

**Where *Fatherlessness* Meets Music Therapy**  
“The Importance of Therapist & The Uniqueness of Music”

Miltiadis Charalampidis  
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Department of Music  
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<p>Tiivistelmä – Abstract</p> <p>A great number of studies are supporting father’s vital contribution in the well-being of their children. <i>Fatherlessness</i>, on the other hand, is something that more and more children are experiencing, growing up in a single-parent family. This, usually, has a number of negative consequences in children’s development (e.g. low self-esteem, loneliness, mistrust, distress, no life model). Music therapy offers an alternative way of dealing with the issue of <i>fatherlessness</i>. With music the therapeutic alliance is taking place faster and in a more pleasant way (making/listening to music). Moreover, trusting and the negative emotions can be first expressed and experienced within musical events -i.e. improvisation. Music therapy it is also seem to be a way that can stop the Cycle of Repeated Behaviors (CoRB), and can set <i>fatherless</i> clients free from their parents choices, equipping them with courage and inspiration to build their own different and better future.</p> <p>The aim of this thesis is, to briefly sketch father-involvement &amp; absence and its consequences in society and later generations (i.e. children), to provide links between music therapy and the issue of absent father (<i>fatherlessness</i>), and to suggest areas in need for further research on the topic of <i>fatherlessness</i> and music therapy.</p> <p>Information from the current literature (psychology, sociology, and music therapy) will be presented and discussed along with information given by professional clinicians; two music therapists from Finland (Helsinki and Oulu). Links between literature and clinical practice will be presented as well as directions for further research on music therapy and its connections to the issue of <i>fatherlessness</i>.</p>	
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## 1 INTRODUCTION

For some, the history of humanity is a linear process: From BC to AC, from Neanderthals to modern, “civilized”, and “developed” 21st century humanity. Events that happened in the past do not have any connection with present events. But for others, is more like a circular process that repeats itself. Same issues again and again are taking place in the history of humanity. The desire for conquest, for control, for maximum pleasure, without sacrifice. The search for the answers to the same questions that bothers the human mind from the beginning.

But the most interesting thing here, though, is that no matter how one looks at the history of humanity (linear or circular) he/she will notice that people are talented on repeating themselves. They are masters of coping the behaviors and the attitudes of their ancestors. Good or bad, joyful or harmful, does not matter at all. People will applaud the nice ideas and the goods previous generation left behind for them, and be critical for the mistakes, the wars, the pain and disaster that have been also left for them. But, and here is the interesting point, people will repeat exactly the same behaviors (good or bad), and will take the same choices as their parents did, no matter how harmful some might be for them and for their children (next generation).

This notion motivated the author to write this MA-Thesis paper about an issue that is part of this circular human behavior, named “Divorce”. But because space and time are always the strongest limitations in those kind of tasks, the author decided to focus only in one of the many “products” of divorce; *Fatherlessness*.

And the “cycle” goes like this: It all started in young adulthood and the formation of romantic relationships. If one of them turned to be a long-term relationship, then it might possibly end up in marriage (or civil union). Family is been formed and children have been born. But then, parents decide to divorce. As a result, the single-parent family emerges, and

*fatherlessness* is the reality for most of the children. Years gone by and children turn into young adults. They clearly remember the choices of their parents and how they feel. And they were critical about the choices, and promised they will act differently. And the formation of romantic relationships “game” starts. And if one of them turned to be a long-term relationship...

## **Rationale**

The aim of this brief study is: a) to briefly sketch father-involvement & absence and its consequences in society and later generations (i.e. children), b) to provide links between music therapy and the issue of absent father (*fatherlessness*), and c) to suggest areas in need for further research on the topic of fatherlessness and music therapy.

Four years ago, in 2010, divorce rate in EU countries was more than 45% and two years ago (2012) in England and Wales divorce rates reached 49%. The same year (2012) in Finland one out of five families (20%) were single parent families, and from those 87% were families with a mother and children (Eurostat; Divorce Statistics and Studies Blog, 2014; Official Statistics of Finland, 2013; see also FIGURE 3 in Appendix).

Furthermore, literature from psychology and social sciences (e.g. Cui & Fincham, 2010; Dunlop, Burns, and Bermingham, 2001; Emery, 2009; Knox, Zusman, and DeCuzzi, 2004; Laumann-Billings and Emery, 2000; Aseltine, Doucet, and Schilling, 2010) is addressing the problem of the numerous negative consequences parental divorce has on children, adolescents, young adults, and adult’s well-being, and also the socio-economical impact that has on society.

Taking also into account that the music therapy literature is silent on the issue of divorce and *fatherlessness* (JYKDOK catalogue & NELLI portal) and music therapists’ acknowledge the little attention they have given to this interesting and indeed serious topic (Kaija Oivamäki-Tähtinen (Helsinki), and Matti Viita-aho (Oulu)-psychodynamic music psychotherapists in Finland, personal communication, January, 2014), the need of a study that would, at least, “touch” the topic and try to find the connections between *fatherlessness* and music therapy, is profound.

So, together with Bretherton & Page (2004) who are calling for “creativity and empathy” (p.572), as the tools for getting along with parental divorce and its consequences in the family

and its members, this study will try to show that those tools can be easily found in music therapy practice, and they are applied from music therapists in their practice with *fatherless* clients.

The paper is divided in three parts. Part one, will give some information from the literature about the issue of *fatherlessness*, starting from the family and the father-child relationship, and ending with the case of absent father and its causes and consequences in children. Part two, is about music therapy and its connections with the issue of *fatherlessness*. Data from the interviews will be presented and linked together with some relevant views from music therapy literature. The last part (Conclusion) provides a summary of the findings, the limitations of the study and some possible future directions.

## **PART I**

### *[Fatherlessness]*

## **2 FAMILY AND FATHER INVOLVEMENT**

This chapter will briefly illustrate the family institute and the father figure. It will deal with family's importance and contribution in society's present and future, and will try to give an overview of the paternal figure and its influence on children's lives.

### **2.1 The Significance of the Family**

Goode (1993) place the family institute in a really critical position for society's vitality. Clearly, he states that "the economy as well as the polity -the legal system itself- rests absolutely on the adequate functioning of the family [...] *The fate of the family is thus the fate of the entire society*" (p. 2) [author's emphasis].

Furthermore, Archard (2010) calls family, "the ultimate comfort blanket" or "a haven in a heartless world" (p. viii). He also describes family as the place in which individuals do not have to act in a certain way -e.g. as students have in classroom, or talk using a certain kind of language -e.g. in a conference, but family members within the family can just act and be themselves. Family provides its members with support, reassurance, honest, warm close relationships, and "love that demands nothing in return" (p. ix).

### **2.2 Family as a System**

Social scientists, researchers, psychologists, PhD students, all those who are studying



the family and its members -or social issues that are linked with family- have to have always in mind that the family is a type of a small system (sometimes more complex that appears to be). Thus, if we want to study one of the members of this family-system (e.g. the father), we have to remember that this person is an integral part of the system and we have to take to account the different ties and bonds that this person has with the other parts-members of the system (mother, children, grandparents, ex-wife, others). And from this point of view scientists and researchers believe that they can gain a better understanding of the behavior and the difficulties that family members are facing (Lamb, 2010). In other words, a more systemic way of approaching the family and its members, possibly will reveal more explanations and understanding about certain behaviors and attitudes family members are having towards each other. In addition to this, Oldfield (2006) suggest that music therapists who are working with a family member (e.g. a fatherless child) should collaborate and get in touch also with the rest of the family members (i.e. mother, siblings, grandparents), and if it is possible to incorporate them in the music therapy as well. This way therapist can help the client in more efficient way since it is a member of the family system which has a great effect upon him/er.

## **2.3 The Father-Child Relationship**

Sigmund Freud itself gave special emphasis on the parent-child relationship, because he believed that “childhood experiences shape subsequent personality and behavior” (Lamb, 2010, p.1). Moreover, three decades now (1980-today) social scientists and scholars have come to agree that fathers are having the same impact -positive or negative- onto their children as much as their mothers have to them (Lamb, 2010). In other words, later research considers the father involvement more significant that once used to be, for the development of the children and of the well-functioning of the whole family.

### **2.3.1 Some History**

As it was back in the “old” days, 1950s - 1990s, that it was beneficial for children and for the whole family when fathers were involved in the family life (supporting its members, cooperating with mothers and emotionally support them, setting and keeping the rules, the rituals and the family beliefs), is still the same now, in the 21st century’s family. All family members are enjoying a better life when fathers are present and involved in the family life as

much as possible (Amato, 1996, cited in Booth & Crouter, 1998).

In the past, [not more than 4-5 generations], fathers were considered as the “all-powerful patriarchs”, the chiefs, the head of the family (Knibiehler, 1995), also as the moral teachers (Pleck & Pleck, 1997) i.e. those who were responsible to transmit and to teach children about the values and the ethics of life (cited in Lamb, 2010). After the industrial revolution [1840], according to Lamb (2010), there was a change in the primary role of fathers, from moral teachers to “breadwinners”. Then, after the Great Depression [1945] psychologists and other social scientists began to worry about many fathers’ failure to stand as a good model of masculinity to their sons. Nowadays, fathers are having multiple important roles; “companions, care-providers, spouses, protectors, models, moral guides, teachers, and breadwinners” (Lamb, 2010, p.3). Through those roles, their attitudes, and their behaviors fathers are directly influencing their children, transferring messages and models of how to live and what choices to make (Lamb, 2010).

