

Children's participation in decision-making: Engaging with foster parents to explore their perceptions and attitudes

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Dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree *Magister of Arts in Research Psychology* at the Potchefstroom Campus of the North-West University

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November 2015



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decision-making: Engaging
with foster parents to
explore their perceptions
and attitudes**



E.S. Venton
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**Thesis/dissertation/mini-dissertation submitted in fulfilment/partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree**

Magister

In

Research Psychology

at the Potchefstroom Campus of the North-West University

Promoter/Supervisor: Prof. H.B. Grobler

November 2015

DECLARATION:

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PREFACE

This dissertation is presented in article format according to the guidelines set out in the Manual for Postgraduate Studies (2010) of the North-West University.

The article will be submitted to: *Child and Youth Care Forum*. The guidelines for submission to the journal are attached as Annexure

DECLARATION

I, Elaine Susan Venton, hereby declare that the dissertation entitled **Children's participation in decision-making: Engaging with foster parents to explore their perceptions and attitudes**, which I herewith submit to the North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus, is my own work and that all references used or quoted are indicated and acknowledged in the relevant reference list.

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SUMMARY

Key words

Child participation; decision-making; foster care; alternative care; child protection; health promotion; children's rights; voices of children.

Child participation and participation in decision-making is a phenomenon that has received much scholarly attention since the ratification of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989. It is now 25 years since the UNCR was introduced and over these years participatory processes that respects children's rights has evolved. South Africa has incorporated many international rights into the Constitution and although far from complete, child law is progressing and moving towards a framework in which children's rights are realised. The introduction of the Children's Act 38 of 2005 was one such framework that gave rise to the rights of children to be involved in decision-making processes. The right to be involved in decision-making processes also included children who reside in alternative care/child protection.

This study explored participation in decision-making within the context of a child protection environment and explored the perceptions and attitudes of foster parents, being the primary care-givers of foster children, towards child participation in decision-making. This study viewed participation in decision-making holistically and not merely from a rights perspective. The study emphasized the importance of context and socio-cultural factors that impact the realization of child participation in decision-making. Furthermore, this study viewed participation through the lens of a health promotion perspective in order to better understand the dynamics and challenges to participation in the unique environment of child protection.

A qualitative research methodology was used because this approach aims to understand how people make sense of their everyday lives. It was important to understand the subjective meaning that participations had towards participation in decision-making. The researcher is of the view that participation in decision-making should not be viewed in isolation but should take into account the social context and the interaction of environmental factors that impact the life of a child. It was for this reason that Bronfenbrenner's ecological perspective was deemed an appropriate lens in which to view participation. This perspective of Bronfenbrenner (1986) also takes into account the chronosystem which considers the accumulative affects over time that impacts an individual. Within the context of child protection this is extremely important due to the difficult life histories and accumulative effects of trauma on children who live in the context of child protection.

The sample consisted of nine participants who were legally fostering children through a prominent child protection organization. Participants were mainly from female-headed households and all resided in the Hibiscus Coast and Izingolweni local municipality in the Ugu District of Kwa Zulu Natal. All participants were first language isiZulu speaking. Foster parents who were judged to be competent and experienced foster parents were identified. Participants ranged in age from 47 years to 66 years. Purposive sampling was used to identify participants that would be best able to answer the research question.

Data was collected through two focus groups. The focus group discussion was around the topic of child participation in decision-making. Six pre-selected questions were identified and the participants were asked to make a creative collage that would reflect their answers to the relevant questions. As participants were isiZulu speaking an interpreter was used for the duration of the focus group discussions.

Data was transcribed and thematically described by way of thematic analysis. Four main thematic categories emerged that corresponded to the six questions asked in the focus groups. The four thematic categories were: Category 1: participation in decision-making enhances a sense of belonging, connectedness and family unity. Category 2: participation in decision-making encourages inter-generational dialogue and bidirectional communication. Category 3: systemic influences that challenge participation in decision-making and 4: the influence of culture on child participation in decision-making.

Although the overall attitudes and perceptions of the participants towards child participation in decision-making was positive, it emerged that there were certain challenges unique to this context of foster care and participations experienced confusion and ambiguous emotions at times regarding certain topics that they felt were inappropriate to discuss with children. Participants were of the view that they needed to be equipped with skills to enable them to be better able to communicate with their children on the more difficult life transition topics. Cultural belief systems played a large role on how participants viewed participation in decision-making.

Further research is needed into participation in decision-making within the context of child protection which takes into account the socio-cultural aspects as well as the systemic factors that influence participation in decision-making. Participation in decision-making needs to be viewed as a process and not a once off event and it needs to be viewed holistically and not merely from a rights perspective which only presents with a one-sided view and fails to take into consideration culture and context.

DEFINITIONS

Abandoned:

According to the Act, an abandoned child is defined as someone who has obviously been deserted by a parent, guardian or care-giver; or who, for no apparent reason, has had no contact with the parent, guardian or care-giver for at least three months.

The Act:

It refers to the Children's Act 38 of 2005, as amended.

Alternative Care:

A child in alternative care is defined as a child that has either been placed in foster care; in the care of a Child and Youth Care Centre following an order of the Children's Court or Criminal Procedure Act 51 of 1977; or in temporary safe care.

Care-giver:

According to the Act, care-giver means any person, other than a parent or guardian, who factually cares for a child. A caregiver may include amongst others the foster parent, the person who cares for the child whilst the child is in temporary safe care, the manager of a Child and Youth Care Centre, the person at the head of a shelter, or a child and youth care worker who cares for the child within the community. The child at the head of a child headed household is also defined as a care-giver in the Act.

Child:

A child according to the Act and section 28 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa is defined as any person under the age of 18 years.

Child Protection Organization (CPO):

An organization designated to perform child protection services.

Child in need of care and protection

The Act states that a child who has been orphaned or abandoned and is ‘without visible means of support’ is a child in need of care and protection.

Child participation:

Child participation is defined as a process that recognizes the strengths, abilities and capacities of children to contribute to and share in decisions that affect their lives and the communities they live in at a household, community, and service level.

Participation refers to children being empowered and enabled to play a meaningful role in all decisions that affect their lives, with due weight being given to their opinions, according to their age and maturity

Decision-making:

A process and not a ‘once off event’ and will incorporate involving children in the big and small decisions that could impact their lives

Foster care:

According to the Act, a child is in foster care if the child has been placed in the care of a person who is not the parent or guardian of the child as a result of either an order of the Children’s Court or a transfer from a Child and Youth Care Centre or temporary safe care.

Foster parent:

This refers to a person who accepts responsibility for a (related/unrelated) child who has officially been placed with them by an order of the Children’s Court. This could also include or refer to an active member of an organization operating a cluster foster care scheme and who has been assigned responsibility for the foster care of a child.

Foster child grant (FCG)

Foster child grant refers to the social security grant payable to a foster parent who has a child placed in their care by an order of the court.

Health promotion:

The Ottawa Charter of 1986 defines health promotion as ‘the process of enabling people to increase control over, and improve their health. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), children should experience health as ‘a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

Orphan:

Section 1 of the Children’s Act defines an orphan as a child who has no surviving parent caring for him or her.

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SECTION A

PART I: ORIENTATION TO THE RESEARCH

Orientation and problem statement

Since the International Convention on the Rights of the Child was introduced in 1989 (Jamieson, 2011), children's participation has received considerable scholarly and public attention in both an international and national context. In addition, children's participation is embedded in human rights provisions across a range of both international and national legislation. On a regional level the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (OAU, 1990) was designed and accepted by the Organization of African Unity (Skelton, 2009; Viljoen, 2009). On a national level, the government of South Africa has demonstrated a commitment to ensure that the human rights of children are advanced, promoted, protected and developed (UNICEF, 2006). To this end, in 1995, South Africa ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Schäfer, 2011). In 1999 South Africa adopted its Constitution, which in Section 28, sets out certain principles applicable to children. In 2005, South Africa ushered in a new Children's Act 38 of 2005 (as amended) (Republic of South Africa, 2005) which provides for a comprehensive range of social services for children and their families and introduces a new development approach to South Africa's child and protection system that reinforces the rights that children already have in the South African Constitution and introduces new rights such as the rights of children to participate in decisions that affect their lives (Jamieson & Berry, 2012).

The concept of participation as a right of children has become progressively more prominent in the discourse and application of the rights of children since the late 1990's. Since 1998, UNICEF has been a leading architect and proponent of the human rights based

approach regarding the fulfillment of rights of women and children under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNICEF, 2010). UNICEF promotes the importance of ensuring that the rights of the “whole” child are met and this is accomplished through the meeting of the physical, psychological, developmental and spiritual needs of children, rather than just focusing on essential services such as health care and education only (UNICEF, 2010).

A newer perspective on participation in decision-making comes under the banner of health promotion. A health promotion perspective has a focus on building on an individual's intrinsic strengths and also on enhancing positive development. According to Wong, Zimmerman, and Parker (2010) a health promotion perspective involves young people in decision-making processes that they themselves have identified and this approach can also prevent problems in youth. From a health promotion perspective, it is common to view children and young people within their context, taking into consideration their physical and social environment with respect to their overall health and wellness. Wong et al. (2010) postulate that before this shift in thinking and a more leaning towards a health promotion view occurred, young people were rarely asked to voice their opinions and most of the time child and adolescent research and practices were largely constructed using an adult lens whilst the perspectives of young people were frequently overlooked. Despite this sometimes ‘adult-centric bias’, research does suggest that young people do have the ability to be active agents in their own personal development.

Preoccupation with children's participation by international agencies and the South African state is certainly not obtuse, with many authors advancing arguments as to the benefits of why children should be allowed to participate in decision-making. Participation of children is part of the broader participation discourse where emphasis is placed on democratic

decision-making processes and children's activity and agency being recognized. Furthermore, all people – on the basis of being human – deserve to be treated with dignity and respect and all individuals – also children – are entitled to express their feelings, beliefs and ideas. Participation discourse puts emphasis on the positive attributes and abilities of children in making choices and influencing decisions as well as contributing to the understanding and solution of social issues (Kirby & Woodhead, 2003). Although participation in decision-making processes is a child's right, enabling participation in a democratic way is not as simple as it perhaps sounds. There are many complexities of child participation discourse, some of which will be highlighted further on. As this study aims to explore participation in decision-making within child protection, one such complexity could be the perception of adults of childhood and the possible constructive and destructive use of power in adult-child relationships. This is more critical where children are deemed to be vulnerable and in need of care and protection by adults. It is therefore, reasonable to suggest that navigating this tension between child participation and child protection could become problematic.

There is much social research suggesting that participation has many benefits for children (Bostock, 2004; Kirby & Woodhead, 2003; Prilleltensky, 2010) According to Bromfield and Osborn as cited in Sturmfels and Manion (2012), participation creates a sense of power and control for children when participation means children have an opportunity to describe their perspectives and experiences about what is important to them. More recent research points to the important role of social inclusion which is a precursor and outcome of wellness. It is argued that social inclusion enhances the self-esteem of children which results in children being more confident to be actively involved in participation in other areas of their lives (Prilleltensky, 2010).

Active participation allows children to develop confidence in themselves as social actors who can act as change agents in terms of having some control over their lives (Prilleltensky, 2010; Taylor, Smith, & Gollop, 2008). Allowing children to have a voice assists them to construct a more positive sense of identity, supports confident and assertive development and decreases the vulnerability to abuse and neglect. Hart (1992) emphasizes the importance of children's participation and is of the view of this author that participation is crucial for the development of the autonomy and social co-operation of children and participation prepares children and young people for adulthood.

It has also been suggested that participation assists in bolstering the self-esteem of children and supports better decision-making (Sinclair, 2004). If children are afforded opportunities to make choices and decisions, these opportunities will assist children to build resilience. The critical element of resilience helps children to cope with adversity (Stanley, 2006) and this could be viewed as a protective factor. If children are encouraged to participate in decision-making processes, these processes will help children to construct a more positive sense of identity, their confidence will be supported, they will develop assertively and their vulnerability to abuse and neglect will decrease (Sturmfels & Manion, 2012). This opinion links in with the concept of self-efficacy which is the belief of individuals that they can successfully perform a given activity. Children build their skills and confidence through exposure to new experiences and this assists them in enhancing their self-efficacy (Bostock, 2004). It is through learning to question, learning to express personal opinions and having these opinions taken seriously by adults, that children acquire the skills and competence to develop their thinking (Lansdown, 2005). It is critical that children learn to exercise judgment and that they have the necessary skills to appropriately manage the many issues that will confront them as they approach adulthood.

Many authors are of the view that participation not only benefits children but that it also has benefits for society. Allowing children to participate in the decision-making process about matters that concern them helps to build the self-confidence of children, enhances their communication skills and support networks, and assists them in playing a pro-active role within their communities (Jamieson, 2011). If children are afforded the opportunity to make choices and influence decisions they thereby have a contribution to the understanding and solution of social issues (Kirby & Woodhead, 2003). In effect, participation allows children to develop confidence as potential social change agents.

Although Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child explicitly advocates the importance of creating space for children to express their views, children also have a right to dissent (Kellett, 2011). This is a critical element for consideration regarding participation in decision-making within foster care as children could be hostile to express their views due to a variety of reasons. Children in the care system often have experienced numerous foster placements and literature suggests that children in the care system often feel unheard. So it could be possible to reason that children may feel that participation has not, and will not, benefit them. It is important that the views of children in this regard are also respected.

When exploring children's participation in decision-making it is also important to view participation within the various contexts that children live their daily lives. The researcher is of the opinion that this will afford a more relational and holistic approach to the concept of participation rather than simply viewing children in isolation. There is an abundance of social research available indicating that the health and well-being of children is influenced by their social context (Bronfenbrenner, 1994; Kirby & Woodhead, 2003). This would be viewed as an ecological perspective where children are not viewed in isolation but are seen as part of a

larger complex system or unit. Theoretical approaches within this perspective include Bronfenbrenner (1994) ecological systems theory of human development.

Bronfenbrenner (1994) proposed five socially organized subsystems that help support and guide human growth. These sub-systems include the micro-system, the meso-system, the exo-system, the macro-system and the chrono-system. The microsystem refers to the relationship between a developing person and their immediate environment (e.g. school, family and other people with whom the individual has direct contact). The meso-system refers to the relationships between the micro-systems in an individual's life. The macro-system refers to the economy, customs and culture. The chrono-system refers to life transitions across the entire developmental lifespan of an individual. Bronfenbrenner (1979) emphasized the importance of the interaction of the different environmental systems that may influence human behaviour.

In discussing the theory of Bronfenbrenner the scholar made the mistake of treating this theory as if it solely dealt with the influence of context on children's or adolescent's development. Rosa and Tudge (2013) point out that this is a common mistake and can lead to theoretical incoherence because Bronfenbrenner's theory underwent considerable changes from the time it was first proposed in the 1970's until Bronfenbrenner's death in 2005. Rosa and Tudge (2013) point out that there was actually three phases of Bronfenbrenner's theory, which saw it move from an ecological to a bioecological theory. In the bioecological theory one of the most critical and central aspects of the theory is 'proximal processes' and how person characteristics, context, and historical time can mutually influence those processes. For the purposes of this study the researcher is basing her research on an earlier version of Bronfenbrenner's theory which has a focus on viewing participation in decision-making in context, taking into account the interaction of the individuals within their particular context.

Viewing individuals within their social context is further illustrated by Nelson and Prilleltensky (2010) who refer to the concept of “an ecological metaphor” which recognizes that interactions are constituted between individuals and the multiple social systems in which they are embedded. Nelson and Prilleltensky (2010) further postulate that there is an enormous body of evidence that points to the socio-economic, cultural and contextual factors that shape the lives of children and families.

Drawing on the theory of Bronfenbrenner, the Centre for Disease Control in the United States of America and the World Health Organization (WHO, 1988) have proposed a social ecological model in order to understand violence and violence prevention better. The focus of this model is to understand how violence against children is shaped by the complex inter-play of risk factors at different levels of an interconnected system (Matthews & Benvenuti, 2014). This ecological model could equally be applied in the context of trying to understand child participation in decision-making given the complex interplay of systems in a child protection environment.

