

“I am making it without you, dad”: fatherless female students

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Declaration

I, Ncamisile Thumile Zulu declare that

1. The research reported in this dissertation, except where otherwise indicated, is my original research.
2. This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
3. This dissertation does not contain other persons' data, pictures, graphs or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.
4. This dissertation does not contain other persons' writing, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other researchers. Where other written sources have been quoted, then:
 - a. Their words have been re-written but the general information attributed to them has been referenced
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Signature of student

Signature of supervisor

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.....

Date: 1/12/2014

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to all South African women who grew up
fatherless.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to give my greatest gratitude to my heavenly Father who has not only enabled me to complete this dissertation but has sustained me throughout my studies.

I would also like to express my many thanks to the following for their assistance and support in making this dissertation a success:

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Abstract

Historically, the awareness of the influence of paternal absence on females was largely overlooked by society. In contrast, maternal presence was acknowledged as the most important parental influence for a child's growth and development. This is particularly true within the Black South African context where fathers were constructed to be "breadwinners" who stayed in the city for work, leaving their children behind in the rural areas in the care of their mothers (Lesejane, 2006). The South African literature that has recently risen on the issue of paternal absence has been primarily focused on the outcomes of father absent boys. The influence of paternal absence on Black females remains largely unexplored by researchers. This social constructionist study was conducted with Black South African father absent female students from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg campus in 2014. From the perspective of resilience theory blended with the traditional African metaphysical framework, the study intended to contribute to filling a gap in literature by presenting the discursive tools (i.e. the meanings conveyed through the use of language and interaction) that Black South African female students employ when portraying their lives of growing up without a father. Five women participated in this study. Collectively, the participants constructed themselves to be resilient to victimisation that was due to fatherlessness. The women portrayed themselves to be self-sufficient and empowered in relation to their identities, academic performance, relationships and attitude towards men, career and future prospects. These findings offer new insights to literature pertaining to paternal absence. The findings also aid in valuing a different way that some Black females construct their lives of growing up without a father.

Keywords: Africentric, Black father absent female students, identity, academic performance, relationships, career and future prospects, conversation, resilience

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Chapter 1. Introduction

Dad

*All those times I cried for you, you never came
Out of all the sports I played
You never showed up at one game
All of the awards I received
I never heard you clap
You were never there
For me to sit on your lap
All the times I fell
and scratched my knee
You were the one who wasn't there
To comfort me
All those times I was bored
And wanted someone to call
You still weren't there
Not there at all
I always tried to make you proud
Hoping you would love me more
but you never seemed to care
So what did I even do it for
You weren't there for any of my firsts
Might not be for any of my lasts
It's like you're not here in my present
Just like you weren't there in my past
I try to move on
But no one knows how hard it is
For your own father not to love you
As much as he loves his other kids
But I hold my head high
To keep things from looking so bad
But deep down I still wish
I had love from my dad*

(poem by Jacqueline M. Smith)¹

¹ Source: <http://www.familyfriendpoems.com/poem/love-starved#ixzz3D70ywNuG>
Family Friend Poems

The origin of the study

The opening poem presents the phenomenon of paternal absence; this is the very phenomenon that I was interested in investigating. Research laments that fatherlessness among children, specifically within the Black² South African context, is found to be commonplace (Eddy, Thomson-de Boor, & Mphaka, 2013). Children that grow without fathers usually feel unloved by their fathers and as a result are hurt, grieved and resentful of their fathers, much like the preceding poem writer. In her poem, the writer frequently uses phrases such ‘never there’ ‘weren’t there’ ‘wasn’t there’ ‘not here’ to perhaps emphasise to her father that she was in fact observing his unavailability and non-involvement in her life-course. My personal story pertaining to paternal absence in females largely informed the study. I have numerous family members that have experienced fatherlessness from an early age or even before birth, including my own mother who was abandoned by her father at infancy stage. I have engaged in numerous conversations with these family members about the issue of fatherlessness and the conversations that emerged were a big part in cementing my decision to conduct a study with father absent females who are at a university institute. The reason behind the sample choice was that I sought to investigate whether what I had gathered from my previous conversations with my father absent female relatives (who seemed to predominantly construct themselves as victims that are powerless and helpless, especially in terms of identity, education and future prospects, which they indirectly attribute to paternal absence) is consistent with father absent females who are already attaining high educational outcomes. I do acknowledge that the sample choice is likely to determine the outcomes of the study. The reason underlying the selection of Black female students is twofold. Firstly, the issue of father absenteeism in South Africa is prevalent within the Black community (Eddy et al., 2013), and seems to have been mostly explored in men/boys. Secondly, by virtue of their present educational activity attainment, Black female university students are clearly in the process of attaining an advanced educational outcome. Therefore, in contrast to dominant literature and perceptions of children from father absent households, Black

²Even though StatsSA (2013) refers to people of African ancestry as Africans, this dissertation will refer to people who are of Sub-Saharan African ancestry or who are perceived to be ‘dark-skinned’ in relation to other racial groups as Black. This is because the everyday term that the researcher and others within her communal context uses to refer to herself and themselves is Black.

female university students would have overcome the expectation of low educational outcomes. It is also key to understand that fatherhood is socially constructed and so different people will conceptualise fatherhood (and fatherlessness) in different ways (Eddy et al., 2013).

1.1 Overview of the chapter

The introduction chapter began by introducing the phenomenon of interest via written poetry in order to ease the reader into the dissertation. Some commentaries on the poem were presented in relation to my personal connection with the phenomenon. The chapter sets to adequately introduce the dissertation in its entirety. The chapter will do this by explicitly introducing the phenomenon under study, stating the problem that it wants to solve and presenting the conceptual frameworks that will be used to understand the phenomenon. The purpose of the study will thereafter be plainly stated, together with the research questions that were formulated. Importantly the significance of the study will be highlighted and then finally the organisation of the entire dissertation will be outlined.

1.2 Introduction of the phenomenon

In the Black South African society the term “father” is not necessarily exclusive to the biological father but can also apply to other males from the extended family such as the younger and older brother of the father. These men are termed *Ubab’omncane* and *Ubab’omkhulu* respectively (Denis & Ntsimane, 2006; Mkhize, 2006; Nduna & Sikweyiya, 2013). Although there are a variety of forms of “fathers” in Black South African culture, for the purposes of the study reported in this dissertation, an absent father specifically refers to the biological father of the daughter.

Fatherhood within the Black South African context has been influenced by the South African political history. In the twentieth century most Black fathers were primarily separated from their children by the need to work. Most Black men would work in distant places on different work experiences on terms of migrant contracts which only permitted yearly home visits (Morrell & Richter, 2006). It is therefore suggested that most Black children would have grown up without paternal presence within their household. Women were for the most part deemed to be the sole

carers of the children (Morrell & Richter, 2006). In contemporary South African society, it is for reasons such as unemployment and poverty (which may be linked to the legacy of apartheid) in addition to divorce and abandonment that many Black South African men are unable to take up the responsibility of fatherhood (Eddy et al., 2013; Mkhize, 2006; Morrell & Richter, 2006). Absent or non active fathers are fathers that are physically and emotionally absent from their children and therefore interact irregularly with the child, and ultimately do not have a significant impact on the child's growth (Eddy et al., 2013; Krohn & Bogan, 2001). It is hence suggested that children who do not live, communicate or get any maintenance from their fathers are father absent children (Eddy et al., 2013). This is the parameter that this dissertation considered for paternal absent females.

In as much as the aforementioned factors behind the absence are acknowledged and may even lead others to pardon the absence, however it still remains that the children are left without their fathers and may therefore have long-term suffering due to this happenstance. Much literature postulates that fatherlessness can infuse deep emotional grief for females and can capitulate adverse outcomes which comprise of early sexual activity, teenage pregnancy, poor academic performance and other psychological and developmental hardships (Clowes, Ratele & Shefer, 2013; East, Jackson, & O'Brien, 2007; Eddy et al., 2013; Jones & Benda, 2008; Luo, Wang & Gao, 2011; Morrell & Richter, 2006; Nduna & Sikweyiya, 2013; Strauss, 2013).

1.3 Statement of the problem

The focus of popular literature on the overarching topic tends to be on how males are influenced by paternal absence rather than females. The studies that do incorporate father absent females are usually either from outside the South African context, not exclusively from a Black female's perspective or the women are not necessarily from a tertiary institution. A gap in knowledge pertaining to the issue of paternal absence among Black South African father absent female students is evident. This study is necessary in order to elucidate the ways that Black South African female students talk about and make sense of being father absent in relation to their identity, academic performance, relationships with and attitudes towards men and their career and future prospects. The bulk of literature on the topic of father absent females primarily

investigates their sexual activities and developments (Delpriore & Hill, 2013; Ellis et al., 2003). There is therefore a need to investigate other life areas that could be influenced by paternal absence such as the female's identity, academic performance, relationships with and attitudes towards men and career and future prospects. Most studies which have paternal absence as their focus miss great richness as they largely draw on thematic analysis and as a result meaning attached to being father absent may not be prioritised. The need to conduct a study that considers paternal absence together with the meaning that females without fathers attach to this phenomenon from their language-in-interaction (conversation analysis) is surfaced.

1.4 Conceptual framework for the study

Since the study aimed to consider the topic of paternal absence from a Black South African context, it was fitting for the traditional African metaphysical framework (Mkhize, 2004) and resilience theory (Theron, 2013) to be used as lens to comprehend the phenomenon from the Black South African perspective. These theories were deemed appropriate as they allowed the understanding, viewing and construction of reality from an Africentric perspective. Both these frameworks consider people's indigenous communal and social worldviews, philosophies and values when attempting to understand the way they think, talk and behave (Mkhize, 2004). The African traditional metaphysical framework postulate that family (both the living and the dead, and the living who are absent) and community make up an important part of the individual's personal identity and social reality (Langa, 2012; Mkhize, 2004). It is thus indicated that from an Africentric perspective, the self is largely context-based. Resilience theory from a Black South African youth's perspective asserts that a young person's resilient interactions are influenced by the socio-cultural context that the youth finds him or herself in (Theron, 2013). Resilience theory asserts that educational aspiration within the Black South African youth context is one of the esteemed indicators of resilience. In addition, resilience theory asserts that positive adjustment to disadvantageous circumstances can be facilitated by making good use of the naturally occurring resources that Black South African youth may have access to such as extended families and cultural communities (Theron, 2013).

1.5 Purpose of the study

This study sought to make apparent the discursive tools that Black South African female students from the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), Pietermaritzburg (PMB) campus use to construct their lives of growing up without a father. The discursive tools will be made explicit from the conversations between the researcher and the participants. The study was interested in how Black father absent female student's "talk-in-interaction" (Miller & Fox, 2004, p. 40) was employed in portraying their identity, academic performance, relationships with and attitudes towards men and career and future prospects in relation to growing up without a father.

1.6 Research questions

The study intended to answer the following questions:

1. How do Black South African female students construct their identity in relation to growing up without a father?
2. How do Black South African female students construct their academic performance in relation to growing up without a father?
3. How do Black South African female students construct their relationships with men in relation to growing up without a father?
4. How do Black South African female students construct their attitudes towards men in relation to growing up without a father?
5. How do Black South African female students construct their career and future prospects in relation to growing up without a father?

1.7 Significance of the study

With finding the answers to the aforementioned questions, it was hoped that the research would significantly contribute in filling the void in the knowledge pertaining to paternal absence among Black female students. The outcomes of this research are likely to be of benefit to the participants and others with non active fathers as the results of the study was made available to them, so they would perhaps (through the results) get a clearer understanding of themselves. The results expect to contribute to the better understanding of some Black father absent South

African females. In retrospect, this dissertation shows that Black females without fathers can triumph over the expectation of low educational outcomes. In addition, the research outcomes which will be publicised may assist higher education practitioners in their work with young Black female students as they might gain a clearer understanding of some fatherless female students. This study may also encourage continued exploration of the processes underpinning Black South African youth resilience in relation to paternal absence. This study could also provide a basis to create an intervention program in relation to paternal absence on women without fathers.

1.8 Organisation of the dissertation

This dissertation will present an investigation of the discursive tools that Black South African females draw on in constructing their lives of growing up without a father. In accomplishing its purpose, the dissertation will (in chapter 2) provide a critical review of literature on the area of interest. The literature review chapter will firstly define and explain the general phenomenon of paternal absence. It will thereafter present an assessment of the identity, relationships with and attitudes towards men, academic, career and future prospects and outcomes of father absent children. The penultimate section of the literature review chapter will discuss the theoretical frameworks that will be employed to understand the phenomenon under enquiry. These theories are the African traditional metaphysical framework (Mkhize, 2004) integrated with resilience theory from a Black South African youth's angle (Theron, 2013). Thereafter a conclusion of the chapter will be mentioned.

Next, the dissertation will present the methodologies and procedures that I used to unfold the study. This section of the dissertation (chapter 3) will cover the chosen approaches in research design, description of the study site, sampling strategy, description of research participants, data collection methods, ethical considerations, data analysis and the actions taken to ensure rigour together with the motivation for the methodological decisions that were taken.

The dialogue, or rather, the powerful conversations that I have selected will be at the heart of this dissertation, in chapter 4. The findings chapter will present some of what I have learned from the conversations with Black father absent females. The results from the study will be presented in

five sections that will answer the five research questions: 1) How do Black South African female students construct their identity in relation to growing up without a father? 2) How do Black South African female students construct their academic performance in relation to growing up without a father? 3) How do Black South African female students construct their relationships with men in relation to growing up without a father? 4) How do Black South African female students construct their attitudes towards men in relation to growing up without a father? 5) How do Black South African female students construct their career and future prospects in relation to growing up without a father?

The dissertation will thereafter go on to put forward the answers to the research questions posed at the introduction chapter. A critical discussion will emerge from blending the theoretical frameworks, previous literature together with the findings that were presented in chapter 4. This will enable the reader to meaningfully understand the outcomes of the study. Some implications of the study will also be mentioned, together with the practical limitations of the current study and recommendations for future studies. This chapter will be presented in the same sequence as the findings chapter (chapter 4).

Chapter 2. Literature review

2.1 Introduction and overview of chapter

This chapter sets to, in all its capacity; give a critical review of previous knowledge on the overarching topic of paternal absence. It gives special attention to how children (especially females) formulate their identity, academic performance, relationships and attitudes towards men, career and future prospects in relation to experiencing paternal absence. International as well as local literature will be evaluated in this chapter in order to present a full scale overview of the topic under study. The purpose of presenting this material is to identify gaps and limitations from available research data, thereby providing a platform for the study on discursive tools that father absent students use in relation to paternal absence. With this, the study hopes to position itself and clarify its contribution within its topic of interest. Insights from the African traditional metaphysical framework (Mkhize, 2004) and resilience theory from a Black South African youth's stance (Theron, 2013) will also be explored and discussed. These theoretical frameworks are incorporated to provide an Africentric basis to the phenomenon under inquiry. This chapter will commence with defining and explaining paternal absence among children with a particular focus on females. Literature on the identity outcomes that paternal absent individuals formulate will be explored. A review of the academic performance, career and future prospects of father absent females will follow; thereafter an evaluation of the relationships and attitudes that father absent females have towards men will be covered. Finally the chapter will, in detail, discuss the frameworks that will be used to understand the topic under study.

2.2 Paternal absence

Paternal absence within the South African context is escalating and has been for the last two decades (Eddy et al., 2013; Holborn & Eddy, 2011; Ratele, Shefer & Clowes, 2012). Approximately half of South African children live without daily contact with their fathers (Eddy et al., 2013). When especially considering Black children who were less than 15 years old in 2009, it was implied that 70% are father absent, 55% of these were from rural areas and the remaining 45% were from urban areas (Holborn & Eddy, 2011). It is for statistics such as these that the current study has been taken up the researcher. Death, poverty, masculinity ideologies

and consequences of intimate partner violence which can lead to imprisonment and abandonment are some of the reasons why some South African fathers do not take responsibilities for their children (Holborn & Eddy, 2011; Morrell & Richter, 2006; Ratele et al., 2012). As a result of abovementioned issues, many Black children become and grow up without a father and therefore may have a life different from those children with fathers, especially in relation to their identity, academic, career and future prospects, and their relationships. This study held promise to make apparent the discursive tools that Black father absent female students employed to construct their lives of growing up without a father.

In a study conducted in the United States of America (USA), young women who had absent fathers were found to be more likely to experience detrimental effects to their well-being (Mancini, 2010). In their qualitative study, East, Jackson, and O'Brien (2006) identified that father absence can lead young girls to be vulnerable to peer pressure and poor behavioural choices as they lack the paternal presence that is often associated with such choices. Indeed the poor outcomes are consistent with other published studies conducted in different parts of the world-including South Africa- which argue that paternal absence can inculcate deep suffering for girls due to the unpleasant effects (East et al., 2007; Eddy et al., 2013; Mancini, 2010). The age of the daughter when the father became absent may have a significant effect on the way that the daughter is affected by the paternal absence, especially when it comes to the onset of sexual activity and teenage pregnancy (East et al., 2007; Krohn & Bogan, 2001; Strauss, 2013). This is so because the age can shape the daughter's view of men, the world and also her academic capacity (East et al., 2007; Krohn & Bogan, 2001; Strauss, 2013).

It is worth emphasising that the negative academic and/or social outcomes of father absent children may also be partly attributable to co-existing social and economic factors (including poverty and a lack of resources) (East et al., 2007). In addition to (and sometimes as an outcome of) father absence, these co-existing factors are experienced by many single female-headed families (East et al., 2007). For example, in their Botswanan study, Letamo and Rakgoasi (2000) deduced that female-headed households are usually more prone to income poverty than male headed households. Men are usually financially better off than females because they normally

have community resources (such as loans, mutual support and influence) that might not be accessible to women (Richter et al., 2012). It is therefore about belonging to a household that can provide financial, social and labour support that the father can provide. Based on these studies it can hence be suggested that children brought up in female-headed households do not have as many “privileges” as those from male headed households. Poor academic performance and exposure to felonious behaviour in children might also be due to the single mother having less time to supervise and discipline her child since most of her time may be spent working full time to support her family (East et al., 2006).

In contrast to what seems to be mostly negative outcomes from paternal absence in children, certain positive psychological outcomes have also been found to result from being raised by a single mother (East et al., 2006). This is so because some single mothers can demonstrate positive role modelling, adaptive coping mechanisms, personal strength, and financial independence which can inspire the young person without a father to seek high career outcomes, financial autonomy and responsibility (East et al., 2006). Other contrary views claim that having a non active father from the infancy stage appears to have no negative consequences for the child (MacCallum & Golombok, 2004). Some studies concur that the impact of father absence may vary from person to person due to the reason of the father being absent (East et al., 2006; Jones & Benda, 2008). It is argued that paternal absence does not have to result in negative outcomes for the child. This is coherent the claim that fatherhood is socially constructed (Eddy et al., 2013). Consequently this dissertation aimed to contribute to the debate of the predominant outcomes of paternal absence among young females by explicating females own socially shared reality construction of growing up without a father.

The father-daughter relationship is often overlooked in research especially when compared to the father and son or mother and daughter relationship. Consequently little is known about this dyad (Del Russo, 2009) especially within the South African context. There is also little that is known about father absent South African University students. The current project aimed to add to South African literature on this topic.

The review will now explore literature on the experiences of father absent children with a particular focus on identity, academic performance, career and future prospects, and relationships and attitudes towards men.