Next paragraphs will discuss the areas in which father’s behavior has an impact onto their children.

### **2.3.2 Areas in which the father-child relationship has an impact**

Taking just a “glimpse” in the literature related to the family, one can easily notice the great importance and effect that parents having onto their children’s bio-psychological development (e.g. Booth & Crouter, 1998; Lamp, 2010).

Especially about father’s parental role, Amato (1996) states it very clearly: “fathers continue to be important for the same reasons that they have been important traditionally, that is, by serving as models of achievement, sources of knowledge about the workplace, and providers of financial support” (Booth & Crouter, 1998, p.258). He examines 59 studies (between 1980-1997) in order to find out if there is any connection between children’s well-being and their parent’s behavior (in intact families). He found that children’s well-being is closely related to their fathers support towards them (found in 85% of the studies he examined) (Amato, 1998, cited in Booth & Crouter, 1998, p.253). Additionally, Lamb (2010) points out some other studies (Pruett, 1983, 1985; Radin, 1982, 1984; Easterbrooks & Goldberg, 1984; Conner, Knight, & Cross, 1997; Van Ijzendoorn & De Wolff, 1997; Pleck, 1997; Shannon, Tamis-LeMonda, London & Cabrera, 2002) that link father positive parenting with children’s socioemotional adjustments (e.g. distress and self-esteem, also in Amato, 1996), “cognitive achievements” (e.g. school performance, also in Amato, 1996), “linguistic achievements” (i.e. fathers are using more

complex vocabulary than mothers when interacting with their children, see also Amato, 1996), levels of empathy, “sex-stereotyped beliefs” [less], and “internal locus of control” [more] (p.4-7). Interestingly, fathers are contributing, in those areas, as much as mothers do.

About adolescents and young adults Amato (1996) argues that the father-child relationship has a vital role in their well-being and behavior as well. He presents a number of studies, (e.g. Amato, 1994; Barber & Thomas, 1986; Bennett et al., 1992; Harris et al., 1996) addressing a correlation between positive father-child relationship and current young adult’s psychological well-being (cited in Booth & Crouter, 1998). In addition, other studies (Snarey, 1993; Franz et al., 1991; Koestner et al., 1990) have shown a strong correlation between “the quality of the early father-child relationship” and young adult’s well-being and social behavior-e.g. marriage, peer relations, empathic attitude and mobility (Booth & Crouter, 1998).

### **2.3.3 Relationships between Fathering & the Couple Relationship**

Beyond children, Lamb (2010) suggested that fathers’ involvement in child rearing and housework can bring more satisfaction onto couple’s relationship. And if fathers are maintaining a good, non-conflict relationship with their wives, they are giving a great intimate-relationship model for their children (Amato, 1996, cited in Booth & Crouter, 1998). This in turn, raises the possibilities for the next generation to have a healthy and stable marriage, not ending in a divorce (Wolfinger, 2003; Teachman 2004, cited in Boothroyd & Perrett, 2008). In other words, better relationship between parents brings better parent-child relationship, which in turn brings “warmer” family environment, which reinforce children’s well-being and giving them intimate relationship models.

This notion, the link between couple's relationship and children’s positive outcome, is based upon numerous studies -e.g. Goldberg and Easterbrooks, 1984; Levy-Shiff and Israelashivili, 1988; Cox et al., 1989; Belsky, Fish, Isabella, 1991; Heinicke and Guthrie, 1992; Gable, Crnic, Belsky, 1994; Grych and Clark, 1999; Kelly, 2000; Lundy, 2002 (cited in Lamb, 2010)- but of course, as it happens with everything concerning human relationships, couple’s positive relationship does not always bears positive outcome for children (Belsky et al., 2005, cited in Lamb, 2010). In addition to that, Lamb notes that “when fathers are emotionally present and supportive in the family, they positively affect mother-child relationship as well” (2010, p. 9).

It is clear that family is a system, [as it previously mentioned in chapter 2.2] and its members are closely connected with each other.

#### **2.3.4 Fathers are needed in difficult times**

Some studies (Hagan et al., 1996; Mosley & Thomson, 1995; Simons et al., 1993) have concluded that “fathers are especially useful to children when families are experiencing difficult times” (Amato, 1996, cited in Booth & Crouter, 1998, p.269). In addition, two studies (Amato, 1994; Barnett et al., 1991) report that when someone is missing any close relationship with another important person for him/her (e.g. partner or parent), then the father figure and the relationship with him turns to be crucial (Amato, 1996, cited in Booth & Crouter, 1998).

### 3 PARENTAL DIVORCE: ONE CAUSE OF *FATHERLESSNESS*

This chapter will briefly discuss parental divorce as one of the causes of *fatherlessness*. Besides divorce or separation there are other reasons as well that can cause father's absence from children's lives. Succinctly, the main reasons of father's absence are; 1) father's death (which psychologically is totally a different case for children and adults), 2) father is living in psychiatric care-unit because of a serious mental illness, 3) father is in prison (for many years), 4) due to economic reasons and poverty father has to leave to an other place/country searching for job (i.e. migrant labor), 5) the cultural habits and traditions of the country (e.g. Africa) are so demanding for the husband that dissuade him from his role as a father, and 6) recently there is also the case of same-sex couples (lesbian marriage) in which the family has two mothers but not any father involved (CSDA, 2011; Gallagher, 2003).

Because of the space and time limit of the current paper, this study will focus only in *fatherlessness* as a result of a parental divorce. Therefore, is needed to dedicate some lines about parental divorce and its consequences on family members.

#### **Divorce's Negative Effects on Family Members**

“Children are striving for an understanding of the meaning  
of divorce and the role of the father in their lives”  
(Bretherton & Page, 2004, p.572).

Below, FIGURE 1 shows the marriage and divorce crude rates per 1000 persons, in EU countries. From 2001 until 2008 marriage rates were in the standard deviation (std) zone (between 4.58 - 4.95), but in 2009 the rate dropped below the std zone to 4.5 and to 4.4 in 2010. Given that the population in EU in 2010 was 330 millions and the crude rates for marriages and divorces were 4.4 and 2.0 it can be easily found that 45,4% of the marriages in EU ended in divorce (source: Eurostat).

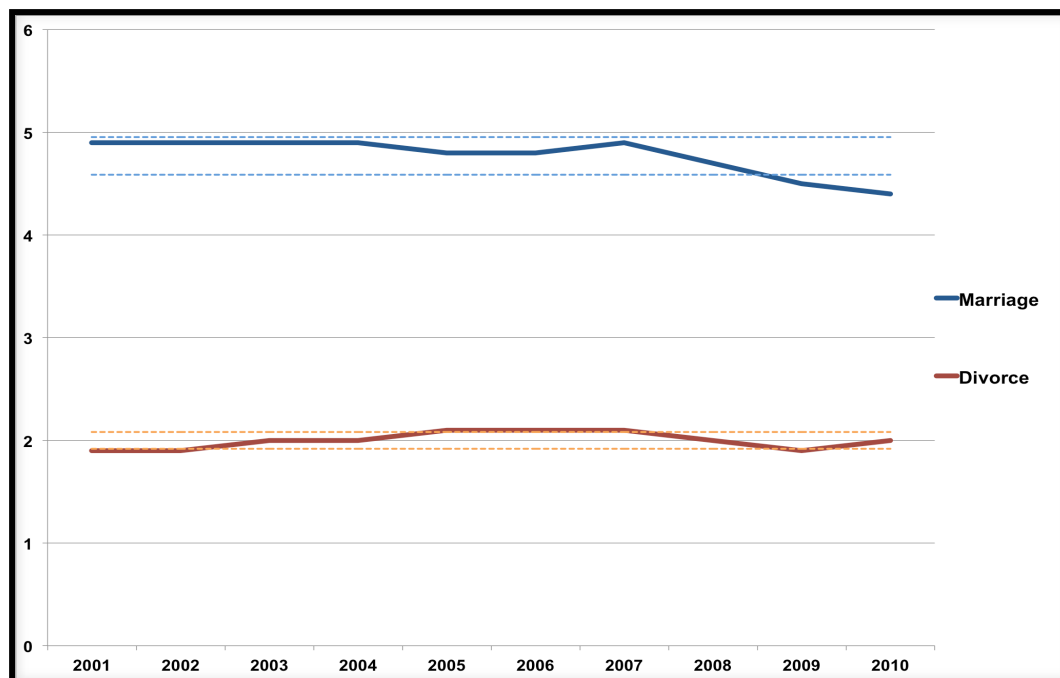


FIGURE 1. Marriages and divorces crude rates per 1000 persons in EU between 2001-2010.

Moreover, during the year 2012 in Finland, 45% marriages ended in divorce, and in England and Wales 49% (Official Statistics of Finland, 2013; Divorce Statistics and Studies Blog, 2014).

Parental divorce brings the whole family system against a “significant and highly stressful transition” (Whiteside & Becker, 2000, p. 5). The family enters the process of “reorganization” (Herscovici, 2004, p. 139). From an intact family system to a different family setting (single-parent or without any parent). This transition, according to Whiteside and Becker (2000), usually brings negative emotions to all family members and disruption of everyday routines. Furthermore, the decision of separation brings changes in family’s roles, economics and relationships (Bray & Hetherington, 1993).

