



<http://researchspace.auckland.ac.nz>

ResearchSpace@Auckland

Copyright Statement

The digital copy of this thesis is protected by the Copyright Act 1994 (New Zealand).

This thesis may be consulted by you, provided you comply with the provisions of the Act and the following conditions of use:

- Any use you make of these documents or images must be for research or private study purposes only, and you may not make them available to any other person.
- Authors control the copyright of their thesis. You will recognise the author's right to be identified as the author of this thesis, and due acknowledgement will be made to the author where appropriate.
- You will obtain the author's permission before publishing any material from their thesis.

To request permissions please use the Feedback form on our webpage.

<http://researchspace.auckland.ac.nz/feedback>

General copyright and disclaimer

In addition to the above conditions, authors give their consent for the digital copy of their work to be used subject to the conditions specified on the [Library Thesis Consent Form](#) and [Deposit Licence](#).

Note : Masters Theses

The digital copy of a masters thesis is as submitted for examination and contains no corrections. The print copy, usually available in the University Library, may contain corrections made by hand, which have been requested by the supervisor.

**DAUGHTERS' RELATIONSHIPS WITH
NONRESIDENTIAL FATHERS:
AN EXPLORATORY INVESTIGATION**

NICOLE LAURA JAMIESON

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
of the degree of Doctor of Clinical Psychology,
The University of Auckland, March, 2011**

ABSTRACT

This qualitative thesis study investigates daughters' experiences of relationships with nonresidential fathers following parental separation, the supportive and difficult aspects of these relationships, and daughters' perceptions of the impact of the relationship on themselves and their sense of wellbeing. The study also investigates experiences external to relationships with fathers that impact on this relationship, including other relationships within the separated family. The study includes two projects, a questionnaire study and an interview study. The questionnaire study was designed to collect information about daughters' experiences of relationships post-separation. Fifty-five young adult women, who had parents that had separated during their childhood or adolescence, completed the questionnaire. Sixteen of these participants also took part in the second project, the interview study. The interviews gathered in-depth data about the participants' relationships with their fathers pre- and post-separation, including current relationships. Thematic analyses were conducted on the data from the two projects. Most participants described both supportive and unsupportive aspects of relationships with nonresidential fathers in the years following parental separation. A common experience that emerged across both studies was a sense of loss that occurred within the father-daughter relationship. This included a loss of contact and for some, a perceived loss of fathers' interest and involvement in their lives. Some experienced difficulties in communicating with fathers, or superficiality in the relationship. Some daughters attributed distance in relationships with fathers to the father's personal problems, while others attributed the distance to changes in the fathers' lifestyle and loss of interest in daughters. Subsequently, some participants described feelings of rejection and resentment towards fathers. On the other hand, some participants were positive about fathers who were perceived to remain actively involved in their lives, demonstrating interest and affection to them.

Participants also identified contextual factors that supported or created barriers to relationships with nonresidential fathers. These concerned practical considerations, including geographical proximity, fathers' work commitments, and living arrangements. For some participants, the quality of relationships between separated parents also appeared to impact relationships with fathers. This included ongoing inter-parental conflict and the impact of visitation arrangements. Fathers' repartnering also appeared to impact some participants' relationships with fathers, either positively or negatively. Finally, some participants perceived

that mothers had affected their relationships with fathers, such that mothers' support could enhance the nonresidential father-daughter relationship, and mothers' difficulties with the nonresidential father could impact negatively on the daughters' feelings towards fathers or feelings about spending time with them. The implications of the results for separating families are discussed along with future research directions.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I entered this research with my own experience of parental separation. My parents separated when I was 14 years old. I have always been interested in the impact of the father-daughter relationship on daughters' wellbeing. So when I was offered the opportunity to carry out research in the area of post-separation families, it seemed a natural fit.

Completing the doctorate programme would not have been possible without the invaluable support I have received from my supervisor, family and friends in the programme.

First, I would like to acknowledge my primary supervisor Dr Claire Cartwright. You have been so supportive throughout the research process, making time to meet with me as often as I needed and providing me with invaluable feedback. I have also appreciated your patience and understanding regarding my personal circumstances that have impacted my progress in the previous two years. And to my secondary supervisor Professor Fred Seymour, I would like to thank you for your valuable feedback in the final stages of bringing my thesis together.

Second, I would like to acknowledge my family. To my husband Greg, I cannot put into words my gratitude for the unconditional support and love you have given me not only in the programme but in the 17 years we have been together. You have been my rock encouraging me when I have experienced doubt, and providing a great listening ear when I have needed it. You are my soul mate and epitomise for me, the ideal father. You are amazing with our son Connor. You are so loving and dedicated. I love witnessing the special bond you two share, and the value you place on that relationship, even at the cost of your career.