2.2.1 Paternal absence on identity

For most Black South Africans, a father is predominantly the key to a child's identity (Eddy et al., 2013). The father's surname to the child is of importance as it symbolises the child's connection to all members of her father's family including the ancestors (i.e. *izinyanya*), who are believed to be the source of success and good fortune, prosperity and protection (Holdstock, 2000; Mkhize, 2004). Connection to the father's family is claimed to give the child her background, belonging, her roots, and therefore an identity (Eddy et al., 2013; Mkhize, 2004). Some father absent children end up demonstrating no regard for traditional customs. It can be suggested that this is because they do not have a supportive fatherly bond that hearten them to traditional customs. Black South African father absent children who reside in households that are not of their father's surname often find themselves excluded from decision making, traditional ceremonies and rituals (i.e. *umsebenzi*) as they are not regarded as 'real' members of the family thereby have a low status within that household they reside in (Eddy et al., 2013). Many children without fathers also face physical and emotional abuse from their maternal relatives and stepparents (Nduna & Jewkes, 2011). Father absent children may seem to encounter this abuse as a result of having a low status in the maternal home environment. Consequently no one may be willing to stand up for them since in most cases the mother is not present most of the day due to work commitments (Nduna & Jewkes, 2011). As a result father absent children feel like outsiders in their maternal home environment, especially during family conflicts as they are told to not contribute any opinion because they do not primarily belong to that home. Some adolescents without fathers attribute the harsher treatment to the fact that they do not have a supportive male father figure present to stand up for them (Eddy et al., 2013). It is argued that some step fathers add to the pain that children without fathers have as they can constantly and painfully remind them that they are not their father (Nduna & Jewkes, 2011). It is implied that these children struggle to find a niche from both their maternal and paternal families, and therefore lack a sense of familial identity. Many children without fathers miss some of the

traditional rituals that need to be performed for them by their fathers and therefore, according to African traditions in South Africa, may end up encountering unfortunate predicaments (Eddy et al., 2013; Mkhize, 2004). Not being part of the *umsebenzi* may be particularly painful because those that are part of this ceremony are believed to receive significant ancestral blessings (Eddy et al., 2013; Mkhize, 2004). In the African context it may be believed that a child's future is bright at the outset, but would become darker and darker as gaps arise due to some ancestral rituals not being performed (Eddy et al., 2013; Mkhize, 2004). The failure to perform these rituals may be believed to lead the child to experience misfortune (Eddy et al., 2013; Mkhize, 2004). It is assumed that children with no link to their fathers are more likely to find themselves in disastrous dilemmas when it comes to identity.

During adolescence, youngsters are usually observed to start asking questions around their father's identity as this is seen to be a time when the requirement for family belonging and identity starts to become strong (Langa, 2010). Father absent children are at times described as feeling 'illegitimate', and unlike 'legitimate' children who know their biological fathers (Langa, 2010). It is assumed that there may be confusion around identity and legitimacy during the adolescent stage for children without fathers (Nyanjaya & Masango, 2012). Therefore some children without fathers feel embarrassed to talk about their absent fathers to their peers as it may elevate personal issues about their identity and legitimacy (Langa, 2010). In contrast, some individuals may experience paternal absence differently, as some do receive emotional and financial support from their maternal side of the family (Nduna & Jewkes, 2011). As a result, these individuals' paternal identity may not pose a major predicament that will have much of an impact on them. Some individuals may also be able to attend cultural events via their maternal families (Nduna & Jewkes, 2011) and therefore feel 'legitimate'.

Langa (2010) brings an essential point to the surface that within the Africentric stance, the status of fatherhood does not necessarily have to be limited to the biological father only, but also to other males from the extended family and around the community. Within this context, the child-rearing responsibility can be a shared one (Mkhize, 2006; Kasese-Hara, 2004). This means that any older man from the extended family can provide, protect and care for a child. The communal

kind of upbringing can provide the child with the socialisation that is needed even if the biological paternity might be missing. In the course of childhood development sometimes if the community does not offer the necessary resources that the adolescent can use for identity development the child might experience disturbing predicaments in relation to their identity (Nyanjaya & Masango, 2012). It is deduced that the extended community under which the child grows has the potential to influence the child's personal identity (Nyanjaya & Masango, 2012).

In the USA some females who grew up fatherless believe themselves to be open, self-sufficient and easily able to communicate with others (Jackson, 2010). In South Africa, however, silence can be used as a strategy not to talk about paternal absence as the topic in most families is deemed to be distressing and wounding (Nduna & Sikweyiya, 2013). The detrimental outcomes of not expressing concerns and negative emotions (especially for a long period) may lead to psychological distress which may manifest itself through anger, frustration, and distress and temper (Nduna & Sikweyiya, 2013). It is proposed that some females without fathers may have problems with anger, frustration, distress and temper in their lives as a result of suppressing their paternal absence concerns (Nduna & Sikweyiya, 2013). Sometimes self-silencing even when wronged by significant others may occur from women without fathers as they do not want to push their significant others away (Jackson, 2010). Women who grew up without a father usually have an unhappier childhood upbringing than those who grew up with their fathers (Jackson, 2010). This unhappier childhood upbringing may also have some influence on the father absent women's identity.

One cannot help but notice that available literature primarily focuses on either South African males' identity or non-South African females' identity in relation to their paternal absence and rather neglects the South African females' identity formulation. Thus revealing the value of enquiring about the construction of identity from a Black South African female's perspective.

2.2.2 Paternal absence on academic performance, career and future prospects

Poor educational achievement is one of the most concerning outcomes associated with paternal absence (Cartwright & Henriksen, 2012; Jones & Benda, 2008; Luo et al., 2011). In a USA study

that focused on the effects of paternal absence on females' development and college attendance, it was proposed that females without fathers were more likely to demonstrate poor academic performance (Krohn & Bogan, 2001). When compared to their verbal skills, females who experienced fatherlessness from an earlier age were found to be more prone to relatively weaker mathematical skills which would have impacted on their academic achievement (Krohn & Bogan, 2001). The younger the child at the onset of the father's absence, the lower their cognitive ability may be because they are more likely to score lower in IQ and achievement tests (Hetherington, 1972; Krohn & Bogan, 2001; Strauss, 2013). Lower academic performance in children without fathers can be due to an impeded cognitive development (Jones & Benda, 2008; Krohn & Bogan, 2001 & Luo et al., 2011). Lower academic performance might be a result of not attaining the proper and adequate attention that the father absent child needs and deserves from a parent because the mother might be too preoccupied as she is probably both the breadwinner and homemaker (Jones & Benda, 2008; Krohn & Bogan, 2001; Luo et al., 2011). It is thus assumed that paternal absence alone may not necessarily cause poor cognitive development but that the mother's role and availability is also of importance.

Daughters without fathers are also less likely to take subjects which are typically associated with masculinity such as mathematics and science (Krohn & Bogan, 2001). Lacking a male figure that could kindle the female's interest in mathematics and science may be the reason that some father absent daughters do not perform well in these subject areas. The females are therefore in turn vulnerable to being successfully discouraged from taking courses that involve mathematics and science (Krohn & Bogan, 2001). Due to the missing sense of fatherly support some females without fathers may experience discouragement and find themselves never completing or even attempting tertiary education (Krohn & Bogan, 2001). It is inferred that some females without fathers are indeed immensely affected by their father's absence in their academic and career prospects.

Female students without fathers may encounter some problems when attempting to attain college education such as the inability to pay fees as the mother may not be able to afford college education and the father would normally not show an interest in paying for the child's tertiary

fees (Krohn & Bogan, 2001). Children without fathers in South Africa normally experience financial hardships that they cannot even afford school fees (Nduna & Jewkes, 2011). Financial struggles may even place some of the father absent children at risk for school exclusion as the mother alone may not afford tuition fees. This brings up some of the detrimental effects of not having a father around who could contribute to the child's studies.

Females without fathers are likely to omit or drop out of college to enter the place of work in order to earn money and have a sense of independence and liberation from men (Krohn & Bogan, 2001). This act might be disadvantageous to females without fathers as they miss out on a higher education qualification.

Findings from a study conducted by East et al. (2007) which sought to understand the lived experiences of father absent daughters showed that a number of Australian women who were raised by their biological mothers had post-secondary academic qualifications and were engaged with their graduate studies. It is important to highlight that there are also father absent females that place an importance on education and therefore demonstrate resilience by having the drive and desire to excel academically even when they are encountering adversities (Cartwright & Henriksen, 2012; Theron, Theron & Malindi, 2013). Family support is vital for successful Black children who triumph over life difficulties (Cartwright & Henriksen, 2012; Theron, 2013; Theron & Theron, 2010). Young people, especially those from urban areas are unlikely to engage in socially deviant behaviour and are more likely to have a positive outlook on education due to familial support. Gaining the needed resources to attend and thrive in the academic institution is also crucial for academic success (Warde, 2008). It is therefore suggested that sometimes if the father absent child has the required resources for learning then the fact that they are without a father may not affect their academic performance.

Father absent college females have been more commonly found to be either overachievers or underachievers (Krohn & Bogan, 2001). Underachieving father absent female students are said to be usually content with a high school certificate or a bachelor's degree. They are said to not demonstrate any interest in furthering their studies beyond that. Overachiever father absent girls

in contrast, are set on achieving not only their Bachelors degree but also their Masters and PhD degrees (Krohn & Bogan, 2001). These individuals are likely to want to be in control and reach their utmost potential. It is said that overachieving female students possibly become so by thinking that their achievements will lead their fathers to approve of them (Krohn & Bogan, 2001). Daughters without fathers may want to prove themselves through their high qualification attainments because they may blame themselves for their father abandoning them as they may perceive that it was their inadequacy that led their father to turn away from his paternal responsibilities (Del Russo, 2009). It was found to be uncommon for father absent college girls to be in between the two extremes of underachiever and overachiever (Krohn & Bogan, 2001).

Since paternal absence may influence a child's academic achievements, it may therefore be concluded that it can also influence their tertiary career choice (Krohn & Bogan, 2001). Females' lack of father involvement and even lack of motivation from other family members to pursue mathematics and science can lead them to having no interest or being forced to not pursue mathematics or a mathematical career (Krohn & Bogan, 2001). Some classroom teachers also usually give much more attention and praise to boys than to girls, suggesting that father absent girls are led to pursuing other careers outside of the "masculine" subjects because it might seem that they are not encouraged by anyone from home or school in these fields (Krohn & Bogan, 2001).

Based on available literature it can be deduced that there is a lack of South African studies that focus on academics and career choice preferences of father absent females. The bulk of research on this issue is primarily from the USA, thus the need to conduct a South African study that touches on this subject is essential as it may contribute novel insights into the subject.

2.2.3 Paternal absence on relationships and attitudes towards men

Father absent daughters' relationships with and attitudes towards men is another issue of concern. Adolescents without fathers may manifest lower self-esteem, compromised psychological well-being, earlier sexual activity, and behavioural problems when compared to

those from father present families (East et al., 2006; Holborn & Eddy, 2011; Jones & Benda, 2008; Luo et al., 2011; Strauss, 2013). Many adolescents from single parent-headed households display difficulties in depending emotionally on others and forming intimate relationships. As it was argued earlier, the age at which the father left has an influence on the father absent child. It has been reported in both recent and older studies that if a girl child experiences father absence at an earlier age, she is more likely to be involved in early sexual activities and even experience teenage pregnancy before turning 16 years old (East et al., 2006; Hetherington, 1972; Luo et al., 2011; Strauss, 2013). Similarly research conducted in the USA on the effect of emotionally absent fathers on daughters' romantic and sexual relationships with men revealed that daughters growing up in father absent homes are more probable to start puberty, dating, and become involved in sexual activities at an earlier age (Del Russo, 2009). Adolescent girls without fathers are more vulnerable to peer pressure and obstructive behavioural decision-making (East et al., 2006), this may be because they lack a father figure that may protect them from the lower behavioural well-being and the vulnerability linked with these choices (Ratele et al., 2012).

It is suggested that a female's acquisition of feminine behaviour and ways of behaving when engaging with males is partly based on the knowledge and reinforcements gained through experiences of interacting with the father (Jackson, 2010). It is thus suggested that females without fathers may have not had the opportunity to develop these traits and behaviours. As a result many young women without fathers experience difficulties when attempting to develop relationships with men, and East et al. (2007) found that they attributed the difficulties to their fathers' absence. The difficulties may include having negative feelings towards men, mistrust in men, fear of rejection, lack of respect for men, and being unsure of the dynamics between a man and a woman in a relationship since they have not witnessed this kind of relationship before. Some females without fathers also do not think that a loving and encouraging intimate relationship with a man is possible. Due to the insufficient fatherly love that father absent young females receive; they may illustrate a yearning for male attention and affection (East et al., 2007). The longing may lead the young women to be vulnerable to exploitation from any male who demonstrates attention and affection towards them (East et al., 2007). Some women confess to making poor decisions based on this vulnerability where they end up with older men trying to

seek affection and attention from a father figure (East et al., 2007). Other young women without fathers, on the contrary, show negative attitudes towards relationships as a whole and reject marriage as they struggle to trust and respect men in addition to experiencing difficulties in accepting love and commitment from a man (East et al., 2007). The reasons behind some father absent females having contrasting difficulties in long term relationships with men may be the factors behind their paternal absence (Krohn & Bogan, 2001). Females whose fathers have died may be introverts and therefore apprehensive around men and as a result may not even attempt relationships with men (Del Russo, 2009; Krohn & Bogan, 2001). On the other hand, females whose fathers are absent due to divorce, or other choice may be inclined to seek out male attention and instigate physical contact with males where they might be sexually promiscuous (Del Russo, 2009; Krohn & Bogan, 2001). It can therefore be suggested that the outcomes of father absent females in relation to relationships with men is binary; where on one hand they can be too trusting and on the other they can be too distrusting.

It is evident that the studies that do depict the effects of paternal absence on females, and though realistic as they may be, are usually thematically analysed, highlighting the need to explore this topic using other analytic approaches. It is also apparent that little research is done in South Africa pertaining to the interpersonal relationships of father absent females. The necessity for South African research which attempts to understand how Black females talk about their relationships with and attitudes towards men is thus reinforced.

2.3 Traditional African metaphysical framework

The theoretical framework that will be used to conceptualise the phenomenon of paternal absence in Black female students will be the traditional African metaphysical framework (Mkhize, 2004) and resilience theory. Both of these will be approached from an African psychology perspective. These frameworks are put forward because a gap was identified in existing literature pertaining to, particularly, Black South African females without fathers. The African psychology approach would enable a conceptualisation of the phenomenon under inquiry from an Africentric perspective rather than the Eurocentric lens. The understanding of the females' interaction and social construction of being father absent, from their own culture,

will be made apparent. The frameworks at the forefront will aid to comprehend the socially shared way in which father absent females “talk” about their paternal absence from an African cultural standpoint. The theories will assist in comprehending how African females construct their social-reality and the mutual sense-making.

Critical psychology asserts that people’s indigenous languages, worldviews and philosophies ought to be taken into account when explaining their reality (Mkhize, 2004). It can be assumed that what other people within the same local space attach to paternal absence has a major influence on how children without fathers construct their paternal absence. It is due to these cultural worldviews that people formulate their self-identity and understanding of the world (Mkhize, 2004). Within indigenous societies, the self is largely context based. It is suggested that within the Africentric context, individuals define themselves based on their affiliations with other people within their family or community (Theron & Theron, 2010). Therefore, research that explores self definitions and identifications for African individuals may need to take cognisance of the fact that collectivist identification processes may take place within the maternal family.

Within the African culture, humans are described as being able to communicate with their ancestors (i.e. *izinyanya*) who are considered to be the living-dead (Mkhize, 2004). It is believed that there is a link between God, *izinyanya* and the living (Holdstock, 2000). *Izinyanya* are said to be the interceders for their living relatives to God in relation to their family affairs (Mkhize, 2004; Chitindingu, 2012). In order for the intercession to take place, the *izinyanya* require that the living perform rituals for them. The ceremony (*umsebenzi*) is considered to be of high importance for prosperity and harmony within the family (Holdstock, 2000; Mkhize, 2004). It can be painful for father absent children who might not be invited to such ceremonies as they are believed to be excluded from any prosperity that the *izinyanya* might bring forth to those present at the ritual.

Community for most of traditional Black people is also of high importance (Theron & Theron, 2010; Mkhize, 2004). A community results from people communally understanding and acknowledging the responsibility to react to each other’s needs. A community comprises of

people that are even outside of one's genetic family, and so an extension of terms such as mother and father to non-biological parents may be evident (Graham, 1999; Langa, 2012). The recipients of these terms are thus obliged to react responsively in a way that is fitting to these terms. Communal child-rearing is hence promoted (Kasese-Hara, 2004). The family (referring to the close-knit community of both the living and the dead) makes up an important part of the individual's personal identity and social reality (Holdstock, 2000; Langa, 2012; Mkhize, 2004). Family is therefore regarded as the most important aspect of self-definition (Mkhize, 2004).

Cultural traditions and social norms regulate, express and transform people's worldviews. In other words, the person and their contexts are intertwined (Graham, 1999). In the above literature review it was seen that different people in different contexts experienced paternal absence differently. Even though there might not be a merging African metaphysics, a number of African people (and other indigenous societies especially in Sub-Saharan regions) do share an outlook on reality based on philosophies about God, causality, person, time and the universe (Mkhize, 2004). It is however important to note that not every member of the African culture has to subscribe to the overarching African paradigm that Africans have developed and adopted to explain their reality. Therefore even for this study, there might be the possibility that not all the father absent Black females subscribe to the predominant African beliefs even though they might be Black African persons.

"It is impossible to understand the lifestyle of black people using traditional psychological theories developed by white psychologists to explain white people." (White, 1980, as cited in Ratele, 2004, p. 389)

2.4 Resilience theory (South African Black youth)

Being vulnerable to distressful difficulties such as family division, poverty, experience of trauma, psychosocial threat and biological risks usually leads many youths to poor outcomes. Detrimental outcomes can include vulnerability to poor academic achievement, school dropout, teenage pregnancy, emotional distress, and behavioural, physical, and mental health adversities (Zolkoski & Bullock, 2012). Contrasting outcomes can sometimes manifest as there *are* children

who possess the appropriate strengths and benefits that assist them to overcome difficult and unfavourable conditions as they are found to thrive despite their difficulties (Zolkoski & Bullock, 2012). These strengths and benefits include skills that help the individuals to be resilient, and in turn lead them to a successful life. Resilience is when a person has seen, heard and experienced hurt and suffering but has kept a positive outlook for the future (Theron, 2007). It is important to emphasise that resilience is not the cheery disregard of one's painful hardships but is rather the ability to maintain competence despite tormenting and distressful life circumstances (Dass-Brailsford, 2005; Van Wormer, Sudduth & Jackson, 2011). Resilience theory is primarily focused on strengths as opposed to deficits or shortfalls (Theron, 2013). In addition, resilience theory is concerned with how positive outcomes can be attained regardless of challenging and threatening incidences. It has to do with coping successfully with traumatic experiences and avoiding negative paths that are associated with risks (Zolkoski & Bullock, 2012).

It is evident from the reviewed literature that children without fathers are more likely to be negatively impacted by this happenstance. Resilient youth do not direct much attention to their non-favourable circumstances but instead generate plans of triumphing over them. Resilient individuals are also autonomous as they feel that they have a sense of their own identity, capability and ability to be independent and apply some control over their environment (Dass-Brailsford, 2005; Theron & Theron, 2010; Zolkoski & Bullock, 2012). Specifically, it is implied that youth with resiliency tendencies usually display social competence, problem-solving skills, and critical consciousness (Zolkoski & Bullock, 2012). Black South African youth have many role models exemplifying resilience, the most obvious being Nelson Mandela who continued to function remarkably well in the toughest circumstances (Theron, 2007).

It is essential to acknowledge that youth interactions are influenced by the socio-cultural context that they find themselves in (Theron, 2013). Resilience is complex as there are a variety of ways of positively adjusting and they are all prioritised differently by different socio-cultural contexts. Resilience functioning in South Africa is not necessarily identical to resilient functioning in other countries. Moreover, resilient functioning among sub-groups of youth (e.g. race and gender) may vary.

Resilient persons have a sense of purpose as they generally display goals, educational aspirations and confidence in a bright future (Zolkoski & Bullock, 2012). One of the pathways to resilience in South Africa is educational aspiration or the profound hope that a good education will lead to access to university and success thereafter (Dass- Brailsford, 2005; Theron, 2013). Academic success is constructed to be the route to self, familial and communal development among Black South African youth. Desire for improvement is especially due to the political history of racial segregation and Black oppression with regards to political, legal and economic subjugation (Theron, 2013; Van Wormer, 2011). It is proposed that Black university students without fathers may be seen to have resiliency characteristics and the vision for improvement as they are studying at a university institution despite their predicament. Having educational aspirations might be the most frequently used approach by which father absent students illustrate their resiliency against the challenges they might be facing with regards to being father absent.