In the context of this study, participation will be narrowed down and will be discussed as participation related to decision-making. Decision-making will be viewed as a process and not a “once-off” event and will incorporate the big and small decisions that could impact the life of children on a daily basis. Participation in decision-making will be explored within the context of child protection and foster care. In order to conceptualize participation within foster care, the researcher will briefly discuss foster care as an alternative care placement option for children who cannot be cared for by their birth family.

The term ‘alternative care’ was introduced for the first time in the Children’s Act 38 of 2005 (as amended) (Republic of South Africa, 2005), as a direct response to the growing numbers of orphaned and vulnerable children (Schäfer, 2011). Care options for orphaned and

vulnerable children in South Africa fall under the categories of formal or informal care. For the purposes of this proposal reference is only made to formal care as it is within this context that the study will be conducted. The guidelines for alternative care of children (United Nations, 2009, p. 10) define formal care as follows: “All care provided in a family environment which has been ordered by a competent administrative body or judicial authority, and all care provided in a residential environment, including private facilities, whether or not a result of administrative or judicial measure.”

Within the South African context formal care is the preferred option of alternative care. Children are wards of the state until they reach the age of majority, which is 18 years of age. Children in formal care are placed legally by way of a Children’s Court Order and they will each be assigned a social worker who will monitor their progress and their placement on an ongoing basis until they reach the age of majority. The Children’s Act No 38 of 2005 (as amended) (Republic of South Africa, 2005) recognizes the following types of formal care:

- Foster care
- Cluster foster care
- Child-headed households
- Child and youth care facilities
- Adoption

In Section 181 of the Children’s Act 38 of 2005 (as amended) (Republic of South Africa, 2005) it outlines the purpose of foster care. The purpose of foster care is to protect and nurture children by providing a safe, healthy environment where they receive positive support. Foster care is also to promote permanency planning, family reunification and should

connect children to other nurturing relationships that will last a lifetime. Foster care programmes must also respect children as individuals and the family through cultural, ethnic and community diversity.

As a result of the intensification of social problems, such as poverty, death of caregivers resulting from HIV/Aids, more children are in need of care and protection and there is a great need for quality foster care to be provided for children. Foster care is a preferred method of alternative care and it is commonly accepted around the world that institutional care, where for example children are placed in children's homes, is not the best option for children. Most countries around the world have moved away from this option to some sort of community based care (United Nations, 2009). South Africa is no exception and advocates a move away from institutional care to community based care as a better option for caring for the growing number of orphaned and vulnerable children (Mkhize, 2006).

Much research has been conducted over the years into the effects of institutional rearing on the development of children and it is clear from these findings that it is not the best practice for children to be reared in an institutional environment. According to Morrow (as cited in Emond (2009), children who have been institutionalized within any form of care system regard themselves as powerless, dependent objects whose active contributions largely go unacknowledged. Research also points to children who live in the care system frequently verbalizing feelings of not being listened to and children are of the view that professionals have made decisions about their lives and placement without allowing them to voice their opinions (Barry, 2002; Domanski, 2012).

Children within the care system describe themselves as feeling angry, frustrated and not appreciated (De Boer-Buquicchio, 2011). In the late 1990's, a research study conducted in Cape Town, South Africa, found that a significant number of children in foster care

experience challenges around self-esteem, relationship forming, decision-making, grief as well as school achievement (Gunston, 1995). According to Gunnar and Vazquez (2006), should children experience a compromised family rearing environment or live in a form of institutional care then this can lead to stress dysregulation.

Children who enter any form of alternative care or out of home placements have generally experienced some form of childhood trauma and even general neglect and are deemed to be in need of adult care and protection. Recent research on childhood trauma is providing a more accurate picture in order to understand how the exposure of children to overwhelming stress is traumatized over time into adult psychopathology (Tomlinson, Gonzalez, & Barton, 2011). Research shows that children who have been exposed to violence show disturbing changes in neurobiological and physiological processes and it is postulated that these disturbances have profound developmental consequences (Tomlinson et al., 2011). It is generally accepted that children who have experienced trauma on any level have experienced some disruption in their normal development process. If children have been traumatized in early childhood, their brain may not have developed at the same pace as children of their chronological age (Tomlinson et al., 2011). This developmental lag is a critical element to consider when discussing participatory processes and decision-making with foster children. Van Breda, Marx, and Kader (2012) argue that almost all young people in care have a “fracturing of belonging” and this is due to multiple factors such as being abandoned, abused, bereaved or having frequent migrations from foster home to foster home and this is a key area of poverty in their life histories.

There are many contextual factors that powerfully impact the development of children such as cultural factors, socioeconomic factors and the various social and inter-relating systems that children form part of. When discussing child participation in decision-making

within foster care, it is important to consider all of these factors that perhaps are unique to this particular context. Another aspect to consider is the fact that foster parents have both responsibilities and rights towards their children. Although legislation states that children do have a right to participate in decisions that affect their lives, parents and care-givers have the responsibility to protect their children, who are deemed to be vulnerable and in need of care and protection. As foster parents are primary care-givers and role-models in their children's lives, they will have to navigate this tension between protecting their children on the one hand, and empowering their children on the other hand to be part of the decision-making process. It could be reasonable to suggest that in some instances this could pose a challenge for foster parents and it would be helpful if they themselves were empowered with knowledge regarding the benefits of participation and assisted to be able to create a platform where child participation in decision-making could be enabled within a foster care environment.

Research suggests that at its core, an ethical approach to children's participation in social dialogue must strike the balance between protection and enabling true participation (Bray, Gooskens, Moses, Kahn, & Seekings, 2011). There are several adult perceptions that could make it difficult to achieve this balance. One such adult perception would be to consider only the vulnerabilities of children and to not consider their intrinsic strengths as well. Simply looking at children as vulnerable and in need of care and protection will limit the ability of adults to take into account the strengths and evolving capacities of children which will actually hinder any participatory process. In the context of this study foster parents could find it challenging to find a healthy balance between protection on the one hand, and empowerment on the other hand.

Empowerment approaches place emphasis on the concept of the evolving capacities of children and this is a basic principle of children's rights. From this perspective it is important that children are informed about matters affecting their lives and they are guided in the decision-making process by adults. As children's capacities evolve, they will gradually take over more responsibility in matters concerning them (Munro, 2001). The more the capacities of children evolve, the more equipped they will be to make decisions for themselves. The concept of the evolving capacities of children is addressed in the Children's Act 38 of 2005 (as amended) (Republic of South Africa, 2005) where it states that children should be empowered to contribute to, and share in, decisions that affect their lives with due weight being given to their opinions according to their age and maturity

Power status and relationships influence perceptions of childhood and children and these perceptions impact children in an adult-dominated society. Often the right of children to participate is linked to the perceptions of a society with regard to children and their ability to participate, as well as to adult-power relations (Viviers, 2010). Some of the key principles that drive ethical participation processes of children are: the capacity of adults to understand and facilitate meaningful participation; adults need to be transparent, accountable and honest with children; adults need to acknowledge the right of children to self-determination, access to information and communication; adults should respect the views of children and respect their ability to present views on matters affecting them and their lives; non-discrimination by adults towards children and the upholding of the "in the best interest of the child" principle (Viviers, 2010). Moses (2006) argues that in his experience, children in South Africa see power in adult-child relationships as being fundamental in undermining their participation. Moses (2006) further states that children's participation in South Africa is often limited by adult conceptions of childhood and gender.

Given the benefits mentioned in this proposal regarding children's participation in decision-making and taking cognizance of the fact that children in the care system often verbalize feelings of not being listened to and their views not being considered, it was beneficial to explore the perceptions and attitudes of foster parents towards child participation in decision-making because this could provide valuable insights related to the negotiation of children's participation within this complex and unique context. The foster parents, as primary role-players, were able to provide significant and valuable insights which could be beneficial and add great value to the present body of literature on child participation. The findings of this study could also prove valuable in being able to further investigate and formulate child-friendly practice guidelines directed at enabling children's participation in decision-making within the context of child protection and foster care. The formulation of such practice guidelines will not form part of this study and the researcher will only make recommendations for future research and practice.

Extensive literature on child participation is available. There is also a body of research available that exists about the status and challenges for child participation in child protection and the health status of children who live in some form of alternative care has been extensively researched (Vis, Strandbu, Holtan, & Thomas, 2011). Unfortunately, there has not been much prior research on child participation in decision-making within the context of child protection and foster care within a South African context that takes into account the views and perceptions of foster parents. Since the right of children to participate is clearly ratified in both international and national law and is also mentioned for the first time as a right of children in the Children's Act of 2005 (as amended)(Republic of South Africa, 2005), it is important to conduct research within this context in order to fully understand the benefits and also the challenges of child participation in decision-making specifically within this context. This study aims to contribute to the knowledge gap by asking the following question:

What are the perceptions and attitudes of foster parents regarding children's participation in decision-making? By exploring the attitudes and perceptions of foster parents regarding child participation in decision-making, the findings could provide helpful, new and interesting information. This information could be used to further enable child participation in decision-making within this unique context and in such a way that it contributes to the overall health and wellness of children.

Research aim

The primary aim for the study was to explore and describe the perceptions and attitudes of foster parents regarding children's participation in decision-making.

Review of literature

In order to gain some information about the topic of child participation and to determine the viability of the study, the researcher consulted various sources about child participation in decision-making. The following literature was reviewed: child participation discourse; participation from both a rights and health promotion perspective; the interaction between children and the context in which they find themselves; children who are classified as vulnerable and in need of care and protection; and several theoretical models of participation. The researcher consulted various journal articles, books and databases, such as EBSCO Host, Google Scholar, Pro-quest, Sage Publications, and other various search engines which are available to students through the North-West University library services. The relevant Acts and legislation relating to children were also reviewed. From the literature reviewed it is apparent that although there is an abundance of empirical research available on child participation in general, there is a paucity of research with regard to children's participation in decision-making within the context of a foster care environment.

Research methodology

Research approach and design

A qualitative investigation was conducted using an interpretative descriptive approach in order to obtain a more in-depth understanding of the perceptions and attitudes of foster parents towards child participation in decision-making within the broader context of child protection. Qualitative research is concerned with individuals' own account of their attitudes, motivations and behavior and it offers richly descriptive reports of individuals' perceptions, beliefs and views (McIntyre, 2004). A qualitative study is concerned with understanding rather than explaining and has a focus of understanding the subjective exploration of reality from the perspective of insiders (Fouche & Schurink, 2011). It allows for the subjective exploration of the participants' reality (Fouche & Schurink, 2011; Terre Blanche, Durrheim, & Painter, 2006). An interpretive descriptive approach was an appropriate study design for this study. According to (Ackard, Neumark-Sztainer, Story, & Perry, 2006). Neuman (2003), descriptive research is used when the researcher wishes to describe the experiences of individuals in relation to a social phenomenon. An interpretive descriptive approach is also applicable when one needs to obtain a more in-depth understanding of the meaning, experiences and/or perceptions that underlie an individual's interpretation of a social phenomenon (Fouche & Schurink, 2011; Terre Blanche et al., 2006). In the context of this study, a qualitative interpretive descriptive approach provided a deeper and more in-depth understanding of the subjective meaning that the participants attached to the concept of child participation in decision-making in their life world and within the context of a child protection environment.

Population and sampling

The participants were selected from a data base of foster parents who are legally fostering children through a prominent child protection organization that specializes in foster care and adoption placements. The foster children in their care were not biologically related to the participants. All the participants reside in the area of the Hibiscus Coast and Izingolweni local municipalities which forms part of the Ugu district municipality in KwaZulu-Natal. According to statistics from the 2011-Census (Statistics South Africa, 2012), females account for 53.06% of the population and could be due to the rural nature of the district and migration of men to urban centres in search of work. In this area 82.69% of people are speaking isiZulu. . The participants in this study were all first language isiZulu speakers. Only one of the participants could converse fluently in English. Two of the participants had to be assisted by a research assistant as they were unable to read or write. Seven of the participants were from female-headed households.

The researcher wanted to identify participants that would best be able to answer the research question and pre-selected criteria were used to identify ‘best case scenario’ foster parents. A pre-selected criterion for the selection of the participants (de Vos, Strydom, Fouche, & Delpont, 2011) was developed and foster parents who were judged to be competent and experienced were identified. The pre-selected criterion was submitted to the supervising social worker of the child protection organization and ‘best scenario’ (see description below) foster parents were identified in accordance with the inclusion criteria. The following criteria were used as a benchmark to identify ‘best case scenario’ participants who would best be able to answer the research question.

The criteria for the inclusion of participants were:

- It was preferred that selected foster parents have had the experience of fostering more than one child. Children are all unique human beings and foster children tend to come from very different backgrounds before being placed in care. If foster parents have fostered more than one child their attitudes and perceptions towards allowing children to participate in the decision-making processes could change over time. The researcher was of the view that this would provide a richer data set and would enhance the overall research study.
- It was preferred that selected foster parents have been fostering children for no less than one year but preferably at least for five years. The researcher was of the view that this is important as the foster parents will have built up a history with the child/children in their care over a period of time and this will provide richer data regarding their attitudes and perceptions towards children's participation in the decision-making over time. Children go through different development stages and the perceptions and attitudes of foster parents towards participation may change as the children grow older. Foster parents who have fostered for a longer period of time are deemed to be more experienced regarding the dynamics of foster care.
- It was preferred that selected foster parents have gone through a process of screening and also through the normal statutory process of Children's Court and that their foster children were legally placed with them by way of a valid Court Order.
- It was preferred that selected foster parents have foster children in their care who were all under the age of majority, which is 18 years.
- It was preferred that selected foster parents have not had any placement of foster children in their care breaking down/or had any foster children removed from their care by the case worker or supervising social worker.

- Selected foster parents needed to reside in the area of the Hibiscus Coast and Izingolweni local municipalities which forms part of the Ugu district municipality in KwaZulu Natal.

Purposive as well as convenient sampling was used. Purposive sampling was an appropriate method of sampling because it called for the researcher to think critically about the parameters of the population to choose the sample base accordingly (de Vos et al., 2011). In order to set the parameters, the use of pre-selected criteria for inclusion in the study was essential. The sample was convenient because the researcher wanted to conduct the study with participants who were fostering children legally through a child protection organization. The participants were; therefore, selected if they fulfilled the necessary criteria and if they were available and willing to participate.

Participants and recruitment process

Twelve participants were initially identified by the supervising social worker at the identified child protection organization as “best case scenario foster parents”. Unfortunately, three participants did not arrive on the day due to logistical challenges. The participants lived in the Hibiscus Coast and Izingolweni local municipalities which forms part of the Ugu district municipality in KwaZulu-Natal. The participants were first language isiZulu speakers. Two of the participants were unable to read or write and they were assisted by a research assistant where necessary. The researcher made use of the services of one research assistant and an interpreter, both of whom were first language isiZulu speakers. The research assistant was a qualified social worker experienced in the field of child protection and the interpreter was an auxiliary social worker, experienced in the field of child protection. Only one of the participants could converse fluently in English. Seven of the participants could be classified as being from female-headed households. The participants were between the ages

of 47 years and 66 years. All the participants were recipients of a foster care grant and had experience of fostering more than one child under the age of 18 years.

Before commencement of the study, the researcher visited the child protection organization on two occasions. On the first occasion it was to meet with the senior social worker to discuss the research study and to ascertain whether the foster parents who fostered children through this organization would be suitable participants. On the second occasion the researcher visited the homes of a selected number of possible participants in order to explain to them what the study was about and to explain what was required should they be willing to participate in the study.

Data collection

The researcher was of the view that focus groups were an appropriate method of data collection because focus groups are conducted within a group setting (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). Focus groups would also afford the researcher the opportunity to enhance her understanding of possible differences between people whom one might think of as a homogenous group of people (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). In the context of this study the homogenous group of people would be the foster parents. The focus groups also provided a platform whereby the researcher was able to explore not only the similarities of the perceptions and attitudes of the foster parents towards child participation, but also explore any differing perspectives of the participants towards child participation in general. In order for the findings to adequately provide a thick description of the attitudes and perceptions of the participants towards child participation in decision-making, the researcher identified six pre-selected questions based on the literature review. The researcher also paid attention to including a range of questions (Whittaker, 2012) to ensure a rich data set that would best answer the research question. In addition, the researcher incorporated a creative collage as

another data collection method. A collage can be described as a technique where one uses various materials (for example: photographs, pictures, newspaper clippings, beads, written words) which are glued to cardboard or paper. The way collages are made is unique to the particular individuals and can be used as a creative and visual method that depicts a certain aspect of their life world.

