

Single foster mothers' perceptions of alternative father figures for children in foster care

J de Wet

 **orcid.org 0000-0001-5986-3642**

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Supervisor: Dr JPD Steytler

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Student number: 22353054

Declaration by researcher

Declaration by researcher

I, Judy de Wet, hereby declare that the dissertation entitled "*Single foster mothers' perceptions of alternative father figures for children in foster care*" which I herewith submit to the North-West University is in compliance with the requirements set for the degree Master of Social Work is my own work, has been text-edited in accordance with the requirements and has not already been submitted to any other university.



Signature

18 November 2019

Date

A foster parent's poem

There I sat alone, and afraid.
You got a call and came right to my aid.
You bundled me up with blankets and love.
And when I needed it most you gave me a hug.
I learned that the world is not all that scary and cold.
That sometimes there is someone to have and to hold.
You taught me what love is, you helped me to mend.
You loved me and healed me and became my first friend.

And just when I thought you done all you do
There came along not one new lesson, but two.
First, you said "Sweetheart, you're ready to go.
I've done all I can, and you've learned all I know
Then you bundled me up with a blanket and kiss.
Along came a new family, they even had kids!
They took me to their home forever to stay.

At first, I thought you send me away.
Then that second lesson became perfectly clear.
No matter how far you'll always be near.
And so foster mom you know I'd move on.
I have a new home with toys and a lawn.
But I'll never forget what I learned that first day.

You never really give your fosters away.
You gave me these thoughts to remember you by.
We may never meet again and now I know why.
You'll remember I lived with you for a time.
I may not be yours, but you'll always be mine.

(Unknown)

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Preface

This study seeks to advance knowledge regarding single foster mothers' perceptions of alternative father figures in the lives of foster children. The study is presented in the form of a full dissertation, which is compiled in the form of two articles. The guidelines of the North-West University regarding a full dissertation were followed. Language editing of the dissertation was done by an professional language editor.

The first section explains the purpose of the research study as well as the problem statement and researcher question. Section 2 consists of two articles. The first article focuses on absent fatherhood and the understanding of an alternative father figure by single foster mothers in a South African context. This article will be published in the Journal of Humanities and the Harvard referencing style is used. The second article focus on the foster mothers' perceptions on the effects and value of an alternative father figure in the lives of foster children. This article will be published in The Southern African Journal of Social Work and Social Development and the Harvard referencing style was required by the journal for the purpose of this article.

Each article referencing is done according to the journal's guideline and may, therefore, differ in this report. Guidelines for the publication purposes of the different journals have been attached in the addendums.

Older references have been used at times due to their relevance as well as the lack of recent studies on the specific topic.

Tables and graphics have been chronically numbered. Titles of the dissertation are visible in each chapter. The abstract and the keywords of the study follows.

List of acronyms

BA	-	Baccalaureus atrium
BSW	-	Baccalaureus in Social Work
DSD	-	Department of Social Development
NWU	-	North West University
ORCID	-	Open Research and Contributor ID
SA	-	South Africa
SASSA	-	South African Social Security Agency
SAW	-	Social Auxiliary Worker
SOCPEN	-	Social Pension System
SW	-	Social Worker
US	-	United States
USA	-	United States of America

Section 1

1.1. Abstract

This study seeks to advance the knowledge of social workers and other professionals regarding single foster mothers' perceptions of alternative father figures in the lives of foster children. Many foster children are being placed in foster care with single foster mothers, creating a need for an alternative father figure (Foster Care Statistics, 2013).

Previous studies have failed to address the topic of alternative father figures with participants such as single foster mothers. Limited research has been done in general with single foster mothers from a South African perspective.

Therefore, the study was focused on single foster mothers' perceptions of alternative father figures in the lives of foster children. Data were obtained through a qualitative design, making use of the semi-structured interview. Interviews were done with the 17 participants in the comfort of their own homes to ensure confidentiality. Some were from a rural area and others were from semi-rural areas. By conducting this study, knowledge was gained as to who can be seen as an alternative father figure as well as the value of such a person.

This paper provides a deeper understanding of the 17 single foster mother participants from the Sebokeng area, within a South African context. The findings revealed that the single foster mothers also perceive themselves as assuming the role of an alternative father figure in the lives of the foster children. This means that these participants are less likely to accept an alternative father figure into their lives and in return leaves the single foster mother responsible for all the foster child's needs. It was also found that the single foster mothers' perceptions of an alternative father figure as someone who is responsible for the foster child's financial needs as well as all matters related to discipline. Therefore, a person can only be seen as an alternative father figure if such a person takes on the financial and discipline roles within a foster family.

The findings also revealed that an alternative father figure should not be defined by gender, but rather by the roles they play in the children's life. That is why according

to the findings a female can also be seen as an alternative father figure. The value of an alternative father figure will differ from person to person, as the foster mothers perceived themselves as highly valued as the alternative father figures in the lives of the foster children, however, they feel that an additional alternative father figure has no value, as they are already fulfilling the role of both a mother and a father.

1.2. Opsomming

Die studie poog om die kennis van maatskaplike werkers en ander vakkeners in verband met pleegsorg en pleegma's se persepsie van die alternatiewe vaderfiguur te verhoog. Baie kinders in pleegsorg word in die sorg van enkellopende pleegmoeders geplaas en dit veroorsaak 'n verlange na 'n alternatiewe vaderfiguur.

Vorige studies met enkellopende pleegmoeders in verband met die alternatiewe vaderfiguur is beperk. Daar is ook baie min ondersoeke in die algemeen gedoen met enkellopende pleegmoeders vanuit 'n Suid-Afrikaanse perspektief.

Daarom fokus hierdie studie op die enkellopende pleegmoeders se perspektief van 'n alternatiewe vaderfiguur in die lewe van kinders in pleegsorg. Kwalitatiewe semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude is gedoen met deelnemers. Deur hierdie studie is inligting verkry om te kan verstaan, wie as 'n alternatiewe vaderfiguur gesien word sowel as wat so 'n persoon se waarde kan wees in die pleeggesin.

Hierdie studie verduidelik die persepsies van die 17 enkel pleegmoeders van Sebokeng, vanuit 'n Suid Afrikaanse konteks. Die studie het bewys dat die enkellopende pleegmoeders hulle self ervaar as die alternatiewe vaderfiguur in die lewens van die pleegkinders. Dit beteken dus dat hierdie deelnemers heelwaarskynlik geen ander alternatiewe pa-figuur in die kind in pleegsorg se lewens tans aanvaar nie, en daarom is die pleegmoeder alleen verantwoordelik om al die behoeftes van die pleegkinders te voorsien. Dit was ook bevind dat enkellopende pleegmoeders 'n alternatiewe vaderfiguur beskou as iemand wat verantwoordelik is vir 'n kind in pleegsorg se finansiële en dissiplinêre behoeftes. Daarom, kan 'n persoon net gesien word as 'n alternatiewe vaderfiguur wanneer die persoon in die kind in pleegsorg se finansiële en dissiplinêre behoeftes voorsien.

Die studie het verder bewys dat 'n alternatiewe vaderfiguur nie aan geslag gekoppel kan word nie, maar eerder aan die rol wat so 'n persoon speel in die pleegkind se lewe. Daarom is dit bevind dat 'n vrou ook as 'n vader figuur gesien kan word. Die waarde van 'n alternatiewe vaderfiguur sal verskil van persoon tot persoon. Die pleegmoeders koppel baie waarde aan hul self as die alternatiewe vaderfiguur, maar voel dat 'n addisionele vaderfiguur geen waarde sal bydra nie omdat hul al reeds in

al die behoeftes van die pleegkind voorsien en beide die ma en pa rol speel in die pleegkind se lewe.

1.2.1. Keywords

absent father, alternative father figure, father figure, foster child, foster parent, single foster mother

1.2.2. Sleutelwoorde

afwesige vader, alternatiewe vaderfiguur, vaderfiguur, pleegkind, pleegouer, enkellopende pleegmoeder

1.3. Introduction

Single female foster parent households is a global phenomenon, especially in the South African context as most communities in South Africa are experiencing an absent father figure (Fazel, 2017:121; Sylvester, 2010:iii). One of the reasons for this can be linked to the fact that in South Africa, males are seen as the primary caregivers, and if the father cannot provide financially, they make the conscious decision to become an absent father (Bailey, 2013:2). The impact of an absent father on a child's life has been studied several times before and proven to have a negative impact. However, even with these research findings, in South Africa, it is still a trend to place children in single female-headed households (Sylvester, 2010:1). According to Williams (2018:1), the Human Sciences Research Council report stated that African children are more likely to be raised in the absence of a father figure. Bailey (2013:1) supports this statement by saying that 6 out of 10 Black African children in Johannesburg are being raised without a father figure.

The definition of a father figure within a South African context needs to be taken into consideration when addressing these studies as there may be various interpretations to define fatherhood, especially with many children being placed in foster care with single foster mothers.

This theme awakens special interest in the term alternative father figure particularly with regard to children in foster care and the modern family construction in South Africa. Therefore, this research study is focused on single foster mothers' perceptions of alternative father figures in the lives of children in alternative care, foster care.

1.4. Problem statement

According to Statistics South Africa (2005), there were approximately 18 million children in South Africa during 2004, which is about 49% of the country's entire population, a further 15% of these children are residing in the Gauteng area with the majority being Black African children (Berry, Leatt & Meintjies, 2005:52-55). This number of children indicates that special attention should be placed on the children. Unfortunately, foster care placements in South Africa tend to indicate differently. Of these 18 million children in South Africa, 3.3 million was identified as being orphaned, which is a devastating 18% of all the children in South Africa (Statistics

South African, 2005). Orphanhood is when a child has lost both parents due to death (Chitiyo, Chandiwana, Chibatamoto, Metro-Munyati, Mfecane, Nkomo, Segwabe, Skinner, Tshek, Tlou, 2004:8). Once a child is identified as an orphan, that child fits the criteria for an adoptable child (Children's Act 38 of 2005). Nevertheless, due to the financial implications and costs involved, most of these orphaned children are not adopted but placed in foster care.

At the end of June 2005, 272 000 children were placed in foster care, which is 56 000 more than June 2004 with a drastic increase of 26% (Statistics South Africa, 2005). The South African government developed a national interface system, SOCPEN that works together with the provincial government to monitor the grants offered to individuals (South Africa's SOCPEN, 2015). According to the SOCPEN (2005), interface and Statistics South Africa (2005) in 2004, 28 281 children were placed in foster care and in 2005, 34 647 children were placed in foster care. From 1998 until 2010 the number of children placed in foster care in Gauteng escalated from 5 737 to 62 023 (SOCPEN, 2016). This is an increase of a devastating 1050%. Then the number of children in foster care dropped in 2016 to 51 568 children in Gauteng. However, recent studies have shown that the number of children in foster care in Gauteng has increased again to 55 650 during 2017 and is still increasing (SASSA, 2017; SOCPEN, 2017).

From this number of children being placed in foster care, 80% are living with their maternal families, which are female-headed (Eddy, Mphaka & Tomson-deBoor, 2013:2). These statistics are a clear indication of the lack of fatherhood among children in South Africa.

The utmost importance of a father figure in a child's life should not be underestimated (Wood & Lambin, 2013:1). Hall and Meintjies (2010:80) stated that in South Africa many children are being raised without a father figure, in the USA, these experiences are also shared and are experienced as a major social problem (Makofane, 2015:22). This trend of absent fatherhood is not only a trend in biological families, but it is also a trend in alternative care.

Children who are in foster care have some sort of alternative residing arrangements. In South Africa, the alternative residing arrangements provided include; being placed in foster care with maternal and paternal family members, non-related family

members and safe care (Children's Act 38 of 2005). Most children in foster care are placed in foster care with female foster parents only, increasing the number of children being raised without a father figure. This concern is divided into categories and discussed individually.

1.4.1. Foster care

Foster care is a societal intervention for orphaned, abandoned and maltreated children (Dozier, Shaufer & Zeanah, 2011). Only a child who has been found to be in need of care and protection can be placed in foster care by the Children's court (Children's Act 38 of 2005). Foster care excludes a child who was placed in safe care as well as a child who has been placed in a child and youth care centre (Children's Act 38 of 2005). Foster care exists in order to ensure that the needs of vulnerable children are met. According to the Children's Act, 38 of 2005 Chapter 2 Section 7, the purpose of foster care is to protect and nurture children by providing a safe and healthy environment, to promote permanency planning and to teach respect in a family environment. Therefore, foster care can be seen as the process of providing a child with a family where they can have a stable family life.

It is further noted in The Children's Act 38 of 2005 Section 182 (2) that a foster parent must: be a fit and proper person; be willing and able to perform all tasks and responsibilities of a foster parent; should provide an environment that is conducive to the upbringing of the foster child; and should be properly assessed by the social worker. Thus, the sole purpose of foster care is to provide a family environment for a child in need of care and protection. Although this is being adhered to, the current trend is that the majority of the children in foster care are placed in female-headed households only, with no alternative father figures to provide fatherly guidance and support to the children in question (Ratele, 2012:53).

Foster care greatly benefits children in need of care and protection and is more beneficial than alternative placements such as institutions and child and youth care centres (Miller, 2009:134). Foster families are supposed to provide temporary care and a family environment for children in need of care and protection. The goal of foster care is the healthy, safety and permanency planning for a child in need (Brochure & Tanski, 2007:157-162).

It was noted that most foster children are placed with relative single foster mothers, who are more likely to be older, have poor health and who are from a lower socio-economic status (Brochure & Tanski, 2007:164-166). Reasons for placing foster children with relative single foster mothers include; availability of the foster parent, the child is less likely to change placement, experience less change in culture, religion, and family values and are more likely to remain in the same neighbourhood (Fortin, 2011:161).

Unfortunately, the reality in South Africa is that many children find themselves being placed in foster care for various reasons such as; physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, the death of biological parents only to name a few (Craft, 2017:11). Foster care is one of the most relied upon forms of alternative care in South Africa (Breen, 2015:16-17). Not only in South Africa, but across the globe, the number of children in foster care is concerning. In 2003 approximately 530 000 children were living in foster care in the USA alone (Kools & Kennedy, 2003:39). In England, 64000 children were placed in foster care during 2010 (Morgan & Baron, 2011:18) and in South Africa with a total population of 57 398 421 people (South African Population, 2017), over half a million children were residing in foster care during 2014 (South African Social Security Agency, 2014:1). Foster care is a worldwide reality, it is noted in the statistics on foster care that one in every 184 children residing in the USA is placed in foster care (Foster Care Statistics, 2013). The number of children in foster care in South Africa is thus more or less the same as in the USA but which has a larger population.

According to the SOCPEN database of 2016, 470 015 children were placed in foster care, of which 51 568 children or 10,97% are residing in Gauteng (Statistics on children in South Africa, 2016). Wilson, Henriksen, Bustamante, and Irby (2016:189) reported that during 2011 approximately 25% of children, excluding children placed in foster care, were being raised by their grandmothers. These children are possibly being raised without the presence of an involved father figure. It is further noted by Ratele (2012:53) as well as research done by the Children's Institute at the University of Cape Town (Xi, 2014:1), that over 1.5 million orphans are living with their maternal grandmothers in foster care. Many of these grandmothers raise the foster children by themselves without the input or assistance of a father figure. Orphaned children are more likely to be placed in the care of a single foster mother

and these children also have 30% more chance of falling under the poorest income bracket (Williams, 2018:1).

Single male foster parents, who are also alternative fathers are unfortunately often marginalised and viewed with suspicion by both social workers and society (Boffey, 2011:3). These suspicions may be a reason why there are limited single or male-only alternative fathers for children in foster care. Deborah (2007) and Ratele (2012:53) noted that the majority of children placed in foster care are being placed with a female foster parent only. This thus increases the number of children being raised without a father figure living in foster care. Being raised without a father figure can be described as “a crisis of confidence that reaches deep within the soul” as stated by Dobson (2002:44).

DeGarmo (2017:111) states that the role of a father figure is equally important as that of a foster mother when it comes to the development of a foster child. This can be supported by Boffey (2011:3) who noted that living with a foster father provides foster children with the opportunity to explore how to form a trusting relationship with men and how to have contact with male individuals who understand their needs. Boffey (2011:3) further states that it is important for foster children to grow up with positive images of men being fun, creative, nurturing and safe in a domestic setting. Therefore, male foster parents have a vital role to play in the fostering of children. Thus, this study explores, a single foster mothers’ perceptions of an alternative father figure.

1.4.2. Absent father

During 2006 the South African absent father rate was standing at approximately a devastating 56% (Molongoana, 2015:1) for all South African children. This seems to become a vicious cycle in South Africa (Bailey, 2013:2). During an interview with a group of boys, Chabalala (2018:1) identified that 18 out of 20 of the boys were fatherless. Larossa (1998:456), Erickson (1996:39) and Sylvester (2010:iii) are of the opinion that the absence of a father is becoming a cultural evolution and a global phenomenon, meaning the communities are more accepting of children being raised by female individuals only without realising the effects the absence of a father figure can have on a child. The significant influence a father figure has on a child’s social, cognitive, emotional and physical well-being should not be underestimated.

Feinstein (2007:161-166) supports the above-mentioned statement and noted that a father should be the authority figure in the household. Fathers are also responsible for providing physical safety towards the children.

It is noted that children who are being raised without a father figure are more likely to experience a father hunger (Steytler & Strydom, 2007:34). A pang of father hunger is referred to as a desire for a father figure. As early as 1982, Draper and Harpending (1982:255) did research in Mexico and noted that the absence of a father may affect a child's education, sociology, and psychological well-being. Both Mexico and South Africa are seen as developing countries and therefore these findings can be linked to a South African context. Bradley, Cabrera, Hofferth, Lamb and Tamis-LeMonda, (2000:127), Eizirik and Bergmann (2004:5-7) and McLanahan *et al.*, (2013:2) agree with the above-mentioned statement that a child's education, social (as well as social play) and psychological well-being may be affected by the absence of a father figure. If a biological father is not present, then an alternative father figure may fulfil that gap.

1.4.3. Alternative father figure

The definition of a father is often described as someone who is the biological father of the child, who provides financially, who is there emotionally and physically (Ratele, 2012:557). But taking into account the South African context, the definition of a father figure should not be limited to the biological father only, especially when focusing on foster children. Molongoana (2015:44) and Bhana, Knight, Makusha, Richter and Van Rooyen (2013:140) reported that children have relationships with various important men in their lives who are not necessarily their biological fathers, these include but are not limited to male relatives, grandfathers, uncles, brothers or family associates who demonstrates paternal behaviours towards them. According to the Children's Act 38 of 2005, Section 18 and Bosman-Sadie and Corrie (2010:33) parental responsibilities include; to care for a child, to maintain contact with a child, to act as a guardian for the child in question as well as to contribute to the maintenance of the child in question.

There is, however, no specific definition of a father in The Children's Act, but it is noted in Section 23 of this act that any person having an interest in the care and well-being or development of a child may assume the role of a parent taking into

consideration the best interest of the child, therefore an alternative father figure can take on the role and responsibilities of a father figure in a foster child's life. Berrick and Skivenes (2012:1957) state that being a father figure for a foster child goes beyond the basics of being a parent because foster children usually have specific needs, come from a background of possible maltreatment, and may experience some form of trauma.

Bhana *et al.*, (2013:140) noted that a father figure is usually someone who is older than the child in question, normally is seen by the child as someone with power, authority or strength, someone with whom the child can identify on a deeply psychological level and who generates emotions generally felt towards a biological father. Uncles, grandfathers, elder brothers, family friends or spiritual leaders can presume the role of a father figure (Molongoana, 2015:44). Several studies have suggested that positive alternative father figures are associated with healthy development in both boys and girls (Hartwell-Walker, 2016). The reality in South Africa is that many if not most foster children are placed in foster care with their maternal grandmothers and maternal aunts, leaving these children without positive father figures (Xi, 2014:1).

The effects on children living in foster care and being raised without father figures have not been studied adequately, especially focusing on foster children from low financial income families (McLanahan *et al.*, 2013:19; Sylvester 2010:iii). Therefore, this study focuses on single foster mothers', from the Sebokeng area, perceptions of alternative father figures in the lives of children in foster care.

1.4.4. Studies addressing the problem

Coakley (2006:154), Denis and Ntsimane ([sa]:237) highlight that social researchers have not been giving enough attention to fatherhood and father involvement. As early as in 1998, Doherty, Kouneski and Erickson (1998:288) identified that there is a research gap regarding the understanding of the role of a father figure, especially within the South African context. Ellis, Bates and Dodge (2003:802) stated that the effects on girls regarding the absence of a father are also still to be studied. In 2006 Morrell and Richter (2006:5) highlight again this research gap regarding the understanding of the role of a father figure especially within a South African context; therefore there is still a dearth of research based on father figures. There is also

limited research done on alternative father figures in the lives of foster children being raised by female foster parents only.

1.4.5. Gendered studies

Children being raised in the absence of a father are more likely to experience problems at school, achieve lower grades, they are more likely to experience behavioural problems and more often do not share healthy relationships with their peers (Allen & Daly, 2007:8; Sylvester, 2010:1). The latter study was done in Stellenbosch with ten teenage boys from a lower social and financial area. Patrick's (2006:7) findings state that children being raised without present fathers are at great risk for suicide, becoming homeless, running away from home, presenting behavioural problems, feeling angry or depressed and becoming high school dropouts.