Generic supports which include healthy attachments with others, self-regulation, self-direction and mastery experiences, problem solving skills, productive meaning making and cultural and/or religious traditions may aid in resilience among Black youth. It is predominantly the connection to female caregivers and having deep cultural pride that explains resilience among many Black youths in South Africa (Theron, 2013). It can be proposed that in order for youth to be able to be resilient, their attempts to adjust well need to be actively supported by their social ecologies (Theron, 2013). Vulnerability and resiliency are both socially constructed as both are a consequently dynamic process (Theron, 2013). The section will now go on to explicate on the critical protective resources that contribute in Black South African youth resilience; which include self, family, community, culture and peers.

Resilience can be invigorated by individual factors such as personality traits which include being goal or achievement orientated, being autonomous, optimistic and conscientious, having the ability to self-regulate, and having enthusiasm and assertiveness. Competence in social settings is proposed to be both an indicator and pre-requisite for resilience. Resilient Black youth are also expected to possess problem-solving expertise, positive cognitive appraisal, an internal locus of

control and a positive sense of self-worth (Theron & Theron, 2010; Theron et al., 2013). Resilient local Black youth seemed to have acceptance of challenges that they face, they were more likely to attain good educational progress and have big dreams for themselves and were guided by value-driven behaviour (Theron et al., 2013). They view hardships as learning experiences as they had positive self-concept and self-esteem. The values that govern most resilient Black youths shape their behaviour of living positively and being respectful to all. Educational progress, since it assists and promotes the development of skills, was found to be helpful for problem solving, communication and future aspirations (Theron et al., 2013). It is hence thought that Black South African youth who are high academic achievers yet face challenging circumstances (such as paternal absence) are resilient. Resilient Black youth were deduced to being goal directed, having big dreams and a vision for their future (Dass- Brailsford, 2005; Theron et al., 2013). Having dreams signify the hope that they will triumph. Resilient local Black South African youth were found to easily accept what cannot be changed and be able to carry on with life. Most Black South African youth have the aim and vision of bettering their adversities over time and with this they hope to unfetter themselves from any hardships they were previously experiencing (Theron et al., 2013). The agency and hardiness that Black youth possess together with their personal beliefs and attitudes portrays them as having resilience that is related to a commitment to excellence. The excellence is implied to be mainly achieved through tenacity and good scholastic achievement (Theron, 2007). A resilient youth is characterised by intrapersonal traits and skills that promote positive adjustment, these include flexibility, indicating agency towards being solution-focused, willpower, self-assurance, good communication skills in terms of being approachable and open, and a sense of self worth. In South Africa, academic success was suggested to be an indicator of resiliency as it is the realisation of an important developmental task (Theron, 2013). It is however important to acknowledge that apt intrapersonal traits and skills are not necessarily the only manifestation of resiliency. Those who are resilient also make use of opportunities and resources that are around them.

Families are argued to have influence on the resiliency patterns of Black South African youth (Theron, 2013). Young people are usually placed at risk of unfavourable life outcomes when parents are illiterate, incapacitated or unavailable or when families are impoverished (Theron,

2013). When youth are under such threat yet manage to adjust well then they are considered resilient (Dass- Brailsford, 2005). Protective mothers are especially thought to embolden resilience as a mother's ability to bond with her child is thought to encourage positive adjustment. Black South African township youth mostly regard their mothers as their "pillars of strength" (Theron & Theron, 2010, p. 2). Mothers were suggested to provide a sense of security and reassurance which enhances their children's self-actualisation. The current study hopes to investigate the role played by the mothers of father absent females (from the context of interest). The significance of the mother's role might be symbolised by the females' self-actualisation, despite their fathers being absent. Parents are especially likely to encourage resilience when they themselves have coped well with trauma and have personified strengths and positive abilities worth imitating (Theron & Theron, 2010). Black South African youth are fortified to increase problem-focused coping strategies when their mothers use the democratic-authoritative parenting style (Theron & Theron, 2010). Supportive familial relationships also help to persuade some Black South African youth to complete their tertiary education and carry on towards sustaining resilience even in the midst of adversities. Caring and encouraging Black familial relations seem to also advance school going Black youth towards an aspiration and admiration of education. Stimulating family members can promote Black youth to accept or be content with their impoverished circumstances and in turn improve on coming up with solutions to their difficulties (Theron & Theron, 2010). Parents and older siblings can make a significant contribution to Black South African youths' resilience and success against their problems (Dass-Brailsford, 2005). Adults are able to make their children feel valued and important. Parents can teach their children that difficulties can be triumphed over. Most Black supportive South African families encourage their children in terms of education as they are provided with time and space to focus on their studies. It is especially youth with absent fathers that display resilience, mothers and grandmothers usually have and pass on their motivational and protective forces to their offspring (Dass-Brailsford, 2005).

Community support can have a major influence on Black South African youths' resilience against difficulties and challenges. Community members such as teachers, good neighbours and schools are the most emphasised community resources that are seen to be supportive, fair, non-

discriminatory, motivating, encouraging and helpful to Black youth over difficulties. Community support is argued to be resilience-promoting (Theron, 2013). There can be a lot of sharing of expertise and practical support from the school, church and youth group communities (Theron, 2007). The Africentric connectedness between the individual and the community is again brought forward. Even though community support is encountered by some youths, there are those that feel the envy, jealousy and low expectations from some of their community members (Theron, 2007). Community support suggests the idea that some Black female students without fathers may triumph over the loss of their fathers due to the fact that they may have men from their communities that play the fatherly role. The father absent females may thus be led to resiliency and success in their endeavours despite not having a father.

Peers of Black resilient youth are also noted to have an influence on the resilience level of the youth (Theron, 2013). Relationships with peers enabled opportunities for social acceptance and the development of a positive identity and value because youth can trust their peers and be able to talk to them about troubling matters. Black father absent females' relationships with their peers might have helped them to develop a positive identity and a sense of value that might have helped them to talk about, amongst other troubling issues, their paternal absence and hence gaining some insights on their problems.

Cultural practices are also said to enhance the resiliency level of Black South African youth. Religious practices and personal faith are depicted as fundamental to the process and outcomes of resilience. Most Black South African youth view faith as a higher power that gives meaning to their lives and thus providing console in the challenging times of their lives (Dass-Brailsford, 2005). The dissertation will make evident if the application of cultural and religious practices is of any aid to females without fathers.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter attempted to give a critical review of the literature pertaining to paternal absence among children, especially from a female's perspective. Both local and international literature

was put forward by the researcher in order to substantiate and get the full magnitude of the knowledge on paternal absence. This chapter in its review of literature has also acknowledged some gaps and limitations in literature and in so doing highlighted the need for this study as a form of contribution in addressing the gaps in available literature. The chapter then went on to direct our attention to the traditional African metaphysical framework and the resilience theory from a South African perspective.

Chapter 3. Methodology

3.1 Introduction and Overview of Chapter

In this chapter I provide a description of the research procedures that were used to unfold the current study after the ethical clearance was granted. I make evident what approaches were used for the research design, sampling strategy, data collection methods and data analysis. Ethical considerations are highlighted, and the ways in which rigour was maintained is also discussed. I also justify for the undertaken methodological decisions in order to make evident how the conclusions of the study were reached.

“The dialogic nature of consciousness, the dialogic nature of human life itself. The single adequate form for verbally expressing authentic human existence is the open-ended dialogue. Life by its very nature is dialogic. To live means to participate in dialogue: to ask questions, to heed, to respond, to agree, and so forth. In this dialogue a person participates wholly and throughout his whole life: with his eyes, lips, hands, soul, spirit, with his whole body and deeds. He invests his entire self in discourse, and this discourse enters into the dialogic fabric of human life, into the world symposium.” (Bakhtin³)

3.2 Research Design

A qualitative research method was used for this study. Qualitative research designs allow researchers to collect data through written or spoken language, or in the form of observations that are noted in language (Merriam, 2009). The qualitative approach allows the researcher to study their particular phenomena of interest in great depth and detail in order to gain a rich understanding of the information that the data yields (Durrheim, 2006; Merriam, 2009).

A qualitative research design was appropriate for the present study because detailed accounts relating to the issue of paternal absence amongst Black female students was perceived as being necessary as opposed to the quantitative research design which focuses on collecting data in the form of numbers, having a variety of predetermined categories and using data to make broad generalisable comparisons (Durrheim, 2006). As a result, data in the present study was collected using participant’s own descriptions and explications as a means of exploring their meanings of

³ <http://pubpages.unh.edu/~jds/Bakhtinquotes.htm>

reality. Meaning that the utterances⁴ that the participants used to describe their lives helped me to get an understanding of how the participants constructed their lives through their interactions with me. The decision to adopt the aforementioned type of qualitative method was based on the assertion that ‘fatherhood’ is a social construction (Eddy et al., 2013) and therefore different people will construct fatherhood (and paternal absence) in different ways. The qualitative design enabled me to have a more in-depth understanding (Durrheim, 2006) of how the participants constructed their identities, academic, career and future prospects and relationships and attitudes towards men in relation to being father absent.

The study was grounded within a social constructionist paradigm (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011), and therefore had meaning that is given by the language that the individuals use as its main concern. The social constructionist paradigm holds that the life of humans is essentially constituted in language and that language should therefore be the entity of the study (Terre Blache et al., 2006). Language refers to the system of meanings and practices that construct reality (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Kelly, 2006). Language thus functions to construct reality. For the current research, this means that I was mostly concerned with exploring how the father absent females constructed their meaning of being father absent through the devices⁵ (which are informed by language) they employed. Merriam (2009) asserts that constructivism is interested in the broader patterns of social meaning which are preset in language. This dissertation will make explicit the socially collective way that the Black father absent females talk about paternal absence through the language that they use in constructing their lives.

3.3 Description of the study site

The sample of participants was drawn from the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), Pietermaritzburg campus. UKZN is a public higher education institution that caters for both

⁴ Utterance in the context of this study refers to any sentence or a sequence of one or more words or expressions spoken by a person. Utterances are said to perform verbal actions (Silverman, 2004; Wooffitt, 2005).

⁵ Devices in the context of this study refers to “regular patterns in interactions” (Wooffitt, 2005, p.43)

undergraduate and postgraduate studies. The Pietermaritzburg campus has a diverse group of students and it offers a broad range of academic programmes (including science, agriculture, education, law, human and management science fields (<http://www.ukzn.ac.za/about-ukzn/campuses>)). The Pietermaritzburg campus was therefore identified as appropriate for the study as it was both convenient for the researcher (in terms of participant accessibility and familiarity to the researcher) and it enabled the recruitment of female students from diverse programmes and varying levels of study. Encompassed within the province of KwaZulu-Natal, most students from the Pietermaritzburg campus are Black, and approximately 75.91% of the female students on the campus are Black (UKZN, 2014). Although the campus offers on-campus residence, it was assumed that most students studying on the Pietermaritzburg campus were from KwaZulu-Natal. The participants of this study were a mixture of IsiZulu, Xhosa and Pedi speaking however all the researcher-participant interactions were conducted in English as it was indicated preferable by the participants.

3.4 Sampling strategy

A non-probability sampling approach was used for this study. The reason behind the sampling strategy was that the sample was not achieved through randomness, but rather through intentional selection of information-rich participants which I was able to study in-depth (Patton, 1990). I used a combination of purposive and snowballing sampling techniques. A purposive sampling method allows the researcher to focus on particular characteristics of the participants that are of interest, which best enables the researcher to answer the research questions (Durrheim, 2006; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 1990). After ethical clearance to conduct the study was granted by the UKZN Human and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) (see Appendix 2), I invited potential participants through notices that were put up around the Pietermaritzburg campus (including the female and mixed gender university residences). The notices detailed the description of potential participants, the purpose of this study, and the researcher's contact details in simple English terms that the reader could understand (see Appendix 3). The notices were intended to enable potential participants to make contact with the researcher, and find out more about possible involvement in the study. The method of

recruitment was appropriate as it allowed only willing and eager participants to come forward and be part of the study. As a result, participant autonomy was enhanced as they would have taken the initiative to contact the researcher (Shenton, 2004).

Due to the fact that the notices about the study were put up late in the first semester of 2014 when most of the students would have been studying and writing exams, I decided to also embark on a snowballing sampling technique. The snowballing sampling technique allows for the gradual accumulation of a sufficient sample through contacts and referrals (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen, & Walker, 2014). Snowballing method was appropriate because it was able to provide participants that possessed the characteristics that the researcher needed, which was for this case Black female students without fathers. One participant directed me to other participants and I was able to gather willing participants. The snowballing strategy was appropriate as it assisted me in reaching members that might have been otherwise difficult to reach. The participants fitted with the specific characteristics that were needed and therefore produced a more focused selected sample (Nkabinde, 2008).

3.5 Description of research participants

Nkabinde (2008) highlights that a complete reporting of the entire population is rarely possible as not all members of the population of interest can be reached. It was also impossible for the current research to recruit all Black father absent female students studying at UKZN (Pietermaritzburg campus) at the time of the study. The study got the attention of five Black female students from the UKZN (PMB Campus). Five participants were appropriate as Silverman (2013) asserts that qualitative research does not draw on a large sample but is rather concerned with selecting a few data-rich cases that will allow for a thorough and in-depth analysis of the data. At the time of data collection the participants were between the ages of 19-24 years. Recruiting people from this age range facilitated data pertaining to both childhood and early adulthood. Given the ages of the participants, it was possible for them to have a conversation with me with regards to how they construct the meaning of having an absent father (Terre Blanche, 2006). The participants included both postgraduate and undergraduate students who at the time of the data collection were father absent due to either abandonment or death.

3.6 Data collection methods

I conducted semi-structured interviews with the participants. The semi-structured interviews (see Appendix 4) attempted to impersonate informal conversations as are appropriate for the analytic approach used (see 3.7). Semi-structured interviews allowed me to follow the direction that the participants took in the interviews, and concurrently probe the participants within the topic of interest (i.e. having an absent father) (Fontana & Frey, 2000). The interviews yielded rich extensive data in the form of interview transcripts, and this was made possible through the participants doing most of the talking during the interviews (Nkabinde, 2008; Silverman, 2004). The audio-recordings and transcriptions enabled the researcher to “stand back” after the interviews were completed and observe the complex behaviour of the participants and of herself as the conversation was taking place (Fontana & Frey, 2000). It is worth noting that meaning and context are important factors that shape an interaction (Silverman, 2004), and therefore both the researcher and the participants’ actions were informed by the context and previous utterances. It is suggested that the setting at which the interviews took place together with the contextual factors of both the researcher and the participants (the fact that they were both females, South African, students at the same University) influenced the interaction between them. The utterances perform actions which in turn invite subsequent kinds of actions (verbal) from the other participant. Data was collected within the premises of UKZN, PMB campus. The reason behind the chosen setting was so that the participants would be in an environment where they felt safe and free to use their own choice of devices to construct their lives of growing up father absent. The duration of the interactions (i.e. the semi-structured interviews) took between 35-50 minutes.

3.7 Data analysis

Data was collected within the space of a week. After data was collected, I then started to perform a verbatim transcription of the data that was recorded during the interactions, this forming part of

the initial data analysis (Silverman, 2010). It was with the consent of all the participants that the interactions were tape recorded (see Appendix 6).

I was immersed in the transcribed and recorded data for an extended period, this also forming part of the data analysis process. Themes and sub-themes from the interactions were identified and ‘constructed’. Utterances that related to the identified sub-themes were clustered together (Nicholson, 2013). The chosen extracts were transcribed in more in-depth detail using the Gail Jefferson transcription conventions (Wooffitt, 2005). These transcription conventions (see Appendix 10) were useful as they captured aspects of speech production and the sequential arrangement of the utterances relative to each other (Wooffitt, 2005). A sequence of symbols were used to capture and make obvious the properties and features of turn-taking including the onset of concurrent speech and the timing of gaps within and between turns and features such as emphasis, volume, speed of delivery, sound stretching (Wooffitt, 2005) and the usage of discontinuity markers⁶ to orient the participants from one topic to another (Billig, 1999; Drew & Holt, 1998).

Data was analysed using the Conversational Analysis (CA) method which was developed from the works of Harvey Sacks (ten Have, 1999; Wooffitt, 2005). In CA, Wooffitt (2005) argues that transcripts have the goal of capturing both what was said and also the way it was said. Even though CA is ideally used in naturally occurring talk and interaction (Wooffitt, 2005), Nicholson (2013) highlights that interviews are also recognised and analysed as a form and context for interaction. CA was deemed appropriate for this study because the interaction between me and the participant was in a manner which imitated ‘natural’ conversation between females who have had some experience of paternal absence one way or another. The interactions between me and the participant explored the participants’ talk and language in relation to their identity, academic, career and future prospects and relationships and attitudes towards men. This study wanted to make apparent the meanings that Black female students attach to being father absent through the usage of the language used by them to describe these meanings. Other analytic approaches such as thematic analysis would be less useful for this study as it is limited on focusing only on

⁶ Discontinuity markers are, for the purposes of this dissertation, the words (such as ‘but’ ‘well’ ‘anyway’) that are uttered to signal a change of topic or idea during a conversation (Billig, 1999; Drew & Holt, 1998).

themes that emerge within data and does not really go beyond this (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It was therefore fitting to use CA as the analysis approach because it captures significant details of talk in interaction (Wooffitt, 2005). It is also useful as it shows how identities, social relationships, 'states of minds' and realities are produced through talk and language (Silverman, 2004). In CA, special interest is paid to what the speaker's action is trying to accomplish (Wooffitt, 2005) as CA assumes that turns in interaction such as long utterances, expressions, sentences and even single words are systematically designed bits and pieces which carry out some activities in interaction (Wooffitt, 2005). The goal of analysis then was to explore how these aforementioned were designed, what they did, where in interaction they occurred, how they were connected to prior turns, and their implications for subsequent turns and to describe the underlying organisation of the way interaction unfolded on a turn-by-turn basis (Wooffitt, 2005). CA has its primary focal point on issues pertaining to meaning and context; the meaning of an action is formed by the sequence of previous actions from which it surfaces (Heritage, 2004). Social context is "a dynamically created thing that is articulated in and through the chronological organisation of interaction" (Heritage, 2004, p. 223). For the current study, both the meaning and context was taken into account in the analysis process. In CA it is argued that by producing their actions (i.e. what they are doing or performing by using particular words, in a particular way), participants signify their understanding of a prior action, and they do this at multiple levels. These understandings are established and there is a mutual understanding between the participants of the conversation.

3.8 Validity, reliability , transferability and reflexivity

3.8.1 Validity

Validity, according to Silverman (2013) is the extent to which an account truthfully represents the social phenomena to which it refers. The suggestions made by the researcher must be supported by the data and must be sensible in relation to earlier research (Silverman, 2013). The interpretations of the data must be credible, persuasive, plausible, reasonable and convincing. For this study, it is suggested that the theoretical claims of the researcher are supported by the

evidence from the participants' accounts, this therefore strengthening the validity of the research findings.

Particular extracts are presented to show credibility of the analysis. Extracts in qualitative research are presented in order to show validity because it forces the researcher to document her claims for readers who were not present during the conversations to witness the interactions as they were unfolding (Shenton, 2004). The problem of anecdotalism is addressed by using deviant cases which had their own interpretations (Silverman, 2006). Validity of the research study is thus improved (Silverman, 2006). Certain extracts that were chosen clearly revealed visible patterns on the phenomena that the researcher is interested in which was evident throughout the dataset. For the improvement of validity, especially against anecdotalism, I will go on to discuss the principles that I used.