The purpose of using a collage as a data collection method within a focus group was two-fold. Firstly, the researcher was of the view that it would be an interesting way to prompt conversation at the start of the focus group discussion and it also provided interaction between the participants, leading to interesting conversations that built on each other's views. Secondly, due to the researcher not being fluent in isiZulu, the collages also offered a pictorial explanation of the participants' views on child participation in decision-making.

Two focus groups were arranged at a date and time that was suitable for the participants. The focus groups took place in the same location and on the same day (one in the morning and one in the afternoon). The location was the home of one of the participants in a community setting outside of Port Shepstone in KwaZulu-Natal. The researcher ensured that the location was private and secure and would be free from interruptions. Before commencing with the focus groups the researcher asked the interpreter to read the consent form to the participants. After this the participants were asked if they had any questions or needed clarity on any of the contents of the consent form. As the participants had no questions they were asked to sign the consent forms.

The researcher reminded the participants of the research question and explained how to go about answering the six pre-selected questions. The list of six pre-selected questions was made available in written format in isiZulu and each participant was given a copy. The questions were read out to the participants by the interpreter and the researcher ensured all

participants clearly understood the questions. The meaning of a collage was also explained to the participants and they were informed that there was a variety of pens and pencils, magazines, paper, glue, scissors and beads that could be used in a creative way to make a collage to illustrate how they viewed child participation in decision-making. The researcher ensured all participants knew what was expected of them in relation to the procedure of making the collage. Participants were reassured that there was no right or wrong way to create a collage and they were free to create their collages whatever way they chose so long as their answers reflected the six questions. The participants were advised that when they had completed their collage the researcher would ask them to share their collage depicting their views on child participation in decision-making with the other participants in the group.

The researcher asked participant 1 if she would be willing to begin the discussion by explaining what question 1 meant to her. After participant 1 had explained her answer to the first question the researcher moved on to the rest of the participants who were afforded the opportunity to provide their personal views and perceptions. This process continued until the participants had provided their answers to all six pre-selected questions. This process was semi-structured in nature and the researcher did follow the format of the questions but the responses from the participants was not merely just answering the questions. The discussion was interactive in nature and open discussion was facilitated between the participants. By discussing the meaning the particular question had to them, the participants either agreed with each other's views or presented different views. Throughout the focus group there was a continual building on each other's views as participants became more confident in sharing their personal views and what the pre-selected questions meant in their life world.

This was a very time consuming task as the researcher had to ensure that she clearly understood the responses and answers of the participants to each question. The researcher

was sensitive to any possible misunderstanding of the answers of participants due to the language barrier and the use of an interpreter and follow-up questions were used such as: Can you tell me more? Do I understand you correctly? Can you explain what this picture means to you? While the participants were busy working on their collages they chatted together easily, sharing stories about their children and clarifying any difficulties they had regarding the questions and this was valuable information for the researcher.

After all the participants had explained the meaning of their collage to the rest of the group, the focus group was brought to an end. The researcher expressed her thanks and gratitude to the participants for being willing to participate in the study and for being willing to share their perceptions and attitudes so openly and honestly. The researcher also asked the participants to conclude with their experience of the focus group. Both focus groups followed the same process.

Data analysis

Analyzing qualitative data is very different to analyzing quantitative data. (Creswell, 2007) suggests that the process of data analysis and interpretation can best be represented by a spiral image where the researcher moves in analytic circles rather than using a fixed linear approach. For this study the researcher followed the steps of thematic analysis where the focus was on familiarizing oneself with the data in order to generate initial codes, search for themes, review themes, define and name themes and then finally writing up the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The recordings of the two focus groups were transcribed by an isiZulu-speaking social worker (who was present as the research assistant for the duration of the data collection) and thereafter translated into English. The transcripts of isiZulu and English were printed out and the researcher and the research assistant sat together and read through the transcripts to ensure consistency. The researcher familiarized herself with the data (printed

transcripts, as well as collages) and emerged herself in the data by reading and re-reading the transcripts whilst at the same time looking at the pictorial demonstration on the collages in relation to the specific research question. This was important because the participants were asked to portray their perceptions and attitudes towards child participation in decision-making by making a collage. The participants were then afforded the opportunity to explain their views to the relevant pre-selected questions and to explain this in terms of their own personal life world. The researcher identified as many possible initial codes from the transcripts and then organized the codes into themes and categories. Initial coding was done to identify emerging key words or phrases in the text (de Vos et al., 2011). From the initial codes, themes and subthemes were identified and grouped into thematic categories with attention paid to whether the theme captured something important in relation to the overall research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Attention was also paid to any “anomalies” in the codes. As researcher judgment is necessary in qualitative research to determine what a theme is, it was important to ensure that all possible themes were given the same careful attention to see whether they captured something important in relation to the research question. In this regard no initial codes were ignored. The researcher was also interested in exploring attitudes and perceptions of the participants in relation to child participation in decision-making and to explore even differences in perceptions and attitudes of the participants who could be thought of as a homogenous group of people. According to Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 83), thematic analysis needs to provide a rich description and be an accurate reflection of the content of the entire data set. Although sub-categories were also identified, the main categories and sub-categories were integrated due to the small sample size. The findings are discussed in Section B.

Trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba (1985) advise qualitative researchers to pay close attention to the issue of trustworthiness of their research study. This is important since the researcher is the data gathering instrument in a qualitative study (Nieuwenhuis, 2010). There are four main constructs that reflect the reliability and validity of a qualitative research study: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Fouche & Schurink, 2011). Encompassing trustworthiness is crystallization in that it provides the researcher with a complex and deeper understanding of the phenomenon (Nieuwenhuis, 2010). The researcher acknowledges that in qualitative research data analysis is a non-linear process and the steps taken to address these four constructs will now be described.

In order to ensure credibility, the researcher asked all of the participants the same questions. The participants were asked to make a collage in order to demonstrate their perceptions and attitudes towards the participation of children in decision-making. Throughout the duration of both the focus groups the researcher ensured that she checked with the participants to ensure her understanding of their answers was accurate. The participants were given ample opportunity to highlight something if they were of the view that the understanding or interpretation of their answers to the questions was not accurate. The data were transcribed and stored safely throughout the course of the research study. After completion of the research project the data will be stored at the North-West University for five years before being destroyed.

In this study transferability was addressed by the provision of a thick and rich description of the research findings. It must be noted; however, that data were only collected from one small sample of participants from one child protection organization and all of the participants were isiZulu speakers. The goal was not to generalize the data. The researcher

asked the participants the same questions and in the same chronological order and ensured that the participants were given ample time in which to discuss the meaning of their collages. The participants were also given ample opportunity to object to the researcher's understanding and interpretation of their answers in order to ensure dependability.

The researcher kept field notes which described her experiences of the research study with regard to confirmability. It was important to keep an open mind and be flexible during the approach due to the researcher being from a different ethnic and cultural group – also bearing in mind her own values and assumptions and beliefs that could be different to the views of the participants. It was important for the researcher to be culturally sensitive and to realize that the backgrounds of the participants were different from her.

Ethical implications

The researcher is a professional registered counsellor and is bounded by the code of ethics as set out by the Health Professions Council of South Africa. The research was also approved by the ethics committee of the North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus, under the ethics number: NWU-00060-12-A1. As with any qualitative study, the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection. Silverman (2005) is of the opinion that qualitative research demands theoretical sophistication and methodological rigor and postulates that one of the challenges qualitative researchers will face is convincing themselves and their audience that their “findings” are genuinely based on critical investigation of their data and do not depend on a few well-chosen examples (Silverman, 2005). The researcher wanted to provide a rich and thick description of the attitudes and perceptions of the participants towards child participation in decision-making and although direct quotes from the participants were used to identify themes in the data, the researcher also ensured that she looked out for any

anomalies in the data as previously explained. The ethical protection of the participants was ensured through the following actions:

- Informed consent

The contents of the informed consent were explained to the participants verbally and the participants were informed about the purpose of the investigation, the procedures that would be followed, possible risks and possible advantages or disadvantages of participating in the study(Williams, Tutty, & Grinnell, 1995). The information on the consent form was relayed by the interpreter in isiZulu to the participants. The consent forms were made available in both English and isiZulu. The researcher ensured that all of the participants were aware of the implications of signing the informed consent (Strydom, 2011). When the participants acknowledged that they understood the contents of the informed consent they were asked to sign this document. All of the participants signed the informed consent that was written in isiZulu. Signed informed consent was also obtained from the senior social worker/director of the child protection organization. The interpreter and research assistants signed confidentiality forms. Participant informed consent is provided in Annexure A. Organizational informed consent appears in Annexure C. Confidentiality forms used for the research assistants are provided in Annexure D. Annexures will be included in CD format.

- Avoidance of potential harm and risk to participants

As with any research study it is impossible to categorically state there will be no harm to respondents. The researcher made it a priority to protect the participants against any emotional discomfort that might emerge from them participating in the research project. In order to do this the researcher ensured that the participants clearly understood what was expected of them before they agreed to participate in the study. The consent form and contents thereof were explained to the participants in their own language prior to

commencement of any data collection and the researcher answered any questions and clarified anything the participants were unsure of. Before commencement of the focus groups the researcher advised the participants that they have a right to request debriefing should they experience any emotional discomfort during one of the focus groups or during both sessions.

- Voluntary participation

The researcher ensured that the participants were aware that their participation in the study was completely voluntary. No participant was forced or coerced to take part in the research study (Gravetter & Forzano, 2006) and participants were informed that they could discontinue at any time during the process should they wish to do so.

- Gatekeeping and mediating

The researcher gained access to this community by way of the senior social worker employed by the child and protection organization whose responsibility it is to oversee the foster care programme. The researcher had two consultation meetings with the social worker and the relevant staff and case workers prior to data collection.

- Deception of the participants

It is important when conducting ethical research that the participants are not deceived or misled in any way (Strydom, 2011). No information was withheld from the participants and they were given the correct information before agreeing to be part of the research study.

- Confidentiality and anonymity

Both focus groups were conducted at a central venue that was convenient for the participants to get to. The focus group sessions were held at the home of one of the participants. The home provided a big enough space to allow for the participants to sit

comfortably at a table. This venue was private and comfortable for the participants. These participants knew each other well as they attend a monthly support group together so they were comfortable sharing with one another in a group context. In fact, several of the participants voiced their appreciation for being part of the group because they learned from one another in a group context. Even though only partial confidentiality can be assured in focus groups, the researcher explained the importance of maintaining confidentiality around what was said in focus groups.

It is important to protect sensitive information and also the identities of the participants (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008). The participants were identified by way of a unique code for data analysis purposes and during the research process all information was kept on a password protected computer belonging to the researcher. Hard copies were kept in a locked filing cabinet in the office of the researcher. The participants were advised that the data collection is the property of the North-West University and once the study is complete, the university will keep this data for a period of five years. Data will be kept in a locked room at the COMPRES (Community Psychosocial Research) office on the Potchefstroom Campus.

The focus group discussions were recorded using audiovisual methods. The researcher is aware that this method of data collection can prompt questions with regard to ethics. The reason for using a visual method to record data was to ensure that the collages made by the participants were adequately captured. It also assisted the researcher when conducting the data analysis to ensure that the transcripts and collages accurately reflected the correct participant. The participants agreed to the focus groups being recorded by audiovisual methods and this was also discussed in the consent form. In the event of findings being published, no visual data will be made available to illustrate findings. Ethical data

management and the level of privacy and confidentiality were disclosed to the participants beforehand.

- Competence of the researcher

The incompetency of a researcher can cause the research study to fail and may lead to invalid results. As suggested by Strydom (2011), the researcher committed to engage with the participants in a professional manner and ensured she was fully prepared whilst conducting the study. The researcher was aware that she needed to follow the protocol in this community and worked through the gatekeeper of the organization at all times when endeavoring to set up convenient times for focus group sessions. As the participants were of a different culture and were first language isiZulu speakers, the researcher made use of an interpreter for the duration of the data collection. The researcher was aware that this was a limitation and kept an open mind as to the different cultural aspects that could arise throughout the process of data collection.

This was the researcher's first practical experience of conducting research in the field but prior to studying towards a Master's degree in research psychology the researcher completed the academic component of a Master's degree with a focus on Gestalt play therapy. This degree has a research component and gave the researcher a basic understanding of a research process. The researcher also has a professional registration with the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) and adheres to the ethical requirements as set down by the HPCSA.

Remuneration for the participants

The participants received no remuneration to participate in the study. The researcher provided snacks, lunch and soft drinks for the participants. The participants did not incur any

personal costs to participate in the study. It is for this reason that a venue was chosen that was within walking distance from some of the participants' homes and the child protection organization provided transport for others that were not within walking distance to the venue. Before a focus group venue was arranged the participants were asked their views about a possible and suitable venue. The options for an appropriate venue provided were either at the child protection organization or at one of their homes in their community. The participants chose to meet in their own local community and one of the participants offered the use of her home for the focus groups to take place.

PROVISIONAL CHAPTER DIVISION

Section A (Part 1) : Introduction and orientation to study

Section A (Part 2) : Literature review

Section B : Journal article to be sent to the *Child and Youth Care Forum*

Section C : Overall summary of research including conclusions and limitations

Section D : Addendums

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SECTION A

PART II: LITERATURE REVIEW

ENABLING CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF FOSTER CARE: A THEORETICAL EXPLORATION

Introduction

The aim of this literature review is firstly to explore and describe the concept of child participation in general. Secondly, to provide a contextual background of child participation in decision-making within the context of foster care in South Africa. Thirdly, to discuss how an enabling environment for child participation can be created and facilitated in a foster care context. Several applicable theoretical models of participation will be discussed such as Hart (1992) ladder of participation, Treseder (1997) participation model and Lundy (2007) model. Most research articles and publications make use of the work of Hart and Lundy in explaining the construct of child participation (Wong, Zimmerman, & Parker, 2010). However, the child participation discourse is evolving all the time and a more recent typology of youth participation with a strong focus on adolescent health promotion (Wong et al., 2010) will also be discussed. These participation models provide valuable information and offer a foundation and guiding principles which could be applied in the context of foster care to enable and facilitate a process of child participation in decision-making. Relevant international and national literature and declarations on the rights of children have also been reviewed, including The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 2009), with special focus given to Article 12; the Bill of Rights found in the South African Constitution and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of The Child (1990).

Child participation in decision-making within the context of child protection will be viewed holistically and regarded as a process of participation in decision-making and not merely a “one-time” event. In order to provide a theoretical base the ecological perspective of Bronfenbrenner (1979) will be applied. The researcher is of the view that the theory of Bronfenbrenner is a well-researched and evidence-based theory and is appropriate for this study which aims to view child participation in context with regard to decision-making.

In the first part of the literature review it is argued that the notion of child participation can be viewed and understood from various lenses and perspectives. For the purpose of this study the researcher has chosen to focus on a rights perspective of which there is an abundance of literature available, and the relatively newer – and less researched – perspective of child health promotion in order to facilitate a more in-depth understanding of child participation in decision-making. The appeal of these perspectives is that they have a strong focus on building on the intrinsic strengths of children and enhance positive development in children. Social research suggests that there are numerous benefits to children if they are involved in the decisions that impact their lives. Some of these potential benefits will be explored together with some of the possible challenges regarding participation. Some protective factors will be explored and an evaluation will be made of whether participation in decision-making could possibly be another protective factor. The literature review chapter will conclude with a summary of the concepts discussed and conclusions reached.

A conceptual understanding of participation in decision-making

Child participation in decision-making

Child participation is a multi-faceted concept and the degree to which children should have a voice in matters that concern them is a subject of much debate and divergent opinion. Participation is not only a human right that children are entitled to. Broadly speaking, child

participation is about the activities and agency of children being recognized; about children being treated with dignity and respect; about them being entitled to express their feelings, beliefs and ideas; about them being listened to and about their voices being heard (Bray, Gooskens, Moses, Kahn, & Seekings, 2011).