Family members, after divorce, start seeking “certainty, clarity, purity, rationality, truth, and order”, without realizing that what they need to do is to accept and adapt themselves into the new situation they face now (Herscovici, 2004, p. 141). In other words, family members, especially children, need to help themselves being aware about the present, what is really happening *here and now*. Here, music therapy, according to Katsh and Merle-Fishman (1998), can facilitate the effort of seeking the awareness of the situation (here and now) and the self. They state; “In our awareness of our responses to music is the awareness of self” (p. 80). Also, the “ability to face things positively” is giving the children from divorced

families the courage to deal with changes and their family reconstruction. In their effort, and apart from family support, social support is significant (Herscovici, 2004). Here, once more music therapy can give another perspective of life and its challenges (more positive) (Katsh & Merle-Fishman, 1998).

“Clearly”, concludes Herscovici (2004), “a good parental and family subsystem reorganization is the foundation for the children’s well-being after divorce” (p. 143). Even after divorce, family members, for the well-being of all, have to be able to “share”, to “accept”, to “adapt”, and to “support”. Music therapy (as it will be more discussed in PART II) incorporates the above elements -sharing, accepting, adapting and supporting- inside a safe therapeutic environment, encouraging the client to gradually gain more and more of those elements into his/er life.

As for the father-child relationship, Amato (1996) argues that parental divorce has a negative impact to father-child relationship, in the sense that it makes the relationship more and more distant (less contact with nonresident father). This change in the relationship, in turn, has a negative effect on children’s well-being (Booth & Crouter, 1998).

Next chapter will focus on the issue of *fatherlessness*. What happens when the father-child relationship collapses or missing and how this missing relationship is “drawing” the portrait of *fatherless* clients. For this, data from the literature and from the interviews taken will be presented and discussed.

## 4 *FATHERLESSNESS*

### 4.1 Definition of the term *fatherlessness*

In the current study the terms that will be used are; “*Fatherlessness*”: describing the situation in general, in which children were grow up in the physical and emotional absence of their father; “*Fatherless*” children/adolescence/adults/clients: individuals who have grown up without a father; and “*Absent Father*”: naming the father who was not present and involved (physically or emotionally) into his children’s lives.

According to Wineburgh (2000) *fatherless* are the children who are growing up in a home in which their biological father is not present. Moreover, Kaija [professional music psychotherapist] is defining *fatherless* child as the child which is growing up without any father presence in the house (biological or not), and for her even if a father is not keeping any contact with his children for a long period of time -e.g. 20 years- is an absent father too, and his children are *fatherless* as well (K. Oivamäki-Tähtinen, personal communication, January, 2014).

Some scholars (e.g. Blackenhorn, 1995; Popenoe, 1996) view “*fatherlessness*” as “the primary ill” of today’s society (cited in Wineburgh, 2000, p. 256). They suggest that the father’s absence from the family has also some connections with juvenile crime and young’s people suicide (see also Thomes, 1968). Herzog (1982) is describing this absence as “father hunger”, which consists “complex feelings and longing for the absent father” while at the same time they are clutching upon any other man present -e.g. uncle, grandfather, coach, teacher (cited in Wineburgh, 2000, p. 256).

### 4.2 Father absence and the areas effected by his absence

Some studies (Herzog & Sudia, 1973; Biller, 1974, 1993; Adams, Milner, & Schrepf, 1984; Whitehead, 1993; Blankenhorn, 1995) shown links between father absence and negative outcomes on “gender-identity development, [...] and perhaps in the control of aggression” (Lamb, 2010, p. 5), and one study from Coombs & Landsverk (1988) reports that “closeness to fathers is related to less substance use” (Booth & Crouter, 1998, p.255).



Furthermore, a number of researchers (e.g. Ellis, 2004; Ellis et al., 2003; Grainger, 2004;) are linking father absence with early puberty and first sexual intercourse, especially in girls (cited in Boothroyd & Perrett, 2008). In other words, father absence seems to have negative effects also in the biological development and health of their daughters. Though, further research need to be conducted on this interesting issue.

### 4.3 Profile of The *Fatherless* Client

With the help of the literature and music therapists' experience, the next part of chapter 4 will try to "sketch" a profile of the *fatherless* client.

In TABLE#1 below, are listed all the characteristics that music therapists have given in order to portrait their clients who grew up in a *fatherless* home.

TABLE 1. Characteristics of *fatherless* clients.

<b>Fatherless clients ARE:</b>	<b>They also:</b>
fragile & "small"	...do not believe they are beautiful, nice, and wonderful persons
often alone	...have difficulties in forming and maintaining romantic relationships
very traumatic patients	...have the same inner problems
not easy to approach	... "caring" other's people choices, worldviews, behaviors, lifestyles
with no roots, no models	...facing a drama, a tragedy
(some) with ADHD, Eating Disorders, and behavioral problems	...need so much / a male friend
(some) without parents	...need father's love, care, and acceptance

#### 4.3.1 Some of fatherless clients' needs

Concerning the needs that children with absent fathers have, music therapists (K. Oivamäki-Tähtinen and M. Viita-aho, personal communication, January, 2014), said that in general these clients "need so much". Wineburgh (2000) suggests that we have to help them to feel more secure, to understand and realize that their father's absence is not their fault and

to learn how they can absolve from the hurtful feelings they might have. They are in need of “some safety, love and some [good] experiences” (K. Oivamäki-Tähtinen and M. Viita-aho, personal communication, January, 2014).

Furthermore, Thomes (1968, p. 95) expects that in late adolescent years, since it is the period of transition to adulthood, father absence might also bring “personal and social adjustments” to young adults. Specially girls, as Kaija mentioned, “need this loving and caring from her fathers”, which obviously is missing from their life (partly or totally). But also male adults “need men friend and they like to have some male person beside them”, because they tend to live most of their lives alone. Kaija explained; “My experience is that these adult persons they are often alone, they haven’t got married or something. I have four adults nowadays who all are *fatherless* and every one of them is alone” (K. Oivamäki-Tähtinen, personal communication, January, 2014). Moreover, and besides the loneliness, these clients often try to keep a distance between them and other people. Matti (2014) explains; “It’s not very easy to come near to such kind of persons who don’t have a father [...] I think it takes time to be with such kind of persons”. Kaija also adds to this; “[...] to rely on people...it’s so difficult for them” (M. Viita-aho, personal communication, January, 2014).

On the other hand, and according to Alan Wineburgh (2000), children who have been raised in a family with an absent father are not condemned. Many of them later in their lives have their own families and a well-paid job. Yet, he adds that boys from families in which the father was absent are more likely to be unemployed, incarcerated and uninvolved with their children, and for girls, that they are more likely to become “unwed mothers” (Wineburgh, 2000, p. 256).

#### **4.3.2 They are fragile, “small”, and traumatic patients, living without any models, and roots**

Therapists are characterizing their clients who have no father or no parents at all, as “very traumatic patients” and “fragile and small” (K. Oivamäki-Tähtinen and M. Viita-aho, personal communication, January, 2014). Especially for young children living without a father is “a drama”, “a tragedy”, as therapists name it. The family environment of those clients and the situations they are living in [parent(s) absence] seems that has a strong negative effect on their way of being and interacting with others, as it was shown in the previous paragraph.

According to Matti (M. Viita-aho, personal communication, January, 2014), many

Finnish families today are wounded from parental divorce or separation; leaving the children in a home that always one is missing (sometimes both parents missing). This, according to Matti, bears the situations in which children are growing up without models of a healthy family life, and without strong home-based roots any more.

#### **4.3.3 They do not believe they are beautiful and nice persons**

What accompanies father absence is the absence of confirmation that children and adolescents are nice, beautiful, and wonderful persons. All children need this confirmation from their parents and especially girls (K. Oivamäki-Tähtinen and M. Viita-aho, personal communication, January, 2014). Also adults need that validation, but for children and adolescents it seems to be something extremely vital for their ongoing development. Rolvsjord (2001) describes her young client from divorced parents that she “lack self-confident” (p.79). Moreover, Dunlop, Burns, and Bermingham (2001) assume that the relationship with the parents is having a very important role in the process of identifying their self in adolescents and young adults.

One example of this importance can be found in the formation and maintenance of romantic relationships between adolescents and young adults from *fatherless* homes, and chapter 9 will discuss this topic.

#### **4.3.4 The *inner* problems are the same across age-groups**

Comparing *fatherless* clients from different age-groups, therapists report that across the age-spectrum they can identify some differences in their fatherless clients but, “the inner problems are rather similar” no matter their age (K. Oivamäki-Tähtinen and M. Viita-aho, personal communication, January, 2014). This observation suggests that there is something common going on inside of every fatherless client no matter the age he/she is. It would be really interesting to go deeper into this direction and search more on this “same inner problems” issue, but this is beyond the aim of the present study, which is only to give some links and the possibilities of further research on the topic of *fatherlessness* and music therapy.

## PART II

### [Music Therapy]

Part II will present and discuss the data that have been collected from the interviews, and the possible links they may have with the current music therapy literature.

