turn losses into strengths and to see the positive side of difficult things.

I accept my circumstance but still a part of me wishes I could have had a father to help me grow and to share my failures and successes with.

You know if you haven't experienced a father really what do you know that you have missed? I mean, life is life, you know, you make the best of it and fill in the gaps, and that's probably what I did...

I remember [dad] always going to all my brothers' athletic events, and school plays. And no one ever came to mine. You know, so then you just learn to accept it, realize that this is part of life, as far as this goes.

I: Now you said in your account that over the years you have thought much about your father, and, what were such moments? What did you think about in such moments?

D: Oh, I just think about having him there when I went on my mission, maybe receiving letters that would encourage me, or what he would tell me when I got married, see how he would react to my first child, you know just natural life processes that go on. Being able to help me fix things that break...just having that association, you know, ...or going fishing together, and that would have been a type of therapy against the stresses of life, an out so to speak, which, see, I haven't had. My father in law was someone to help there too after I got married, he was a great example and there were times he and I just went camping or fishing, which was good, but see, it was not my dad, and it is not the same, I mean it is a good substitute at best, but it is not the same.

I: Do you think when a boy has a situation like that it is not as hard as losing a father through divorce or so, or is it harder?

D: Yeah, I mean, in some respects maybe it is better that I did not have a dad than have one that was always down and I would never measure up. I thought about that too. You know sometimes it's good to weigh two vice and find your own...

I probably became stronger than I would have been by not having a dad, but my dad was not as strong either, if you know what I mean?

Our family was left with minimal finances and I had to work and help my mother at an early age. The child labor law did not apply in those days, so it worked out well to ease the financial burden my mother had. In many respects I feel this taught me a strong work ethic that has prepared me for my current role as a father.

I think I would have maybe been a little more apt to relax and be recreational if my dad had been around. I am not very good at relaxing and at recreation. It is very hard for me to play. I think that was probably a cause of my circumstance, just working all the time and that is all I did and that's what I became comfortable with and so I am more comfortable working than I am playing, in fact I feel guilty playing [you mentioned that, yeah] and I don't know why, those feelings of guilt, I feel like I should be doing something more productive you know instead of just playing for mere recreation of amusement.

On the other hand I learned to work—kind of a positive thing. Just have to balance it out...

I saw several dominant character traits of David which played an important role in successfully dealing with his losses, namely emotional and spiritual strength, positive attitude, being responsible, compassionate, other-oriented, and having good judgment. David is aware of and honest about his strength in dealing with the difficulties in his life, but he is himself surprised about it and he was careful in the interview to not come across as boasting in it in any way. David definitely shows strength in that he takes initiative and takes on responsibility. He could be considered as having been the spiritual leader in the family from the time of his youth.

I: You said something like you were different than the rest of your family...

D: Yeah, I don't know why that is. But I think differently. I was raised the same, but I am not like my brothers and sisters at all.



All of my brothers and sisters at one time or another have come to me with problems or concerns, feelings of inadequacy or whatever, and I have always felt like I've had to be the strong one, and I, even when my wife got cancer...like then they were good to kind of rally, but I still felt I had to be the strong one, you know?

I: Do you think that that impacted your healing in the whole situation as well?

D: Well sure, because I am the one that is always looked at as the go-to guy, you know. I mean I am the 9<sup>th</sup> child and yet I am the one that was always looked at as the decision-maker, you know, looking after mom and trying to get things taken care of. Now, my one brother who is 8 years older than me he is doing more of that now—only because I fell back—I don't come forward to do it so much anymore, I step back when I can. When I moved away I always hoped that they would pick up the slack and step forward, but they didn't. My mom would still call me. I was 3000 miles away and they were around here and would still call me for advice and what not.

...and part of that could be just because of my spiritual nature, being very active in the church, I was more grounded there than they, so, even though they weren't active in the church ...

I started family home evenings, we'd have it once a month until the last couple of years because everyone's families have gotten too big and their kids have gotten married, so we still get together a couple of times a year, but we did that and when they came to my house I gave them a full-blown lesson! [...] I started them when I came home from my mission, I started scripture reading...

...maybe I am closer to the Spirit than I realize or am giving credit for. And I only say that because of what others tell me. I don't feel like I have a handle on anything. I think maybe I just have a good heart and I try to keep that heart good and try to be as honest as I can with other people...that's who I am. I hope that I am the same wherever I am, I mean I don't put on a different face, I mean in my beliefs and expressions...

I think another reason I am different (than fatherless people who struggle) was because of where I grew up. I was not growing up in the slums of LA. I was growing up in Provo, Utah, which was a pretty upstanding community did not have any slums, I mean we had the other side of the trax, but it was not, do you know what I mean? We grew up with a lot of middle class people not a lot of rich not a lot of poor, so everyone was kind of common, so that was just a favorable condition. And even though

my family was poor, it was not like I was poor, because, I don't know, because somehow the finances came, or there was help there that allowed me to function like I was middle class, you know even though I was poor.

My way was fortunate, I did not resort to vices, you know, I resorted to good things, but (some others who are struggling) not and that was probably by...chance, or...[You think so?] Not by any great knowledge that I had!... I think by chance or, I guess the spirit could have been there.

I: And you said you never felt like a victim, and how that experience is for you, how do you think you came to that point?

D: Because I had two or three guys in my grade school class that year that lost their fathers also, so I wasn't the only guy in the boat, so, I could see, you know, that kind of stuff happens. Of course their dads died, one in an auto accident another one in some other tragic accident. But the fact still remained that we all lost our dads. So I could see that I was not the only one, do you know what I mean? I mean, three guys in my grade school class lost their dads that same year, you know! The interesting thing though is the other two guys did not turn out that great, you know one's been married four or five times, the other one has been in prison, just... they chose the rougher course, you know. I'm not sure that would have happened if their dad would have still been around, I don't know.

The greatest thing that helped David in accepting the difficulty of his situation probably were the select spiritual experiences he had, which stood in direct relation to his religious faith and beliefs:

I: What do you think helped you in accepting your circumstances throughout life, do you remember anything specific?

D: Not really, just the Gospel, just having that belief that [dad] was still alive and that I would see him again. And this may sound funny, but there have been many times in my life when I've gone through kind of hard things that I've felt his presence there. I just felt that he is kind of there for me, protecting or, a guardian sort of. I think our guardian angels are our family members. And I felt him on many occasions, although I've never seen him I just felt a presence, I guess.

I: Now I am an LDS interviewer, and you are LDS, but, how would you describe your beliefs that helped you feel differently

D: I don't know if you can do that without being grounded in the basic, secure belief in God. The faith that He will bless you, and that he knows

your circumstance. And so that's probably what helped me—that I had faith in the Lord, and that everything would work out.

I: That there is a loving God, type...?

D: Yeah, one who ...you know, I've never felt like a victim. Society always wants to victimize someone. I more or less felt that things happen for a reason that they can help us grow and make us better. This misperception that life should be easy, and like a holiday, maybe that's what I learned from losing my dad. You know things are going to happen. When things don't seem fair or right, that's part of life and you just deal with it. You know maybe I learned that early...

Things just happen for a reason and we are to experience different things, hard and good.

We all have different testimonies of things that haven't necessarily come because of something that has happened in life, we just have it, you know, we just feel strongly about certain things for some reason.

I experienced some pretty miraculous things (on my mission) in a lot of respects. I experienced kind of a feeding of the multitudes when little was there and a lot was left over, I experienced the tempering of the elements or the weather. I experienced healing the sick in a miraculous way. A lady with a brain tumor, her daughter sought us out, she was not a member of the church, her daughter was investigating, asked us if we could give her mother a blessing and her mother was comatose when we went there. And my companion, I just anointed and my companion sealed, but he spoke this eloquent Japanese that I have never heard a missionary speak. And we were both so weak after we got through giving the blessing that we went home and did rest. And a week later that lady sent us a note and thanked us and she was totally recovered, no brain tumors, nothing.

So, I saw enough to know there is something to all of that stuff, you know—and then I've just build upon that as a youth. I haven't conversed with angels per se, but I've just had moments and experiences, you know,...or when I was a priest, I remember taking the sacrament to the shut-ends (i.e., foyers). I remember having some special experiences where a man with Leukemia whom I'd have to give the cup to his mouth, ...so I remember feeling something special from those occasions, something that was good, something that brought peace, something that said to me 'its good for you to do this. This is what life's about.' I've had a real affinity towards the prophet Joseph Smith. You know I had I think a significant whiteness of his First Vision—and here again I have not seen angels, but there were some pretty overwhelming feelings I've had. So, that is why I don't...I was really raised void of the church in many

respects, I mean I always went, lots of times my parents didn't, and I don't know why I went, part of it was probably sociality, we had a pretty big ward with a lot of kids my age, you know, and I probably went because it was a more positive thing than perhaps I was experiencing at home, you know what I mean? And so it felt good to be there, or better than to be at home perhaps, and I don't want to picture the home as bad, but it just ...wasn't always positive.

I: Just a better feeling ...?

D: Just a better feeling of where I was at and of what I was doing.

I don't think we ever have to be victim of anything, particularly if you have the Gospel in your life...it's the Gospel that teaches you anti-victim, I think that's part of why we are here in life, is to fight against that tendency to be a victim and to get into the poor me's. I mean there are plenty of stories of people who rose above their circumstances. Mine is a very meager story compared to most. People who, I mean those early pioneer saints and what they gave up for the Gospel and they were willing to give their lives on the planes even in hopes that their families would make it that far and that the rest would get here. They were not afraid of death because they were dying in the right thing and for the right cause. I guess I feel a lot the same way. If I die, I die, you know? I have to ready myself for that, I guess...but it seems I am not done yet, I need to take care of whatever it might still. But I am really starting to understand the concept of you got to live each day like it's your last because quite literally it could be...you know...now I see that death could be an option.

It needs to be said here too that David almost died the night before I came to interview him for the second time. David is a diabetic and his sugar level was very low; he went to the hospital at two in the morning to receive emergency treatment, so, his last statement really echoes reality. What is remarkable is not only his belief in the Gospel, spiritual things, and to get out of himself in overcoming his difficulties, but also his trust in life:

Well, I think some things we know and some we don't. We learn the reason as we go along. As we look back hindsight teaches us that 'Oh, I can see why I've experienced that,' or 'look what I've learned from that!'

I: Do you feel like you always kind of knew why your dad died, or did you just put it on a shelf?

D: Yeah, I don't know...hum...I don't know. But maybe for my personality I had to lose my dad for me to develop the way I developed. Because I really think that things happen for a positive reason, you know...for a reason that causes us to become more like our Heavenly Father.

I: I wonder why that is...

D: Well, I think that has to do with faith too, you know all stems back to faith and trust in a God you believe knows you and loves you and understands your circumstance, you know... [Hum] As a bishop I've never counseled with those who had that belief, those who did not have that belief were the ones who could not stand, and came and needed a bishop...

In the end of my second interview with David, I saw a lot of the central themes representing David's strength and resilience, basically stemming from his faith in the Gospel and in God, emerge. Again, there was so much of this part of the interview that I thought was important to quote in my analysis of this participant's experience, that I included it in its entirety below. This part of the interview not only shows depth, which without doubt was a result of our good friendship, but also the most authentic answers that could be given by David in response to questions about the experience of fatherlessness. Represented are also again parts of my own experience, biases, and feelings, which in many instances were used to probe further into David's experience.

I: But that strength of yours still surprises me and, you know maybe you are making the story lighter than it really was, or you just forgot...I mean I...like in my situation, I remember sometimes I wonder what was the shouting all about [before we came to this earth], I mean I feel like I am sick of this life sometimes, it just gets really hard, I mean without family and without support, being kind of alone there...

I purposefully used an emotional tone in the previous statement in order to challenge David's strength and to see how he truly arrived at such strength and faith.

D: I mean, I don't...I've never...I mean my family has disappointed me. I know that. But you know what?... It doesn't mean that I can't be who I can be, you know, and so I've never blamed anyone else for where I am at or what I haven't and am able to do.

I: And you know who you are.

D: And I know who I am.

I: So from where did you know that?

D: Yeah, you see that's where obedience to God's commands teaches you who you are, I think. I mean I am not saying I was always the most obedient person [Um-hum], but I guess I have a strong conscience, therefore I may wonder but I've changed my ways once I...you know, but that does not say I am better than anyone else.

At this point I actually saw David's eyes tear up a little bit. I felt that he really believed what he was saying.

I: So would you say maybe...I am trying to put a name to it, and what comes to my mind, would you say that is a knowledge of...I don't like the word self-esteem because psychology uses it a lot all the time, and I think in a very narrow-minded way, but...

D: Well, I hope I have a strong self-esteem.

I still did not want to give up and so continued to ask David questions that might trigger him to give me some information that could be related to some kind of perceptual framework underlying his successful coping and resilience. I did not want to put words into his mouth though and was careful to conceal the intentions of my questions...

I: But, do you know what I mean, would you term it that way that you always knew who you were...

D: Oh, I remember times where I felt that I did not measure up very well, like I told you—I felt like a third wheel. [Um-hum] So then I came to grips with that by saying, 'well I will just be my own self, I will not depend on others, their friendship are phony.' Maybe I am too skeptical that way with respect to others. Maybe I...I probably do have a hard time getting really close to people and being a real friend because maybe I am afraid of what the outcome might be, as far as really being hurt, and so

maybe I shut out certain things to a certain degree. I mean I can communicate with people, I can get close to people, but I don't, I don't let them get them inside me very much...

This was a very significant statement David made! After all I did discover a weakness that could be related to his father loss—a weakness that can easily be concealed in our society, and I would say, especially the LDS culture, under the label of someone being 'service-oriented.' Someone who gives rather than takes is functional and able to contribute to society. Taking or receiving requires vulnerability because one is at the mercy of the other and one can easily get hurt, especially, as I have experienced it in my father hunger, if the receiving concerns such delicate and private topics. What is often missed is that takers are equally important, because if there were no takers there would not be any need for givers. I wonder if David did not get hurt on his journey in trying to reach out and receive. In my situation as a fatherless individual, I have learned that many people who did not go through father loss do not understand how sensitive that topic is and how to give to the fatherless on a deep and meaningful level. I think what I have learned from experience and observation is that the most meaningful gift someone can give to the fatherless is constancy, or, a word also David has often used, showing responsibility and dependability.

The other issue at play might be that David has not been able to make sense of his father's death, therefore there is a level of uncontrollability about losing someone again without being able to make sense of it and therefore it makes sense for David to not want to get too close to others.

I: Like on the dependent side, but on the serving side you...

D: Yeah, on the serving side I am good, but...yeah, I am not on the dependent side at all, [laughter] [Um-hum]...do you know what I mean? [Um-hum!]

In his voice and body language, I could depict that David now also had the insight that he was better in giving than receiving. It was a wonderful moment, because David and I had both found truth together.

D: And, my wife and I just talked about this for a while, I wish at times that I was a better friend, you know...

I: On the depending side?

D: Not depend—well, I think sometimes to be a friend you have to be ...dependent [Um-hum] and I just can't...it's not me when I can do it myself I don't need someone to do it for me, you know [Um-hum], and it seems kind of phony to me, and I quite frankly don't feel a need to be dependent, I just don't. And yet I know others do. So that's kind of a hard thing to sort out how all of that plays in with friendship. I think that the prophet Joseph and his brother Hyrum, who I think were probably good true friends, but what does that mean? Well they there for each other and they would support each other. I think there have been people in my life that I would do that for...

It is noteworthy to point out here that David just referred to spiritual source and examples to find his answers, which is representative of many incidences in his account. I still did not give up—it was so hard for David to even think of receiving.

I: But would you let them do it for you?

D: But here is what happens, is lot's of times the road they take isn't one that I would take and so therefore that distances me from them, because I am just not going to do that, because I have a strong sense of right.

I: Would you let them die for you too?

D: It would depend on the circumstance.

I: [laughter] Its a hard question!

D: It's a hard question. It's a hard question. I guess I have never gotten that close enough to someone that I would say I'd feel good about them



giving their life for me. [Um-hum]. Because I don't think we are really good communicators in telling each other how we really feel about each other, because it opens you up sometimes and sometimes it is not very comfortable to hear. [sigh]

[long pause]

I: Well, I think I got a lot of good stuff. I now have to transcribe the whole thing.

D: (Still thinking)...I never felt the need for any therapy. Nor do I, I am not really into psychology....My sister in law thinks I try to avoid things in life, like I had a hard life and I am not really letting it get close to me or something, like I am just trying to forget about it...But I am not...

I could really see that something was working in David, because he was deep in thought at the time I thought I had gotten enough information of him to conclude my interview. I gave him the opportunity to share more, but he was done talking. What came through again in the previous section was David's faith in Gospel principles and religious examples to orient himself and to find hold. As in Melinda's and Eva's case, David displayed strong faith and confidence in having the ability to progress and change, and in his case this confidence predominantly came from his religious beliefs. While David has a weakness in allowing himself to receive from others, it makes perfect sense that he would put his trust in Jesus Christ and a Heavenly Father who are perfect beings and who understand everything. It is one of the most basic beliefs of the LDS faith taught to everybody from an early childhood age onto their adult years.

## DISCUSSION

### Cross-Analysis of All Participants

Three final themes have emerged from my study of the three participants in this research by looking for similarities and differences between and across accounts. The comparison of similarities and differences between and across accounts was done on the basis of several cross-analysis themes (Table 4). Cross-analysis themes were themes that were most strongly or frequently represented in individual accounts of my participants and that were compared against each other in order to assess the nature of their occurrence between and across accounts. As my discussion below will show, cross-analysis themes were not evenly represented and some were more strongly represented than others. Father hunger, for example was an overarching cross-analysis theme in that it involved or had to make sense of all of the other themes in comparing one participant's experience to another participant's experience, however, it was only strongly represented in the account of one participant. My attention was drawn to father hunger as a cross-analysis theme because it was so strongly represented in one participant and because it was an important cross-analysis theme in my pilot study.

Table 4

<b>7 CENTRAL CROSS-ANALYSIS THEMES</b>
1. Ability to grieve
2. Supportive mother
3. Nature of death
4. Beliefs
5. Father hunger
6. Personality
7. Positive father image

In the nature of interaction between the cross-analysis themes, I could detect three themes eliciting most meaningful interpretations and conclusions between all three participants. These three themes were the themes most indicative of facilitating successful coping and resilience. I identified these themes as final central themes for this study: (1) The importance of reconciliation with the father loss, (2) An active desire, determination, faith, and invested effort towards growth, progress, and healing with the ability to compensate, and (3) Spiritual and religious beliefs, practices, and experiences. Final central themes did not necessarily emerge through participants' equally strong participation in the cross-analysis themes, but also according to the strength of participants' representation in one theme as it made sense in reflection against other themes and against the other participants. In other words, final-central themes also emerged through participants' unequal or disparate participation in the cross-analysis themes.

The final central theme "Reconciliation with loss" was related to almost all cross-analysis themes in a significant way across all participants. "Desire and determination to succeed" was most strongly facilitated by the beliefs participants held and by their personality but also by other cross-analysis themes. The theme "Spiritual and religious beliefs and experiences" was upheld as a final central theme especially in the strong influence of my participants' beliefs and, in the strong cases of Eva and David, through the influence of personality.

Father hunger in regards to reconciliation was so strong in one participant that it was considered as a cross-analysis theme serving a comparison across all three participants. It is treated in depth below. Personality influence in light of spiritual or

religious beliefs and experiences was so strong in two of my participants that it became an important cross-analysis theme even though it had not much interaction with other cross-analysis themes. Spiritual and religious beliefs and experiences further were so closely tied to participants' personalities that it showed strong interaction with the other two final central themes. The influence of supportive mothers was so diverse that it could not be sustained as a coherent influence for any of the final central themes. It was nevertheless included in the following analysis, because it served as an important cross-analysis theme for the cross comparison of my participants. It was especially important to include the theme "support of mothers" in its ambiguity in an in-depth analysis between participants, because this theme was a final-central theme in my pilot study. The following section will now discuss each of the three final central themes in light of its underlying and interacting central cross-analysis themes.

*(1) Reconciliation with father loss*

Reconciliation with the loss of the father has been the greatest indicator of how well an individual coped successfully and developed resilience. As mentioned earlier, I defined reconciliation in terms of an individual making sense of having lost the father, or as being able to find positive meaning in the experience of having lost a father (cf. Boss, 1999, 2006; Harris, 2006). In all three of my participants, I could see in order for reconciliation to occur it was important that each participant found a way to reconcile with their loss emotionally and had an opportunity to grieve. Melinda did not seem to report much about grieving in her account, nevertheless grieving occurred. Melinda was very young when the death of her father occurred and she did not understand everything about her father's disappearance; however she missed her father. Under the positive

influence of her mother, Melinda learned to understand that her father was sick and that he had to go. She saw her mother sad at times about the father's death and about being lonely, which gave her the ability to identify and learn from her how to deal with those feelings. The mother explained that the father was sick and that it was the best thing for him to go to a place where he would feel better and thus provided for Melinda a way to reconcile with the grief. Melinda later had the opportunity to understand the death of her father more fully and reconcile with her loss through a dream. She also reconciled through confronting her own emotional wounds by seeing her own children grow up with their father and exercising faith that they would not be abandoned.

Eva did not have the opportunity Melinda had to reconcile with her loss at an early age and her account shows much more difficulty in accomplishing reconciliation. However, her account contributes significantly to an understanding of the importance of grieving and of understanding the loss emotionally. Eva's account serves as a good comparison against Melinda's account to show the development of an individual who did not sufficiently grieve and thus reconcile. The point of contrast especially lies in the influence of their mothers. Melinda and Eva's accounts shared many similarities with regards to mothers who were or tried to be supportive. Melinda's mother, for example, exemplified strength, leadership, and initiative, especially when it concerned her children. She facilitated a positive image of the father in how she explained his death to her children and continued to talk about him. Also Eva had a very supportive mother in that she facilitated an understanding in her children about the love their father had for them and in that she made him a continual part of the family by continuing to talk about him. Melinda occasionally saw her mother sad about the death of the father and about being

lonely. Also Eva's mother was sad about the death of the father. However, at this point significant differences occur in the accounts.

Melinda recounts how her mother would often grieve with the children and teach them ways to reconcile. The mother openly showed her emotions and feelings about the father's death and about being lonely. However, she explained the circumstance to her children in a way that would help everyone bring their feelings to the table and to reconcile with them. She then showed strength and resolution to keep going. Eva's mother seems to have had a significantly more difficult time with the death of the father. She needed time away from the children in order to grieve alone and she seemed to not have made the children so much a part of her grieving process in subsequent years. Eva recounted that her mother did not talk much about her grieving. A main theme that was adopted in Eva's family instead was that they would be a strong and capable family and that they could make it without the father. This focus on being strong did not allow the children to adequately grieve with their mother. The father was missed, but the family did not take much time as a whole to reconcile with those feelings and to grieve and make sense of all the happenings together. Allowing the children to see how the mother dealt with her feelings of grief was a tremendous strength to Melinda in her capability to deal with those feelings. Melinda thus was better reconciled to her father's absence than Eva.

Another significant point of contrast between Melinda's and Eva's experience of reconciliation lies in the nature of the fathers' deaths. The death of Melinda's father, for example, made sense to Melinda in that it took away the agony of his drug addiction. Because of that, Melinda, even though there was sadness about the death, was able to

reconcile. In Eva's case, the death of the father did not come as a relief to anybody in any way and was harder to reconcile with. Eva's family was able to make more sense of the father's death as the years progressed through, as Eva put it, gradual spiritual confirmations that he had fulfilled his mission on the earth. The process of reconciliation for Eva's family however was more difficult because these spiritual confirmations and thus the ability for the family to make sense of the death came slowly and the death did not help anyone.

David's experience with reconciliation is very different compared to Melinda and Eva's experiences and provides another point of contrast and an extraordinary contribution to a more complete understanding of successful coping and resilience. David's mother could not be seen as having been very supportive. She struggled to provide physical and emotional comfort and did not teach anything that would have helped David grieve or reconcile with the death of his father. Despite of that, David seemed to have reconciled with the death of his father and not only coped successfully but further thrived in all areas of his life, which could be seen for example, in his attitude towards life, his success in creating his own family, or in his professional and church responsibilities. His father's death did not come as a relief either and was very difficult on his family, nevertheless David continued to thrive and progress successfully. These differences in the contextual qualities surrounding David's success, were such a strong contrasting point that it made me look more closely at what it was that helped David cope and to look at that theme as a potential final central theme.

David reconciled with the loss of his father mainly spiritually. There were still a few unresolved issues distantly stemming from David's loss of his father at the time of

this study, however, these unresolved issues did not manifest until the very end of our interviews. David was conscious about them and had started to deal with them not too long before my interviews with him. The fact that these issues were not apparent until the very end of our interviews showed how well David had learned to compensate for them. This was intriguing to me, because it truly highlighted David's spiritual nature and resilient personality, which will be described in more detail below, as solely responsible for his success, masking the lack of or absence of complete reconciliation with the loss of his father.