Interest in the theme of children's participation has gained momentum over the last couple of years. An international academic network was established and a seminar series on 'Theorising children's participation: Learning across countries and across disciplines' were funded by the Lever Hulme Trust (Bray et al., 2011). A considerable amount of research has been conducted into the area of child participation both nationally and internationally (Pölkki, Vornanen, Pursiainen, & Riikonen, 2012) and the interest in children's active involvement in discussions about issues that affect them is being stimulated by an increased awareness and understanding of children's development, abilities, contributions and their rights to expression, decision-making, information and association (UNICEF, 2010).

Although the concept of participation is broad, in the context of this study participation in decision-making refers specifically to foster children who live with a foster family being afforded the opportunity to take part in a process of discussions in such a way that their opinions and views can have some influence on decisions that impact their lives. This is consistent with views of Cousins and Milner (2006) and Leeson (2007) who suggest that for children to participate effectively, participation needs to be viewed as a process rather than a one-off event. Although definitions of participation in decision-making may vary, for the purpose of this study the researcher is of the view that the definition provided by Franklin and Sloper (2005) is appropriate due to the identification of certain key features which could be appropriately applied in the context of foster care.

According to Franklin and Sloper (2005), children have firstly to be provided with information in order to understand what the content of the decision-making is about and what

the arguments and options are. Secondly, it is important that children are given the opportunity to express their wishes and views. Thirdly, the opinions of children should be considered (Vis, Strandbu, Holtan, & Thomas, 2011). This definition is in line with the Children's Act 38 of 2005 (as amended), (see South Africa 2015), where one of the principles of child friendly foster care is where children are empowered to contribute towards and share in decisions that affect their lives with due weight being given to their opinions, according to their age and maturity. This definition is consistent with Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child where participation is assumed as an ongoing process in which children can have a say in some, if not all (Littlechild, 2000), of the decisions that impact them.

Conceptualizing participation in decision-making within foster care

Foster care, according to the Children's Act 38 of 2005 (as amended), is where children have been placed in the care of persons who are not the parents or guardians of the children as a result of either an order of the Children's Court or a transfer from a child and youth care centre or temporary safe care. Foster care programmes are part of the child protection system that are aimed at providing alternative care to children who require care and protection out of their parental homes. The United Nations Guidelines on the alternative care of children (Nations, 2009, p. 10) defines foster care as follows:

“Situations where children are placed by a competent authority for the purpose of alternative care in the domestic environment of a family other than the children's own family, that has been selected, qualified, approved and supervised for providing such care”.

Foster care, as set out in Chapter 12 of the Children's Act 38 of 2005 (as amended), is only one form of alternative placement that the Children's Court can order (Breen, 2015;

Schäfer, 2011). The need for children to be placed in alternative care arises out of many situations such as orphanhood, abuse and neglect. There have been a significant number of children entering the foster care system since 2002 mainly due to the HIV/Aids pandemic (Breen, 2015). According to the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) and the SOCPEN data base (2009), which is a data base used for processing applications for foster care grants, child support grants and various other grants, statistical data revealed that during October 2009 more than 549 827 children were placed in the foster care of an estimated 362 019 families compared to 506 556 children placed in 329 709 foster families for the same period of time in 2008 (Department of Social Development, 2011). In March 2014, 512 055 children were placed in foster care and were receiving foster grants (Breen, 2015). These figures indicate that the need for foster care programmes could continue to increase dramatically over the coming years.

The Department of Social Development recognized the need to provide quality foster care due to the increasing number of children entering the foster care system. Quality foster care ensures that vulnerable children who are in need of care and protection live in a safe environment, receive positive support, relationships are nurtured and experience a sense of permanency in their lives. In 2011, as a first step in addressing this need, the Department of Social Development compiled foster care guidelines which outline numerous guiding principles that must underpin any foster care programme for South African children. These central guiding principles provide a frame of reference for best practice and intervention measures. The central principles include respecting, protecting and promoting the best interests of children, treating children fairly and equitably, protecting children from unfair discrimination, supporting child participation where children are empowered to be able to share in decisions that affect their lives and acknowledging the needs of children for development of their strengths. According to these guidelines, a best practice approach

incorporates both a rights based and developmental approach (Department of Social Development, 2011).

The Department of Social Development places a high priority on providing reunification services where necessary. This means that a high priority is placed on foster children being reunified with their biological family where possible. In the context of this study reunification was not part of the research study. Due to the lengthy process of training that the participants (foster parents) undergo, they are all familiar with the implementation of South African legislation in this regard.

The context of foster care is broad and this study will narrow it down to specifically exploring participation in decision-making with foster parents from one specific child protection organization. In order to provide a contextual background to child participation in decision-making, a rights and health promotion perspective will be discussed in this literature review. Owing to the lack of primary studies in this specific context of foster care, the researcher will not infer a causal relationship but will view child participation in decision-making as not only being the right of children, but also that participation has the potential to promote the overall health and well-being of children.

Perspectives on participation

A rights perspective

The concept of child participation as a right of children has become progressively more prominent in the child rights discourse and application since the late 1990's and is embedded in the provision of human rights across a range of both international and national legislation. The rights of children are defined internationally by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), and these are rights to: non-discrimination or equality; freedom of expression; access to information; protection of privacy; freedom of

thought, religion and conscience; and participation in cultural life. The UNCRC asserts the right of every child to self-determination, dignity, respect, non-interference, and the right to make informed decisions (Söderbäck, Coyne, & Harder, 2011). Viviers and Lombard (2013) also regard child participation as a cornerstone of human rights. The UNCRC is based on four fundamental pillars, namely: non-discrimination; best interest of the child; the right to survival, protection and development and participation (Guidelines for effective foster care, 2011). Since the adoption of the Convention in 1989, child participation has been the subject of an increasing flood of initiatives, ranging from research and publications to conferences and concrete projects (Lansdown, 2001). National and local governments, UN Agencies, international and national NGO's, community groups and schools have started to explore what is meant by consultation, participation and empowerment (Lansdown, 2001)

Since 1988, UNICEF has been a leading architect and proponent of the human rights-based approach across its programmes to fulfil the rights of women and children in accordance with two legal and moral touchstones: the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (UNICEF, 2010, p. 30). All human rights are indivisible and are interdependent which basically means that no single right should be prioritized over another right. In respect of children this means ensuring that the rights of the “whole” child are met. Addressing the rights of the whole child is accomplished through the meeting of the physical, psychological, developmental and spiritual needs of children, rather than focusing on essential services such as health care and education only (UNICEF, 2010).

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child introduced the concept of the ‘evolving capacities’ of children. Article 5 of the Convention states that direction and guidance, provided by parents or others with responsibility for children must take account of the capacities of children to exercise rights on their own behalf (Lansdown, 2005). This has

profound implications for adults working with children because this principle recognizes the fact that as children acquire greater competencies they have a greater capacity to take responsibility for decisions that affect their lives. Within the context of this study this is a key concept when discussing participation in decision-making because it means that foster parents are required to recognize that children are active agents in their own lives and should be afforded increased autonomy in decision-making as they acquire greater competencies. Although child participation in decision-making is a right of children, in the context of child protection children are also deemed vulnerable and have a need for care and protection by adults. The challenge for foster parents could be how to navigate the need for protection of children on the one hand, and the right of children to participate, on the other hand. Moses (2006) asserts that there appears to be a lack of knowledge, experience and debate as to how children can be afforded both protection and participation. This will be discussed further in the literature review.

The concept of child rights in South Africa began after South Africa ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child on 16 July 1995. In the post-apartheid South Africa the precepts of child rights were embedded into the country's Constitution. South African law gives effect to international rights and at a national level South Africa ratified two treaties that impact children's rights to participation on the African continent. The first one is the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights (1981), which provides for participation as a civil and political right, as reflected in Articles 8, 9 and 10. The second treaty is the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (African Union, 1990), which includes non-discrimination; the best interests of children; survival and development; respect for children's views and supporting African unity (Jamieson, 2011).

The most comprehensive addition to the child rights framework is the 2005 Children's Act and Amendment, which reinforces provisions in the Bill of Rights. The Children's Act 38

(2005) (as amended) details the responsibilities of parents and guardians of children and it requires that adults who take decisions that affect children have to ensure that they are operating in the “best interest of the children” at all times. Participation and consultation with children regarding decisions that impact their lives is one way the ‘best interest’ principle can be upheld. Consultation in this context does not mean that adults must always adhere to the wishes of children, but the important factor is that adults should be prepared to listen to their children, consider their opinions and involve them in the decision-making process. The voice of children should be central to any process which impinges on their future and this means that the voice of children has to be listened to carefully and without prejudice (Head, 1998). If the voice of children is to be central to any decisions that have an effect on their lives, then this requires adults to carefully listen to the thoughts, views and opinions of children to ensure that they understand, from the perspective of children, the essence of the experience of children (Kruger, Coetzee, Jamieson, Bray, Viviers, Lake et al., 2011).

Although the South African government has confronted the task of accelerating progress with child rights, there is still a long way to go and perhaps it could be said that faster progress is necessary. Much work is being done to promote awareness about the rights of women and children who are deemed to be the country’s most vulnerable population (UNICEF, 2010). Recognizing human rights is one thing, but bridging the gap between these rights and the realization of these rights is another matter altogether that needs further exploration.

Studies from a rights-based approach could be criticized as being dated and is certainly not without criticism. The researcher has included some of this older literature in order to provide a platform and foundation from which to view more recent literature on child participation. According to Mannion (2007), the main problem with viewing participation from a rights-based approach relates to culture and context and the related tensions that arise..

Other authors (Stephens, 1995; Wyness, Harrison, & Buchanan, 2004) have noted that the spread of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child can be seen as inappropriately ageist and culturally biased, positioning children as the bearers of some ‘adult sized’ rights and westernizing children from other parts of the world. Mannion (2007) is further of the opinion that research on children’s participation needs to move towards a model that addresses the tensions and the cultural problems that have been associated with a rights perspective.

In the context of this study this will be an interesting aspect to explore due to the fact that the research study will be carried out with participants from one particular culture and ethnic group in South Africa. It will be interesting to explore whether in fact the views of these authors regarding culture and context play a role in providing a better understanding of participation in decision-making within this context.

A child health promotion perspective

Participation in decision-making is considered by researchers as a new perspective on health promotion. Recent research on child and adolescent health promotion is gaining recognition as an approach to both preventing youth problems and as a way to enhance positive development in youth (Wong et al., 2010). The Ottawa Charter of 1986 defines health promotion as “the process of enabling people to increase control over, and improve their health” (De Winter, Baerveldt, & Kooistra, 1999). According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 1988), children should experience health as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (WHO, 1946, p. 1).

It has become common today to view the development of children as a process of mutual interaction between individuals and their environment. Viewing participation in

decision-making from a health promotion perspective implies that adults need to give children more space to practice their social skills and responsibilities. Research shows that this will not only promote social, cognitive and moral development, but can also prevent psychological problems in terms of well-being and health (De Winter et al., 1999). Conversely, from a health promotion perspective, if children are denied participation in decision-making then this is considered a risk factor for adequate social and moral development and also a risk factor for the emergence of psychological problems (De Winter et al., 1999). Viewing participation in decision-making from a health promotion lens is steadily gaining recognition as a viable approach not only for preventing youth problems, but also to enhance positive development (Wong et al., 2010). In both the participation and health promotion discourse it is becoming more widely recognized that young people are uniquely positioned to be active agents in their own personal development (Wong et al., 2010).

In the context of foster care and child protection, a critical element is to identify what the protective factors for individual development, overall health and well-being of children are. As previously mentioned, foster children generally have experienced a fractured sense of belonging, loss and varying degrees of trauma. It is well documented that there are also personality traits such as hardiness, resilience and a sense of coherence that play a major role in how individuals cope with stressful situations (De Winter et al., 1999). Should participation in decision-making be a protective factor for children and assists in developing their capacities for initiative and healthy psycho-social development, then this aspect needs further exploration in the context of child protection. According to De Winter et al. (1999) participation is a powerful tool to promote self-confidence, self-respect and a sense of control over one's life. The life histories of children who reside in an alternative care setting have usually been difficult and if participation in decision-making could assist children to

experience a sense of control over their lives, then this is something that needs further exploration.

Social research points to the fact that the health of ‘looked-after children’ is not as good as their peers and looked-after children are more likely to suffer from mental health problems if they enter any form of care and protection system (Vis et al., 2011). Morrow (as cited in Emond, 2009) argues that children who have lived in any form of alternative care regard themselves as powerless, dependent objects whose contributions are mostly not acknowledged by adults. This is not the focus of this study but it is a critical aspect to consider when conducting research within this context and when viewing participation in decision-making holistically.

There is a growing interest on the factors that contribute to the promotion of health and wellness in children and within child protection there is a growing interest on the possibility of a link between participation in decision-making and the overall health and wellness of children. The researcher has been unable to find any South African studies in this regard and due to the paucity of research in the context of child protection a study was commissioned by the Norwegian Ministry of Children and Equality in 2011. Firstly, the aim of this study was to inform policy-makers about the current level of evidence that participation in decision-making benefits looked-after children. Secondly, to assess the state of knowledge of health effects that could be associated with child participation in decision-making in care and protection cases (Vis et al., 2011).

The findings of this Norwegian study pointed to the importance of finding a ‘child-friendly’ way to include children in decision-making processes. The research also found that it is important to allow social workers to work with children in decision-making processes and it is not enough merely just to listen to children regarding certain aspects such as one-off

events for example. The findings also pointed to the importance of supporting children through the process of participation. The researchers emphasized that participation within the context of child protection has the potential to promote the health of children in several areas, but emphasized that participation does not automatically have a benefit for children. Whether participation benefits children is due to several factors such as the way in which the participation is tailored to accommodate the expectations and abilities of children.

This Norwegian study also found that if children are allowed to participate in decisions that affect their lives, then this leads them to make better decisions. Within the framework of child protection, participation also helps to keep children safe by discovering and substantiating cases of abuse and neglect (Vis et al., 2011). In the context of foster care this one primary principle is protecting children from further abuse and neglect.

Further research conducted by Vis et al. (2011) focused on exploring obstacles for child participation in child protection and the findings identified certain challenges within this environment. The researchers were of the view that much still needed to be done to comply with the participation principle in the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child. The main focus of this research was on exploring why Norwegian social workers find engaging children in a participatory way a challenge. The study concluded that there were three main factors that attributed to this: child participation was deemed unnecessary; participation was considered inappropriate because it might be harmful (protectionism factor) and communication difficulties. The researchers suggested that in order for participation in decision-making to be improved within a child protection environment, formal regulations and guidelines need to be developed and attention paid to the development of social work skills in working with children in a participatory manner.

The researcher is of the view that although further research is needed within the South African context of foster care, the Norwegian study is helpful in providing a more in-depth understanding of child participation in decision-making within child protection which forms the context of this study. The aim of this study is not to provide best-practice guidelines for participation in decision-making within a foster care environment, but this will certainly be a recommendation for future studies. Foster care is a dynamic interaction of various systems and it would be beneficial to explore the perceptions and attitudes of social workers towards participation in decision-making. It would also be beneficial to explore the views and perceptions of children within the care system in order to ensure a more holistic picture of the unique challenges and benefits of participation within this unique context.

From this brief conceptualization on child participation in decision-making and due to the lack of empirical studies regarding participation in decision-making within a foster care context, a better understanding of child participation is needed in order to more fully understand the complex dynamics of child-participation. If children within the care system are given a safe space in which to be part of the decision-making process, this could possibly be another protective factor that needs further exploration. The researcher is of the view that the findings of this study could, in a small way, add to the body of knowledge regarding child participation in general and could also provide a better understanding of child participation within the context of foster care.

Taking into account some of the identified obstacles mentioned above for child participation in a child protection environment, it is reasonable to suggest that there will be challenges to participation in decision-making within foster care in the South African context. After reviewing the literature the researcher identified several possible challenges to authentic participation. The identified challenges discussed below are in no way meant to be

conclusive and as the researcher engaged with literature throughout the process of the study, more possible challenges to participation were highlighted.