I first analysed all the data that was collected during the study. This is known as the comprehensive data treatment (Silverman, 2013). I then went on to compare all the data collected in the study with my initial understanding of the phenomena under enquiry, therefore fulfilling the constant comparative method. I sought to refute or disprove the initial assumptions or the current understanding of the phenomena under study; this is known as the refutability principle. I thereafter actively sought out and addressed anomalies or deviant cases (Silverman, 2013) at every stage of the process and gave examples of deviant cases in order to achieve objectivity (Silverman, 2013). This is known as applying the deviant case analysis. The abovementioned principles strengthen the validity of the research as through the differences, I re-evaluated the labelling or ideas (Silverman, 2013) that emerge.

3.8.2 Reliability

Reliability refers to the regularity with which instances are conveyed to the same category by different participants or by the same person on different occasions (Silverman, 2013). I provide a number of verbatim transcribed extracts looking at the specific phenomena of interest. The extracts are presented in a detailed manner using the Jefferson's transcription conventions to accurately represent how the data was verbalised by the participants. Using Jefferson's transcription conventions provided additional information on how the participants organised their

talk as these conventions grant an objective, inclusive and reliable dataset because of the level of detail given by this method. According to Silverman (2004) interview transcripts can be weakened by failure to transcribe the small yet important sequencing, timed intervals and characteristics of speech production. By including these characteristics in transcription, reliability of the analysis of the study was improved. The detailed analysis was done in order to show links between data interpretations and conclusions and persuade the reader to agree with the conclusions of the study by showing that the findings are supported by data (Silverman, 2004). The reader can also scrutinise the basis upon which the interpretative judgements were made about the information obtained from the interactions (Silverman, 2004).

Silverman (2004) argues that the extracts selected should consist of all speeches made by all the participants of the conversation pertaining to the particular phenomena of interest. Transcription of the extracts should be detailed and inclusive of pauses and overlaps that both the participants of the conversation utter. Making these details evident to the reader allows the reader to examine the succeeding interpretations of texts (Silverman, 2004). Silverman (2004) also argues that this approach to analysis allows for data to remain contextualised and it refutes the researcher's impositions of her own ideas of the data.

3.8.3 Transferability

Transferability according to Kelly (2006) is the ability of the research findings to be transferable to similar contexts with similar participants. To improve the transferability of the study, a thick description of the context under study was given so that structures of meaning that are built up within the participants contexts were accounted for (Van der Riet & Durrheim, 2006). The understandings can be transferred to other studies in similar contexts to provide a framework to view the arrangements of meaning and action that take place in other studies (Van der Riet & Durrheim, 2006). To improve transferability the current study provided a complete and precise description of how the whole process of the study was conducted by clearly stating the research objectives, questions, methodology and the underlying framework that was used (Kelly, 2006). The reasons and motivations behind the chosen techniques have been plainly stated and argued for (Kelly, 2006).

3.8.4 Reflexivity

Reflexivity entails the researcher making the research process itself a focus of inquisition (Watt, 2007). As the researcher of the study I was prone to have a major influence on the research process in its entirety as I was the main decision-maker in all aspects of the project. The topic that was under study, the methodology that was used, and the technique used for data analysis was informed by me. In other words I used literature and the data gathered from the interactions with the participants in a particular way to accomplish the present study. It was therefore my duty to be reflexive of my influence on the research study both as a researcher and the relationship I had with the phenomenon under study (Watt, 2007). As the researcher I now consider my own assumptions, biases and experiences, and how these affected my research decisions (Watt, 2007).

The topic of father absent Black female students was brought up by my own personal interest in the topic. This phenomenon was intriguing as I have numerous family members that fit into the category of being Black, female and father absent and this is something that has preoccupied my mind for a long time. For this study, I initially wanted to explore the topic of paternal absence from any Black female's stance, not necessarily students. This is because in my conversations with my father absent relatives about their paternal absence I have discovered that they seemed to construct their lives as unsuccessful due to being father absent. In light of the above, I identified that it was relevant to generate other conversations where constructions of Black father absent females could be explored and analysed. As a common experience in South Africa (Eddy et al., 2013), and something that my own family has experienced and constructed in conversations over the years, I identified that an empirical understanding of these conversations could contribute in filling a gap in knowledge.

The participants that were selected for the study were chosen on the basis of fitting in the required criteria and their convenience to the researcher, in terms of being accessible.

I was very well aware that as the researcher and an interactional participant my presence did have an impact on the nature of data that was produced in the conversations. It was both the participants and I that negotiated the information outcomes as we actively interacted with each other in the interview session (Watt, 2007). It is indicated that the results are contextually based (Fontana & Frey, 2000).

I knew that I was going to have to do an extensive enquiry about the personal aspects of the participant's lives during the interactions. Most participants confessed they hardly talked about these personal aspects with anyone. With this, I was uncertain if I was up for the challenge of how I would interact to especially the issues the participants might think would put them in the negative light. When listening back at the interactions, I found that sometimes I missed the opportunity to probe the participants to elaborate and further the conversation. This was when the participants indicated insecurity about the subject at hand. As an act of being polite and respectful of the participant's boundaries I did not probe them further. When participants indicated embarrassment, I tried to encourage them to be comfortable around me and indicated non-judgement. I knew that I was part of the scene during the data collection process and so as a participant myself I encouraged responses from the participants by continually assuring them of my presence and understanding so that they would feel comfortable and free to interact without limitations. I did not take down any sort of notes during the process as I wanted to be fully present in the interaction. I also found myself not showing any strong emotional reaction to the participant's responses as I wanted to show my relating to the participant and my non-judgement. The interview schedule was framed in a way that allowed the participants to have a conversation as the purpose of the study was to create a conversation and interaction with the participants in relation to the topic under study.

As the researcher I decided on which excerpts to use for the data analysis of the study, since I was the one that understood the purposes and aims of the research and how it evolved. Even though I was the main researcher, I did worry about what I will do with the data that depicted the participants in a negative light as I did not want to hurt any participant in what I might find. In such cases, as a researcher I maintained respect and integrity for all the participants at all phases on the research.

3.9 Ethical considerations

Ethical research should be a primary concern for all social science researchers who work with human participants. This means that researchers should keep the welfare of research participants at the forefront of the research process (Wassenaar, 2006). There are basic ethical principles that

must be adhered to by researchers when conducting research (Wassenaar, 2006). These principles are discussed below and it is made explicit how each has been applied in the current research.

3.9.1 Scientific validity

Research that is scientifically valid must yield valid answers to the research question (Wassenaar, 2006). Scientific validity is only possible when appropriate methods are used that ultimately yield valid and usable results. In this study, scientific validity was assured by not exposing the participants to risk and inconvenience for no purpose. The design (the qualitative approach), methods, analysis (conversational analysis) and the sample size that were used were rigorously chosen (i.e., justifiable) and feasible for this study. Therefore the aforementioned features of the research study are suggested to have led to valid and meaningful answers for the research questions (Wassenaar, 2006).

3.9.2 Social value

Research should be of value to society or a particular community of people (Wassenaar, 2006). The current research hopes to be of benefit to society (research community) as it desires to add a new angle to literature and make a meaningful and valid contribution to existing literature that is around the subject of ‘father absenteeism’. This study could open a possibility that some other person or organisation could build or improve on an intervention program based on this study which could positively contribute to the greater society. The participants of the study could directly benefit from the study as the results of the study were made available to them. The results could have helped them to be empowered through knowledge as they might have understood themselves in a better way both academically and socially.

3.9.3 Collaborative partnership

Research should address some community need and members of the community should be active in the planning and participation of the research (Wassenaar, 2006). Participants must also

inherit the benefits of the study (Orb, Eisenhauer & Wynaden, 2001). For this study, the UKZN community gatekeeper (i.e. the UKZN Registrar) was approached for permission to conduct the study with students from UKZN (Pietermaritzburg Campus). The permission was granted (see Appendix 7). The UKZN student community participated in the research and therefore brought knowledge that had a major influence on the research study in its entirety. The UKZN ethical clearance was also applied for in order to ensure that research will be carried out in an ethically sound manner. The UKZN ethics committee granted approval for the research to be carried out (see Appendix 2). Further, the Child and Family Centre (CFC) was approached for assistance if any of the participants experienced any stress during and/or after the process of data collection. CFC granted permission to help students through professional counselling to try and alleviate any stress (see Appendix 8). The abovementioned bodies that were approached are from the UKZN community, this showing evidence that the UKZN community was participatory in the research planning and execution. The UKZN community benefitted from the research as the dissertation is ultimately a product from the institution. The research also adds to the growing body of knowledge on the impact that absent fathers may or may not have on young people in South Africa.

3.9.4 Favourable risk-benefit analysis

All foreseeable risks, harms and ‘costs’ associated with the research to the participants should be acknowledged (Orb et al., 2001). The researcher must then have the means to minimise these risks and costs and maximise the benefits for participation in the study (Orb et al., 2001). For the current study, it is possible that the research participants could have experienced distress due to participation in the research. For such an occurrence I made arrangements with the CFC (located within the discipline of psychology at UKZN) for participants to get counselling from a professional psychologist. Alternatively, if the participants became emotionally distressed as a result of their participation in the research study, they could have been referred to the free student counselling services (Orb et al., 2001) available within the UKZN student support structures.

To minimise distress, I chose to include only participants that were comfortable enough to volunteer to be part of the study.

A summary of the findings was emailed to the participants. Feedback is believed to have helped the participants gain insight into understanding themselves and other Black father absent female students. Arrangements were also made with the CFC if any of the participants needed more information on how to deal with paternal absence. I also compiled a list of relevant books and journal articles, a documentary, and online resource recommendations for the participants that might have been helpful (see Appendix 9).

3.9.5 Informed consent

Participants must be provided with appropriate and adequate information about the research; the participants must also be competent to understand the research and its implications (Orb et al., 2001). Researchers ought to give potential participants clear, detailed and factual information about the research, its methods, its possible disadvantages and benefits together with the oath that participation is voluntary and that there is freedom to refuse or withdraw from the study without consequences. Moreover, the participants need to be informed about the tape-recording and give consent to it (Nkabinde, 2008). With the aim of protecting the participants from any harm, I clearly explained the consent form (see appendix 5) to the participants and negotiated their informed consent. Informed consent is a determinant of ethicality in research (Wassenaar, 2006). For this study, the aforementioned issues on informed consent were dealt with. The information sheet (see appendix 9), which included information about the participant's rights; such as volunteering and that they can discontinue whenever they feel uncomfortable during the research process and about the confidentiality, was explained to the participants. Autonomy was enhanced as the participants were the ones that took the initiative to contact me. The participants were told that no incentives will be offered to them for volunteering themselves to partake in the study. An opportunity was presented to the participants to bring up any questions in relation to the information sheet that was discussed. Informed consent to participate in the study was then obtained by asking the participants to sign the participant consent form (see Appendix 5) after I went through it with them and ensured that they understood all details. The participants were

asked for permission to be audio-taped during the data collection. Signed consent was also asked from the participants if they agreed to be audio-taped (see Appendix 6). After the data collection session, I also facilitated a debriefing session to alleviate any anticipated stress. The session involved me checking with the participants how they experienced the interaction, and if they felt they needed to talk more to a professional counsellor about the issues that came up during the session. The participants were treated with respect throughout the research process. I did give feedback of the research to the participants. She fulfilled this by writing a summary of the findings of the study which was emailed to the participants.

Since the interactions were audio-recorded, the digital recordings were stored on a computer that only I had access to. The research supervisor also had access to the audio-recordings. The transcribed data copies could only be accessed by me and my supervisor. Data that was analysed was kept safe. In order to further protect the identity of the participants from public disclosure, pseudonyms were used.

All participants for this study were 19 years and older, therefore did not require parental or guardian consent for participation. They were all educated young women from UKZN. They signed consent for participation in the study, which was written in simple English terms. The information sheet was made available to them so that they could reflect on it whenever they wished to. A name and contact details of the research ethics committee was provided to the participants in case any of the participants were in need of it with regard to their rights as participants in the research project.

3.9.6 Respect for participants and community

The information that the individuals chose to reveal remained confidential. I respected the participant's rights to autonomy, privacy, truth, right not to be injured and agreed confidentiality (Orb et al., 2001). Data was stored in a manner that preserves anonymity and confidentiality.

3.10 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a description of the research procedures that were used to unfold the current study. The chosen research design, description of the study site, sampling strategy, description of research participants, data collection methods, ethical considerations, data analysis and the actions taken to ensure rigour were made explicit to the reader together with the motivation for the methodological decisions taken.

Chapter 4. Findings

4.1 Introduction and Overview of Chapter

The purpose of this chapter is to focus on and present the major findings of the study. Data for the current study was analysed using CA. The primary objective of this study was to identify the devices that Black father absent female students employed in interactions when discussing paternal absence. CA provided insights into the ‘conversational utterances’ (Silverman, 2004) that Black father absent female students used during interactions. This chapter will first present a background description for each of the participants. Thereafter, the chapter will use a pattern of first presenting an extract of an interaction between the me and the participant, and then a detailed CA based on the preceding extract will be presented. The chapter will consider the participants’ identity, academics, relationships, attitude towards men, career and future prospects respectively.

4.2 Description of the participants

4.2.1 Participant A

When participating in the study, Mbali (pseudonym) was a 22 year old Black father absent female student who was pursuing a masters degree in a humanities field. She reported being the first of five children from her mother and the only child of her father. Her parents were never married. She reported being father absent due to her father’s death which she said happened when she was 13 years old. Prior to his death, Mbali mentioned that she had a good relationship with her father, but due to certain familial conflicts she reported not having a relationship with her father’s family. At the time of the data collection, Mbali was living with her mother, and she was pursuing her studies because “the last conversation we had with my father before he died he was like ‘ufunde’ like ‘study’ ... I think those words (.) have an impact on how I’ve been driven and how I’ve been serious and getting good marks” (line 245).

4.2.2 Participant B

At the time of data collection Bongi (Pseudonym) was a Black father absent female student originally from the Pietermaritzburg area. When participating in the study, Bongi was 24 years old and was also completing a masters degree in a humanities field. She reported being one of five children from her mother. Bongi's father had multiple wives, and when he passed away, when she was six years old, numerous conflicts arose within the extended polygamous family. These conflicts apparently pertained to finances, with Bongi's mother receiving little to no financial benefits from her father's polices "so even though there were some UIF⁷ or something but that amount was to be divided by-umm amongst four wives, so we kinda like got (.) I'd say a small amount"(line 37). Bongi identified that the death of her father made it "hard for my mom just to support five children...cause my mom was a housewife" (line 42); however, she saw education as a way to escape this socio-economic situation.

4.2.3 Participant C

When participating in the study, Gabi (Pseudonym) was 23 years old, and was registered for a postgraduate qualification in education. Her father passed away when she was three years old and soon after that her mother also passed away. Her parents were never married. Gabi reported that she stayed with her father's family from as far back as she can remember. She reported not having a relationship with her mother's family, and embarking on post secondary (and post graduate) studies with the financial and emotional support from her paternal relatives.

4.2.4 Participant D

Originally from Durban, Sphe (Pseudonym) was a 23 year old Black father absent female student when she participated in the study. She was pursuing her postgraduate studies (at masters level)

⁷ It was assumed that when Bongi said UIF, she was referring to the South African government's Unemployment Insurance Fund

in a humanities field. She reported being the last born from her parents' marriage, being preceded by one brother and two sisters. She reported being father absent due to paternal abandonment at the age of eight when her parents divorced. She reported never seeing her father since the divorce. She indicated that she had no memory of any of her father's family, and stayed with her mother and siblings. Sphe claimed to be pursuing post secondary (and postgraduate) studies as she had the drive to do well and succeed for herself. She wanted to "assure" herself that she "can still make it...can cope without him (referring to her father)" (line 25).

4.2.5 Participant E

At the time of data collection, Mpume (Pseudonym) was a 19 year old father absent Black female studying her first year of engineering. She reported staying with her mother and older sister. She was also father absent due to abandonment. Her father apparently abandoned her before she was even born. She reported meeting her father's brother before but not her father or any other member from her father's family. Mpume reported that she was an outstanding student at school and dreams of pursuing her PHD one day.

4.2.6 The researcher

When conducting the study I (Ncami) was a 23 year old Black female student who was pursuing my masters degree in the discipline of psychology. I am originally from Newcastle and I stayed with my mother, father and younger brother when growing up. I had numerous family members, especially female relatives that were without fathers. In my numerous historical conversations with my female relatives, I have been especially aware of what I have come to identify as a socially shared victim constructed reality of their lives. My other females (including myself) within my family that have fathers present in their lives mostly seemed to pursue post-secondary studies. Continuation in education has been constructed by some of my relatives as being partly the result of their fathers' own presence in their lives and studies.

4.3 Findings

“Truth is not born nor is it to be found inside the head of an individual person, it is born between people collectively searching for truth, in the process of their dialogic interaction.” (Bakhtin⁸)

Throughout the extracts, the devices of resilience, independence and empowerment were predominantly evident, due to their repeated appearance as the participants were interacting in relation to their paternal absence.

The data analysis process was an iterative and non-linear process where I audio recorded the conversations, conducted a verbatim transcription of the audio recordings, immersed myself in both the audio recordings and the transcribed data and conducted CA on the data.

4.3.1 Identity

Throughout the researcher-participant interactions, the participants seemed to display a resilient “social reality construction” (Heritage, 2004, p. 222) of their identity in relation to their paternity. More specifically, it appeared as if the participants were constructing themselves as agents of their own lives. The following extracts illustrate aspects of identity.

4.3.1.1 Extract 1⁹

Prior to the conversational turns taken in the extract below, Sphe and I were talking about the impact that her father’s absence had on her. Sphe conveyed a *resilient* construction in that she did not feel like she was lacking in anything due to her father being absent. Sphe indicated to me that she separated her identity from her father’s. This description is produced in the extract below.

Interview D (Sphe):

1. Ncami: °hm° (.) ↑and how do you: feel (.) generally °how do you feel about your

⁸ <http://pubpages.unh.edu/~jds/Bakhtinquotes.htm>

⁹ See Appendix 10 for the description of the Jefferson transcription symbols used in the extracts.

2. father's absence°
3. (0.2)
4. Sphe: ↑uh: ·hhh
5. (0.2)
6. Sphe: ↑like I don't real↑ly (0.1) it doesn't really: like (.) ok I- I- at
7. times I come across↓ people who are like you know ° oh my dad le::ft, why did
8. he lea::ve' >you know< etcetera etcetera they so >heartbroken< (.)hhh I'm not.
9. I- I-with me I don't even ca:re you know because life goes on: He's there:, he's
10. not there: (.) i:t's still the same
11. Ncami: °sure°
12. Sphe: y:ou kno:w a:nd another thing that: uh: I had to make myself realise
13. is that (0.2) it's m:y life whether (.) ok (.) whether m:y mom is there: or not (.)
14. whether my dad is there or not: Th:is is my life I:: nee:d to mould it the way I
15. wa:nt it to be=
16. Ncami: =sure=
17. Sphe: you know (.) so i:f he:'s not there, he's not there (0.3)he's not there i::t: ca:n
18. affect me (.) y:es but ·hhh it shouldn't affect me to such an extent that: (.)no:w
19. I:: see myself as nothi:ng o:r I can't co:pe o:r I can't continu:e with life now
20. and >I'll commit suici:de< <no::> it's my life at the end of the ↓day
21. Ncami: hm
22. (0.2)
23. Sphe: °yah° I:: nee:d (.) to mak:e a success of my own life...