As I compared David's leading theme of spiritual strength to the accounts of the other two participants, I found that it was a theme budding in the other two accounts as well, in one more strongly than in the other. Because the spiritual theme was represented in the other accounts and because it showed to have the same potential for influence in those accounts as in David's account, I acknowledged it as a final-central theme.

David's experience can teach us that complete reconciliation is not necessary in order for an individual to cope successfully and be resilient. A person can be considered resilient and successfully coping when not all issues have been resolved in that he or she is exercising faith towards more completeness or wholeness and becomes complete or whole in that faith. Through religious beliefs and spiritual experiences that strengthened and confirmed David's faith towards this wholeness, David gained confidence, strength, and a purpose or a mission within his family that kept him going. Eva could be seen to have taken that approach towards reconciliation and wholeness as well. Her coping also lay in faith towards progress and learning, which gradually helped her reconcile. Her resiliency was evident in her patience and endurance to keep observing, learning, and



searching for answers. Melinda believed in an innate strength and ability of human beings to heal themselves and become whole spiritually, emotionally and physically and she also applied faith in progress and healing towards becoming a successful individual. It is probably true in all three of my participants that the death of their fathers opened a “door of self-finding and self-examination” as Simeon (1998) describes it (see p.40 in this thesis).

One theme that is interesting to compare across all participants in light of reconciliation is that of father hunger, a term used in the professional literature describing the condition in some fatherless individuals to exceedingly and continuously miss their father or a father figure. Although selected authors have written on father hunger (e.g. Erickson, 1998; Gallagher, 1998; Herzog, 1982; see p.38 in this thesis), to my knowledge the nature and reasons for father hunger have not yet been scientifically explored. It is my belief, however, in accordance with Erickson (1998), or (Herzog, 1982), who wrote about this issue, that father hunger usually is a sign of an individual not having reconciled with the loss of the father and with associated emotions. It was interesting that Eva mentioned the term father hunger to describe her condition without knowing that it was a term used in the professional literature. Eva was the only participant in my study who experienced father hunger. Reasons for why that was so can be found in the extent a participant was aware of the difficulties he or she was dealing with and able to understand how to successfully cope and reconcile with them, in how much time a participant was able to spend with the father before his death, and in other factors, such as personality and maybe gender.

For example, none of my participants, including Eva, felt a need for or wanted to have a substitute father. All of my participants missed their fathers, but they did not want to bond with another fatherly figure. It would have been like a “betrayal” to them, to use Melinda’s term. This made Eva’s father hunger even more interesting. Eva’s father hunger mainly manifested in Eva missing her own father and not any father figure. However, on the other hand, Eva also expressed that she generally missed the interaction and knowledge of how to relate to male figures while growing up. It seems like Eva was stuck between wanting to learn how to relate to males and not wanting a substitute father from whom she could have learned those things. Eva probably did not learn to acknowledge, understand, and reconcile with her questions and feelings of what she needed in a father. To have these feelings yet to not be able to understand them and reconcile with them probably exacerbated her father hunger (cf. Erickson, 1998; Herzog, 1982). This interpretation would confirm Herzog’s (1982) argument that unresolved feelings such as ambivalence, which would be the one applying most to Eva’s situation, but also hurt, or hatred characteristic of loss and abandonment seem to maximize for the individual the felt absence of the father and seem to exacerbate father hunger (p. 172; see p.38 this thesis).

Melinda knew of and had her dad for about three years in which she spent much quality time with him. Besides all the other factors helping Melinda to reconcile with the death of her father which I discussed earlier, I think a very pertinent factor in her reconciliation and thereby prevention of father hunger was also that she, as she herself said, had enough time before her father’s death to form a healthy attachment to him. Melinda missed her father, but not to the extent that it was a problem to her. David also

knew his dad and had spent much quality time with him, in fact, David had his father the longest (10 years) compared to Melinda and Eva. Another great factor in his ability to reconcile, besides all the ones that already have been mentioned, and the reason for why he might not have had father hunger probably also was that he had much time to experience his father and to bond with him before his death.

Eva did not know her father, nor could she remember anything of her dad from personal interaction with him. She had the least amount of interaction with her father out of all my participants. Although spiritual beliefs and experiences, and building strength and resilience during life's trials helped Eva reconcile with the death of her father, it did not teach her what it meant to have a father and her reconciliation was more based on faith than knowledge. She just could never be sure what it would mean to have a father and without dealing with those unresolved questions and feelings, she probably was more prone than others to develop father hunger. Eva spent a lot of time with her grandfather while growing up; however, he was seen and known as the grandfather, not the father. Although he gave her a lot of fatherly attention, Eva probably did not know it, because she did not have any fatherly love to compare grandfather's love to.

From the conclusions of my pilot study, I assumed that insufficient reconciliation with the father loss and insufficient support from the mother were precursors for father hunger. Eva's account seems to support that assertion to some extent. Eva was the participant who had reconciled the least with the absence of her father out of all my participants. A great deal of reconciliation in Eva still has to occur in her ability to grieve and also in resolving that grieving with an awareness and understanding of her mother's inability to facilitate it. By looking to David's account, we may say that there is a good

possibility for Eva to overcome her father hunger by in her faith towards wholeness which, as I have mentioned before, can compensate for incomplete reconciliation. In fact, I started to see development of such compensation in Eva throughout our interviews as she described that her father hunger was still there but that she would suspend it until things could be sorted out and she could meet her father again.

David's account negates the view that supportive mothers are necessary for reconciliation and the prevention of father hunger, for his mother was not supportive and he did not experience father hunger. David missed his father but he did not miss him to the extent that it became a problem for him. Perhaps here again it could be argued that David's strong and resilient personality made up for the insufficient support of the mother, and that a more sensitive and vulnerable personality, as displayed in Eva, would have had more of a disposition for developing father hunger. This theory would also to some extent be reinforced in Melinda, who had a strong personality and did not have father hunger either. Perhaps another factor to consider in David's case might be his gender. Males might not be as apt to develop father hunger as females. This could have to do with the possibility of females learning best from their fathers about an indispensable part of their identity, namely womanhood. This argument has been made throughout the fathering literature, as I have demonstrated to some extent in my literature review. For example, as Tessman (1989) and Trowell and Etchegoyen (2002) stated, girls, from being loved by their fathers, learn about intimacy, difference, that they are love-worthy, and they can practice being a woman (see p.13 in this thesis). However, I repeat the argument that these assertions can be true without applying to every individual. Melinda, for example, although expressing having had the challenge to "learn to read

men” because she was not able to learn that from her father or step father, showed that she could learn this skill in other ways, for example through her dating relationships. To understand the intricate details about father hunger requires further qualitative research that closely looks at the context of different fatherless individuals of both genders.

From comparing the accounts of my participants with each other, I have wondered if it could be said a universal effect of father hunger is that individuals generally see the loss of the father as the major or sole cause for difficulties in life. Melinda and David did not see their father loss to be a central source for their difficulties, although they saw it as a possible or partial source. Melinda, for example, stated that her fear and her anxiety attacks did not solely stem from the loss of her father. She recognized that factors such as having seen her mother sad and others she did not know about could have influenced her anxiety. David acknowledged connections between trials he has had in his life and his fatherlessness, however, he did not dwell on it. He also acknowledged that other people had similar trials whether or not they had fathers, and that in the end it did not matter what caused the trial but that one grew from it. Eva, on the other hand, seemed to put a lot of the focus of her difficulties around her fatherlessness.

The last important theme that stood out to me in terms of individuals’ ability to reconcile, was that all three of my participants had a positive father image. They all knew they were loved by their dads, which, I think, made reconciliation easier for them. I compared this condition to the experience of one participant of my pilot study, John, who, like Melinda, lost his father due to suicide. The difference between Melinda’s and John’s experience was that John’s father had previously abandoned the family and

divorced John's mother. John had not been able to speak to his father and seek reconciliation about his abandonment because of his death and John experienced his fatherlessness as "a nightmare," to use his own words (see p.92 in this thesis). It appeared as if John used the death of his father as an excuse to not being able to reconcile with the negative image of his father, however, I think that the majority of his struggles came from not even wanting to reconcile with the death of his father due to his anger towards him and his abandonment. If one compares Melinda's experience with the experience of John, one can see the drastic impact a positive father image has on the experience of fatherlessness and on reconciliation. The ability to resolve loss seems to be intractably linked to an individual's relationship to the person whose loss they are resolving, which supports points made earlier by Erickson (1998), Gallagher (1998), Osherson (1992), Simeon, 2001, Streaan (1995), and Trowell (2002) (see p.46 in this thesis).

*(2) Desire, determination, and faith to succeed with ability to compensate*

The second of the three final central themes indicative of the ability to cope successfully and to be resilient was that all of my participants had a strong desire, determination, faith, and invested effort to succeed and overcome their difficulties. Accompanying that desire, determination, faith, and effort was a strong commitment of honesty towards oneself and towards one's difficulties or situation through which Melinda, Eva, and David could learn to see their situation realistically with its difficulties, yet also in light of hope. Honesty prepared my participants to be aware of their difficulties in order to begin to cope, reconcile, and find hope.

Especially David and Eva demonstrated resilience in that they were not going to give themselves up in resignation as victims of their father loss. It was almost as if they wanted to earn and be known under the title of someone like a hero, who exemplified having mastered their situation. In David that was even more pronounced than in Eva. Eva also was “the survivor” in her story, although she did not give herself much credit for it. Melinda could have been labeled as the “unconscious survivor.” She showed tremendous strength, but seemed to not have been much aware of it.

Eva’s reluctance to give herself credit for her accomplishments in successful coping and being resilient fits previous descriptions I have given of her coping and resilience being “in progress.” When we have faith in something our knowledge is not perfect, we don’t understand everything—nevertheless, we go forward. Melinda and David mentioned that they had grown from their father loss and exhibited a strong sense of confidence in that they were perfectly functional and not defected through their loss in any way. They both were very dominant and self-confident and they seemed to be more resilient than Eva. Eva seemed to be a very sensitive person and, as mentioned earlier, that perhaps also made her more susceptible to experiencing her fatherloss as a challenge. On the other hand, Eva was the most inquisitive and curious participant, willing and open to learn. Her resilient personality showed in her determinacy to keep going and inquire of life what life had to teach her. She continued to work ambitiously on questions and issues resulting from her father loss and it probably was her remaining insecurity about herself which ignited this great drive to learn, improve, and heal.

As I have already briefly touched upon earlier throughout the previous paragraphs, the different personalities my participants brought with them had a great

influence on their determination and success in overcoming difficult challenges.

Melinda, for example, was a very self confident, outgoing, and outspoken person—attributes which only would have helped Eva in her experience. Eva was a happy and inquisitive person, yet very soft-spoken, and she had to cultivate somewhat of an outspoken and self-confident personality over the years in dealing with life's challenges. A strong personality in a child can help the child to identify a parent's weaknesses and struggles without taking any blame onto herself. A more shy and sensitive personality in a child may cause the child to not step out into her own world, to analyze her parent's world from her own standpoint, and to thus adopt and re-live some of the parent's fears and weaknesses, a point that was similarly mentioned in the psychoanalytic literature earlier (Burgner, 1985; Target & Fonagy, 2002, see p.50 in this thesis). Eva's mother was a good woman and mother, but it probably would have helped Eva to separate her mother's from her own experience in a few places and to find, trust, and follow her own voice (e.g. her first marriage decision—see Appendix E—or allowing herself time to grief about the absence of the father as a child).

David, with regards to personality, demonstrates a very unique example. He had none of the beneficial factors I mentioned throughout this thesis to help him master his experience of growing up without a father. He did not receive support from his mother but instead had to support the family financially, emotionally, and spiritually. David was the second youngest and on his own. David wonders how he dealt with everything so well himself. Surely the strongest theme in David's account explaining his resilience and successful coping is his strong and dominant personality, and spiritual nature. For example, David's strong personality helped him to be independent and allowed him to



not share in some of his mother's counterproductive world views and tendencies. David instead found his own voice and way at an early age. His spiritual nature allowed him to recognize things like his father's spiritual presence, and the love of a "Heavenly Father," which gave him the needed comfort and strength to continue.

Literature reviewed earlier suggests that individuals who are not able to experience good attachment with their own parents often become socially isolated and, if they have children, because they have no one else to turn to, might seek care and comfort from their own children whom they treat as though they were much older than they are (Bowlby, 1988, see p.45 in this thesis). David has admitted struggles with being too independent, even to the point that he likes being alone or by himself. It was significant to see the light turn on in David's eyes during my interview with him, in the moment where his awareness of this struggle became even more refined because of the issues we talked about in relation to his fatherlessness. At that moment, I personally experienced with David the reality of a spiritual realm in which we can find enlightenment, understanding, reconciliation, and strength. Such moments could possibly explain David's enormous success in spite of the grim prognosis current mainstream psychological literature would make about his case given his background. Through David's faith in a "Heavenly Father" who could give him the strength to get through his trials and through the knowledge that his biological father was close by him at times, David had "someone else to turn to" to use Bowlby's (1988) words. He thus compensated for his need of dependency and was able to become a good husband and father.

In my literature review I indicated that scientists have found correlations between fathers' involvement and children's improved moral sense and spirituality (Day & Lamb, 2004; Dollahite & Hawkins, 1998; Dollahite, Marks, & Olson, 2002; Vitz, 1999; see p.14 in this thesis). While I do not want to downplay the importance of fathers in their children's moral and spiritual development, David's case testifies of an inborn or innate spiritual disposition that was strengthened and cultivated through religious commitments, faith, and experiences. His parents had nothing to do with his moral sense and spirituality. David developed his spiritual nature in spite of his parent's, especially his mom's example. This fact can give hope to other individuals in whom rests the same potential for spiritual strength and development.

### *(3) Spiritual and Religious Beliefs and Experiences*

The occurrence of spiritual and religious themes in all of my participants' accounts was so strong and was behind so many of the central and cross-analysis themes that I made it the third final central theme. As just mentioned, David definitely showed most of the religious or spiritual themes in his account. All of my participants were Latter-day Saints and shared similar beliefs about an afterlife in which they would be able to see their fathers again and in which all loss would be recompensed. As a Latter-day Saint myself, I was able to understand this and other Latter-day Saint beliefs underlying my participant's experiences. All of my participants believed that their fathers sometimes were close to them in spirit and they felt strength and support from that. David also mentioned his belief about a loving Heavenly Father who cared and was aware of our struggles. His belief in that was firm and David took strength from that especially since his remaining parent was not able to convey such care for him. Eva and

David believed that all trials in this life eventually make sense under this Father's care and can be overcome or compensated for in the atonement of Jesus Christ. This belief showed to be especially important for Eva, because it helped her in continuing to strive for growth and reconciliation, while having to live with unresolved issues. All three participants believed and had faith in the atonement of Jesus Christ and that Christ could perfectly understand and succor their needs. Through His power, which He freely shares with us if we have faith in Him, Christ can, depending on the purpose of the trial, either help us to overcome a trial and weakness entirely or He can help us to receive the strength to live with a weakness and trial. Melinda lived this belief more than she acknowledged it. In other words, it seemed as if this belief was not conscious to her, although I could definitely recognize it in her account. Eva and David made explicit mentioning of this belief and its application is revealed in how they reconciled with a lot of the disadvantages they encountered due to having lost their fathers.

Earlier in my literature review, I pointed to the claims made by professionals that fathers have been shown to be important in helping boys and girls learn how to control emotions and behavior and how to establish a sense of self-control (cf. Biller, 1993, 1997; Lamb, 1997) and that fathers have the important job of being role models to their sons in teaching them male responsibility, achievement, assertiveness, independence, and how to relate to the opposite sex, among other important traits and skills (cf. Biller 1993, 1997; Furstenberg, 2000; Lamb, 1997; Palkovitz, 1997; Palkovitz, 2002, see p.13 in this thesis). In David's experience with fatherlessness, these important qualities were nurtured in him through religious beliefs and through the religious community which supported, lived, and taught him those qualities in the form of values, principles,

commitments, and life-skills. Religion has provided for David a major source of hope in that it provided a stronghold and an opportunity to acquire those qualities in the face of fatherlessness.

## CONCLUSIONS

In this study, I was able to take a deeper and more thorough look at successful coping and resilience among the fatherless by interviewing three fatherless individuals. I particularly wanted to look at the experience of successful coping because my findings in a pilot study, in which I have looked at the general experience of fatherlessness, I found that successful coping and resilience can be part of the experience of being fatherless. The findings of my pilot study showed that there are fatherless individuals who are struggling and that there are fatherless individuals who are not struggling, or who are not struggling as much as others. Central themes in my pilot study revealed that the individuals I had interviewed were not struggling as much when they were able to reconcile with or make sense of the loss of their father, and when they had a supportive mother who was able to provide mental, spiritual, and physical support. More often than not the ability to reconcile was connected to the availability of a supportive mother.

What I found in this study for the most part reinforced the findings of my pilot study. Many of the themes that I found and that could be labeled under “successful coping” and “resilience” concerned the participants’ ability to reconcile with the loss of the father and the support they received from their mothers—with the exception of one case. The support of mothers was not seen as a final central theme in this study, because of the account of one participant who did exceptionally well without maternal support and showed other reasons for his resilience and successful coping that were stronger than the influence of his mother. This study also revealed other shades and facets of successful coping and resilience that did not come up in the pilot study. Such shades and facets included the broader social, economic, psychological and cultural context in which

the father loss occurred, for example, the personality of the fatherless individuals and their mothers and the nature of the relationship between the fatherless and their mothers, religious beliefs and practices, and the nature or reason for the death of the father.

A special focus in this study was on individual interpretations of fatherlessness, how the experience of fatherlessness was reported about, and different contextual circumstances and life events surrounding the experience. My research had this focus based on my underlying hypothesis that by looking at the experiential side of fatherlessness as much as possible in its rich and multi-faceted context, and through the direct narratives of the ones who are affected by it, themes of resilience, successful coping, and hope in fatherlessness could be detected. I hypothesized that each one of the participants I chose for the research would be able to provide me with an account of their experience with fatherlessness that would contain such themes. I was careful to initially not reveal to participants why they had been chosen for this study, other than for the reason that they were or have grown up fatherless, in order to obtain truly authentic experiences of successful coping and resilience, uninfluenced by my or recruiters' biases. I did not mention the terms "successful coping" and "resilience" during my data collection until the debriefing periods to not suggest or trigger any expectations in my participants about these concepts.

My hypotheses were supported. In contrast to the generally grim literature on fatherlessness, which mentions themes of successful coping and resilience very scarcely and which presents fatherlessness as a very hopeless condition, the accounts of my participants not only showed that successful coping and resilience can be found among the fatherless, but they also showed how exactly or why these themes were part of

my participants' experiences. I also found that the more I looked at and understood the context and thus the meaning of individual's individual experiences of fatherlessness, the more I understood about successful coping and resilience. For example, subtle differences between Melinda's and Eva's mothers were important in explaining the differences their mothers made or did not make in their children's coping with father loss and they were important in understanding successful coping and resilience. Although both of their mothers were supportive, one cannot say that they had the same influence on their daughters or that their daughters turned out the same way. Melinda and Eva's mothers were supportive in different ways and to different degrees and had different influences on their daughters. Both mothers and daughters had different things to give and different issues to deal with. Such contextually rich findings remedy a deficit in our literature which, as has been shown throughout my literature review, manifests in the stigma that the fatherless generally are hindered in their progress due to the adverse effects of their father loss.

My study has shown how resilience and successful coping are based on a variety of factors that are influenced and characterized by much development and change throughout a person's life-span. The effects of fatherlessness are not fixed and the fatherless individual has a range of opportunity to control the outcome of his or her situation. Most influential in whether an individual was able to cope successfully and show resilience in this study were the person's ability to reconcile with the death of the father, the desire and determination to succeed, and spiritual or religious beliefs and experiences, all of which was demonstrated in various different ways. I found that it was extremely important to understand my participants' interpretations of their experience

and not just the environmental and situational facts of their experience. Embedded in my participant's interpretations were important beliefs and expectations about life, which revealed a fundamental belief in the ability to progress and change and that this ability lay in their own hands.

Because of the predominance of quantitative research in the field, psychology has not paid enough attention to certain meanings and phenomena in the human life-world and is missing important information. Because psychology often talks in terms of variables, sometimes the quantitative discourse loses its sense of the whole. Sometimes emphasis on the variables of a particular study cause one to lose sight of the holistic terms that concern each affected individuals' beliefs, interpretations, and expectations about his or her environment and situation. Quantitative research, for example, focuses more on outcome-variables like resilience. In qualitative research, outcomes are not the end in themselves but rather a reflection of the greater, holistic, surrounding meanings. Resilience thus was a recognizable outcome and in that sense, an important variable, but it was embedded in holistic, meaningful, and interpretive life strategies.

The effects of fatherlessness vary according to many individual and contextual factors and can best be understood through research that looks at the lived experience of individuals who are fatherless. The differences and similarities I found in my research are vital in constructing new and richer theories about the nature of fatherlessness and especially in constructing theories about the nature of resilience and successful coping in fatherlessness.

Of course there are still many questions that could be asked about fatherlessness, for example, whether or not father hunger would develop if the child did not have a



positive image of or relationship with his or her father, whether or not reconciliation would be at all needed if the child did not know his or her father and had a negative image or knowledge of him, how gender and religious and cultural diversity influence the experience of fatherlessness, and so forth. Limitations, which are found in all research also apply to this study in that the data I obtained cannot easily be transferred to the whole population of fatherless individuals. My sample size was small and more or different themes of resilience and successful coping might have been found with a larger or a more strategic sample. For example, my study did not specifically look at different ethnic or racial populations, gender, or religious affiliations. The purpose of this research was not to generalize to the whole population, but to begin to look at the experience of fatherlessness, successful coping, and resilience in more depth, starting at the level of three individual narratives which would speak for themselves and which only *might* tell us something about some collective experience among a group of fatherless individuals. Further studies will have to be done to build upon, enrich, and support the findings of this study. Another limitation of my study might have been that my participants mostly had to recollect their experience with fatherlessness and could have forgotten important things or given an incorrect recollection.

Overall, I believe, this research provided valid and valuable information about the nature of successful coping and resilience. It showed that fatherlessness can be viewed from a more hopeful point of view because progress and success are possible for the fatherless. The hope of my participants was demonstrated in how they coped with life's challenges and this hope may carry over to others reading about their successes in this thesis. After all, there appears to be hope for the fatherless. Hope in that we can turn

challenges into strengths and hope in that we can leave an important heritage to the world  
in spite of difficult challenges.

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## APPENDIX A

### Pilot Study Summary

#### Participants

6; Four males, two females; students at Brigham Young University

#### Causes/Types of Fatherlessness

Death

Divorce

Abandonment

#### Overall Influencing Factors

Gender

Personality

Ability to differentiate between fatherlessness and other issues (i.e. abuse)

Nature and quality of Relationship to father (if he was present at some stage)

Nature and quality of Relationship to Mother

Nature and quality of Relationship to Siblings/other family members

Overall support network (friends, teachers, religious community)

#### Overall Themes Emerging

- Shame/Depression/Addiction (neg.) (especially if loss occurs later in life: "I'm different," guilt, hopelessness over loss, and isolation - "to open up towards the world around you again..." "wanting to be accepted...")
- Identity (pos., neg.) ("I'm different," "missing part of myself - who I am and what can I do in life," self-worth, missing example –for girls especially in romantic love, "Have grown stronger/resilient because of my experience")
- Lack of belonging (neg.) (especially if mother not there or dysfunctional; to not mean something to a parent/to love a father)
- Feeling uncomfortable in society (neg.) (having to explain why fatherless, family secret, unaccepted/uncommon in society or family pathology, not relating to groups, not fitting male stereotype)
- Finances (neg.)
- Responsibility (pos., neg.) (financial, emotional, spiritual, relational; "had to learn to take responsibility early")
- Lack of guidance/leadership/teaching (neg.) (emotional, spiritual/patriarchal – relationship to God, educational/professional, playing and fixing things - role model, relating to other people)
- Sacrifice (neg.) (relationships - marriage, friends, career/education)
- Missing link in family/unsolved family relations (neg.) (interrupted, unclear family history)
- Fear of Men/Hard time relating to men (neg.) (not used to males, hard time with trusting)
- Longing for love, protection, caring, order, and admiration (neg.) (physical, emotional, environmental, spiritual, protection of over-mothering,

- (especially in females - longing for unromantic love and approval)
- Lack of physical contact w/ father (neg.) (unromantic relationship with a male in case of women)
  - Uncertainty (neg.) (emotional, financial, spiritual, sexual)
  - Labeled Disadvantaged (neg.) (maybe even incompetent, incomplete, developmentally behind - maybe societal judgment and/or real)
  - Loneliness (neg.) (longing for spiritual, emotional, physical, social closeness, admiration, guidance, teaching, etc.)
  - Develop special talents and making up for loss (pos.) (because there was someone - a coach, teacher, etc who "believed in me;" being able to relate better to women because having grown up with mother only)

## APPENDIX B

### Consent To Be a Research Subject

The purpose of this research is to determine the meaning of the lived experience of being fatherless. I, A. Manja Larcher, am a graduate student in the Master's program in psychology at Brigham Young University and I am the principal investigator for this project. You were selected for this study because you are over 18 years of age, because you have answered affirmatively that you are currently fatherless or because someone identified you as fatherless, and because you expressed interest in participating.