Possible challenges when participating in decision-making

Although the concept of child participation is not new in South Africa, there are some key challenges that could be present when adults engage in dialogue with children and engage them in participatory processes. Bray et al. (2011) suggests that there are several challenges that can act as barriers to participation such as adults experiencing anxiety at “getting it wrong”. Adults working with children can also have a poor understanding of the ethical considerations and provision needed to enable true participation. Bray et al. (2011) also states that at the core of true participation is the balance between protection of children on the one hand, and enabling participation on the other hand.

Foster care is a unique environment and has some unique challenges in respect of participation in decision-making. Whilst exploring literature on child protection and policy, research aimed at safeguarding children often appears to oscillate between the two poles of protecting and empowering children (Stanley, 2006). Bray et al. (2011) is of the opinion that in order to have an ethical approach to child participation, the two poles of protecting and empowering children are critical elements that need to be addressed. In the context of this study, foster parents have responsibilities and rights that must be adhered to and respected in the process of fostering children. The Children’s Act 38 of 2005 (as amended) has made provision for both responsibilities and rights in order to protect both the children and the foster parents. It could be reasonable to suggest that as foster children are deemed to be vulnerable and in need of care and protection, foster parents could put more emphasis on protecting rather than empowering children. It is also reasonable to suggest that perhaps this could be a challenge foster parents faces in finding a healthy balance between protecting and

empowering children. The difficulty of finding a balance of protecting children on the one hand, and empowering children on the other hand, was a challenge identified as one of the main obstacles experienced by child protection workers (Vis et al., 2011). If foster parents focus mainly on protecting children and exclude children from decision-making processes, then they can inadvertently silence children and it will prove difficult for these children to experience any sense of being listened to and their views being carefully considered by the adults in their lives.

Responsibility of adults to both protect and empower children

Literature on child protection tends to promote a “protectionist approach” to participation which emphasizes the vulnerabilities of children in the face of harm. Parton is of the opinion that this could be described as a more passive construction of childhood and produces response systems which focus on the care and behaviour of parents (Stanley, 2006). Empowering approaches place more emphasis on the agency of children and assert their rights to be able to participate in decisions that affect their lives (Stanley, 2006). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child clearly recognizes that children should be afforded rights and also recognizes that children are not merely the recipients of adult protection. By recognizing that children have rights does not mean that the adults caring for children no longer have any responsibilities towards their children. This is critically important within foster care due to foster children being deemed to be vulnerable and in need of care and protection. Whilst learning to take responsibility for their own well-being, children often have to rely on the significant adults in their lives to make decisions on their behalf. However, sometimes the well-meaning intentions and concerns of parents to protect children can have the unintended consequence of stifling the rights of children to freedom of expression (Jamieson, 2011).

In order for true and authentic child participation in decision-making to occur, there must be a balance between protection and empowerment which allows for authentic dialogue to take place between adults and children. As already mentioned, it is the way in which participation occurs that is important. To capture the perspectives of children adults, parents and health professionals need to be attentive, sensitive and supportive of the expressions, experiences and perceptions of children (Söderbäck et al., 2011). Adults need do more than just “listen” to children. It is also crucial that protective steps, such as ensuring confidentiality and guarding against the abuse of power by adults (Bray et al., 2011), are needed to minimize the potential for harm. This is a critical element to be addressed in the context of this study as it could be argued that foster parents could experience it as a challenge to find a healthy balance between protection and empowerment. It is for this reason that the attitudes and perceptions of foster parents regarding children’s participation in decision-making are extremely important. This study aims to offer a thick description of the perceptions and attitudes of foster parents in relation to child participation in decision-making as this information could assist in the future formulation of best-practice guidelines which will incorporate skills training on how child participation in decision-making can be enhanced within the child protection system. From a child health promotion perspective “enablement” is a key element of both the Ottawa Charter on Health Promotion and the International Convention on the Rights of the Child (De Winter et al., 1999).

Adult conceptions of childhood

One of the foremost barriers to participation is the perceptions of adults, including their images of the capacities of children and their self-interest in maintaining their own position with respect to children (Hill, Davis, Prout, & Tisdall, 2004). This is in line with the view that if children have rights then this can undermine the authority of adults. If adults are of the view that they alone know what is best for their children, when they do not involve

their children in decision-making and do not recognize the value and relevance of the perspectives of their children (Meintjes, 2010), then these personal views, perceptions and attitudes of adults can undermine the strengths and abilities of their children and will make authentic participation in decision-making difficult. According to Roche (1999), adults need to reconsider their definition of children in order to acknowledge that although the perspectives of children may be different to those of adults, the perspectives of children are still valid. Roche is further of the view that children can be seen to be lacking in wisdom due to them not having sufficient life experience. This argument could be relevant as adults do have superior knowledge in some areas of life simply due to their life experience. It could also be argued; however, that children are the experts in their world and for adults to acknowledge this possibility will necessitate a profound change in thinking in order to legitimize the contributions of children regarding matters that concern them.

Piaget, one of the most influential theorists of child development, argued that the development of children takes place as a series of discrete stages. Each of these discrete stages is associated with an approximate age range. The sensory motor stage is from birth to 18 months; pre-operational stage is from 19 months to 7 years, concrete operational stage is from 7 years of age up until 11 years of age. The formal thinking stage is from 11 years and older (Lansdown, 2005). The theory of Piaget has had a profound influence on our understanding of the development of children. Most of the theories on child development; however, reflect presumptions from a Western point of view where it is viewed that childhood is a period of time where children should be nurtured, should be cared for, attend school and be free from adult responsibilities. As Lansdown (2005) points out, this western point of view of childhood is not necessarily the reality for many millions of children living in other parts of the world. If one takes the view that childhood follows a natural order from childhood to adulthood, it could negate the impact of culture and the impact of the

environment on children. If one takes the view that all environments are socially constructed, then one must look at the relationships adults have with children because these relationships will be shaped by the beliefs, attitudes and perceptions of adults. How adults view childhood will also be shaped by their own beliefs. A commitment to respect the human rights of children requires a fundamental review of preconceptions that regard childhood as a period of lesser status Lansdown (2005).

This argument regarding the relevance and value of the perspectives of children is adequately addressed in an empirical study completed by Weithorn and Campbell (1982). Their study illustrates the capabilities of children to make rational choices in hypothetical situations. These authors show that children of 14 years are as competent as adults in making certain decisions and children of nine years, to a great extent, can make the same choices as adults, although they are not capable of arguing their point to the same extent (Runeson, Enskär, Elander, & Hermerén, 2001). Children generally have different perceptions from adults on most matters and an interesting example of the difference between adult assumptions and the reality of the lives of children was highlighted in a project undertaken with children between the ages of four to five years old in a poor district of London, the United Kingdom in 1993. The children were asked to produce a mural depicting their local environment as it currently was and a mural depicting how they would like to see it. The researchers found that the children objected to the local council providing play areas covered in grass. The adults thought that by providing grass for children to play on was the most appropriate surfacing. The views of the children were entirely different. The children wanted more play areas covered in concrete because grass made it impossible for them to see the broken glass, dog excrement and discarded needles used by drug addicts (Lansdown, 2001).

Children and adults do, at times, have different perceptions and attitudes towards situations, but this does not mean that the views of children are less meaningful than the views of adults. Working with children in a participatory way involves adults being willing to change the way they view children (Bray et al., 2011) and calls for adults to have a critical shift in their thinking to be able to acknowledge that the contributions of children are important and valid. If adults do not make this shift, then the contributions of children will never be legitimized as having any value. In conceptualizing participation in decision-making within a child protection environment, and in the context of this specific study, cognizance must be paid regarding child development practices from a cultural aspect.

Protecting versus empowering children and the conception of childhood by adults are only two of the possible challenges foster parents could face regarding the enabling of child participation in decision-making within foster care. Perhaps the most critical challenge foster parents could face in creating an environment for the enablement of participation in decision-making is weighing the principle of protection versus enablement and taking into consideration the evolving capacities of children (Lansdown, 2005). As this study is qualitative in nature, more challenges were highlighted during the course of this study and these challenges will need to be noted and acknowledged. In the light of contextualizing participation in decision-making in a foster care environment, the benefits and protective factors of participation will now be discussed.

Possible benefits of participation in decision-making

There is an abundance of social research pointing to the benefits for children should they be afforded the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes. It is recognized globally that participation develops the social competence and responsibility of children (Shier, 2001). If children are able to participate in decision-making, this assists them to gain a

sense of control over their lives. The self-worth and coping capacities of children are enhanced when they have some degree of control over their own lives and they are given the opportunity to contribute to their own health and the welfare of others (Kruger et al., 2011). Coyne (2006) argues that within an environment of child protection, if children are allowed to participate in decision-making processes about aspects that affect their lives, it has been found to enhance their sense of self-esteem. When participation is set up as a process in which children are provided with information and explanations as to what is going on and what the options are and when they are supported in expressing their feelings, this may have psychological benefits (Vis et al., 2011). The importance of self-esteem will now be addressed.

It is generally accepted that children build their skills and confidence through exposure to new experiences, and conversely, if children and young people do not receive the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes, they are less likely to “own” the decisions that have an impact on them (Sturmfels & Manion, 2012). Hart (1992) suggests that if children are afforded the opportunity to participate in projects that involve finding solutions to real problems, then children develop the skills of critical reflection. Through participation children learn new skills such as problem-solving, assertiveness, negotiation and collaboration (Viviers, Clacherty, & Maker, 2011).

The possible psychological benefits to children if they are afforded the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes are not the main focus of this literature review. When discussing participation in decision-making holistically it is, however, important to take note of critical psychological factors that could be enhanced if child participation is enabled. Research suggests that there are certain benefits to children if they are allowed to participate in decision-making processes. Some of these possible benefits will be discussed

below. The psychological benefits mentioned in this study are certainly not inclusive and the researcher is not aiming to link these possible psychological benefits to participation in decision-making alone, but this paper has the aim of exploring the concept of child participation in decision-making in a holistic manner.

Enhancing the autonomy of children

Autonomy can be described as the ability of individuals to take responsibility for their own responses, actions, choices and attitudes. Autonomy is often quoted as being the basis for determining moral responses and accountability for one's actions. Hart (1992) emphasizes the importance of children's participation for the development of autonomy and social co-operation. Piaget, the Swiss developmental psychologist, argued that if children are always subjected to authority and do not have opportunities for establishing rules through relationships with mutual respect, they cannot develop autonomous selves. The blooming of a personality through the development of autonomy depends on social relationships. It is; therefore, possible to suggest that allowing children to participate in decision-making is not just an approach to develop more socially responsible and co-operative youth, it is the route to the development of psychologically healthy persons (Hart, 1992). The suggestion to consider; therefore, is child participation in decision-making from a child-health promotion approach. The focus on the "whole" child could be valuable.

Enhancing the resilience of children

The concept of resilience is not a new one, although there are many different definitions as to what constitutes resilience. A number of researchers have identified specific factors such as trusting relationships, emotional support outside families, self-esteem, encouragement of autonomy, hope, responsible risk taking, a sense of being loved, school achievement, belief in God and morality and unconditional love for someone (Grotberg,

1995). Resilience refers to the qualities that cushion vulnerable children from the worst effects of adversity and may help children or young persons to cope, survive and even thrive in the face of great hurt and disadvantages (Bostock, 2004). Resilience is the ability to “bounce back” from, or adjust effectively to risk factors (Louw & Edwards, 1998). Self-esteem is described as one of the building blocks of resilience (Bostock, 2004) and self-esteem plays an important role in enhancing the ego development of children (Gunston, 1995). The importance of good self-esteem in foster children has been emphasized by Gilligan (1993), who not only highlighted the protective value of feelings of high self-esteem, but also the fact that these feelings can be modified by subsequent life experiences (Gunston, 1995).

During a review of literature on the health of looked-after children, it is noted that this concept has been extensively reviewed and the results are pretty sobering. Adults who were looked after as children show a lower standard of education, lower income, shorter life expectancy and increased risk of suicide, substance abuse and criminal behaviour, according to Clausen and Kristofersen (as cited in Vis et al., 2011). Children who are removed from their families, for example, and placed in foster care have experienced stressful negative life events and have generally been part of a highly stressed family system. Children who are placed in alternative care have often experienced neglect and the absence of primary caregivers, including the positive involvement of a father figure (Cowen, Wyman, Work, & Parker, 1990). In South Africa, 46% of young children aged between 0 to 5 years live with their mothers (Bower & Dawes, 2014). A total of 39% of children in South Africa are being raised in female-headed households (Matthews & Benvenuti, 2014).

More recent studies point to the importance of resilience as a protective factor for individuals. Pathways to Resilience Project is an ongoing research study that seeks to

understand how youth navigate between services such as child welfare, education, mental health and youth justice to successful outcomes. The principle goal of Pathways to Resilience Project is to identify pathways that result in positive psychosocial outcomes for youth who face significant levels of adversity. This project is still in progress and uses a mixed methods approach with large samples of youth in the age group of 13 years to 19 years. The studies incorporate the findings of youth in countries such as New Zealand, Columbia and South Africa.

What is interesting about the Pathways to Resilience Project is that it concerns itself with service providers such as child welfare that offer services to high risk children and youth. Their study points to youth who are more at risk have less resilience. The study points to ways in which service providers such as child welfare for example can enhance positive experiences of the children and youth with whom they deal with. Some of the important ways to enhance the 'at risk' children and youth's experiences are: engage in open communication, empowerment, honesty, validate their experiences and views, acknowledge their strengths, and integrate their voices (<http://www.resilienceresearch.org/research/projects/pathways-to-resilience>).

This is important information that can add value to the study of participation in decision-making within foster care. This study's findings pointed to the importance of open and authentic dialogue between parents and children, being a protective factor for high risk behavior. It also took into account the importance of empowerment and evolving capacities of children. The holistic viewpoint of taking into consideration the 'whole' child, looking at protective factors, points to a child health promotion perspective.

If we know what the protective factors are that enable children to escape damage from adverse experiences, it will assist us not only in understanding why perhaps some children do

better than others when faced with adversity, but it will also help us to be able to enhance the resistance of children to health problems. Viewing participation in decision-making as one of the critical elements that has the capacity to enhance resilience in foster children could be ambiguous and it is certainly an area for further exploration within the context of child protection. Since foster children generally have experienced life stressors, enhancing resilience through a process of participation could possibly be classified as both a benefit and a protective factor.

Participation and self-regulation

Research suggests that the ability of individuals to self-regulate is an important psychological characteristic that will influence behaviour. Self-regulation is conceptualized as the ability to regulate emotions, attention and behavior (Crockett, Raffaelli, & Shen, 2006). Studies conducted by Crockett, Raffaelli, and Moilanen (2003) suggest that self-regulation, together with similar constructs, is a significant longitudinal predictor of high risk behaviours in the adolescent years. The quality of the parent-child attachment relationship is one potential source of influence on the development of self-regulation in children (Drake, Belsky, & Fearon, 2014). Research also indicates that children that have developed secure attachments to primary caregivers tend to present with fewer behavioural problems (Fearon, Bakermans-Kranenburg, Van IJzendoorn, Lapsley, & Roisman, 2010) and are more resilient when faced with challenges (Murray & Hallett, 2000).

When exploring self-regulation relating to foster children, it is important to take into consideration their early life experiences. Many children in the child protection system have not experienced a secure attachment with primary caregivers in their formative years. Attachment theory highlights how poor parenting in early childhood impacts negatively on the ability of children to regulate their emotions and interpret the emotions of others.

Conversely, if children have secure attachments this can enhance the ability of children to cope with adverse traumatic experiences (Matthews & Benvenuti, 2014).

Research conducted on the impact of institutionalization on child development suggests that children from orphanages often experience maltreatment and neglect on every level (physical, behavioural, social and emotional levels) (Maclean, 2001). Research interest in the developmental consequences of extreme deprivation in infancy began intensely in the 1940's and 1950's with the work of (Bowlby, 2008) and (Goldfarb, 1943a, 1943b). Goldfarb's research with children who had lived in institutions for the first three years of their lives before being placed in foster care suggested that these children suffered developmental deficits that often continued into adolescence. Further research suggested that these development deficits were not overcome once children were placed in a more stimulating and loving environment (Maclean, 2001).