In response to the my utterance, Sphe positions herself in the conversation in line 4. It was in this line that Sphe showed that she was battling to answer the question. She seemed to be taking time to formulate her argument before engaging in the production of an utterance. In the middle part of this line Sphe indicates that she had assessed the question negatively “I don't real↑ly (0.1) it doesn't really: like” and begins to establish her standpoint on the matter at hand. This standpoint is a negative attitude or no regard towards her father's absence, possibly indicating *resilience*. In lines 7-8 Sphe then went on to give an illustration of people that are heart-broken and have

questions regarding their absent fathers. The image that Sphe creates seemed to be an attempt to emphasise what she *does not* identify with, illustrating that she is the *opposite* of those people in that she is *not* heart-broken and does *not* have questions pertaining to her father being absent. Therefore she *resists* and *objects* to the idea of being broken-hearted due to her father's absence. It is indicated that she was resisting her identity being constructed by her paternal absence. In lines 9-10 Sphe portrayed herself as *resilient* to feeling gloomy about her father's absence. She describes herself as a *survivor* "you know because life goes on" who needs to carry on with life whether her father is there or not. In line 11, I showed her agreement to Sphe's response. The former part of line 12 "y:ou kno:w" suggested that Sphe was trying to convince me of her resilience and further align her to her side of the argument. In the latter part of line 12, Sphe confessed that she did not always display this independence and survivor construction. This was something she had to figure out and apply on her own in her life. In lines 13-14 "it's m:y life" "Th:is is my life" with the increased volume "Th:is" Sphe was emphasising herself as the main actor of her own life and therefore taking full ownership of it (Wooffitt, 2005). She tried to convince me that she really was independent "I:: nee:d to mould it the way I wa:nt it to be=" with the stretched out sound which signified her emphasis. Here Sphe was emphasising that she did not depend on her father for her to have her desired life outcomes. In line 16, I accepted Sphe's social construction without any challenges. In the former part of line 17 "you know" Sphe further tried to convince and reassure me of her previous statement showing how strongly she felt about her standpoint. In line 17-18, however, Sphe now seemed to surrender to the idea that she might be affected by her father's absence, albeit not to a great extent. She portrayed herself as the main 'driver' of her life, *resilient* to her father's absence having a negative effect on her. Sphe presents herself as an *empowered* woman, and *not a victim* of circumstance. A long pause in line 22 which was not owned by either of the conversational participants followed. I was giving Sphe an opportunity to explain further. It is seen that Sphe took this opportunity as in line 23 she reinstates her position, trying to show me that she is taking responsibility of her own life and not relying or depending on anyone else for making a success of it except herself.

4.3.1.2. Extract 2

Mpume and I were previously discussing the fact that Mpume has never met her father.

Mpume's description of her paternal absence is similar to those of the other participants in that she too presents as a resilient individual whose identity is independent of her father.

Interview E (Mpume):

1. Ncami: uhm (.) and how do you feel abou:t tha:t
2. Mpume: hawu (h) I do:n't kno:w
3. Ncami: yah
4. Mpume: I do:n't know (.) I'm just like (.) fi:ne
5. Ncami: °hm°
6. Mpume: °°cause°° yah: °I never knew him so it doesn't matter to me°
7. Ncami: uhm (.) ok ↑so you've met his brother but not hi:m
8. Mpume: ↓ya:h
9. Ncami: okay uhm (.) an:d have they ever invited you guys maybe for
10. family eve:nts and what not
11. Mpume: ↓>°No°<
12. (.)
13. Ncami: uhm (.) and how do you feel abou:t tha:t
14. Mpume: ↓°e::y I don't ha(h)ve any feelings towards tha:t (.) I ca(h)n't say I'm angry
15. abo:ut it sad o:r (0.1) anything cause (0.3) >I don't know< I just (.) it
16. do:esn't matter to me: Y:ah°

I, in line 1, based on Mpume's previous statement about never meeting her father was trying to get Mpume to come up with some sort of stance about never meeting her father. In line 2 Mpume responds with "hawu (h)" seeming to be mocking or downplaying my question and signals that she does not take any specific standpoint. In line 4, Mpume gets the hint from me and provides further talk on this topic. She insists on her initial answer of not having a firm standpoint on the matter but then after a pause (perhaps a reconsideration), she takes a standpoint regarding her feelings. Mpume in line 4 was indicating to me that never meeting her father had no major

negative impact on her. She was portraying herself as well and content. In line 5, I was reassuring Mpume of her presence and that she can expand on her talk. In line 6 Mpume, in a quieter utterance went on to explain and justify her previous statement by advocating that since she has never met her father, his absence does not have an impact on her. She was also bringing forth that she had no care or concern for this matter. The quieter utterances in line 6 possibly suggest that Mpume was contemplating the issue under discussion. Mpume distanced herself from this issue, presenting herself as *independent*, not a victim or lacking in any way but as a *resilient* individual. Line 7 indicates my surprise that Mpume had met her father's brother (discussed earlier) but not her father (which Mpume is revealing now). I was also inviting Mpume to explain this predicament. In line 8 Mpume responds with a low pitch “↓ya:h” signifying her contentment that she had come to terms and had accepted the fact that even though her uncle has made a successful attempt to meet her, her own father had not. In lines 9-10 I went on to probe Mpume about her relationship with her father's family and anything else that she might see as significant in relation to this subject. In a quieter by rapid outburst, Mpume indicated that there is no relationship that exists or a familial linkage of any form. The rapid speech and quieter tone that this statement was presented with possibly suggests that this issue was uncomfortable for Mpume to discuss. The uncomfortable utterance was followed by a silence from the conversation participants. When this type of discomfort is played out in a conversation, both participants might not be sure of what to say and hence the silence. In line 13, I then took it upon herself to directly ask and challenge Mpume to share her feelings towards the issue of not having a relationship with her father. Line 14 signals Mpume's frustration “↓e::y” due to the question posed to her, showing that the question is burdensome to her. Mpume then goes on to laugh within her speech. Jefferson (1984) identified that laughing while relaying a troubling situation can be described as “troubles-resistive” (p. 367), and this notion may be useful in understanding Mpume's laughter. In lines 14-16 Mpume portrays herself as someone who has no standpoint to this matter but at the same time does not give a care about not having a relationship with her father's family. Mpume was thus portraying herself as a *survivor*, *independent* and *resilient*. She appeared not to be moved by her father's family not having a relationship with her. She also distances herself from the subject matter with the stretched out

sound “it do:esn’t matter to me:” indicating that she is not negatively impacted by this issue, but rather she is content, all signifying her *resilience*.

4.3.1.3 Extract 3

In the following extract Sphe surrenders and acknowledges that her father’s absence may have had an impact on some aspect of her identity. In the extract below, she claims that her father’s absence might have impacted her, and in this instance, Sphe presents an identity construction that deviates from her previous construction.

Interview D (Sphe):

1. Ncami: yah (.) and has it al:ways been like tha:t ((referring to Sphe’s quietness))
2. Sphe: yah I’ve always been like that: (.) ever since (.) yah I’ve al:ways been like
3. That (.) I’ve always been (.) you know even in primary (.) I’ve always been
4. <quie:t>
5. Ncami: Do you thi:nk that maybe has: anything to do with your fa:ther
6. Sphe: u:hm:: (0.2) wha:t can I (.) I don’t I- I ·hhh doubt =
7. Ncami: =hm=
8. Sphe: = I: wo:n’t say ↓no bu:t: at the same time I won’t say y:es
9. Ncami: °hmm°
10. Sphe: >cause I just don’t see< h::ow it would be influenced by that: (.) but it’s
11. possible (0.2) cause I ↑mean (.) for example if you:: ·hhh let’s say:: in this
12. class the majority of the kids have (0.2) you know mhlambe have a: ok (.)
13. have ↑fathers: ok maybe they always talking (.) maybe they have ↑things in
14. common you know ‘my father is like thi:s and’ you know and they talk about
15. that (.) Wh:a:t are you:: gonna sa:y
16. Ncami: °hmm°
17. Sphe: you know (.) you might as well just di:stance yourself and the:n when you
18. Fi:nd some who- who probably: shares the same experiences as you (.) >then
19. you can open up< to that person: and talk to that person: but: you can’t talk to:
20. just about a:nyone caus:e (0.2) you know you’ll >probably won’t have the

21. same things in common<

Sphe's repetition of "I've always been like that" in lines 2-3 indicates that she was unsure of the words to select and how to formulate the utterance and so she was taking her time to formulate this account before engaging in it (Edwards, 1994). The repetition also functioned as a tool she used to emphasise and convince me of the consistency of the quiet trait she had. In line 5 I gave Sphe space to give an account or link her father's absence to her identity, implying that he could have had an impact on Sphe being a quiet individual. In line 6, the pauses, false starts and hesitation portrays Sphe to be battling with responding, this signalling that Sphe could not easily navigate around this topic (Edwards, 1994). She firstly rejected the idea that her father could have anything to do with her being a quiet person, but then she reconsidered her position, showing that she was open to the possibility that perhaps her father could be linked to her being a quiet individual. In line 7, I conveyed her understanding. In line 8, Sphe established her standpoint, conveying to me that she is not satisfied with the two possible choices (yes or no) offered to her. I communicate my presence in line 9, indicating that Sphe can continue with her dialogue. Sphe went on to give an account of what she meant in line 8. The accelerated outburst at the beginning of line 10 was an indicator that Sphe might be defensive to the idea that her father's absent might have an impact on her. She was resistant to the idea that her father might have influenced her identity. Here Sphe was portraying herself as *independent*, not influenced by her father. In the latter part of line 10, Sphe acknowledged that a link could be a possibility. In lines 11-15 Sphe then gave an illustration of how the link could have been possible, by this she was convincing me that she fully understands the possibility. At the same time Sphe was justifying herself being a quiet individual portraying herself as a victim of circumstance. In line 15 Sphe was convincing me that she had no choice but to distance herself from those who she did not have commonalities with (pertaining to paternity). In lines 17-19 Sphe went on to express to me that she associates with people whom she mostly has commonalities with. In lines 20-21 Sphe was convincing me that she is quiet because she does not just talk to anyone but she is selective of the people she talks to based on common grounds; she does not open up to people with fathers since she herself does not have a father.

In concluding this theme it is evident that most of the participants did not acknowledge their fathers as having an impact on their identity outcomes. Most of the participants did not even have linkage with their paternal family.

4.3.2 Academic performance

The conversations which pertained to academic performance generally indicated that the participants did not acknowledge their paternal absence as having any affect on their positive academic performance. Rather they attributed financial circumstances, maternal support, motivation and a host of other factors as having an influence on their academic performance.

4.3.2.1 Extract 4

The participants of this conversation are talking about the hardships that Bongi faced from a young age, and how she used those hardships from home to motivate herself to work hard in her academics in order to have a successful life. The themes of vulnerability and weakness (but also resilience and empowerment) are evident in Bongi's social construction of paternal absence.

Interview B:

1. Bongi: we needed so many thi:ngs (.) but from there: maybe: we tried to build
2. ourselves just to (.) maybe just to say, to stay stro:ng and try to: (.) work
3. hard on our studies
4. Ncami: °Hm:°
5. Bongi: That was the > positive part< (.) I guess despite err the circumstances we
6. were faced wi:th but yah (.) we tried to: focus on our studies even though
7. it was kinda like ha:rd cause we'd go: to school without foo::d >as in
8. like< we didn't know what we'll e:at when we come ba:ck...
9. Ncami: ° hm°
10. Ncami: ok so you'd say tha:t it sort of had a p:ositive impact on your academic
11. li:fe?
12. Bongi: ↑I'd say that=

13. Ncami: =Yah
 14. Bongi: es:pecially for <me:>
 15. Ncami: °Hm°
 16. Bongi: I was like uhm (.) looking at my uhh situation I was like ‘God I know one
 17. day I’ll ch:a:nge this’

In line 1, Bongi used the discontinuity marker “but” to change her tone of victimhood and life of difficulty to that of *resilience*, taking *responsibility* and *empowerment* (through education) in lines 1-3. The discontinuity marker was used to dismiss the victimhood argument as if it were irrelevant and hence steering the conversation to the direction that is more in line with Bongi’s goals of portraying herself as resilient (Drew & Holt, 1998). Here Bongi was portraying herself as a *survivor*, motivated by rising above a difficult life. She and her family took ownership of themselves and were not consumed by their struggles. I respond with understanding. Bongi went on to indicate to me that this motivation and resilience against all odds was something of a benefit. Bongi used this difficulty as a motivation to be *resilient*, to take *responsibility* of herself and to be an *empowered* individual. In line 5, Bongi indicated that her life circumstances carried a great deal of difficulty but then again uses the discontinuity marker “but” to switch back to the *empowerment* construction to show that her description ends with the fact that she rose above her difficulties, portraying herself as *driven* by education. In lines 7-8 Bongi explained why focusing on their studies was a challenge. Here she was attempting to make me understand and be convinced by the argument that she was putting forward as she emphasised in a rapid outburst the extreme nature of her difficulties “>as in like<”. She was advocating that studying during and after school without food was difficult for them. Here Bongi was portraying herself as a survivor who has triumphed over hard life circumstances. I, in line 10 conveyed my understanding and reassures Bongi that I was present and that she can continue. In lines 10-11 I attempted to get a clearer understanding of Bongi’s stance. I was trying to get a clearer answer from Bongi as she seemed to focus a lot on the impact on her academic life. In line 12 Bongi with heightened emotions “↑I’d” showing excitement (Hepburn & Bolden, 2013) confirms my assumption. I then indicated that I am agreeing and listening to Bongi. In line 14 Bongi now distances herself from her other siblings. She indicates that being motivated by her struggles had an especially

significant impact on her as an individual. She indicated that her other siblings did not have as much educational benefit as her. She was portraying herself as a more *empowered* and *resilient* individual compared to her siblings. In response to this, I demonstrate my understanding. In lines 16-17 Bongi continues with the individual construction explaining her previous argument. Here she indicates that she had a desire to change her struggles through being empowered.

4.3.2.2 Extract 5

The participant in the following extract shows her resistance to admit her shortcomings in some of her academic performance.

Interview C (Gabi):

1. Ncami: >And then in- in the calculations aspects of things<
2. Gabi: >The calculations< (.) yo:h that was: that- (.) >I tried my best<=
3. Ncami: =Hm=
4. Gabi: =But I just feel that if I applied myself the way I did with (.) everything else
5. Ncami: °°Y:es°°
6. Gabi: <yah I probably would have (.) did(.) ok (yah)>
7. Ncam: Ok (.) ↑but why do you think that you (.) just didn't have that interest as much
8. as thi:s (.)the: home economics a:nd Engli:sh and all the notes and stuff
9. Gabi: °I don't (.) it's just (.) yah it's ↓calculations° you know ha ha ha
10. Ncam: ya:h (.) so would you say that you had a sort o:f (.) >negative< outlook on
11. [it]=
12. Gabi: =[Yah] I did (.) yah I did (.) I did.
13. Ncami: a:nd (.) you didn't really apply yourself to it=
14. Gabi: =yah and another reason was (.) I knew that I wouldn't I didn't wanna [do:]
15. Ncami: [Ok]
16. Gabi: (.) my career will not be (.) nowhere near the sciences=
17. Ncami: =oka:y

In line 1 I was steering the conversation to a new direction, trying to get Gabi to focus, advocate and give an account for herself in terms of how she performed academically. In line 2, Gabi's speech concludes hesitation, pauses and accelerated speech indicating that she might be in the process of producing an uncomfortable account (Nicholson, 2013). The short, fast outbursts ">The calculations<" and ">I tried my best<" indicate that Gabi was not entirely comfortable discussing this topic as she was rushing through it and would like to get this portion of the account out of the way. In line 2, Gabi's remark "yo:h" suggests that she was overwhelmed by the question and found it difficult to answer the question. She went on to, in the most subtle way, indicate that she did not perform well. By the latter part of the sentence it is evident that Gabi was reluctant to take responsibility for not performing well. Gabi in line 4 continued with her explanation however beginning with a discontinuity marker "But" which indicates that she was now stepping in and changing her perspective. Gabi now took ownership of her actions, acknowledged her weakness and the past mistakes of neglecting the mathematical subjects. She was, however, also contradicting herself from line 2 ">I tried my best<". I then indicated to Gabi that I was present with her and that she can continue. In line 6 Gabi acknowledges this reassurance and her own lack of responsibility as she admits her lack of concern for mathematical subjects. She also indicated her level of the performance which was less than acceptable as she said that if she applied herself "...I probably would have (.) did (.) ok ...". In lines 7-8 I challenged Gabi to advocate or account for her standpoint in mathematical subjects as compared to subjects that did not involve calculations. Again in line 9, Gabi indicated some discomfort and uncertainty as to what to say on the matter as she seemed to be overwhelmed and battling to answer. Gabi was being resistant to take on failure or battling with mathematics and hence she opted to downplay and mock calculations and in the process tried to recruit the researcher to be a part of this mockery "you know ha ha ha". Here Gabi was expecting the researcher to agree with her standpoint when it comes to calculations. In line 10 I showed understanding to Gabi's standpoint however I also directly challenged her to take ownership for herself not performing well. I offer Gabi an explanation for her performance (which Gabi could accept or refuse), since she could observe that the topic was problematic for Gabi. This interaction could be identifiable as politeness, which Bellig (1999) argues can be when a person indirectly formulates requests for information. In line 12 Gabi without hesitation overlaps with

an indicator that the topic being opened up was of significant meaning to her (Hepburn & Bolden, 2013). The in-breath and long pause in line 4 from Bongi indicates that she could not easily find the appropriate word or phrase to describe her mother's impact on her academics; signifying being overwhelmed. Bongi here was indicating that her mother played a significant role. She finally came up with an appropriate phrase which she used to try to show that her mother was her "pillar of strength >in everything<". Bongi uses the rapid outburst ">in everything<" to add emphasis (Hepburn & Bolden, 2013). Here Bongi was portraying her mother as a hero and a person which she depended on. Upon this response, I showed her agreement and presence to Bongi, indicating to her that she can go on with her talk. The long silence could have meant that they either do not have anything else to say on the matter or they are unsure about what else to say. However, here I was giving Bongi space to talk and expand on the subject under hand. Bongi then stepped forward and gave an utterance. In line 7, Bongi starts her sentence with a heightened emotion "↑Even ↑though" stressing that she was introducing a different perspective to the conversation. Bongi acknowledged the fact that relative to her performance in mathematics, she did not do as well in her other subjects. Here Bongi was taking ownership and responsibility of the fact that she did not try her best in other subjects as she did in mathematics. She however indicated that despite this, her mother's role and significance did not change as she continually gave her support and strength. She praises her mother for this.

4.3.2.4 Extract 7

In the following extract Sphe makes explicit that her father's absence is the main motivator for her to want to do well in her academics. It pushes her to want to succeed.

Interview D (Sphe):

1. Ncami: uhm an:d uh:m (.) what maybe do you think had influenced you °on that°
2. Sphe: >on the fact that I've been doing we:ll academically<
3. Ncami: °Hm°
4. Sphe: I guess it goes back to:: what I said ear:lier that: (.) you know I- I (.) you
5. know >I sort of like have this< dri:ve to- to succeed in °things° so: you know
6. when I start something I: make it a point that I:: finish it you know...

7. Ncami: <°Hm°>
8. Sphe: ya:h but: uh (.) influence ya:h I guess it's just that dri:ve >that you know<
9. even though my father is not around so <wha:t> I can still do it: (.) °you
10. know°
11. Ncami: °uhm°

The false starts and pauses in line 1 “uhm an:d uh:m (.)” indicate that I was taking time to formulate this probe as I was not sure which words to select (Edwards, 1994). Sphe indicates that she wanted to be clear with my question and not assume anything. She therefore confirms what I meant by “that” in line 1. Sphe’s pauses and false starts in lines 4-6, indicate that the account she was giving was not a general or expected one, and so she was taking her time to carefully manage her talk (Edwards, 1994). In lines 4 -5, Sphe, through the repetition of “I” and the fast outburst “>I sort of like have this<”, was trying to convince me that the drive that she had to thrive was what was influencing her to do well academically. Sphe was convincing me that she was determined and thrived rigorously and wholeheartedly to do well. Sphe in line 8 produced some false starts and pauses that indicate that her talk is not routine talk but rather she was taking time to formulate her account (Edwards, 1994). Sphe in line 8 emphasised on the drive that she has despite her father’s absence having a negative influence on her. In line 9 “so <wha:t> I can still do it:” indicated that Sphe did not care and actually belittled the fact that her father has been absent from her life and that she did not need him to carry on and thrive in life. Here she was portraying herself as resilient to being victimised by her father’s absence. Bongzi was also presenting herself as autonomous as she was convinced that she “can still do it”. In concluding this theme of the academic performance of Black females without fathers, it is evident that both directly and indirectly the participants used their fathers’ absence as a motivation to want to do well academically. In doing this they used devices that communicated *resilience, independence and empowerment*.