If you choose to participate in this research, you will be given a questionnaire to fill out that will provide some information about you, including your first name and phone number. This questionnaire will also ask you about the time-frame and time period of your fatherlessness and contain a request to describe how you have lost a father. Finally, the questionnaire will contain an essay question in which you will be asked to describe your experience of fatherlessness. You will be given a pre-post stamped envelope addressed to the researcher, in which you will place your completed questionnaire, and which you will be asked to send to the address on the envelope **within 10 days**. If you are on Brigham Young University campus, you will only have to drop off the envelope at one of the campus mail mailboxes in any of the campus-buildings.

After I have received your questionnaire, I will contact you by phone to schedule an appointment for a follow-up interview. Interviews can range anywhere from 30 minutes to an hour, may occur once or twice, and may be done over the phone or face-to-face according to your preference and availability. These interviews will be tape-recorded.

Your anonymity will be protected in that your name will be taken only to make contact with you again for the follow-up interviews. Your name will then be changed to a pseudonym when your accounts are quoted or summarized in the master's thesis or any other possible subsequent publications. Questionnaires, tapes, and notes will be destroyed after the research is completed.

You will be involved in a basic research project which will serve the completion of a Master's Thesis. There is a minimal risk for you to participate in this study in that the research subject may turn out to be an emotional topic for you to talk about. You may chose to withdraw from the research at any time should the data collection or interviewing process become difficult for you. Benefits of this research may include a better self-understanding of your experience with fatherlessness. Beyond that, it is hoped that this research will expand our knowledge base in the social sciences about fatherlessness. You will have access to the results of this study through the Brigham Young University library which will hold a copy of my Master's thesis, or upon requests made to me via phone, mail, or email.

**Participation in this research is voluntary. You have the right to refuse to participate and the right to withdraw at any time without jeopardy. However, if you choose to withdraw, please contact me and report your withdrawal so that I can maintain a constant number of expected participants and recruit new participants if needed.**

For questions you may contact me at:  
**A. Manja Larcher**  
**1243 Aspen Ave, Provo UT, 84604**  
**Email: aml39@byu.edu**  
**801-473-4876**

or my faculty advisor:  
**Dr. Richard Williams, D-387 ASB, BYU,**  
**phone (801) 422-3567.**

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a participant in a research project you may contact Dr. Renea Beckstrand, IRB Chair, 422-3873, 422 SWKT, renea\_beckstrand@byu.edu.

I have read, understood, and received a copy of the consent for A. Manja Larcher's research. I am over 18 years of age and desire of my own free will to participate in this study.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**\*Please detach this sheet and return it, together with your completed questionnaire, within 10 days to A. Manja Larcher. Thank You!**



## APPENDIX C

### Initial Questionnaire

Your First Name:

Phone number:

1. Have you had a father or father figure in your life? If yes, how old were you?
2. How did you lose your father and how old were you?
3. What was/is your experience of being fatherless (i.e. in your private, social, professional life, etc.)? Feel free to write as much as you like, but please write at least one single spaced, typewritten, or two handwritten pages. You may hand-write your experience on this sheet and add more sheets to it or type your answers on the computer by referring your answers to the questions on this questionnaire (e.g., "Question 1.") Please be as detailed as possible so that I can understand your experience of being fatherless as fully as possible.

APPENDIX D

Example of color-coded initial recruiting account (Original participant name removed)

- events / demographics
- feelings / events (explore cont.)
- "hope" themes
- disadvtg. father (1)

Question 1: from birth to age 5  
 Question 2: Suicide  
 Question 3:

My father committed suicide after some years of drug addiction. For that reason he has played a limited role in my life in the years prior to his death. My mother had given him an ultimatum to either quit all drugs or move out of the house. My parents separated at that point. I don't have a lot of memories of him, what he looked or sounded like. As a child I remember inventing a father when talking to other children at school. He would always be an important person like a king. I don't remember at that point missing my father even though I remember being very close to him before he died. He was my main caretaker the year after my sister was born; because my mom very much concentrated on the new baby and my dad was unemployed he would make meals for me, go to the park and play with me. My mother remarried when I was 13. Her new husband has become a good friend to me but never a father figure!

- dealing w/ loss (1)
- not missing
- bonding (1)
- sup. network
- supp. (1)
- independ. (1)

Why is this in here? → follow up

Being fatherless had the biggest impact on my life when I started dating and finally met my husband. I started dating at 17 and I think it took me a while to know what exactly I was looking for in a boyfriend. When I met Ethan, my husband, I introduced him to my family after about two months. My mom talked to me the day after the first meeting with Ethan and told me that she was so shocked by the similarity between Ethan and my father that she had a hard time talking or visiting. Other members of my family that knew my father had the same reaction. Ethan and I dated for two years before we got engaged. After the engagement I started dreaming of my father every night I would always see him at the bottom of an escalator I was coming down in a popular mall in the town we lived and he died. For some reason those dreams were scary and unsettling to me. I often woke up worried. I had a hard time falling asleep. At that point I started therapy and "Autogenes Training" to figure out what was going on with me and to be able to sleep better again. During that time I dreamed the same dream again, but in the dream I had a chance to get down to the bottom to where my father was standing and I had a conversation with him. He embraced me. When I woke up that time I was not scared or worried. I could not remember any details of the conversation after waking up. I have not dreamed of my father since.

- fear, anxiety (1)
- unresolved loss (1)
- - " - (2)
- - " - (3)
- healing (1)
- - " - (2)
- fear, anx., wrk. (4)

Reconc.

When I had my first daughter I started having sleep issues again I had anxiety attacks every time my husband came home late from work and could not sleep at all when he was out of town for a couple days. I still have some issues with that today but I understand now that my experience of being fatherless entered a new chapter when I started having my own children. I can see my own husband in his role as a father. Our daughter is about the age I was when my father died. The fact that I have a hard time sleeping when he is not in the house is certainly anchored in a strong fear of abandonment.

- fear, anx., wrk. (4)
- fear, anx., wrk. (5)

! disadvtg. fatherless (1)

## APPENDIX E

MELINDA

### Initial Questionnaire

**1. Have you had a father or father figure in your life? If yes, how old were you?**

From birth to age 5

**2. How did you lose your father and how old were you?**

Suicide

**3. What was/is your experience of being fatherless (i.e. in your private, social, professional life, etc.)? Feel free to write as much as you like, but please write at least one single spaced, typewritten, or two handwritten pages. You may hand-write your experience on this sheet and add more sheets to it or type your answers on the computer by referring your answers to the questions on this questionnaire (e.g., "Question 1.") Please be as detailed as possible so that I can understand your experience of being fatherless as fully as possible.**

My father committed suicide after some years of drug addiction. For that reason he has played a limited role in my life in the years prior to his death. My mother had given him an ultimatum to either quit all drugs or move out of the house. My parents separated at that point. I don't have a lot of memories of him, what he looked or sounded like.

As a child I remember inventing a father when talking to other children at school. He would always be an important person like a king. I don't remember at that point missing my father even though I remember being very close to him before he died. He was my main caretaker the year after my sister was born; because my mom very much concentrated on the new baby and my dad was unemployed he would make meals for me, go to the park and play with me.

My mother remarried when I was 13. Her new husband has become a good friend to me but never a father figure.

Being fatherless had the biggest impact on my life when I started dating and finally met my husband. I started dating at 17 and I think it took me a while to know what exactly I was looking for in a boyfriend. When I met my husband, I introduced him to my family after about two months. My mom talked to me the day after the first meeting with Ethan and told me that she was so shocked by the similarity between Ethan and my father that she had a hard time talking or visiting. Other members of my family that knew my father had the same reaction. My husband and I dated for two years before we got engaged. After the engagement I started dreaming of my father every night. I would always see him at the bottom of an escalator I was coming down in a popular mall in the town we

lived and he died. For some reason those dreams were scary and unsettling to me. I often woke up worried. I had a hard time falling asleep. At that point I started therapy and “Autogenes Training” to figure out what was going on with me and to be able to sleep better again. During that time I dreamed the same dream again, but in the dream I had a chance to get down to the bottom to where my father was standing and I had a conversation with him. He embraced me. When I woke up that time I was not scared or worried. I could not remember any details of the conversation after waking up. I have not dreamed of my father since.

When I had my first daughter I started having sleep issues again. I had anxiety attacks every time my husband came home late from work and could not sleep at all when he was out of town for a couple days. I still have some issues with that today but I understand now that my experience of being fatherless entered a new chapter when I started having my own children. I can see my own husband in his role as a father. Our daughter is about the age I was when my father died. The fact that I have a hard time sleeping when he is not in the house is certainly anchored in a strong fear of abandonment.

#### First Interview

Text in [parentheses] from now on and throughout the interviews of all participants signifies utterances the interviewer made while a participant spoke.

Interviewer: O.K. I read your account, and have some questions, to clarify and to get a little deeper. And you said yourself that you do better talking about it than writing [um-hum], and that is good to know...and I really would like you to take me wherever you would like to take me. I am not coming with an agenda. I really just want to see what your experience looks like. And there are some interesting things, but first I just want to clarify: You said you parents separated?

Melinda: Yes a year before, because my dad could not stay clean, so

I: Um-hum. And then committed suicide?

M: Yeah.

I: And then you said during that time he was kind of your main care taker...

M: No that was before...[um-hum] so until he moved out, until they separated, he was... well, from the time that my sister was born, which was a year and a half after I was born, [um-hum] he was pretty much, not my main, well, he was kind of because he would kind of go on outings with me and make food, because my mother would take care of the

baby, especially the first year [um-hum], you know, she was breast feeding, and so...So yeah, he was, ...we had actually a very strong bond [hum!]

I: And, you remember that? What do you remember?

M: I remember situations. I remember there was one time, I must have been really, really little, like three [um-hum], ah where he went, he worked as a volunteer in a drug rehabilitation center, because he actually went through drug rehabilitation before I was born, and so he was a volunteer there. And I remember visiting him there, because he would stay there for three days, work there, like day and night, and then come home. And one time he just took me there, and, I remember that, like walking through it, and, I remember people, you know. And I remember that I always was very happy to be with him. And he would take me on trips to visit his sister in Switzerland [um-hum] And I remember a trip going to the zoo. So, I remember spending time with him [um-hum] But I also remember being concerned about him.

I: Oh, really?

M: Yeah.

I: Can you describe that a little more?

M: Well, it wasn't...I don't think I really understood drug addiction, but I understood that he was smoking and that concerned me, even though back then, especially in Europe, smoking wasn't a very big concern, but for some reason it must have impacted me, that I was always concerned that he was smoking. And I remember, one time I actually hid his cigarettes from him, and he never got mad, he was never mad at me, but my mom actually said, and that is something that is not my own memory, but that's something that I've been told is that the reason when he actually was clean for all these years was because I was there. Because that was his motivation to just not fall back, and then...but at some point, I mean, that was not enough, you know... [hum]

I: And, what did your mom...what role has your mom in this whole story?

M: She is the protector. [O.K.] She was always protecting. I mean the reason why he moved out was that she said really clearly here are children at home if you are not clean you cannot stay in the same house, so, she always was the protector. And all through our childhood and growing up she always had that role, like towards the outside like if there was a situation where she didn't feel comfortable with something that would happen in our lives, she would always step in and very strong...and she is not—she didn't have a lot of school because she had a very, very difficult upbringing, so she taught herself to read and all these things, but for herself, she is more, she is a little bit shy and all these things, but if it concerns children she is out there, [laughter] full force.

I: Did you ever feel that there is a tension between mom and dad, or something?

M: No, I cannot remember actually any fighting, and even like the fact that I was fatherless, I always thought that was a big advantage that I had towards, like compared to my other friends who had parents that were just separated [hum!] because there was always fighting or there was taking advantage of one parent over the other or trying to, you know, kind of that kind of stuff, and I never had any friction at home. There was just no friction. My mom was the boss, you know [laughter] and at that point was just my sister and I with her and it was just very peaceful. I remember that she was often very sad, because she was alone, you know, but not, but there was really no tension or you know. And I have never seen my parents fight ...My mom isn't a very loud person, and neither was my dad.

I: So you say you think you even had an advantage over other people where there was tension in the home or maybe the parents got separated?...

M: Yeah, in both cases, you know a lot of people, it's just there is a lot of back and forth, and especially when people are getting separated. And I don't think my parents, ..even if my dad had not committed suicide, I don't think they would have stayed together, because for my mom that was a big no—drugs and kids don't mix, so...I never had to make a decision. I never had to choose sides; I never had any of those situations.

I: You wrote that you always liked to invent a father, can you describe a little more about that?

M: Well I think, I mean I understood that my father was dead, because I was actually the one who opened the door to the police when they came to tell my mom. And so I remember that situation, I remember that my mom explained it to us, but I don't think it really, you know, I don't think at that age you understand what that means. And I didn't know what he died from. My mom just said he is dead. She did not do a lot of explaining until we asked questions, and that was quite a bit later. But in school, I think because I was always asked, you know how other kids say, my dad does this or...I think I always had an image of my dad and I just, you know, that would always change, like one day he would be a king, because he could be all of that, you know because he wasn't there. And for a while I thought, O Gosh I was just lying about it, but I don't even think I was lying about it. I just really think that was my image of it. So, I think there is a difference between lying and telling a different truth, you know [laughter] where I'd really...it was true for me. And I remember one time I told somebody that my dad is a king and he is far away, so I remember that for sure, and then, I know that I made up other stories about him too, or I, I thought other stories, I don't even know if it's made up, I think they were really true for me at that point, you know and that was something that I must have needed.

I: When did that stop?

M: It stopped when I actually asked my mom how he died. ...And that was, ..I cannot say exactly when that was, but I would say I was nine.

I: And you said your mother then remarried when you were about 13?

M: 13, 14, yeah, around that age.

I: And he was a good friend, but he like never became a father figure.

M: No...

I: Why do you think is that?

M: I don't think my parents ever tried that and that would have been exactly the wrong thing to do. I know that I would have had a really hard time if he would have ever tried to discipline me or do any of those things, you know.

I: Because your father was still there for you, in a way or...?

M: No, I don't think at that age it's, you can't just, somebody can't just show up and say 'I'm your dad now' you know, it does not work like that. And I don't even think that my dad played a big role in that, but its.. just at this point my mom was my parent. And I also didn't have such a need for a father that much. [um-hum]. I know that my sister who didn't know my dad hardly at all, she had a much bigger need for a father than I did. [Hum. That is interesting]. And I really didn't. And I can't say that I ever missed him, I think, sometimes I think that I had enough time with him. For some reason it gave me enough security or something, you know, in my back somewhere, in my memory, that I never really had a need for a father figure. And he [step father] really is a good, good friend, I mean when I moved away from home, he did the whole move. He renovated my house, you know, he does everything a dad would do. And he is a grandfather to my children. For sure, like I, you know, its its very clear, its not even a question. [um-hum] He is Opa. [um-hum] [um-hum]

I: Do you think that you didn't have a need that that was also in part maybe because you had this time where you had this imaginary father, where you made stories up about him...?

M: I don't know. I really think it is because I knew so very much that I was so loved during those first years of my life, by my father. I really think that that's the main reason.

I: And do you think your mom also played a role in that, in communicating or conveying that to you?

M: Yeah, I mean she would never talk about my dad unless we would ask. You know she always waited for us to come. Yeah, I mean she never talked bad about him. I mean we could talk critically, critical about him, like you know we can say things more like, 'O my Gosh, he could have,' you know... but also I am old enough now to understand a whole more background and family history, you know all these kind of things, where

over generations lives gets screwed up, you know [laughter]. It is a generational thing, so you know! [laughter] [Really?] Yeah...

I: What do you mean my that?

M: Well, it's just a long history of addiction, of child abuse, you know, all, I mean, everything that can go wrong, [hum!], .. so [hum].

I: On his side?

M: On his side. On my mom's side that was also the case, but because the parents were out of the picture I sometimes think the effect was not as bad, because I think it's worse to have really bad parents than to have no parents. [Hum] You know what I mean? [Um-hum, Um-hum]. Like, what kind of message does that send for life if you have really, really bad parents. Isn't it easier that you have no parents and you can say 'well, my real parents would have been great,' you know, you always have that hope in the back of your mind, but for people who have really these awful parents, you know, I think there is just no hope. [Hum!]

I: Let's go to the dating. You said you dated your husband for two years [...] Was that, you said you started dating with 17, was that with [your husband] or just general?

M: General.

I: And then when did you meet your husband?

M: I was...19. Yeah.

I: And I am just curious why it took so long, the dating, how did the process look like, in relation to your father, maybe...

M: Well, I think the length of the dating did not have to do anything with my being fatherless. For Europe that's actually a pretty common time, even in the church you know. I don't think I would have ever wanted to get married faster. I think that is a time that never comes back, so it's kind of a decision we made, you know. But the fact that my husband is so similar to my dad, which I don't consciously, you know, I don't have a memory like that of my dad, I have a memory of situations or feelings, but not of his person, you know. So that is actually something where I think the relationship came easier because of that reason.

I: And you also said it took you a while since you started dating to figure out what you were looking for in a husband, and how did you find that out and what was it in your husband that was similar to your dad?

M: Well, when I went through that phase I never thought, oh he is like my dad. Until my mom said that I never thought that. But my mom and my aunt and family members who really knew my dad they said that he was really like him.



When I look back I always had boyfriends with strong personalities, not always to the positive, but strong personalities. Some super nice, some others just awful. But always strong, dominant parents. And I think that that maybe had something to do with that. Yeah. But it also took me a while to figure out also how to read men, because I did not have that experience, you know...

I: How was that for you? Do you think your mom was helpful in that process at all, or?

M: No, because she had just had two more children in that second marriage, and so in a way, I sometimes I am glad about that, because she was so busy and involved with those children that I could kind of just figure out my own way, and she did not get very involved in it, which is actually a good thing I think, you know. She would let me date or go out, I mean I would have a curfew and she would always know where I am and how I would get home, but she would let me have a lot of freedom. And so I think that that actually really helped me to figure out what I wanted. And then I was also very secure in my decisions because it was my decision.

I: Is there anything else you mom or, you mentioned your aunt, said what are some of the traits in which your husband is similar to your dad?

M: He moves a lot like my dad, and his voice, and his looks! He looks like my dad! Which is very odd, you know. That one of those things where I think like life has a way to sneak in those little connections, you know [laughter].

I: Oh yeah, I wanted to also ask you, were there times, even though you said this man your mom married, later on, he was not really a father figure, but were there things that you learned from him, [M: Yeah!], like advice sometimes even, or...

M: Well advice, he is not, his personality is not that way, but I know that I mean just the fact that he was always there when I needed someone to fix something, you know do those fatherly things. And he would drive me to dances, and youth conferences, and we would talk, you know. And I know the fact that he respected me and that he told me that I am doing well in life, or in school, or as a person, that is a huge thing. And he did that for us, for me and my sister, [um-hum], so, I mean in that aspect he really could have been a father figure, but he isn't because it just was too late at that point for us to just have a father figure. [yeah]

I: Like emotionally, like you didn't need that, or...

M: Yeah, but still he gave me a lot of things that a father gives, you know...

I: Tell me a little more about, you said after your marriage it became hard...

M: I think it had a lot to do with having children and then experiencing a father-figure that I cannot remember that well, or that I didn't have, so I think it had a lot to do with

that. And you mean the anxiety and stuff? Yeah, just the fact that it started after I had children...well, and it started, in the dating...I had it a little more when we got engaged, because it was serious, you know, and I think that just had to do with the fact that I had to come to terms with, you know there was a big similarity...and also that I ...I don't know that I can pinpoint it that much.

I just think that there was a lot of emotional things going on, you know, but the main anxiety that really started when I had children, especially when I had a girl, because there was a parallel experience now. And I have a husband who is very much like my father was, without all the big issues, you know, and without the addiction, and the abuse, all those things. And his now doing and fulfilling a role that my father couldn't because he just was not capable to do that, you know. So I think that parallel experience really freaked me out. [laughter] And it's not totally gone, but I think there is also something to be said about accepting some things, you know, and just saying 'I know I have that, I know I get tense when I am alone at home, and, you know, I have this abandonment issue, but its O.K., you know. It's really fine I just have a bad night and that's that.'

I: Can you say that, like analyzing yourself a little bit, do you think that ... doing that over and over again probably helped in kind of building a bank account of trust kind of, 'O.K this is just a parallel experience [M: Yeah!] ...and I know where it's coming from...'

M: And [my husband] is not going to be gone tomorrow,.. yeah, yeah

I: And is there anything you could say your husband did that especially helped you in that process?

M: No not really. I can't say its one thing. I really think it has very little to do actually with him, which is weird because its' connected to him. But I really think it probably has nothing to do with anything he could do, you know. It really is all a mind game. Where just some memory is triggered, or some emotional memory is triggered, you know. I mean he is really supportive. Like when the anxiety was very bad, we figured out therapists and all those things. And he helped me find them through friends and recommendations. [...] And he also knows there are things that we can't and probably shouldn't fix within each other. You know if you have a plumbing issue in the house you get a plumber, [laughter], you know, if you have an issue in your head you get a therapist.

I: And you said that that was helpful, you analyzed your dream with the therapist

M: Yeah that was when I could not sleep because I would keep dreaming the same dream over and over again.

I: And that is before the children, right?

M: Yeah, that was in the engagement [Oh, O.K.!] phase, where just, making that decision, you know and going through all that immigration stuff, and...

And, I had a therapist who was a very, very bad therapist. But, I don't think I really...I just needed somebody to give me a... an opportunity to just talk, and I think, you know, you figure most stuff out by yourself anyway, so I figured it out. And he gave me a good tool...Autogenic Training... and I've used that. [...] After a month I stopped.

I: Tell me a little bit how you made sense of that dream and what does it mean to you now?

M: You know there are these images where you go downstairs, you know I would go deep down into my memories, into my subconscious memories, wherever that is stored [...] ..

I: You went down escalators? Going down towards your dad?

M: Yeah in the mall. And it's actually a mall where a lot of drug addicts hang out, but also where we would go shopping. You know the main place in a smaller town. So, I would always go down and meet him at the bottom of the stairs and he would be in white and really healthy, you know. And I think I just had to close that chapter and really close it, because as a kid you could not, you know. And then as a teenager you are not really interested and I think at that point I was really closing a chapter and going into a new situation. And I think I had an opportunity to really make peace with it. I didn't have the feeling that I wasn't at peace but there has never really been an occasion to make peace with it, you know.

I: But now it was triggered by your...

M: By those dreams, [marriage], yeah, it was triggered by [commitment] commitment, marrying somebody where hopefully you know there won't ever be an abandonment, all these, and I think it really was a purely emotional [um-hum] trigger and emotional memories that came up...

I: And you said the dream reoccurred couple of times...[M: Oh, all the time] ...Until you were ... finally able to, I think you said, you hugged him?...

M: Yes, and I would never get down all the way. And then at some point, I think I just surrendered to it. And I said I am not afraid. What am I afraid of? You know. I think it's always fear that keeps us away from something.

[...]

I: Do you think your religion, your beliefs had something to do with the dream, or with its form, I mean for example, you saw your father in white, ...

M: I think that I believe in an afterlife for sure has to do with it. I don't think if I didn't have that belief, I don't think that would have been the form of the dream, yeah.

I: So, having reconciled with the experience in that way, what do you believe now about your father?

M: I really truly believe that everything will be forgiven. And especially because there are things, even though we are adults we are not responsible for it, because there are long lines of guilt, you know in our history, and so... I truly believe there won't be any...he is forgiven. He already paid the highest price we can pay—you know—never being with our families [...] And I always think he is proud, he is very proud of what his children did. My sister has a family of her own [...], and we have this family and are building our lives. You know and I always just think he must be so happy that someone broke the cycle...

### Second Interview

I: I want to go back to that dream one more time and talk a bit about how it helped you close that chapter...

M: It helped me because it was like a needed meeting with my dad which I could not have with him anymore, but I could, like I had the feeling afterwards, it's O.K. I can go into this new chapter of my life, that was just before we got married, you know, and it's going to be O.K., that meeting was also something where I did not have that feeling that I was abandoned anymore, because I had that moment, you know?