Although this earlier research could perhaps be criticized, more recent research suggests that early exposure to cumulative adversity may cause enduring neurobiological changes responsible for a range of developmental deficits in different domains (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010). The major sources of childhood adversity are poor health as well as an economic compromised rearing environment (Dobrova-Krol, Van IJzendoorn, Bakermans-Kranenburg, & Juffer, 2010; Fearon et al., 2010). It has also been suggested that a compromised family rearing environment as well as institutional care can lead to both physical growth delays (Dobrova-Krol et al., 2010; Fearon et al., 2010; Skuse, Reilly, & Wolke, 1994) and stress dysregulation in individuals (Gunnar & Vazquez, 2006).

In the context of this study the focus is on children who are residing in a form of alternative care, namely foster care. Foster children have often experienced childhood trauma and there is a vast body of research that indicates the negative impact of trauma on children's

brain. Traumatized children are likely to find it difficult to utilize reasoning and logic and to modify their behaviour or reactions. Children in the child protection system have often experienced neglect, trauma and a sense of fractured belonging (Van Breda, Marx, & Kader, 2012). According to Tomlinson, Gonzalez, and Barton (2011), the development of self-mastery and an appropriate sense of control are important components for the recovery of traumatized children.

A health promotion perspective emphasizes the importance of empowering children and argues that if children have positive feelings of self-esteem, mastery and control they will be better able to manage stressful experiences in their lives. Prevention programmes confirm the importance of children's participation, as the aim of one of the tools is to develop effective coping mechanisms (Price, Cowen, Lorion, & Ramos-McKay, 1988).

The ability to self-regulate one's emotions is considered an important psychological construct. Given the probability that children in the care system have experienced poor parenting in their formative years and have experienced a fracture in their attachments, this would have impacted their ability to self-regulate their emotions. It could be reasonable to suggest a possible protective factor of participation in decision-making having the ability to both enhance resilience and self-regulatory capacities of children who have found a safe placement and a healthy connection with a foster family. More research is needed regarding a possible link between participation in decision-making and the effects on the ability of individuals to self-regulate.

Enhancing the self-efficacy of children

The concept of self-efficacy is a core concept of Bandura (1991) social cognitive theory. Simply put, self-efficacy is the belief of individuals that they can successfully

perform a given activity. Often this concept is used interchangeably with the concept of self-esteem, but self-efficacy is usually the precursor to self-esteem. One of the benefits of allowing children to participate in decision-making that affect their lives is that it bolsters self-esteem and supports better decision-making (Sinclair, 2004). Recent theories on the social, intellectual and moral development of children focus on the importance of the activities and responsibilities of individuals with regard to their developmental environment (De Winter et al., 1999). From a health-promotion perspective it has also been suggested that learning to be in charge of one's own life, appears to be an underestimated factor in the emergence of health and well-being in children. It has further been suggested that participation is a powerful instrument to raise the current level of functioning of individuals (De Winter et al., 1999). Prilleltensky (2010) explores the role of power in social inclusion for children and is of the view that if children experience social inclusion it will promote self-efficacy, spiritual development and children will experience meaningful pursuits in life. Wong et al. (2010) argue that in the pursuit of child and youth wellness it is important that adults share power and allow young people to be active collaborators in decision-making, thereby increasing their self-efficacy and sense of being in control of aspects of their lives.

Although more research is needed regarding a possible link between self-efficacy, participation and a foster care environment, it could be reasonable to suggest that because of their early negative life experiences, children who live in the care system often experience self-esteem problems (Gunston, 1995).

Given the health promotion benefits of participation mentioned briefly in this literature review, it could be reasonable to suggest that if children in the care system are enabled with the necessary support in accordance with their evolving capacities and afforded

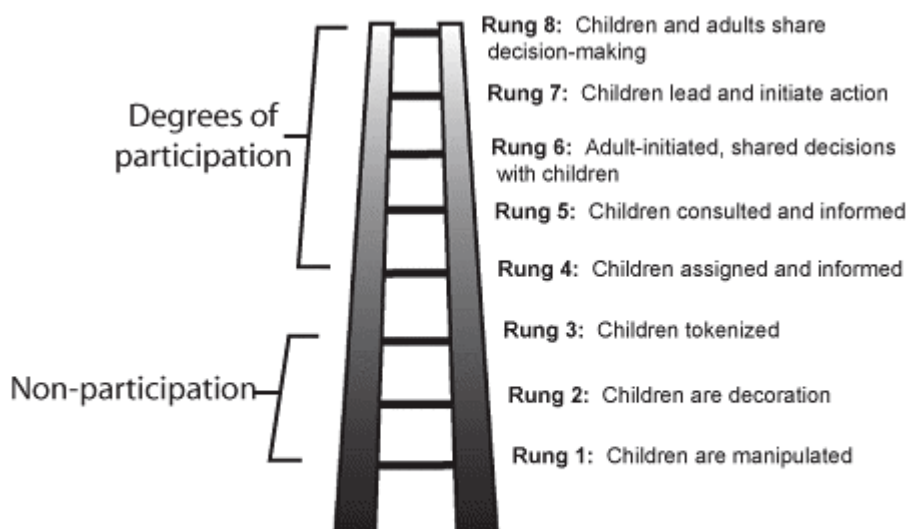
the opportunity to be involved in the decision-making process, this could have a positive effect on their overall psycho-social well-being.

In summary, in order to conceptualize participation in decision-making within foster care this literature review has so far discussed participation in general, discussed the meaning of participation in decision-making as it relates to this study and discussed participation in decision-making from a health promotion and rights perspective. Some possible challenges to child participation in decision-making have been explored together with some of the possible psychological benefits. The next part of the discussion will briefly discuss several theoretical models of participation that could possibly be applied to enable and facilitate participation in decision-making within foster care. Hart's ladder of participation, Treseder's model, Lundy's model and the more recent Typology of Youth Participation and Empowerment for child and adolescent health promotion (The TYPE pyramid) will be discussed.

Overview of theoretical models of participation

Figure 1

Roger Hart's Ladder of Young People's Participation



Adapted from Hart, R. (1992). Children's Participation: from Tokenism to Citizenship. Florence: UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre.

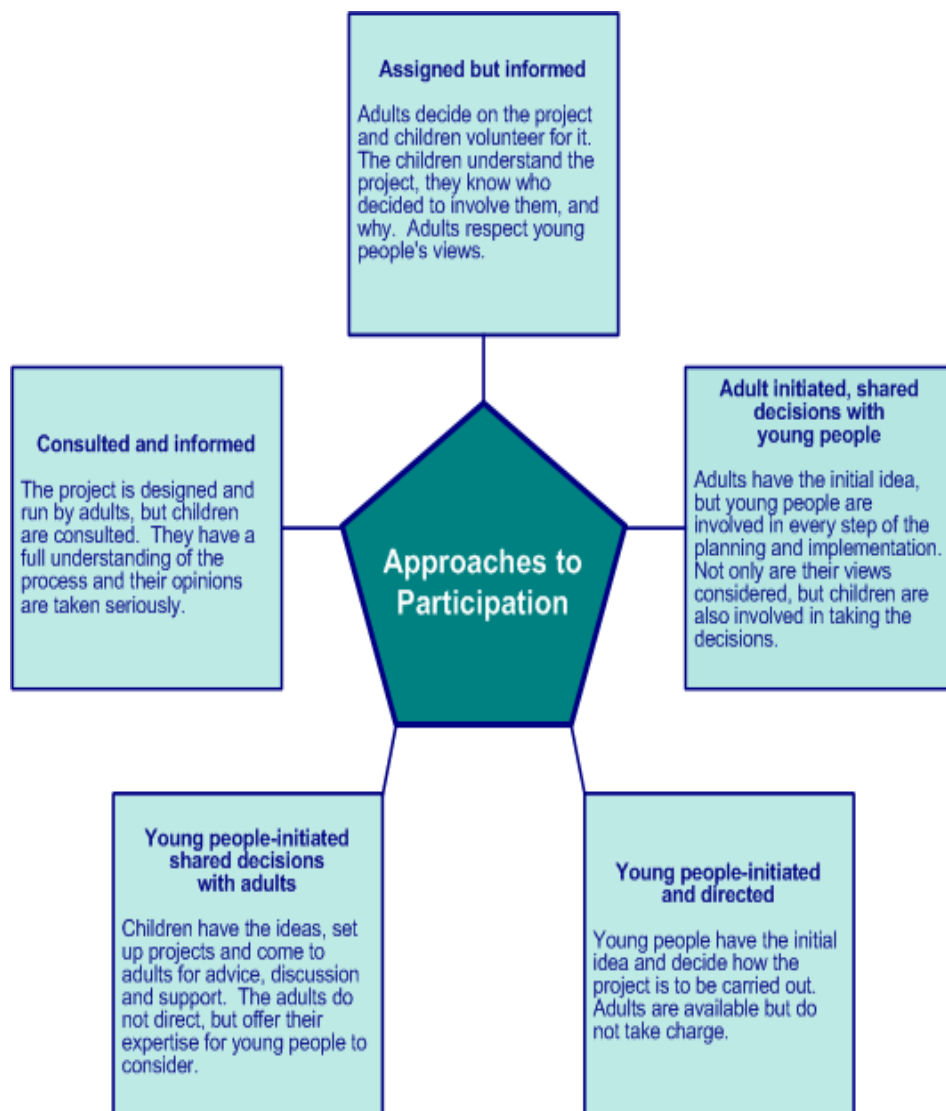
Note. (Hart's Ladder of Young People's Participation (as cited in Kirby & Woodhead, 2003, p. 242).

Hart (1992) Ladder of Young People's Participation was the first real attempt to define the concept of participation and this model has been both cited and criticized (Kellett, 2011). The metaphorical ladder of Hart has eight steps where step one (at the bottom of the ladder) symbolizes no child participation and step eight (at the top of the ladder) symbolizes full child participation where children and adults share the decision-making process (Kellett, 2011). Hart's ladder of participation has been criticized by some (Reddy & Ratna, 2002) mainly due to the sequential nature of the model and its implication of a hierarchical value system (Kellett, 2011).

Figure 2

Treseder's participation model

Treseder (1997) critiqued Hart's model due to the fact that cultural contexts are not acknowledged. Treseder developed his own model of participation and uses the top five levels of Hart's model arranged in a circle to show that they are different, but equal forms of participation.



Treseder's model is a non-linear conception of participation. Treseder describes five types of unique, but equal forms of participation. The five participation types included in the model are: (1) assigned, but informed; (2) adult-initiated, shared decisions with children; (3) child-initiated and directed; (4) child-initiated, shared decisions with adults; and (5) consulted and informed (Wong et al., 2010).

Treseder's model is a non-linear approach to participation and this model builds on the model of Hart and provides a more in-depth understanding of the dynamics of participation. This model incorporates the concept of child-initiated and shared decisions with

adults. Lundy (2007) model of participation takes participation a step further and brings into the participation debate the concept of “voice” which will be discussed below.

Lundy’s model of participation

Lundy (2007) takes the concept of children’s participation further than Hart and provides a more holistic and pragmatic conceptualization. Lundy (2007) argues that listening to children is not enough. To give effect to Article 12 of the Convention, Lundy brings the relatively new concept of “voice” into the participation debate. The meaning of “voice” in this context is adults giving children a platform so that they are able to freely express their views. There are four key components of “voice”:

Space: Children must be given the opportunity to express their views.

Voice: Children must be supported to have their voice heard.

Audience: Someone must actively hear (or see) their opinions and ideas.

Influence: The views and ideas of children must be acted upon (appropriately) to influence change.

A health promotion model: the TYPE pyramid

Typologies of participation are evolving all the time and a more recent typology of youth participation and empowerment with a health promotion focus is the TYPE pyramid (Wong et al., 2010). This is an interesting model and perhaps could be called a non-traditional model of participation because it also incorporates the intergenerational linkages regarding participation and speaks of youth-adult partnerships. This model focuses on building on the intrinsic strengths of young persons and also actively involving them in addressing issues in their lives. The TYPE pyramid presents five types of participation, namely, (1) Vessel; (2) Symbolic; (3) Pluralistic; (4) Independent and (5) Autonomous.

Vessel describes a traditional youth-adult relationship that is adult-driven and demands little or no input from young people (Wong et al., 2010). *Symbolic* participation includes the voice of the youth and the researcher is of the view that by allowing the youth to have a voice in matters that concern them opens up the opportunity for them to be able to enhance critical thinking skills, formulate opinions and come up with solutions. According to Benson, this practice also encourages the development of self-efficacy and mastery, which are crucial key factors in positive youth development (as cited in Wong et al., 2010). *Pluralistic* participation is simply where both adults and the youth work together, where adults serve as role-models but the decisions made are shared decisions. *Independent* participation is where the youth are primarily the major decision makers and have the opportunity to draw upon their leadership skills (Wong et al., 2010). *Autonomous* participation describes scenarios where the youth have taken measures to create their own spaces for voice, participation and expression of power even if there are no adults involved (Wong et al., 2010).

The TYPE pyramid of participation is a dynamic and evolving model and focuses on strengths and empowerment. The appeal of this approach is that the pyramid not only builds on the strengths of individuals, but actively involves children and youth in addressing issues that they themselves have identified. Most other approaches do involve children in decision-making processes but often the adults have decided on the issues that need to be addressed. This model; however, is about shared youth-adult control in participation and not simply youth-driven participation.

In summary, theoretical models of participation are evolving all the time. The researcher began an exploration of the various models of participation with Hart (1992) model. As mentioned, Hart's model of participation was the first real attempt to define the concept of child participation. Hart's model is a useful framework in conceptualizing

participation and clearly indicates what could be classified as non-participation, such as at rung 3 where young people are tokenized, at rung 2 young people are decorative of nature and at rung 1 young people are manipulated. From rung 4 to rung 8 the ladder moves in a hierarchical manner to rung 9 which illustrates shared decision-making by young people and adults. The researcher is of the view that this model is useful, but perhaps not entirely adequate for the context of this study which has a focus of empowerment and enhancing the strengths of foster children.

The researcher concurs with Lundy (2007) that children need space and a safe platform to have their views heard. It is not sufficient just to listen to children. Participation requires adults to support children through the participatory process (Lundy, 2007). This view of supporting children through the participatory process is important because it also links in with the evolving capacities of children. It is important that adults promote responsibility in children in an age appropriate manner and taking into account their evolving capacities. In the context of this study the significant adults in the children's lives are the foster parents and professionals such as social workers, case workers and counsellors. In most cases, children have to rely on the adults in their lives to assist them in realizing their participatory rights and the perceptions and attitudes of significant adults in their lives will; therefore, play a role in either creating the opportunity for participation in decision-making or stifling participation in decision-making.

In the context of exploring participation in decision-making within a foster care context, the researcher is of the view that the TYPE pyramid of participation could also be a useful framework in order to understand participation in decision-making within this context. This is a newer model of participation in decision-making and the focus is from a health promotion perspective. This model of participation incorporates intergenerational linkages

(Wong et al., 2010) and considers the more recent developments in youth-adult partnerships. This is a very important aspect to consider in foster care due to the intergenerational communication that needs to take place between foster children and adults regarding participation in decision-making.

From a health promotion perspective, empowerment and enhancement of the health and wellness of individuals are of key importance. Interestingly, the TYPE pyramid takes this a step further and identifies socio-political influences on the quality of life. The perspective of Freire (2003) suggests that people are powerless when they are unaware of the causes that shape their conditions and empowerment occurs through the creation of a collective and critical consciousness. Freire (2003) goes on further to state that empowerment is derived from an awareness that is formed when individuals can understand that their circumstances are shaped by the broader social and historical forces and not just by their own behaviour.

This literature review highlights that there are several psychological approaches and perspectives within the broader scientific field of psychology that can be used to understand and conceptualize child participation in decision-making. There are also several theoretical models of participation that have been explored, for example the models of Hart, Lundy, Shier and the TYPE pyramid. This review also emphasizes the fact that child protection is a unique environment and it could possibly be challenging to enable authentic participation in decision-making. The review also emphasizes the importance of taking into account the environment, context and culture of children and that there is no “one size fits all” approach to the topic of participation in decision-making. The researcher motivated an ecological perspective which takes into account factors such as the social context of individuals and the different social systems that influence individuals. The environment is important because the lives of children are influenced by it and this issue is well-documented in literature.