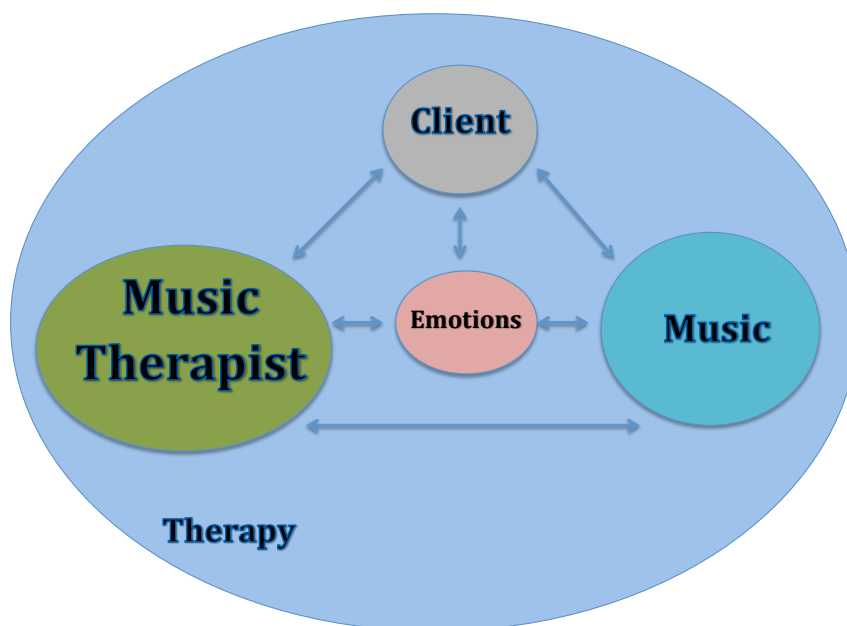
## 5 METHODOLOGY

Besides data from the literature, part II (also chapter 4 in part I) contains lot of data taken from face to face interviews. Two professional and experienced music therapists have been interviewed; Kaija Oivamäki-Tähtinen (Helsinki), and Matti Viita-aho (Oulu). Both are psychodynamic music-psychotherapists and are working with many different clients (young & old with various disorders), in the private sector. The interviews were conducted by the author itself, were semi-structured, about 35-40 minutes long, and both were taken in January 2014.

For the whole processes of data collection and data analysis, abductive approach has been used, in order to deal more sufficiently with the mixed data set; containing data from the existing literature and from the informants (interviews).

In more details, the questions for the interviews were formed with the help of the literature; unanswered questions or gaps in the literature (e.g. “What music therapy can offer to this particular people (*fatherless*)?”, see Appendix; Question No.2), in an effort to gain an inside into new areas that music therapy applications might be beneficial.

The information from the interviews have been recorded using the android application “Hi-Q mp3 voice recorder”, and then transcribed. Then thematic analysis method had been used to analyze the data. FIGURE 2 shows the 5 main-themes that were used for the analysis (Music therapist, Client, Music, Emotions, and Therapy; the size of the bubble indicates the amount of data that have been gathered from the interviews, except the theme “Therapy” which is placed as the area within everything else unfolds). Each of those will be discussed separately in this part, except the theme “Client” which has already been discussed previously in PART I,



### 5 Main Themes

FIGURE 2. Main themes derived from interview data and used for thematic analysis.

chapter 4. Next step in data analysis process was the creation of a mind map using the above five main themes. The mind map contained all the information from the interviews script in a form of keywords-e.g. “container”. Then, from the mind map, information tables are formed for each one of the five main themes, creating various sub-themes for each main theme. Some information has been grouped together in this face-e.g. “Sensible, Understanding, and Empathic”, see TABLE 2., mainly because there was not much information about those sub-themes, thus they could not stand alone in a paragraph.

The last face of the analysis process was to go through the interviews script once again and link the information present there with the sub-themes from the tables. Then, relevant information from the interviews script were combined with relevant information from the literature and discussed in a paragraph or two. Each of the five main themes has its own chapter in the paper, and each of the sub-themes has its own paragraph in the chapter.

In the following four chapters below, the process of the *therapy* and the main *emotions* that are present during the whole process will be discussed (chapter 6), the profile and the role *music therapist* has when he/she is working with a *fatherless* client will be presented (chapter 7), the contribution and the use of *music* will be discussed (chapter 8), and chapter 9, will deal briefly with the issue of *romantic relationships* and the “Cycle of Repeated Behaviors” (CoRB) that is affecting a lot all *fatherless* clients.

## 6 THERAPY PROCESS

This chapter will illustrate some characteristics of the music therapy process with *fatherless* clients. Therapy, as such, is interrupting -acting as a “turning sign”, is a long process, a learning environment (new ways of being, acting), is challenging, is the place in which feelings and emotions can be expressed and discussed. Next paragraphs will explain more about the characteristics of the therapy process and what it can contribute to fatherless clients needs.

### 6.1 Therapy is a Long Process

One characteristic that psychodynamic music therapy has -also with fatherless clients- is its length. Music therapists were clear on that: “it takes time to be with such kind of persons”, “I give same things for *long time*”, “I am like a new father for a *long time*”, “I meet them twice a week for a *long time*”, “if we have been meeting for a *long time* then I use other music style”, “it takes a *long-long time* getting them glad”, “it takes time”, “with clients we making the same trip for a *long time*”, “*long* therapies”, “it may be a *long time*”, “they are *long* therapies”, “it takes *long time* for the patient”.

Obviously, music therapy process -under the psychodynamic framework- is “a *long* journey”. When therapists are saying “*long time*” usually they are talking about 3-5 years, but there are times that therapy needed up to 7 years or more. Of course, it varies from client to client as they said (K. Oivamäki-Tähtinen and M. Viita-aho, personal communication, January, 2014).

### 6.2 Therapy can act as an “Intervention” alone

Therapy is “what will *break* this ongoing negative process” (the CoRB, see chapter 9.2) states Kaija, when she was talking about the impact music therapy might have onto the negative parental model that children keep repeating when they are adults. She calls the therapy “*an intervention*”, and she believes that when the person decides to come to music therapy there is already the first step taken towards the change of this negative ongoing process (K. Oivamäki-Tähtinen, personal communication, January, 2014).

### 6.3 It is a Therapeutic Learning Environment

Something important and vital for *fatherless* clients which take place in the therapy is that they learn to rely and to trust; “*In therapy we learn to rely on people [...] and to trust, and it takes a long time for those patients to learn to trust*” says Kaija (K. Oivamäki-Tähtinen, personal communication, January, 2014). Learning how to trust is extremely important for these clients because this difficulty in trusting is linked with the issue of the formation and maintenance of intimate and romantic relationships, as later will be discussed in chapter 9.

### 6.4 A Place to *Search Inside* and to Express Feelings and Emotions

“In all my *fatherless* clients I recognize that the inner problems are the same. [...] when he/she [client] *finds something inside* and when he/she express the *inside feelings*, it is very good for him/er” (K. Oivamäki-Tähtinen, personal communication, January, 2014). Those “same inner problems” have been already mentioned in chapter 4. Kaija here propose that inside the music therapy setting clients can start dealing with these inner issues. Therapy is the place for this search inside them.

Furthermore, in therapy, (as with the music too, see chapter 8), client has the opportunity to express him/er self. His/er feelings, emotions, and thoughts. Therapy is the place for all those difficult feelings (K. Oivamäki-Tähtinen and M. Viita-aho, personal communication, January, 2014).

Concerning the importance of the emotions in the process of music therapy, the next section is all about emotions that are present in the music therapy process with *fatherless* clients.

### 6.5 Emotions in Music Therapy

“Emotion is in music and music is in emotion”  
(Pellitteri, 2009, p.3)

“Emotions are central factors at all levels of human endeavor from global crises and international conflicts to local community and family issues to interpersonal relationships and individual well-being” (Pellitteri, 2009, p.xvii). In the work with clients with absent fathers,

the emotions that are present in the sessions are very intense. But in the beginning of the therapy process, most of the times, there are no emotions present at all. Therapists are helping the client to express his/her emotions gradually in the process of music therapy sessions. As Kaija said; “when we starting there are no emotions. When we proceed the emotions are coming out. And when we are working intensively there are very-very big emotions”.

The main negative emotions that are present in music therapy with *fatherless* clients are: Anger, Sorrow, Sadness, Anxiety, and Depression. Kaija comments; “Anger and sorrow are walking always together, they are a pair [...] and is very difficult for the patient to express these feelings”. Matti “pairs” *Anxiety* and *Depression* together saying for his clients that “they are very much depressed and with anxiety”.

As for the positive ones, therapists noted that their clients, after a long time, they are more happy (joy), more spontaneous (open), and the are more active (body language). As Matti describes them; “they are happier and they can tell me more and more [...] and their body language, the way they sit or stand, is more open in a way [...] and they start running or moving around” (K. Oivamäki-Tähtinen, personal communication, January, 2014).

Moreover, Pellitteri (2009) states that in a music therapy setting is much more easy to deal with emotions; to understand and to accept them, to work with and to alter them. In music therapy we have the combination of the therapeutic clinical environment (i.e. the presence of therapist) and the music (in any form). Each one of those has strong connections with human emotions, thus it makes it much more easier to get in contact with them, especially if you combine them in a sophisticated way.