I: That's actually going to be something else I want to look into today, this theme of feeling abandoned..., but you said you had to bring this to a close and as a child, you said it is not possible, and as a teenager one is not interested in it. Could you explain to me what you meant by that?

M: Well, it may be possible if you had someone to help you through it...but in my case, because he had not lived at home it was kind of a gradual development and the fact that he was dead was just one more step in that development, so it wasn't a traumatic thing, it was not so conscious, you know [um-hum], and so for that reason I think it's just not possible, it was not possible for me to say, O.K. my father is dead and I understand with everything I am. And as a teenager, I don't think it was my focus, and it wasn't necessary, you know, I did not have a need for it, I don't know that I would know a good reason for it.

I: It's just interesting to me because, don't you think, like on one side there is this deep fear of abandonment that is triggered by this whole marriage thing and on the other side you didn't really feel the need.

M: And, I don't think it was a conscious thing. I can also today say that I never felt abandoned because my mom was fully there, she was the perfect mother or parent figure that you can imagine, you know. But, I mean the fact that I have struggled with anxiety since and, you know those things, I just think it is something that's deep down is in me, and I don't know that it is something necessarily linked to the fatherlessness, or if it is

just something that is part of me, you know, but I am sure that it plays a role somehow. But to the spirituality or belief system, I know the fact that I dreamt of my father that he is still there and he is somewhere and that he can meet me still, has to do with the fact that I believe in an afterlife. Besides that was not a spiritual dream, it just was a closure thing, a physical thing, you know...

I: So, with your belief that you can meet him again, and you also said something last time, like you believe that he has been forgiven and that he is proud of you that you and your sister are breaking the circle, and that it is punishment enough for him to not be able to ..

M: ...to participate, yeah..

I: So what do you personally believe about meeting him again, and those things?

M: You know, I have a general image of it but I don't have a specific image of it. Especially people around Provo have like a very specific image of these things, like we are all going to be in white, etc. but I truly do not believe that and I hope it is not going to be that way. I really think, like I have a lot of hopes about that and, I don't have a lot of knowledge about that, I hope that life is going to be pretty similar to how we live now, but that we can be with the people we can't be with right now and that it is going to be easier hopefully, you know, but I don't have a really strong image of that and it has not been very important to know or to have some kind of image of it [um-hum]. I just believe that we are surrounded by people who want good for us, like I can feel that and those are our ancestors or people that love us, you know, no matter who they are...

I: O.K. And you also said that you still sometimes have those anxieties when your husband is out of town or so...

M: I do Autogenic Training...

I: What do you do in Autogenes training?

M: I just lay very flat kind of, no crossing over limbs or anything, just on my back. It's just like self-suggestion, I think, and then I just empty my mind, I don't have any thoughts in it and I only think about my breathing and I think calmness in and fear out, and that's all, I totally empty my mind and that works really well for me.

I: Where you just kind of get rid of all the anxiety thoughts...

M: Um-hum. No thoughts, and I mean it's not perfect, I still don't sleep that deep when I have that, but its not bad, it does not bother me at all anymore. It used to be very bad and I did not sleep at all and that was not like good at all, you know... [um-hum]

I: Its kind of a faith, I think, I would kind of have to put something else in place of the anxiety thoughts...

M: Well, some people do that, they have images, but it never worked for me. I learned Autogenic Training as a kid. You know when you have test anxiety or so, its really useful. My mom taught us that and, I always did it that way. ...

I: And your mom, you said last time, did not really talk about the death of your father...Did you wish she had or were you O.K with that?

M: That was fine for me. I can't , see that is something sometimes, with other things I am clear that I wished she would have done something different, but with that I am not sure, because with a difficult subject like that I think it is important that a child is ready for it and the only way you can know is when they ask, you know. [um-hum]. And she has never talked bad about him, even the things that were difficult about him, like the drug abuse or that he was not living with us anymore, or whatever, you know, she always explained to us in a very neutral way, and there was never any animosity, and they actually never fought, not even when they were separating.

I: That's kind of interesting to me, because she kind of created a positive atmosphere about the whole thing [Oh, absolutely!]... and you said you do have enough memories where you remember walking around with him and making food for him...you know, didn't you know even back then wonder, I mean, where did he go?

M: That I actually I do not remember, and ... I am sure I must have asked, but my mom said it just was not a big subject, it was something that we were so little that we just accepted, you know. And I also think when there is no animosity between the parents it is much easier to accept.

I: Do you think, perhaps that uhm, you know you being so little and not understanding that you maybe did go to your mom and asked her and she just tried to create a positive atmosphere and as a child, yet inside underneath you kind of, 'well, but he is gone, where did he go...and that this was then what was triggered later?

M: I don't know. My mom said she doesn't remember us asking at all. [um-hum]. And it was also, there was a move and he just did not move into the new place with us. This was when my mom said, 'O.K. you can stay with us if you are clean, but he just wasn't clean at that point and so he just never moved into the new place, and there was a lot of change, you know, we had new friends and so... I can't remember that transition at all. Yah, I am not sure. But I know that she created a very positive image of him in us you know, the most important thing was how much he loved us, how much those were the only times that he was happy, and so on...

I: The move is interesting too, because, uhm, didn't you say you were, I just think, I have a belief that kids just know, you know, they know what is going on don't you think?

M: Oh, I am sure that I knew, like I remember being concerned about my dad, that I remember. I just don't know if I was so concerned about my parents being together,

[yeah] you know what I mean? [yeah, um-hum]. I think I was concerned about him as a person or about my mom as a person, but I don't think that I was so concerned about, and it might just be that they were also not the typical, well, ...and I also have to explain...up to that point we lived in a commune, like with lots of people and there were kids and it was like very Hippie and out in the country, so I don't know that I like really had a picture about a family unit, you know what I mean...

I: And the family is like a very LDS view anyway...

M: Well I think for most people it is pretty common, but just in the 70s and for very alternative people. And it was like a bunch of families lived in three or four houses together and had their gardens that they shared and so it was like that environment, and so it wasn't like 'one person is missing, you know

I: Hum. And then maybe when you got it later when you were older, 'O that was my dad...' kind of thing

M: Well, I think that it was always clear that he was my dad, I just think when you are that little and there is so many people and then you are just with your mom, so its like.... I really don't remember that as being traumatic. I remember the moment when I found out that my dad is dead, or when I was concerned about him smoking, but not the family thing...

I: What do you remember about learning that he was dead?

M: I opened the door to the police men, because my mom..., it has knocked at the door, and my mom said o can you open the door because she thought it was the neighbor who was dropping something off, and uhm there were two police men, and they said, and I remember that situation,... is your mom there and I called her real quick, and I actually stood next to her when they told her that they had found him. And I didn't quite understand that, and then they left and my mom sat down with me and with my sister and she really explained it, like he is dead and he was really sick, you know, that was the first explanation, like he is really sick and he died. And then the older we got and the more we would ask there would be more and then one day she would just say that this is how it was, you know.

I: Do you remember her being emotional or anything, ...

M: Yeah, she was really sad. And we actually prayed like right after the explanation, like after we have talked. And I remember like over years that she was very sad, and not just about my dad, but about being alone and things...yeah, yeah she was really sad

I: Did you ever feel like you had to sort of take over for her sometimes or something like that?

M: I had to, I think I, well, I didn't have to take on a mothering role, but I know that I was concerned about her, more than my little sister, and that's a typical behavior of a first daughter, you know. And I remember that she would only cry at night, you know [um-hum], but for some reason I would know that it was there or something, ...so I would like sometimes feel responsible for her [um-hum, um-hum], or, but I never had to take over for her. She was actually very strong.

[...]

I: You said when you were teenager and started dating or when your mother remarried you did not really feel the need to look out for a father, and if I remember right, because you felt you had a father and you feel like you had enough time with him...

M: Well, or more like I did not really want a different one. [right!] This is my story I have a father and he is dead. Like I did not really need a substitute father or something like that.

I: You did not want a replacement.

M: No [um-hum]. And I call my step-father father in front of most people because it is just easier, you know, and he is a great grandfather and he loves them, and I know he loves me, and so it's a really positive thing, he is just not my dad, you know

I: That is just so curious to me!

M: Really?

I: I just think, you know it shows so much strength on your part between you know moving and kind of seeing, yeah your mom is said sometimes, and something is going on, and I am sure you thought that yourself, oh he is gone (and were sad about it)...but then there is just this strength, you know...

M: Yeah, and sometimes I think, Oh just..., I just didn't take it that badly for some reason. I must have understood somewhere deep down that was the best way for him. I truly believe that today. I don't think it would have been good if he dragged this out and I don't think he could have gotten over it, you know. This was like, it must have been such a relief when he died, like oh finally all this is over, you know. And perhaps I had that somewhere in me, you know. So I've always had peace with his death. I didn't quite have peace perhaps with not having a father, or like not understanding what that male thing will be in my life, you know what I mean, so that more what his role would be... But I think I had pretty good emotional understanding that his death was necessary [yeah] like for his development, like there was nowhere he could go here, you know

I: And could explain a bit more what you meant by the other side that you did not know what this male thing was going to be in your life...



M: [um-hum]. Like as a teenager I did not really know what to look for. I think that some people who grow up without the parent of the opposite sex they instinctively look for somebody who is either the same or the total opposite than that parent. And I don't think I had that. The only common thing that I can say is that they all were artists, and really creative people...

I: Do you think that life kind of got back at you there, like I was wondered that while listening to the previous interview, I don't know if it is true, but I thought now she feels like she had enough time with her father before he died, but on the other hand maybe she didn't and so life brings him back to her in her husband [well] where she has to deal wit it again...

M: See, my thought was more that it is amazing that even with a short exposure like that I can have the same benefit that other people have that have their father their whole life, because a lot of my friends married somebody that was exactly like their father, or the opposite of their father, that exists too...and so I just thought it was amazing that nature creates such a deep memory [hum] so that I could actually benefit from that...

I: It's still interesting to me, because I think maybe nature brings that to you and what also maybe was engrained in you was that addiction and this worry about your father and then it brings you that husband and it is hard to believe it is hard to get rid of that next to all the other qualities that are so similar between your dad and your husband...

M: But I have never been, like I am extremely trusting with my husband, and that is something that's like I have observed over the past years, most of our friends have trust issues, but I have like no issues with that whatsoever. And so that's why I think if he really were that similar, like if that deep memory of my dads would be stronger, I would probably be more afraid, and I am not, I know whatever he does he is fine, he makes good decisions always..

I: Maybe I am going on your nerves with that, [No that's O.K] I am just trying to understand how you feel in your situation [yeah, don't worry] because it is very interesting to me that experience with your fear that this came out and so...

M: And that's the thing, everything is just a theory, you know? And sometimes when I have anxiety I'm like 'how can it just be that?' there must be more, you know, but it might be that I have seen my mom being sad, [hum!] you know what I mean, [um-hum] and being abandoned, because, I mean who was more abandoned than she was with two small children... and also before my dad died they also had a third child together [hum] and he died right after birth, and there was like all this trauma, you know...So I always think if there was someone who was truly abandoned it was my mother, and so sometimes when I lay there and think that but also the memory, but then I was abandoned too because I didn't have a dad and especially because he was someone who loved me so much, so it is always interesting because it is all theory, but it fits really well, because that is my experience, you know, it's I had somebody who loved me a lot and he died...

I: And that theory probably doesn't, well maybe it helps in a way, but

M: It helps in a way to put the anxiety in its place, it's less important when you have thought about it, you know what I mean [um-hum] , it's not this huge thing that I don't understand. I might not be right, you know, but it helps. [laughing] And who knows, I mean I might find out later that I have other hidden memories that are strong, but for now that is actually pretty good, like, as a family we were abandoned, not .... with a bad thought or anything, but just that was just life. It was not something purposefully bad or something you know...

I: Maybe that is even harder, I wonder sometimes, if it is not evil, because well who will say that it will not happen again, like you have no control over it... [um-hum]

M: But the thing is there was such a strong condition to that happening and that was that he had the worst upbringing he could have had, you know, and that was actually that was important in the way I was dating. I broke up with two boyfriends because of their parents, I couldn't deal with that. They just were not good people. And I didn't want that in my life. And that was a decision my mom made with my dad's family, she, they had no contact. I had contact with them, actually around the same time I had those dreams. I just thought, you know what I am just going to call these people and see how they are doing. And my grandmother, my father's mother was still alive but she had a stroke and could not speak. And then my cousin, whose dad committed suicide too, and we are in pretty good contact, like sporadically, not really lose, but its good, you know...but I don't know, yeah its interesting how that happens, you know, its...and most of the time I have a pretty good image of it, you know, like what happened and how it all fits together. But its amazing how these memories work and that they can cause anxiety or depression, or so you know...

I: But your grandfather was not alive when you called them up?...

M: [um-hum] he passed away before that, but my step-grandmother. My grandfather and grandmother had three children together, no four, and three committed suicide and one is still alive but like severely addicted to pills, and he left her for another woman who is still alive and she used to own the house that my father was raised in until recently, so I met her too and she was actually quite bad to my dad. And that was interesting, it's not that I have anything to forgive, cause, you know that is my dad's business, but I just have a hard time with her, more than with my grandmother, because like how can someone come into a family and mess with other people's children, you know, it's just bad. But it was during that time that I had those dreams, I really just kind of wanted to clear the table, you know what I mean, and so I called people and met people, and went to the house my dad grew up in and I just did all of those things....

I: Did that help you?

M: The house was depressing. It was interesting because I was actually the first one in my father's line who was not born in that house. [hum]. Like hundreds of years [um-

hum] everyone was born in that house. But that was just depressing, just because I also knew what happened, you know. But it was interesting to meet my aunt. She lives in Switzerland and she is addicted to painkillers but she was actually in a good shape then so we could actually talk. And it was interesting to talk to my cousin, because she grew up, she actually grew up without any parents, her mom died of cancer shortly after her dad committed suicide, so her story is even more, really bad. [Wow!] Yeah, but she is actually really strong, she has a really good life now.

I: How would you categorize your personality and also your mom's maybe...?

M: I'll start with my mom. My mom is very quiet and she is a really instinctive mother. That's her calling. She is very strong for her children, not so strong for herself. And she is a very spiritual person, actually the most spiritual person I know. [um-hum] And she, she has a lot of insecurities, but she does not try to fix them, it's something she just tries to learn how to live with. And her upbringing was very difficult and she taught herself to write and to read and she went back to school when we were kids, and she is very self-sufficient, you know she really makes do. She is very quiet but she is a very strong person. And I have the impression I am much more like my dad, head strong, you know stubborn. And I am a very intuitive mother, like it comes naturally to me, but I have phases where I am not as content with it. I am really disciplined and follow through with everything that has to do with other people, just not with myself. Like anything that has to do with the children I do diligently but if it has to do with myself I am a slacker, which bothers me. And I am pretty outgoing, I used to be more outgoing. Like in Europe, I used to have lots and lots of close friends and it is not that easy to make any friends anymore...

I: Is there anything that you remember from your childhood where you can say, yes, that is me...

M: Um, you know what I really have the feeling that I am really different now. And I think it has a lot to do with the fact that I am not in my home country. I can say before I moved here, before I got married I was always the one who would initiate something, like activities, I would get everything rolling and started, you know, and I still do that for my personal life, but I don't have that as a public social person anymore. You know I have nice friends here, or acquaintances, but I rely a lot on them to kind of get stuff started. And I really used to be somebody who, like I remember I always was the one who would like find the game that we would play now on the playground, or I would always, 'O.K. now we are going to do this' or start a craft project and everybody would come and join in, you know and it is not quite like that anymore, at home it is, with the kids, you know...[laughing] and that concerns me, and this is actually one of the reasons why I am so anxious to go back home. I just feel like, I can never fully be myself, it is not my language, it's not my culture, ...

I: And here we sit and do this interview in English!...[laughing]

M: Well, I am totally fine with that! I it interesting because today I am actually more tired than last time and the more tired I am the less English there is in my mind, but you can figure it out...[laughing]

I: And last time you also said that you actually had a “glueckliche Kindheit” [yeah!] like a happy childhood...

M: And I can remember that I had actually one ...”Therapeut” how do you say that in English...? [therapist], yeah, [laughing] see..

I: We can just continue this interview in Denglish! [laughter]

M: I had one therapist, actually here in the States, and he did not believe me, he kept saying this cannot be because you grew up without a father, and I said ‘no!’ I still can honestly say this is not something I create or make up, I had a very, very happy childhood. And the whole reason is that my mom really kept it together. She did not have a phase where she went into a depression or anything. And she, she said she was so sad after he died and sad after a couple of years, where she just was so lonely, but she did not let herself go. It was like she kept it together for us and it worked, it totally worked, you know.

I: Have you ever asked her how she did it?

M: Well, the first reaction was all of her family said, she was so young when he died, and they all said, ‘well you should give up the children’ and that was a huge thing for my mom and she just was determined to make it work and she would actually be home. She never went to work. She said, no I will not do that, I am the only person in their life and I will stay home even if we have hardly anything. And I can’t remember being poor, and we were poor, but I can’t remember it. We were always dressed O.K., I mean the clothes were hand-me-downs from my cousins or something like that, but it was always good. So she would always stay home, and later she went back to school, but later at night and we would have a baby-sitter, but yeah it was like a really happy childhood.

I: It’s lieke the kids that kept her going...?

M: Yeah, and it was not only us, like the neighbor kids were always at our house and she would help them out with little school things and, you know, so she really was, like mothering was her thing...

I: You said it took a while to figure out while dating what you were looking for in a male...

M: Yeah and they were all very creative people, which I think my dad was. And I was never someone who had in her mind a picture of like ‘this is my dream boyfriend’ or something, never. And sometimes I think if that had been the case, I don’t think I would have met my husband. Like I was totally open for everything, and that was always the

case. [Maybe that was good then...] Um-hum. Ah, I have friends that have like the craziest ideas, like he has to weigh a certain, or he has to be this tall, or, you know and that never played a role for me, I did not even notice those things...

I: And do you think that that was so because you didn't

M: Because I did not have a dad. And with some friends I think it is just a way of controlling their life, and not like that they had someone in their life before, some people just need a lot more control in their life...but with dating in retrospective, I thought it was always kind of interesting that even though I was open for anything that would come or that would fall into my arms, you know that they were all artists or that they were all extremely, strong creative personalities, because I did not plan that, you know. And with some they still were so young that they were not artists yet, but you could tell that they were going to go in that direction.

I: Would you say you are more intuitive, or more logical, or both?

M: I am pretty balanced in that. Now that I have children, I use logic much more. I don't have the luxury anymore to just say, oh, I will just do what feels like...I have to see if it hold up, like if it makes sense, is safe, etc... [...] in order to stay on top of my life, and I have such high expectations, I am like climbing a hill of expectation of what I want to do as a mother for my children [hum], it really is...and its also because I financially and educationally I have so much more opportunities than my mother ever had and it is amazing that she could do much for us with so little and I just feel like my responsibility is so much bigger because of that, you know. So in order to stay on top of my life I have to be very controlled. And I think that might also be the reason why I can't succeed in taking enough personal time.

I: So you kind of feel that responsibility that you are in a better place...

M: Well, I just always think that the more you are given the greater your responsibility is to share that and to make sure that my kids can become the best they can become, and also to share with others who do not have as much..

I: A thought just came, you said you did not really remember being poor... and how was that in school, like with your interaction with other kids...

M: I cannot remember being poor! The only thing I remember that was different from other kids was that we ate healthier than other kids. My mom always baked the bread, like my mom was always very nutrition-conscious.

I: So you did feel out of place or anything...

M: I remember when I was a teenager I had a lot of friends who had a lot of money, but I did not feel like I had less than the average.

I: And we also talked last time that at church there were some difficulties, can you revisit that? Like how did your social circle look like at church...?

M: [...] There was one friend that was truly understanding in my mother's situation. She was like the only one interested in it too. I think people were kind of too occupied with their own life and also kind of afraid to touch on something that might be difficult to deal with, you know. And then there was just pure ignorance, you know there were people who told my mom, she wanted a blessing when I was going to first grade, and then she was told she could not have a blessing because and there were all these weird reasons. And my mom just did not understand and then in retrospect I think, you know anyone should be able to get a blessing, but just plain ignorance, you know. [hum] I think it was a difficult time, more difficult than even today, to be a single mom or a single parent in church, you know. There wasn't a good program in place, there were no talks given for people in that situation, it was kind of like, hum, and then these people, you know...

I: Did you feel like a second-class kid in there or something?

M: No, and I really think as a kid, and even today, I was really self-confident. And for example, everything would come easy for me, like in school, so I just had this trust in life. And also my mom, like she would stand up for us. And we were also very self-reliant, like we did not have a car and the church was not so close, but we would just walk and find the prettiest way to church and we would always make a trip out of it, you know. My mom did not like relying on other people. And I am the same way [oh really?] Oh absolutely the same way. [laughing] If I can do it myself I will never, ever ask. And even if I can't do it, I have a hard time asking. [hum!] yeah.

I: Would you categorize yourself um more in, like you say you have trust in life, do you have an easy time getting close to other people?

M: I used to. I don't any more. It's really difficult for me, and I always wondered if it has to do with the fact that I am not..., like it started to be really difficult when I moved to the States, and sometimes I just think I don't get the people, like I just don't understand it... You know I have an acquaintance here from our ward and we went out for lunch the other day with the kids and we had a nice time, but no real connection, you know...and it has always been like that and our daughters are really, really good friends, and then she gave me her blog address and she has a really, really nice blog and she is a good writer, but I thought why can I not see that in her when I am face-to-face. And that happens to me with a lot of people here...and then there are other people where I know I have, there is a good chance that we could be really, really good friends, like a friend here from Germany, and she is from Germany but she is American, but she grew up there and she speaks flawless German, and for some reason I just don't let her come close. And she knows and that's why it is so sad, but I can't even pinpoint why...

I: And that was easier though before?

M: Um-hum. [hum]. Yeah it was easier there, like lots of close friends.

I: And how do you think you got close to them?

M: Some of them I grew up with them. But then some of them I only even met them twice or three times before we got married and still I mean I get together with them. And we are truly close, like we talk about personal things. One theory I have, like I never talk bad about my husband and never, ever do that, like we can be in the worst situation ever, and I don't tell people, because this is a huge part of my life and I can't talk to much about it and I just don't want to do that...

I: Like he is your life and your closest...

M: Yeah...and when we have a fight and I won't talk about it, because the fight will pass but its forever in other people's mind, you know. [Um-hum]. And that might be one reason why I can't get that close with other people, because there is this huge part of my life that I will not talk about, you know, not even with my mom. [hum] a part that's protected...[laughing] [yeah.] But I don't know if that's all, or if I have unlearned it or something...

I: Do you have a good relationship with your mother?

M: Yeah.

I: Do you talk to her often?

M: Yeah, every day...

I: Does she live alone now with her second husband?

M: No, two of my sisters are still at home, 17 and 18.

I: So she had more children...

M: Yeah, those two. I can show you a picture of here when we are done!

I: Yeah. Hum, let's see what else I had to ask you...Yeah, kind of going back to the dream, we kind of talked about it, but I just liked how you said last time that when you did bring closure to it there was a moment when you asked yourself, 'well, what am I afraid of?'[um-hum] There is nothing to be afraid of anymore...[um-hum, um-hum]

M: Yeah there is a, and I think that also makes you understand and when you dream of somebody, like my mom had that after her mom died, she died at out house actually, and for, I mean really for a year and a half after wards she dreamt so often of her, and I think it just shows us that they are around us [yeah] you know and they still influence us...

I: Your mom, what relationship did she have to her mom?

M: She was really truly abandoned. So, she actually grew up in an orphanage, and when she was an adult, she is the youngest of all the children and she is a child of a rape and she was the only one of all her siblings that took her mom in. And my grandma actually always said she only had four children, she did not count my mom [oh my goodness!] And my grandma lived with us for 15 years. [wow]. So, yeah, really difficult [laughing]. But my mom really truly loved her and said, you know she is beyond that. And she was so heavily medicated in the sanatorium that they killed off any sense. And, it must be very hard to be raped and to have a child from the rape, you know.

It's amazing how uhm, that is actually something I learned from my mom, that we have everything in us to heal ourselves, physically, emotionally, you know what I mean, like all the tools are there we just have to use them. And that is really true, you know. Like we can listen to our bodies and to our minds and our hearts and we can know what we need.

I: That's really amazing to me, like your mom, and you yourself too, that strength

M: My mom! [laughing]

I: I wonder if, if I am not forming a belief here just now I think... [Oh..] [laughter] You know I wonder if there isn't in the universe, and you know I believe in a God, and even though it does not seem to us like that sometimes, but if He doesn't maybe especially take care of people that have crazy lives. [um-hum] You know like, where did your mother have that strength [um-hum, um-hum] from and then she did not really have so much support from the church, and so on...and you too, you know kind of going through life and ....I have had experiences too in life where I felt the presence of Heavenly Father and His strength and support and that he cares...