4.3.3 Relationships with men

In relation to relationships, the mutual sense-making from participants was that the way they behave in relationships is based on the guy that they are involved with or previous relationships.

They were resistant to admit their fathers as having an impact on their behaviour in relationships. There was a deviant case however where one of the participants admitted that her father's absence has influenced her relationships with men.

4.3.3.1 Extract 8

In the following extract the participant constructs herself as being resistant to entering a relationship with a man and also resilient to the idea that this might be caused by her father abandoning her.

Interview D: Sphe

1. Sphe: so >when when< I do: realise that 'ok I:: you know I:'m d:veloping
2. feelings for this guy' it still takes a while to- to actually (.) pt.uhm (.) to:: to
3. ↑get into that rela:tionship
4. Ncami: °ya:h°
5. Sphe: so: ya:h (.) it's a mission he
6. Ncami: °yah°
7. Sphe: it:'s a mission cause I need I- >I always tell myself < that I need to know
8. what this guy is ↓about=
9. Ncami: =And w:hy do you think you feel that- w:hy does it take such a long time
10. (.) Why is there such an emphasis on=
11. Sphe: =>↑I think it has to do with past relationships< >I don't think it has anything
12. to do with my< father's absence
13. Ncami: °hm°
14. Sphe: it has to do with past relationships (.) ↑like in the past I can say I was: I
15. was still careful about the guys I used to date but: (.) not as I am n:ow
16. Ncami: sure

In lines 1-3 Sphe produced her talk in accelerated speech, filled with pauses and false starts in between. This suggests that the account she was producing was her own and not drawn from anyone, as she was carefully managing her talk (Edwards, 1994). Sphe here was trying to

convince me that it takes her a long time to get into a relationship. She was producing herself as someone who is resistant or hesitant to get into a relationship. In response to this, in line 4, I shared my consensus to Sphe's position and that I was taking in all that she is sharing. Sphe conveyed that getting into a relationship was something that does not get accomplished easily for her. She then gave a light laugh which was probably used to demonstrate and cover up her embarrassment to me. In response to this, I conveyed my agreement and assured Sphe of my presence and that she can carry on with her dialogue. In line 7 Sphe receives this indication from me and so she continued and gave a reason for taking a long time to get into a relationship, in rapid speech ">I always tell myself <" suggesting an emphasis. Here Sphe justified her actions of being resistant, the resistance being something that was internal. In lines 9-10, I quickly jumped in and tried to get Sphe to state the source of her resistance to men whom she already had feelings for. In lines 11-12 Sphe conveyed a defensive tone with the high pitch, increased volume and accelerated speech. Sphe here was trying to convince me that her father's absence had no influence on her resistance towards getting to relationships with men, thereby showing her *resilience*. In line 13 I signalled to Sphe that I was taking in what she was saying and that she can continue her interaction and perhaps give an explanation into her argument. In Lines 14-15 Sphe took this hint and continued with her interaction. Sphe repeats the statement she made in line 11 with the same volume increase signifying that she was *emphasising this resilience* and trying to convince me that her resistance to relationships is due to *past relationships* and not her father's absence. She went on to motivate for her given answer. Here Sphe was still insisting on the resilience construction, in fact further arguing for it.

4.3.3.2 Extract 9

Before the extract below, Bonggi and I were talking about the relationships she has with men in her life. She constructs herself as vulnerable to males due to the fact that she is without a father. This was a deviant case as most participants did not acknowledge their fathers as having any impact on their relationships with men.

Interview B (Bonggi):

1. Bonggi: even though they are ju:st friends but >I kinda like< (0.3) they play (0.3)

2. some role in my li:fe I'm not sure (0.3) ↑y:a:h=
3. Ncami: =w:hat sort of role would you say (.) maybe (.) they play=
4. Bongi: =as for guida:nce ↑even though they are my frie:nds(.) we're >supposed to
5. Be< equa::l just to talk things as in like free[l:y:]
6. Ncami: [sure]
7. Bongi: as friends (.) ↑but for me: I kinda like (.) be in a situation where (.) I'm like
8. (.) I'm listening to the:m (.) of what maybe: I should do:> I'd be kinda
9. like< (.) ya:h submissive ↑and I'd be like °y:e:s° I get you' ↑without
10. challenging them=
11. Ncami: =hmm=
12. Bongi: =of which yah (.) I'm kinda like noticing n:o n:o [no]
13. Ncami: [hmm]
14. Bongi: it's (.) it doesn't supposed to be like thi:s in a friendship y[abo:]
15. Ncami: [sure]
16. Bongi: so yah (.) er uh: the issue I'm struggling (.) with uh >currentl:y:< ↓but ↓yah
17. uh:m
18. Ncami: and (.) >maybe how quickly< would you sa:y you do get attached
19. Bongi: ↑o:h >very quickly< my God
20. Ncami: Hmm (0.3) in a matter of mo:nths (.) o:r [years]
21. Bongi: [not even]
22. Bongi: ↑no(.) ↑a ↑week is (.) it's lo:ng (.) to be honest=
23. Ncami: =hmm

From lines 1-2, it was evident that the topic at hand produced discomfort in Bongi as she was talking about it. This was indicated by the long pauses and short fast outburst in her speech (Nicholson, 2013). It seemed like her male friends did have some influence on her. In line 3, I probed Bongi about the role that her male friends occupy in her life, essentially trying to get Bongi to elaborate. In lines 4-5 Bongi advocates that her male friends give her some support. Bongi then went on to point out and emphasise her understanding of what friends are *expected* to be like (which is equal and free with each other). In lines 7-10 she, however, acknowledged that

in her friendships with males this was not the case as she gives her male friends the upper hand and succumbs to their opinions without disputes. This is further illustrated by the quieter (non-challenging) tone that she utters °y:e:s° in. The high pitch and increased volume in line 9-10 suggests that she acknowledges and takes ownership of the fact that she fails to challenge men. Here Bongi was portraying herself as submissive to males. In line 11, I conveyed my understanding to Bongi. In lines 12 and 14 Bongi stresses that this is not the way it should be in friendships. In lines 13 and 15 I showed my empathy to Bongi. The pauses and fast speech outbursts in line 16 symbolised the discomfort that Bongi was experiencing as she was uttering this sentence. In line 18 I acknowledged that the topic might be discomforting for Bongi and so I also, in part, rush through the probe about her attachments to guys. I seemed to be connecting Bongi's relationship with guys with her attachment with them. In line 19 the high pitch, increased volume and stretched sound “↑o:h” indicated a heightened emotion which signified excitement from Bongi, meaning that the statement in this line was of significance. This statement “my God” in line 19 indicated that she was also overwhelmed at how quickly she got attached to guys. In line 20, I wanted Bongi to be explicit about the time frame of the attachment development; I was indicating that I did not want to assume anything because the word ‘quickly’ is subjective. The overlap in line 21 and the high pitch and louder words in line 22 was used to show her emphasis of her point.

In concluding the theme of ‘relationships with men’ it can be highlighted that the social interactions displayed by the participants were that of *resistance* to acknowledge any possible influence that their fathers might have had on their relationships with men and therefore resilient to the influence of paternal absence. However there was a case (Bongi) where the participant did acknowledge that her father's absence had an influence on her relationships with men.

4.3.4 Attitudes towards men

The participants presented a socially constructed and shared view that men ought to be treated the same way that women should be treated. They did not display any strong negative attitude towards men, acknowledging men as no different to women. The fatherless females also

distanced themselves from generalising about men based on their own personal experiences. There was however a deviant case where one participant did make a generalisation based on her experiences, seeing men as selfish.

4.3.4.1 Extract 10

The participant in the following extract presents herself as an independent thinker that is resilient to conforming to society's attitude of men.

Interview A (Mbali):

1. Ncami: Uhm (0.2) and what are your: behavioural and thinking patterns or
2. attitudes towards men in general now
3. Mbali: ·hhh ↑M:en I, I'm intrigued by me:n [in a way]
4. Ncami: [In what way]
5. All: Ha ha ha
6. Mbali: ↑In a wa:y (.) you see men, the, the way (.) the way they've been
7. Structured: uba °men are more superior then women (.) are°. The thoughts
8. that, the main thoughts about men, they are very, they are very (0.1)
9. nurturing: in a way, >I don't know how to put it< ↑People have that idea
10. that a male has to provi:de, a male has to (.) ↑I don't have (0.2) ↑I don't, I
11. don't put i-males in that certain bo:x, I put them as, as, as humans that also
12. deserve love as much as (.) >↑also Deserve attention as much as the females
13. Deserve < (.) ↑whatever (.) my ideas or my ↓thoughts about males is that
14. whatever a woman (.) believes she has to get o:r believes she has to treated
15. is the same way that the male should be treated [as well]
16. Ncami: [Right]

The false start and pause “Uhm (0.2)” in line 1 signifies that I was trying to formulate my statement before I uttered it out to Mbali. I was taking my time and contemplating a way of posing my question so as to aid Mbali's understanding. I, in lines 1-2 asked about Mbali's outlook on men, trying to get Mbali to give an account about this. In line 3 Mbali's in-breath at the beginning of her response indicated that she was taking her time to give an utterance

(Hepburn & Bolden, 2013). The high pitch, louder volume and stretched sound of “↑M:en” stresses Mbali’s heightened emotion due to the topic that has been opened. This question invoked interest in her and she did indeed confess being intrigued by men. Mbali here portrayed herself as being fascinated by men in some way or another. In lines 3-4, the overlapping talk between me and Mbali suggests that I was determined to address this issue and so I rush to tackle it before Mbali was even finished with her sentence. This interrogation from me did not give Mbali a chance to fully explain herself further. The interrogation was then noticed by both the participants of the conversation and was managed through laughter from both me and Mbali in line 5. The laughter was their way of handling the awkwardness in conversation that has been created by this overlap in talk when one participant was not finished with her utterance. Throughout lines 6-15 the pauses and false starts indicate that the account that Mbali is giving was her own talk and is therefore taking her time formulating before uttering it to me (Edwards, 1994). She started off by acknowledging that society has many high expectations for men, such as being providers and being superior to and stronger than females. Mbali then brought forth her contradictory argument that men ought to be treated as women are treated. Here Mbali was portraying herself as an independent thinker, *resistant* to conforming to society. She was presenting herself as *empowered* and not willing to follow the idea that the general society has (as in line 9).

4.3.4.2 Extract 11-deviant case

Interview B (Bongi):

1. Ncami: and what are your behavioural and thinking patterns (.) or attitude towards
2. men in general
3. Bongi: ·hhh hm: (0.4) let me see: (.) some of them are cari:ng (.) >just to be honest<
4. but (.) I have (.) uh (0.3) thi:s attitude that they are so sel:fish
5. Ncami: sure
6. Bongi: you see
7. Ncami: hm
8. Bongi: I:.’ve had some (0.5) °how can I put it° (.) Some instance:s (.) where they
9. took advantage of me: (.) >cause maybe< I’m not sure (.) they kinda like

10. realise that I'm missing this (0.2) I'm having this uh (0.2) °how can I put it°
 11. (.) ↑A ↑space or >I need someone to fill this gap in my heart< they kinda
 12. like took an advantage of that, so maybe that's why I'm saying the:y are
 13. selfish
 14. Ncami: hmm and what sort of advantages
 15. (0.3)
 16. Bonggi: ↓<for me:> ↑oh my God as I said it doesn't err (.) take a week (.) before I
 17. get attached to the guy you see just to regard him as a frie:nd (.) as for
 18. them ↓I'm not sure how they perceive me: for me it's like >'a friend, a
 19. friend'< as for them, maybe they see: some- I'm not su:re (.) but an
 20. object to u:se for that ti:me >of which I don't like< [yabo]
 21. Ncami: [uhm]

In response to my enquiry Bonggi's in-breath, long and short pauses indicated that she was taking her time to produce this account as it was her reflection of her own thoughts. She acknowledged in a fast outburst that there are some men who are compassionate. The fast outburst indicates that she wanted to quickly acknowledge this part and get it over with, then steer the conversation to a new direction with the use of a discontinuity marker "but (.)". The discontinuity marker allowed for the introduction of a perspective that is more consistent with Bonggi's attitude (Drew & Holt, 1998). Here Bonggi was conveying that she does not have a positive outlook on men in entirety. She was presenting herself as open minded and not as a person who generalises about men. In line 5, I agreed with Bonggi's statement and reassured Bonggi that I was listening and that I can further explore this topic. Bonggi acknowledges my reassurance and thus confirms my agreement. In line 7, I agree with Bonggi and signal to her that I am taking up her argument and that she can carry on. In lines 8-13 Bonggi went on to argue for her standpoint. As she was arguing for *her* position there were multiple long pauses in her utterances. The long pauses showed that this topic was not easy to navigate and that Bonggi carefully managed it as it was uncomfortable for her to navigate through (Nicholson, 2013). In lines 10-12 Bonggi was portraying herself as vulnerable, a victim of circumstance of her needs. Here Bonggi justified her standpoint by the example that she gave. In line 14 I showed that I was taking in all that Bonggi was saying and ask

for a further expansion. After my probe there was a long pause from both participants of the conversation. With this silence I was giving Bongi time and space to expand on her argument, particularly looking at the advantages. Bongi was taking the time to formulate her argument. In line 16 Bongi carries on with a vulnerable and victim stance in relation to how males treated her. She avoided directly answering my question, concluding that men see her as an object for usage. However, she was not specific about the purpose that men use her for. A fast outburst in line 20 suggests an emphasis, and specifically an emphasis that Bongi does not like being used by men. She acknowledges her vulnerable and trusting role in her relationships with men and also their role in abusing her trusting nature. Here Bongi was portraying herself as a victim. Most participants had an independent thinking pattern towards men as they reported to see men in the same light as they saw women. The participants largely emphasised that their lives depend on themselves and that they cannot make generalisations due to their one personal experience.

4.3.5 Career

4.3.5.1 Extract 12

The participant here acknowledges her father’s absence but is resistant to take the impact of that absence in with regards to her career choice and rather constructs herself as self-sufficient. This is in line with the other participants.

Interview B (Bongi):

1. Bongi: ↑Even if I miss my father in a ↑wa:y cause sometimes you hea::r some
2. Stude::nts or friends saying [my]
3. Ncami: [yah]
4. Bongi: father did thi::s my father bought thi:s (.) you’d be like >o:h daddy where are
5. you<
6. Ncami: yah
7. Bongi: ‘maybe if you were here >I could have< (.) uhm g:ot uhm this from you:’
8. yabo
9. Ncami: ↑hm

10. Bongi: ↑but for me (.) I ↓learned to be strong to be independent: -you see yah to-to
 11. wanna do things for my:self and not depend on someo:ne
 12. Ncami: °Sure°
 13. Bongi: Uhm: ↑that's why ↑maybe: yah: I pursued uh this career also: to thi:s level
 14. Ncami: °Sure°

Bongi uses a discontinuity marker “↑Even if” in line 1 before uttering any information. The use of this marker suggests that she acknowledges what she was about to utter, but that it is also not as significant as what she will reveal later on (in line 10). In lines 1, 2, 4, and 5 Bongi admits that she would like her father to be present in her life. In her mind this would make her similar to other students who have fathers that make academic provisions for them. This was brought on by her peers praising their fathers in her presence and this intrigued her thoughts of her father's whereabouts. Bongi here was presenting herself as deprived and disadvantaged. In response to Bongi's utterances, I convey to Bongi (in lines 3 and 6) that I am taking in this information and that she can continue with her interaction. In line 7 Bongi went on to share her intimate thoughts about her father, indicating that she did not have everything she needed or wanted and possibly her father might have been able to provide those things. In line 8 Bongi was also trying to convince me to see her point of view. I responded to this with understanding and indicated that I was taking in the information provided by Bongi. Line 10, specifically “↑but”, signifies that that everything that was uttered before this (the deprivation and disadvantage that Bongi felt) is not as significant as what was to follow. She was drawing attention to what was to come. In line 11 Bongi indicated that what was more important was that she was *resilient* and *empowered*. Here, she was also trying to convince me that she did not need her father to provide for her but that she should provide for herself. The false start “to-to” indicated that Bongi was taking her time to formulate her dialogue. In line 12 I conveyed my agreement and conveyed that I was taking up Bongi's information. The “Uhm:” in line 13 signified that Bongi was taking her time to think about how to formulate her argument further. Bongi was motivating for why she continued with her studies; in order to provide for herself and portray herself as self-sufficient.

The participants did not acknowledge their fathers as having an impact on their career choices. Whenever the participants acknowledged their fathers' (negative) impacts on their lives, they

tended to use discontinuity markers to shift their conversations to a more *resilient* and *independent* stance, thus portraying themselves as *empowered* women.

4.3.6 Future prospects

4.3.6.1 Extract 13

In the following extract the participant showed herself to be excited about continuing with her studies in order to be a source of encouragement to those around her and also to prove others wrong. This is in line with all the other participants as they had a desire to pursue their studies until PHD level, portraying themselves as *empowered* and *self-sufficient*.

Interview B (Bongi):

1. Ncami: and do you plan on furthering your stud[ies after this qualification]
2. Bongi: [Woo::h::]
3. Bongi: hehe y:e:bo::: PH[D here I come]
4. Ncami: [<wh:y> hehe]
5. Bongi: ↑As ↑I said before >I wanna excel<
6. Ncami: Hm=
7. Bongi: =In everything=
8. Ncami: =Su:re
9. Bongi: ↑I want to be a: an ex:ample fo:r the ones who are following me- it's either
10. my sibli:ngs o:r my nephews or my niece ↑even my community as well (.)
11. cau:s:e oka:y as you see my structure I'm like sma:::ll
12. Ncami: °° <Yes>°° [he he]
13. Bongi: [and] people tend to underestimate me
14. Ncami: <su:re:>
15. Bongi: I'll be like one day 'n::o I'm a Do:ctor by profession' yabo=
16. Ncami: =Ya:h

In line 1 as I probe Bongi about her studying aspirations, Bongi responded in excitement as she even overlaps with me in order to answer the question. This signified that she was intrigued by

the topic at hand and already had an answer. In line 3 the excitement was further emphasised by Bongi's laughter and her stretched out utterance "y:e:bo:::" in agreement to furthering her studies. Bongi indicated that she intended to do her PHD in the future. In line 4, I manage Bongi's excitement with laughter. I demonstrate my intrigue by quickly asking for reasons even before Bongi was finished with her sentence. In line 5 in response to my question, Bongi portrayed and emphasised herself as someone who is an *achiever* and *success-motivated* through her high pitch and increased volume. In lines 6 I show my presence, indicating to Bongi that I can continue. In line 7 Bongi continues to present herself as *someone with aspirations* and *empowered*. In lines 9-10 Bongi indicated that she wants to portray herself as a motivator, a role model and an inspiration to those around her. Lines 11, 13, 15 indicated that Bongi's small physique can cause people to underestimate her therefore she wants to prove them wrong or surprise them by getting a doctorate qualification. She was indicating that as much as she is doing it for herself, she is also doing it for others.

4.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has provided a detailed background description of each of the participants of the study. It has also included my background since I was a key interactant in the conversations. This chapter then went on to show how CA was used to make sense of the interactions between the participants. The findings showed that the discursive tools of resilience, independence and empowerment were the predominant socially shared ways in which the participants talked about their paternal absence in relation to their identity, academics, and relationships, attitudes towards men, and career and future prospects. There were also deviant constructions within cases that were presented in order to achieve objectivity (Silverman, 2013). The findings showed that the participants were predominantly leading successful lives and were not preoccupied with their paternal absence.

Chapter 5. Discussion

5.1 Introduction and Overview of Chapter

This chapter aims to present and discuss the answers to the research questions that were posed in the first chapter of this dissertation. In discussing these questions and the data generated in relation to them, I will draw in previous literature and theories on the phenomenon presented in the second chapter of this dissertation. Some implications of the study will be presented together with the limitations encountered during the study. The discussion will attempt to critically explicate the overarching topic.