As previously mentioned, there is an abundance of research in the social sciences on participation and participation in decision-making, but there is a paucity of studies that have been conducted within a child protection environment. The reviewed literature consequently points out the imperative need for an enabling environment for participation in decision-making to be realized and there is disparity as to how this can be achieved. In contextualizing participation in decision-making in child protection, the researcher is of the view that this concept should be discussed critically, in the context of the models and frameworks discussed in order to provide an understanding of the phenomenon in an integrative and holistic manner. In conceptualizing child participation in decision-making within a foster care environment, it is crucial to consider the interaction of children and their environment and also the cultural context within which participation will take place.

The next part of the review will focus on how participation in decision-making can be enabled within foster care and/or in a child protection environment.

A contextual approach to enable participation in decision-making within child protection

The aim of this literature review was to explore the concept of child participation in decision-making in general and to explore how an enabling environment for participation could be achieved within foster care. As suggested by Whittaker (2012), it is important to engage critically with the relevant literature to the topic in order to gain a more thorough and in-depth understanding of the research topic. Children's participation in decision-making specifically, due to the multi-dimensional nature of children's participation in general, the researcher is of the view that it could not be understood from a one-sided point of view such as a rights perspective, for example. Viewing participation in decision-making from a one-sided point of view will fail to account for the unique contexts, cultures and personal

interactions that impact the enablement of child participation in decision-making. From literature it is clear that there is not a “one size fits all” approach to any participatory process. Participation in decision-making must be viewed holistically and within context, using an integrated approach which takes into account the broader social and cultural practices of individuals.

An integrated and holistic approach to participation in decision-making

As previously mentioned, the researcher is of the view that the theoretical perspective of Bronfenbrenner (1979) is an appropriate perspective in which to view participation in decision-making within the environment of foster care. The biological theory of development, initially termed an ecological model, was initially proposed by Bronfenbrenner to explain how human development occurs, focusing largely on context (Rosa & Tudge, 2013). Bronfenbrenner (1994) describes the environment in which development takes place in terms of a series of nested systems that fit into each other (Visser, 2007). According to this ecological theory of development, an individual exists within layers of social systems such as families and societies. From this perspective individuals are in constant interaction with their environment and it is; therefore, impossible to view individuals in isolation. It is further argued that problems do not originate inside people (Visser, 2007), as is the view of individualist psychology approaches in contemporary society. However, problems arise because of the interaction between individuals and their context and environment.

An important concept of Bronfenbrenner (1977), which is critical to this study, is the view that the development of children is determined by the social context within which they reside. Children are situated within families and communities and; therefore, development of children is influenced by the social contexts of micro-systems (families, schools, peers), meso-system (connections between micro-groups), exo-systems (communities) and macro-

systems (social structures, cultural values, policies and laws) (Muir & Goldblatt, 2011). Bronfenbrenner argues the need to look at the environment or setting in which children develop and not just focus on individuals (Westcott, 2004). This viewpoint is critical in the context of this study where the aim is to view participation in decision-making – not in isolation – and not only from one perspective. The ecological theory is similar to a systems approach which also views individuals in context and view individuals within the different inter-relating systems that they form part of (Geldard & Geldard, 2009).

Bronfenbrenner (1986) coined the term *chronosystem* and argued that when looking at human behaviour, one must take into account the changes over time, not only within persons, but also in the environment in which they are living. Bronfenbrenner (1986) was of the view that it is important to understand the dynamic relationship between persons and the environment and to consider the cumulative effects of this over time Bronfenbrenner (1986). Bronfenbrenner (1986) postulated that the first two decades of life are extremely important for the development of children. The strength of the connections existing between children and their families and other various systemic connections will either positively or negatively affect the development of children.

There is an abundance of previous research indicating that the health and well-being of children is influenced by their social context (Bronfenbrenner, 1994; Kirby & Woodhead, 2003). From an ecological perspective, one would view the person-in-context, focusing on trying to gain more understanding of the relationship between individuals and their social settings (Lazarus & Rice, 2000). According to Bronfenbrenner (1994), persons and the systems in which they function become clear when they are viewed as part of a multi-level, multi-structured and multi-determined social context. For the purposes of this study the

application of Bronfenbrenner's theory will focus on the developing individual as they interact with their environment.

From an ecological perspective, conceptualizing participation in decision-making within a foster care environment necessitates the understanding of the complex interaction of the various systems that foster children are part of such as foster families, biological families, social workers and other professionals and welfare organizations (for example a child protection organization). In the context of foster care the researcher is of the view that exploring participation in decision-making through an ecological and developmental perspective could provide a platform in which to better understand child participation in the context of a foster environment. To view participation merely from the viewpoint of children has the right to participate, would not sufficiently address the research question and would not provide sufficient new information that could be used to further enable child participation in decision-making within the environment of child protection.

It is legislated and well-documented that children have rights to participate in decisions that impact their lives and they have a right to voice their opinions about matters that concern them. In conceptualizing participation in decision-making in foster care, foster parents also have responsibilities and rights towards their foster children who are deemed vulnerable and in need of care and protection. By exploring the perceptions and attitudes of foster parents regarding child participation in decision-making, and documenting their challenges and their views towards this concept, this will provide vitally important and new information on the well-researched topic of child participation.

There is a paucity of literature on child participation in decision-making within the context of child protection and foster care. Enabling child participation in this environment is complex due to the different inter-relating dynamics within this environment. Although it is

commonly accepted that children have a right to participate in the decision-making process in matters that concern them, it is not as simple as it sounds to provide an enabling environment for participation in decision-making within a foster care environment. Critical to this right to participate is the right of children to be protected because foster children are deemed vulnerable and in need of care and protection. It could be possible that foster parents place more weight on the protection of children rather than to their rights to participate.

Summary

This literature review began with a general discussion of child participation in decision-making. As there are many differing viewpoints regarding child participation, some definitions were discussed and the concept of child participation was narrowed down to a discussion of child participation within the unique context of a foster care environment in order to provide a conceptual understanding. Participation in decision-making was explored through both a rights perspective and a health promotion perspective. There are many other perspectives that could have been explored, but the researcher was of the view that these two perspectives would provide a good platform in order to understand participation in the context of foster care. Some possible protective factors were discussed together with several possible psychological benefits to children if they are encouraged to share their views and opinions about matters that concern them. Some possible challenges to participation, specifically within a foster care environment, were also discussed.

When critically evaluating child participation in decision-making through a health promotion perspective, it emphasizes the importance of focusing on the intrinsic strengths of individuals rather than focusing on problems. It also focuses on the 'whole child' which means taking into consideration the social and cultural environment of children. This is in line with the requirements as set out by the Department of Social Development in which one

of the principles is empowerment of children and creating opportunities for healthy child development. Participation in decision-making within foster care presents unique challenges, together with opportunities where participation in decision-making can be better enabled. It is for this reason that the researcher is of the opinion that viewing participation in decision-making through the lens of health promotion is a holistic approach in the context of this study.

This literature review also explored some psychological constructs in relation to the possible benefits of child participation. The researcher did not infer a causal relationship between these concepts and child participation in decision-making, but suggested there could be a link between these critical factors that needs further exploration. Protective factors are critical elements of importance within the context of child protection. There is, to date, not sufficient empirical data available to conclude that participation in decision-making is a protective factor, but it is an important and interesting concept that needs further exploration.

This review has highlighted the fact that there are many different perspectives, attitudes and views regarding child participation in decision-making. Although there is an abundance of research in general regarding participation, not much empirical research has been done within the sphere of child protection in South Africa. It is hoped that this study will be able to contribute to the body of knowledge, even in a small way, to the concept of child participation within the context of foster care.

Adults may have the desire to provide an enabling and child-friendly environment for participation in decision-making to occur. Providing this enabling environment can; however, be challenging and complex. Some of these complexities have been discussed in this review. In the context of this particular study the foster parents are the significant role-players in their children's lives and it is; therefore, important that their views and attitudes are explored and

their concerns and challenges are noted. By exploring the attitudes of the foster parents and their perceptions towards children's participation in decision-making, the findings of this study could provide valuable and new information regarding child participation in decision-making within the specific context of child protection. The findings could also provide the basis for future formulations of child-friendly, best-practice guidelines regarding the benefits of children's participation.

The evidence base for South Africa is limited and many theoretical models of participation are aimed at middle to high income settings. Within a child protection environment, as previously mentioned, there is no "one size fits all" approach and one cannot merely "import" methodologies that are perhaps effective in other countries, for example. Within the South African context any participatory process needs to be a best-practice approach specially designed for our local context – ensuring compliance with the "in the best interest of children" principal as a requirement stated in the Children's Act 38 of 2005 (as amended). Having guidelines available based on a best-practice approach will further facilitate the Department of Social Development's primary objective of caring, protecting and promotion the well-being of children in South Africa. The formulation of best-practice guidelines will not be the focus of this study; however, and will be recommended for future research studies.

Section A provided the orientation towards the study and a review of literature as background to the study. Section B will provide the reader with a compact discussion of the research in article format. Section C will conclude with a critical evaluation of the study and recommendations for future research and practice.

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SECTION B: ARTICLE

CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES: ENGAGING WITH FOSTER PARENTS TO EXPLORE THEIR PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES

Abstract

Background

It is generally accepted that children build their skills and confidence through exposure to new experiences. If children and young people; however, do not receive the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes, they are less likely to “own” the decisions that impact them.

Objective

To provide a contextual background of child participation in decision-making within foster care by exploring the attitudes and perceptions of foster parents.

Methods

A qualitative, interpretive descriptive approach was used including focus group interviews with nine participants. Focus group one consisted of six participants and focus group two consisted of three participants.

Results

In the study participation was perceived to enhance inter-personal connectedness and family unity. Exclusions to participation were identified. The influence of the macro-system presented challenges and these complexities caused confusion and the experience of ambiguous parenting roles. The foster parents lacked the necessary knowledge and skills to

effectively navigate these challenges. Tension between protection and empowerment was evident.

Conclusions

Child participation in decision-making cannot be viewed in isolation – resulting often in a one-sided and even romantic perspective on children’s participation. Consideration must be given to the complexity of the environment of children where contextual realities and culture dynamics play a pertinent role. More research is needed to what extent and how culture plays a role in the playing out of the participatory processes of children in the context of foster care. Research is needed to explore the perceptions of foster children regarding participation in decision-making.

Keywords: child participation; decision-making; foster care; alternative care; child protection; health promotion; children’s rights: voices of children

INTRODUCTION

It is argued that if children are actively involved in decision-making processes, there are many psychological benefits to children. If adults engage with children in a participatory way, this will bolster the self-esteem of children (Sinclair, 2004) and will assist in building a sense of resilience in children (Stanley, 2006). If children are part of the decision-making process, it will assist them to construct a more positive sense of identity, it will support confident and assertive development and will decrease their vulnerability to abuse and neglect (Sturmfels & Manion, 2012). It has also been suggested that participation in decision-making does not only benefit children on an individual level, but also benefits society if children are afforded the opportunity to make choices and influence decisions regarding the

solution of social issues (Kirby & Woodhead, 2003). Participation may help children to develop confidence as potential social change agents.

There are several perspectives in which one could view child participation. A child rights perspective has become progressively more prominent in the human rights discourse and application since the late 1990's. The rights of children are defined internationally by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child which regards child participation as one of the cornerstones of human rights (Viviers & Lombard, 2013). In the South African context the most comprehensive addition to the child rights framework is the Children's Act 38 of 2005 (As Amended) see South Africa 2005. Another newer, and perhaps less researched perspective, is one of health promotion. Recent research in this regard is gaining recognition as an approach that both prevents youth problems and also has the ability to enhance positive development in youth (Wong, Zimmerman, & Parker, 2010).

Health is a complex phenomenon with multiple meanings. Health is defined in the WHO constitution of 1948 as: "A state of complete physical, social and mental well-being, and not merely the absence of disease" (WHO, 1988, p. 1). Health promotion is a positive concept and in the context of this study a health promotion perspective has a focus on the 'whole' child. A focus on the 'whole' child means not only taking into account their physical well-being, but also includes their psychological, emotional, social and spiritual well-being. Prilleltensky (2010) takes the concept of wellness a step further and suggests that child wellness is achieved by the satisfaction of personal, collective and relational needs of children and youth. He further states that one component of child wellness is social inclusion. A health promotion lens does not focus on intra-psychic problems, but focuses on empowerment and building on the intrinsic strengths of individuals. Within this approach environmental factors and their interaction with individuals are crucial considerations.

This study will conceptualize participation in decision-making through the paradigm of an ecological perspective. It is universally accepted that the family system is a primary and important context in which human development takes place. Bronfenbrenner (1986) placed great emphasis on external systems that affect families and the manner in which the family context can exert influence on individuals. Bronfenbrenner (1986) asserted that although the family is the principal context in which human development takes place, it is only one setting in which the developmental process can and does occur. Bronfenbrenner (1986) brought to the fore the perspective of the patterning of environmental events and transitions over the life course of individuals (referred to as the *chronosystem*). This perspective is very important because this patterning of environmental events takes into account not only the changes in individuals over a period of time, but also takes into account the dynamic interaction between individuals and their environment. The chronosystem also has a focus of examining the cumulative effects of developmental transitions over an entire lifespan. In this study it is particularly relevant given the difficult transitions and difficult life histories of foster children and children who reside in a child protection environment.

Drawing on the theory of Bronfenbrenner, the Centre for Disease Control in the United States of America and the World Health Organization have proposed a social-ecological model with the aim to understand violence and violence prevention (Matthews & Benvenuti, 2014). Although this model focuses on the prevention of violence, it is interesting to note that an ecological approach is still a best-practice approach when one wants to understand the dynamic interplay between individuals and their social context.

Families are the principal context in which human development takes place (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). Families have the potential to protect children from harm and it is the role of families to care for the physical and emotional needs of children. Families are seen

as the most influential socializing environment for children to learn values and norms and to learn what is acceptable and not acceptable within society (Matthews & Benvenuti, 2014). It is within families that attachment bonds are formed. Conversely, children can also be hurt and abused within the family system. In conceptualizing participation in decision-making, the researcher is of the view that in order to understand the dynamic interplay between children and their social context, a holistic and ecological systems theory approach is necessary and this approach will provide a useful framework in order to form a better understanding of this complex phenomenon.

The context of this study is child protection and foster care. Within this environment children often experiences some form of trauma, neglect and/or abuse. Research is fairly conclusive that the health of “looked-after” children (in this case foster children), is not as good as their peers and they are more likely to suffer mental health problems if they enter any form of care or protection system (Vis, Strandbu, Holtan, & Thomas, 2011). Research also suggests that when children are removed from their birth family (for whatever reason) or are orphaned or abandoned, this can cause them to experience a fractured sense of belonging (Van Breda, Marx, & Kader, 2012).

It is, therefore, crucial to the overall health and wellness of children residing in child protection to experience a sense of belonging and acceptance within the family system. Foster parents play an extremely important role in the lives of their children. In foster care the aim is to give children “forever families”. The influence of the meso-system, exo-system and macro-system cannot be ignored due to the many inter-relating systems foster families are part of and these influences can present many challenges.

Inter-personal relationships within the family system are important and parents are seen to be important people in the lives of their children. Much research has been conducted

into exploring the relationship between parents and children and there is enough evidence to suggest that if children have a healthy and positive connection with their parents and are able to share their personal experiences with their parents, this relationship can have positive health benefits (Ackard, Neumark-Sztainer, Story, & Perry, 2006; Levin & Currie, 2010).

Steinberg (2001) examines specifically adolescent development in the context of the family and studies what can be referred to as ‘authoritative’ parenting (Steinberg, 2001, p. 7). An authoritative parenting style is where parents are warm and involved with their children, they are firm and consistent in establishing and enforcing guidelines and limits and parents have developmentally appropriate expectations regarding their adolescent children. Steinberg (2001) argues that although adolescents may benefit from having parents who are authoritative in their parenting style, it is also important that parents are willing to permit their adolescent children to develop their own opinions and beliefs. Steinberg (2001, p. 9) refers to this as “psychological autonomy granting”.