M: Yeah, and, but then I wonder what about all these people who fail in life, you know? [um-hum] I mean, I really believe, and we may have talked about that before, but I don't think Heavenly Father cares if we make this or that decision. But I really believe He gave us all the tools and it is up to us sometimes to figure it out. I don't know, I mean I feel guided, and if I look at my life I think, gosh, I could complain more, [um-hum] and I have made some dumb decisions, but then I think no, even those decisions bring us to other places. But I don't think we see strength in ourselves. It's easier to see it in somebody else. Like, I can see it in my mom. But then I look at myself and I think, its easy, not so much is required. But I look at my mom and I think she was born that way, you know children are born a certain way, I see that also in my children...

I: Do you have any experiences from your life where you felt some guidance or , like even the presence of your father, or Heavenly father.

M: Yeah, I have an experience. When I broke up with one boyfriend, I knew, and I was like, that was one situation where I was, I ignored it for such a long time that I got hit over my head, really, I mean truly, I got so, so sick, I mean. I have never been so sick



before or since. I had like 100 fever and I was alone in the apartment and I knew I had to break off this relationship and I really did not want to and I got sicker and sicker, and actually I got so sick that I started hallucinating and at that moment my friend came and she knocked at the door and I could not say anything, I would hear, but I could not say anything, and they broke open the door and they got me and brought me to the hospital, because I really, I would have died there probably, I was totally dehydrated. I did not drink for a couple of days you know, I could not get to the kitchen ...I was alone there. And that's when I really felt His (Heavenly Father's) guidance, because as soon as I made that decision I got better. I just said, you know I need to call him and tell him we could not date anymore.

I: And why was that so hard for you?

M: He was non-LDS and I just really, really liked him, but I just knew I could not do it. It would have been too complicated and it just got to the point where we would have become more serious. It was before I met my husband, actually! [Interesting!] I met my husband like four months later. Yeah, but it was like really traumatic. But that was when I felt total guidance.

I: Looking back about all we've talked about, can you say that you benefited from being fatherless.

M: Yeah, like, I did not have a set image of whom to date. Also because I did not have two parents in the home there was no fighting...and I think those are the main things that had to do with that situation. I mean I can also look back at my life and say that I probably had the best mother...and I don't know if she could have been that involved and that motherly if she had had a partner, because there are always distractions, you know...

I: I don't think I told you much about my study, I don't know what you know from reading the consent form, but

M: Yeah, you did not tell me a whole lot, only that you were interviewing a few people who grew up without a father, and I think that was it. What is it?

I: Well, you know I don't come out with it right from the beginning because I want to truly see the people's stories. And I actually did a pilot study, here I went to the literature and it was very grim, so it lists addiction, sexual promiscuity, violence, etc., all these negative implications, and I like...

M: Well, I heard that, like a bishop of mine once told me, which really makes me upset when I think about it, well you have to be careful because girls without a father the divorce rate is much higher because they don't know what they are doing. And I am like whatever, some people don't know what they are talking about.

I: And I thought well 'that's not me though and that literature did not help at all in explaining me fatherlessness better...etc. and so I picked people who I thought they could

probably give me such stories.. (I then told Melinda about my study, including the pilot study)

M: Yeah, that's so funny because that's like in my case I really had a strong mother and I really had closure and the crucial time, yeah, hello! Good you did not tell me that before, because I would have focused too much on it...

Are your other participants death or divorce people?

I: They all lost their fathers through death.

M: Which I truly believe is easier than divorce, you know...because you are always torn emotionally...

After this interview, Melinda and I still chatted a bit in German. She was excited about my study and thought that it was good to publish something that would talk about cases of fatherlessness that were not as grim as those usually portrayed in the literature. She then also asked me if I ever wanted to meet my dad and other things pertaining to my own experience of fatherlessness. I shared with her some of my experience, but nothing I shared altered or enhanced the account she had already given me. It seemed to me like she had truly given me her story and that it could not be deepened by what I had shared about my experience. Melinda only shared one more insight, namely that she saw many other single parent mothers, like those of her friends, who always seemed to think more of themselves rather than of their children. She said she was astonished about that, because her mother always thought about the kids only, and not about herself at all. I thought that that summarized what she already had said about her mother very well.

EVA

Initial Questionnaire

**1. Have you had a father or father figure in your life? If yes, how old were you?**

My father died when I was 15 months old therefore the only father I remember is my maternal grandfather, who had great concern for me. I have many sweet childhood memories of tagging along with him as he did his work on the farm, having him teach me, read to me, and tell me stories.

**2. How did you lose your father and how old were you?**

My father died of tuberculosis which he contracted during travels in the Middle East in 1937. He became very ill and was diagnosed in the fall of 1939 (a usual incubation period for that illness). He was hospitalized when I was seven months old, and died eight months later, so I never saw him after I was seven months old. I always loved to hear my mother talk about how delighted he was when I was born after two sons, and how he loved little girls. I treasure the portrait of me at about 6 months of age which hung at the foot of his hospital bed. My mother was constantly aware of my need for a father figure and for me to know that though my father was absent, he loved me. When I was in elementary school and there was a male teacher teaching in my grade, she arranged for me to be assigned to his classroom.

**3. What was/is your experience of being fatherless (i.e. in your private, social, professional life, etc.)? Feel free to write as much as you like, but please write at least one single spaced, typewritten, or two handwritten pages. You may hand-write your experience on this sheet and add more sheets to it or type your answers on the computer by referring your answers to the questions on this questionnaire (e.g., “Question 1.”) Please be as detailed as possible so that I can understand your experience of being fatherless as fully as possible.**

My mother made a special effort to make our father, though absent, still a real part of our home and perceptions. She would comment on how he would have enjoyed “this meal,” or how he would have loved to be with us for certain family activities. She kept us aware of his sense of humor, his favorite color, and often spoke of how proud he must be of an achievement we had just made.

In fact, my mother kept Daddy so much a part of our lives, that I felt I really had a father and was not really missing much in growing up when he was absent - until one day in my Freshman year at BYU. My Entrance Exams had showed that I was struggling with issues of self-confidence, and that was not news to me. That reality had troubled my mother (as well as myself) all through my teen years. So, I was offered the opportunity for counseling, and throughout my Freshman year I met once a week with a wonderful counselor, Dr. Clyde Parker. One day he said to me, “How do you feel about growing up without a father?” I responded that I did not feel I had grown up without a father and I only missed him when there were occasions like “Daddy-Daughter Dates” for the Primary girls. As I said that, I started to cry. I cried uncontrollably for the entire hour-long counseling session. It really surprised me to find so much emotion about that matter pent up inside of me. That is virtually the only session which I remember with that skilled counselor who help me tremendously, but the fact that is the only session which stands out for me tells how significant was his question.

After thirty years of marriage and raising three children, my first husband asked me for a divorce. I was not eager to end a temple marriage, but he wanted it that way. He chose throughout our 30 years of marriage to berate me for having grown up without a father, to criticize the way I related to him because I did not have a father to let me see “the way men are.” I felt condemned in his eyes, yet what could I do? I could not re-create my life, nor did I wish it were possible to rearrange my happy home of origin to include another man. I continued to feel gratitude for my valiant mother, but I did feel inadequate, which I suppose was his desire.

I re-married after being alone for 3 ½ years. I had seen my mother live alone and I was sure that I could do it with her example before me. But when, through a mutual friend, I met my second husband, it felt so right to accept his proposal of marriage, and companionship has been very good for almost ten years now. It is like breathing fresh, clear air to NEVER be condemned by my husband nor hear even an inference of my inadequacy for growing up without a father.

At times my two little sons suffered physical abuse at the hands of their violently angry father. I have wondered many times if I would have been more assertive in protecting them from his abuse if I had been endowed with the confidence I might have had if I had been nurtured daily by a loving father. I will never know. But I sorrow that I permitted even a shadow of the shouting, hitting, pummeling to which my husband and their father subjected my pre-school sons. When they got big enough to try hitting back, he ceased to use physical abuse.

When my life crosses paths with a woman who has grown up with a superlative relationship with her father, I am a fascinated observer trying to discover the unanswered questions I have because of those 30 years of being told my father’s absence was to blame for all the ills in my marriage. Intellectually I cannot accept that, but it was such a constant theme, that I cower yet when I am probing for answers.

I feel that there is inside of me a little girl that yearns to have a Daddy who will love me and protect me. Experience has taught me it is there. I know it is a need that will not be satisfied in this life. I have just come to accept that and live with it. Some of us have physical disabilities. I have been blessed with a healthy body, but deep inside there is a little girl that longs to be doted upon and loved by a father. It is okay. I have a lot of wonderful, fulfilling relationships in my life that give me joy and enthusiasm for living. Eternity will take care of the rest.

#### First Interview

I first chatted with Eva a bit to get us both used to the telephone and to make us both more comfortable in getting acquainted with each other. I then explained to her

some of the interview procedures, as I had explained them to Melinda. Eva seemed eager to talk and it was easy to get into the interview with her.

I: You mentioned your grandfather and I am just wondering how long he was around for you?

E: He died when I was married, he died in 1964.

I: So, he was there for your marriage...

E: Yes, he was there when I got back from my mission

I: Was he much of a father-figure then for you, or...can you describe that a little bit?

E: Well, I think he definitely was. He was not the get in and play with the kids kind of a guy. And as I was a teenager I was too busy to be really involved with grandpa. It when I was a tiny child that he was more involved with me. But I had always had a deep love for him and sometimes he was very elderly, [...] but I still loved to just sit with grandpa and hold his hand in total silence [um-hum]. That was sweet. I know he totally adored me. And when left, when I spread my wings and flew away when I was 19 to take a job in South Dakota, and we lived in Provo, [um-hum], I went by myself and he was very frightened and he insisted that I needed a fathers' blessing. I didn't ask for it, but he needed to give me a fathers' blessing [laughter] [um-hum]. To just give him peace because he was very concerned about me being out in the world alone.

I: What are other things that you can remember, just about him and what he meant to you and what he did for you, what you learned from him, in a way how he substituted a father...

E: I think that he was very sensitive to not step into my fathers' shoes wholly. I think that he felt sensitive, just he probably always mourned that he had to take this role and my father was not around. He did discipline me a time or two, and once it was extremely harsh, and I'll never forget it, but I think as a tiny child it was, it kind of altered my relationship with him, I think I became a little afraid of him after that, but I deserved the spanking I got. [laughing] I was about six or seven, and being very hard-headed and stubborn. So, he didn't hesitate to teach me that way. He taught me when we were out in the bard with the cows, and everything, he'd teach me some of the facts of life. He tried to substitute him for me. The sweetest memories I have of him were sitting on his lap before I could read, reading the funny papers to him. I was telling him what was going on in each little frame of picture. And he thought that was just great, you know it was kind of a little tradition we had.

I: So, on which side, your mother's or father's side was he the father?

E: My mother's. He was my mother's father.

I: And you have contact to your father's side?

E: Yes we did some, because we lived in the same town when I was that age, when I was a small child, we spent the summers on the farm with grandma and grandpa and we spent the winters in school in the same city with my father's family.

I: But they were not so close to you?

E: They were not close. My father's father was a very austere man and most of my fathers' siblings recount very harsh experiences from their father, so he was not a loving, nurturing man.

I: And you also mentioned that your mother looked out for you that you had male figures in your life. One was your teacher. Can you tell me a little bit about that? Did he become someone that you looked up to, that you learned from, kind of a father figure, or was he just you know a teacher, and did not have so much of an impact to you?

E: No, I don't think there were any that ever tried to step in and become a father figure. You know some people I think have a neighbor that really puts their arms around them the family, that never happened. My mother was a very self-sufficient women, and so I think people just kind of looked on her as being able to manage the situation. [um-hum]. Yeah, I don't remember anyone that really became, ..who stepped into a nurturing role, as you will. [um-hum] There were those who were very interested and very concerned for us. And my father's brother, when I received my mission call, he paid for half of my mission, and so, there was people always around. I feel like there were people looking out for us, but they were in kind of in a hands-off posture [um-hum], because things seemed to be going so well, because there wasn't any point where we felt like somebody had to step in and help us.

I: Was the ward [church] helpful?

E: Yeah they were, and I had several bishops as I was a teenager, and I think the bishop probably looked out for me a bit more carefully because I was a teenager. And I just felt very warm and cared for by my bishop, but I did not see him as a father-figure.

I: Now, you said that you did not actually really miss a father figure, you said that in your written account, except for when you became a teenager. And you had this experience when you went to college...can you tell me a little bit about that now?

E: Well, I realized that when [the therapist] asked me that question, that I guess I had missed a dad, it was really a moment of truth for me. I was totally in denial about missing a dad. And mother made such a point of talking about him and keeping him part of our home, and you know it was just ...this is how we do it, and he is just away for a

time, and we went along, you know. So, it was just now anything I just did never allow to feel sorry for myself, or to, you know, I did not feel like I lacked anything because I had everything I needed as far as I could see.

I: You feel in a way that you didn't actually got to grief until that age, where you realized...

E: Probably not, because I was a baby when he died. You know the grieving thing was not in my capacity.

I: And what do you thing triggered that whole thing, was it something besides that question, or, I mean, there must have been something...

E: It was just that question, it was a very astute question, I think [Yeah]. You know he probably realized there was some unresolved stuff there. [um-hum]

I: And what did that do to your development, from then on, how did you deal with it...?

E: You know I do not remember anything else. I continued with counseling though that whole year, as I remember. We probably talked about other things, but that's the only session I remember.

I: What did it do for you in your life, outside of counseling, was there a change in your life from then on?

E: Not anything that I can remember. You know all of life is a growing process and I probably changed a little bit about how I thought about myself and about other people, but you know, nothing that I remember significantly.

I: You said that you struggled with issued of low self-confidence, was that better, or was that still there then?

E: It probably got better, I mean that was the purpose of counseling. And I think that he helped me a great big deal that year. I don't know that anybody knew I was in counseling and nobody at the end of the year said, 'my you changed', you know growth is a continuum. I only in recent years have realized, since I had my own children, that little children regard that time and love are one thing altogether, [hum] you know. And if you don't have enough time for a child you really don't love them, these are preschool I am talking about, cause that was the focus of my education. [um-hum]. And if you don't have time to sit and read to a child and talk to him, you know those kind of things I think they don't really feel loved. And my dear mother trying to be mother and father together, I think that's the greatest source of my lack of self-confidence, was that I just didn't know,...I felt loved by my grandparents, I felt loved by my mother, but I also did not have a lot of time with her, and she had a total nervous break-down at my father's death and was away from me for a time.

I: So how was that?

E: It was rough, I mean, she had a break-down when I was almost two, [um-hum] and was fairly functional by a year later, [hum] but then she, my mother had a break-down in NY city, working on her master's degree and she had to return to NY and my grandmother went with her and so both grandmother and mother were gone [hum], in the most terrifying time of my life, I am sure. And I was just kind of shuffled from friends to family, just passed around for two or three months.

I: How old were you then?

E: About four or five.

I: So in that time where your mother had a nervous break-down, you lived with your grandparents?

E: Aha, yes, she was living with my father's parents and my father's father, and his second wife in Vernal, and you know in those days they couldn't really do much for nervous breakdowns, so she was out doing basically work therapy, she could lift boulders that the men could not lift. I mean, she was just totally out of it. The Lord really blessed her, she got back together much faster than they expected.

I: How many siblings do you have?

E: Two of them.

I: I am just wondering how they took your fathers death...

E: One of my brothers often made reference to that...For example, he told one about when mother, I mean he had the same impression that we did, that daddy is just away for a time. My brothers still laugh about a time when a man came to a house call as a veterinarian, our dog had broken his leg and a veterinarian came and set his leg and quoted the price to mother and he said 'but seeing that you are a widow lady we'll just charge you half price' and my brothers still laugh about that, I don't know why it really struck them funny, it's probably because they haven't given mother that title either. I mean, my older brother was 12 or 13 years old and never conceived of mother as a widow. [hum!]

I: So they are older than you. [Aha!] Were they with you when your mother had this difficult time, were you together then?

E: Yea, when mother and grandma went together, they stayed with my aunt and uncle because they were both in school, and I wasn't in school, and so I was in Provo and they were in Vernal.



I: O.K. I might come back to that later a bit later. Can we talk a little bit about, I wonder about how your dating time went, when you started to date...Did you date a lot?

E: No, I did not date a lot. But I had a lot of friends, but it was all very platonic. I was a student body officer and you know I was placed in that position by the elected student body officers, I was well-liked, you know I just had a lot of friends, but I was not date-mate, and ... I have some theories about that, I think that a girl who dates a lot has had an excellent, you know of course there are exceptions to this, I mean there are the ones that are sex-bombs, if you will [laughter] who attract boys for another reason, but I think the ones that are easy around guys and know how to chat with them and flirt with them and tease with them, have had a wonderful relationship with their dad. [hum! O.K]. That's a personal theory.

I: So you did not feel you had that easiness in dating?

E: No, but then none of my friends were date-dates either and they came from wonderful families, but they did not have fathers who spent a lot of time with them...

I: And would you be willing to talk a little bit about your first husband? I read in your written account that that was a pretty big experience...And again I want to remind you, anything, ... I am just trying to get as much of the bigger context, and some things might fall by the wayside and not be important, and some things I compare them also to other things that are said in interviews with other people, but if some things are too painful, then...

E: Oh, yeah, don't worry, I met my first husband after my mission, my mothers' first cousin introduced us, and I became very, very close to him [...] he just basically swept me off my feet, he was very romantic, very gallant, he did all the right things to sweep a girl off her feet, and because he was at college alone in California, we met in July and were married in January, it was basically a long distance relationship, and we agreed after our mission that we had not spent time in each other's presence, but he said that he was terrible lonely and he wanted me to come and my mother said, Eva, if he is lonely go, because she had been engaged for five years to my dad while he was in medical school and her heart yearned to be with him the whole time, it was just really hard time, she had a loan from my grandfather and she felt like she had to pay off that loan so that her next sister could go to college, so she just had commitments she felt she had to do, it felt right to her, but her heart ached that she did not have more years with him, because he was buried on their 11<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary, [um-hum] and she said if he is lonely for you, you must be there with him and have that time with him because you don't know how much time you will have with him. So she kind of pushed things along, although she did not approve at all of short courtships.

I: How old were you when you married?

E: I was 23, almost 24.

I: How do you think did your fatherlessness influence your courtship, and your choosing that husband, or did it?

E: I think it influenced it. My mother fell in love with him, probably more than I at first, cause I felt he was just moving things along too fast. I came home from my mission and suddenly I was dating a lot. And I could feel that he was ready for marriage and he was going to pressure me for marriage, ...I remember sitting on my mother's bed after a date and said 'mom I don't think I can do this, I don't want to date him anymore,' you know and she said 'don't burn your bridges behind you...' and she really encouraged me to continue to date him. And it turned out later that he had a side of him that was very unkind [hum] and very negative [yeah] and he criticized everybody in his life...and soon I came in line for all of that negativity and criticism, ...it was very difficult, and our courtship was far too short, but I think that my mother was kind of shocked when she saw that side in him, because she had really sponsored him. I probably would not have married him without my mother encouraging me [yeah] [...] and she never, never did voice anything of her thoughts in a negative line, [...] but on the other side I loved his whole family, I loved his parents, you know, it was never an easy marriage, but they were a wonderful family. When he left it was such a shock for my kids [um-hum] and I said to them 'I can't account for your dad's choices, but I said, I do know this, I'd go through it all again so that you could come [hum!]. And then I felt, as I said that, I don't know if you've ever had that experience of hearing yourself say things that were instructing to yourself [um-hum], and I could hear myself saying that and I thought it is true, and I felt like that that was a mission that I had performed to bring them then into the world, and I still feel that way, I feel like that's something that was my thing to do. [...] I also feel like, you know, my husband came from a very valiant family line and I, I don't know, I kind of have strong feelings about the eternal nature of families before this life as well as after. I just think I had a mission in all of this. Lot's of things we will learn in eternity, and it's O.K. Things will work out in eternity.

I: Did your first husband remarry?

E: Yeah, he remarried, there was not another woman in his life, he just did not want to be married [to me] anymore, he said. [hum]

I: And, what did he say to you, because you also wrote in the account that a big issue for him became that you were fatherless,...I am just wondering about the nature of that. I mean, what was the problem for him?

E: I just think he was hunting for an excuse [laughing]. He just had to hunt for something to be critical about. I think he wanted to be more of a flirt. I mean, he had ideas that were extremely worldly, [um-hum] and suggested behaviors to me that were extremely worldly and I just would not do it,...and I think this is also part of the reason that his kids do not want to have a lot to do with him, because he is inactive in the church, the values are not there,...and they just feel like he is strange, and after he left and I realized that he was expressing,... you know, going inactive, it must have been very

difficult for him to be married to me, you know, we were at church every Sunday, [...] honestly, no wonder! He had 30 years of living the way he did not want to live.

I: If I understand right, in your account you also wrote that you wonder how it would have been if you had ended the whole marriage earlier for your kids' sake...

E: Ah, I wondered about it, but I knew I made covenants, and so I just prayed to Heavenly Father, I mean the marriage covenant is a three-way thing that includes God and I thought I made covenants with my husband, but I've also made covenants with Heavenly Father and he'll help me, and so he became my partner in it. I knew I did not have an eternal marriage, I knew this was not a relationship that would last through eternity, but I thought I've made covenants that I have to keep and I have to just let Heavenly Father take care of the rest. [hum]

I: And did that affect you more in your self-confidence do you think, or how did you feel about this whole accusing thing?

E: I think it had the effect of...you know how adversity can make you strong or can kill you? I think it made me stronger. Because it was a difficult marriage, but I was determined to hang on and I was determined to try to do my level best to make him happy. You know you just do your best and hang on. (almost before mark 7)

I: Maybe again some more general questions now. What do you think you've learned from your whole experience of being fatherless?

E: I don't know. To me men are much more of a mystery than if daddy would have been around. And so I tried to be observing of behavior, and, I majored in child development and family relations, and I think that was also part of trying to figure our life and people and relationships. And I think I've just continued to observe people, male and female.

[...]

I: Your grandfather, was he, he was not around at the time [of your marriage], was he? You said he died after your mission?...

E: He died the year I was married. [Oh, O.K.] So he was around. He was very elderly. He was 94, I think at the time.

I: O.K. Do you think he had some impact [in the marriage decision]. Did he like him, or did he say anything at all, or was he not involved?

E: He did not say anything at all, but I don't think he liked him.

I: O.K. Now also I want to talk a little bit about your current husband.

E: O.K.

I: How did you meet him? You said he was like a fresh air...

E: Yeah, you know everybody that has gone through divorce feels like the opposite gender,... there is not much confidence in interacting with the opposite gender. And my, this mutual friend said, 'are you ready to date yet?' And I said, 'oh, I guess so, I suppose I could spend an evening in the presence of a man, if I have to' [laughter]. That was the point I was at. You know, I really thought that I was supposed to spend my life alone, I've seen my mother do it, and I thought, you know, I can do this. I had a good role model in that, but, the Lord does not have you do things that are easy. That would have been easy. [laughter] [hum]. You know you marry a second time and you have to deal with the family issues of his family and my family, you know all of that. So it's just, oh, I just have a philosophy about life, you are supposed to be growing all the time and surely you have to be stretched to the last degree most of the time. [hum]

I: What are some of the most differences you can see between [your two husbands], um, that perhaps have to do with your learning about having grown up without a father, anything that comes to mind?.

E: Yeah, this is a very relevant thing...I always said I wanted to marry a man that was as big as a bear, if he just enfolds me in his arms, and I'd just be married. I think it is that need to be protected [as I wrote in the account I sent you]. And I think it was that need that made me say that I wanted to marry someone that was very big, and my first husband was. He was 6'4 and weighted over 200 pounds. Even if I did not feel fully protected by him, because I always felt attacked, [um-hum] there was still a sense of, ...you know I just needed a hope that I would be protected by him. [hum] There was never really a love or protection, either emotionally, or physically, or financially, or spiritually, or, I mean there was not really much there. But, that's why I say,...the physical attraction, he filled the well physically. [hum] And I remember coming into my current husband and I said when I was young I always wanted to marry a man who was as big as a bear, and look where it got me. [laughter] And my current husband weights what I do, and he is the same height, so a totally different look, but he is kind. And it's, it is a fresh breath in my life.

I: One thing that I picked up on in your written account was that you still liked observing other people and you still have some questions left about your having grown up without your father. What are some of those questions?

E: There are mostly on a socially successful level, just because that was always what my first husband was dinging about. And it's really odd, because he was very awkward socially. [...] I think that the need inside me for a daddy, I think that is probably the most prevalent thing that I feel that affects, that continuously affects my life, is that hunger for a daddy who would dot on me and love me and listen to me, you know the things you miss, that are not there.