### 6.5.1 A note for Anger

Kaija underlines the *anger* as the main emotion (together with sorrow) that is present in her work with *fatherless* clients. It is present in all faces and with all of her clients no matter in which age group they are at the moment. Furthermore, she states that this feeling of *anger* is very difficult for the client to express it, especially here in Finland; “In our Finnish culture” she explains, “anger is not so acceptable feeling” (K. Oivamäki-Tähtinen, personal communication, January, 2014).

In literature on divorce children, anger can also be found as one of the main emotions that post-divorce children with absent fathers are experiencing. One example can be found in Bretherton & Page’s (2004) study on relationships in post-divorce families. Its about a boy



which in the story-narration task (have to make up the end of the story), he took the child-toy and stomp it upon mother-toy saying that he will bury her alive because she did not did what he wants to. Afterwards, boy's mother in the interview said for her son that he is not receiving any support from his father and that he is "full of anger" (p.569).

## 7 THE MUSIC THERAPIST'S PROFILE

TABLE 2 below includes in summary all the characteristics (sub-themes) with which informants describe themselves as music therapists who work with fatherless clients.

TABLE 2. *Music Therapist's* characteristics.

<b>What Music Therapist IS</b>	<b>What Music Therapist DOES</b>
Sensible, Understanding & Empathic	Changes the climate (uses music & humor)
Loving & Safe	Gives space & Encourages
Careful	Plays music with client
Container	Gets contact with client
Professional & Nurturing	Offers new experiences
(like) Friend	Likes his/er job
(like) Father/Mother	Helps client to trust/believe/realize
Role Model	Changes client's thinking
Therapist	Needs (time-methods-knowledge)

In this section all the above sub-themes will be discussed separately or grouped together. Some relevant views from the current music therapy literature will be presented as well. Sub-themes that "sketched" the identity of the music therapist will be presented first, and then those that described his/er way of working.

### 7.1 The Music Therapist IS:

#### 7.1.1 Sensible, Understanding and Empathic

Music therapists, who have been interviewed for this study (K. Oivamäki-Tähtinen and M. Viita-aho, personal communication, January, 2014), agreed that the music therapist (like all psychotherapists) tries to understand his/ers client's situation and emotional state, from the very beginning of the therapy process, and continues this effort throughout all the

process. The literature, specifically Wolitzky (2011), states the same on this topic concerning psychotherapists, saying that from the first contact, therapists try to get an understanding of how difficult the situation is for the client, both emotionally, cognitively and physically (cited in Messer & Gurman, 2011).

### **Few words on Empathy**

Empathy in psychotherapy, and in music therapy as well, is one of the main pillars upon which therapy is based. It has a key-role in the process of change in therapy (Bohart, et.al cited in Norcross, 2002), it is the way the therapist understands the client; an “empathetic understanding” as Wolitzky calls it (cited in Messer & Gurman, 2011, p.54). Empathy blends together sensitivity and understanding (i.e. a sensitive-understanding way). It is the way that enables the therapist to see through the eyes of the client (Rogers, 1980, cited in Norcross, 2002). One can easily understand the vital role empathy has in the process of (music) therapy. Without it, the therapeutic connection between the therapists and the client would not ever been possible.

#### **7.1.2 Loving, Safe, Careful, and Nurturing, but Professional**

When the music therapist is a “*loving and safe person*” he/she acts “like a father” towards the *fatherless* client. This group of clients is in need of love and acceptance, because they missed those things from their fathers. So, if therapists can offer back those missing things to them, are indeed taking -for some extend- the role of the father (K. Oivamäki-Tähtinen, personal communication, January, 2014).

Robbins (2009) talked about the great importance of this *loving* attitude of therapist towards his/er client, explaining that this love has nothing to do with a romance, but is a “selfless or unconditional love”, giving to client the message: “*I want you to be happier. I want to serve you that you can push aside the things that are destroying your later life and your relationships*” (cited in Tsiris, 2012).

The *carefulness* is mainly about the issue of sexuality (physical closeness) and intimacy (emotional attachments) in therapy with *fatherless* clients (specially girls) and how to deal with it. The therapist has to be really careful of how to be in those circumstances. Matti, for instance, is finding himself balancing between being a professional and being

nurturing to those clients. And sometimes finding the balance between those two can be really challenging, as also Kaija mention on this; “I have to be *professional* and very *nurturing* at the same time with them [fatherless clients]. This is really very challenging sometimes, especially with those kind of patients” (K. Oivamäki-Tähtinen and M. Viita-aho, personal communication, January, 2014).

### **7.1.3 Therapist act as an emotional container for the client**

The concept of the music therapist acting as a container is well know in the field of psychotherapy and music therapy; “the therapist provides structure as a *container* in which the child can decipher how he needs to be organized” (Jackson, 2003). Kaija as well, states it clearly; “I get so much from them [...] I am a *container* ... all the time” (K. Oivamäki-Tähtinen, personal communication, January, 2014).

### **7.1.4 Therapist is like a new father or friend in the beginning**

During the course of music therapy with *fatherless* clients, music therapist has to take different roles in different faces of the therapy process. In the beginning the therapist is present as a friend, *a father*, or *a mother* to the fatherless client. Matti, for instance, sometimes tries to be like a good friend to them (talking, playing, telling jokes together), especially with adolescent boys, because he believes that those young boys and male adults without a father are not having a male presence in their lives, they need someone to be their friend. Later, and as the therapy process unfolds, music therapist must take the role of the *therapist*. The music therapy process has to end with the therapist being a *therapist* to the client and not a parent or friend anymore (K. Oivamäki-Tähtinen and M. Viita-aho, personal communication, January, 2014).

### **7.1.5 Therapist as a model to the client**

Something else that music therapists are, during their work with *fatherless* clients, is *a model*. Music therapists are a new model, a good example, to their clients. They give other models, more healthy ones, for their client to imitate in their life (e.g. on formation of intimate relationships), and also many times they give other ways to live and to be in the world, different that those client’s parents have given. All these are done mostly only by therapist’s

presence in the sessions and his/er active engagement in the music and conversations with the client (K. Oivamäki-Tähtinen and M. Viita-aho, personal communication, January, 2014).

## 7.2 What music therapist DOES:

### 7.2.1 Makes the Climate “Easy”

When the climate in the session is anxious or depressed -specially in the first sessions- music therapists are taking action to change it and make it more “easy-feeling”. Matti uses humor a lot, especially with adolescent boys. He is telling jokes during their talks but also during the music listening; “I use music when the whole situation is very anxious, and I try to *make the climate very easy* and feeling good. I just try to find *humor* during music” (M. Viita-aho, personal communication, January, 2014). Tervo (2001) also uses *humor* in his work with *fatherless* adolescents and it seems that, indeed, when it combined with music, it facilitates a more “easy-going” environment.

It is important to mention here that humor and music are combined and used under the umbrella of empathy. Then the therapist is able to create a “good holding environment” for the client and for the therapy process (Wolitzky cited in Messer & Gurman, 2011, p.54).

### 7.2.2 Give Space & Encourages

Vital to music therapy is for the client to be able to express his/er inner feelings. So, music therapist is giving the *space* and *encourages* the client to express him/er self, his/er feelings and emotions. Everything is welcome in the music therapy sessions. Kaija is using a direct verbal way of *encouraging* her fatherless clients to express their anger feelings inside; “In our Finnish culture anger is not so acceptable feeling, and I have to *encourage* the patients: be, be angry, you can be angry, you can feel your sorrow, you can cry” (K. Oivamäki-Tähtinen, personal communication, January, 2014).

### 7.2.3 Gets Contact through music & discussions

It is very important for the therapist (and for the whole therapy process) to gain contact with his/er client. Wolitzky states that from the very beginning, therapist tries to *relate* him/er self with the client’s world (cited in Messer & Gurman, 2011). Empathy is one of the

“tools” enable him/er to achieve this contact (as already was mentioned previously in the chapter), but music therapist are using also the music as a “bridge” to meet the client; “we play something together”, says Matti, “because I try to *get contact* to that young boy, and make sure that he likes me, and thinks for me: *o, yeah, he [therapist] is a good guy*”.

For music therapists, both are very important; the music and the verbal discussion between them and their clients when they are trying to gain the contact. And they use it both in their work. Indeed, the music therapist is open to discuss anything that emerges during music therapy; “we talk about many things, everything” as Matti mentioned (M. Viita-aho, personal communication, January, 2014).

Furthermore, Matti agrees with Tervo (2001) that the music therapist always has to take in consideration the musical culture of the client. As an example, for adolescents Tervo is mentioned “rock music and youth culture” (p. 80), as two important factors that the music therapist has to take into account when he/she tries to get into “the client’s world”, to gain this *contact* with his/ers client.

#### 7.2.4 Offers Good Experiences

Specially to *fatherless* children music therapist role is to offer some *good experiences*. Experiences of a relationship full of love, acceptance, and safety. Something different from what the client has already been experienced from his/er parents relationship, and the father-child relationship. But the therapist has to offer the same things again and again, for a long period of time (K. Oivamäki-Tähtinen and M. Viita-aho, personal communication, January, 2014). Rolvsjord (2001) also, clearly states that one of the main goals she had when she worked with a girl from a broken home, was to give to her “some *good experiences* of relationships” (p.78).