“It’s not the load that breaks you down, it’s the way you carry it.” (Lena Horne¹⁰)

Historically, young women without fathers have been found to be more likely to experience damaging effects on their well-being (Mancini, 2010). Specifically, adversity pertaining to their identity, academic performance, relationships with and attitudes towards men and career and future prospects are evident in literature. Complications can include the father absent child having no sense of belonging or background as they have no linkage with their father (Eddy et al., 2013). This particular finding has been especially prominent within the Black South African context. Daughters without fathers have also been described as less likely to perform well at school, more likely to engage in sexual activity at an earlier age, have resentments towards men, and have little to no aspirations of furthering their postsecondary or postgraduate studies (Clowes, Ratele & Shefer, 2013; East et al., 2007; Eddy et al., 2013; Jones & Benda, 2008; Krohn & Bogan, 2001; Luo, Wang & Gao, 2011; Nduna & Sikweyiya, 2013; Strauss, 2013).

In spite of hardships or any risky situations associated with paternal absence, the phenomenon of resilience explicates how different individuals are able to successfully adjust or cope (Theron, 2013). A resilient person is one who has seen, heard and gone through suffering but maintains their competence and positive outlook for the future (Theron, 2007). The philosophy of resilience suggests that there might be father absent females who, in spite of the hardships they

¹⁰ http://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/158428.Lena_Horne

might face, are able to positively adapt to privations. Resilient individuals primarily focus on their strengths rather than their shortfalls. These individuals tend to focus and build on their strong points (Dass-Brailsford, 2005; Theron, 2007; Theron, 2013; Zolkoski & Bullock, 2012). Daughters without fathers might have strengths that include generic support and their own personality traits which enhance their skills of coping and maintaining competency despite the adversities commonly associated of growing up without a father. For the current study, when talking about their identity, academic performance, career and future prospects, and relationships with and attitudes towards men, most participants constructed themselves to be resilient in relation to the impact that their fathers' absence had on them.

5.2 Identity

At the beginning of the research, one of the research questions that was posed was how Black female students from South Africa formulate their identity in relation to growing up without a father. The findings revealed that Black father absent female students used devices that portrayed them as *resilient* to being negatively impacted by their paternal absence when talking about their identity. The findings were somewhat contradictory to my personal experience and knowledge (that females take on a victim constructed identity in relation to growing up without a father). In addition to my personal experiences, existing literature tends to highlight adverse effects for father absent children such as identity related confusion. The identity confusion is often linked with the difficulty to find a familial and social niche in both their maternal and paternal families (Nduna & Jewkes, 2011). Since father absent children have no connection to their fathers' families they might lack a sense of having a real belonging and roots, and therefore an identity as in accordance with the Africentric paradigm (Eddy et al., 2013). Children without fathers are not regarded as 'real members' of the maternal households that they usually reside in and as a result often feel like outsiders or illegitimate (Nduna & Jewkes, 2011). In addition, the failure for African rituals to be performed to present the child to the ancestors is said to lead to misfortunes (Eddy et al., 2013; Mkhize, 2004). Father absent children usually have unhappier childhoods when compared to those who grew up with fathers. The unhappy childhood might have had an influence on some of the children's identity in some way or another (Jackson, 2010).

In consonance with the traditional African metaphysical framework, self-identity and the general understanding of the world within the Black Africentric perspective is largely based on the cultural worldview, and indigenous languages and philosophies (Mkhize, 2004). The self is largely moulded by attitudes, beliefs and knowledge of the individuals within the same space, be it from school, home, religion, culture or political affiliation, as well as the individual's own understanding of themselves.

The family (specifically the close-knit community of both the living and the dead) make up an important part of the individual's personal identity and social reality (Holdstock, 2000; Mkhize, 2004). Individuals define themselves based on their family and/or community (Kasese-Hara, 2004). The current study revealed that most participants did not seem to acknowledge their paternal family in their construction of their identity. It was brought forward that some of the father absent females defined and identified themselves only with their immediate families as these were the ones that they affiliated themselves with. It can be argued that it is through the immediate family that most father absent females develop a sense of collective self (Mkhize, 2004). It can also be suggested that Black father absent females may have supporting systems that help them to triumph over the adverse life circumstances they have faced with regards to their fathers being absent. Moreover, some females might come from immediate families that are resilient themselves to paternal absence and hence the female's resilience could have been informed by their family members' resilience. This is in accordance with the traditional African metaphysical framework which implies that the meaning that people within the same local space attach to paternal absence may influence how children without fathers construct their paternal absence (Mkhize, 2004). Cultural traditions and social norms regulate, express and transform the way that people think. The deviant cases were an indicator that different people from different contexts experienced paternal absence differently. For example, one of the participants was characterised as a deviant case, where she acknowledged her father's influence on her identity (where the other participants did not).

In spite of the hardships that many young females go through due to paternal absence, from the findings it is evident that there are those that demonstrate resiliency. Resilient individuals are autonomous as they have a sense of their own identity, capability and control over their environment (Dass- Brailsford, 2005; Theron, 2013; Zolkoski & Bullock, 2012). It may be

assumed that the females did make efforts to positively adjust to their disadvantageous circumstances of not having a father while growing up.

“I come across↓ people who are like you know ‘oh my dad le::ft, why did he lea::ve’ >you know< etcetera etcetera they so >heartbroken< (.)hhh I’m not . I- I-with me I don’t even ca:re you know because life goes on: He’s there:, he’s not there: (.) i:t’s still the same”. (Sphe, interview D, lines 293-297)

The above extract highlights that some participants emphasised *resisting* and *objecting* to the idea of being heartbroken due to paternal absence. The father absent females from this study described themselves as *survivors* “you know because life goes on” who needed to carry on with life whether their fathers were there or not. Some father absent females presented themselves to be self-reliant and distanced from father’s family. This was inferred to demonstrate a sense of empowerment and agency in decision making processes around who and what influences their identity. For example it was noted that some females are the ones that take the initiative of distancing herself, thereby indicating their *self-reliance* as it was uttered “=Yh:es, <they, they (.) do love me> it’s just ·hhh cause of some issues I’ve decided to (.) I decided to distance myself, not them” (Mbali, Interview A, lines 291-292). Despite the absent paternal linkage, most of the participants portrayed themselves as empowered and able to leave a situation (e.g. pursuing relationships with an absent father’s family) that they could see was not productive. One of the participants indicated that never meeting her father had no major negative impact on how she constructed herself to be:

“°cause° yah: °I never knew him so it doesn’t matter to me°” “↓e::y I don’t ha(h)ve any feelings towards tha:t (.) I ca(h)n’t say I’m angry abo:ut it sad o:r (0.1) anything cause (0.3) >I don’t know< I just (.) it do:esn’t matter to me: Y:ah°”(Mpume, interview E, lines 481,489-490)

The portrayal in the above extract is that of being content. Since some father absent females have never met their fathers, their father’s absence does not have impact on them. The participant and other father absent female participants distance themselves from the whole situation of paternal absence and represent themselves as independent and not lacking in any way. According to Zolkoski and Bullock (2012) Black youth that are resilient have the tendency to be highly

competent, have problem-solving skills and critical consciousness, they are also said to be independent as they feel that they have a sense of their own identity. Resilient Black youth construct themselves as people who are able to uphold competence despite tormenting life circumstances (Dass-Brailsford, 2005). Due to these traits it can be suggested that some Black father absent females may have the ability to make their own proficient life decisions. Productive meaning making and self-direction may also aid in resilience among Black youth. Personality traits that include being optimistic, having enthusiasm and assertiveness encourage resilience. Resiliency among the participants was also symbolised by their evident self-actualisation despite not having a father. For instance some participants were assertive (for example, Sphe, interview D, lines 293-297), describing themselves as the drivers of her own lives.

Families of Black South African youth usually play a significant role on the resiliency outcomes of their young people. Protective mothers in particular inspire resilience through their provision of a sense of security and encouragement, which in turn may heighten a child's self-actualisation (Theron & Theron, 2010). Most of the participants emphasised their mothers as their primary provider and supporter in all aspects of their lives. For example, Bonggi (interview B, line 108) remarked that, "My mom is the ·hhh (0.3) is my pillar of strength >in everything<". Parents are able to make their children feel valued and important and reassure them that difficulties can be triumphed over (Dass-Brailsford, 2005). It can be seen how the mothers are the ones that are most likely to influence the children that are without fathers.

There were discontinuity markers that the participants used to draw away from a victim construction, and drew attention to a more resilient construction of themselves. This conversational move attempted to show that they did not acknowledge their fathers' absence to have had an adverse contribution to their identity. This indicates that even though some Black father absent students may feel embarrassed to talk about their absent fathers, they can be autonomous and have problem-solving skills (such as using discontinuity markers when making utterances about their fathers) that help them to turn from the challenges they face due to fatherlessness. For example in the opening poem, the writer, towards the end of the poem used a discontinuity marker "But" to draw away from powerlessness or deficit, to a more confident and unashamed stance despite the difficulties she faces with the fact that her father has been absent.

5.3 Academic performance

The second question that was posed by the research was how Black South African female students constructed their academic performance in relation to growing up without a father. The findings suggested that the participants also used discursive tools of resilience to show that they actually performed well at school despite the predicament of not having paternal support. More specifically, the conversations which pertained to academic performance indicated that the participants did not acknowledge their paternal absence as having any negative effect on their academic performance. Rather they attributed other aspects of their lives (such as financial circumstances, maternal support, and motivation) as impacting on their academic performance. In fact, the participants seemed to portray their fathers' absence as a motivation to want to do well academically. The participants highlighted a resilient construction throughout the conversations, thus becoming the focal point of this dissertation. The participants did not construct themselves as having any lack, vulnerability, or powerlessness because of not having a father while growing up.

According to Krohn and Bogan (2001) females without fathers are more likely to show poor academic performance. The poor academic performance might have been partly the outcome of poverty (which is experienced in many single female headed families) rather than the actual absence of the father (East et al., 2007). Poor academic performance can be due to deep emotional distress for girls without fathers (East et al., 2007). All participants in this study could be considered exemplars of academic success as they were pursuing their postsecondary studies. In addition, four of them were pursuing their postgraduate studies. I do acknowledge that the sample selection did influence the outcomes, particularly on the theme of academics and future prospects. It has been asserted that girls who experience fatherlessness from an earlier age are more prone to weaker mathematical skills (when compared to their verbal skills), and this could have an influence on their academic achievement (Krohn & Bogan, 2001). Lower academic achievement that the children without fathers may demonstrate may be due to not attaining the proper and adequate attention that is needed from a parent because the mother might be too preoccupied as she might probably be both the breadwinner and homemaker (Jones & Benda, 2008; Krohn & Bogan, 2001; Luo et al., 2011). However, it is important to highlight that there are also father absent children that place an importance on education and therefore demonstrate

resilience by having the drive and desire to excel academically even when they encounter adversities (Cartwright & Henriksen, 2012; Theron et al., 2013). According to Warde (2008) the needed resources to attend and thrive in the academic institution is also helpful for academic success. It can therefore be suggested that the participants of the current study had the needed resources to thrive in their academics.

Considering the South African political history of racial segregation and Black legal, social and economic oppression, academic success is linked with resilience and as a route to self, familial and communal improvement among Black South African youth (Dass- Brailsford, 2005; Theron, 2013). It can be suggested that some Black university students without fathers may be seen to have resilient characteristics and the vision for improvement as they are studying at a university institution despite their predicaments. For youth to be considered resilient, their attempts to adjust need to be actively supported by their social ecologies (Theron, 2013). Resilient local Black youth seem to have acceptance of challenges that they face, they are more likely to attain good educational progress and are guided by value-driven behaviour and scholastic achievements (Theron et al., 2013). For example in relation to her academics Bongi expressed herself saying “we needed so many things (.) but from there: maybe: we tried to build ourselves just to (.) maybe just to say, to stay strong and try to: (.) work hard on our studies” (Bongi, interview B, lines 46-47). Bongi uses the discontinuity maker “but” to change her tone of victimhood and life of difficulty to that of *resilience*, *taking responsibility* and *empowerment*. Another example is Sphe who uttered “>I sort of like have this< drive to- to succeed in °things° so: you know when I start something I: make it a point that I:: finish it you know” (Sphe, interview D, lines 178-179). Some Black father absent females emphasised that they were determined and thrived rigorously and wholeheartedly to do well. Black resilient youth have a vision that they will better their hardships over time and thereafter be able to liberate themselves from any privations that they have been previously experiencing (Theron et al., 2013). For example, Bongi declared “I was like uhm (.) looking at my uhh situation I was like ‘God I know one day I’ll change this” (Bongi, interview B, lines 68-69), thereby portraying herself as an *empowered* and *resilient* individual. The utterance indicates that some females without fathers desire to change their struggles through education. Many children possess the appropriate

strengths and benefits that assist them to overcome unfavourable conditions. These children are found to thrive despite their difficulties (Zolkoski & Bullock, 2012). Resilient Black youth do not direct much attention on their disadvantageous circumstances but rather generate plans of triumphing over them (Zolkoski & Bullock, 2012). An example is Sphe who tried to convince me that the drive that she has to thrive is what is influencing her to do well academically, she uttered “ya:h but: uh (.) influence ya:h I guess it’s just that dri:ve >that you know< even though my father is not around so <wha:t> I can still do it: (.) °you know°” (Sphe, interview D, lines 186-187). Sphe by her utterance was convincing me that she *is* determined and thrives rigorously and wholeheartedly to do well despite her father’s absence. It is evident that educational goals might be an approach that students without fathers use to display their resilience against the challenges they might face as a result of being fatherless. Resilience can be encouraged by factors such as goal or achievement orientation, and having enthusiasm and optimism (Theron et al., 2013).

Importantly, resilience is a social construct and is a dynamic process (Theron, 2013). Those who are resilient make use of opportunities and resources that are around them. Competence in school and social settings are proposed to be indicators for resilience. The resilience of the females without fathers might be influenced by their mothers’ democratic-authoritative parenting style which encourages responsibility and reasoning (Theron & Theron, 2010). Caring and encouraging Black familial relationships seem to also advance school going Black youth towards an inspiration and admiration of education. Supportive familial relationships also encourages Black youth to accept or be content with their impoverished circumstances and to rather improve on coming up with solutions to their difficulties (Theron & Theron, 2010). It is especially youth with absent fathers that display resilience since their female carers normally possess and pass on motivational and protective characteristics (Dass-Brailsford, 2005).

5.4 Relationships and attitudes towards men

The third question that the researcher aimed to address was about the way that Black South African female students constructed their relationships with men in relation to growing up fatherless. The participants displayed interpersonal resilience and used dominant interactional devices of denying the possible influence that their fathers might have had on their relationships

with men. However there was one participant who acknowledged that her father's absence had a negative influence on her current relationships with men.

Overall, the participants did not display any strong negative attitudes towards men, and they acknowledged that men were no different from women. Most of the participants also distanced themselves from generalising based on their own personal experiences. There was however a deviant case where one participant made a generalisation based on her experiences, perceiving men as selfish. Interestingly, the findings were contrary to research that suggests that paternal absence may have negative outcomes on a woman's relationships with men (East et al., 2007). Literature postulates that specifically women with absent fathers could long for male attention, affection and approval, and may start dating and engaging in sexual activity at an earlier age (Del Russo, 2009; East et al., 2007; Holborn & Eddy, 2011; Krohn & Bogan, 2001; Strauss, 2013). Some females might end up with older men as they want to appease their yearning for a fatherly male in their lives (East et al., 2007). On the other hand, some fatherless daughters may tend to distance themselves from men, and may struggle to form intimate relationships with men (Jackson, 2010) as a result of fear of being rejected and/or mistrust in men. The fear and mistrust may be embedded from their fathers abandoning them (East et al., 2007). Women without fathers may therefore have difficulty in accepting love and commitment from a man (East et al., 2007). Some father absent women may be unsure of the dynamics between men and women within a relationship as they themselves have not witnessed an intimate men and women relationship before (between both their parents) and may thus struggle to handle their own relationships with men (East et al., 2007). For instance Bongi's stance towards men is consistent with the fact that she struggles to understand what is expected of her when interacting with a man as she utters, "I'd be kinda like< (.) ya:h submissive ↑and I'd be like °y:e:s° I get you' ↑without challenging them" (Bongi, interview B, lines 621-622). Bongi constructs herself as giving her male friends the upper hand and succumbs to their opinions without disputes, this is illustrated by the quieter (non-challenging) tone that she utters °y:e:s° in. It is suggested that Bongi might be unsure of how to handle herself when interacting with a man. The high pitch and increased volume emphasises that Bongi acknowledged and took ownership of the fact that she fails to challenges men. Here she was portraying herself as submissive to males.

It is evident that some females suffer in their relationships with men due to being fatherless. The term ‘father’ in Black communities is socially constructed as it is not necessarily limited to the biological father but can also apply to other men from the extended family and community (Kasese-Hara, 2004; Mkhize, 2006; Nduna & Sikweyiya, 2013). Such social fathers may aid in the struggles that women without fathers may encounter within their interpersonal relationships. The women’s’ interaction with other males from their community may help them to learn how to handle their relationships with men, to be able to trust men and be able to accept love and commitment from a man which they might otherwise not have been able to. The philosophy of communal child-rearing (Kasese-Hara, 2004; Mkhize, 2006) is in itself demonstrating Black resilience because it allows the fatherless to cope and adapt (through the availability of other community members who are willing to play the fatherly role) even if they do not have a biological father present. Based on this suggestion, a Black fatherless female from an Africentric context may apply what she has learned from the men from her extended family and community in her relationships with other men. This means that the fatherless females might not necessarily yearn for male attention and affection as they may receive it from the males from their extended families and communities, who act responsively to the ‘fatherly’ term. Black fatherless females may also not show any signs of having any negative attitudes towards men as they have had contacts with other men who have played an appropriate male role that gave the females an apt idea of male dynamics and the dynamics between males and females. For instance Mbali brought forth an argument that men and women ought to be equally treated. She portrayed herself as an independent thinker, *resilient* to conforming to society. She presented herself as *empowered* and unwilling to follow the view that is generalised by society which is that men are somewhat superior to women. She uttered “I don’t put i-males in that certain bo:x, I put them as, as, as humans that also deserve love as much as (.) >↑also deserve attention as much as the females deserve <” (Mbali, interview A, lines 432-434). Mbali’s construction of gender equality might have been due to other males in her extended family and community that might have influenced her thinking patterns towards men.

“I’m more closer with men than with females and I think what influences that the most is that... my brother and I are the youngest so when we grew up we grew up together, you

know we used to play together uh yah, so I guess that's why I prefer guy company” (Sphe, Interview D, lines 373-375)

The above utterance from Sphe is another example that men (other than fathers) can have a positive influence on the extent to which fatherless females are resilient to the victimisation commonly associated with being fatherless. In fact, Sphe emphasises that she enjoys male company more so than female company. Theron (2013) asserts that support from social ecology is of importance in attempts to adjust well in life challenges. Adults are able to make their children or younger siblings feel valued and important and thus causing children without fathers not to feel powerless or lacking in any way (Theron, 2012). Community support can have a major influence on Black South African youth's resilience against difficulties and challenges. Good neighbours, peers and a school community can be a good platform for Black females to develop healthy relationships with men which are not characterised by fear or obsession. Community resources such as these are helpful to Black father absent females as they can promote resilience and positive adjustment to being fatherless against the negative outcomes of male relationships that they might otherwise have.

5.5 Career and future prospects

The penultimate research question pertained to how Black South African female students talk about their chosen career in relation to growing up fatherless. The findings showed that the participants did not acknowledge their fathers as having an influence on their chosen career paths. Instead, during data collection, the participants were identified as using devices that showed self-sufficiency and independence. Whenever the participants acknowledged their fathers' negative impacts on their lives, they tended to use discontinuity makers to shift their utterances to a more resilient and independent stance, thus portraying themselves as empowered women.

The final research question was focused on the way that Black South African female students constructed their future prospects in relation to growing up fatherless. The participants were already pursuing their postsecondary studies and portrayed themselves to have a desire to pursue their studies until PHD level, constructing themselves as empowered and self-sufficient.