I: You wonder why that is, or what are your questions about that?

E: I don't know. My oldest son was just with us and he is the father of my only granddaughter, [...] and just does my heart good to see how much he dotes on her and delights her and brags about her and you know I always,.. and there is a fellow in your neighborhood, and, I mean I always just pick up on those little things, he was one of seven sons and then his mother gave birth to one daughter, can you believe that?...[laughter] and he said you ought to see the difference in all of us boys as soon this tiny infant daughter came into our home. [um-hum] He said it was an amazing difference. You know these are the things I remember, [yeah] how much difference a little girl makes. [um-hum] And my name is [Eva], and my mother told me that daddy named me and so I thought, oh, I have to love my name because I want to learn everything about my daddy, because I have so little knowledge about him, and so no memory at all,...and so I tried to love my name. And then I came to Germany and found out that it was a German name and I did not know that! My parents spent 1930 in Europe, and daddy was studying with an eye surgeon in Vienna, Austria and the only thing I can think of is that he ran across that name with some woman he got to know in Germany or, because he did not speak German...

I: So, um, that seems to be the most common theme in your whole story this father hunger, and I was wondering about that...and identifying with the newer situations...

E: And with both of my spouses I have come to a point where I have realized I was expecting them to give me that, that nurturing, doting on me, caring kind of thing, that a good father innately gives, and I think in both of them I expected them to give that and realized that I was expecting too much. [um-hum]

[long pause]

I: Hum. That is interesting! Yeap! All right, boy those were a lot of question, weren't they!...Well I will digest some of this a little more and ....

After this interview ended, Eva asked me a little bit about my father and my background with fatherlessness. In the next interview I included some more information about my background as it fit with what we were talking about. The second interview in general probed deeper and brought into the open some of my biases. As I shared some of my own experience of father loss, I felt Eva also opened up more and our conversation went to a deeper level. An important element in this probably was that Eva had something to compare her experience to. I must say that I likewise gained more insight into my experience of father loss while I compared it to Eva's. I do not give a full

account of my experience in this thesis, because this study is not about my experience of fatherlessness and because I do not think it is necessary. However, I share a few pieces of my experience when they show an important underlying bias, or background from which my bias came.

### Second Interview

I: Was there anything since our last interview that came to you that you would like to address?

E: Not really. I mean I thought a couple of times about what we had talked but nothing really came to mind.

I: O.K. That is just a general check we like to do in this type of research...

Let's see, I have a couple of clarifying questions again...but we had a pretty good interview last time, I thought and so I think that we are almost done. What probably will happen next is that my mentor will look over...and then you will get to read what I wrote up about your account so you can say what you like about it, what is missing, what you don't like, etc...

E: O.K. That sounds great!

I: O.K. First of all, I would like to know a little bit more about your brother's experience with the loss of your father. You had two brothers you said, right? [um-hum] and they were older, they were about how old again?

E: One was 3 ½ and the other almost 8. The oldest one had a difficult time in school, but I did not know about that until later. For him it was probably the most difficult because he understood the whole ramifications of daddy being gone, being the oldest, and that is permanent. It was very difficult for him, also because it was a small town, and the kids were pretty cruel because he was new and he was grieving and so he probably was a bit withdrawn...

I: How do you think he made sense of the whole thing? How did he resolve the death of your father?

I: I really don't know. I know that he was realizing that everyone else around him was grieving. My mother's parents, that's where he lived, adored my dad and they were the ones that were taking care of him. And, you know there was grieving all around him, so he did not feel lonely in his grief at least. [um-hum] but he was, I think he very much felt he had to be the man and that he had to be the man in the house. I remember my mother saying one day that he kind of shrugged his shoulders and tried to be the man of the

house. [hum]. Mother made it a point that it was wonderful when he received the priesthood and that we then had the priesthood in the house. I think my mother did a wonderful job of teaching us to honor the priesthood when we did not have a Melchisedek priesthood holder in the home. [um-hum] But I have just perceived over the past years how strongly I respect the priesthood and honor it and what it means and all of this, and I did not get it by experience I got it from teaching...Of course my old grandfather did and he gave me father's blessings sometimes, but I think she did a superb job of teaching us about the priesthood and what it meant. [um-hum] and she was very thrilled when my older brother was ordained a deacon and made it a big thing.

I: Is there anything you remember that he made up anything for you to not have a father? Like I imagine it must have been nice to have an older brother...

E: It was, it was nice. He has made a comment to me about ten or 15 years ago that he felt bad that he ignored me as much as he did [laughter] [um-hum] and I don't have a lot of memories of him, I have a lot of memories of him being kind to me, but in terms of playing with me—no. I mean I was a girl and I was little. [um-hum] And so that interaction for him was not of this sort and he probably, you know he was the man of the house, he had to behave like the mature, I don't know...[laughter]. But here is an innuendo of that, was something when he was 16, he was just going to figure out what to do with his life and what to do as a career. And he was sitting on mothers bed, and he worked, all through high school he worked, so he was an extremely busy teenager, and he was sitting on the edge of mothers bed and was talking about this, and I think the was mother recounted it was, he said, 'mom, do I have to be a doctor?' And she said 'well, of course not!' And she was shocked that because he had figured that daddy was gone and he was the oldest son that he had to follow in his daddy's footsteps. And he had carried that burden on his heart for six years. [hum] And mother was just sick that that was a burden on her child's heart. No, my younger brother wanted to be a doctor from the time he could say the word. He always played doctor, and he wanted to become a doctor, not because father was a doctor, but out of his own motivation.

I: How did he experience the whole thing? Different than his older brother?

E: Yeah. Because he was younger. I think it was very hard for him. Daddy used to come home and lie down in the middle of the day, come home for lunch, and then he'd lie down for a few minutes, and mother said it was a tradition that daddy would lie on the sofa for a few minutes and my younger brother would come over and daddy would hold his hand and talk to him and, you know they had this little time together in the middle of the day. And when he was lying in the coffin my younger brother reached over and took his hand and said, mommy why doesn't daddy hold my hand? [hum] That was a poignant story for me. So he was young enough that the whole thing did not sink in enough for him.

I: So how do you think he made sense of it? Or has he?

I asked this question because I wanted to see how well Eva was aware of the concept of reconciliation, to learn something about her own concept of reconciliation through interpreting her brother's experience, and to see if there was not something helpful in her brother's experience that would help me understand Eva's experience.

E: I think he has. You know he is a very different personality from my older brother. [um-hum] My older brother is a hard driver, you know my grandma said when he used to fall asleep as a little tiny child, you know kids would sometimes just fall asleep on the floor sometimes, you'd touch him and he was stiff as a board, when he woke up he was so mad that he had fallen asleep. [laughing] [hum]. I mean he was just like this from day one, he was just out to accomplish. My younger brother definitely is the opposite. He is very soft spoken, you know many people have praised his bedside manner as a doctor. He is very sensitive. And I think that this sensitivity is an outgrowth of his losing his daddy. [yeah.] And he now has a wonderful, big family and has had fulfillment in it, but I think that there was a certain amount, a sense of loss. But that is very much a subjective statement. We have not talked much about this, I mean we would love to share those stories as a family together, but my younger brother has, I don't ever remember him talking about how he missed daddy or anything. He did, recently I sent him a letter, because I was writing daddy's history and I found a letter that daddy had written to my younger brother, and my mother had kept the letter, daddy had written my younger brother from the hospital, [um-hum] and it's precious, my it's precious. And so I made a copy and sent it to my younger brother through the mail and he wrote me back and said how much he appreciated it and won't it be wonderful when we can renew these relationships again on the other side. [hum] And that's probably the most telling thing I've ever heard him say. [hum, yeah.] Just trying to be brave, to be the man, you know...

I: How long was your mother around? I think I didn't get that last time...

E: She died when she was 74 years old.

I: And where was that again in relation to your life?

E: I was 41.

I: In the last years you had your mom, did anything come up again in relation to your fatherloss?

E: Uhm, no. I mean she continued to talk about father and we continued to talk about father. And she only said positive things about him.

I: You told me last time sort of a theory you had about children perceiving time and love to be one thing. And then you told me how you kind of did not have a lot of time with your mother back then when she grieved...



E: Yeah, because she grieved, and she was the high school drama teacher and that meant rehearsals at night and she filled the auditorium for several nights and she always made everything a success, I mean that was just her personal standard, and so she was gone a lot. I mean she would take us with her, I have memories of playing in the auditorium during rehearsal...and so she was very involved, she was always very involved beyond the whole... and so, that's what I mean, that I might not have a lot of time with her, as a preschooler during the years she was grieving and then going to school and then getting her feet under her as a provider, you know I just did not have that.

I: Do you think that that was one of the causes for your difficulties when you came to college when you had low self-esteem, do you think that was part of it?

E: I think it was part of it, I think it was. See I was living at home, and I would get home from these counseling sessions and tell mother about it and I mean I was an open book to my mother and she to me, you know, there was nothing, I mean we were very, very close and she was really concerned about my lack of self-confidence. She was the oldest child in the family and so she was always out there conquering the world [yeah] and so she had a hard time understanding why I felt that way and why I was having such a hard time [hum]

I: And so what do you think helped you, or are there some traces still left of that in you?

E: There were still some traces I would say up until 50 years of age, but, you know I am one of these that believes pretty heavily in those survival courses where you put kids through agonies until they can't stand it and come out feeling, or, you know, adjust their sight and they figure out what's important in life. And I had some pretty rough experiences that gave me a great deal of self-confidence. We lived for four and a half years with my first husband's elderly father. We went there for six months when he got his dissertation finished, supposedly, we lived there four and a half years later and the dissertation still was not done [hum] and in those four and a half years, there was one child and then I bore two more, my other two children in that circumstance and that circumstance was my Gethsemane. I mean it was much harder than the divorce. [hum] We lived four and a half years under a roof that was not mine under terms in which I never had not much to say about, and trying to raise children in a house in which we needed to keep them quiet for the sake of a man who was downstairs studying and a grandfather who was elderly, I mean Oh my, it was awful, it was just awful. After we came through that I thought, you know I just felt much more confident, I lived through that, I have done it, there was automatically more confidence. [hum]

I: That is interesting how that works...

E: Yeah, it really is...I know that really hard experiences, you end up with a lot of confidence when you have lived through them.

I: Do you think that was in part also because you thought ‘now I’ve had it’ and I just have to stand up for myself or was it just the knowledge of accomplishment ‘I have lived through this hardest period of time...’

E: Yeah that’s what it was, it was just, ‘wow I did it...’

I: And then one more of your beliefs..., because it is really important in my study that I point out, we call it a folk perspective where we get the person’s beliefs out into the open, so that it is not my belief but also that your perspective is really represented...

E: Sure...

I: And another belief I picked up on was about the eternal nature of families and that they were put together kind of, and you had a strong belief about that

E: There is nothing in the Gospel that tells us much about that, except that we know that we lived before now, and so I don’t, it’s not something I dwell on, it’s not something I get on a soap box about and talk about a great deal, but I muse a lot about it and it is interesting to think about, you know, how were we organized and did we make covenants with the spirits that come to us as our children...I’ve talked to many women and I’ve heard so many women say that when they had a certain number of children they knew they were done, ‘Yeap, I know that that’s how many children I am supposed to have’. So it is interesting these little signals come to us by the Spirit and I have just thought about it a little bit, but it’s not anything life-altering...

I: Are there other beliefs that helped you with your fatherless situation

E: Hum. Not anything that is not freely discussed in the Gospel. I firmly believe, as my mother taught me that they are with us when we need them. They are not always with us but at times that we need them they are there, those that have passed on to the other side. I got a blessing once that was a very, very sweet experience to my oldest brother who gave me the blessing and to myself, during the time my marriage was getting more and more difficult. My brother did not know that I had problems in my marriage, I just came to him to get a blessing to have the strength to keep going. After the blessing was given, he said that that he knew that my father was present and that he had never experienced something like that before, so he said I want you to know that the blessing I gave you was truly a father’s blessing. [hum]. That was a very sweet experience. [hum!] So, you know, I have a very firm belief that they are near us when we need them and that they are near us if we need them at a moment’s notice, you know in danger, I think angels help us and guide us. And I don’t know if it is exactly my dad sometimes, but I know that there is a lot of interaction with the other side and a lot of knowledge about what we are doing, the veil is not very heavy. They are aware of what we are going through. Also, both times my mother had a hysterectomies, I was about 9 or 10 years old, and she said that, my uncle attended my father’s brother, and my fathers sister was a nurse, were both in the operating room, and they said that daddy was there, they could feel them there. [...]  
And there are a lot of stories where my father was kind of the spiritual leader in the

family and all of his families have acknowledged that daddy was the bonder, the peace-maker, and then he died so early, but they all really loved him, and so, several have seen him, you know, at the grave side, or, at my mother's funeral a neighbor saw daddy, and I thought... 'Oh, why wasn't it one of us?' [laughing] you know, that's something else, why do some people have those manifestations instead of others, but we know it was daddy. And she wasn't a soul friend, you know she was just a good neighbor. She saw daddy up on the podium smiling and holding hands with my mom and they were laughing at the stories and just enjoying themselves immensely. And then she said, I figured that the man with your mother was your father. And then she said, the one, you cousin, who gave the closing prayer, really looked a lot like the man who was with your mother. Well, this cousin has always looked more like daddy. And so that was the confirmation that it was daddy.

I: And despite that though,... now there is that time in our interviewing where I am making you more part even of my biases. First I try to not include them so much because I wanted you to truly share what you would share on your own, and that is just part of qualitative research, so that truly also my biases are also brought out on the table so that you can correct them if needed and also my interpretation of you... So in that light, you said something in the first interview, despite all these experiences you just shared that you experienced father hunger. And that term, I don't know if you knew that, but it is actually a term used in the literature [oh, really] yeah, and it manifests in different ways and people deal with it in different ways, or some don't deal with it... And so it's interesting to me that you even brought that term up by yourself

E: Yeah, that is interesting!... Well, if you want to put me on that continuum (of dealing with it versus not dealing with it) I would probably fall under not having dealt with it well...

I: And why do you think that is?...

E: Ahhh, ... I just never had a male figure in my life that filled that and I decided that I can't look top a spouse for that...

I: And there is something else interesting in that for me, because from what you told me it seemed like your mother was making sure in a way that this was filled, like that she put you with a male teacher, or in the ward, friends, so there were people who cared about your family, yet you were very independent and it seemed almost as if you did not need that attention. Maybe it is because there is help in different ways, like physical or financial, but then there is also the emotional side... And I am just wondering, and you said that people did not try to step into the role of a father for you guys, but I am wondering would you have accepted if someone had given that love, or maybe someone even did, but I just want to clarify that a little more ...

E: No, I think I would have felt like I was being untrue to my daddy. I mean he was such big part. He was talked about so much. He was definitely an influence as to, you know his presence, he was a part of your home, he is a part of our family, we don't see

him, but we know that he is with us and worried for us and wants us to be right, you know. I probably would not have allowed myself to bond with anyone that way [hum, that's interesting, yeah!] And I've never thought about that, but that's probably the case.

I: That makes sense to me, for example in my own experience [um-hum], because I've had that father hunger, but I, I think I've resolved it. I think because, as you also mentioned before, I think I got sick of my own condition, like 'O.K. I think I am ready to be done with that'..

E: [um-hum] How old were you?

I: I never knew my dad. There is one picture where I was few months old and a man with a beard was holding me, totally weird to me, no connection...but I did have that hunger and I did look for father figures and I got a lot from very nice people and it would just have never filled. But I think the difference here really between our two stories is the mothers. Because your mother made a conscious effort to have the father be there in a way and you still had that connection through her, and I did not have that through my mother.

E: That is interesting that difference. [um-hum] And the response to it...[yeah] is equally interesting!

I: So in a way maybe it is good that a father was there, you know that he loved you, but it makes it harder perhaps too on the other side...

E: Yeah, yeah, and you know, and the older I get the more I see this, there is nothing, absolutely nothing in this world that's all good or all bad, nothing! [yeah] You know, I have a friend, a dear friend who served time in prison, unjustly, and during that time he wrote his life's history and he just made the best of it and I just thought, golly, even that, there is nothing all good or all bad.

I: Yeah, but the other side to that father hunger was that you also learned that you also can't fill that hunger within your marriages and I wonder how you realized that and perhaps, if you are willing to share that how that father hunger played out...

E: Oh, it's just, when you are aching and hurting, when you need comfort, you know, and neither of my spouses have given what I wanted in terms of comfort, and I realized probably in the second marriage, 'wait a minute you are hungering for something that you cannot expect a spouse to give' [hum!] And at a younger age, I probably would have said, you know it's a lack in him [um-hum] but when you are 60+ years old and you are feeling this desperate need, and I know I'd married a wonderful man, and I thought, 'I can't expect him to be superman' you know. 'This is, it's O.K., its O.K.' You know it was as I kind of was at that place and I was 60+ years old.

I: Yeah, and it was the comfort that was missing? Or...

E: The nurturing, the nurturing kind of thing [um-hum]

I: Now, husbands do nurture though, right? It was a specific kind ...

E: Yeah it was.

I: It's a specific type of nurturing...

E: And, you know, maybe it is the specific kind of men I am drawn to...I don't know...

I: So you mean you just missed the kind of father role in a way?

E: Yeah, I realized that that was what I was expecting and that that was not fair. That's not fair on my part. Don't love him less or respect him less, I am expecting too much.

I: Now isn't that interesting in contrast to your not wanting to really replace your father with anyone, to not have anyone fill that role, yet at an emotional level maybe somehow...

E: Yeah, and I think that what I figured was that when I got married, that when there was a man in my life through marriage that I would get it.[hum] You know that's probably the expectation I built. And so when it wasn't there and there were lot's of other emotional things lacking in the first marriage, I just figured, I just figured 'it's not going to happen' and then when he asked me for a divorce, I thought 'ugh' so you know it's just not going to happen. And then when I married a second time, which was a total surprise to me, I think my heart still said 'well, that was just that man' I can find it with another man. I was 58 when we were married. And so, you know, in reality, yes, I was still thinking maybe someone else would do that. And it took me two or three years and I sat back and realized, 'No!' It's just not going to happen.

I: Was there any guilt on your side after your first marriage...?

E: No, I did not feel guilt, I think it's because he was trying so hard to make me feel guilty. [laughing] That was the principle thrust.[hum] When I had to endure 30 years of marriage I prayed for help...but when my first husband then asked me for a divorce, I prayed to my Heavenly Father 'you've helped me love him and endure those difficult 30 years of marriage, not please take that love away' and He did. And I did not feel anymore love for him. So I know, I have a very strong testimony that Heavenly Father functions in the realm of feelings. [yeah]. My mother always said 'pray about your feelings, for that's how we learn through the Holy Spirit.' You know that's the realm he communicates with us, through our feelings.

I: And that goes into the next item...because you said that it was really your mother who fell in love with him...

E: Yeah, and I did fall in love with him, you know he was gallant, he was on a career track and I always wanted to marry the great intellectual [...]

I: Do you think if you've had, now these questions can be annoying sometimes, you know, what if...[um-hum, but what? laughing] do you think if your father would have been there it would have been different and in what way, or would your choice of marriage not have been different?

E: I think the first time I was married I was a very needy soul [um-hum] I needed a man, I expected all of my needs of a father to be fulfilled in marriage. And I think that it really skewed my views in terms of what kind of companion I really would have needed. [hum] I think I would have chosen someone really different

I: How?

E: I think I probably would have chosen someone who was more like my father, more gentle, and more quiet, and more sensitive. Because those were qualities I had not lived with parent and so I probably would not have even been attracted to him. And that's a question I have not really ever asked myself, but I think that I probably would have married someone a little more like my second brother. [hum]

I: And do you think that you didn't see that because the need to be with someone, and you even said physical need...

E: Well, and to feel like I meant something to someone of the opposite sex. That someone thought I was really neat. And was concerned for my feelings, you know the general things you hope for, but I think that I was really needy for approval of the opposite sex, and really needed to feel like I meant something to someone to the opposite sex. You know tremendous hunger...

I: Now, do you think that what you got stronger in over the years, could it be pinpointed down to that father hunger? All these attention, feeling loved by a man, physical aspects of that...Do you think that's the thing you grew stronger in, even though you feel like that can never be filled in this life...Do you think that this was the key or the center of your whole growing...?

E: No, and I am not sure I understand what you are saying, but I don't think it was central to any growth. I mean I still feel my hunger. And my first marriage was a huge disappointment. And I, ahh,...there wasn't any nurturing.

I: So even through that disappointment, because I think even through this disappointment there comes a point where you think 'O.K I am sick of this, I am over this, I am stronger now' I mean the hunger is still there, but on one side I think perhaps it makes us stronger when we have such disappointment it makes us stronger, I don't know what do you think about that?...At least I see that in myself where I have had disappointment in that way

and still had some of that father hunger and thought, well maybe if this is so disappointing maybe, you know, I should just give up on that...?

E: Yeah, that's basically what I've done. You know I've said this is not going to be satisfied in this life. And it was interesting that I've come to terms with how much that we are emotionally needy and that we do have a need for affection and love and that kind of thing. And I realized when my oldest son was about 16 that he was the one that gave me that kind of interaction of approval and caring about me, because my husband did not, and we have a very sweet relationship, and when he got his mission call I thought, 'how am I emotionally going to survive?' because I knew that I was getting the emotional feeding, which all human beings need, you know we all need this, and that I was getting that from him, and I thought he is not going to be around. And I had to come to terms with how much he meant to me in that way. [um-hum] And I, I just cut the apron strings before he left on his mission, and I was working then, and I started to cry, and I closed the office door and cried for a while and I felt better, and I went through many episodes like that before he went into the MTC. And when he was married he said, 'mom is that hard on you?' And I said, 'oh no honey, I cut those apron strings before you went on your mission. And I did, you know it was a joyous thing to find him happily in love...but I had realized that I was quite emotionally dependent on him and that's when I probably had to rely even stronger on my Heavenly Father to help me [hum, yeah...]

I: And is that part of what you meant last time by you were wondering how successful you could be on a socially acceptable level, that that was part of your struggle with self-esteem, that that was what your first husband hammered on, even though he himself was ...[socially awkward, yeah]...what did you exactly mean by socially acceptable?

E: Oh, well, I guess there are several meanings to that. I mean being this socially graceful, wonderful, fantastic hostess, you know the popularity kind of thing, because I have never dated a great deal and I thought, sure I've got some lacks...

I: Although you had that theory that girls who are heavy into dating, either they are getting the guys with the physical draw, or they are getting the guys because they have learned how to flirt, because they have flirted with their dad, and they've just had these wonderful relationships with their dad, and they have just learned how to relate to the opposite sex.

I: I thought that was interesting too to me, if you don't mind me sharing of my own experience again [no!] because I have not dated a lot at all and I thought perhaps if this had to do with my growing up without a father and sometimes I thought if there was something wrong with me socially or so, but then I have a very strong head and thought, 'no, I am fine, I am normal. No I don't need to date a lot. I know what I want and when I meet him I will know. I just have not met anyone I am really interested in yet.' And I am wondering if, going back to the difference between our experiences in fatherlessness if that sheds on this difference in dating too. Because it seems like you still were a little bit insecure in a way, or doubting yourself [Oh, yeah]...

E: Well, I have watched my own daughter and she has not ever dated a lot. I mean she had a father, but he totally ignored her, and so, you know and were scholars say that gender formation is influenced by the father, her father was not there for her. She eventually got married to someone she met in a singles ward, but up until that point she never felt like she had to date a lot. [um-hum] Same deal. And I looked at her, O.K. her dad never paid much attention to her, and it kind of supported my own theory. [hum] Because you know I think its one thing to be without a father, its another thing to have a father yet to have him ignore you. It's a little bit of a different signal. [um-hum, um-hum].

I: I have one more follow-up question. How did your education, you said you studied early child development, how did that help you if it did at all help in making sense of your making sense of fatherlessness?

E: Oh, I was in a school that was heavy into research. And I took some classes there about human development and family life. And I chose to have a family lab, because I felt like I wanted to see a family functioning with a father. So, in other words it perhaps changed the focus of my studies, you know I always gravitate my studies towards those things that might help me understand more fully the role of a father or of a man in the home and you know that kind of stuff...

After this interview, I sent Eva my thesis prospectus to help her better understand where I was coming from, and to make her a better informed participant and truly a co-researcher of my study. The response I got from her in an email was very positive. She was very amazed at all the research I had done and was exited to be part of it. I then told Eva that I would write up her account and then let her read it so she could give further input and corrections if necessary. Eva invited me to call her again if necessary. A third short interview happened after the second interview, after Eva had read my thesis proposal and before my I did my analysis. It is included in the latter part of the following section, the write up of my analysis, because it contained so much material I wanted to quote.

DAVID

Initial Questionnaire

**1. Have you had a father or father figure in your life? If yes, how old were you?**



Yes, until I was 10 years of age.