Steytler and Strydom (2007:30-36) conducted a study that explored possible elements of a child that may be affected due to the absence of a father figure. Due to the diverse population in South Africa, the study was done in a South African context on Afrikaans speaking White male subjects from rural and semi-rural areas. The findings of this study identified that the absence of a father figure can have a negative influence on a child's psychological, physical, social development. Eddy *et al.*, (2013:1-38) conducted an interesting study in South Africa in the Johannesburg area where the subjects were the biological father, age ranges between 13-35 years. Some of these fathers were still under the age of 18 years, are still children and need father figures themselves, thus making it harder to be a father figure for someone. This study mentioned, focused on getting the men of South Africa's opinion regarding reasons for absent fathers, and how they feel it influence the children. The outcome was that a child's behaviour, emotional, social, financial and spiritual well-being are negatively influenced by an absent father and that these effects are long-term and contribute towards the vicious cycle. None of the above-mentioned studies was done with foster children and within the Sebokeng area. Furthermore, no attention was given to the fact that these children may have alternative father figures in their lives and how they influenced them if they influenced them at all.

Ellis *et al.*, (2003:801) conducted a study that focused on the effect of absent fathers related to teenage pregnancies. The study focused on female participants and the

outcome stated that an absent father does place a girl child at higher risk for early pregnancy. Mancini (2010:13) also conducted a study in the US that focused on the effects on girls due to the absence of father figures. The findings of this study suggested that the absence of a father can affect a female child's chances of teenage pregnancy and promiscuity; it was also evident that the absence of a father figure affected a female child's emotional, educational, social, psychological and physical well-being. It was also reported by Mancini (2010:13) that the absence of a father can link a female child to a cycle of poverty. Molongoana (2015:20) found in her study on girls raised in the absence of a father figure that possible effects can be identified as; gender identity problems, backlog in academic progress, financial implications, the premature age of menarche, psychological disturbances as well as influences on relationships with partners.

Doherty *et al.* (1998:277-292), Coakley (2006:153-163) and Allen and Daly (2007:1) conducted research focusing on the physical, social, educational, emotional, and psychological well-being of children, and the positive effects of having an involved and present father. Their findings explained the positive side of fatherhood. They reported that children being raised by positive and involved fathers experience higher cognitive functioning, they are reported to be better problem-solvers, they perform better in school, they have better quantitative and verbal skills, and they are more likely to have higher levels of economic and educational achievements, career success and psychological well-being. Patrick (2006:7) is also of the opinion that the presence of a father has a significant impact on a child's life, especially in a boy's life.

1.4.6. Deficiencies in previous studies

During previous studies the research subjects were almost always children and mostly male or the absent fathers themselves or society. Steytler (2007:30) and Makofane (2015:23) are of the opinion that research focusing on female participants within the South African context is limited. The researcher was unable to find studies related to the perspective of foster parents regarding father figures in the lives of foster children. Molongoana (2015:108) noted that there is a need for research regarding absent fathers due to death, there is also a need for research with regard to low-income families with regard to father absences taking into account different races (McLanahan *et al.*, 2013:19). Sylvester (2010:iii) and Richter (2012:19) further

reported that research regarding the absent father within the South African context is limited. The researcher was also unable to find any studies that focused on foster children within the Sebokeng area.

It seems that the majority of the studies focused on the absence of the biological father, and seldom take into consideration the South African context where a grandfather, uncle or foster father can be seen as a father figure. There is a lack of research focusing on the effects of alternative father figures in children's life (Molongoana, 2015:43). On the other hand, White and Gilberth (2001:159) are of the opinion that this limited research in this field is due to the fact that alternative father figures have little or no effect on children. This is in total contrast to all other studies and only one of the studies mentioned the impact that a father figure, who is not the biological father, can have on a child. Therefore, this study focuses on single foster mothers' perceptions of alternative father figures for children in foster care, residing in the Sebokeng area.

1.4.7. Significance of the current study for the audience

The research study aims to provide social workers and other professionals working with children with knowledge regarding alternative father figures. The study will also help social workers to work proactively and to identify possible concerns at an earlier stage that are related to an absent father. The study will help professionals to identify the alternative father figures in children's lives by making use of a South African context rather than being focused on biological fathers only as alternative fathers can include non-family related men. This study will enable social workers and other professions to identify and empower alternative father figures in the lives of foster children, by creating awareness of the term alternative father figure within a South African context. This study can also be used as a basis for future studies focusing on the alternative father figure in the lives of foster children. The study will directly benefit professionals who render services to foster families.

1.4.8. Purpose statement

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study is to explore single foster mothers' perceptions of alternative father figures for children in foster care. An alternative father figure can be defined as male relatives, grandfathers, uncles, brothers or

family associates who demonstrate paternal behaviours towards the foster child (Bhana *et al.*, 2013:140; Molongoana, 2015:44).

1.5. Research questions

1.5.1. Primary question

What is single foster mothers' perceptions on alternative father figures in the lives of children living in foster care?

1.5.2. Secondary questions

- What is the concept of an alternative father figure from the perceptions of single foster mothers in South Africa?
- According to South African single foster mothers, who can be identified and fulfil the role of alternative father figures?
- What value can these alternative father figures add to the foster child's life?

1.6. Aim and objectives of the study

In order to answer the mentioned questions, the following aim and objectives need to be reached.

1.6.1. Aim

The aim of the study is to explore the perceptions of foster mothers regarding alternative father figures in the lives of foster children.

1.6.2. Objectives

In order to achieve the above-mentioned aim the following objectives must be reached:

- To explore the concept of an absent father and the understanding of an alternative father figure by single foster mothers in a South African context.
- To explore single foster mothers' perceptions on who can be seen as a person to fulfil the role of the alternative father and the value of such an alternative father figure in, a South African context, the life of a foster child.

1.7. Clarification of terms

By clarifying terms that will be used in this study, the following concepts are as follows:

Absent father: When little is known about the father or a biological father who is not emotionally, socially, financially, psychologically or physically involved in his child's life (Denis & Ntsimane, [sa]:244, Makofane, 2015:24, Molongoana, 2015:12, Patrick, 2006:10, Sylvester, 2010:10, Wilson *et.al.* 2016:190).

Child(ren): Can be seen as an individual under the age of 18 years, children fall under the legal age of responsibility or emancipation (Barker, 2003:69, Bosman-Sadie & Corrie, 2010:5, Children's Act 38 of 2005).

Child(ren) in need of care and protection: Is a child under the age of 18 years in need of care and protection, like an orphaned child, abandoned child or neglected child (Children's Act 38 of 2005).

Father figure: Someone who provides love, support and who is involved in the child's life, this can be a grandfather, uncle, neighbour, friend, brother, coach, educator, spiritual leader, a family friend and nephew (Makofane, 2015:22,24; Wood & Lambin, 2013:5).

Foster care: Is the process of providing physical care and a family environment to a child who was found to be in need of care and protection (Children's Act 38 of 2005), and who is not able to stay with his/her natural family (Barker, 2003:167, Bosman-Sadie & Corrie, 2010:8).

Foster parent(s): According to Barker (2003:167) a foster parent is an individual or individuals who were found to be suitable by the children's court to provide physical care and a family environment to a child who is unable to live with his/her natural family. Bosman-Sadie and Corrie (2010:8) further stated that a foster parent is an individual who has the responsibility to render foster care to a child by order of the children's court.

Perception: The impressions made by an individual using their five senses (sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch) based on one's experiences (Barker, 2003:321).

Positive father figures: Someone related or unrelated who is; loving, sensitive, warm, encouraging, close, providing financially, friendly, intimate, playful, sharing, nurturing, someone who makes time, affectionate, available, involved, accepting,

supportive, comforting, patient, responsible, aware and consistent (Wood & Lambin, 2013:2).

1.8. Theoretical framework

In this research study, systems theory and the ecological perspective form part of the point of departure.

1.8.1. Systems theory

Systems can be seen as individuals and are open to and interact with their environments, meaning that they change as evolution takes place (Drack & Schwarts, 2010:10). This theory focuses on the individual as a whole, meaning beliefs, environment and perspectives are taken into consideration (Gibson, 2018). The system theory reminds us that problems cannot be solved if they are looked at in isolation. The purpose of system theory is to develop a unifying principle by integrating various sciences, natural and social while focusing on the structures and functions of systems (Carr, Jenlink Reigeluth & Nelson, 1996:21-30). Therefore, system theory can be viewed as a holistic view, as it is focused on relationships between individuals and their environment.

1.8.2. Ecological perspective

The ecological perspective is focused on the person within their environment; attention is focused on the good fit between the individual, group, society and their physical environment (Breton, Denis, Labrie, Lehoux, Leonard & Richard, 2004:1; Sands, 2001:11). "Individuals are constantly creating, restructuring and adapting to their environments as the environment is affecting them" (Ungar, 2002:480-497). The focus is therefore placed on how individuals adapt to their environments. When using the ecological perspective, the focus is placed on four different levels; microsystem, mesosystem, ecosystem and macrosystem (Sands, 2001:12). The ecology of human development as described by Bronfenbrenner in Gardiner and Kosmitzki (2011:24) involves: "The scientific study of the progressive, mutual accommodation throughout the life course, between an active, growing human being and the changing properties of the immediate settings in which the developing person lives, as this process is affected by relations between these settings and by the larger contexts in which the settings are embedded". This means that an individual should be seen as a holistic being that is evolving because he or she is

interacting and restructuring the many environments he or she gets into contact with. This interaction is two-directional because the person is being influenced by their environment and the environment is also influenced by them (Gardiner & Kosmitzki, 2011:24). This perspective, therefore, allows the researcher to go beyond the setting of immediate experience but allows the incorporation of indirect effects from other environments (Gardiner & Kosmitzki, 2011:25).

1.9. Literature review

By understanding the concept of an alternative father figure from the perceptions of single foster mothers the following database were consulted: EBSCOhost, Google Scholar, electronic databases and journal searches.

1.10. Research methodology

In order to answer the research question, a qualitative research approach was implemented. According to Maree (2007:50), qualitative research is focused on collecting rich descriptive data in respect of a particular phenomenon in the hope of developing an understanding of what is being studied. It was further noted that qualitative research is focused on people by interacting with them in their own personal environments (Maree, 2007:51).

1.11. Research design

A qualitative descriptive design was used to conduct a research study. Qualitative descriptive designs seek to discover and understand a phenomenon, process or perspective of the participants where information is directly required from the individuals experiencing the phenomenon (Atkinson, Bradshaw & Doody, 2017:7; Caelli, Mill & Ray, 2003:12; Anderson, Neergraad, Oleson, Sondergraad, 2009:38). Qualitative descriptive studies are part of the naturalistic approach, which creates an understanding of the phenomenon by studying participants experiencing the phenomenon in their natural context (Atkinson *et al.*, 2017:8; De Vos, Delport, Fouchè & Strydom 2011:316; Maree, 2007:78).

This research design strives for an in-depth understanding of human experiences, but with emphasis on literal description, therefore the focus of qualitative descriptive studies was to compile a detailed and comprehensive summary of the participants' experiences in an accurate form of data collection (Sandelowski, 2010). The

qualitative descriptive approach accepts that there are many different interpretations of reality, an individual's experiences will differ (Atkinson *et al.*, 2017:7). Anderson, Neergraad, Oleson, Sondergraad (2009:1), further noted that the strengths of a qualitative descriptive design are that it provides the opportunity to gain preliminary insight into a specific topic. Durrheim (2006:33-59) explains that a qualitative approach is advantageous because it provides a detailed understanding of the participant's feeling regarding the particular problem or issue.

1.12. Sampling

Qualitative samples tend to be small because intense contact is needed between the researcher and the participants; therefore, data saturation has become an accepted way to determine sample size (Atkinson *et al.*, 2017:7). Data saturation is applied to the point where no new information emerges and when enough information is gathered to answer the research question. The research sample consisted of participants receiving supervision services from the Department of Social Development Sedibeng. The gatekeeper was the Department of Social Development DSD at the Sebokeng offices, who gave permission for the research to be conducted on their clients. The responsible person who was acting as the gatekeeper on behalf of the DSD was the supervision manager, Mrs. Shireen Hassan BA Hons Social work. The gatekeeper requested each social worker rendering supervision services at the DSD Sedibeng to provide her with five single foster mothers' contact details who fitted the criteria for this research study. These 60 clients were then the representative sample of the larger sample of single foster mothers (De Vos *et al.*, 2011:226). This method enhanced the possibility that the sample of participants consists of clients within the DSD but still reside within the larger geographical area of the DSD.

Purposive sampling was utilised as participants were selected with a specific purpose in mind due to the fact that they fit certain criteria (Maree, 2007:178). Each participant had an equal chance of being selected for the research study based on them meeting the specific criteria, therefore simple random sampling was used (De Vos *et al.*, 2011:228). The names and contact details of the possible participants that the gatekeeper received, was sent to the individual person who combined the names alphabetically in one document. The independent person was Mrs. Monique

Potgieter BSW who is a qualified supervision social worker who has been working in supervision at the DSD for five years. The clients of the researcher, the independent person, and the translators were excluded from the sampling process to prevent biases as well as conflict of interest.

Due to the number of identified possible participants as given to the gatekeeper, the independent person made use of systematic sampling by selecting every third person on the list. A minimum of ten participants was selected and when data saturation was not met, systematic sampling continued from the list until data saturation was reached (Maree, 2007:230). The participants were contacted telephonically by the independent person, who then explain the purpose of the research study and asked if the participant were willing to voluntarily participate in the research study. Participants who could not be contacted via telephone were visited at their homes.

During the first contact with these possible participants, the independent person asked each participant whether a translator will be needed for the signing of the consent forms and interview sessions. The translator was available whether they were needed or not in order to avoid complications, but was only asked for assistance when needed. The translators were Mrs. Thembikele Mdondo who has been employed by DSD for the past ten years and Mrs. Busiziwe Selokoane who has been employed by the DSD for the past seven. They are both social auxiliary workers and part of their roles at DSD include translation.

The independent person then compiled the final list of participants. The independent person went to the houses of each participant to provide them with a consent form. The research study was once again explained to the participants. The consent form was discussed with each participant. The participants were informed that their participation is voluntary and that they can leave the study at any point in time. The independent person visited the participants after four days to collect the consent forms. This is known as the cooling-off period in research that allows participants time to think about their possible participation in the research study and to provide them with enough time to decide whether or not they want to participate in the research before signing the consent forms (Barker, 2003:97). If participants did not want to participate in this study and the number of participants was below ten, then

the independent person selected another possible participant from the gatekeepers list following the same process.

After the signing of the consent forms, the independent person scheduled a date and time with the participant for the researcher to conduct the individual interview. The interviews took place in the houses of each individual participant. This was more convenient for each participant as they did not have to bear any expenses for the research study and the interviews were scheduled at a time that is best suited for them. The individual interviews were conducted in English and a translator was available in a case where the participant could not communicate in English. The participants were single foster mothers; some were from a low-income family residing within a rural to semi-rural area due to the area division of the DSD Sebokeng district. The study was focused on an uncontroversial topic as the study was not likely to be disputed or to cause strife or quarrel, as it was focused on each participant's own experience. Therefore, no harm towards the participants was expected, but each participant were provided with a note with the contact details of the social worker from DSD who specialises in emergency trauma debriefing. This social worker would have provided a counselling session free of charge if it was needed. The participants were adults, although some of the participants could be seen as vulnerable groups due to living in a low economic environment and being single-parent foster mothers. The information that was obtained was in general not regarded as sensitive. All data collected were anonymised.

The gatekeeper, independent person and the translators adhered to ethical practices by keeping all information confidential.

1.12.1. Inclusion criteria

Participants were selected to meet the following criteria:

- The participants had to be single foster mothers from the DSD Sebokeng office.
- The foster mother should have been a foster parent for a minimum of two years and must be a single foster parent; with no living in partner.
- The foster mothers must have foster children (male or female) in their foster care (under the age of 18 years).

- The foster mothers can be directly related to the foster child in question; maternal and paternal grandmothers, aunts, cousins or they can be non-related foster mothers in order to have a mixed population group.

1.12.2. Exclusion criteria

- Foster mothers who are not single and have a husband, boyfriend or life partner living in and participating in the child's life.
- Foster mothers who have foster children in their care older than 18 years.
- Foster mothers who have not been a foster parent for more than two years.

1.13. Data collection

Data collection refers to the use of data to understand and explain a phenomenon (Atkinson *et al.*, 2017:7). Therefore, data collection in a social study is typically focused on the interactions of participants and the observations of the researcher. For the purpose of this research study, individual interviews were conducted with a minimum of ten participants until data saturation was achieved.

1.13.1. Individual interviews

The researcher made use of semi-structured interviews that contain qualitative questions (Barker, 2003:424). The interview was conducted in English and was transcribed by the researcher. This type of data collection method is suitable due to the fact that the research is focused on personal perceptions (Greeff, 2011:351-352). The researcher had more control over the response rate, it was suitable in cases where respondents had low literacy levels, and open-ended questions were asked when facts needed to be explored on a deeper level (Burda & Metha, 2003; Cournoyer, 2008:210). Unclear questions were explained by the researcher and if needed, translated during the interviews by the translator.

An individual interview is a guided, monitored and recorded discussion on a particular topic in an organised manner for the purpose of research (Chadwick *et al.*, 2008:7). Interviews were used to obtain information about how participants think, feel or act regarding a specific topic (Chadwick *et al.*, 2008:7). Asking open-ended semi-structured questions during the interview sessions empowered the researcher to explore different perceptions of foster mothers on alternative father figures in the lives of children living in foster care (Greeff, 2011:352).

Creswell, Ebersohn, Ferreira and Pietersen, (2007:157-158) highlighted the following as limitations of this type of data collection method; due to different participants, the responses will differ, participants may be dishonest and the researcher's bias can be a great risk. The language and cultural differences between the participants and the researcher may create a misunderstanding during the interview and can influence the data. The researcher is aware of the limitations but is of the opinion that gathering different perceptions provides the researcher with more factual information that may stimulate further studies on alternative father figures in the lives of foster children.

1.14. Preparation for data collection

Ethical approval was obtained from the NWU (NWU-HS-2018-075). Thereafter permission was gained from the Department of Social Development Sebokeng, where the researcher conducted the research. Consent was gained from all the participants by utilising a trained independent person to administer the consent forms. The researcher conducted the individual interviews until data saturation was reached and when needed, an experienced translator was used.

1.15. Quality assurance

1.15.1. Validity and reliability

In qualitative research validity and reliability means the research is credible and trustworthy (Creswell *et al.*, 2007:80). Validity means being valid and true and reliability means remaining the same even when the research is done again. In order to ensure validity and reliability in the study, the researcher eliminated biases by including various participants. Due to doing research with participants, the researchers avoided biases by focusing on the research question and not on the previous contact with clients (Creswell *et al.*, 2007:114-115). Therefore, none of the participants were from the client base of the researcher, independent person or translators. Generalisation of participants and findings was avoided, as qualitative research is focused on participant's perceptions and can differ from other participants. Confidentiality and anonymity were always taken into consideration when conducting research.

The researcher was careful not to present any information that can link a specific individual to the findings of the research study, thus breaking confidentiality and anonymity. It is the researcher's obligation to report the limitations of the research study in order to ensure validity and reliability and not misleading the reader or participants (Creswell *et al.*, 2007:115). Making use of the interview is a form of reliability, as these interviews can be done with various participants, but high reliability can only be obtained if the results of the study remain the same on each sample (Creswell *et al.*, 2007:147; Leung, 2015:324).

The questionnaire is valid, as this instrument measured the perceptions of single foster mothers on alternative father figures in the lives of foster children as it is supposed to (Creswell *et al.*, 2007:147; Leung, 2015:325).

1.15.2. Trustworthiness

When validity and reliability can be proved in a research study, the study can be seen as trustworthy, this refers to the same themes being identified in various participants' perceptions (Anney, 2014:272). "In qualitative studies, the researcher is the data gathering instrument" (Creswell *et al.*, 2007:80), therefore the researcher was well-trained to conduct the research study. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985:991) credibility, applicability, dependability, and conformability are key elements for trustworthiness in qualitative studies.

In order to ensure the trustworthiness of the research study, the researcher made use of various different skills of data collection such as; individual interviews, probing and observation. This way the data collected were analysed and reappearing themes can be identified to ensure validity and reliability, which in return ensured trustworthiness.

This process of data collection can be referred to as crystallisation. Crystallisation is based on the assumption that individuals change along with their environments, whether we like it or not (Creswell *et al.*, (2007:81). Crystallisation reminds the researcher that everything has two sides, nothing is fixed or rigid. The idea of a crystal is that it has various sizes and shapes, different angles and dimensions and research should follow the same approach (Creswell *et al.*, 2007:178). Therefore, the researcher interviewed various participants in order to ensure trustworthiness. Multiple coders were used to ensure trustworthiness (Creswell *et al.*, 2007:114).

Gunawan (2015:11) states that trustworthiness is based on a detailed transcription of data, systematic planning, and coding. The researcher ensured that data is transcribed accurately and with detail, data generated and management should be transparent and explicit (Chester, Grbich & Kitto, 2008:245).

1.16. Method of data analysis

The purpose of data analysis is to find patterns and themes in the research study (Bondas, Turunen & Vaismoradi, 2013). The purpose of conducting a qualitative research study is to produce findings that need to be analysed in order to provide order, structure and meaning to the mass of collective data (De Vos, Fouchè & Schurink, 2011:397). Data collection involves collecting information by using a recorder and analysing the information gathered by the participants (Creswell, 2009:184). Qualitative data analysis is a process where the data is gathered and a preliminary analysis is concluded (Maree, 2007:105; De Vos *et al.*, 2011:403). The qualitative content analysis was used.

