



## Materials and Methods

### Materials:

- 1 playing card
- Scotch tape
- Meaningful photograph

In addition to the materials used, the following subjects were studied:

- Stephen Charles Pattee
- Danielle Rose Pattee

and the data was qualitatively analyzed using the following methods:

Ever since I was little, my dad has been my best friend (Figure 3.1). We are both video game nerds and science geeks, and we used to spend countless late nights in the living room watching space documentaries and Civil War reenactments. We have a bond that is different than most father-daughter relationships, which is why the simplest gifts from him mean so much. A month into my summer after seventh grade, for reasons my middle school mind couldn't yet comprehend, he spent some time in a mental recovery center. I felt scared, lost, hurt, and confused. I had no idea what was in store for the future, but the first time my dad was allowed visitors he gave me a small gift that helped me overcome my worries. To most, it was a typical playing card, the ace of hearts, with a picture of two people taped to the back. To me, this trivial assortment of tape and paper had a very personal meaning and gave me comfort in one of the roughest and most overwhelming storms of my life.

When my dad handed the card to me, the first thing I noticed was the image taped to the back. It was a basic touristy picture of my dad and me, taken the first time we went to what soon became our favorite place, the Air and Space Museum in Washington D.C. (Figure 3.2). In front of the massive glass building I was perched on his shoulders, both of us grinning ear to ear, despite how sweaty we were from the hot D.C. sun. Our nerdy sides were bursting with excitement to see the largest collection of historic air and spacecraft in the world, a subject my two younger sisters could not be less interested in. This was a trait they got from my mom, so they stayed at home with her while my dad and I spent hours bonding over moon landing simulations and German World War 2 missiles. It was one of my favorite memories with him, and looking at the picture of it reminded me of how much we have in common and how important and wonderful our close relationship is, giving me refuge I needed in the midst of the chaos.

In addition to how close my dad and I are, the card was also special because of the personal memories I associated with it. During my childhood, my dad always stressed the importance of spending time together as a family and the significance of family traditions, specifically family game nights. No matter how hectic each of our lives were, my dad ensured that our entire family spent just one night a week together playing games and enjoying each other's company (and some leftovers) around the coffee table. My sisters and I got very into board games such as Parcheesi and Sorry, but we were particularly intense about card games--crazy 8s, go fish, slapjack, war--you name it we bonded (and on a few occasions fought) over it. Our love for card games came from my dad's side of the family; they were an important part of

his close childhood relationships with his siblings and parents, and he wanted to make sure my family had the same experience.

My family was certainly not the first to place a significant value on card games, but the social meaning and use has changed drastically over and over since they were first ingrained into popular culture in the fourteenth century. Variations of games were created and changed through travelers on their journeys, the wealthy played games with each other using luxury cards to display their status and individuals used them to tell people's fortunes or perform entertaining card tricks (Wintle). All these people before, as well as my own family, all saw card games as the same thing; a "bond which united people together" (Wintle). Even though he never officially confirmed it, given the significance he placed on card games, I know my dad chose to tape the picture on a playing card instead of plain copy paper for a reason. Because I associate card games with my love for my family and our blissful nights together, the playing card reminded me that good times would come again and gave me solace in a time where I was battered with constant worry about the future.

Along with the happy memories associated with the card, it made me realize just how much I meant to my dad. Our relationship was simple, yet very meaningful; we were best friends but we rarely vocally expressed this or anything else remotely deep. For instance, instead of outright saying anything, we expressed our love and appreciation for each other through subtle actions. He would put my favorite candy, a Twix bar, on my dresser the night before he went on a business trip, I'd cover his office with fuzzy pipe cleaner hearts on Father's Day, we'd reference inside jokes around my mom and sisters--knowing they wouldn't understand--just to make each other laugh. In the center of the card he gave me, scribbled over the single red heart in the middle, were the words "love and miss you, see you soon." This plain and direct note reflected our straightforward relationship perfectly and the knowing he loved me gave the card an even more important meaning. During that first month I was blinded by a haze of hurt and confusion as I wondered how my dad could really care about me if he was able just leave me without even saying goodbye. Those seven barely legible words on the card helped clear the fog and I finally understood that no matter what, my dad did care about me, giving me the clarity I was looking for.

In the car on the way home from seeing my dad that day, I looked down at that small plastic-coated piece of paper in my lap and reflected on everything it meant to me. I thought of how close my dad and I were, the happy memories in the past as well as the good times to come and how much I knew I meant to him and, for the first time since summer began, I felt peace. The storm of confusion and fear ended as the sun peeked through the clouds again and I knew I had something that would give me the comfort I needed until I saw my dad again.

#### Works Cited

Winkle, Adam. "History of Playing Cards - 2." *The World of Playing Cards*. N.p., 29 Mar. 2016. Web. 22 Sept. 2016.

Figure 3.1: Danielle Pattee (right) and Steve Pattee (left)



Figure 3.2: The Air and Space Museum of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C.