**2. How did you lose your father and how old were you?**

My father died of heart failure.

**3. What was/is your experience of being fatherless (i.e. in your private, social, professional life, etc.)? Feel free to write as much as you like, but please write at least one single spaced, typewritten, or two handwritten pages. You may hand-write your experience on this sheet and add more sheets to it or type your answers on the computer by referring your answers to the questions on this questionnaire (e.g., “Question 1.”) Please be as detailed as possible so that I can understand your experience of being fatherless as fully as possible.**

When I was 10 years old I came home one Sunday afternoon and found my father in his favorite chair. He had passed away of a heart attack. I was close to my father. I was the 9<sup>th</sup> of 11 children and the youngest of six sons. I am now 51 years of age. There have been many times over the 40 year period that I have thought about my father. I have wondered what it would have been like to have my father attend sporting events and activities. I was often invited by friends to activities with their fathers, but I often felt out of place even though they did everything to make me feel part. I have often wondered if I would have experienced life differently, especially through my teenage years if my father would have been present to counsel with and feel his support. Because I lost my father at an early age, I felt I had to take on responsibility earlier than perhaps I would have had to. Our family was left with minimal finances and I had to work and help my mother at an early age. The child labor law did not apply in those days, so it worked out well to ease the financial burden my mother had. In many respects I feel this taught me a strong work ethic that has prepared me for my current role as a father. Because of my work responsibilities I don't feel that I was able to enjoy many of the activities of youth. I feel this has had a strong effect on my abilities to relax and just have fun. I often have felt guilty to vacation and enjoy entertainment. This could very well have affected my role as a father. The term work-a-holic has been mentioned on more than one occasion. There have been many times in my life it would have been good to talk with my father and seek his counsel. All things considered I feel in many respects life without my father has caused me to develop in a way that would have been different than having a father still in my life. It is difficult to determine the pros and cons of my fatherless circumstance. I loved my father and miss him even now. I really feel that a family with a father and a mother is the best circumstance for the children to be nurtured. I accept my circumstance but still a part of me wishes I could have had a father to help me grow and to share my failures and successes with.

First Interview

Interviewer: You said that you were close to your father, can you describe that a little more, how that was like for you...

David: Well, I was the youngest of six boys, so dads' ..., I don't know if I was a favorite, but because I was the youngest, he kind of was a little easier on me. And he really spent a lot of time with me in those first few years, and so I spent a lot of time with him before he passed away. So I was close from that standpoint. I still was young enough though that..., I had a conference with him because I was a teenager, you know bucking his rule, so he kind of walked on water to me, you know? [um-hum] there is a lot of things I don't remember because I was pretty young. I know that he had a bigger bark than he had bite, in other words, he threatened that he would do things but he never would, I mean, like he would, when he would want to discipline us he would threaten to take his belt off, but it never happened, because he was too kind-hearted.

I: Do you remember some experiences you had with him?

D: Well just simple things like, he was a repair man, so he'd come out in the shop and he'd kind of teach me how to use a screw driver, you know try to teach me how to do repair things. He also sold door-to-door vacuum cleaners and so lots of times he would take me to do deliveries and do purchases, or, he used to like to walk, we used to live downtown, he'd walk in the mornings to a little café and he'd drink Postum, which is like coffee, but you know, [I know!] [laughter], so he would, I would sneak and follow him and he wouldn't make me go back home, he'd just invite me to come in and buy me a hot chocolate. So, I mean he was just... And he would know everybody in town, so. I kind of hated to go with him because he would always take a long time because he would always run into somebody and talk, talk, talk. But he did not have an enemy, because he was just kind-hearted. [...]

I: And where was that again, here in Provo?

D: Yes [...]

I remember that he loved to sing, he'd forget the words and just kind of... I have the records... he used to make records himself, you know with him singing [wow], or practicing some sales pitch, or some fourth of July speech, so he was kind of colorful

I: So he had humor?

D: Yeah, he had humor. And he loved to dance. [hum] Ballroom stuff. My mom and he went dancing all the time. I remember that they'd always say that they'd bring us back a price if the house was clean, and they would, they'd always keep their word that way.

I: And you lived with all your siblings at that time?...

D: Well yeah, a couple of them were married when I came around, because they were just older. I was eleven and so, I had a brother that was old enough to be my dad, well he was 17, 18 years older.

I: So, how was it that you described, you came home and you found him in his favorite chair and you came home school, or was it....

D: It was actually from church. He felt a little ill. I had to give a talk. And my mom did not go either, she had gone to visit my grandmother. I just went to church myself. I came home and my dad was just in his chair like he'd been reading the paper and fallen asleep. The paper was still in his hand and his legs were crossed. I came home with my friend and I jumped over his legs to show my friend my goldfish. And dad kind of looked funny. He had purple lips, and [hum] and he was eary. So I went out of the house then I came in the back door, because our house was such that the living room and then the kitchen. So I yelled from the kitchen to him and he would not answer. So I went and got my friends' dad who was next door and he came and told me that he was dead. [hum]

I: How was that for you, um, in the following days, years, what did you go through. Can you explain that maybe?

D: Oh, I just remember the first couple years that I'd be sad at times like on holidays and you know, just because dad did do a lot of things with me and now there was nobody. Mom was overwhelmed. My brothers were too busy being teenagers. And so I felt kind of alone. But then, you know you just carry on, I mean you know, that type of thing. And you know dad was always one who would support you. I remember him always going to all my brothers' athletic events, and school plays. And no one ever came to mine. You know, so then you just learn to accept it, realize that this is part of life, as far as this goes.

I: What do you think helped you in accepting, do you remember anything specific?

D: Not really, just Gospel, just having that belief that he was still alive and that I would see him again. And this may sound funny, but there have been many times in my life when I've gone through kind of hard things that I've felt his presence there. I just felt that he is kind of there for me, protecting or, a guardian sort of. I think our guardian angels are our family members. And I felt him on many occasions, although I've never seen him I just felt a presence, [hum] I guess. So, nothing really specific, just religious belief, I think was the thing that helped. And then the fact that some of my buddies included me in their families and their dads would allow me to come fishing or camping or whatever with them. They were kind of surrogate fathers, I guess.

I: How did your mom deal with the whole thing?

D: Mom struggled. She always missed dad. She was only 45 and so, never had a desire to remarry. No one could ever measure up to dad, you know, so she was lonely all those years. It was a loneliness that we as children could not replace. But she'd just, I mean, you know...I think there is a greater tendency for people to do that nowadays...

I: Do what?

D: I mean in those days, be stronger with tragic situations like that [hum]. I mean a lot of people kind of cry babies now, or feel victimized, or, you know its part of life, to a certain degree. So, you know, she had seven children at time and one in the hanger, see my youngest sister had not been born yet, she was, my mom was pregnant with her when dad passed away, at age 45. So, she kind of had to go on cause she had to, you know those heads to feed, no real education, social security paid some, but it was still poverty so we all worked and chipped in.

I: And your oldest brothers were already out of the house and married?

D: My oldest sister and my oldest brother were married. And I had two brothers that were in the military. So there were seven of us at home.

I: So who was the oldest at that time?

D: My one older brother who was 17, 18. He should not have gone on a mission. I actually had a brother on a mission when my dad died. [Um-hum]

I: So soon you became the kind of the care giver...

D: Yeah. Yeah.

I: Do you think your relationship to your mom changed a little bit after your father's death?

D: Probably, probably. The older I got for sure. I mean when you are ten you are still a little boy. She always introduced me as her baby boy, even when I was 30 years old she did that. But she relied upon me a lot for advice and help and all that. So from that aspect, I think I reflected that in my [written account] is that I think that was almost a blessing because it caused me to mature in a way that I may not have matured [Um-hum] if dad would have been there. Oh, it did not allow me to be the child either. You know, I sometimes miss the fact that I really did, I really did a lot of things I wanted to do, but there were a lot of things I could not participate in because I had to work and I had to, you know what I mean? [Um-hum] But, I don't know, here again—life.

I: Do you think she, like, relied on emotional support as well?

D: I think she probably would have more so, if I would have been receptive to that, but I think even I was like any other teenagers, so you get a little older and you have no time for your parents and, you know you are too busy trying to find out who you are and all that. I think she did later, you know, as I grew up. There were many times when I've had to talk to her and she'd be in tears over this or that and I had to console her and encourage her [Um-hum] and that type of thing. But initially I don't think I was much of an emotional support, because I was not at such a good place either, I mean you lost there, I think we all just kind of probably fed off each other, you know when one was up the other down and we'd all just kind of support each other that way.

I: And you just said something interesting I want to follow up on a little more, about finding yourself and teenage years, how did you feel about your development with respects to what happened..

D: Well of course it depends on the relationship the child has with the parent as to finding yourself to figure out your teenage years, but I had no one really...mom was really not someone you could go to. She was kind of overprotective, that kind of distanced me from her for a while. I would always look at my friends and their relationships with their dads, some of them had great relationships, some where fighting and stuff, so I don't know that I went through it as well or as good as I could have if I would have had I had a little more guidance, someone to rely upon. I think I caused my mother a lot of grief, when the need has been there, there could have been a bit more understanding or encouragement, you know. [Um-hum] I don't know that moms always understand boys at that age. [hum] That's why dads are so important you know because they were boys once, I am not saying that moms can't understand, but, I just don't think, you know what I mean [Um-hum]. So, I tended to rebel a little bit against my mom's discipline. She was very overprotective. You know, like, if I'd been out and it'd be, you know my friends could stay out later and I couldn't and if I was five minutes late my mom was out looking for me, and that was an embarrassment [hum!] you know and I was always were I said I'd be and she just like, you know, it was not like early morning either, you know it was 10:30 at night, and I thought I should be able to stay a little later than that, but...

I: So what do you think some of your peers might have had, that your mom did not understand that well, could you specify that a little better, you think? [I don't know..] Like perhaps dads help boys to become more independent...

D: Well, I think moms can do that too, but I think dads help boys become men. Like give them responsibility, how to treat women, you know in my case growing up, the role of women was a lot different that it is nowadays, it is a little more liberating nowadays, you now back then dad was the bread winner, he was the provider, he was the ruler under the roof so to speak, not that mom did not have any say, but mom always relied on dad and all of a sudden she had be the ruler of the roost, and I don't think she always did it that gracefully, if you know what I mean, and so I think dad would have been a little more understanding, which I think if I had been a little more positive, but that just was the situation at the time, and my age, ...

I: How did you find your profession, how did you find yourself?

D: Well, because I had to work, it exposed me to things that most kids were not exposed to until later [Um-hum] and it allowed me to learn how to work with people, so I think when I struggled with knowing what to do [Um-hum], I even took the career test and they could not tell me, you know I was always good with people, that's what it said and so, and I had a love for sports and for the human body and so it kind of lead to...

I: So you kind of found your way [yeah just kind of found my way]. Do you think your peers had a little more support there?

D: At that point I was pretty much a loner. And I wondered even about that, like did my sociality with people, like I am very much to myself. At work I can be outgoing, but I am really not a social animal, you know I could not find me by going out with other people, not that could have been a result from not having grown up with a dad...I don't know

I: Are there other things you can think of that might have been different?

D: I think I would have maybe been a little more apt to relax and recreational. I am not very good at relaxing and at recreation. It is very hard for me to play. I think that was probably a cause of my circumstance, just working all the time and that is all I did and that's what I became comfortable with and so I am more comfortable working than I am playing, in fact I feel guilty playing [you mentioned that, yeah] and I don't know why, those feelings of guilt, I feel like I should be doing something more productive you know instead of just playing for mere recreation of amusement.

On the other hand I learned to work, kind of a positive thing. Just have to balance it out...

I: Do you think, kind of comparing yourself to your peers, they had more help, so they did not learn as fast to grow up...

D: Yeah, and I learned years later that they are not, some are not as successful as I am, so I don't know how to weigh that out. Just some guys had dads but it was like not having a dad [hum] because they were gone all the time, or he was too busy for them, and I had friends whose dads did a lot with them, and, like I said they took me along, and that was good, even though I knew I was not their son, they, you know treated me fairly..

I: So you feel maybe like you had a special position there to uhm take in other places good things, yet to become independent and learn to be by yourself..

D: Yeah, not having the other I don't know how to weigh it out, but I don't feel I was cheated, or that it was not fair. I just feel it's different, and it would have been nice at certain times in my life if I had had a dad there to sound off to, you know like when my son comes over and asks me a question, or seeks counsel, or wants a blessing, and I just did not have that. I mean I had access to a priesthood holder, but that's not like your dad, you know that's just not the same.

I: Do you think that is because he would know you better, or...?

D: Yeah, he would know you better, plus you know, I don't care who a person is, they will never love you like your own parents, you know their love is really unconditional, and they want the best for you even though it seems like they are trying to make life hard for you, but they are doing what's best for you. It's like I tell the youth often stay close

to your parents because no one will ever love you like your parents do. You know there are some parents that don't have that love, but even if you have a parent that has a hard time expressing feelings, and you know, I always tried to do that with my children, to tell them that I loved them, you know those words were never spoken in my house, and the touchy or hugging never happened in my house, it was an uncomfortable feeling, it just did not feel right...

I: Do you think you ever sought that from somewhere else? Like in a surrogate dad, or so..

D: No not that, in fact when someone hugged me it was kind of awkward, it wasn't natural for me, and so I had to learn that after I got married, and I've gotten a lot better with that. But, I think it's an important thing. And I think that's what's sad in society now if you do that its looked at being iffy, or pervert, or just something else, when all you are doing is just showing appreciation, or just kindness. I'd like to think that the Savior gives a lot of hugs, you know what I mean, and it does not matter whether it is male or female.

I: So, you didn't really seek for a father outside then...

D: No I did not seek for one because I had one, and no one could take his place.

I: But you appreciated...

D: I appreciated their offer of my friend's dads to include me, but I don't think in that inclusion I had a desire to have a dad, it was just a desire to be part of the game and to have the experience more so than to have the dad that was there...

I: Now you said in your account that over the years you have thought much about your father, and, what were such moments? What did you think about in such moments?

D: Oh, I just think about having him there when I went on my mission, maybe receiving letters that would encourage me, or what he would tell me when I got married, see how he would react to my first child, you know just natural life processes that go on. Being able to help me fix things that break, ... just having that association, you know, ...or going fishing together, and if that would have been a type of therapy against the stresses of life, an out so to speak, which, see, I haven't had. My father in law someone to help there too after I got married, he was a great example and there were times he and I just went camping or fishing, which was good, but see, it was not my dad, and it is not the same, I mean it is a good substitute at best, but it is not the same. So I have thought often times, you know just what he would have counseled, what he would have said, what it would have felt, yet at the same time I recognize there are guys who did not even ever had a relationship with their dad, and I think that's sad, because no matter how coarse or harsh a dad could be a child could always find a way to his heart and make something positive out of that. You know the dad might be grumpy but there is ways to reach his heart and have a good experience that both can draw memories from that.

I: Do you think when a boy has a situation like that it is not as hard as having a father die or is it harder?

D: Yeah, I mean, in some respects maybe it is better that I did not have a dad than have one that was always down and I would never measure up. I thought about that too. You know sometimes it's good to weigh two vice and find your own, and trial and error is not always the best way to experience life, you know. It's always good to learn from someone who has been where you are at, if your mind is open to that. But, I think, and I reflected that in my comments, I think, it is always better to have a dad if at all possible. My dad would have been someone who it would have not been hard to relate to, he would have been the opposite.

I: So you think its still better to have a dad or to not have a dad and to have a negative experience, or a negative experience someone could make better...?

D: No, well, I think it is always better to have a dad. And I think society reflects that. You know there have been a lot of studies that statistically show that lots of crime is going on because kids did not have a male role model who shows how to be a man. A man just stopped here yesterday who was a convicted felon who is now out of prison trying to change his life; didn't have a dad, and that's the first thing he said, you know, he did not have that role model showing how to be..., you know, so you are trying to learn some things... My way was fortunate, I did not resort to vices, you know, I resorted to good things, but [some others who are struggling] not and that was probably by...chance, or...[you think so?]....not by any great knowledge that I had!,... I think by chance or, I guess the spirit could have been there. But I did not really have that role model either, because my mother was not active [in the church]. Half of my brothers have gone inactive, and I am completely different than the rest of my family, and I don't know why that is. And maybe largely due to the fact that I did grow up without a father a lot youngest than my siblings, because my older brother was 17 when my dad died, there is a lot of difference loosing a dad at 17 then at ten, [um-hum] I think.

I: You think you maybe had a little bit of a role model still in your brothers?

D: My brothers were no role models. They were too busy. The only role model they were when they wanted to smack me around because I have done something wrong and they wanted to play dad, just to smack me around [laughter]. So sometimes I got smacked around, three and four times for doing one thing. Just because I came home and I wanted to take the role of dad...

I: Even though your dad did not hit, he just threatened...!

D: Yeah, they did it out of a power thing, I don't know.

I: So comparing against that man that just came out of prison, your life was different...uhm



D: I think the other reason I was different was because of where I grew up. I was not growing up in the slums of LA. I was growing up in Provo, Utah, which was a pretty upstanding community did not have any slums, I mean we had the other side of the trax, but it was not, do you know what I mean? We grew up with a lot of middle class people not a lot of rich not a lot of poor, so everyone was kind of common, so that was just a favorable condition. And even though my family was poor, it was not like I was poor, because, I don't know, because somehow the finances came, or there was help there that allowed me to function like I was middle class, you know even though I was poor.

I: You said in your account you accept your circumstance but that you feel sometimes like you miss your father, uhm..

D: Yeah I would be sad if I didn't, because I remember the good things, I don't remember the bad things. I am sure there were bad things, ... I know that dad was not necessarily the great provider because of his good-heartedness. We did not always have much. You know we moved a lot, because, you know at one time he was very successful, but then he just, he was just like I say he was too kind-hearted. Someone owed him money he would say, oh that's O.K. you don't have to pay me, if they had a hard time. I mean I remember that there were times when we weren't sure that we were going to have supper. But you see, there was still just a feeling of love that those things, ...I felt that dad was trying his best. And so, love went beyond those feelings, non-materialistic providing.

I: How do you think the death of your father affected your brothers and sisters?

D: Well, some of them probably had a similar experience as me, the older ones probably had a more mature mind and they were a little more prepared for it, it was not so dramatic for them. I think it affected my sisters. Technically my youngest sisters had any, dad, and by the time she was raised she was more like a grandchild, so she did not have a normal upbringing at all. And mom favored her, it was kind of a clinging. My sister never met my dad, but she kind of had his mannerisms. And I think my mom, my sister was part of dad, so to speak, more than the rest of us. So my little sister kind of filled the gap...

I: You said something like you were different than the rest of your family...

D: Yeah, I don't know why that is. But I think differently. I was raised the same, but I am not like my brothers and sisters at all.

I: Do you think that that impacted your healing in the whole situation as well?

D: Well sure, because I am the one that is always looked at as the go-to guy, you know. I mean I am the 9<sup>th</sup> child and yet I am the one that was always looked at as the decision maker, you know looking after mom and trying to get things taken care of. Now my one brother who is 8 years older than me he is doing more of that now, only because I fell back, I don't come forward to do it now, I stepped back when I can do it. When I moved

away I always hoped that they would pick up the slack and step forward, but they didn't. My mom would still call me. I was 3000 miles away and they were around here and would still call me for advise, and what not.

And part of that could be just because of my spiritual nature, being very active in the church, I was more grounded there than they, so even though they weren't active in the church they, though they chided with me, they were very respectful, so...

I: Now I am an LDS interviewer, and you are LDS, but, how would you describe your beliefs that helped you feel differently than, you know, perhaps your family...

D: I don't know if you can do that without being grounded in the basic, secure belief in God. The faith that He will bless you, and that he knows your circumstance. And so that's probably what helped me, that I had faith in the Lord, and that everything would work out.

I: That there is a loving God, type...?

D: Yeah, one who, ...you know I've never felt like a victim. Society always wants to victimize someone. I more or less felt that things happen for a reason that they can help us grow and make us better. This misperception that life should be easy, and like a holiday, maybe that's what I learned from loosing my dad, you know things are going to happen, when things don't seem fair or right, that's part of life and you just deal with it. You know maybe I learned that early...

I: Do you think that that maybe was the difference between you and your family?

D: Yeah, I mean I had a couple of brothers who were active, but I was still different than them...I mean, also, I can kind of straddle both realms, meaning I can understand very religious so to speak and I can also relate with those who aren't. See and that's also been my role in the family too. I was kind of a peace maker and mediator and the bridge between the active LDS and the non-active...My dad I don't know necessarily where he fell...

I was very slow to be offended, so when they (siblings) harassed or teased me, I'd joke right back at them. And they would do something to just cause anger or animosity, and that's part of their fun, is to get you [angry], but I would never get [angry]...

I: And you said you never felt like a victim, and how that experience is for you, how do you think you came to that point?

D: Because I had two or three guys in my grade school class that year that lost their fathers also, so I wasn't the only guy in the boat, so, I could see, you know, that kind of stuff happens. Of course their dads died, one in an auto accident another one in some other tragic accident. But the fact still remained that we all lost our dads. So I could see that I was not the only one, do you know what I mean? [Um-hum]. I mean, three guys in

my grade school class lost their dads that same year, you know! The interesting thing is though is the other two guys did not turn out that great, you know one's been married four or five times, the other one has been in prison, just they chose the rougher course, you know. I'm not sure that would have happened if their dad would have still been around, I don't know. So I think that helped me come to that conclusion that hey, it happens, it happens to my classmates too, you know?

I: And that things happen for a reason, like explain to me that belief a little more...

D: I don't know, I think all of us have some innate understandings, you know. We all have different testimonies of things that haven't necessarily come because of something that has happened in life, we just have it, you know, we just feel strongly about certain things for some reason. I don't know what precipitates that or what even creates that, and I just, I'm just, I don't know, I don't remember not feeling that way, things just happen for a reason, and we are here to experience different things, hard and good...

I: Do you know the reason, or do you just say things happen for a reason and I have faith and I don't need to know now..?

D: Well, I think some things we know and some we don't. We learn the reason as we go along. As we look back hindsight teaches us that 'oh, I can see why I've experienced that,' or look what I've learned from that.' For example the case with my wife (who had cancer) taught me to realize how important relationships were for me, far deeper than I would have if I hadn't ever experienced that. You know some things you have to put on the shelf to, and you don't understand why. I don't why certain people have to go through certain things, but they probably know why, a lot of them, but that's not for me to know sometimes, even though it seems unfair to me, like why do they have to go through this, it seems, how..., like they have to go through one thing after another...

I: Do feel like you always kind of knew why your dad died, or did you just put it on a shelf?

D: Yeah, I don't know, hum, I don't know. But maybe for my personality I had to lose my dad for me to develop the way I developed. Because I really think that things happen for a positive reason, for a reason that causes us to become more like our Heavenly Father, so for you that may be a whole different basket of things than for me, do you know what I mean, what might be a really trial for you might not be a trial at all for me and vice versa. And we see that all around us, don't we, we see people who go through what for us would be a terrible ordeal and they seem to just kind of cruise through it and are fine, others just like throw their whole world, like throw their whole apple cart over and can't function and are just so lost...

I: I wonder why that is...

D: Well, I think that has to do with faith too, you know all stems back to faith and trust in a God you believe knows you and loves you and understands your circumstance, you

know, [hum] as a bishop I've never counseled with those who had that belief, those who did not have that belief were the ones who could not stand, and came and needed a bishop...

I: A short question real quick, did your dad die suddenly, would you say, or did you guys anticipate it in some way?

D: No it was sudden. He was fine and he just had a heart attack. ... However, he told my brother left on a mission six months earlier that he wouldn't be there when he came back [hum!], so he had some premonitions [wow!] that he was soon to go, but I don't think he knew the day, it kind of played out...

I: I do want to ask you a little bit about how your father's death might have affected your courting time...

D: I don't know that it had much of an effect on that. The dating relationship brought more, brought something to your life that you didn't have, another relationship with someone who loved you, so in a way it filled a void. But dating wasn't fun, it was a frustration. I was never the handsome guy, I always felt like I was rejected a lot to a certain degree,... For a while I kind of dated girls that I felt I could rescue, do you know what I mean.

I: Why do you think was that?

D: I don't know, maybe I had a greater sympathy for those women because of the way I grew up, I don't know, that may just be a quality I may have always had, whether I had a dad or not had a dad. But I, I have a real sympathy for those who are struggling emotionally...

## Second Interview

I: Your strength really stood out to me in the last interview. And I want to talk a little bit about that today. For example, it seems to me like, even before the death of your father, although you told me of all the nice memories you have of him doing things with you, like going to the café, etc, and I don't know where your mom was in that picture, but it seems to me like you already had to be strong before your father's death..