The data were collected digitally; by means of an audio recorder and was transcribed (Maree, 2007:104). By transcribing the data, the researcher was provided with the opportunity to listen to the recordings, which made the data come alive during the quest for themes and subthemes (Atkinson *et al.*, 2017:5). A large number of themes were identified initially, but the researcher focused on the purpose of the study and a smaller number of themes stood out to capture the experience, which is known as “straight descriptions” (Atkinson *et al.*, 2017:5). Two co-coders were used to ensure that the most suitable themes were identified.

The data were organised and reduced to ensure only the most important content is selected, alternative explanations were explored and findings were visually displayed (De Vos *et al.*, 2011:403-404; Maree, 2007:104). Qualitative descriptive studies enable data collection and analysis to be an interactive process by responding to participants' responses and responding to participants' questions (Patterson & Morin, 2012).

The advantage of a qualitative descriptive study is that the data are more likely to remain true to the participant's accounts and contributions (Clancy, 2013;

Sandelowski, 2000). Data collected were straightforward descriptions of the research encounters and observations.

The data obtained are safely kept on a disc and stored in a locked cupboard. Electronic data were stored with a password. After transcribing, the data were deleted from the recording devices. After the study is completed the data will be stored in a locked cupboard at the North-West University for a period of six years. Thereafter the data will be destroyed by means of shredding the documents.

1.17. Ethical considerations

A summary of possible risks and how they were addressed follows after the ethical considerations.

1.17.1. Experience of participants

The probable experience of participants may have been a positive experience. This was obtained by creating critical consciousness to the participants' voices, involvement and vulnerability (Aluwihare-Samaranayake, 2012:68). The researcher invested in a trusting relationship between participants and the researcher by creating a trusting environment for all the participants by ensuring confidentiality (Aluwihare-Samaranayake, 2012:69). The participants were respected as human beings and debriefing was provided if needed.

1.17.2. Risk and benefits

The participants were identified as a medium risk group due to the fact that participants were divorcees or widows, and talking about an alternative father figure trigger unresolved trauma and grief in some of the participants. The participants were single foster mothers, some were from a low-income family residing within a rural or semi-rural area due to the area division of the DSD Sebokeng office. The research did present some potential risk of harm or discomfort, but appropriate steps were taken to mitigate or reduce the overall risk. The study was focused on an uncontroversial topic as the study was not likely to be disputed or to cause strife or quarrel, as it was focused on each participant's own experience. Therefore, no harm towards the participants was expected.

The researcher took the well-being of the participants into consideration at all-time. The participants were not caused harm in any way. When a participant needed to be

referred for counselling the researcher provided the participant with a referral to an appropriate professional free of charge. However, there was only one such case and the participant refused counselling. The researcher did not mislead or provide false information to the participants (Delpont & Strydom, 2011:118). The researcher also provided the participants with the opportunity to debrief after the interview session regarding their experiences and questions were answered to the best of the researcher's ability (Delpont & Strydom, 2011:122).

The participants did not benefit from the research study directly but may benefit from the study indirectly in the future.

1.17.3. Vulnerable participants

The participants were adults. Some of the participants could have been seen as vulnerable due to them living in a low economic environment and being a single foster mother, but information that was obtained was in general not regarded as sensitive. Data collected was anonymised. The vulnerability of participants was also taken into consideration by ensuring that the risks and benefits were clearly determined, that recruitment is fair and that participants participate voluntarily in the study (Bracken-Roche, Bell, Ellen & Racine, 2016).

1.17.4. Incentive

The independent person took the consent forms to the participants. The consent forms were collected by the independent person from their houses. The interviews were done at the houses of the participants at a time that is convenient for the participant. The participants were therefore not responsible for any cost related to the research study. Therefore, no incentive was given to participants.

The researcher had to protect the participants by; not having the participants feel like they are forced to take part in the research, participation had to be voluntary, and they could withdraw from the research at any time (Creswell, *et al.*, 2007:42; De Vos *et al.*, 2011:116-126). On the day of the interviews, it was made clear that participation is only voluntary and the participants could withdraw from the study at any point in time as well as the implications and risks associated with participation in the study.

Verbal and written voluntary consent was obtained from each participant. All participants gave written consent before participating in the research study (Delpont & Strydom, 2011:117). The consent form also indicated the important information such as the goal and objectives of the research project, the advantages and possible disadvantages of the research, possible harm the participants may be exposed to, the expected duration of the study and the participant's involvement and the credibility of the researcher (Delpont & Strydom, 2011:117).

1.17.5. Legal authorisation

As the researcher had the obligation to protect the life, health, dignity, integrity, right to self-determination, privacy and confidentiality of personal information of the research subjects, the researcher obtained permission and ethical approval from the NWU Ethics committee (Camille, Ban & Njan-Lin, 2016:684). Thereafter, permission was sought from the Department of Social Development Sebokeng where the researcher conducted the research. Consent was gained from all the participants by utilising a trained independent person to administer the consent forms. The researcher conducted the individual interviews and when needed, a trained translator was consulted.

1.17.6. Confidentiality, anonymity and privacy

The interviews were held in the privacy and comfort of each participant's house on a date and time that suits them best. Confidentiality is a principle of ethics and the researcher gave information to the participants as to who will have access to the information such as the researcher and her supervisor (Barker, 2003:90, Creswell, *et al.*, 2007:42). According to Delpont and Strydom (2011:113), research should be conducted in an atmosphere of mutual trust, acceptance, co-operation, promises and well-accepted conventions and expectations between all parties involved in a research study.

The interview sessions were recorded by means of an audio recorder and the recordings were transferred to a disc. The recordings were deleted from the recorders. Information on computers was password protected. The anonymity of information in research means that the researcher did not collect identifying information of the participant such as; name, surname, address etc. or that the research project will not directly link the participants with the project after publication

(Anon, 2012:1). During the research study, the researcher did not make use of personal particulars of the participants; the participants were recorded as Participant 1, 2 and 3, etc. This in return protect the participants from being identified (Delpont & Strydom, 2011:119).

1.17.7. Role-players

The gatekeeper was the manager at the Sebokeng Department of Social Development. The manager had no direct contact with the participants. The independent person was a trained individual who had no relation to any of the participants. The translators were social auxiliary workers who are familiar with the social work vocabulary and who has been an interpreter for the past five years for the DSD. If needed, the independent counsellor that will assist the participants for debriefing will be a trained emergency counsellor from the DSD Sebokeng.

1.17.8. Expertise of researchers

The researcher is a registered social worker by profession where interviewing skills are used on a daily basis. The skills required to conduct the research study may be different from research interviewing skills, but the baseline is similar, which includes interpersonal-, observation- and listening skills. Ethical competency was needed to complete the study. The researcher is a social worker by profession and has experience of working with foster families for five years and have knowledge regarding the foster care process, foster parents and foster children. Currently, the researcher is employed by the DSD as an early childhood development social worker rendering services to educational centres. The researcher conducts interviews and group work projects on a daily basis.

The researcher completed training on basic ethics for research online (Optentia) as well as the two-day workshop presented by Prof M Greeff of the NWU (HREC).

1.17.9. Facilities

The research study was implemented at the different houses of each participant for their own convenience. This also creates a sense of privacy and provides confidentiality. This arrangement was more convenient for the participants.

1.17.10. Risk level of the study

The risk level of the study was identified as medium risk as the research study was focused on single foster mothers. Some of the foster mothers were from a rural or urban area due to the area division in Sebokeng. Some of the single foster mothers were divorcees or widows and talking about alternative father figures may have triggered unresolved trauma and grief.

1.17.11. Dissemination of results

After conducting the study the researcher compiled the findings in the form of a letter, which will be sent to each participant as well as the gatekeeper at the DSD. This letter will have the researchers' contact details for anyone who would like to discuss the findings. The findings of the study will then be explained and shared with the participants. The findings will also be placed in various articles to share the findings with other professional individuals rendering services to foster families.

1.17.12. Storage and archiving of data

All the electronic data, as well as hard copies, will be safely kept in a locked cupboard at the NWU. The data will be kept for a period of six years and thereafter the data will be destroyed by the means of shredding.

Table 1: Summary of risk analysis

<i>Possible risks</i>	<i>Strategies to minimise risks</i>	<i>Assessment of risk</i>
<i>Participants may experience negative emotions due to the fact that they will be sharing personal experiences, they may also become aware of things during the interview session that they never knew.</i>	Should the participant experience any negative emotions the researcher referred the participants to the counsellor at the DSD who agreed to provide a free counselling session to participants.	None of the participants requested or needed counselling.
<i>Participants may feel that they are targeted</i>	The participants should be well-informed of the reasons	The participants were informed

<i>and being vulnerable as they are from the lower financial area or residing in a geographical risk area.</i>	why they fit the participant criteria and it should be made clear that being part of a vulnerable group was not one of the criteria.	about the inclusion criteria before the research study was done.
<i>The study does not directly benefit the participants.</i>	- The researcher clearly explained the goal and purpose of the study to the participants. - Although the research does not directly benefit the participants, the study may benefit single foster mothers in the future. The risk is also medium and the researcher prevented any risks as far as possible.	The goal and purpose of the study was clearly explained to each participant.
<i>Some of the participants can be seen as vulnerable participants.</i>	The researcher ensured that the study stays focused on the topic. If any of the participants feel negatively affected by the study the researcher referred the participants for counselling.	
<i>Participants may feel vulnerable due to the fact that they may be seen as a vulnerable group.</i>	The participants should be well-informed by the researcher about the risks and benefits of the study.	
<i>The research study was</i>	The researcher ensured	Due to the

<i>about one hour long and the participant's bodies may get sore.</i>	sufficient body breaks to keep them interested.	nature of the interview sessions, no body breaks were needed.
<i>Participants may not understand the purpose of the research study.</i>	- The researcher clearly explained the research study to the participants. - The researcher explained the risks and benefits of the study to the participants.	
<i>Participants may not understand why they fit the criteria for the research study.</i>	- Recruitment of participants was done ethically. - The criteria were clearly stated in the consent form. Recruitment of participants was ethical by informing participants of the study and inviting voluntary participation. Participants meeting the criteria were allowed to be part of the study.	
<i>Participants may feel obligated or forced to participate in the research study.</i>	- The participation was voluntary. - Participation had to be completely voluntary and participants could leave the study at any time.	

• <i>Participants may not feel safe to share their personal experiences and opinions.</i> • <i>Participants may feel that their information will not be confidential or not kept safe.</i>	• The researcher respects the privacy and well-being of the participants by keeping them informed and keeping their information confidential. • The information obtained during the study will not generally be regarded as sensitive. If any of the participants are negatively influenced by the study they were referred for counselling sessions. • The participants were ensured that their information will remain confidential by not gathering any identifying particulars of the participants. • All information collected from participants remained confidential by providing each participant with a number instead of using their names. • It was explained by the researcher who will have access to the information.	
• <i>Participants may not understand the</i>	• If needed the researcher made use of a trained	• The translator was used in

<i>researcher due to language barrier.</i>	translator.	most of the interview sessions.
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1.18. Structure of the report

The report is written in the article format. The general referencing style of the report is according to the NWU Harvard referencing style. The format of each article is done according to the prescribed format of the proposed journal. The research are for a full dissertation.

The report is structured as follow;

- Section A: Problem statement
- Section B: Articles:
 - o Article 1: The concept of an absent father and the understanding of an alternative father figure by single foster mother's in a South African context.
 - Journal of Humanities
 - Harvard referencing style
 - o Article 2: Foster mother's perceptions on the effects and value of an alternative father figure in the lives of foster children.
 - Southern African Journal of Social Work and Social Development (SAJSWSD)
 - Harvard referencing style
- Section C: Conclusion and recommendations
- Section D: Combined reference list

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Section 2 – Articles

Article 1: Absent fatherhood and the understanding of an alternative father figure by single foster mothers in a South African context.

2.1. Abstract

In South Africa, many children are being raised without father figures, and furthermore, the number of foster children keep on increasing each year. The implication is that it has almost become a norm to place foster children in foster care with their maternal grandmothers, increasing the number of children being raised by single foster mothers.

The purpose of this article is to discuss how a group of South African single foster mothers perceive absent fathers in the lives of foster children and to correctly interpret how alternative father figures are experienced by single foster mothers. There is a research gap regarding the understanding of the role of a father figure, especially within a South African context focusing on single foster mothers. There is limited research available on single foster mothers perception of alternative father figures in the lives of children in foster care and this study aimed to explore single foster mothers and their perceptions regarding absent fathers and alternative father figures.

Therefore, the researcher's approach was focused on gaining the understanding of how single foster mothers within a South African perspective perceive absent fathers and alternative father figures. The study intended to gain an understanding of the perspectives of single foster mothers. This was done by conducting semi-structured interviews with 17 participants, who were single foster mothers residing within the Sebokeng service delivery area.

The findings suggest that single foster mothers perceive themselves as alternative father figures in the lives of the foster children and discourage the involvement of alternative male father figures. The implication of this may be that the single foster mothers are left with all the responsibilities of a "father figure" and children are raised in a mostly "matriarchal" system.

2.2. Opsomming

In Suid-Afrika word baie kinders grootgemaak sonder 'n vaderfiguur, en die aantal kinders in pleegsorg, bly jaarliks styg. Die gevolg daarvan is dat kinders in pleegsorg in die sorg van hul materne grootmoeders (oumas) geplaas word, en dit verhoog die aantal kinders wat grootgemaak word deur enkellopende pleegmoeders.

Die doel van die artikel is om te bespreek hoe enkellopende pleegmoeders vanuit 'n Suid-Afrikaanse perspektief, die alternatiewe vaderfiguur in die lewe van pleegkinders ervaar, en hoe om persepsies korrek te interpreteer oor hoe die alternatiewe vaderfiguur ervaar word deur die enkellopende pleegmoeders. Daar is 'n groot gaping in die navorsing oor die begrip van die rol van 'n vaderfiguur, veral in 'n Suid-Afrikaanse konteks. Die bevordering van hierdie studie is baie belangrik in Suid-Afrika, juis omdat daar beperkte navorsing gedoen is oor enkellopende pleegmoeders. Alhoewel dit 'n algemene bekommernis is, het die navorser gesukkel om verwante studies te vind oor enkellopende pleegmoeders en hul gevoelens oor die afwesige vader en die alternatiewe vaderfiguur.

Daarom is die navorser se benadering gefokus om te verstaan hoe enkellopende pleegmoeders in die Suid-Afrikaanse perspektief, die afwesige vaderfiguur en alternatiewe vaderfigure beskou. Die studie is gefokus om 'n duidelike begrip van die perspektief van enkellopende pleegmoeders te kry. Dit is gedoen deur 'n semi-gestruktureerde onderhoud te voer met al 17 van die deelnemers, wat almal enkellopende pleegmoeders is wat woonagtig in die Sebokeng dienslewering area was.

Die bevindings het getoon dat enkellopende pleegmoeders hulself beskou as die alternatiewe vaderfiguur in die lewens van die pleegkinders en hulle ontmoedig die betrokkenheid van 'n alternatiewe manlike vaderfiguur. Die gevolge hiervan is dat die enkellopende pleegmoeder alleen oorgelaat word met al die verantwoordelikhede van 'n vader figuur en kinders word meestal in 'n "matriargale" stelsel grootgemaak.

2.2.1. Keywords

Absent fatherhood, alternative father figure, father figure, foster child, single foster mother

2.3. Introduction

In South Africa many communities are facing the challenge of absent fathers (Fazel & Freeks, 2017:1, Padi, Nduna, Khunou & Kholopane, 2014:44). This is still an ongoing trend in South Africa. Kruk (2012:3) went as far as to make the statement that this fatherlessness is “the most destructive trend of our society today”. The traditional family, consisting of a father and a mother with children is declining and Freeks (2016:15) and the National Fatherhood Initiative (2007:20) highlight this as one of our greatest social problems or as Chabalala (2018:1) describes it: “a serious social illness.”

In many families in South Africa, the family has been so redefined that the father or a father figure is not present anymore (Ford, Nalbone, Wetchler, & Sutton, 2008:295). As a result, an increasing number of single females take over the parenting responsibilities of both the father and the mother (East, Jackson & O'Brian, 2006:283). Examples of other family structures include single mothers, homosexual couples, and children being raised by family members based on a private arrangement as well as foster children placed with single foster mothers. The effect of families where there is only one parent has been studied well, less attention is paid to the effect that it has on a child. Dickerson (2014:52) explains that in single-mother households with absent fathers, the chances of a child entering healthy adolescence can be hampered. Other consequences identified of an absent father include; depression, behavioural issues, identity crisis, insecurity, bad grades and higher dropout rates (McLanahan, Tach & Schneider, 2013:399).

Children need a father figures (Frees, 2013:3; Steytler & Strydom, 2008:43; Wilerton, Schwarz, Wadsworth, & Oglesby, 2011:524-526) and absent fatherhood and/or fatherlessness is becoming a worldwide phenomenon (McLanahan *et al.*, 2013:399). Absent fatherhood seems to be a new standard of living. Thompson (2008:278) states that a yearning arises for father figures in children who have been raised without father figures. Sadly, the trend of fatherlessness can create a vicious cycle as boys raised without father figures may not see the importance of being an actively involved father themselves one day (Dickerson, 2014:53). The concern is that the issue of father absence is being ignored or that there is a lack of focus on this concern; “the greatest concern is the lacking response from law and policy

developers, who are rendering services in the best interests of a child” (Kruk, 2012:3). Therefore, the perfect scenario will be for foster children will be to have a mother and father figure in their lives.

2.4. Contextualisation

Foster care as a protection mechanism for vulnerable children is a statutory process and the ultimate aim is to provide a family and supportive environment for a child in need of care and protection, while providing reunification services as the main goal is to reunite the foster children with his or her biological family (Dolgova, Rokickaya, Volchengorskaya, Yemelyanova, & Uvarina, 2016:859; Fortune, 2016:16-19). However, the majority of the cases, reunification is not possible in foster care due to biological parents being deceased or unknown. This result in children ending up in the foster care of their grandparents and reunification is not possible (Fortune, 2016:22). In 2006 the South African absent father rate was standing at approximately 56% (Molongoana, 2015:1) for all South African children. The concept of a biological and social father within a South African context (meaning not only biological fathers) need to be explored further as this may help to understand the role of a father or alternative father figure in the lives of children (Van den Berg, Makhusa, Richter, Radebe, Ratele, Nduna, Khunou, Humna, Motlapule, Khan, Mercer, Moore & Lewaks, 2018:65). Jini and Roby (2011:21) state that within African cultures it is believed that once a child is born it is the responsibility of the community as a whole to provide for such a child, this is also referred to as “social fatherhood” (Thorn, 2013:1; Williams, 2018:1).With this stated, the assumption is that there should be alternative father figures in the lives of children.

As mentioned, foster placement is mainly with single females and there is the assumption that the community can serve as alternative fathers for children. The gap in previous studies show that the focus in these studies were mainly on the child’s perceptions, the community’s view and biological mother’s perceptions on absent fatherhood, but not from that of the foster mother who is caring for children alone. These single foster mothers’ perceptions on alternative fatherhood may be able to provide insight as to who they perceive can be seen as an alternative father figure as well as the values of such a person in the lives of foster children. The concept of an alternative father figure according to a foster mother’s perceptions may encourage or

discourage the involvement of an alternative father figure (Eddy, Mphaka, & Thomson-de Boor, 2013:31). This study is focused on single foster mothers' perceptions of an absent father and the understanding of an alternative father figure in the lives of foster children.

2.5. Methodology

A qualitative research approach was implemented to investigate this concern. Qualitative research is focused on people by interacting with them in their personal environments (Maree, 2007:51). Therefore, this study was conducted in the comfort of the participants' homes. In this environment, they were able to feel safe and secure and therefore they were comfortable with sharing their own experiences. The focus of the study was to gain an understanding of how single foster mothers perceive or experience absent father figures and to find out how they will define an alternative father figure within a South African context based on their own experiences.

This knowledge obtained can empower social workers and other professionals rendering services to foster children to be able to identify absent and alternative father figures in the lives of foster children within a South African context.

2.5.1. Research design

A qualitative descriptive design was used to conduct the research study. Qualitative descriptive designs seek to discover and understand a phenomenon, process or perspective of the participants where information is directly required from the individuals experiencing the phenomenon (Atkinson, Bradshaw & Doody, 2017:7; Caelli, Ray & Mill, 2003:12; Anderson, Neergaard, Oleson, & Sondergaard, 2009:38).

This qualitative descriptive approach accepts that there are many different interpretations of reality, as individual's experiences will differ (Atkinson *et al.*, 2017:7). Anderson *et al.* (2009:1) noted that the strengths of a qualitative descriptive design are that it provides the opportunity to gain preliminary insight into a specific topic. An advantage of this approach is that it provides a detailed understanding of the participants' feeling regarding the particular problem or issue (Durrheim, 2006:33-59).

2.5.2. Ethical considerations

Ethical clearance for this study has been provided from the NWU (NWU-HS-2018-075). The researcher also obtained permission from The Department of Social Development to conduct the study with their clients. Participants signed the consent forms and a date and time were arranged with the participants to conduct the individual interviews by the independent person. Interviews were done in English and when needed a translator was used. Of the 17 individuals who were interviewed for the research study, a total of 11 participants made use of the translator. No harm towards the participants was expected and no participant requested trauma debriefing.