According to East et al. (2006) father absence can lead young girls to be vulnerable to poor life choices. Poor choices can be linked to their career and future prospects. Literature states that the negative outcomes of fatherless children may also be partly attributable to existing social factors such as poverty and a lack of resources. It is suggested that some fatherless children do not make it to postsecondary and postgraduate levels in their studies because of a lack of resources such as finances (Krohn & Bogan, 2001; Nduna & Jewkes, 2011) as there is only one parent that is the provider. It is asserted that many single female headed families may experience financial difficulties. However there are single mothers that can inspire their fatherless children to seek high career outcomes, financial autonomy and responsibility (East et al., 2006). For example Bongi had been struggling financially since her school days but she has a mother who has always encouraged her to stay focused on her academics. Family support is vital for successful (Black) children who triumph over life difficulties (Cartwright & Henriksen, 2012; Theron, 2013; Theron & Theron, 2010). A positive outlook on career and future prospects usually stem from a constructive outlook on education. It is implied that familial support can play a major role in the prosperous career and future prospects that some fatherless females may attain.

It is suggested that females who became fatherless from an earlier age are more prone to relatively weaker mathematical skills (Hetherington, 1972; Krohn & Bogan, 2001 & Strauss, 2013). Moreover, Krohn and Bogan (2001) argue that a person's academic achievement influences their tertiary career choice. Having relatively weaker mathematical skills may also suggest that most fatherless females may choose a career path that is outside of mathematics, hence their future prospects outside of mathematics as well. Gabi is one participant that asserted that she did not do well in mathematics and she constructed her reason behind this as that she knew she was not going to have a career that involved mathematics.

Some of the fatherless females who make it to university tend to be underachievers while others are overachievers in their chosen career prospects (Krohn & Bogan, 2001). It is evident that for this study most of the participants were academic overachievers as they seemed to be set on not only achieving their Bachelors degree, but also postgraduate qualifications (including aspirations to do a PHD degree). Overachieving individuals want to reach their utmost potential (Krohn & Bogan, 2001), and this was a finding arising from the participants in this study.

Krohn and Bogan (2001) also argue that a female's lack of father involvement and motivation from other family members and school teachers to pursue mathematics and/or science or a career in this field can lead them to having no interest in pursuing a career in this discipline. It may thus be suggested that females may be driven to undertake mathematics and science career paths if they do receive communal support and motivation. The communal support could come from their family and extended community members (such as neighbours, peers and teachers).

According to the traditional African metaphysical framework, Black South African communities prize the spirit of 'togetherness' (Mkhize, 2004). Education is also of high importance for Black communities (Theron, 2013). It is therefore suggested that the communal people that the fatherless females affiliate with can be supportive and motivating in terms of their career and future prospects. The family (both the living and the dead) and communal members can have an influence on their future prospects (Mkhize, 2004). Since the 'father' term is extended to other older members of the family and community it promotes communal child-rearing since the recipients of this term are obliged to act responsively in a way that is fitting to the term (Graham, 1999; Kasese-Hara, 2004). It is suggested that these men may also motivate fatherless females into good career choices. For example Bongi highlighted how her high school teachers encouraged her to pursue a career in mathematics as they saw a potential in her. Bongi uttered "they were v:ery emphasizing () 'yah, you must stick to maths, you can go anywhere with maths' " (Bongi, interview B, lines 96-97)¹¹. Another example is Mpume who was encouraged by her male teachers to pursue a career in engineering. She uttered "in physics I had like, yah, I had like, I think they were the one who made me who I am now is the male, yah" (Mpume, interview E, line 132-133). Most of the Black fatherless females were able to complete their secondary and undergraduate studies. The females also showed the ability and capability to apply some control over their own lives and became independent, and therefore illustrative of *resilient* people with goals, aspirations and confidence in their futures (Dass-Brailsford, 2005; Theron & Theron, 2010; Zolkoski & Bullock, 2012). However it is also worth highlighting that there are those unhelpful community members that have low expectations of others, Bongi for instance constructs some of her community members as underestimating her. The participants of the

¹¹ Even though Bongi failed her first year in the mathematics faculty and switched to humanities

current study, however, continually constructed themselves to be self-sufficient. Having good careers and future prospects might be an approach that fatherless students use to construct their resiliency against the challenges they might be facing due to growing up fatherless. Academic success, which leads to a bright career and future, is thought to lead to self, familial and communal improvement among the Black community (Theron, 2013). Bongi is an example of *resilience* against poverty and having the prospects of improving her home situation. For instance she utters “I was like uhm (.) looking at my uhh situation I was like ‘God I know one day I’ll ch:a:nge this” (Bongi, interview B, lines 68). Black youth are guided by value driven behaviour which is usually marked by excelling academically in order to advance their lives (Theron et al., 2013). It is suggested that having prosperous dreams for the future signify the hope that the father absent females will triumph over their adversities. Most females selected their chosen career fields to earn money and attain prestigious qualifications and be able to liberate themselves from the hardships they were previously experiencing (Theron et al., 2013).

5.6 Limitations of the study

In conducting the current study, the researcher did come across some limitations. The first limitation is that most of the participants were pursuing careers in the humanities fields where there were four out of five participants that were in humanities, therefore the scope of the participant career paths is limited. It is possible that father absent females from other disciplines may have provided additional insight into the phenomenon. Secondly most of the participants were pursuing their postgraduate studies. It means that the study lacked balance with regards to the level of study that the participants were pursuing as the undergraduates were under-represented. Perhaps more undergraduate participants would have brought forward different perspectives into the study. The third limitation was that of social desirability, which might have been at play during the conversations with the participants, where the participants might have presented themselves in socially favourable light. Since I knew some of the participants, this might have influenced the way that they present themselves to me. Perhaps the participants presented themselves in a favourable light.

5.7 Recommendations

The researcher recommends that future research into this area of study set out to balance the number of participants from differing study and career paths. In addition, the research could aim towards a slightly bigger sample size as a way of enhancing breadth of insight into the phenomenon. Future research could also aim to select participants that are balanced in terms of their level of study. In addition, it would also be useful to conduct further enquiry into the discursive tools used by fatherless female children, and perhaps a contextually informed study on the construction of fatherlessness among women in different race and socio-economic groupings could be insightful. The current study focused on fatherless female students, while a related study could be conducted with fatherless male students. Moreover, it would also be of relevance to conduct a study with single mothers who are raising children without fathers. Such studies might raise a range of issues and concerns that might be valuable to look into, and they could strengthen literature on this phenomenon. Research that focuses on the issues that hinder fathers to fulfil their fatherly role should also be continued as they are helpful in the development of interventions to support men to fulfil their duties of fatherhood for example the fatherhood project (Human Sciences Research Council [HSRC], 2014). It would be of assistance in improving the Black South African family life.

5.8 Conclusion

Chapter 5 highlighted the resilience devices (of empowerment, independence and self-sufficiency) that were used by Black fatherless female students to talk about their lives of growing up fatherless. This chapter implies that some Black fatherless females have strong positive personality traits, that is, they possess the appropriate strengths and benefits that enabled them to overcome difficult and unfavourable conditions. The participants in this study seemed to use education as a platform to develop resilience and triumph over any adversities they may have encountered as a result of being fatherless. It is also important to highlight that there were deviant cases and deviance within one case where the participants would occasionally construct themselves as vulnerable and victims as a result of being fatherless, however even in these

utterances there were discontinuity markers that were used to shift from victim construction to a more resilient construction.

“You may encounter many defeats, but you must not be defeated. In fact, it may be necessary to encounter the defeats, so you can know who you are, what you can rise from, how you can still come out of it.” (Maya Angelou¹²)

¹² <http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/93512-you-may-encounter-many-defeats-but-you-must-not-be>

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Turnitin originality report

preferences



Originality Report

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I am making it without you
 By Ncamisile Zulu

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"I am making it without you, dad": fatherless female students Ncamisile Thumile Zulu (210523794)

Submitted in fulfilment of the partial requirements for the degree of Master of Social Science in the School of Applied Human Sciences, College of Humanities, University of KwaZulu- Natal (Pietermaritzburg campus) Date: Supervisor: Dr Nicholas Munro Declaration 12

I, Ncamisile Thumile Zulu

declare that 1. The research reported in this dissertation, except where otherwise indicated, is my original research. 2. This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university. 3. This dissertation does not contain other persons' data, pictures, graphs or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons. 4. This dissertation does not contain other persons' writing, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other researchers. Where other written sources have been quoted, then: a. Their words have been re-written but the general information attributed to them has been referenced b. Where their exact words have been used, then their writing has been placed in italics and inside quotation marks, and referenced. 5. This dissertation does not contain text, graphics or tables copied and pasted from the Internet, unless specifically acknowledged, and the source being detailed in the thesis and in the References sections. 2

6. A turnitin originality report has been attached (See

Appendix 1) Signature of student Signature of supervisor Date: i Dedication This dissertation is dedicated to 17

all South African women who grew up fatherless. ii Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to give my greatest gratitude to 52

my heavenly Father who has not only enabled me to complete this dissertation but has sustained me throughout my studies.

I would also like to express my many thanks to the following for their assistance and support in making this dissertation a success: ? My 33

supervisor, Dr Nicholas Munro, for his invaluable advice, support, guidance and availability in times of confusion. Pleasure working with you! ? The women that volunteered to be part of this study. A special thank you for

- 1 1% match (Internet from 16-Sep-2009) <http://www.nexopia.com>
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- 5 < 1% match (Internet from 25-Feb-2014) <http://146.230.128.141>
- 6 < 1% match (publications) [Theron, L. C., "Black students' recollections of pathways to resilience: Lessons for school psychologists", School Psychology International, 2013.](#)
- 7 < 1% match (Internet from 30-Oct-2012) <http://www.sajs.co.za>
- 8 < 1% match (publications) [Dass-Bralesford, P., "Exploring Resiliency: Academic Achievement among Disadvantaged Black Youth in South Africa", South African Journal of Psychology, 2005.](#)
- 9 < 1% match (Internet from 25-Jul-2010) <http://eprints.utm.my>
- 10 < 1% match (Internet from 09-Sep-2012) <http://uir.unisa.ac.za>
- 11 < 1% match (publications) [Young Consumers: Insight and Ideas for Responsible Marketers, Volume 10, Issue 4 \(2009-12-15\)](#)

Appendix 2: Ethics approval



20 November 2014

Ms Ncemile T Zulu (210523704)
School of Applied Human Sciences – Psychology
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Dear Ms Zulu

Protocol reference number: HSS/0365/D14M
New project title: "I'm making it without you, dad": Fatherless female students

This letter serves to notify you that your request for an amendment received on 31 October 2014 has now been approved as follows: **Approval Notification – Amendment**

- Change in title

Any alterations to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form; Title of the Project, Location of the Study must be reviewed and approved through an amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research protocol.

Yours faithfully

Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

/ms

Ce Supervisor: Dr Nicholas Munro
Ac Academic Leader Research: Professor D McCrackin
Ac School Administrator: Mf Shonela Duma

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building

Postal Address: Private Bag 201001, Durban 4001

Telephone: +27 (0) 31 261 3881/30002557 Facsimile: +27 (0) 31 261 4608 Email: ethics@ukzn.ac.za / INYUVESI@UKZN.AC.ZA / ETHICS@UKZN.AC.ZA
Website: www.ukzn.ac.za



19 YEARS OF ALUMNI EXCELLENCE

Law and Governance
in
Engineering
in
Health College
in
Medical School
in
Pietermaritzburg
in
Westville

**Are you a black female student at
UKZN?**

**Has your father been absent from
your life?**

**Would you like to be part of a research study aimed at
exploring the experiences of paternal absence among
black South African female students?**

**If you would like to participate in this study, please contact
Neami Zulu (Discipline of Psychology) for more information**

Email: 210523794@stu.ukzn.ac.za

sms or call: 0794756419

Appendix 4: Semi-structured interviews

Theme 1: Cultural Identity

1. What knowledge do you have about your father's whereabouts? (Is your father deceased or still alive or do you have no knowledge of him?)
2. How long has your father been absent?
3. Do you use your mother or fathers surname? (probe: can you tell me the reasons behind that?)
4. Which family would you consider 'real' family? Your mothers or fathers family? (probe: can you tell me the reasons behind that?)
5. Do you feel welcomed by your father and/or his family?
6. Have you been invited to attend any of your family's cultural events? (Do you feel excluded during these ceremonies?)
7. Do you think you are disadvantaged in any way since you have an absent father? (probe: do you feel that you experience misfortune solely because your father is not there for you?)
8. How do you emotionally feel about your father's absence?

Theme 2: Participants academic/career outcomes

9. Which subjects did you perform best in at school? Why do you think this was so?
10. Which subjects did you perform the worst in at school? Why do you think this was so?
11. Was there anyone that encouraged you in subjects such as maths, science and technology?
12. Which University Degree are you currently doing?
13. Which University level are you currently doing?
14. Could you explain to me why you chose to do this career path? (Probe: was it your first choice? What led you to this career path? Try to get a story)
15. How would you rate your University academic performance? (Excellent, average, under-average?)
16. Do you plan on furthering your studies after completing this qualification? Why or why not?

17. Do you think the career path you chose is due to any circumstance pertaining to your father's absence? Why or why not?

Theme 3: Relationships (with self and other)

18. What sort of personality would you say you have? (Probe: dominant, introvert, extrovert)

19. Tell me about your emotional attachments to current or previous partners? (Try to get a story)

20. How do you think your experiences of being fatherless shaped your behavioural and thinking patterns and attitudes pertaining to men? (Try to get a story)

Appendix 5: Participant consent form

I..... (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire, without any negative consequences.

.....
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

.....
DATE

Appendix 6: Audio-recording consent form

I..... (Full names of participant) hereby understand that the information I chose to reveal during the interview process will remain confidential and my identity will remain anonymous. I give my consent to be audio-taped during the interview process of the research study.

.....

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

.....

DATE

Appendix 7: Gatekeepers approval (UKZN Registrar)



5 March 2014

Miss Ncamisile Thumile Zulu
School of Applied Human Science
College of Humanities
Pietermaritzburg Campus
UKZN
Email: 210523794@stu.ukzn.ac.za

Dear Miss Zulu

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Gatekeeper's permission is hereby granted for you to conduct research at the University of KwaZulu-Natal towards your postgraduate studies, provided Ethical clearance has been obtained. We note the title of your research project is:

"Paternal absence in South African black female students".

It is noted that you will be constituting your sample by interviewing black female students through notices that will be put up on the Pietermaritzburg campus.

Data collected must be treated with due confidentiality and anonymity.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "MC BALOVI", is written over a horizontal line.

MC BALOVI
REGISTRAR

Office of the Registrar

Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban, South Africa

Telephone: +27 (0) 31 200 8000/2200 Facsimile: +27 (0) 31 200 7824/2204 Email: registrar@ukzn.ac.za

Website: www.ukzn.ac.za

1910 . 2010
100 YEARS OF AKAHMO CELEBRATION

Primary Education ■ Higher Education ■ Higher Colleges ■ Medical Schools ■ Pietermaritzburg ■ Yezane

Appendix 8: Psychological support for participants (if needed)



3 March 2014

To whom it may concern

This letter serves to provide the assurance that should any interviewee require psychological assistance as a result of any distress arising from the approved research process for the study 'Paternal absence in South African black female students', it will be provided by psychologists and intern psychologists at the UKZN Child and Family Centre.

Yours sincerely

Professor D.R. Wassenaar
Academic Leader
Discipline of Psychology
School of Applied Human Sciences

**School of Applied Human
Sciences: Psychology**
P/Bag XD1 Scottsville
PIETERMARITZBURG, 3209
South Africa
Phone: +27 33 2605853
Fax: +27 33 2605809



Founding Companies

- Tugayana
- Oswald College
- Medical School
- Abantwana
- Natal

Appendix 9: Information sheet

Dear participant

My name is Ncami, I am a student of the University of KwaZulu-Natal and I am conducting a study on father absence among university female students. The study aims to describe the experiences and outcomes of having a non active father in a group of black female students. I would like to speak to you, but only if you agree to speak to me.

The discussion will take approximately an hour. I will ask you about your cultural identity, your academic and career outcomes and about your perceived intimate relationship dynamics and your perceptions about society all pertaining to not having an active father in your life.

The research interview will be audio- recorded. The audio-clip, and any transcriptions and documents that arise from the interview will be kept in a safe storage by me for a period of five years, and thereafter destroyed. Any information you disclose will be kept confidential and your identity. Unless you specifically request your identity to be known in the study, no name and student number (and any other identifying details) will be required from you, mentioned or attached to any document when transcribing or writing up the final thesis. You will be assigned a pseudonym for identification purposes. I will be the only person who will be able to match the pseudonym back to the original data source.

Involvement in this study will pose no harm, threat or financial cost to you.

I anticipate that your involvement in this study might benefit you in that you can be empowered through knowledge as the finished product can be made available to you. I will be able to give you feedback on the study by emailing you a summary of the findings or alternatively I can give a PowerPoint presentation of the findings. This might help you get an insight to understanding yourself and other fatherless students in a better way, academically, socially and culturally.

If it happens that you come to experience any stress during and after the session due to the interview, I have made arrangements with the Child and Family Centre located within the Discipline of Psychology at the University of KwaZulu-Natal or alternatively you can attend the student counseling service within their College (a free service available to all UKZN students;

contact details are available on the various UKZN College websites) to alleviate any stress encountered due to the interview. There will be immediate counseling that will be available for you if it happens that you need the counseling immediately. If you experience stress after the session, you can attend sessions at the Child and Family Centre or the Student Counseling Service within your College.

If you would like more information on how to deal with paternal absence, I have made arrangements with the Child and Family centre or you can alternatively go to the student support counseling service within your college. A journal article edited by Linda Richter and Robert Morrell (2006) called *Baba: men and fatherhood in South Africa* might be insightful to read. I would also recommend the book called *Life without a father* by David Popenoe and a documentary called *Daddy hunger* by Ray Upchurch. You can also visit these websites:

<http://www.southafrica.info/services/crisishelp.htm#.U0VskMqEtOw>

<http://madamenoire.com/289634/fault-deal-painful-emotions-absent-father/>

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and you are free to withdraw your participation at any stage should you wish to. Your withdrawal from the study will not disadvantage you in any way.

My research supervisor is Nicholas Munro, and he can be contacted on MunroN@ukzn.ac.za 0332605371. The research Ethics Committee can be contacted through Ms. M. Snyman on 031 260 8350 or via email on snymanm@ukzn.ac.za.

Sincerely

Ncamisile Zulu

210523794@stu.ukzn.ac.za

0794756419

Appendix 10: Jefferson's Transcription conventions

[]	Square brackets indicate the point of overlapping speech
=	Equal signs indicate that there is no time gap between the speakers.
(0.3)	Numbers in round brackets indicate the timed amount of seconds elapsed between speech
(.)	A dot in round brackets indicates a short pause within or between utterances
↑	Upward arrow indicates a marked to a higher pitch in the utterance part that is immediately following the arrow
↓	Downward arrow indicates a marked shift to a lower pitch in the utterance part immediately following the arrow
WORD	Words in capital letters indicate an increase in volume relative to the surrounding talk
◦ text ◦	Utterances bracketed by degree signs indicate that these parts are relatively quieter than the surrounding talk
< text >	Outward arrows indicate the part of the talk that is delivered at slow pace
>text<	Arrow brackets that point towards the text indicate talk delivered at fast pace
Word:	A colon indicates that the preceding sound is extended
Word:::	If there are more colons, the sound is prolonged even more
.hhh	Indicates a hearable in-breath
hhh	Indicates a hearable out-breath
W(h)ord	Indicates laughter within speech
He he	Indicates softer laughter

Ha ha	Indicates loud laughter
()	Empty round brackets indicates the transcribers inability to hear what was said
(word)	Indicates a transcribers guess of what was said
(())	Double round brackets contains transcribers descriptions rather, than or in addition to what was said.
....	Indicates a portion of transcription that has been removed