Similarly, Smith (2012) talks about a community project he was part of as a music therapist. In the music-making sessions he used improvisation and he said that with music he was able to help those young people who took part (most of them spending their time in parks, roadsides, in and out of foster care, economically marginalized) to create another identity, to find other ways to express their negative feelings towards the community, other ways for their voice to be heard, or just to find their place in the community, in the world. In other words, with music improvisations Smith gave a new positive experience to young people and a chance to be creative and explore their potential. He offered the possibility of new positive

experiences to them that changed their view about themselves and the world around them.

### **7.2.5 Helps in Trusting & Building Self-Confidence**

One major role of the therapist is to help the client a) to believe in him/er self, to build his/er self-esteem, and b) to trust him/er self and other people, starting with the therapist. “I think” Kaija said, “that the therapist has an important role here, because if the patient *trusts* on me maybe he or she can *trust* another person as well” (K. Oivamäki-Tähtinen, personal communication, January, 2014). And from literature it seems that repeated experiences of mastery in music therapy increase *self-confidence* and *self-esteem*. For instance, in Hammel-Gormley's (1995) study one informant said: "I like Music Therapy sessions. I get to play songs that are very dear to me. Without music, my life is a drag. Music Therapy helps me to build my *self confidence*." (cited in Solli, Rolvsjord, and Borg, 2013, p. 260).

### **7.2.6 Helps in Understanding and Changing the Thinking of the client**

Another great role music therapist has is helping the *fatherless* client to *realize* and to *understand* his/er own parents' behavior (specially father's behavior). Then, after client *understands* the why therapist can move one step further and ensure the client that he/she can make different choices from their parents; “I help them *notice* that they don't have to make the same as their parents have done. And when they *realized* it then they are free, free from their parents' choices, behavior and lifestyle” said Kaija.

Finally, therapist accompanies the client into his/er journey to the future, helping them to build their own life, making their own choices, different from their parents. “I try to *change their thinking* of how to live” said Matti, “and I think the most important thing here is that I am with the boy/girl long time, discuss and of course play music with him/er”, accompanying him/er into his/er life-journey (K. Oivamäki-Tähtinen and M. Viita-aho, personal communication, January, 2014).

### **7.2.7 Therapist likes his/her job but needs: Knowledge, Time, and Methods**

The work with fatherless clients is not an easy work in general but despite how challenging can be the, Kaija keeps a positive attitude towards her job; “I think is more

difficult and challenging for me as a therapist to work with those patients comparing with others from intact families, [...] but, I like, *I like that work* very much” (K. Oivamäki-Tähtinen, personal communication, January, 2014). It seems, somehow, important for the music therapist to be able to like and enjoy his/her job, no matter how difficult or demanding sometimes it can get. But music therapists are calling for more *knowledge* about the topic of *fatherlessness*; “we need *knowledge* on this issue and about families with difficulties and about young boys and girls” said Matti. He also expressed the need of *time* and *methods* specially when he is working with *fatherless* adolescent or adult girls; “sexuality is not very easy thing there [...] those girls are in need of love and acceptance so much, and I offer those [...] so it is possible for them to love me and come so near me. [...] I need *time* and I need *methods* to be near them” (M. Viita-aho, personal communication, January, 2014).



## 8 WHAT MUSIC IS OFFERING

Katsh and Merle-Fishman (1998) in their book *Music Within You*, are giving a clear view for the role music has in peoples' lives and the importance it has concerning the emotional and psychological well-being:

“Throughout the ages and into the present, people have sought the comfort of music in times of sorrow and distress, expressed with sound what could not be conveyed by words and experienced community and belonging through shared song” (p. 220).

This chapter will present music therapists' views concerning music and how do they use it when working with *fatherless* clients. Also, some relevant information from literature will be presented, to complement music therapists' views.

### 8.1 What music is and what it does

Music is a safe thing, a holding place, a container, and a way to express and gain contact with deeper feelings. Music can change the climate, can “talk” about the person and can offer new experiences. Below, all those sub-themes of the theme *music*, will be discussed further and linked with the current literature.

#### 8.1.1 Music can change the negative climate

The fundamentals of music are strongly connected with human emotions, and music therapist knowing that they use music in order to *alter the atmosphere* (the mood) of the therapy (Pellitteri, 2009).

Indeed, that is exactly what music therapists are doing with their *fatherless* clients, especial in the beginning of the therapy process; they are using music activities in order to change the anxious or depressed climate. In the first session for example (and in any other difficult session as well) music listening -songs chosen by the client- is always a nice way for calming or changing the anxious climate that is present in the session to a more easy-feeling atmosphere. And if the climate has been “fixed” (more positive), then therapy can take place

easier. The client is less anxious and more cooperative towards the therapist (K. Oivamäki-Tähtinen and M. Viita-aho, personal communication, January, 2014).

### **8.1.2 Music as an emotional container**

Not only the therapist is a container for the client (as it was shown in chapter 7), but music can also be a *container*. Clients with absent fathers are putting feelings, emotions, thoughts and images -that have some connection with their fathers- into the music. Most of the times by bringing a song in the therapy and share it (listening) together with the therapist, but also by paying-composing music (improvisation / song making) together (K. Oivamäki-Tähtinen and M. Viita-aho, personal communication, January, 2014).

A number of studies (Kennelly, 2001; Robb & Ebberts, 2003; Lindberg, 1995; Edgerton, 1990; Ficken, 1976; Glassman, 1991; O'Callaghan, 1996, 1999; Lindberg, 1995; Robb & Ebberts, 2003; Freed, 1987; Tamplin, 2001) have shown that it is now well established that music therapy is able to provide a safe *container* for exploring issues that are difficult to express (cited in Baker, Kennelly, and Tamplin, 2005).

### **8.1.3 Music creates a Safe and Holding Place**

Barcellos (2006) in her study on the effect of familiar songs to mothers of premature infants found that songs are acting as a “*Holding Environment*” for mothers.

Music therapists (K. Oivamäki-Tähtinen and M. Viita-aho, personal communication, January, 2014), share this notion, and believe that music is acting as a *holding place* also for children that are growing up without fathers and within an unstable family environment. It is a safe thing to do. It cannot harm them [specially emotionally, like their father behavior did].

Putting together all the above characteristics that music has -being a “safe thing”, a “holding place”, and a “container”- music therapists are proposing that music itself can act somehow like a “father” or a “mother” to the client (K. Oivamäki-Tähtinen and M. Viita-aho, personal communication, January, 2014). Note that all those characteristics are also music therapist’s characteristics. So, if the music therapist can be “like a father” to the client, one can assume that music can also take this role, (partly of course). Though, more research is needed in order to draw more solid conclusions on this topic.

### 8.1.4 Music is a mean of Expressing and Contacting deep feelings

Music improvisation and music listening are giving to *fatherless* clients the unique opportunity to express them selves. Music listening for example, of songs that client prefers, can end up with both client and therapist crying. Additionally, music making, particularly when playing heavy music, can bring aggression out more easily. Music indeed has a strong connection with emotions, thus with *fatherless* clients it is better to avoid music that has to do about fathers and abandonment and all those associated themes [in the lyrics]. It is more beneficial for the clients to stay to their musical preferences, especially in the beginning of the music therapy process (M. Viita-aho, personal communication, January, 2014).

Slowly-slowly, and little by little, music can bring the client in contact with his/her feelings and help him/er to verbalize and share them with the therapist (Rolvsjord, 2001; Ghetti, 2013). At the same time, and because of this musical engagement, the building of the therapeutic alliance, between therapist and client, is taking place easier and faster. Therapists are using improvisation and/or song covers in order to get more contact with the client and to build their in-between relationship (K. Oivamäki-Tähtinen and M. Viita-aho, personal communication, January, 2014). Aldridge (2004) writes that “Shared improvisation of music gives expression to deep feelings and brings them into a form that can then be discussed” (cited in Oldfield and Flower, 2008, p.162), and Katsh (1998) advise all persons (not only music therapy clients) to “use songs to communicate feelings to others” (p.99).

### 8.1.5 Music “talks” about the client

Music therapists are using music to collect additional information for their client. They say that music “talks” about the client; “We can learn a lot about them [*fatherless* clients] from the music they listen or bring in the session” (M. Viita-aho, personal communication, January, 2014).

Music therapy literature supports this notion about songs that client likes and brings to music therapy labeling them as precious source of information. Songs are carrying with them memories, people, life moments, and experiences. Hearing back the song together with therapist, client is experiencing again these moments and memories in another way [and in a safe environment] but at the same time sharing all this with the therapist. Thus, with songs client can communicate personal information to therapist (Ruud, 1998; de Chumaceiro, 1998; cited in Rolvsjord, 2001). Sometimes, music listening can be so rich that the music therapy

session will contain nothing more than listening to songs. As Matti put it; “Sometimes you don’t need something more. We just sit and listen to the music together with my client and that’s enough” (M. Viita-aho, personal communication, January, 2014).

### 8.1.6 Music offers new Experiences

Through music therapy *fatherless* clients besides their well-known music genre, they are introduced to some other music. New music models and areas are open for them to explore them and maybe found something new about themselves and/or gain another new perspective of their musical tastes (M. Viita-aho, personal communication, January, 2014). This way music can act as a bridge to explore the “unknown” the “new”, and find new/different ways of being and interacting with the “new”. Finding new *musics* it can be the starting point of finding new ways in life.