The gatekeeper, independent person and the translators adhered to all ethical practices, which include keeping all information confidential. All data collected has been anonymised.

2.5.3. Participants and setting

The Department of Social Development (DSD) was the gatekeeper and permitted this study. The representative population sample consisted of 60 participants receiving supervision services from the DSD in the Sedibeng district (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché, & Delport, 2011:226).

Purposive sampling was utilised as participants were selected with a specific purpose in mind, because they met certain criteria (Maree, 2007:178). Each participant had an equal chance of being selected for the research study based on them meeting the specific criteria, therefore simple random sampling was used (De Vos *et al.*, 2011:228). A minimum of ten participants was selected from the population sample and when data saturation was not met, systematic sampling continued from the list until data saturation was reached at 17 participants (Maree, 2007:230).

All 17 participants interviewed were residing within the Sebokeng region receiving services from the Sebokeng DSD. At times the interviews were difficult as there were words that are not familiar in the African languages and a phrase was used to describe the words. The same phrase was consistently used for all interviews.

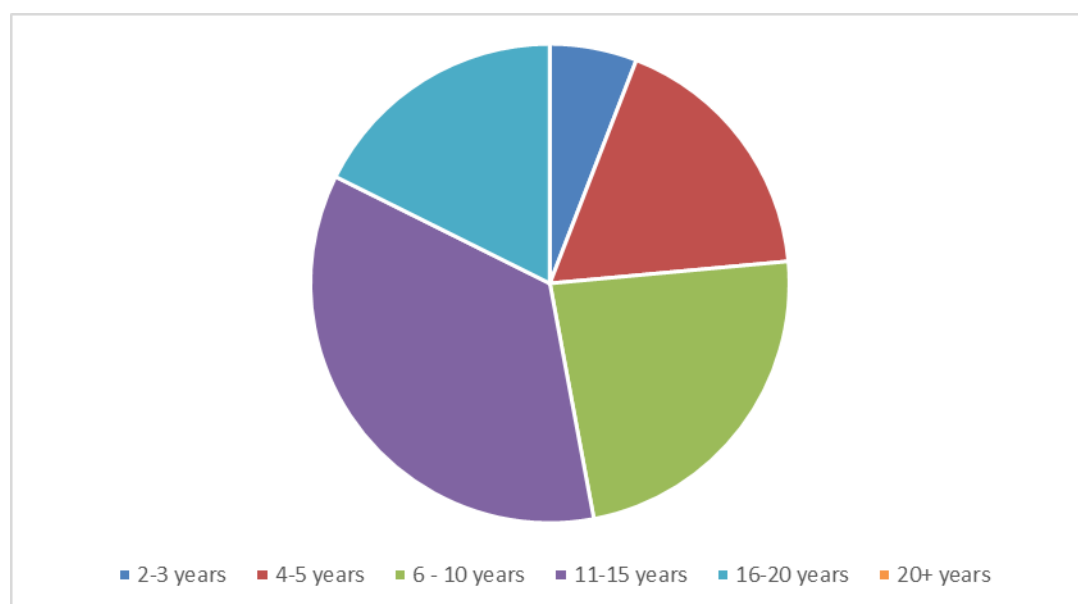
Table 2: Age of participants

Age	20– 25	26– 30	31– 35	36– 40	41– 45	46 – 50	51 – 55	56– 60	61– 65	66– 70	71+
Participants:	0	1	0	1	1	2	2	3	2	2	3

As indicated in Table 2, the majority of the participants were 46 years and older, although age was not a factor in the sampling of participants. None of the participants were below the age of 26 years.

All the participants were Black African females except for one participant who was Coloured African. Thirteen of the participants, which represent the majority of the participants, were South Sotho speaking, one participant was Tsonga, one was Venda and two where Xhosa speaking.

From the 17 participants, 8 participants were foster mothers to female foster children only. Four participants were foster mothers to male foster children only and 5 participants were foster mothers to both male and female foster children. There was a total of 19 female foster children and 10 male foster children between the 17 participants. Five of the participants each had one foster child that aged out of the foster care system and one of the participants had a female foster child in her care who passed away.

*Figure 1: Duration of being a foster parent*

All of the participants have been foster parents for more than two years, with three being foster mothers for 4–5 years, four have been 6–10 years, six have been 11–15 years and three have experience of being a foster mother for 16 – 20 years. Among all the participants, they have a combined total of 205 years of experience. Due to the amount of time these foster mothers have been fostering children, it can be safe to say that they have clear expectations of what it is like being a single foster mother as well as the challenges thereof.

Four of the participants had a male older than 18 years staying with the foster family. These males are the sons of the foster mothers and are the maternal uncles of the foster children. One of the participants stated that her son is also staying with her, but he is not related to the foster child. Another participant said that her son is staying with the foster family and he is the maternal uncle of the foster child. The rest of the participants did not have any males staying with them older than 18 years.

Table 3: Biological parents' whereabouts

	Living	Deceased	Unknown
Biological mother	1	15	1
Biological father	2	6	9

The whereabouts of the biological parents of the children living in foster care with the participants for this study are as follows: One of the participants' foster child has a biological father who is known to the foster child. The child sometimes visits the biological father, but they do not share a healthy relationship. He also does not contribute to the foster child financially. The biological mother of this specific child is deceased. Five participants indicated that both the biological parents of the children in their foster care are deceased. For another participant the biological parent's whereabouts are unknown and therefore the foster child does not have any relationship with her biological parents. For 8 of the participants, the biological mother of the children is deceased and their biological fathers are unknown. One of the participant's foster children knows their biological mother, but they have not had contact with her in years. Their biological father is involved in their lives, but they do not share a healthy relationship.

As part of the sampling criteria, all single foster mothers were allowed to be part of the researcher study regardless of the current status of the biological parents of the foster children.

2.5.4. Data collection

Data collection was focused on the interactions of participants and the observations of the researcher during the interviews. Seventeen participants were interviewed by means of a semi-structured interview that contained qualitative questions. The interviews were conducted in English and were recorded and then transcribed by the researcher. Unclear questions were explained by the researcher and when needed, translated during the interviews by the translator.

2.5.5. Procedure

Ethical approval was obtained from the NWU (NWU-HS-2018-075) after which the Department of Social Development permitted this study to be conducted within their department. The researcher trained an independent person for the research study. Consent was gained from all the participants by utilising the trained independent person to administer the consent forms. The researcher conducted the individual interviews until data saturation was reached.

2.5.6. Data analysis

The data was collected utilising an audio recorder and was transcribed. By transcribing the data, the researcher was provided with the opportunity to listen to the recordings, which made the data come alive during the quest for themes and subthemes (Atkinson *et al.*, 2017:5). A large number of themes were identified, but were reduced to stay within the scope of the study and a smaller number of themes stood out to capture the experience, which is known as “straight descriptions” (Atkinson *et al.*, 2017:5). Two co-coders assisted to ensure that the most suitable themes were identified.

2.6. Findings and discussion

The findings and discussion in this article are based on the literature study and the themes identified. The findings are discussed in two sections. The first section is on absent fathers and the second is on alternative fathers.

During the study the following main themes were found:

Absent father

- 1) How an absent father can be described.
- 2) Reasons for being an absent father.

Alternative fathers

- 1) Single foster mother's perceptions of alternative father figures in the lives of foster children.
- 2) The concept of an alternative father figure according to single foster mothers.

2.6.1. The concept of an absent father

Absent fatherhood is a term or concept that is differently perceived and described among scholars. Boothroyd and Perrett (2008:188) believe that the term absent father can only be used when the biological father of the child is not living with the child, even if they share a healthy relationship. Van den Berg, Makhusha, Richter *et al.* (2018:4), however, stated that an absent father should be defined as a biological or non-biological father figure who is not present in the child's life. Morrell and Richter (2006:18) reported that when talking about the absent father one should not only focus on the physical absence but the focus should also be placed on the emotional and financial absence of a father. Padi *et al.* (2014:44) concluded by stating that "The term absent father is a socio-economic and political term and is therefore complex and difficult to define". In the South African context, absent fatherhood should be redefined taking into consideration the influence of social fatherhood. Social fatherhood is where the community is also seen as the father and is not only one specific person (Thorn, 2013:1; Williams, 2018:1).

East *et al.* (2006:284) concluded that the term of an "absent father" is not definable and Padi *et al.* (2014:50) recommended that the term absent father should be divided into the following four categories:

- **Absent and unknown:** This is when the biological father of a child is unknown to the child and family.

- **Absent but known:** This is when the biological father of a child is known to the child or family of the child, but the father is not involved in the life of the child.
- **Absent and undisclosed:** This is when a child has no information about their father at all, but the extended family might have information regarding the biological father.
- **Unknown and deceased:** This is in a case where the biological father was known to the child, but the father passed away when the child was still at a young age, and therefore does not truly know his or her father.

By focusing on all the elements mentioned that contribute to the definition of absent fatherhood, South Africa has an exceptionally high number of absent fathers (Eddy *et al.*, 2013:1; Fazel & Freeks 2017:89). Although these definitions are contradicting “social fatherhood”, which is common in the African cultures, Dickerson (2014:29) thinks that today’s culture is the biggest reason for absent fathers.

While focusing on a South African context it is nearly impossible not to take into consideration social fatherhood or alternative father figures, which can be natural mentors as well as, the majority of children in South Africa, are being raised by alternative father figures or society. Nevertheless, it seems that the term absent father creates a scar that is seemingly permanent in a child’s life (Chabalala, 2018:1). “There is no typical father when one is focusing on the South African context since there are so many different types of fathers and fatherhood in South Africa” (Van den Berg *et al.*, 2018:5). Therefore, a father within a South African perspective can be seen as a man with the important role of leading a household, someone who provides financially, who is there both physically and emotionally and who can be seen as an authoritative person (Diaku, 2016:27).

Taking into consideration the above-mentioned explanations of an absent father, for this study, the absent father is defined as: a biological or non-biological father (alternative father figure/social father) who is not actively involved in a child’s life. Being an absent father includes not being there for a child emotionally, physically, financially and spiritually.

Having an absent father is identified as a disadvantage (Fazel & Freeks, 2017:4), and Steytler (2007:36) states that the absent father has an undeniable effect on a

young child, especially a boy child. Various studies have shown that living in the precense of an absent father affects both boys and girls. Spencer (2013:1) is of the opinion that children who are being raised by single mothers also have a higher risk for developing deviant behaviours.

2.6.1.1. *How foster mothers describe an absent father*

The participants find it challenging to understand the question resulting that most of the participants focused on the effect of an absent father rather than on defining the absent father. One of the participants (Participant 9) stated that she does not know what an absent father is while another participant (Participant 1) expressed that the absence of a father is noticeable in a child as the child will express that he/she misses the father figure. However, for this specific participant, the biological father of the child in her care is known but not involved in the child's life. Participant 2 stated that an absent father is someone who is not there for the child emotionally. Single foster mothers perceptions of an absent father as someone who is never there for the child; this includes fathers who are only there sometimes.

Participants voiced their description of an absent father as:

- Being a “coward” (Participant 3). It is someone who is not trustworthy and who is selfish.
- “Someone who runs away from their responsibility of being a father, someone who does not take care of their responsibilities” (Participant 4).
- “If a person does not contribute to the upbringing of the child financially then such a person cannot be seen as an alternative father figure” (Participant 12). This participant felt that the most important factor should be the financial contribution that the father makes.

Therefore, an absent father according to single foster mothers' perceptions can be seen as someone who causes pain to the child due to being absent. Absent as per the findings includes being absent emotionally, physically and financially. Literature states that not having an emotional bond with one's child and not being there for the child physically can make you an absent father (Van den Berg *et al.*, 2018:4). It can be therefore stated as per the findings that foster mothers describe an absent father as someone who makes the conscious choice not to be involved in their children's lives emotionally, physically and financially.

2.6.1.2. *Reasons for being an absent father*

Fatherlessness is “the most destructive trend of our society today” (Kruk, 2012:3). There are many different reasons for experiencing the absence of a father including children being raised in the care of single foster mothers, same-sex female life partners and children being raised by family members (East *et al.*, 2006:283). But what can be reasons for why biological fathers make the conscious choice to be absent fathers?

According to the perceptions of single foster mothers the following are reasons for fathers being absent in the lives of their children:

- When the father and mother get separated and the father remarries, he forgets about his previous life including his children and his responsibilities. (Participant 1 and Participant 14).
- Men do not want to take responsibility.
- Males are not trustworthy.
- Men are selfish and do not care about anyone except themselves.
- Men are constantly looking for various simultaneous relationships.
- The father and the maternal family may have unresolved issues.
- Men do not take responsibility; they enjoy the single life of drinking and smoking and do not have time for kids.
- Some fathers are not aware that they have children.
- Do not respect and care for children. Participant 14 stated that “men do not understand that children are gifts from God”.
- It is a vicious cycle of men being raised without father figures themselves.
- Men are scared to maintain their children.
- Men cannot care for children as mothers do.

The finding of this study can be linked to the five findings of Eddy *et al.*'s (2013: 22 – 27) study on absent fathers but from the perspectives of the absent fathers. These links include:

1. *Unemployment and poverty*: Due to unemployment and poverty many males may find the need to not be involved in their children's life (Eddy *et al.*,

2013:22). This creates a vicious cycle of children being raised without father figures, as mentioned by several of the participants during the study.

2. *Predominant construction of father as Automatic Teller Machines:* During this research study, the foster mothers stated that fathers do not want to take responsibility and do not take care of anyone except for themselves. One participant also stated that men are scared to maintain their children. The focus here was mostly on the financial responsibility of the fathers. Fathers feel that they are only needed or welcomed when it comes to a financial contribution to their children's lives (Eddy *et al.*, 2013:23).
3. *Cultural factors such as high cost of ilobolo:* Some fathers might not be aware that they even are fathers, due to the cultural beliefs. Fathers may be kept in the dark about the birth of their children as well as their involvement with their children (Eddy *et al.*, 2013: 24). The participants of this study also felt that men can't take care of children as women do, this can be due to cultural belief and being focused on the past where women mainly had the role of taking care of the house and the children, while the men had to work and provide.
4. *Dysfunctional and conflict ridden relationships:* Many of the participants in this study felt that males in general are not trustworthy. This creates a barrier for father figures, as they do not feel comfortable visiting the families as they feel they are not trusted and not welcome (Eddy *et al.*, 2013: 26-27). It may also be the case that the maternal family never approved the relationship between the father figure and their daughter and therefore after the passing of the daughter tried to find ways to eliminate the contact between the father and the maternal family, in return influencing the relationship between the father and child. During the study, the participants seemed to have a negative impression of male figures in general. They believe that men do not like responsibility and enjoy living a single life of drinking and smoking.
5. *Challenges of moving to new relationships following a divorce or break-up:* One of the participants mentioned that when the biological mother of the child passes on or the relationship between the biological parents ends, the biological father is more likely to move on and forgets about his

responsibilities. Eddy *et al.* (2013:27) stated that many of their participants explained that they had trouble accessing their children due to their new life partners. Another issue may be the fact that the maternal families do not agree with the new life partner and then prevents the father to have access to his child. Some of the participants in this study mentioned that they felt men are always looking for various relationships, which they obviously do not approve. If the new relationship is not approved by the foster mother it will be hard for the father figure to access his child (Eddy *et al.*, 2013:26).

2.6.1.3. *Defining alternative father figures*

Alternative father figures can be described as someone who takes on the responsibility and role of a father, but who is not the biological father of the child (Van den Berg *et al.*, 2018:4). Schwartz (2004:18) refers to these alternative father figures as “old heads” because they are usually older males who are more responsible whereas Fazel and Freeks (2017:93) refer to them as substitute fathers. Dickerson (2014:179) mentioned that teachers and councillors can be seen as alternative father figures as children presented a positive attitude when these authority figures got to know them on a more personal level. These alternative father figures provide support to children who experience fatherlessness and it is reported that they also help reduce violent behaviours and negative effects on children (Schwartz, 2004:21).

Dickerson (2014:179) believes that friends of a child in the adolescent stage can be experienced as alternative father figures. He stated that in some cases the effect was positive and in others it was negative. This usually happens when a younger child becomes friends with an older peer, who they look up to and admire. The positive contribution that a peer can provide in the form of an alternative father figure include support, guidance and then usually share a strong bond with the child (friend). The negative effects, on the other side, include the encouragement towards negative behaviours such as drug and substance abuse increase and harmful and destructive behaviour such as fighting and disrespecting authoritative figures was encouraged. In some cases, even the female caretaker is seen as the alternative father figure, as they have no other choice but to take on the role of being both the mother and father (Tremblay & Pierce, 2011:101).

The following can be seen as characteristics of a good or positive alternative father figure:

- Someone who is able to teach a child new skills.
- Someone who can teach a child how to cope with daily struggles and stressors.
- Someone who is a positive example of what a “good” father should be.
- Someone who teaches a child useful daily life skills.
- Someone who acknowledge their positive achievements (Thompson, 2008:279)

For the purpose of this study the non-biological, substitute or social father will be referred to as the alternative father figure who is taking over the role and responsibility of a biological father. This alternative figure needs to be actively involved in the child's life and should be there for the child emotionally, physically as well as financially.

2.6.1.4. *Perceptions of single foster mothers (17 Participants) regarding regarding alternative father figures in the lives of foster children.*

The perceptions of single foster mother's regarding alternative father figures were mostly positive when they spoke in general. Meaning that when they focused on other people's lives they tend to see alternative father figures in a positive light. As soon as the question was directed to a more personal level, meaning their own current situation the participant's reaction was negative towards alternative father figures. The general feeling was that the participants do not have a good perceptions of “men” in general and this may have influenced their objectivity (Tremblay & Pierce, 2011:101). The participants felt that women are more than capable of performing the role of both a mother and father at the same time and all the participants did indicate that they fulfil both these roles.

Although not part of the aim of this study, but some of the participants mentioned that having a male father figure for their own personal support will be good. Someone who they can talk to and look to for support and guidance. It was identified that single foster mothers sometimes feel lonely and have an urge to share their stories and experiences with a significant other. This can be linked with the

ecological theory that has been used in this study, as the environment on a micro and marco level of the foster mothers' should be taken into account. The system theory also interlinks in this part, as the participants are focused on their own well-being and personal experiences and perceptions.

Eddy *et al.* (2013:31) explain that the concept of an alternative father figure according to a foster mother's perceptions may encourage or discourage the involvement of an alternative father figure. Due to the fact that these single foster mothers perceive or experience themselves as both the mother and the father in their foster household they may discourage or may not see the need for an alternative male father figure in the lives of the foster children.

During this study the participants were contradicting themselves at times. They would for instance say that they do not need or want men or alternative father figures in their lives, but during the next question they will identify possible alternative father figures in the lives of the foster children, such as uncles, grandfathers or sport coaches. They would also explain that an alternative father figure may be able to assist with discipline more effectively than women, and that the financial contribution of an alternative father figure will be beneficial but they will still say that they are the alternative father figures and that they do not need "men" in their lives. It seems that the participants direct this question towards themselves and not towards the need of the child in foster care.

This contradiction in their answers may be due to the majority of the participants being mostly older women who have been single for a long period of time.

Some of the participants were able to identify positive perceptions of alternative father figures, which include:

- Alternative father figures can be experienced as positive because they can fulfil the role and the responsibilities of the absent father (Participant 7).
- They can provide support to the foster mother while raising the foster child. This was one element that came forth from most of the participants. (Participant 1, Participant 2, Participant 7, Participant 12).
- It was a general feeling that an alternative father figure should be the main source of emotional support towards the foster mother. They share a need to

talk to someone and get comfort regarding the difficulties of raising a foster child. Participant 11 expressed the importance of this alternative father figure to be involved in the foster family's live full time, "he needs to be reliable, someone you can trust, look up to for guidance and support". The alternative father figure has to be someone who is involved in a child's life on a constant basis.

- The importance of financial assistance from the alternative father figure was identified by most of the participants. There was a strong feeling among participants that an alternative father figure should mostly be responsible for the financially contribution of raising a foster child. It was explained (Participant 1 and 17) that at times a foster mother cannot cover all the expenses of a foster child and therefore the financial contribution of an alternative father figure is appreciated.
- Other significant contributions an alternative father should do that were mentioned by the participants include physical support and to assist with discipline.

Two main themes that kept on coming up were financially contribution and discipline. All of the participants mentioned in some way that an alternative father figure's role should be to provide financially. Therefore, if one does not provide financially one cannot be seen as an alternative father figure. The second theme was discipline. Some of the participant's believe that male figures are better at handling discipline. They perceive men as authoritative figures and feel that children will take male figures seriously when it comes to discipline; therefore, discipline is more effective when it is done by a male.

The participants had different perceptions regarding an alternative father figure in the lives of foster children. Some of the participants felt that alternative father figures are a bad thing, males cannot be trusted, especially not with children that are not their own biological children. Thirteen of the participants stated that a non-related male is not to be trusted with a foster child. If there should be an alternative father figure, he needs to be directly related to the foster child. During the research study it was found that there is a misconception among society regarding the African culture. It is often said that in the African culture the community as a whole raises a child (Jeynes, 203:210), and therefore non-related males can also be seen as alternative father

figures for the child. However, during this study, it was found that the majority of single foster mothers do not trust nor accept non-related males as part of their family. Only four of the participants stated that someone who is not directly related to the child can be seen as an alternative father figure such as a sport coach or a religious leader.