Third, I would like to acknowledge my son Connor. You and I have sacrificed so much in the past three years that I have been working to complete the Clinical Doctorate programme. Thank you for your patience, staying with grandma and spending long hours at kindy when I have had to study. You are such an amazing little boy. I feel so blessed to be your mummy.

To the rest of my family, Mum you have been amazing, I couldn't have finished this thesis without your support over the last two years, driving across the city to care for Connor up to five days a week so that I could come into university. I know Connor has loved having you so involved in his life, and I have loved seeing you and him grow so close over the last two years. To my siblings, Jess, Karl, and Andy, and my niece Emma, thank you for your

patience, particularly regarding my increased absence over the past few years. I look forward to spending more time with you now that I am FINALLY finished!

I would also like to acknowledge my classmates, in particular, Arwen, Katharine, Christina, John, Julie, and more recently, Vicki, Tessa, and Maria. You have been an amazing support network for me. Throughout the programme we have laughed, cried, stomped our feet, and celebrated together at different stages throughout this interesting journey. It has been so wonderful having a group of such supportive friends who understand how challenging and rewarding this programme can be. You have been my lifeline at different times, and a great distraction at other times. I hope that we will continue to be lifelong friends. I feel so privileged to have met and grown to know you over the previous six years.

Last but definitely not least, I would like to give a special thanks to the women who gave their time and shared their very personal stories with me. You are a wonderful group of women, without whom this thesis study would not have been possible. Thank you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
LIST OF TABLES	x
LIST OF APPENDICES	xi
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
Terminology	2
Theoretical Perspective	2
Literature Review	4
Divorce rates and trends	4
The impact of parental separation on children	5
Factors impacting on child adjustment	6
Interaction of factors	10
Parenting after separation	10
Effect of parental mental health issues on children’s relationships with nonresidential fathers	11
Coparenting styles	12
Parental repartnering and stepfamily living	14
Challenges of new stepfamilies	15
Father repartnering and nonresidential father-child relationships	16
Mother repartnering and nonresidential father-child relationships	18
Relationships between fathers and children following separation	19
Fathers’ experience of post-separation parenting	21
Child and young adults’ experiences of relationships with nonresidential fathers	23
The father daughter relationship	26
Daughters’ relationships with nonresidential fathers	28
CHAPTER TWO: OVERVIEW OF METHODOLOGY	31
Qualitative Methodology	31
Authenticity and Trustworthiness of Qualitative Research Methodology	32

Personal and epistemological reflexivity	33
Personal reflection	33
The epistemological framework of this study	34
Meticulousness of methodology contributing to quality and trustworthiness of qualitative research	35
Thematic Analysis	35
Process of thematic analysis	39
Content/Categorical Analysis	39
CHAPTER THREE: QUESTIONNAIRE PROJECT.....	40
Introduction	40
Method	40
Ethics	40
Participants	40
Design of the questionnaire	41
Procedure	41
Data Analysis	41
Results	43
Content analyses	43
Separation and custodial arrangements	43
Reason for parents' separation	43
Preferred custody and visitation arrangements	44
Father-daughter contact two years following parental separation	45
Thematic analysis	46
Daughters' relationships with nonresidential fathers	46
Current/adult relationships with fathers	57
CHAPTER FOUR: INTERVIEW PROJECT.....	62
Introduction	62
Method	62
Ethics	62
Participants	62

Data collection – interviews	63
Data analysis	64
Results	65
Relationships with fathers prior to the separation	65
Distant or uninvolved relationships	65
Close supportive relationships	66
Relationships with nonresidential fathers during childhood and adolescence	67
Supportive experiences	68
Unsupportive experiences	71
Current relationships with fathers	78
Supportive experiences	79
Unsupportive experiences	81
Fathers influence on daughters’ wellbeing and functioning	84
Sense of self-concept	84
Experience of relationships	86
Advice to Fathers	88
Being involved	89
Civil relationship with other parent	90
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION.....	92
Father-Daughter Relationship	92
Father’s parenting approach	92
Impact of relationship on daughters’ current self concept and relationships	95
Mother-Daughter Relationship	96
Co-parental Relationship	96
Parental Repartnering and Stepfamily Living	97
Impact of stepmothers on nonresidential father-daughter relationship	97
Limitations	99
Implications for Future Research	100
Implications for Clinical Practice	101
Conclusions	103

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Childhood and adolescent themes	47
Table 2: Supportive and unsupportive experiences	67
Table 3: Supportive and unsupportive aspects of current relationships with fathers	79

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A: Daughters' Relationships with Nonresidential Fathers Following Parental Separation Questionnaire.....	128
Appendix B: Participant Information Sheet	138
Appendix C: Participant Consent Form	140
Appendix D: Interview Guide	141
Appendix E: Transcriber Confidentiality Agreement	144