D: Yeah, perhaps. Maybe that was because there were so many children and I was one of the youngest. You know dad was busy trying to work, mom was busy doing her thing, I don't even recall what mom did, she was not really working, but I am sure a house full of kids, you know doing the wash, and trying to keep the house up, maybe I had to learn independence early, I don't know, I mean my next youngest brother was six years older than me, so it's not like you were going to pile around with him, you know what I mean? [um-hum], because he was old enough that he did not want his own brother to hanging out. And then I have a sister above me and below me, so you know, its just different, though we did play a lot together and spent a lot of time together, I think we were just left

alone to a certain degree, so when I could spend my time with dad, I enjoyed spending time with him.

I: Would you say your dad was kind of the more nurturing one?

D: He probably was for me, at that time. I feel my mom was more an oppressor than nurturing. So even after my dad died I, course she went to work, it just seems like, I mean later in her years, I can't say I was her favorite, but kind of, you know, maybe because I was the most accomplished, but she was overprotective a lot of times and I feel like she did not trust me, and I didn't know the reason why she did not trust me, but she would, it was like she wanted to keep me on a leash kind of a little bit, you know. [hum]. And I think I later found out why, was because I think she had some wild oats as a youngster and she did not want me to fall into those same patterns that she fell into, you know...

I: Some wild what?

D: Oats, in other words she was kind of wild. I mean she kind of rebelled against her parents, her dad was you know kind of an alcoholic, kind of verbally abusive, I don't think he was physically abusive, but kind of a mean old guy, scary, you know gruff..

I: Did you still know your grandfathers?

D: Just one. My father's father passed away when I was one.

I: How old was your dad when he passed away again?

D: He was 59.

I: 59. Hum, like it seems to me, like even the way you told me your story last time, and, I don't know maybe you have come to grips with it now and it makes sense to you now, but even telling it last time I thought that there was not much of a big change for you there, I mean, just missing a nurturing father kind of, but not really...

D: You know if you haven't experienced a father really what do you know that you have missed? [um-hum] I mean, life is life, you know, you make the best of it and fill in the gaps, and that's probably what I did, but that could be why I am where I am with respects to being somewhat of a loner, you know, I don't necessarily care to be out with the boys, I can be out with the boys, and I can be out with friends golfing or playing a game of basket ball, but I don't have to be. You know where some people if they don't have people around them all the time, you know, I am O.K.

I: So you kind of have taken care of yourself..

D: Yeah, and so I don't feel, this isn't totally true, but I don't really feel a need for dependency. But by the same token, I think I am somewhat dependable on my wife. I am so glad she is around and have her to share with, you know. But generally speaking I

don't feel, nor do I count on people necessarily, because people are not dependable, a lot of them.. I see it every day at work, you know people don't meet their commitments, and I was always taught, you know, if you've made a commitment you keep it, or you certainly come in if you've goofed up and say 'sorry I don't know what happened, I'm sorry it's my fault, I should have been more dependable...you know...So, I don't know where that comes from, if its from living a life that's somewhat, I don't want to say alone, but it always kind of was that way, life is always kind of lonely, even with the friends I had, I always felt like I was kind of the third wheel, like they just had me tag along. You know I think I mentioned later that I've since found out that they relied more on me than I realized, but I always felt like I was not really part. [hum]

I: Was you father active in the church?

D: Yeah he was active in the church [...] Mom was not really active til later

I: Later when?

D: Well, when I went on my mission she was discouraging me from going. She kind of got active when I got home. And when my sister had a child out of wedlock she kind of became active for my nice, you know, and she practically raised her granddaughter there, and she was active...active enough that she would go to the temple...but I think she only went because I was taking one of our old lady neighbors and she was jealous, so we got her a temple recommend so she could go too, you know [smile].

I: I just kind of wonder where you got your level of activity from, cause I mean your dad was active, but...

D: I can't answer that, I mean I wondered that many times, I mean I have a sister and a brother and another sister that re active and the rest really aren't per se.

I: And you guys did not communicate with each other, or like had family home evening, or

I: We did, I started family home evenings, we'd have it once a month until the last couple of years because everyone's families have gotten too big and their kids have gotten married, so we still get together a couple of times a year, but we did that and when they came to my house I gave them a full-blown lesson! [laughter] and you know when we went to other places, thay did not do a lesson, they'd just eat, and, but it was still important to get together

I: Did your father do that?

D: We never had family home evening or anything. I started them when I came home from my mission, I started scripture reading, so my mission changed a few things, it was just different, I don't know why that is, because we were all basically raised the same way, you know...? [hum]

I: How did you decide to go on a mission?

D: I probably decided because all my friends were going, I was one of the last ones to leave, but I probably went because all my buddies went. And when I got out there, you know it was tuff at first, but I made some commitments with the Lord, just trying to keep them, and I think that probably changed me a lot. I experienced some pretty miraculous things in a lot of respects. I experienced kind of a feeding of the multitudes when little was there and a lot was left over, I experienced the tempering of the elements or the weather. I experienced healing the sick in a miraculous way. A lady with a brain tumor, her daughter sought us out, she was not a member of the church, her daughter was investigating, asked us if we could give her mother a blessing and her mother was comatose when we went there. And my companion, I just anointed and my companion sealed, but he spoke this eloquent Japanese that I have never heard a missionary speak. And we were both so weak after we got through giving the blessing that we went home and rest. And a week later that lady sent us a note and thanked us and she was totally recovered, no brain tumors, nothing.

So I saw enough to know there is something to all of that stuff, you know, and then I've just build upon that as a youth. I haven't conversed with angels per se, but I've just had moments and experiences, you know,...or when I was a priest, I remember taking the sacrament to the shut-ends, I remember having some special experiences where a man with leukemia whom I'd have to give the cup to his mouth, ...so I remember feeling something special from those occasions, [um-hum] something that was good, something that brought piece, something that said to me its good for you to do this. This is what life's about. I've had a real affinity towards the prophet Joseph Smith. You know I had I think a significant whiteness of his first vision and here again I have not seen angels, but there were some pretty overwhelming feelings I've had. So, that is why I don't, I was really raised void of the church in many respects, I mean I always went, lots of times my parents didn't, and I don't know why I went, part of it was probably sociality, we had a pretty big ward with a lot of kids my age, you know [um-hum], and I probably went because it was a more positive thing then perhaps I was experiencing at home, you know what I mean, [um-hum] [um-hum]and so it felt good to be there, or better than to be at home perhaps, and I don't want to picture the home as bad, but it just ..wasn't always positive..

I: Just a better feeling ...?

D: Just a better feeling of where I was at and of what I was doing. And I think there were a lot of kids in the ward who were kind to me. In fact, and that was interesting too, I didn't realize, I was talking to [one of the girls that was in my ward not too long ago at a funeral which was the funeral of her mother] and she put her arms around me and said 'you were the only boy who was nice to me when I was young' you know what I mean, [um-hum] so then you hear those things and you thing, well maybe there is a purpose for me, even though I have not done any grandiose things, maybe some of the simple things I have done were significant in people's lives.

I: You think you maybe got that role in your family?

D: Yeah, no question. [hum]. All of my brothers and sister at one time or another have come to me with problems or concerns, feelings of inadequacy or whatever, and I have always felt like I've had to be the strong one, and I even when my wife got cancer, like then they were good to kind of rally, but I still felt I had to be the strong one, you know...[um-hum, um-hum]

I: And you said that your father was this good-natured person and that he maybe could not provide so well, but that this was not as important as the nurturing...

D: Yeah, well you know, I think a ten year old does not really understand poverty that well...we always had food on the table, it was pretty simple and sometimes, you know I remember receiving welfare from the church...

I: Your role that we were kind of talking about before, do you see that again with regards to your dad not being able to provide...?

D: No, I don't think I provided any strength to him, necessarily, and if so that's something he would have to share with me when I get on the other side because that is not something I could know...

I: Um, now just a clarifying question. There was something I might have misunderstood in the previous interview..., like you said something like its, ...well, I am just going to ask you, do you think it's better to not have a dad due to death rather than have a bad situation?

D: No, I think optimally it would be good to have a dad that really was a meter of a strength, no question, but I think I stated that I probably became stronger than I would have been by not having a dad, but my dad was not as strong either, if you know what I mean? [yeah, um-hum, O.K]. So I think the optimal is to have, if I had Joseph Smith's father for example, he showed the right kind of dad, or I am sure father Adam was a good father, or Lehi or Nephi, or people like that. There is no question that that's a better circumstance than not, but I think even in my own situation, I mean even though I am not the perfect dad, my kids have been very blessed by having two parents that love each other, have common goals, or teach good values. And I think I have been there for my kids...So I think no question the optimal thing is..., and that's a divine thing ordained of God, isn't it, but it's just that human nature sometimes takes over so that the optimal doesn't happen, we become selfish, don't nurture our marriage relationships, see that relationship has a big impact on society and we see that...

I: Yeah, so that's what you meant by, but if it is not ideal, the child can make things better



D: Sure, I don't think we ever have to be victim of anything, particularly if you have the gospel in your life...it's the gospel that teaches you anti-victim, I think that's part of why we are here in life, is to fight against that tendency to be a victim and to get into the poor me's. I mean there are plenty of stories of people who rose above their circumstances. Mine is a very meager story compared to most. People who, I mean those early pioneer saints and what they gave up for the gospel and they were willing to give their lives on the planes even in hopes that their families would make it that far and that the rest would get here. They were not afraid of death because they were dying in the right thing and for the right cause. I guess I feel a lot the same way [um-hum] [hum]. If I die, I die, you know. I have to ready myself for that I guess...but it seems I am not done yet, I need to take care of whatever it might still. But I am really starting to understand the concept of you got to live each day like it's your last because quite literally it could be...you know, now I see that death could be an option...

I: Weren't you ever scared of anything in life?

D: I don't know, not really scared of anything other than when I fell short of the mark. When I fell short of commitments I made or did not always follow through of commitments I made. I think I was a little afraid of my mom. She had a heavy hand sometimes...and she was somewhat oppressive in some respects [um-hum] you know and you learn to deal with it and its not a big deal. You overcome those fears and you also understand that she was doing it out of love not out of anger, but we don't always see that until later you know...

I: Again maybe going back to the dating for a little bit, you said that you often dated girls that you felt you could rescue, or help in some way? I don't know if your wife then also felt into this category... I am just also wondering how you decided to marry your wife versus the other girls... any thoughts on those things?

D: Well, I don't know I think [marrying my wife was] pure luck. [pure luck? Laughter] Well,...[divine intervention?] Yeah, I think it was divine intervention to a certain degree, although I feel there was probably a little bit like something where I felt like I could [give something to her], Like be the guy that could always take care of her, you know? [um-hum] And in a lot of ways we were a lot alike in that we felt like we never really fit in, so we were buddies, we were a lot alike, we thought a lot the same, and just filled in the gaps for each other. And so it became apparent quite quickly I did not have to be somebody I wasn't, I could just be me, and she was O.K with me being me, that was quite refreshing. [um-hum] Because others I dated it seemed like you couldn't really be who you wanted to be; you always had to be who they wanted you to be, and that was hard. Quite frankly when I met my wife I was through dating, I've just had it. Seems like everyone I met it would go well for a while and then they would break it off, or the ones you did not really care much about and could not get rid off, you know...I don't know, my wife was just what I needed. And she changed me a lot through her goodness not through cohesion, just through her goodness.

I: By chance huh?! [laughter]

D: By chance, yeah, how about by chance with divine help. And maybe that's come because of the choices I've made. But maybe I am closer to the Spirit than I realize or am giving credit for. And I only say that because of what others tell me. I don't feel like I have a handle on anything. I think maybe I just have a good heart and I try to keep that heart good and try to be as honest as I can with other people...that's who I am. I hope that I am the same wherever I am, I mean I don't put on a different face, I mean in my beliefs and expressions...

I cut off the end of the second interview here so that I could include it in my analysis section because it had too much material I wanted to quote.

## APPENDIX F

### Sample of collecting significant statements.

#### MELINDA SIGNIFICANT STATEMENTS: EFFECTS OF FATHER ABSENCE

Table 1.1

Important statements from the written questionnaire:

1. Father committed suicide after some drug addiction
2. Parents separated
3. As a child I remember inventing a father when talking to other children
4. I don't remember missing my father
5. I remember being very close to him
6. Father was my main care taker (before separation)
7. Dad was unemployed
8. Mother remarried. This new husband never became a father figure.
9. Being fatherless had the biggest impact on my life when I started dating and finally met my husband
10. It took me a while to know what to look for in a husband
11. My mom and family was shocked by the similarity between [my future husband] and my father
12. My husband and I dated for two years before we got engaged
13. After the engagement I started dreaming of my father every night ...dreams were scary...I often woke up worried...I had a hard time falling asleep. At that point I started therapy
14. (Dreaming that dream one more time) I had a chance to have a conversation with him (father). He embraced me.
15. When I had my first daughter I started having sleep issues again ... Strong fear of abandonment
  
16. Important statements from the first interview
17. Parents separated one year before suicide
18. We (Melinda and father) actually had a very strong bond
19. I remember situations. I remember going on outings with him and spending time with him, like to the drug rehabilitation center where he was a volunteer, on trips to his sister in Switzerland, going to the zoo
20. I remember that I was always very happy to be with him
21. Was concerned about her father. Concerned that he was smoking
22. I don't think I really understood drug addiction, but I understood that he was smoking
23. One time I hid his cigarettes from him
24. He never got mad at me (2)
25. The reason when he actually was clean for all these years was because I was there, that was his motivation..., but at some point it was not enough
26. Mom was the protector inside of family and outside (3)

27. Mom said if you cannot stay clean you cannot stay in the same house (with the children) (3)
28. Mom had a very difficult upbringing, taught herself to read
29. No tension was felt in the home (marital discord) (2). Mom and dad were not loud people.
30. But, mom was the boss
31. Mom was often sad, because she was alone after the separation, but no tension
32. Advantage over families that just got separated (where there was discord)
33. Dad was not in her life at all=advantage over peers who had fathers in the home and discord between parents
34. Only good memories of her dad
35. Mom did not explain death of the father to the kids until they asked questions about it when they were older
36. Mom remarried but he did not take the father role. Mother was the parent. He was a good friend and did many things a father would help with in the home though, like provide financially, or fix things. He is considered the grandfather to Melinda's children
37. I also did not have a need that much for a father. Sister who did not know their dad had had a much bigger need for a father
38. Family had long history of addiction, child abuse, and everything that can go wrong on the father's side and mother's side, but mother's side not as bad because the parents were out of the picture, the effect was not as bad.
39. It is easier to have no parents than bad parents because you can say "well my real parents would have been great" you have always that hope in the back of your mind. But when you have bad parents there is just no hope
40. Started dating when 17
41. Met my husband when I was 19 and dated him 2 years
42. Length of dating did not have anything to do with not having had a father. Its just the German culture
43. I always wanted boys who had strong parents and strong personalities. Took me a while to learn how to read men, because I did not have that experience (2)
44. Mother did not get very involved in the dating experience, because she had two more children in the new marriage, which was kind of good. She would know where I was and stuff, I had a curfew, but she would let me a lot of freedom. That actually really helped me to be confident in my decision, because it was my decision.
45. My father was a very artistic person and all of my boyfriends were artists
46. Current husband moved like my dad, looks like him as in appearance"Life has a way to sneak in these little connections"
47. New husband of mothers drove her to dances and youth conferences, they would talk, and told her that she was doing well in life as a person, etc. and that was a huge thing. He really could be a father figure, but it was just too late at that point. He gave me a lot of things a father gives
48. Experiencing a father figure caused me to freak out when I had my own children with my husband (main anxiety when having a girl).

**MELINDA****MEANING UNITS AND THEMES**

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1. **Dealing with the loss (hard things):** e.g. making up positive stories about dad (3), facing, acknowledging, and accepting fear (3), Autogenic Training (emptying mind and breathing calmness in and fear out) (1), persistent effort to overcome fear (1), acceptance of own needs (1), dream (3), going through the loss emotionally (1), trust in life (1), faith in the unknown/not disturbed by the unknown (2), called relatives of dad as an adult and went to the old home to understand father's background (1), having theories about origin of fear—giving fear a reason or cause helps eliminate it (1)/(tot.18).
  2. **Dealing with the loss (not hard things)/Not missing/need for dad:** e.g. had enough time with him (4), was a gradual goodbye—death only one step in that process (1), it was not a traumatic loss, it was not so conscious (5), as a teenager I did not feel a need to deal with the loss (1), we were so little (at the time of the loss of father) that we just accepted it (1), we moved and he just did not move with us (1), I don't think I was so concerned about my parents being together (1), We lived in a commune, I don't know that I really had a picture about a family unit (2), it was not like someone (dad) purposefully hurt us (1)/(tot.17).
  3. **Controversial themes:** loss was not a traumatic thing (2)—vs. anxiety (7); I never felt abandoned, because my mom was fully there (1)—vs. fear of abandonment later (2); I was abandoned, especially because he was someone who loved me so much (1); I am sure I must have asked where he went (when dad suddenly was gone), but mom said it was not a big subject (1); I am extremely trusting towards my husband (1)...but there is anxiety when he comes home later or is on a trip; Had a "happy childhood" (3)—vs. anxiety later (7)/(tot.6).
  4. **Positive things taken from being fatherless:** e.g. death over divorce—never parental discord, never had to choose sides, bias free/openness when dating (5)/(tot.7).
  5. **Disadvantages of fatherlessness:** but not really disadvantages—e.g. took a while to know how to read men (1), abandonment (3), anxiety during engagement (2), anxiety when having her own kids (3)/(tot.9).
  6. **Bonding with father:** e.g. always very happy to be with him, made food for me, went on outings, trips w/ M., never was mad at me, stayed clean because of me (tot.8), somehow had enough time with him (4)/(tot.12).
  7. **Independence:** regard. father—e.g. not needing/wanting father substitute, financial or any other help (5), appreciated dating without help (2), schoolwork came easy (1)/(tot.8).
  8. **Worry, anxiety, unresolved loss:** e.g. concerned about him, dreaming about dad, issues falling asleep after being married (7), fear of abandonment (2)/(tot.11).
  9. **Advantages of Mother:** e.g. protector, strong despite difficult upbringing (2), good with children, stands up for children (4), my mother was the boss—"drugs and kids don't mix," explains death to kids when they ask and can understand but does not holdback explanation (4), conveyed that children were loved by dad (2), never talked

- bad about him (4), critical but understanding of dad's addiction, never let herself go/fall into a depression (2), can't remember being poor (3), planted some of helpful beliefs in children (3) (see below) /(totl.24).
10. **Disadvantages of mother:** were not really disadvantages, but e.g. sadness, loneliness (3), I did not have to take over a mothering role, but I was concerned about her (2) /(tot.5).
  11. **Advantages of father:** e.g. never discord, knew that I was loved during first years, (3) /(tot.4).
  12. **Disadvantages of father:** e.g. addiction (3), generational history of addiction and abuse /(tot.4).
  13. **Advantages of parents:** e.g. never marital discord or fighting, no animosity, never had to chose sides, my mom was not a very loud person nor was my dad (2) /(tot.5).
  14. **Support network (positive):** step father—helps fix things (2), talks, gives rides, good friend but does not try to be father (2), commune (1), social security, clothes from family (1), Melinda's husband (1), mother (24) /(tot.34).
  15. **Support network (negative):** church (2), moving to the United States (1) /(tot.3)
  16. **Helpful Beliefs:** e.g. "It's worse to have bad parents than to have no parents," better to have a dead father than a suffering father, "you figure most stuff out by yourself anyways," "I believe in an afterlife," (2) "I truly believe that everything will be forgiven (3)," "there are things thought we are adults we are not responsible for it," "we are not immediately condemned for choices we make—they are there so we can learn from them," "I think my dad is forgiven," "I always think my dad is proud of our accomplishments and for breaking the chain," "father is still somewhere and can meet me still," "we will be able to be with people we can't be with right now again and it's going to be easier," "we are surrounded by people who want good for us, I can feel that and those are our ancestors and people that love us (2)," "it was the best way for dad (to be dead), his death was necessary, could not have gone anywhere from where he was," "my mom was more abandoned than anyone (than me) (3)," trust in life, "It was just life, it was not purposefully bad," "we have everything within us to heal ourselves in every way (3)," Heavenly Father guides us and helps us at times" /(totl.26).
  17. **Helpful personality:** outspoken (1), creative, independent, self-confident, stubborn (strong willed), determined, thoughtful—e.g. "it's all theories"(2), open to possibilities (4), achiever/sense of responsibility (3), ambitious /(tot.16).
  18. **Hardships not categorized as necessarily related to fatherlessness:** e.g. Still does not sleep as deep sometimes (1), difficulties feeling at home in the U.S. (2), Melinda does not initiate friendships and is not so energetic in the public circle anymore (1), anxiety (7) /(tot.11).
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Table 1.3

**MELINDA**

**CENTRAL THEMES**

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1. Having positive image of dad—he is still around, only in a different way
  2. Understands his absence (need for his absence)
  3. Does not understand/has fully reconciled with her being abandoned emotionally
  4. Being strong: For mother and for dad
  5. Courage and trust in life and in oneself
  6. Independent, strong, inquisitive, and creative personality
  7. Self-honest and self-accepting (knows how to take care of herself)
  8. Melinda's anxiety and her weaknesses generally are acknowledged (self-honesty) and dealt with in the best way she can (being herself), in faith (trust in life, in herself) and with endurance and persistence (strong willed personality and upbringing).
  9. Extremely supportive mother in every way—herself an example of strength and resilience
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Table 2.1

**EVA**  
**MEANING UNITS AND THEMES**

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1. **Disadvantages of fatherlessness:** Eva could not bond with her father (3), missed dad on daddy-daughter activities, misses someone who loves and protects and prides in her (2), family was broken up, no father there to counsel when going into first marriage, missing father as strong backbone: e.g. shame, feelings of inadequacy, which might be linked to trying to solve problems which Eva thinks come from being fatherless but really might have other causes, inexperienced in relating to men and boys (3), sought physical comfort, protection, and acceptance, father hunger (6) by a male which resulted in first marriage /(tot.19)
2. **Dealing with the loss (hard things in general):** Persistently seeking answers to questions (5), acknowledgement of own needs (5), therapy (3), learning through life's experiences, even though they were difficult—e.g. marriages (4), prayer, Gospel, spiritual comfort (4)—e.g. having a mission in first marriage for a time, observing other people and families, majoring in child development, acceptance of hard things, growing from being tired of being in agony and changing perspective or simply moving on (5), hope in an afterlife and reconciliation (2), gratitude for good things, turning bad circumstances into successes (2) /(tot.30)
3. **Controversial themes:** Eva felt she had a father, yet she missed having him in her life; self-confidence issue from loss of father vs. loss of mother when she was unavailable due to grieving; supportive mother, but had nervous breakdown—Eva constantly talks well of her, but suffered from low self-esteem that probably did not solely come from her fatherlessness; seeking answers a plus, but might also be a result of insecurity and feelings of inadequacy; Eva says felt she had a father because of mother, but she still has father hunger; was independent or emotionally on her own a lot, but followed mothers influence when agreeing to marry first husband—did not trust her own instincts (2); sought for physical comfort, protection and love in first husband, but did not really feel safe with him; on one hand Eva says she did not experience shame or guilt bec. her husband wanted her to feel that, on the other hand she says that she does not feel she is a successfully coping person bec. of her first husband's accusations /(tot.8)
4. **Independence:** e.g. did not want another man to step in and be a father (2), family independence (3), after her divorce, Eva could have lived alone, just moving on (2), personal independence (3) /(tot.10)
5. **Advantages of Mother:** Tells Eva how delighted father was when she was born and that she was loved (2), tries to provide well for Eva's (2), made effort to make father still part of home and children's perceptions (5), only talks well of the father, plants good beliefs in children—"daddy is just away for a time" (3), teaching about priesthood—a male role /(tot.13)



6. **Disadvantages of mother:** not really seen or talked about as disadvantages; mother maybe could not provide the closure of the father's death the kids needed; had a nervous breakdown and left the kids with relatives (3), Eva did not have a lot of time with her (4) /(tot.9)
  7. **Support network (positive):** e.g. grandfather: father figure (2), had great concern for her (3), "totally adored" Eva, going around with her, teaching her (1), reading to her, telling her stories, sit on his lap and hold his hand, disciplined her, gave blessings, taught her facts of life, sensitive to not step in her father's shoes wholly /(tot. 13), bishop, therapist, brother. /(tot. 16)
  8. **Support Network (negative):** parents of Eva's father were not so nurturing, first marriage (3): berating, blaming her for fatherlessness; mother had nervous breakdown (3)/ (tot.5)
  9. **Helpful Beliefs:** All of life is a growing process, adversity can either kill you or make you stronger, life is supposed to stretch you, the dead are with us when we need them, afterlife and reconciliation and knowing all the answers /(tot.6)
  10. **Helpful personality:** inquisitive, determined, patient, honesty towards self (4)
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