There was a strong feeling that men are not needed in single foster mother households, as the foster mother is already performing the role of both the mother and the father. The participants felt like alternative male figures think that they can take over the household and be the head of the house, in these cases they are disrespectful towards the foster mothers and are experienced as a negative influence in the house. Many of the participants also perceived men in general as not trustworthy, even more so when the male is not directly related to the foster child and even more if the foster child is a girl. "I am both the father and mother in the house and I feel that it is enough" (Participant 10). She further stated that men in general cannot be trusted, and should an alternative father figure be part of the foster family's life, his role will mostly be to provide financially and physically.

All of the participants identified themselves as the alternative father figures involved in the foster children's lives, although almost two thirds of the participants stated that an alternative father figure may be needed in a foster child's life, but this needs to be understood in context along with all the other information received, as some of the participants felt that they are the alternative father figure and therefore an additional (male) alternative father figure is not needed. Of the almost two thirds of participants all of the participants saw themselves as the needed alternative father figure and not necessarily an additional alternative father figure. Furthermore, if an additional father figure was to be part of the foster child's life it will mostly be for financial and discipline reasons. These two reasons are mostly for the foster mothers' own benefit and not necessarily for the foster child.

Seven of the participants stated that there is no need for an alternative father figure, however, they identified themselves as the alternative father figure. Some of these participants who stated there is no need for an alternative father figure still mentioned that an alternative father would be able to assist financially. Therefore, it

is hard to determine whether alternative father figures are needed in the lives of foster children due to the perceptions of single foster mothers.

2.6.1.5. *Foster mothers' experiences of an alternative father figure*

During this study, it was identified that culture does not affect the way in which an alternative father figure is identified or perceived. Anyone is allowed to be an alternative father figure, however, fourteen of the participants strongly felt that the alternative father figure needs to be directly related to the foster child, as non-related males are not to be trusted with children. The only thing that was influenced by culture, and related to most African cultures, is that a male in general is perceived as an authoritative figure or head of the house, according to Van der Walt (1994:160). As quoted by Coetzee (2001:300), which the older single foster mothers do not agree with. They do not like feeling that a man has more power in their house (Participant 3, Participant 6 and Participant 16), and therefore does not want alternative father figures involved in their foster children's lives.

Taking into consideration that these single foster mothers see themselves and other females as alternative father figures, this role can be divided into positive and negative experiences.

Positive experience

The positive experiences of an alternative father figure according to the findings include:

- A person who does not drink or smoke (Participant 1).
- Someone who is not abusive (Participant 3).
- Someone who provides support towards the foster child as well as the foster mother (Participant 1, Participant 3, Participant 7, Participant 11 and Participant 17).
- It has to be someone who likes children and likes spending time with children both physically and emotionally. Participant 11 went as far as to say that an alternative father figure is someone who has to be present both physically and emotionally all the time.
- It should be someone who can assist the foster mother in raising the foster child financially. An alternative father figure should take the foster child for

shopping and be there financially (Participant 4, Participant 6 and Participant 11).

- Someone who assists in cultural ceremonies, especially for a boy child (Participant 7 and Participant 11).

The importance of being there for the foster mother as a form of emotional as well as financial support also came up several times. At the end, the alternative father figure has to be someone who can be trusted, reliable, a good listener, respectful, a good leader, strict but kind, be involved in all aspects of the foster child's life including school, humble, encouraging, protective and taking care of the foster child as if it was his own child as explained in the ecological theory.

Negative experience

Some of the participants have negative experiences regarding alternative father figures. It was stated by some of them that an alternative father figure is not an option. The findings include:

- Three participants (Participant 3, Participant 5 and Participant 8) feel that men in general cannot be trusted and they are not a safe option to have around vulnerable children such as foster children.
- Men cannot take care of kids the way a mother does (Participant 7).
- An alternative father figure's only role is for financial and discipline reasons. This can be linked to the system theory. Individuals personal experiences has an influence on how things are perceived in life.

2.7. Conclusion

The terms absent father and alternative father are not part of the African vocabulary, therefore the researcher found it hard to explain the term alternative father to the participants.

The study found that an absent father can be described as a person (male or female/biological and non-biological) who is not actively involved in a foster child's life. This includes but is not limited to; not being there physically, emotionally, socially and financially. The reasons for being an absent father as per the participants' perceptions are mostly that men are not to be trusted, they do not want to take

responsibility and hide away from their financial duties. This leaves the foster mothers responsible for taking on the role of an alternative father figure.

The overall perception of single foster mothers' perceptions regarding alternative father figures in the lives of foster children can be described as:

- A positive experience for the foster child but not always for the foster mother.
- The alternative father figure is someone who is respected, as in the African culture males are perceived as authoritative.
- The alternative father figures have to be someone who loves children and who can be seen as the head of the house.
- An "alternative father" should be responsible for taking care of the family both emotionally and financially, Participant 3 stated that it is his role to ensure the family does not live in poverty.

An alternative father figure has to be someone who is directly related to the foster child. There needs to be a healthy relationship between the foster mother and alternative father figure. The alternative father figure should be responsible for the financial and discipline roles of raising the foster children. The alternative father figure should not try to take over the household of the foster mother. More so, according to the participants a female can also be seen as an alternative father figure. Females are taking on the roles of fathers as mothers daily. African single foster mothers perceive themselves as strong powerful woman who can perform all the roles of a man/father.

Literature from several studies indicated that children, including children living in foster care, do need alternative father figures. However, from the perceptions of the participants it seems that being a single foster mother is enough for a foster child. All of the participants stated that they can be seen as the father figures in the lives of the foster children. This can be due to the limitation that alternative father figures is a concept that is not familiar to the African language and may be confused with social fatherhood. Another reason for single foster mothers believing that they do not need an alternative father figure can be because of their own experience with male figures. Some of the participants experienced trauma due to both physical and

emotional abuse by the hands of men and therefore their overall conception of males in general seems to be negative.

They explained that they take on all the responsibilities of being a mother as well as a father by being a single foster mother and they do not see a need for an additional father figure. All of the participants stated that they themselves can be experienced as the alternative father figure. The main theme that came out from most of the participants was that the only area where they require additional assistance was with finances and discipline. They explained that the financial constraint of raising a foster child alone can at times be difficult. During the study, it was identified that within the African culture financial contribution is seen as a greater effort in raising a child rather than emotional or physical involvement. In African cultures males are also seen and believed to be the stronger authoritative figures, therefore the participants feel that males will be better at dealing with discipline. This can also be that they do not understand appropriate or effective discipline measures.

However, in this study the focus was on single foster mothers' perceptions and therefore the children's feelings and experiences were not taken into consideration. The researcher feels that the two reasons for wanting an alternative father figure, which are financial and discipline reasons, are more focused on the foster mothers' needs rather than the foster children's needs.

The overall perceptions of single foster mothers is that there is no need for an alternative father figure, as they are already taking the place of the father figure. They experience themselves as strong and powerful.

2.8. Limitations of the study

Factors that may have influenced the perceptions of the foster mothers included:

- Being raised without a father figure themselves.
- Having to raise a foster child on their own as well as the foster parent's relationship with the foster child.
- Previous life experiences of the single foster mothers.
- Trauma and abuse from male figures may have influenced the general feeling of single foster mothers towards male figures.

- Some of the foster mothers were able to identify alternative father figures in the lives of foster children, whereas other foster mothers were not being able to do so, this influenced the perceptions of each foster parent.

The researcher experienced the following additional limitations in the study;

Due to the fact that the interviews were done at the participant's homes there was no privacy. Even though the appointments for the interviews were made with the participants there was still no privacy. Other individuals and children living in the house were present at times during the interviews and became a disturbance. The houses are so small and the space between houses are even smaller, therefore when individuals were walking and talking in the street or in the next-door house one could hear this.

During interviews neighbours would come knocking at the participant's door and the interview would have to be paused. Most of the participants were from a lower social-economic class and therefore some of them do not have tables, chairs and basic house utensils. This caused an inconvenience for the researcher as at times the researcher had to stand while doing the interviews and take notes at the same time. Some of the participants has small children in their care. These children were present during the interviews and will cry and complain at times to get the foster mother's attention.

The study was done with single foster mothers' only.

- The findings were related to single foster mothers but may not be relevant to other foster parents.
- The researcher got the impression that the foster mothers were more focused on their own needs rather than on the foster children's needs and this influenced the information obtained.
- People have different perceptions due to their personal experiences.
- These experiences and personal feelings influenced the information provided by the foster mothers.
- Many of the participants had negative experiences with male figures and therefore their overall experience of men and alternative father figures are negative.

- Another limitation was that the sample was only single foster mothers from the Sedibeng district. The researcher feels that different data would have been collected with a wider population group.
- It can be seen as a limitation for sampling only Sebokeng clients of the Department of Social Development.
- Using individual interviews as the sole form of data collection can be seen as a limitation.
- The terms absent father as well as alternative father are not found in the African languages, therefore even with the assistance of a translator, it was difficult to explain the questions to the participants.
- When asking the question, who can be seen as an alternative father figure, the researcher wanted to know specifics like who, an uncle, grandfather family friend etc. However, the participants kept on focusing on characteristics of an alternative father figure rather than identifying the person. By focusing on the characteristics and roles of an alternative father figure all of the participants identified themselves as the main alternative father figure in the foster children's lives.

2.9. Recommendation for future studies

Recommendation for future studies includes expanding the study to include the perceptions of teachers, foster mothers in general, social workers and other professionals rendering services to foster children. Another recommendation can be to repeat a similar study with a wider population of single foster mothers and not only Sebokeng clients. Conducting a study with a focus group including various professionals rendering services to foster families as well as foster mothers would be a way to expand the study and gain valuable insight in the form of a group discussion. To conduct the same research study making use of different research methods.

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Article 2: Foster mothers' perceptions on the effects and value of an alternative father figure in the lives of foster children.

3.1. Abstract

Many foster children are being placed with single foster mothers without an active father figure fulfilling any roles in the household as well in the lives of these children. Limited research has been done with single foster mothers' from South Africa and therefore little is known about the alternative father figures in the lives of foster children. The purpose of this article is to explore the effects and value of having an alternative father figure in the lives of foster children from the perspectives of single foster mothers within a South African context. Data was collected in the form of a semi-structured interview that was conducted with 17 single foster mother participants, residing with the Sedibeng region and receiving social services from the Department of Social Development.

The findings indicated that the participants perceive themselves as the alternative father figures, and in this regard add high value to an alternative father figure. However, when identifying a male individual as the alternative father figure, his value in the life of the foster child is greater linked to financial contribution. These findings can assist social workers or other professionals working within family systems to be able to identify alternative father figures in the lives of foster children, as well as to understand the value of the alternative father figure.

3.2. Opsomming

Baie kinders in pleegsorg word in die sorg van enkellopende pleegmoeders geplaas sonder 'n aktiewe vaderfiguur wat enige rol in die huishouding sowel as in die kinders se lewe speel. Beperkte ondersoeke is gedoen met enkellopende pleegsorg moeders in Suid-Afrika en daarom is daar min inligting omtrent die alternatiewe vaderfiguur in die lewe van kinders in pleegsorg. Die doel van die artikel is om die effek en waarde van 'n alternatiewe vaderfiguur in die lewe van pleegkinders vanuit die perspektief van enkellopende pleegmoeders in die Suid-Afrikaanse konteks te verken.

Data is deur die navorser ingesamel met 17 enkellopende pleegmoeders wat maatskaplike dienste verkry van die Departement van Sosiale Ontwikkeling Sedibeng, deur middel van 'n semi-gestruktureerde onderhoud.

Die bevindings het aangedui dat die deelnemers hulself sien as die alternatiewe vaderfiguur. Daarom, toe hulle 'n manlike figuur as 'n alternatiewe vaderfiguur moes identifiseer was dit duidelik dat dit belangriker vir hulle was dat die vaderfiguur finansieel moes bydra, as wat die vaderfiguur deel van die kind se lewe moes wees.

Hierdie bevindings kan maatskaplike werkers en ander vakkeners wat met families werk baie help om 'n alternatiewe vaderfiguur te identifiseer in die lewe van kinders in pleegsorg so wel as die waarde van 'n alternatiewe vaderfiguur te identifiseer.

3.2.1. Keywords

Absent father, alternative father figure, father figure, foster child, single foster mother

3.3. Introduction

The general nuclear family structure, consisting of a mother and a father figure is declining. Although children share the need to be raised in a family environment (South Africa, 2009:78), this need can unfortunately not always be met and children are often raised without a parent. Unfortunately, in many families, the father figure is the one missing (De Lannoy, Swartz, Lake and Smith, 2015:103; Dickerson, 2014:14). Thus, single female-headed households are becoming more common in South Africa (East, Jackson and O'Brian, 2006:283; East, Hutchinson, Power and Jackson, 2017:436; Fortune, 2016:25).

The welfare system in South Africa recommends that the best placement for a child will be in a family that consists of both parents (Children's Act 38 of 2005), but unfortunately, this is in many cases not a reality as children are often placed in foster care with only a foster mother. Foster care is a valuable but also a vulnerable statutory type of placement (Vanschoonlandt, van Holen, Vanderfaecillie *et al.*, 2014:71). Van der Riet (2006:30) stated that "foster care is all about family and children". Although foster care is all about family, the challenge still remains that the majority of foster placements in South Africa are within female-headed households.

Although, the need might be identified for a nuclear family, but these single females are experienced by the children as the heroines in their lives as the female guardians are looked to for support and guidance (Chabalala, 2018:1). This trend of single-parent households are not South African specific, but is a global trend. According to Gram (2013) in Teel, Verdeli, Wickramaratne, Warner, Voursoura, Horoz, and Talati, (2015:588) there are over 14 million single-parent households in the USA of which more than 80% are single female-headed.

3.4. Problem statement

Although several studies have been done the last few years on the *effect* of children being raised by a single parent, research is still lacking that focused *on the children* being raised by a single female (Teel *et al.*, 2015:588).

Children are the future and if we want a bright future we need to make sure we protect our children and ensure their best interest (Fortune, 2016:6). Dickerson (2014:27) stated that a mother cannot take the place of a father or a father cannot take the place of a mother. Therefore, a mother cannot be seen as an alternative father figure nor can a father be seen as an alternative mother. But a mother might help contribute to the understanding of a father figure and fathering (Van den Berg, Makhusa, Richter, Radebe *et al.*, 2018:67).

It has been noted that research is needed on how social workers and other professions, the community and society promote fathers or alternative father figures' involvement in the lives of children (Van den Berg *et al.*, 2018:67). By identifying the alternative father figure in the lives of foster children, social workers and other professionals will be able to create programmes to identify and involve these father figures in the lives of the foster children, as foster care is the main form of alternative care in South Africa (Van der Riet, 2009:iii;1).

Although foster care is the most preferred method of alternative care in South Africa, research has always focused on the child in foster care or biological parents rather than the foster parents (Nutt, 2006:13;16). Little is known of the dynamic of the families in which these children are being placed in foster care with (Van der Riet, 2009:3). Dickerson (2014:188) stated that research is needed where a mother's perceptions is taken into account regarding alternative father figures. He stated that

a mother's perception will bring in valuable information regarding a mothers' perceptions of fatherlessness and alternative father figures and mothers could share their experiences of raising children without a father figure (Dickerson, 2014:188). Current research focuses a lot on the absent father, but there is limited research that is focusing on the strengths and resources of families living with an absent father. For example extended family members as a resources, such as uncles (East *et al.*, 2017:437). These extended family members can then be seen as a resource who can take the place of an alternative father figures'.

Therefore, this article focus on single foster mothers' perception of who can be seen as an alternative father figure and the value of such a person.

3.5. Methodology

Ethical approval was obtained from the NWU (NWU-HS-2018-075). Thereafter permission was gained from the Department of Social Development Sebokeng, where the researcher conducted the research. Consent was gained from all the participants by utilising a trained independent person to administer the consent forms. The researcher conducted the individual interviews until data saturation was reached and when needed, an experienced translator was used. The qualitative research approach was implemented to answer the research question (Maree, 2007:51). The results of this study will empower social workers and other professionals rendering services to foster children to be able to identify alternative father figures in the lives of foster children, according to the perceptions of single foster mothers'. The information gained could lead to solutions, such as being able to identify alternative father figures in the lives of children in foster care, to not only professionals but also the community. The data collected can possibly be used to design programmes to create awareness and to get alternative father figures more involved in the lives of foster children.

3.5.1. Research design

A qualitative descriptive design was used to conduct the research study. Qualitative descriptive designs are used when individual experiences are directly needed from participants (Atkinson, Bradshaw, and Doody, 2017:7; Caelli, Ray and Mill, 2003:12; Neergaard, Oleson, Andersen and Sondergaard, 2009:38).

This approach accepts that individual's experiences will differ, and therefore their perceptions will differ (Bradshaw *et al.*, 2017:7). Durrheim (2006:33-59) explained that this approach is effective in understanding an individual's perception of a problem.

3.5.2. Participants and setting

The research sample consisted of 17 single foster mothers from the Sedibeng region receiving supervision services from The Department of Social Development Sedibeng. Systematic sampling was used by selecting every third person on the list, until data saturation was met.

The research study was explained to the participants and the consent form was discussed and signed. The independent person also identified whether a translator will be needed for the interviews. The interviews took place in the comfort and convenience of the participant's house. This ensured that the participants did not have to cover any expenses regarding the research study and the time and date for the interview was at the participant's comfort.

The participants were 17 single foster mothers; some were from a low-income family residing within a rural to semi-rural area in the DSD Sebokeng district. No harm towards the participants was expected and no participant requested trauma debriefing. The participants were seen as a vulnerable group due to living in a low economic environment and being single-parent foster mothers. The information that has been obtained will in general not be regarded as sensitive. At times the interviews were difficult as there were words that are not familiar in the African languages and a phrase were used to describe the words. The same phrase was consistently used for all interviews. All data collected has been anonymised and the gatekeeper, independent person and translator kept to ethical practices.

3.5.3. Data collection

The study was focused on the communication of participants and the observations of the researcher. The researcher made use of semi-structured interviews that contain qualitative questions (Barker, 2003:424). An individual interview is a goal focused type of research, this is an easy way to gain information on how the participants think, feel, or react regarding a specific topic (Chadwick, Gill, Stewart and Treasure, 2008:7). Asking open-ended questions empowered the researcher to explore more

on the research topic and helped to explore the different perceptions of the participants (Greeff, 2011:352). The interviews were conducted in English and was transcribed by the researcher. Unclear questions were explained by the researcher and when needed, translated during the interviews by the experienced translator.

Creswell *et al.* (2007:157-158) highlighted the following as limitations of this type of data collection method; the responses will differ due to different participants, participants might not share their true experiences and the researcher's bias can be a great risk. The language and cultural differences between the participants and the researcher might create a misunderstanding during the interview and can influence the data. The researcher is aware of the limitations but is of the opinion that gathering different perceptions provides the researcher with more factual information which may stimulate further studies on alternative father figures in the lives of foster children.

3.5.4. Procedure

Ethical approval was obtained from the NWU. (NWU-HS-2018-075). Thereafter permission was sought from the Department of Social Development Sebokeng where the researcher conducted the research. Consent was gained from all the participants by utilising a trained independent person to administer the consent forms. The researcher conducted the individual interviews until data saturation was reached and when needed, an experienced translator was used.

3.5.5. Data analysis

Qualitative data analysis is a process where the data is gathered and a preliminary analysis is concluded (Maree, 2007:105; De Vos *et al.*, 2011:403). The qualitative content analysis was used for the purpose of this study. The data was collected digitally; by means of an audio recorder and has been transcribed (Maree, 2007:104). The researcher was provided with the opportunity to listen to the recordings, which made the data come alive during the quest for themes and subthemes (Bradshaw *et al.*, 2017:5). Two co-coders also coded the data for the purpose of quality assurance. The coded data was then explored by the researcher. Many themes arose from the data collected, but the researcher focused on the purpose of the study and a smaller number of themes stood out and only the themes

that were found to be in common with the two additional co-coders were selected, this is known as “straight descriptions” (Bradshaw *et al.*, 2017:5).

The data obtained is safely kept on a disc and has been stored in a locked cupboard. Electronic data is stored and is protected with a password. After transcribing, the data has been deleted from the recording devices. After the study is completed the data will be stored in a locked cupboard at the North-West University for a period of six years. Thereafter the data will be destroyed by means of shredding the documents.

3.6. Findings and discussion

In order to understand the findings, it is important to understand the demographics of the participants as this influenced the participants' framework for answering the questions.

3.6.1. Demographic data of participants

During the study there were a few factors that might have influenced the perceptions of the participants, which include; being raised in the absence of a father figure themselves, having to be a single foster mother to a foster child, the foster parent's relationship with the foster child, the participants perceptions of men in general and the previous experiences of the participants.

The researcher identified a pattern in some of the participants. It seemed that many of these participants had negative life experiences with male figures in the past. These experiences most probably influenced the way in which the participants perceive male figures in general and therefore affected the data collected.

Seventeen participants were interviewed for the purpose of this study. All of these participants were residing within the Sebokeng region and were receiving services from the Sebokeng DSD at the time of the study. Eleven of the participants made use of a translator during the interview sessions due to language differences. Some of the terms or concepts in this study is not used or familiar in some of the African languages or cultures and therefore it was difficult at times to get the required data, even with the assistance of a translator. For example; when participants were asked to describe an absent father, they will keep on focusing on the effects of an absent father rather on the defining of an absent father. Also, the term alternative father

figure was not clearly understood by the participants and therefore during the research study the researcher at times had to explain what an alternative father is, or the meaning thereof and this might have influenced the responses of the participants. If this encountered, the same description or explanation were used for all the participants.