## 8.2 A Coda for the Uniqueness of Music

Interestingly all the main themes of the current study can be found in numerous songs. Making just a quick search in the western song-library, through web, anyone can easily detect a great number of artists who have recorded songs talking about “family”, “divorce”, and “father’s absence”, starting even from the ‘30s. Indicatively: Cole Porter (1932), Tammy Wynette (1968), Garçons (1979), Hanoi Rocks (1985), There was love (1993), William C. Belton Jr. (2003), Elbow (2008), Takiyah Spears (2009), Street Pharmacy (2011).

Below are two examples of how music can gives a mean of expression and another way of saying things you could not once say. As Katsh and Merle-Fishman (1998) said:

“Although words are a most useful tool in communicating our thoughts to others, they are inadequate when it comes to expressing the depth, intensity and scope of feeling of which we are capable” (p. 95).

Example 1: Chuck Comeau, the drummer of the band *Simple Plan*, in 2003, wrote a song named “Perfect”. His father was physically there, but emotionally absent from his life and his choices. He wrote this song in order to speak to his father “*about the pain [he] feels inside*” that his father “*don’t care anymore*” and to say “*sorry that [he] can’t be perfect*”.

Example 2: One more example comes from Art Alexakis, singer in band *Everclear*, who wrote in 1998, the song "Father of Mine". His father was absent from his life but he [the father] would send every year a card with a \$5 bill inside. This made Art more angered and in an interview he said that "It was kind of a catharsis to put those feelings into words, it's a way for me to get things out of my system".

## 9 LINKS BETWEEN MUSIC THERAPY, ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS, AND THE CYCLE OF REPEATED BEHAVIORS

### 9.1 The issue of Romantic Relationships in Music Therapy with *fatherless* clients

Relationships are very important for all humans. Argyle calls them “the main sources of happiness and of mental and physical health” but he also sees them as “sources of conflict and unhappiness” (Argyle, 1992, p. 38).

One type of relationships people have are relationships between family members. Family relationships are vital for all human beings, but, as all relationships, they can also turn to be difficult, painful or the cause of troubles in offspring’s romantic relationships. And concerning the topic of this paper, different studies have found a link between *parental divorce* and young adult’s *romantic relationships* (Knox, Zusman & DeCuzzi, 2004; Scabini & Cigoli, 2004; Cui & Fincham, 2010).

Music therapists agreed that *romantic relationships* are “a very important issue”. The role of the therapist here is multidimensional. He/she helps the client to believe in him/er self, to built his/er self-esteem his/er self-confidence, in order to be able to make contacts and *intimate relationships* with other people. *Fatherless* clients, especially, need to learn to trust and to rely to other people, and music therapy is the place for these “lessons”. Together with the help of the music therapist, *fatherless* clients are learning to rely and to trust the therapist, themselves and then other people as well. Especially for *fatherless* girls, this issue of *romantic relationships* is more arduous for them because there is this deep “need of father’s love, care, and acceptance” inside them unfulfilled. This, in turn, germinates low self-esteem, and the belief that they are not beautiful or nice women. Which, consecutively, affects their attitude towards *intimate relationships* with the other sex (K. Oivamäki-Tähtinen and M. Viita-aho, personal communication, January, 2014).

Indeed, with the help of music and the music therapist, *new relationships* can be formed, or the existing ones can be straightened (Katsh & Merle-Fishman, 1998). And Joy Hasler gives an example of this talking about “positive attachment patterns” and how much important they are for adolescents. In brief, she argues that those positive patterns are the “secure base” upon which the adolescent will build his/er self-esteem, confidence and the

ability to form and maintain *long-term relationships*. From this stage then, the adolescent is ready to enter, gradually, independence. So, she concludes that “music offers teenagers an age-appropriate medium to *relay and reform early attachment patterns*, especially when shared with the attachment figure in their life” (cited in Oldfield and Flower, 2008, p.163-164).

## 9.2 The Cycle of Repeated Behaviors and the impact Music Therapy has on it

Here the term “Cycle of Repeated Behaviors” (CoRB) has been invented by the author and used in order to name the situation in which people repeat again and again the same behavioral patterns (positive or negative), taken from their parents, living with them and communicating them to their offspring. So every next generation ends up doing the same mistakes (in the case of negative behavioral patterns) as the previous generation did. And it’s a kind of a cycle that is not so easy for an individual alone to get out of it.

Scabini & Cigoli (2004) have concluded that if family members lose the ability to manage and to solve relationship problems or conflicts that may arise, then the negative affects deriving from those relationship problems will continue to affect future generations. For instance, parental divorce has a negative effect on how young adults view marriage and also affects the quality of their own romantic relationships (Cui & Fincham, 2010). Particularly, young adults from divorced families seem to “lack of commitment to their own current relationships” (Cui & Fincham, 2010, p. 331), and one of their greatest fear is the fear of *repeating the same behavior* and attitude towards relationships, marriage and family, resulting in their own divorce and unhappy family life (Knox, Zusman & DeCuzzi, 2004). This fear, indeed, is not something excessive. Cummings and Davis (1994), also observed that “offsprings of divorced parents learn to solve conflicts based on styles *they have observed in their parents*. When these styles appear aggressive or almost impossible to reconcile, the consequence will be an increase in behavioral problems” (cited in Herscovici, 2004, p. 142).

And particularly about *fatherlessness* and CoRB, the members of the band *Good Charlotte*, expressed their views, in an elaborative way, through the song: “The story of my old man”:

*“This is the story of my old man  
Just like his father before him  
I’m telling you, do anything you can  
so you don’t end up just like them, like them”* (Good Charlotte, 2004)

In the interviews, Kaija illustrated the foundations of the CoRB using an example from contemporary art;

“I have a painting in my therapy room where is a woman with very long hair, and in her hair there are heads. Men’s and women’s heads. Those heads are describing all the people that this woman is caring along with her -relatives, teachers, friends, others- which all of them have an affect on her. And like this woman, we all are caring some people along with us [...] its like a gallery... a gallery of people of my life” (K. Oivamäki-Tähtinen, personal communication, January, 2014).

She explained that this painting simply communicates the message that all humans are affecting and been affected by others. There is an interaction between people, especially with the closed ones (e.g. family members). And some peoples’ choices have an effect on other peoples’ lives.

Music therapists agreed that music is helping *fatherless* clients to exit the CoRB. In music therapy sessions Matti said that he is making music together with the client, offering a model, a good example of being to him/er (chapter 7 earlier stated this as one of the roles of a music therapist). Matti believes that if the music therapist is “close” and “with” the client, being a healthy model, then he/she can help the client to make different, and better choices than client’s parents did (M. Viita-aho, personal communication, January, 2014).



## 10 CONCLUSION

In the present study the issue of *fatherlessness* was discussed through the eyes of music therapists, and through various psychological studies. Fathers are members of the family institution which it appears to be a crucial and vital social institute for society's well-functioning and for the individual as well. Family is a system and its members are interacting with each other affecting the family-system by their choices and behaviors. One of those behaviors/choices is parental divorce. And one of divorce's consequences is the absence of the father from the family, named *fatherlessness*.

Fathers are important contributors to their children's well-being. Their role as fathers is linked with the socio-emotional adjustments of their offspring, for example their behavior, their stereotypes, their self-esteem, and also their attitudes towards intimate relationships and family.

People who grew up without a father (*fatherless*) appear to be more "fragile", traumatic and with very low self-confidence. Moreover, they have difficulties forming and maintaining romantic and intimate relationships (even friendships sometimes), mainly because they cannot trust other people. Thus, most of them are not easy to approach and build a relationship with them. Meanwhile, all of them are in desperate need of a friend, of someone besides them who will care for them and understand them. Especially, fatherless male adolescents and adults want to have a male friend with whom they can share their thoughts, ideas, their struggles, and their hobbies. But the most crucial thing those people are missing because of their father absence, is a life model. A model of how to live, how to behave, what choices to make, what values to believe and strive for. And because this model is missing, fatherless people most of the times are turning to other sources to fill this gap.

Part II discussed music therapy as a way of helping and supporting *fatherless* people with their needs. Here must be clarified that, people are not entering psychotherapy -or music therapy- because they are fatherless, but many music therapists today have a lot of clients who are fatherless too and many of the issues they addressing are linked with father absence.

Music therapy, as it showed in part II, turned to be a proper place and method for approaching and supporting fatherless clients.

Using music (listening or/and making) the therapist is able to gain contact with the

*fatherless* client in an easier and more comfortable way for the client (especially for adolescents music in an integral and treasured part of their lives). Music is -in a way- forming the environment and making the atmosphere more relaxed, more comfortable. Gaining an early good contact with these clients is extremely important because it will serve as the basis on which the building of trust will follow. And of course music therapist and client will build this trust first in music. Making music together (e.g. improvising) the client is able to try trusting his/her music therapist. In music too, the music therapist will show that he/she is there for the client and he/she will support the musical ideas that client is bringing into the music. In other words, music is serving as a symbolic tool, with which the client can safely experience new things and areas (e.g. trusting).

Emotions are having a great role in every therapy situation. In music therapy emotions can be expressed safely using music (songs, improvisation, listening). Music is acting like a “container” which the fatherless client is feeling with emotions, feelings, thoughts, images that are connected with the father figure or both of the parents. Clients are encouraged to express their emotions and they can do it first in music, which is most of the times easier than using words (e.g. playing *Stratovarius* in a drum set for anger, or improvising smoothly in a metallophone for tenderness or sadness).