Although the selection criteria included all single foster mothers regardless of their age, the majority of participants happen to be on average 41 years old or older. Only one of the participants was younger than 36 years. Two participants were between the ages of 36 – 45 years, two of the participants were between the ages of 46 – 50 years, two where between the ages of 51 – 55 years, three participants where between the ages of 56 – 60 years, two between the ages of 61 – 65 years, two between 66 – 70 years and three participants were 71 years or older. The age of the participants might have affected their response rate as they are a bit older and has been single for quite some time.

Only one of the participants was a colored lady, the rest of the participants were Black African ladies. The thirteen of the participants were speaking South Sotho, one participant was Tsonga, one was Venda and two where Xhosa. Between the participants they had a total of nineteen female and ten male foster children currently in their foster care under the age of eighteen years. Five of the participants each had one foster child that has left the system due to age and one foster child passed away while in foster care.

All of the participants have been foster parents for at least three years. The reason why the participants had to be a single foster parent for at least two years is to gain a clear understanding from someone who has been raising a foster child on their own for at least two years. They have more experience in being a single foster parent and the challenges related. Three of the participants have been foster mothers for 4 - 5 years, four has been 6 - 10 years, six has been 11 - 15 years and three has experience of being a foster mother for 16 - 20 years.

Five participants have a male or more than one male staying with the foster family older than 18 years. These males were either the sons of the foster mothers, the maternal uncles of the children or the grandchildren of the participants. None of these males residing was in a romantic relationship with the participant.

It is important to know the family structure of a foster child in order to determine the need for an alternative father figure. Therefore, the researcher asked the current situation of each foster child's biological parents.

Table 4: Biological parents' whereabouts

	Living	Deceased	Unknown
Biological mother	1	15	1
Biological father	2	6	9

The biological parents whereabouts of the children living in foster care with the participants is as follows: One of the participants' foster child has a biological father who is known to the foster child. The child sometimes visits the biological father, but they have an unstable relationship. He also does not contribute to the foster child financially. The biological mother of this child is deceased. Five participants indicated that both the biological parents of the children in their foster care are deceased. Another participant the biological parent's whereabouts is currently unknown; the foster child does not have any relationship with her biological parents. For eight of the participants the biological mother of the children is deceased and their biological fathers are unknown. One of the participant's foster children knows their biological mother, but they have not had contact with her in years. Their biological father is involved in their lives, but they do not share a healthy relationship.

The findings and discussion in this article is based on the literature study and the themes identified during the study. The findings will be discussed in two sections. The first section is based on who can possibly be identified as an alternative father figure. The second is focused on understanding the value of an alternative father figure in the lives of foster children.

The following themes arose from the study:

- 1) Who can be identified as an alternative father figure in the lives of foster children according to single foster mothers.
- 2) The value of an alternative father figure in the lives of foster children.

3.6.2. Challenges experienced during the study

Due to the setting where the interviews took place the following were experienced as challenges: At times there was little or no privacy as some of the participants had other individuals staying at their homes who were at home during the interviews. Once these individuals move or talk in the house it is immediately captured by the recorder. All participants were informed about the process of the interviews and they selected dates and times that best suited them, but still due to the living conditions privacy was limited. Some of the participants still have younger children that they care for and these children had to be present during the interviews as there was no one else to take care of them. Many of the participants are staying in rural and semi-rural areas where their houses are made of zinc and are very small and sound travels easily throughout these houses. So even when neighbours or individuals were talking in the street the recorder captured the voices. At times, during interviews, neighbours will come knocking at the participant's door and the interview session will have to be paused. Most of the participants were from a lower social-economic class and therefore some of them do not have basic furniture and the interviews were conducted while standing.

3.6.3. Who can be seen as an alternative father figure in the lives of foster children

A substitute father or alternative father figure in a typical African rural culture can often be an older brother who replaces the absent father figure (Fazel, 2017:3). Van den Berg *et al.*, (2018:65) and Dickerson (2014:3) support this by stating that in the collective African cultures the biological father is not always seen as the father in the child's life, but rather a significant other like an uncle, grandfather or family friend. In the South African context an alternative father figure can be someone within the family structure, the neighbour or friend who takes over the father's responsibilities (Diaku 2016:58).

Young children, especially young boys experience a positive relationship with such an alternative father figures and these alternative father figures play an important part in the lives of these children, as children need a father or father figure in their lives (Clowes, Ratele, Shefer, 2013:255; Diaku, 2016:58-59). Cartwright and Henriksen Jr (2012:34) noted that children being raised without a biological father expresses a need for an alternative father figure and a biological or non-biological

male figure can replace this role (Sarkadi, Kristiansson, Oberklaid & Bremberg, 2007:5; Steytler & Strydom, 2013:123).

Dickerson (2014:40-41) said that children who are living in the absence of a father figure should become friends with one or more good men like; grandfathers, uncles, cousins, teachers, coach or a friend's father, so that they can learn what a true man is, and to be admired by these special people. For a person to be a good or positive alternative father figure one needs to be a positive male role model or mentor, someone who provides support and promotes personal and family resilience (East *et al.*, 2017:438; Steytler and Strydom 2010:566).

One of the participants in the study of East *et al.*, (2017:439) stated the following “*I do not think that having a father is necessarily important as long as you’ve got somebody in your life who is stable and is there and caring*”. Therefore, it can be concluded that alternative father figures can have a vastly important role in the lives of children being raised by a female-headed household.

3.6.4. Who can be identified as an alternative father figure in the lives of foster children according to single foster mothers

This question is challenging in a South African context as there is no such word as alternative in the African languages. Therefore, the phrase *alternative father figure* does not exist and is not understood by the African culture. However, the participants were all able to identify who an alternative father might be in the lives of each foster child. Although the participants were all females, they strongly believed that due to the on-going role they play in the foster children's lives, they should be identified as the main alternative father figure. The term of alternative father figure seems not to be linked to a gender, but rather to a specific function or role in the family.

Dickerson (2014:27) on the other hand noted that a female cannot take the place of a father and therefore they cannot be seen as an alternative father figure. Data obtained in this study taking into account the single foster mother's perceptions strongly disagrees with this statement. These participants motivated their answers by explaining that they do everything a mother and a father should be doing. They believe that they are doing their best to meet all possible needs of the foster children and they believe that they are fulfilling their roles and expectations of the foster children.

Initially, the participants will identify themselves as the alternative father figures, but later during the study, they also identified other people, both male and female as additional alternative father figures as indicated in Table 5. These other people include grandfathers, uncles and aunts (maternal and paternal), the priest/pastor or religious leader, a male relative of the foster mother including her son, father, brother and also cousins, both male and female. However, they strongly felt that even with other people involved in the lives of the children in their care, they are still the main alternative father figure in the foster children's life due to the role they are playing.

Table 5: Alternative father figure

Alternative father figure	Occurrence
Maternal grandfather	1 (Participant 1)
Maternal uncle	6 (Participant 2, 4, 10, 12, 13, and Participant 14)
Maternal aunt	1 (Participant 3)
Sport coach	2 (Participant 7 and Participant 11)
Foster mother's son (non-related)	2 (Participant 6 and Participant 8)
Female cousin	1 (Participant 3)
Pastor/religious leader	2 (Participant 7, Participant 2)

An important finding was that the participants felt that a person outside the family cannot be trusted enough to be an alternative father figure for the foster children. Fourteen of the participants expressed their concern that a non-related person cannot be seen as an alternative father figure as they cannot be trusted (Participant

1). Therefore, the alternative father figure needs to be related to the foster child. It seems like there is a misconception among the participants that children might only be hurt by men who are not family or related to the child.

3.6.5. The effects and values of an alternative father figure

According to Malm, Murray and Green (2016) in Icard, Fagant, Lee and Rutledge (2017:57) social service providers have not been giving enough attention to father figures and it is challenging to find a positive alternative father figure. In Dickerson's study (2014:183) only two of the eight participants reported that they had a positive alternative father figure. Unfortunately, the opposite is also a reality where an alternative father figure can pose a strong potential risk for a child, especially if this alternative father figure is influencing the child negatively or have a negative relationship with the child (East *et al.*, 2017:439-440).

An alternative father figure can make an important positive difference in a child's life, well-being as well as overall school performance by offering discipline, spending time with the child, praising the child, being attentive to the child's needs, helping the child with homework and being there financially (Curtis, Grinnell-Davis and Alleyne-Green, 2017:591;603; Diaku, 2016:60;80). Teel *et al.*, (2015:589) stated that the presence of an father figure provides a form of support for families who might be prone to depression.

In a study done by East *et al.*, (2017:438) it was found that male children growing up in a single female-headed household had various different alternative father figures such as; grandfathers, uncles and family friends, but they never met the child's expectation for fathering. They always experienced an emptiness, a need for something greater and this seems to be a gap that needs to be addressed.

3.6.6. The effect and value of an alternative father figure in the lives of foster children

The participants identified themselves as alternative fathers, even though they are all female and answered the questions from that framework.

As the participants see themselves as alternative fathers, the questions were rephrased to include other people also as alternative fathers. When asked what the value of an alternative father figure is in the child's life they said that they are of great

value as they are taking care of the child's every need. However, when the researcher asked the question in a way that made the participants think about an additional alternative father figure (not themselves) then their response was mostly negative with regards to the value of such a person. With this response, still 10 of the participants stated that an alternative father is needed in the life of a foster child and can add value to a foster child, but then they need to be the alternative father figure.

According to the participants, alternative father figures can provide the following value in the lives of foster children:

- **Academic support:** They can assist with homework and other school-related issues (Participant 1).
- **Daily care:** Alternative father figures can assist with daily caring of the foster children including cooking and washing dishes (Participant 3).
- **Financial support:** Alternative father figures can provide strong financial support which can assist in providing for a child's needs. The financial value was acknowledged by several of the participants.
- **Emotional and physical support:** There is a great value for an alternative father figure regarding a child's emotional and physical needs (Participant 6 and Participant 8).
- **Guidance and advisory:** An alternative father figure can provide support, guidance and advise.
- A "male" figure is needed when a child has to be assisted when doing **cultural activities**.
- **Discipline:** Participants felt that the value of an alternative father figure will be great with regard to discipline. It was stated that males are better with discipline and that children are more likely to follow the rules if they were set by a male.

Discipline and financial support were highlighted as the most prominent function or role of the alternative father figure.

One of the participants verbatim states that "Mothers are enough but if an alternative father was present his role would be to discipline the foster child and to provide support towards the foster mother". Dickerson's (2014:178;180) study highlighted

that children who shared a healthy relationship with their female parents were less likely to be so negatively influenced by the effect of being raised without a father, but the children still felt that discipline would have been better addressed if they had a father figure. The children still acknowledged that they needed a father figure, they wanted a father figure to be there for them, to guide them and support them. Some of the children in his report reported to acting out on purpose as they felt a need for attention due to only having one parent (Dickerson, 2014:181). These participants in this study shared the same experience as the children in Dickerson's study mentioned.

The participants directed the questions towards themselves and according to the participants, alternative father figures can provide emotional support to them as foster mothers'. In contrast to the literature, none of the participants felt that behavioural problems experienced by their foster children were related to the absence of a father. The reason for this might be that the participants in this particular study did not have foster children who were presenting any major behavioural problems.

3.7. Limitations of the study

The research study was done following a qualitative approach, where the participants were interviewed with a semi-structured questionnaire in order to answer the research question. The interviews were done with single foster mothers. Due to the research methodology used during the study, some of the limitations were expected, such as: People have different perceptions due to their personal experiences. These experiences and personal feelings influenced the information provided by the foster mothers. The findings were related to single foster mothers, but may not be relevant to other foster parents. Therefore using individual interviews as the sole form of data collection in its own, can be seen as a limitation.

Additional limitations include:

- The study was done with African single foster mothers' only.
- Many of the participants had negative experiences with male figures and therefore their overall experience of men and alternative father figures are negative.

- Being raised without a father figure themselves, having to raise a foster child on their own as well as the foster parent's relationship with the foster child. This one again contributes to the negative perception of men in general.
- Another limitation was that the sample was only single foster mothers from the Sedibeng district. The researcher feels that different information would have been gathered by a different population.

3.8. Recommendation for future studies

Recommendation for future studies includes expanding the study to include the perceptions of teachers, foster mothers in general, social workers and other professionals rendering services to foster children regarding alternative father figures, and the value or role they play in the foster children's lives. It will be beneficial if a similar study can be done with a different sample group, however it will be recommended that another research method be incorporated in the study in order to collect information in a different manner. Conducting a study with a focus group including various professionals rendering services to foster families as well as foster mothers would be a way to expand the study and gain valuable insight in the form of a group discussion.

3.9. Conclusion

In conclusion, the overall feeling of the participants was that they are coping fine without an alternative father figure. The majority of the participants experienced themselves as the alternative father figure and therefore doesn't see the need for an alternative male figure. However, the two main things that came from the study was that single foster mothers feel a need for a male figure to assist with the discipline of children as well as to help contribute financially.

One participant went as far as to say that an alternative father figure will only be needed if a foster child does not get the foster care grant. The researcher got the impression that this participant was more focused on her own needs rather than the needs of the foster children. She stated that an alternative father figure can add value by being there physically like doing the labour at the house. This participant also felt that an alternative father figure can assist financially in the upbringing of the foster child. Another participant stated that there is no need for an alternative father figure in the lives of foster children; she explained that foster children might be at risk

of being abused if there is a male involved. The one benefit of having an alternative male figure would be for financial reasons.. One participant also feels that the only contribution an alternative father can make would be financially. It was further said by her that if she had to choose an alternative father figure for the child it would be her son, due to the fact that he provides financially towards the foster child, and assists with homework and discipline. She was however consistent throughout the interview that male's main responsibility should be financial support. She also described herself as the main alternative father figure. Participant 10, both the researcher and the translator felt that this participant is in general angry at men. She does not seem to have anything positive to say about male figures. She is a talkative person and enjoys telling stories and explaining to such an extent that she misses the point and even confuse the researcher and translator. When the researcher asked the question: "How do you think raising foster children would have been different if you had not been a single foster mother?" her response was, "It would have been worse". She explained that she did not have a healthy relationship with her late husband, he was verbally and physically abusive towards her and she was never allowed to make any decisions on her own. The researcher identified some underlying trauma in this participant and after the interview, she asked the participant if she would like to get some counselling. The participant stated that she already received counselling and that she does not want counselling now, but that she would contact the researcher should she change her mind. When asked the question, who can be seen as a father figure? The participant could not answer the question; she only spoke about the abuse she went through with her husband. She also made it clear that she does not trust men in general and does not want them to be part of her or the foster child's life. The participant stated that she is the alternative father figure and that she is fulfilling all the needed roles by herself. Another participant also felt that she is the alternative father figure and that it is sufficient. However, this participant seemed to have a more positive perception of males in general due to her experience with her biological brother who plays an active part in both her and her foster children's life. He is, therefore, seen as the foster family's source of emotional, physical and financial support. This participant felt that a religious leader or even sport coach can also perform the role of an alternative father figure. The feeling of the researcher is that the participants are focused on a more self-centred level and

not taking into account, or are not aware of the needs of the foster children with regards to having an alternative father figure.

The researcher, therefore, had to explain some of the terms to such an extent that it might have influenced the data obtained to some extent. However, the participants were constant about one thing and that is that they are the main alternative father figure in the lives of their foster children. They clearly motivated their perceptions by explaining that they are responsible for everything regarding this child. They are single foster mothers and are therefore forced to perform both the role of a mother and father in their environments. Although some literature might argue with the above-mentioned it is hard to overlook the fact that some of these participants are forced to play the father and mother role, and they are coping well.

The researcher did, however, get the impression that the participants do not always understand the role of a father figure and they are convinced that males should provide financially and deal with the discipline while they are overlooking important factors such as emotional and physical bonds and relationships between children and alternative father figures. Because the participants are focused on these two things only they might be overlooking important male figures in the lives of the foster children.

During the study, it has been identified that several individuals can be regarded as an alternative father figure including but is not limited to; grandfathers, maternal and paternal uncles, aunts and cousins. The overall feeling of the participants is that a person cannot be seen as an alternative father figure if he or she is not biologically related to the foster child.

Most of the participants stated that they feel there is no need for a male figure in the foster children's lives. They explained that they are performing the role of both a mother and a father and feel that they are sufficiently fulfilling these roles.

The value of an alternative father figure when taking into account the foster mother as the alternative father figure is great. The alternative father figure is there for the child in question, providing support and guidance, being there physically, socially, emotionally and financially.

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Section 3

Summary, conclusion, recommendation and contribution towards further studies

4.1. Introduction

In this section, the summary, conclusion, recommendation and contribution of the study towards further studies are discussed. The summary of the study is discussed in this section. The importance of the methodology is also explained.

4.2. Methodology

In order to answer the research question, semi-structured individual interviews were done with single foster mothers. The study was based on qualitative research, as the participants' perspectives were taken into consideration. The interviews were done in English and a translator was used when needed.

4.2.1. Profile of participants

The participants were single foster mothers' who have been a single foster parent for at least two years, and who currently had a foster child in their care for more than two years. All of the participants were residing within the Sedibeng district and was receiving social services from the Department of Social Development, Sebokeng.

4.3. Article 1: Absent fatherhood and the understanding of an alternative father figure by single foster mothers in a South African context.

4.3.1. Findings

The researcher made use of the system theory and the ecological theory in order to conduct the research study. These theories influenced the study due to the fact that the theories are focused on individuals personal life experiences. During this study, a total of 17 participants were interviewed. At times the interviews got difficult due to the language barrier, even with the assistance of a translator, due to the fact that some words were not familiar to the African language. Therefore, the researcher had to ensure that the same phrases were incorporated throughout the interviews. All of

the participants had been single foster mothers for longer than four years at the time of the study.

The findings of this study is based on both literature as well as themes identified during the transcription of the interviews. The following themes were identified during the study and are discussed:

- 1) How an absent father can be described.
- 2) Reasons for being an absent father.
- 3) Single foster mothers' perceptions of alternative father figures in the lives of foster children.
- 4) The experience of an alternative father figure according to single foster mothers.

4.3.2. The experience of an absent father

The term absent father can be described in many different ways, especially when taking into consideration the South African context. One should also be specific when defining an absent father, due to the different reasons for having an absent father, such as; the biological father being unknown, the whereabouts of the father being unknown, when the child has no information regarding the biological father but the extended family does and when the biological father is deceased.

Taking into consideration the above-mentioned, for the purpose of this study the absent father was defined as; a biological or non-biological father (alternative father figure/social father) who is not actively involved in a child's life. Being an absent father includes not being there for a child emotionally, physically, financially and spiritually.

During the study, the participants found it hard to describe the characteristics of an absent father and rather placed focused on the effects that an absent father may have on the foster mother or foster child. The researcher tried by all means to redirect the focus of the question on the characteristics of an absent father and the following was identified:

From the perspective of single foster mothers from a South African perspective, an absent father can be seen as someone who:

- Causes pain to a child, due to not being involved in the child's life.
- Being absent emotionally, physically and financially.

Therefore, an absent father can be defined as someone who makes the conscious choice not to be involved in their child's life emotionally, physically and financially.

4.3.3. Reasons for being an absent father

According to the perceptions of single foster mothers, the following are reasons for fathers being absent in the lives of their children:

- When the father remarries post-divorce and the new family does not accept the child.
- Men do not want to take responsibility.
- Men, in general, are not trustworthy.
- Men are selfish and do not care about anyone except themselves.
- Men are constantly looking for various simultaneous relationships.
- The father and the maternal family may have unresolved issues.
- Men enjoy the single life of drinking and smoking and do not have time for kids.
- Some fathers are not aware that they have children.
- It is a vicious cycle of men being raised without father figures themselves.
- Men are scared to maintain their children.
- Men can not care for children as mothers do.

The system and ecological theories were used for the purpose of this study. Therefore the personal experiences and beliefs of each individual as well as the environmental elements influenced the data obtained. The participants are of the opinion that men can not care for children as mothers do, due to their own perceptions and experiences.

4.3.4. Defining the term alternative father figure, from the perspective of single foster mothers within a South African context.

For the purpose of this study, the non-biological, substitute or social father is referred to as the alternative father figure who is taking over the role and responsibility of a

biological father. This alternative figure needs to be actively involved in the child's life and should be there for the child emotionally, physically as well as financially.

The participants perceived an alternative father figure as a benefit when focusing on families in general. As soon as the question was directly related to the participant and their family setting the participants' response was negative. The general finding was that the single foster mothers do not have a good perception of men in general. It was a shared feeling among participants that females are capable of performing both the "mother" and "father" roles in a foster child's life. During this study the participant at times were contradicting themselves. They will, for instance, say that they do not need or want men or alternative father figures in their lives, but during the next question, they will identify possible alternative father figures in the lives of the foster children, such as uncles, grandfathers or sport coaches. They would also explain that an alternative father figure may be able to assist with discipline more effectively than women, and that the financial contribution of an alternative father figure will be beneficial but they would still say that they are the alternative father figures and that they do not need "men" in their lives. It seems that the participants direct this question towards themselves and not towards the need of the child in foster care. This can be linked to the system theory, where the participants own experiences and perceptions are the centre of the focus during the study.

However, some of the participants were able to identify positive perceptions of alternative father figures, which include (when looking at the positive perceptions one should keep in mind that these perceptions are for both male and female alternative father figures, as many participants identified females as the alternative father figures):

- Alternative father figures can be experienced as positive because they can fulfil the role and the responsibilities of the absent father.
- They can provide support to the foster mother while raising the foster child.
- It was a general feeling that an alternative father figure should be the main source of emotional support towards the foster mother.
- The alternative father figure has to be someone who is involved in a child's life on a constant basis.

- The importance of financial assistance from the alternative father figure was identified by most of the participants. There was a strong feeling among participants that an alternative father figure should mostly be responsible for the financial contribution of raising a foster child. The study done with fathers' in Johannesburg also found that fathers' perception of fathering in general is mostly focused on financial responsibilities (Eddy, *et al.*, 2013:8). This can be linked to the system theory as well as the ecological theory, where individuals' personal experiences as well as environmental aspects influence an individual's perceptions.
- Other significant contributions an alternative father should do that were mentioned by the participants include physical support and to assist with discipline.

Financial contribution and addressing discipline were two main themes that kept coming up during the study. There was a strong feeling among participants that one cannot be seen as an alternative father figure if you do not contribute financially towards the foster child. There was also a general feeling that males are more authoritative, and therefore are better at addressing discipline.

During the study, thirteen of the participants stated that they will never trust a non-related male figure as an alternative father figure for their foster child. This goes beyond the shared belief that in African cultures children are raised by the community as a whole.

All of the participants identified themselves as the alternative father figure in the foster child's life. Therefore, they do not see the need for having an additional alternative father figure in the child's life, especially not a male figure and if an alternative father figure was to be involved it would be for financial reasons and to address discipline only.

4.3.5. The characteristics of an alternative father figure according to single foster mothers

It was identified during the study that culture does not play a role in defining or identifying an alternative father figure. Identifying an alternative father figure will differ from person to person due to their personal beliefs and experiences. It was further

identified that thirteen of the participants feel a non-related person cannot be trusted as an alternative father figure.

Taking into consideration that the participants see themselves and other females as alternative father figures, this role can be divided into positive and negative experiences.

4.3.5.1. *Positive characteristics*

The positive characteristics of an alternative father figure according to the findings include:

- A person who does not drink or smoke.
- Someone who is not abusive.
- Provides support towards the foster child as well as the foster mother.
- It has to be someone who likes children and likes spending time with children both physically and emotionally.
- It should be someone who can assist the foster mother in raising the foster child financially. An alternative father figure should be responsible for most of the child's financial expenses.
- Assist in cultural ceremonies, especially for a boy child.

Contributing financially and providing emotional support towards the single foster mother came up several times during the study. Taking into consideration the above-mentioned findings, the alternative father figure has to be someone who can be trusted, reliable, a good listener, respectful, a good leader, strict but kind, be involved in all aspects of the foster child's life including school, humble, encouraging, protective and taking care of the foster child as if it was his own child. Negative experience:

4.3.5.2. *Negative characteristics*

Some of the participants had a negative characteristics regarding alternative father figures. The findings include:

- Three participants feel that men, in general, can't be trusted and they are not a safe option to have around vulnerable children such as foster children.
- Men cannot take care of kids the way a mother does.

- An alternative father figures will only be beneficial for financial contributions and addressing discipline.

4.4. Article 2: Foster mothers' perceptions on the effects and value of an alternative father figure in the lives of foster children

4.4.1. Findings

The findings and discussion in this article are based on the literature study, empirical investigation and the themes identified during the study. Two main themes stood out during the study:

- 1) Who can be identified as an alternative father figure in the lives of foster children according to single foster mothers.
- 2) The value of an alternative father figure in the lives of foster children.

4.4.2. Who can be seen as an alternative father figure in the lives of foster children

This question was challenging during the study as there is no such word as alternative father figure in the African languages. The researcher had to explain the term alternative father in such a way that the participants understood the term for the purpose of the study. Focusing on the findings of the study it is clear that the participants do not link the word alternative father figure to a person, but rather to the roles associated with a father figure. Therefore, all of the participants identified themselves as the alternative father figures in the lives of the foster children.

The participants in this study strongly feel that they resemble the alternative father figures in the lives of the foster children as they are responsible for everything related to the foster children. They are performing both the “mother” and “father” roles in the children's lives. The participants identified the following individuals who may also be experienced as alternative father figures; grandfathers, uncles, and aunts (maternal and paternal), the priest/pastor or religious leader, a male relative of the foster mother including her son, father, brother and also cousins, both male and female. However, they strongly felt that even with other people involved in the lives of the children in their care, they are still the main alternative father figure in the foster children's life due to the role they are playing.

4.4.3. The effects and values of an alternative father figure

During the study, the participants identified themselves as the alternative father figures in the lives of the foster children. Therefore, the effects and values of an alternative father figure would mostly be perceived as positive by the participant. Therefore, the researcher had to rephrase the questions to get the participants to think and be able to identify additional alternative father figures in the lives of the foster children. The response was then mostly negative. However, 59% of the participants still felt that an alternative father figure can provide value to a foster child's life.

According to the participants, alternative father figures can provide the following value in the lives of foster children:

- **Academic support:** They can assist with school-related issues.
- **Daily care:** Alternative father figures can assist with daily caring of the foster children including cooking and washing dishes.
- **Financial support:** Alternative father figures can provide strong financial support, which can assist in providing for a child's needs. The financial value was acknowledged by several of the participants.
- **Emotional and physical support:** There is a great value for an alternative father figure regarding a child's emotional and physical needs.
- **Guidance and advisory:** An alternative father figure can provide support, guidance and advice.
- A "male" figure is needed is when a child has to be assisted when doing **cultural activities**.
- **Discipline:** The participants felt that the value of an alternative father figure will be great with regard to discipline. It was stated that males are better with discipline and that children are more likely to follow the rules if they were set by a male.

Discipline and financial support were highlighted as the most prominent value or role of the alternative father figure.

4.5. Conclusion

Terms like absent father and alternative father figure were hard to explain during the research study, as these words are not part of the African languages. However, the researcher explained these terms to the participants in such a manner that they understood what the study was about.

During the study, it was found that foster mothers do not link an absent father is any person (male or female/biological and non-biological) to a person, but rather a specific function who makes the conscious choice to be part of a foster child's life emotionally, physically or financially. There are many reasons for being an absent father and some of these reasons include; male figures not wanting to take responsibility, men in general, cannot be trusted and male figures run away from their financial responsibilities. Due to the above-mentioned perceptions of single foster mothers, they feel they have the responsibility to be both the mother and father to the foster children.

The participants further felt that should there be an alternative father figure besides the foster mother, this person has to be directly related to the foster family. This alternative father figure should then also be responsible for the financial and discipline roles of raising the foster child.

There was a strong feeling among participants that females can be seen as the alternative father figure. They stated that they are mostly responsible for all things related to the foster child and therefore they should be seen as the main alternative father figure. African single foster mothers perceive themselves as strong powerful women who can perform any task of a man.

From the data collected it seems that alternative "male" father figures are not necessarily needed by single foster mothers. This may be because the term alternative father figure is a concept that is not familiar to the African context and might be confused with social fatherhood. Another reason for single foster mothers believing that they do not need an alternative father figure can be because of their own experience with male figures. Some of the participants experienced trauma due to both physical and emotional abuse by the hands of men and therefore their overall conception of males, in general, seems to be negative.

The overall perceptions of single foster mothers is that there is no need for an alternative father figure, as they are already taking the place of the father figure. They experience themselves as strong and powerful. The findings may have been different if the foster children's perceptions was taken into account.

4.6. Contributions

The findings of this study may influence further studies. The data obtained identified that there is a gap on research based on foster children's perceptions. The data gathered in this study may assist social workers and other professions to be able to identify alternative father figures, to understand the role and responsibilities of an alternative father figure and to understand the value of an alternative father figure in the lives of foster children. This study also identified that foster mothers does not necesarrily understand the term alternative father figure or the role of an alternative father figure.

4.7. Recommendation for further studies

This paper identified that there is still a gap in research that is focused on single foster mothers from a South African perspective. Therefore, professionals rendering social service to families, especially foster families will benefit from further studies. Recommendation for future studies includes expanding the study to include the perceptions of teachers, foster mothers in general, social workers and other professionals rendering services to foster children. Another recommendation can be to repeat a similar study with a wider population of single foster mothers and not only Sebokeng clients. As well as to conduct the same research study with foster children. Conducting a study with a focus group including various professionals rendering services to foster families as well as foster mothers would be a way to expand the study and gain valuable insight in the form of a group discussion. It can also be recomendaed that programs be developed to educate foster mothers' on the defintions and role of an alternative father figure in the live of a foster child. Implement programs that can provide support to single foster mothers'. It is recommended that the same study be done incorporating different research methods

Section 4

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Addendums

Addendum 1: Guidelines for Journal of Humanities

Manuscript format and layout/guidelines to authors:

Articles or contributions that have been published elsewhere will not be considered.

Two complimentary copies of the edition that contains an author's contribution, will be mailed to each author free of charge. More copies may be ordered from the publication's office at the set price.

Manuscripts, in **Afrikaans or Dutch** only, should be typed in double spacing Arial 12 with a 25 mm left margin. Manuscripts must be **edited and according to the technical specifications of the journal**.

- Authors must submit written proof that the manuscript has been edited by a knowledgeable language practitioner.
- Contributions are limited to **6 000 to 8 000** words.
- Please submit an abridged curriculum vitae in Afrikaans and English (100-200 words) and a photograph (JPEG) of each author.
- Manuscripts must contain a summary of **100-250** words in Afrikaans, Dutch, German or French, plus an English abstract of 600-1000 words. The English abstract should start with a **translation of the title**.
- A list of approximately 10 - 20 key terms in Afrikaans and English must be given after the summary.
- **Illustrations or drawings** must have suitable captions placed below the graphic, and should be in a size appropriate to the format of the journal.

Guidelines for headings:

1. MAIN HEADINGS are in capital letters and bold. Leave a space between the heading and the text.

1.1 Headings are in lower case and bold. Leave a space between the heading and the text.

1.1.1 Sub-headings are in italics. Leave a space between the heading and the text.

Headings may be numbered if preferred. Do not put full stops after headings.

Table headings:

TABLE 2: Economic development according to demographic groups

Captions of figures:

Figure 3: *Systemic interdependence.*

- **Quotations** are not in italics - even when in another language. Quotations that exceed **three** lines should be indented and do not get quotation marks. Any insert to a quotation is between square brackets. See examples in the printed journal.

- **Abbreviations** must be avoided if at all possible.
- **Corrections** after the final copy has been approved will be charged as author's corrections.
- **Bibliographic references** are based on the abbreviated Harvard method, with some variation for certain subjects.

Examples:

Book: Olivier, D.V. 1996. *Die nag van die vlieë*. Kaapstad: Blackwell.

Article from journal or magazine: Van Wyk, B. 1993. Vesel voorkom hartsiektes. *SA Tydskrif vir Dieetkunde*, 19(3):56-59.

Chapter in a book: Elphick, R. & Malherbe, V.C. 1989. In Elphick & Giliomee (eds). *The shaping of South African society 1652 – 1840*. Cape Town: Maskew Miller Longman.

Internet source:

Gries, H.B. 1996. Experimental learning. *Education online*, 21(1). <http://www.edu.learning.html> [14 October 2004].

OR IN AFRIKAANS:

McFarlane, L.R. 2004. Afrikaans en die media. *SA Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns*, <http://www.akademie.co.za> [14 Oktober 2004].

If the source is Afrikaans, all bibliographic detail is in Afrikaans, or vice versa in English.

References in the text:

Volgens Swan (1996:45) ...

OR: ... (Swan 1996:45) ...

OR: ...(Swan 1996:45). (at the end of a sentence)

Page fees: There is a charge of R300 per printed page (+BTW) towards the printing costs. It is the responsibility of the author to arrange for payment of these fees by his/her university/institution. The journal is an approved publication with regard to government subsidy for universities and research institutes.

Copyright: Copyright remains with the author(s) of the article.

Responsibility for manuscripts, illustrations and discs:

Although the editor and publications office will always take care of the handling of manuscripts, pictures and graphic material, we cannot take responsibility for any lost material - please keep back-ups. If an author would like to have the material returned, please inform the editorial office on submission of the article.

Addendum 2: Guidelines for the Journal of Social Work and Social Development

Article length

Articles should not exceed 6000 words from the first word in the title to the last word in the list of references.

Abstract

Present an abstract of not more than 250 words. Abstracts should not contain any footnotes or citations. Do not type the abstract in italics.

Keywords

Below the abstract, please provide 4–6 keywords for indexing (only proper nouns should be capitalised). Separate keywords/phrases with a comma, e.g. semantics, code-switching, discourse, southern regions of Africa, indexicality

General Style Guidelines (Chicago Manual of Style: Author-Date, 17th ed.)

Guidelines for the Technical Preparation of Manuscripts

Layout

Submit manuscripts electronically as **Microsoft Word** files. All graphic material has to be positioned at the correct place in the text and should be of good quality. Do not add supplementary files with graphic content.

- Manuscripts must be presented as: A4 pages; normal margins; 12pt Times Roman; 1.5 line spacing.
- Proofing language must be set as UK English (e.g. colour—not color; travelled—not traveled; organise; organisation; organising—not -ize).
- Do not type double spaces anywhere; not between words, at the end of sentences or after colons.
- Type hard spaces (shift + control + space bar) when phrases are preferred to be presented as a unit, e.g. 10_000; Vol. 1 (2): _22–21.
- Authors should include their affiliation or ORCID below their name, after the title of the article.

Style

- Do not use the ampersand (&) anywhere in the text or citations; use “and” instead.
- In text, emphasise words by using italics only sparingly. Italicisation should otherwise be reserved for titles and words from a language other than that of the text.
- Italicised words/phrases in another language are glossed by an equivalent word/phrase in the language of the text placed in parentheses, e.g. *indoda* (a man). Words well known in South African English are set as roman, for example, “lobola,” “ubuntu,” “indaba.”
- Words/terms that need to be singled out as being “borrowed” from another author/source may be placed in double inverted commas.
- Titles of *standalone publications* must be in headline style (significant words are capitalised) and in italics when typed in the text. Titles of articles are placed between “double inverted commas.” Also see citation guidelines for examples.

Acknowledgements

Acknowledgements appear at the end of the article, should be brief, and recognise sources of financial and logistical support and permission to reproduce materials from other sources. Save a copy of documentation granting such permission. Adherence to copyright rules remains each author's sole responsibility.

Addendum 3: Scientific committee approval



PO Box 1174, Vanderbijlpark
South Africa 1900

Tel: 016 910-3111

Fax: 016 910-3116

Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

www.optentia.co.za

Ms Judy van Tonder (de Wet)

[22353054]

9 May 2018

“Single foster mothers’ perceptions of alternative father figures for children in foster care”

Dear Ms de Wet,

This letter serves to confirm that your research proposal has been accepted and approved by the **Optentia Research Committee**.

Please note the change in title as suggested by Kareni Bannister and accepted.

The ethics application is referred to the Humanities Research Ethics Committee (HUMREC).

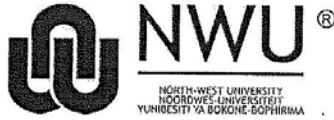
Best of luck with your study!

Best Regards,

Prof. S. (Ian) Rothmann

Director: Optentia Research Focus Area

Addendum 4: Ethics acceptance



Private Bag X1290, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-1111/2222
Fax: 018 299-4910
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

Research Ethics Regulatory Committee
Tel: 018 299-4849
Email: nkosinathi.machine@nwu.ac.za

ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER OF STUDY

Based on approval by the North-West University Human Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (NWU-HSS-REC) on 29/10/2018, the North-West University Human Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee hereby approves your study as indicated below. This implies that the North-West University Research Ethics Regulatory Committee (NWU-RERC) grants its permission that, provided the special conditions specified below are met and pending any other authorisation that may be necessary, the study may be initiated, using the ethics number below.

Study title: Single Foster Mothers' Perceptions of Alternative Father Figures for Children in Foster Care																														
Study Leader/Supervisor (Principal Investigator)/Researcher: J De Wet																														
Student: -																														
Ethics number:		<table border="1"> <tr> <td>N</td><td>W</td><td>U</td><td>-</td><td>H</td><td>S</td><td>-</td><td>2</td><td>0</td><td>1</td><td>8</td><td>-</td><td>0</td><td>7</td><td>5</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3">Institution</td> <td colspan="3">Study Number</td> <td colspan="3">Year</td> <td colspan="3">Status</td> </tr> </table>		N	W	U	-	H	S	-	2	0	1	8	-	0	7	5	Institution			Study Number			Year			Status		
N	W	U	-	H	S	-	2	0	1	8	-	0	7	5																
Institution			Study Number			Year			Status																					
Status: S = Submission; R = Re-Submission; P = Provisional Authorisation; A = Authorisation																														
Application Type:		Risk Category: Medium																												
Commencement date: 2018/10/29		Expiry date: 2019/10/29																												
Approval of the study is initially provided for a year, after which continuation of the study is dependent on receipt and review of the annual (or as otherwise stipulated) monitoring report and the concomitant issuing of a letter of continuation.																														

Special in process conditions of the research for approval (if applicable):

- Translation of the informed consent document to the languages applicable to the study participants should be submitted to the NWU-HSS-REC (if applicable).
- Any research at governmental or private institutions, permission must still be obtained from relevant authorities and provided to the NWU-HSS-REC. Ethics approval is required BEFORE approval can be obtained from these authorities.

General conditions:

While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, the following general terms and conditions will apply:

- The study leader/supervisor (principle investigator)/researcher must report in the prescribed format to the NWU-HSS-REC:
 - annually (or as otherwise requested) on the monitoring of the study, whereby a letter of continuation will be provided, and upon completion of the study; and
 - without any delay in case of any adverse event or incident (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the study.
- The approval applies strictly to the proposal as stipulated in the application form. Should any amendments to the proposal be deemed necessary during the course of the study, the study leader/researcher must apply for approval of these amendments at the NWU-HSS-REC, prior to implementation. Should there be any deviations from the study proposal without the necessary approval of such amendments, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited.
- Annually a number of studies may be randomly selected for an external audit.
- The date of approval indicates the first date that the study may be started.
- In the interest of ethical responsibility, the NWU-RERC and NWU-HSS-REC reserves the right to:

- request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the study;
- to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modification or monitor the conduct of your research or the informed consent process;
- withdraw or postpone approval if:
 - any unethical principles or practices of the study are revealed or suspected;
 - it becomes apparent that any relevant information was withheld from the NWU-HSS-REC or that information has been false or misrepresented;
 - submission of the annual (or otherwise stipulated) monitoring report, the required amendments, or reporting of adverse events or incidents was not done in a timely manner and accurately; and / or
 - new institutional rules, national legislation or international conventions deem it necessary.
- NWU-HSS-REC can be contacted for further information or any report templates via Daleen.Claasens@nwu.ac.za or 016 910 3441.

The NWU-HSS REC would like to remain at your service as scientist and researcher, and wishes you well with your study. Please do not hesitate to contact the NWU-HSS REC or the NWU-RERC for any further enquiries or requests for assistance.

Yours sincerely



Prof Chrizanne van Eeden
Chair NWU Human Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Original details: (22351930) C:\Users\22351930\Desktop\ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER OF STUDY.docm
8 November 2018

Current details: (22351930) M:\DSS1\6533\Monitoring and Reporting Cluster\Ethics\Certificates\Templates\Research Ethics Approval Letters\9.1.5.4.1 NWU-HSS-REC Ethical Approval Letter.docm
5 December 2018

File reference: 9.1.5.4.1

Addendum 5: Information and consent form

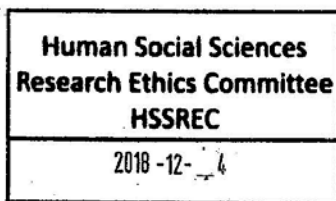


Private Bag X1290, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

Tel: +2718 299-1111/2222

Fax: +2718 299-4910

Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>



Date: 13 October 2018

C. van Eeden

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENTATION FOR SINGLE FOSTER MOTHERS WITH FOSTER CHILDREN CURRENTLY IN THEIR CARE

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH STUDY: Single foster mothers' perceptions of
alternative father figures for children in foster care

ETHICS REFERENCE NUMBERS: NWU-HS-2017-0075

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Dr JPD Steytler

POST GRADUATE STUDENT: J. De Wet

ADDRESS: 8 Bentley Vanderbijlpark (J de Wet)

CONTACT NUMBER: 083 258 6657 (J de Wet)
072 144 0148 (JPD Steytler)

Dear prospective participant

You are being invited to take part in a **research study** that forms part of a Masters study on single foster mothers' perceptions of alternative father figures for children in foster care. Please take some time to read the information presented here, which will explain the details of this study.

Please ask the researcher or person explaining the research to you any questions about any part of this study that you do not fully understand. It is very important that you are fully satisfied that you clearly understand what this research is about and how you might be involved. Also, your participation is **entirely voluntary** and you are free to say no to participate. If you say no, this will not affect you negatively in any way whatsoever. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any point, even if you do agree to take part now.

This study has been approved by the **Humanities and Health Research Ethics Committee (HHREC)** of the **Faculty of Humanities of the North-West University (NWU-HS-2017-0075)** and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines and principles of the international Declaration of Helsinki and the ethical guidelines of the National Health Research Ethics Council. It might be necessary for the research ethics committee members or relevant authorities to inspect the research records to make sure that we (the researchers) are conducting research in an ethical manner.

What is this research study all about?

This study will focus on single foster mothers' perceptions of alternative father figures for children in foster care. The researcher will follow a qualitative descriptive design and the researchers have been trained to use this method.