Listening to songs can also be an alternative, which sometimes can be so powerful that “you do not really need something else” as Matti said. Songs also are containing useful information about the client. Through them the therapist can learn more about the client (e.g. tastes of preferred sounds and/or way of dressing and behaving. It can be even beliefs or values that are present in music and the client identifies with them).

Finally, music therapy is a way for *fatherless* clients to stop the CoRB process. In music this repetitive behavior pattern can be addressed and expressed (e.g. through song writing/listening). Furthermore, music is an extra safe tool for the *fatherless* clients with which they can recreate and/or revitalize their intimate relationships (family or romantic relationships, and close friendships as well). In music therapy *fatherless* clients’ voice can be heard (metaphorically and literally as well). And with the support and guidance of the music therapist, acting as a good model, fatherless clients, little by little, day by day, starting to feel again free, valuable, and that they are wonderful persons and still have the capability and the

strength to move on and make different choices... a better future for them and for their own children.

## 10.1 Limitations

One of the major limitations of the present study is the issue of language. For both the author and the informants English are not their first language. As a matter of fact, some information might got lost or communicated in a much more simplistic way that the informants might want in the first place. The informants, however, were allowed to answer in Finnish as well, but the questions are presented to them all in English, so they decided to try answering in English as well. It is obvious that if the interviews were conducted in Finnish, then more data would be available and maybe more detailed in some issues. In addition, the writing of the paper would have been different (way better), if the author's mother language was English.

The second limitation has to do with the small amount of literature on *fatherlessness* issue and the non-existing music therapy literature on this topic (at least in JYKDOK catalogue and in NELLI portal). Combined with author's relative small experience in the field of *fatherlessness* and music (only 18 months in SOS children village), the challenge was obvious. Finding and putting together data from psychology literature, music therapy literature and music therapists' opinions (interview data) without any previous knowledge and experience on the topic and on research in general, was not something easy. So, more experience and background knowledge would definitely had led into a better work, with more data, views and suggestions about *fatherlessness* and music.

Third limitation is about the interview questions (see Appendix). Due to a small amount of time (this is always a limitation by default), and the difficulty for an extra participant to be found, a pilot interview did not take place, in order for the questions to be double-checked. This of course had an effect on the interview data, and the author was aware of that when he runs the analysis.

## 10.2 Future Directions

### 10.2.1 Fatherless Children

Kaija believes that it might be more helpful for her work if the research on *fatherlessness* will focus more on the children. As a music therapist she finds it more effective to work with *fatherless* children than adults. She explained that “if I have a 10 years old child I think I can do much more with him/her because is so small and I can offer some safety, love, and some experiences”. She also added “[...] if you are a child and you don’t have a father, is a tragedy” (K. Oivamäki-Tähtinen, personal communication, January, 2014).

Thus, the present study suggests for a *fatherless* children orientated music therapy research. To study more in depth fatherless children and to find out ways that music can support their needs and promote their well-being.

### 10.2.2 Same-Sex Marriage

Gallagher (2003) argues that if the US government accepts same-sex marriage, as it accepts opposite-sex marriage, then it transmits the message that it no longer believes that children need both mothers and fathers. Thus, two mothers (or a mother and a grandmother), are just the same good and sufficient as a heterosexual couple for the children. She also adds, concerning the future impact of this “new idea” of marriage and family, that it will definitely have an effect on how adolescence and young adults understand marriage, family, raising children and the role of fathers and mothers (their value and necessity).

Furthermore, thanks to science (genetics) there is now the IVF way of having children and together with the same-sex marriage law the “package” is ready to dispatch and for consuming. Thus, new-style families can be formed, e.g. families without fathers.

In this topic, Lamb (2010), argues that “the characteristics of the father as a parent rather than the characteristics of the father as a male adult appear to be most significant”, meaning that the “parental characteristics” counts more than “gender-related characteristics” when it comes to father’s positive impact to their children (p. 5).

And the questions that all these are raising, and that are relevant to the current study here are; “Do fathers really matter?”, “Are they important or necessary in the family at all, or a family with one or more mothers is enough and/or exactly the same for the children as it is with both mother and father?”, and

“How important is children’s well-being in the marital-equation? i.e. How serious are we taking in concern children’s well-being when we are discussing/deciding and making laws about the family and its structure?”.

Moreover, in the field of (music) therapy, does the (music) therapist’s sex makes any difference when he/she is working with *fatherless* clients (esp. boys)? Does the physical presence of the (music) therapist counts for *fatherless* clients at all? Or, following Lamb’s opinion, it does not really matters for a *fatherless* boy, and actually it is exactly the same, to jam on drums and electric guitars *Insomnium’s* “One for Sorrow” with a female music therapist than with a male therapist.

Kaija, on the other hand, believes that for *fatherless* boys maybe is better for the therapist to be a male. She explained that those boys have not known any male-person present’s in their lives, so the physical presence of a male music therapist might be more helpful for them. However, she is not totally sure about this issue, because she has not thought and talked a lot about that. Nevertheless, and besides the physical presence, she believes that female music therapist can still stand as a “father” to their *fatherless* boys clients (K. Oivamäki-Tähtinen, personal communication, January, 2014).

Scholars seem to hold different views and opinions about these kinds of issues and questions, so that is why further research needed to be done in this topic, and not drawing hastily conclusions.

### 10.2.3 Young adults from divorced families

Laumann-Billings and Emery (2000) study on young adult’s distress and its links with the divorce of their parents, show that parental divorce negatively effecting also older children’s (e.g. college students) well-being and it keeps effecting them even years after the divorce.

Driving from this notion, and considering that young adults are the future of the society, and more and more are struggling with issues connected with their parent’s divorce, the present thesis is proposing that, researchers and clinicians must join forces and find ways of supporting this wounded population-group. And since music is something important for all young adults, across all nations, music psychology and music therapy research has to offer a unique contribution in this research topic.

### 10.3 Closing Remarks

The issue of *fatherlessness* is not something new, and it is not the only family-issue that human societies have been struggling in the past and are still do today. *Motherlessness* and the absence of both parents are also critical family-issues that have been bothering –and still do- the society, the scholars and the clinicians across the globe. Science, politics, religion and social institutes are trying hard to find solutions to all those family-issues.

In the last three decades clinicians and researchers are joined forces and took a great step incorporating arts into the search for solutions on family related issues. Community music therapy projects, for example, and -generally- the use of music in order to strengthen family and social bonding, communication and cooperation between individuals is something promising to the next generations. Music and arts have always been used for expression and communication between people. So does music therapy. Though, the extra step that takes is helping the individual also to get in touch with him/herself as he/she is getting touch with others into the music. Music therapy helps fatherless people to see themselves more clearly and to face their feelings. And this is the only way to accept them-selves and to rise from the difficult situation that others' people choices brought them. Moreover, music is the only form of art that literally gives voice to the fatherless. Through songs fatherless teenagers –adults too- have the opportunity to talk to their fathers, about their feelings and their thoughts. Also, through music they find a way to forgive their parents for the choices they made, and find the courage to make different choices in their own life. Music can combine words and emotions in an elegant way and *fatherless* children, adolescences and adults are singing out loudly their life; what people are usually missing out of all this is ...stop and listen... to their song.

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## APPENDIX

<b>Questions for the MA-Thesis Interviews</b>
//: to Music Therapists, who are working with people who grew up with an absent father (fatherless). [Therapists: Matti Viita-aho, and Kaija Oivamäki-Tähtinen]
1. Tell me something about your <b>theoretical orientation</b> . a) about your <b>general framework</b> b) Is there a <b>more specific framework</b> that you use in your work with fatherless children?
2. How MT <b>can be beneficial</b> to young people who grew up with an absent father? ( <u>What music can offer</u> to this particular group of young people?)
3. How do you see <b>your role</b> as a music therapist when you are working with a young person who grew up with an absent father? a) In your opinion, can you see any <b>difference between male and female therapists</b> working with fatherless children? Does therapist's sex matters?
4. What about the <b>characteristics of the relationship</b> between you and your client, and between you, the client & the music? Are there any unique characteristics present in those relationships and interactions?
5. Tell me something about the <b>emotions</b> that are present in the session. How they are being expressed. How you deal with them. a) Can you describe me any changes you notice in their emotions during the process of the therapy? b) Tell me smth about your own emotions during the therapy with them.
6. While working with youngsters with absent fathers, have you notice any connections between <i>father absence</i> and <b>romantic relationships</b> ? Does their attitude/behavior towards their partner changed? (if they have one).
7. During MT process, do you recognize any changes on their opinions/views about adults and close relationships with them? (e.g. The " <i>father image</i> ": Have you seen any changes on their opinion they hold about that?)
8. According to some scholars (Bowlby, Main, Kaplan, Cassidy), parents are repeating the same parenting model to their children as their own parents have done to them, passing the same parental model to their children (when they have their own families). If it is a positive parental model then we all are happy about it. But what can MT offers in the case of a negative parenting model that keeps transmitting from generation to generation? Does the music therapist can play a role in young adult's effort to stop or minimize the repetitive <b>negative parental models</b> they have adopted from their parents? Does MT has to offer something more on those cases?
9. In your opinion, <b>why it is important</b> to study the issue of <i>fatherless</i> ? a) What our focus should be? What areas need our attention?

FIGURE 3. A comparison of the different family types in Finland between 1950-2010.