All the participants for this study live in the Sebokeng area. This study will be conducted at your house to ensure comfort as well as confidentiality. The researcher will only ask you some questions that you need to answer from your experience as a single foster mother.

The objectives of this research are to get an understanding of how you see an absent father. The study further explores alternative father figures for children in foster care, who can be seen as one and what the value are of such a person.

Why have you been invited to participate?

You have been invited to be part of this research because you met all the criteria, which is:

- Being a single foster mother residing in the Sebokeng area;
- You have a child(ren) in foster care under the age of 18 years in your care; and
- You have been a foster mother for longer than two years.

You will unfortunately not be able to take part in this research if you are not a single foster mother, who does not have a foster child under the age of 18 years in your care or who is a foster mother for less than two years.

What will be expected of you?

You will need to participate in an individual interview session where the researcher will ask you some questions. The interview will be conducted with you alone and not in a group. The questions will relate to a single foster mothers' perceptions of alternative father figures for children in foster care. You will only participate in one interview session that will be no longer than 45 minutes.

Will you gain anything from taking part in this research?

The findings of this study might help professionals that render services to foster families, especially where there is an alternative father figure in the family. This study can also be helpful for other studies that focus on family structures. There is that possibility that you will only gain indirectly from this study through the assistance of your social worker.

Are there risks involved in you taking part in this research and what will be done to prevent them?

The risks in this study, and how these will be managed, are summarised in the table below:

Probable/possible risks/discomforts	Strategies to minimize risk/discomfort
The risks to you in this study are that you might feel emotional.	The researcher will try to limit emotional distress by keeping the topic controversial. If any emotional distress is caused by the study the researcher will refer you to the relevant counselling services.
All the questions are relating to the child in foster care, but this may let you think about your own upbringing and life as a child that could be distressful or make you feel uncomfortable.	If any distress is caused, the researcher will refer you for counselling sessions at a trained counsellor at DSD.

However, the benefits (as noted above) outweigh the risk. *Should we learn, in the course of the research, that someone is harming you, or that you are intending to harm someone, then we must tell someone who can help you/warn the person you are intending to harm.*

How will we protect your confidentiality and who will see your findings?

Anonymity (meaning; in no way, will your results be linked to your identity) of your findings will be protected by providing each participant with a number rather than using any identifying information.

Confidentiality (meaning; I/we assure that we will protect the information we have about you) will be respected by keeping your information anonymised. Confidentiality will also be supported by explaining the purpose and importance of confidentiality. Reporting of findings will be anonymous by making use of numbering.

Only the researcher and the study leader will be able to look at your findings. Findings will be kept safe by locking hard copies in locked cupboards in the researcher's office and for electronic data, it will be password protected. The interviews will be audio-recorded and the researcher will transcribe the conversation. As soon as data has been transcribed it will be deleted from the recorders. The transcripts will be stored on a password-protected computer. Data will be stored for six years.

What will happen to the findings?

The findings of this study will be used for this study and in future for further studies or collaborative studies to further explore the topic of alternative father figures in the lives of foster children.

If any further studies will be done the process will first be approved by the ethics committees of the NWU (HREC) that will stand on the behalf of the participants. Only the researchers for this study will use the findings for further studies.

The information will stay anonymise to protect your identity. This means that the reporting will not include your name or details that will help others know that you participated in the study.

The findings will be published in peer-reviewed journals.

How will you know about the results of this research?

After the study is complete, the findings will be shared with you in the form of a letter. The researcher will include her contact details in this letter to ensure participants can contact her should they have any questions regarding the research findings. These findings will also be shared with the gatekeeper and independent person in the form of a letter.

Will you be paid to take part in this study and are there any costs for you?

No, you will not be paid/compensated to take part in the study. You will not need to travel as the researcher will come to your house to conduct the interview. There will thus be no direct costs involved for you if you do take part in this study.

Is there anything else that you should know or do?

You can contact Mrs Judy De Wet at 016 930 2121 or 083 258 6657 if you have any further questions or have any problems or concerns.

You can contact the chair of the Humanities and Health Research Ethics Committee (Prof Chrizane van Eeden or Chrizane.vaneeden@nwu.ac.za if you have any concerns or complaints that have not been adequately addressed by the researcher. If you cannot get hold of her, you can leave a message for her with Ms Daleen Claasens (016 910 30441)

You will receive a copy of this information and consent form for your own purposes.

Kind regards

J de Wet

Declaration by participant

By signing below, I agree to take part in the research study titled: **Single foster mothers' perceptions of alternative father figures for children in foster care.**

I declare that:

- I have read this information/it was explained to me by a trusted person in a language with which I am fluent and comfortable.
- The research was clearly explained to me.
- I have had a chance to ask questions to both the person getting the consent from me, as well as the researcher and all my questions have been answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is **voluntary** and I have not been pressurised to take part.
- I understand that what I contribute (what I report/say) could be reproduced publicly and/or quoted, but without reference to my personal identity.
- I understand that the interviews will be recorded and transcribed and that a trained translator will be present during the interviews to assist with translations.
- I understand that the findings of this study will be used for this study and in future for further studies or collaborative studies to further explore the topic of alternative father figures in the lives of foster children.
- I may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be handled in a negative way if I do so.
- I may be asked to leave the study before it has finished if the researcher feels it is in the best interest, or if I do not follow the study plan, as agreed to.

Signed at (place) on (date) 20...

.....
Signature of participant **Signature of witness**

- You may contact me again. ☐ Yes ☐ No
- I would like to receive feedback on the research study in the form of a letter. ☐ Yes ☐ No

The best way to reach me is:

Name & Surname: _____

Phone Number: _____

Consent form

Page 5 of 8

Addendums

In case the above details change, please contact the following person who knows me well and who will help you to contact me:

Name & Surname: _____

Phone Number: _____

Declaration by the person obtaining consent

I (name) _____ declare that:

- I clearly and in detail explained the information in this document to

- I did/did not use an interpreter.
- I encouraged him/her to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them.
- I am satisfied that he/she adequately understands all aspects of the research, as discussed above
- I gave him/her time to discuss it with others if he/she wished to do so.

Signed at (place) on (date) 20...

.....
Signature of the person obtaining consent

Declaration by researcher

I (name) declare that:

- I explained the information in this document to or I had it explained by who I trained for this purpose.
- I did/did not use an interpreter
- I encouraged him/her to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them or I was available should he/she want to ask any further questions.
- The informed consent was obtained by an independent person.
- I am satisfied that he/she adequately understand all aspects of the research, as described above.
- I am satisfied that he/she had time to discuss it with others if he/she wished to do so.

Signed at (place) on (date) 20...

.....
Signature of researcher

Addendum 6: Semi-structured interview questions

Confidential Information

Single foster mothers' perception of alternative father figures for children in foster care questionnaire

- ✓ It is important that the consent form must be completed prior to the interview.
- ✓ Participants also need to give verbal consent and needs to be recorded.
- ✓ Make sure that the audio recorder is recording the interview and that you say the participant's number on the recording at the start of the interview.

1. Demographic Data

1.1. Participant

Participant number																											
Area residing																											
Age	20-25		26-30		31-35		36-40		41-45		46-50		51-55		56-60		61-65		66-70		71+						
Race	Black				Coloured				Indian				White				Other										
Home language	Afrikaans				English				Ndebele				Tsonga				Setswana										
	S Sotho				Swati				Venda				Zulu				Other										
Biological children living in the home (under 18)										Other children living in the home (under 18) but not foster children																	
How many children in foster is currently under your care (under 18)										Boys		Ages															
										Girls		Ages															
How many children did you care for left the foster care system?										Male		Reason															
										Female		Reason															
How long have you been a foster parent? (years)										2-3			4-5			6-10			11-15			16-20			21+		
Are there any male adults (older than 18) living with you?										Yes			No														
If yes, what are your relationship with this male person?																											
If yes, is this person related to the children in foster residing with you?										Yes			No														
If yes, how are they related?																											
Does the foster child have a biological mother?										Yes			No														
Does the foster child have a biological father?										Yes			No														

2. Alternative father figure

2.1. How would you define a father / what comes to mind when you think about the word father?

Confidential Information

2.2. According to your experience, if you have any male family members with whom you share a healthy relationship, what role do they play in the lives of foster children?

2.3. When you think about the father that is not involved in a child's life. What would you say would be the reasons for not being involved?

2.4. How will you define an absent father?

2.5. Is the foster child in your care presenting any behavioural problems?

2.6. Do you think these behavioral problems can be related to the absent father? How?

2.7. If you think about a child being raised without a father figure what problems do you think these children can experience?

Confidential Information

2.8. Do you experience a difference between being a single foster mother for a boy and being a single foster mother for a girl?

2.9. How do you think raising foster children would have been different if you had not been a single foster mother?

2.10. Do you feel there is a difference between foster households where there are a father figure and households where there are no father figures?

Yes		No	
-----	--	----	--

2.10.1. In your opinion, what makes the difference?

2.11. In your opinion who can be seen as a father figure / what would you describe as a father figure?

Confidential Information

2.12. In your opinion, do you think that a female can be experienced as an alternative father figure? Why or why not?

2.13. How will you describe an alternative father figure?

2.14. Can you identify alternative father figures in the lives of the foster children?

Yes	☐	No	☐
-----	--------------------------	----	--------------------------

2.14.1. If yes, how is this person related to the child?

2.15. In your experience, do you think these alternative father figures can have an effect on the lives of foster children? How?

2.16. How do you feel about alternative father figure?

Positive	Why	
Negative	Why	

Confidential Information

2.17. According to you, do foster children need alternative father figures?

Yes	Why	
No	Why not	

2.18. In your opinion, does culture play a role in the defying of an alternative father figure, or in their involvement?

Yes	How	
No	Why not	

2.19. How are alternative father figures perceived in different cultures?

2.20. From your experience, how can alternative father figures be more involved?

2.21. In your opinion, what is the value of having an alternative father figure involved in the lives of foster children?

Confidential Information

2.22. In your opinion, do you think there is a need for alternative father figures?

Yes	Why	
No	Why not	

2.23. Do you think that a person outside of the family can be an alternative father figure for foster children?

Yes	2.23.1. Who would you prefer to be an alternative father figure for a foster child outside of the family? Explain your answer.	
	Family member	
	Friend	
	Religious leader	
	School teacher	
	Sport Coach	
	Community leader	
	Other (Specify)	
No	2.23.2. Why don't you think a person outside of the family can't be an alternative father figure for a foster child?	

3. Any questions about the questions that you would like to ask.

Addendum 7: Independent person consent

Mrs J de Wet
judydewet25@gmail.com
016 930 2121

The Department of Social Development
Sebokeng

26 September 2018

Dear Independent person

Independent person for a research study

I am in the process to conduct a study *to explore the perceptions of foster mothers regarding alternative father figures in the lives of foster children*. The participants for my study reside in the geographical area which your office serves. My study leader is Dr Johan Steytler from the NWU Vaal Triangle Campus in the social work department with the contact details 016 9103437 or Johan.Steytler@nwu.ac.za.

An independent person is needed in order to eliminate biases and to ensure that the researcher does not have any contact with the participants prior to the research study. The role of the independent person for my study will be as follow:

- You will receive a list of potential participants for the research study from the researcher.
- Systematic sampling will be used to sample participants. Every third person on the list will be contacted by the independent person as the researcher is not allowed to contact the participants prior to the study.
- Participation process for the independent person:
 - You will contact the prospective participants and explain the purpose of the study to the participants as well as make it clear that participation is voluntary.
 - After identifying possible participants who are willing to participate in the research study you as the independent person will go to each participant's house, where the purpose of the research study as well as the importance of voluntary participation and the consent form will be explained.
 - You will then explain to the possible participants that you will leave the consent forms with them for a period of four days in order to give them sufficient time to decide whether they want to participate in the research study or not.
 - After four days as the independent person you will collect the consent forms from each participant from their houses.

- The consent forms will then be given to the researcher who will allocate a number to this participant.

If you are willing to serve as the Independent person for my study, will you please complete the third page and return it to me before 28 September 2018.

Please contact me if you have any questions.

Kind regards



Mrs J de Wet

Independent Person Acceptance Statement

I Monique Petgieter am a registered social worker at the Department of Social Development at the Sebokeng office. I have a Masters in Social Work qualification and I have 5 years of experience in this profession. My current job description is Social Worker.

I hereby state that;

- I am willing to act as the Independent person for the study of Mrs J de Wet, titled Single foster mothers perception of alternative father figures for children in foster care;
- that I will ensure that none of the possible participants are my clients;
- that I will uphold ethical standards and keep the names of the possible candidates confidential at all times.



Signature

28/09/2018

Date

Addendum 8: Translator 1 consent

Mrs J de Wet
judydewet25@gmail.com
016 930 2121

The Department of Social Development
Sebokeng

26 September 2018

Dear Translator

Translator for a research study

I am in the process to conduct a study *to explore the perceptions of foster mothers regarding alternative father figures in the lives of foster children*. The participants for my study reside in the geographical area which your office serves. My study leader is Dr Johan Steytler from the NWU Vaal Triangle Campus in the social work department with the contact details 016 9103437 or Johan.Steytler@nwu.ac.za.

A translator might be needed in cases where the participants does not understand English. The role of the translator for my study will be as follow:

- To help with translation to English when needed;
- To be available during the research study when needed for translation; and
- To provide clear, true and accurate translations

If you are willing to serve as the Translator for my study, will you please complete the second page and return it to me before 28 September 2018.

Please contact me if you have any questions.

Kind regards



Mrs J de Wet

Translator Acceptance Statement

I Thembele Madondo am a registered social auxiliary worker at the Department of Social Development at the Sebokeng office. I have a Social Auxiliary Work qualification and I have 10 years of experience in this profession. My current job description is Social Auxiliary work I have been helping with translations since 2014. My translation services include Zulu, Sotho Seswosa

I hereby state that;

- I am willing to act as the Translator for the study of Mrs J de Wet, titled Single foster mothers perception of alternative father figures for children in foster care;
- that I will ensure that none of the possible participants on the combined list are clients of mine;
- That I will uphold ethical standards and keep the information gathering during interview sessions confidential.

Madondo

Signature

26-09-2018

Date

Addendum 9: Translator 2 consent

Mrs J de Wet
judydewet25@gmail.com
016 930 2121

The Department of Social Development
Sebokeng

26 September 2018

Dear Translator

Translator for a research study

I am in the process to conduct a study *to explore the perceptions of foster mothers regarding alternative father figures in the lives of foster children*. The participants for my study reside in the geographical area which your office serves. My study leader is Dr Johan Steytler from the NWU Vaal Triangle Campus in the social work department with the contact details 016 9103437 or Johan.Steytler@nwu.ac.za.

A translator might be needed in cases where the participants does not understand English. The role of the translator for my study will be as follow:

- To help with translation to English when needed;
- To be available during the research study when needed for translation; and
- To provide clear, true and accurate translations

If you are willing to serve as the Translator for my study, will you please complete the second page and return it to me before 28 September 2018.

Please contact me if you have any questions.

Kind regards



Mrs J de Wet

Translator Acceptance Statement

I Pkisoine Selokocane am a registered social auxiliary worker at the Department of Social Development at the Sebokeng office. I have a Social Auxiliary Worker qualification and I have 10 years of experience in this profession. My current job description is Auxiliary Worker. I have been helping with translations since 2014. My translation services include Sotso, Zulu, Xosha, Tswana

I hereby state that;

- I am willing to act as the Translator for the study of Mrs J de Wet, titled Single foster mothers perception of alternative father figures for children in foster care;
- that I will ensure that none of the possible participants on the combined list are clients of mine;
- That I will uphold ethical standards and keep the information gathering during interview sessions confidential.

Pkisoine Selokocane

Signature

27-09-2018

Date

Addendum 10: Social worker/counsellor letter

Mrs J de Wet
judydewet25@gmail.com
016 930 2121

The Department of Social Development
Sebokeng

26 September 2018

Dear Counsellor / Therapist

Counsellor / Therapist for a research study

I am in the process to conduct a study *to explore the perceptions of foster mothers regarding alternative father figures in the lives of foster children*. My study leader is Dr Johan Steytler from the NWU Vaal Triangle Campus in the social work department with the contact details 016 9103437 or Johan.Steytler@nwu.ac.za.

A counsellor / therapist might be needed in cases where participant will require counselling due to unresolved trauma. The role of the counsellor / therapist for my study will be as follow:

- To provide counselling services to participants who experience trauma due to unresolved trauma that were triggered during this research study.
- To provide 1 (one) free counselling sessions to participants who require counselling.

If you are willing to serve as the counsellor / therapist for my study, will you please complete the second page and return it to me before 28 September 2018.

Please contact me if you have any questions.

Kind regards



Mrs J de Wet

Clishandre can be described as a very trustworthy and responsible person. She has excellent communication and inter-personal skills. She has a happy and positive disposition and is always punctual and responsible. On a personal level she was popular with staff and was well liked and accepted by everyone.

Should you have any queries, please feel free to contact the undersigned at (016) 422 0507

Regards,



A.J. van der Merwe
Chief Social Worker

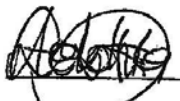
Date: 8-11-2017

Councillor / Therapist Acceptance Statement

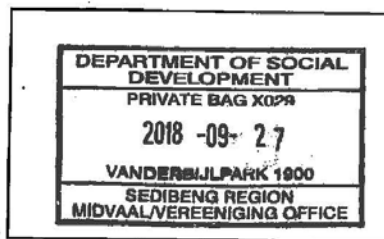
I C.S Austin-Lehchla am a registered Social Worker at the Department of Social Development at the Sebokeng office. I have a Bachelor of SW qualification and I have 6 years of experience in this profession. My current job description is Reg. & Monitoring ECOPs. My experience in counselling / therapeutic services include: Counseling child & adult victims of rape, abuse, marriage, Domestic Violence, Parent child problems, any Trauma and
Experience: Stress.
The SW was also part of the Life Esidimeni team that counseled families before, during and after court proceedings. Various trainings have been attended toward counseling services.

I hereby state that;

- I am willing to act as the councillor / therapist for the study of Mrs J de Wet, titled Single foster mothers perception of alternative father figures for children in foster care;
- that I do not have any direct contact with supervision clients and therefore my role as councillor / therapist will be pure and free from biases; and
- that I will uphold ethical standards and keep the names and information identified during the counselling sessions confidential.


Signature

27/09/18
Date



Official Stamp

Addendum 11: Letter of gatekeeper – Department of Social Development – Sedibeng region

Mrs J de Wet
judydewet25@gmail.com
016 930 2121

The Manager
Department of Social Development
Sebokeng

26 September 2018

Dear manager

Gatekeeper for a research study

I am in the process to conduct a study to *explore the perceptions of foster mothers regarding alternative father figures in the lives of foster children*. The participants for my study reside in the geographical area which your office serves. My study leader is Dr Johan Steytler from the NWU Vaal Triangle Campus in the social work department with the contact details 016 9103437 or Johan.Steytler@nwu.ac.za.

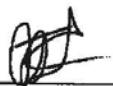
A gatekeeper is needed in order to eliminate biasness and to ensure that the researcher does not have any contact with the participants prior to the research study. The role of the gatekeeper for my study will be as follow:

- To request all supervision social workers from DSD (excluding the researcher, independent person and translator) to identify 5 (five) single foster mothers meeting the following criteria:
 - They should be single foster mothers (no husband, boyfriend or life partner living in);
 - They should be a foster parent for 2 years or more (not less than 2 years);
 - They should have a foster child in their foster care currently under the age of 18 years (boy or girl); and
 - They should be clients of the Sedibeng office.
- A combined list of these possible participants' names and contact details should be given to me on the date provided.
 - I will alphabetically sort the names according to their surname. This list will serve as my sample population.
 - I will follow a systematic sampling method to select the possible participants from the sample population for this study.
- The list of possible participants will be sent to the independent person who will then contact the possible participants.

If you are willing to serve as Gatekeeper for my study, will you please complete the second page and return it to me before 28 September 2018.

Please contact me if you have any questions.

Kind regards



Mrs J de Wet

Gatekeeper Acceptance Statement

I Shireen Hassan am a registered social worker at the Department of Social Development at the Sebokeng office. I have a BA (Social Work) Hons qualification and I have 28 years of experience in this profession. My current job description is Social Work Manager

I hereby state that;

- I am willing to act as the Gatekeeper on behalf of DSD Sebokeng for the study of Mrs J de Wet, titled Single foster mothers perception of alternative father figures for children in foster care;
- that I will ensure that none of the possible participants on the combined list is clients of the researcher, the independent person or the translator;
- that I do not have any direct contact with supervision clients and therefore my role as gatekeeper will be pure and free from biases; and
- that I will uphold ethical standards and keep the names of the possible candidates confidential at all times.



Signature

26/09/2018

Date



Official Stamp

Addendum 12: Language editor



Jomone' Miller

Language Practitioner
SATI No. 1002831
BA Hons (Language practice)

www.jmuller.co.za
Tel: +27 84 406 0029
jomone@jmuller.co.za

DECLARATION OF LANGUAGE EDITING

8 November 2019

To whom it may concern

This is to confirm that I, the undersigned, have language edited the dissertation of *Judy de Wet* entitled:

SINGLE FOSTER MOTHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF ALTERNATIVE FATHER FIGURES FOR CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

No changes were permanently affected and were left to the discretion of the author. The responsibility of implementing the recommended language changes rests with the author of the dissertation.

Yours truly

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J Müller'.

Jomone Müller