In the context of this study, exploring possible protective factors for children was deemed to be a critical element. The enhancing of children’s autonomy was considered an important aspect as was the importance of inter-personal connectedness within the family. Steinberg (2001) is of the view that “psychological autonomy granting” is a general protective factor and offers protection against anxiety, depression and other forms of internalized distress. It is therefore important to consider this aspect when exploring the family’s role in promoting the overall health and well-being of children.

Exploring participation in decision-making within a child protection environment should be viewed holistically. There are several theoretical models of participation that could be applied within this context in order to enable participation in decision-making. Hart (1992) ladder of participation was the first real attempt to define the concept of participation and is

cited and criticized in equal measure due to its implication of hierarchical values when it comes to participation (Kellett, 2011). Treseder (1997) model of participation is non-linear and it brings in the concept of child-initiated and shared decisions with adults. Newer models of participation have a health promotion focus and view participation more holistically with a specific focus on the strengths and empowerment of children. One aspect that should be highlighted in this article is that although these participation models can certainly provide a guiding framework and guiding principles to enable child participation in decision-making, it is important to view this concept holistically, taking into consideration the context and culture of children so that any participatory interventions will be child-friendly, child-centered, with the focus on upholding “the best interest of the child” principle, which are all critical elements in child protection.

Viewing participation in decision-making from a child-friendly approach is not without challenges. It could be argued that this approach has the possibility of creating conflict in adult-child relations, because depending on the interpretation of adults, conflict could be perceived as endangering the authority of adults. Depending on the conception of adults with regard to childhood, this could evoke adult-driven participation which can result in manipulation, decoration or tokenism (Hart, 1992; Kreisberg, 1992). Manipulation, according to Hart (1992) is the lowest rung of the ladder of participation. Often children are consulted on matters but are given no feedback. Hart (1992) does, however, state that manipulation could also be called misguided in that adults are often not aware of children’s abilities. According to Hart (1992) decoration is where adults use children to bolster their cause and this is done in an indirect way. Decoration is the second rung of Hart’s ladder of participation. Tokenism, according to Hart (1992) is where adults do give children a voice but this is done in such a way that children have little choice about the subject and have little opportunity to formulate their own opinions. When discussing participation in decision-

making holistically, it is equally important to consider the right of children to dissent and not to express a view or opinion.

Although child-participation is a legislated right and children have a right to contribute and share in decisions that affect their lives, research suggests that there are several challenges that act as barriers to participation such as adults experiencing anxiety at “getting it wrong” or ignorance of how to facilitate child participation (Jamieson, 2011). Adults can also have a deep-seated reluctance to recognize the capacity of children to be a part of dialogue and decision-making processes. The attitudes and perceptions of adults can be traced back to religious beliefs, cultural practices or simply due to their own experience in childhood where they were excluded from discussions just because they were children (Jamieson, 2011). Here the old adage of “children should be seen and not heard” would apply.

In the context of South Africa it is important to prioritize children’s participation in resource-poor settings. Statistics show that 61% of South African children live in households below the income poverty line. Nearly one in four economically active adults are unemployed (Bray, Gooskens, Moses, Kahn, & Seekings, 2011). Given these realities of poverty, the HIV/Aids pandemic and high unemployment, it could be argued that to have a child-centered approach and a consultative approach to children’s experiences should not be a priority as there are more important matters that need to be dealt with. It could also be argued; however, that involving children in decision-making is a necessity in order for adults to gain a more accurate picture of how children sees these situations so that interventions and solutions can be found that prioritize the “best interest of the child” principle. A further reason to prioritize participatory approaches in resource-poor settings is that participation could have psychological benefits to children. Children who face poverty-related insecurities often feel

uncertain and they feel that they have no control over situations that affect their lives.

Psychologists have found that people in fact cope better with uncertainty when their opinions and experiences are heard and acted upon. This also assists children in bolstering their self-esteem and assists them to sustain hope (Bray et al., 2011).

The parent-child relationship has been already stressed as important. Open and authentic bi-directional communication is important in parent-child relationships. Participation discourse suggests there are many benefits to children if they are allowed to be a part of decision-making processes. Much research has been conducted into this phenomenon, but few studies have illuminated the importance of the role of foster parents or primary caregivers within a child protection environment and how their attitudes and views can either enable or inhibit participation. Several studies have highlighted the possibility that participation can be a protective factor for children in the care system (Vis et al., 2011), but this needs further exploration. The aim of this study was to explore the perceptions and attitudes of foster parents toward participation in decision-making and illuminate any challenges to participation taking into account culture, context and environmental factors.

Methods

Research design

In order to explore the perceptions and attitudes of foster parents towards child participation in decision-making within a child protection environment, a qualitative investigation (Delpont, Fouche, & Schurink, 2011) was conducted using an interpretive descriptive approach in order to obtain an in-depth understanding of these perceptions and attitudes. An interpretive descriptive approach is a particularly appropriate study design when one needs to obtain an in-depth understanding of the meaning, experiences or perceptions that underlie the interpretations of individuals of a social phenomenon. This approach allows for

the subjective exploration of the realities of the participants (Fouche & Schurink, 2011; Terre Blanche, Durrheim, & Painter, 2006). For the purpose of this article the approach provided a deeper understanding of the subjective meaning that the participants attached to the concept of child participation in decision-making in their life world.

Participants and sampling

Purposive and convenient sampling was used. Purposive sampling included pre-selected criteria for the selection of participants (de Vos, Strydom, Fouche, & Delpont, 2011). Foster parents who were judged to be competent and experienced parents and fostering through a prominent child protection organization in KwaZulu-Natal were identified. The pre-selected criteria were used as a benchmark to measure the “best-case scenario” (see description below) foster parents who would be able to answer the research question.

Participants were selected who met the following inclusion criteria: 1) foster parents should have preferably fostered more than one child; 2) foster parents should have preferably gone through the necessary screening and normal statutory processes of the Children’s Court (meaning children were legally placed by way of an order of court); 3) foster children should preferably be under the age of eighteen years; 4) foster parents should preferably not have had any foster placements breaking down which necessitated children being removed from their care by a social worker. The sample was convenient because the participants were already fostering children in a foster care environment and they were willing to participate in the study.

Nine participants took part in the study. The participants lived in the Hibiscus Coast and Izingolweni local municipalities which forms part of the Ugu district municipality in KwaZulu-Natal. All of the participants were first language isiZulu-speakers. Two of the participants were unable to read or write and they were assisted by a research assistant where

necessary. One participant could converse fluently in English. Seven of the participants were from female-headed households. The participants were between the ages of 47 years and 66 years. All of the participants were recipients of a foster care grant and were fostering more than one child under the age of 18 years.

Data collection

Focus group interviews were an appropriate choice for the gathering of data in this study. These interviews assisted the researcher in gaining an in-depth understanding of the inter-subjective experiences of the participants. The group discussions focused on the topic of child participation in decision-making. The researcher identified six pre-selected questions which she thought would be appropriate in answering the research question. The process of the focus group was as follows: the participants were asked to create a collage that would reflect their personal attitudes and perceptions to each of the pre-selected questions. The researcher began with participant 1 who shared her views with the other participants in the group. The participants were asked to provide examples from their daily lives and were asked to clarify the pictures used in their collages and to explain the meaning of their collages in relation to the pre-selected questions. This process was interactive in nature and not merely a discussion on the participants collage. This gave a platform for the participants to share their life worlds regarding child participation in decision-making and the process provided an opportunity for each participant to build on the views of each other.

The researcher was sensitive to any possible misunderstanding of the answers of the participants due to the language barrier and the resulting use of an interpreter. Where necessary, follow-up questions were used such as: Can you tell me more? Do I understand you correctly? Can you explain what this picture means to you? The focus group discussions were recorded and transcribed verbatim. The option of one-on-one participant interviews was

considered to be a possibility after the focus groups but this was deemed unnecessary due to the interesting themes and new information that presented itself from the collages and the focus groups.

Data analysis

The participants received both verbal and written information about the study in their first language – isiZulu. Informed consent was obtained from all of the participants and the research assistants and interpreter signed a letter of confidentiality. The informed consent was made available in the first language of the participants. The participants agreed for audio-visual methods to be used to record focus group discussions. Participants were verbally informed about their right to withdraw from the study at any time. This was also addressed in the informed consent form.

The data analysis focused on illuminated the meanings, perceptions and attitudes of the participants towards child participation in decision-making in order to form a better understanding of and to be able to describe the phenomenon. The data included transcriptions of the focus group discussions and pictorial representations in the creative collages. The transcripts were first transcribed into isiZulu and then translated into English by a research assistant. The transcripts of isiZulu and English were compared to ensure consistency. This comparison was done by printing a hard copy of both isiZulu and English transcripts and the research assistant and researcher comparing both for accuracy. The data from the two focus group discussions were integrated due to the small sample size. The transcripts were then thematically analyzed in order to identify and report patterns and themes. This was important to ascertain a “rich description” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 83) of possible themes within the data. Constant referral was made to the collages to ensure confirmation of the interpretation. Initial coding was done to identify emerging key words or phrases in the text (de Vos et al.,

2011). From the initial codes themes and subthemes were identified and grouped into thematic categories with attention paid to whether the theme captured something important in relation to the overall research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Although sub-categories were also identified, the main categories and sub-categories were integrated due to the small sample size. Attention was paid to highlighting both similarities and differences across the data set as well as seeking out and addressing anomalies or deviant cases (Silverman, 2005). The researcher ensured times of reflection to go over the themes and patterns to gain deeper insight.

It is important to note that in identifying themes, at times it could be argued that the themes overlapped each other to a degree and perhaps the essence of the theme could lack in depth or be unclear. This particular sample of participants live in a rural area of Kwa Zulu Natal and two participants were unable to read or write. Participants initially struggled to understand the word 'participation'. Although the participants could understand basic English, the vocabulary used was simple and basic. The researcher was of the view that to change the simplicity of this would actually detract from the richness portrayed in its simplicity. Interpretive research aims to have a better understanding of the participant's life world and this is what is portrayed in the findings.

Ethical implications

This study was approved by the ethics committee of the North-West University, Potchefstroom campus under ethics number: NWU-00060-12-A1. Informed consent was signed by the participants and a letter of consent was obtained from the Child Protection Organization. The researcher was aware of the importance of avoidance of potential harm or risk to the participations. Participants were informed that their participation was voluntary and that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time. No information

was withheld from the participants and they were advised about levels of confidentiality and anonymity. The identities of participants were protected and they were identified by way of a unique code. The participants were informed that the focus groups would be recorded using audio-visual methods. They were given the right to object to this should they wish to do so. The researcher also explained to the participants how the information provided would be protected. In order to establish trustworthiness, the researcher employed the four constructs that are identified by Lincoln & Guba which are credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability as cited in de Vos et al. (2011).

RESULTS

The findings of this study revealed four main thematic categories and these were assembled according to themes and subthemes. All the elements that encompass the views and attitudes of the participants towards child participation in decision-making were reported as being inter-related and part of a process of being able to understand the concept of child participation within a very specific context. Child participation in decision-making was a new concept for the participants and the researcher had to take time to explain what was meant by child participation in decision-making. The participants needed clarity on the word “participation” and said they had not heard of this word before. Once participation was explained and clarified, the participants were more comfortable that they would be able to answer the questions.

Child participation is often not a concept that people are usually familiar with. By way of explaining to the participants what participation meant the researcher explained that we were not only talking about big decisions but simple daily decisions in the lives of children. The participants were informed that there was no right or wrong answer and that the important aspect was that the researcher wanted to understand their thoughts, attitudes and

perceptions of how they experienced child participation in decision-making processes in their every-day lives. One of the participants offered the opinion that before children came to a foster family the children are involved with the process and the social worker asks if they (referring to the children) are happy and wanted to join a specific family. The participant wanted to know if this was part of decision-making. The researcher confirmed that this was a good example of child participation in decision-making. Child participation in decision-making was described broadly to the participants within a specific single context of foster care, and was described in terms of how participation was understood by the participants in their life world. The first category in this process discusses how participation in decision-making is perceived to enhance a sense of belonging, connectedness and family unity.

Thematic categories

Category 1: Participation in decision-making enhances a sense of belonging, connectedness and family unity.

This category emerged from the responses of the participants whereby they voiced their thoughts that if they involve children in decision-making then their perception was that this would create a sense of belonging and togetherness in the family. The perceived meaning of participants with regard to belonging was that their children would feel a sense of being involved in the family and not feel isolated or alone. The participants were of the view that if children were allowed to participate in decision-making, it would create an opportunity for the mutual expression of feelings of both the adults and children in the family. The participants had the following to share:

It is good to involve children in decision-making. It makes children happy and makes the home to be a peaceful and happy place. The children feel loved and part of the family. (P2)

If we make decisions together there will be no misunderstandings. All boundaries will be clear. I would like them to have a bright future so they can buy their own cars, a nice house, and they can enjoy life. (P6)

If you involve them [referring to children] they will feel they are part of the family. (P5) [Information in brackets provided by the researcher.]

The importance of families working together in unity and not in isolation was a golden thread running through the data. The participants were of the view that in order to succeed in life, families have to function as a unit. It was important to the participants that their children feel part of the family, that the children experience a sense of togetherness and belonging. The *Ubuntu*-principle was evident in this context. If translated literally, *Ubuntu* means “I am, because we are” (Swanepoel, Van Wyk, & Erasmus, 2003). In this context the participants were of the opinion that to allow children to express their opinions and views about matters that impacted their lives, will create a sense of togetherness and belonging. One of the participants said the following:

It is good to involve children in decision-making because it gives a child a sense of belonging. The child knows I am part of this family. I am involved in those decisions and I am not separated. (P1)

Interestingly, although the participants were of the view that children should be involved in decision-making. Discussions around decision-making must be done as a family unit and the mother must be the role-model and the leader of the discussion. A participant described this perception as follows:

Participation means that as a family you need to sit together when you have to decide on something important everyone must be involved. It will not work if you tell one by one. As a

parent you must role model, you must get everyone seated and be the leader of the discussions. (P9)

Literature emphasizes the importance of family and parent-child relationships. Research points to the importance of the nature and strength of connections that exist between family members and other various settings regarding the development of children (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). Families are broadly recognized in policies, law and practices as the first protection system for children (Van Niekerk & Makdae, 2014). Bell and Wilson (as cited in Vis et al., 2011) assert that children value the experience of being consulted and they welcome opportunities where families work together on issues to develop relationships. If the youth feel connected to their families, their families can be an important anchor for them (Ackard et al., 2006).

All of the participants were of the view that in order to succeed in life, you had to work together as a family. Interestingly, phrases such as “a bright future” were used. A ‘bright future’, according to the attitudes and perceptions of the participants, meant their children would be able to achieve a higher social status, for example to have a good job and own their own homes one day. But their children would not be able to achieve this if they did not work together as a family. The attitudes of the participants regarding child participation in decision-making were consistently positive, with emphasis on the importance of working together as a family whilst emphasizing the mother’s role as a leader.

The importance of being connected as a family was important to the participants. Resnick, Bearman and Blum (as cited in Ackard et al., 2006) reported that family connectedness was significantly and inversely associated with emotional distress, suicides, alcohol use, marijuana use and increased sexual intercourse at an

early age. They further argue the importance of children and youth feeling connected to their families and that families are important anchors for children. Communication with parents is of the utmost importance when establishing families as a protective factor. Support from families equip young people to be better able to deal with stressful situations and families act as a buffer in assisting young people to deal with adverse negative influences.

Category 2: Participation in decision-making encourages inter-generational dialogue and bidirectional communication.

The next category naturally flowed from the focus group discussions where the participants were of the view that it is the responsibility of adults to actively engage and listen to children. This was important so that children would feel safe and secure to be able to share their feelings and voice any concerns they had. It was evident from some of the responses of the participants that although they placed a high priority on listening to their children, they were also of the view that at times as the mother and leader of the home they must just take charge of a situation and make a decision. This perception is contradictory to authentic dialogue and bidirectional communication that was deemed important to the participants. Once again this is strongly related to and influenced by culture and the fact that the mother is deemed to be the matriarch in this particular culture.

Literature suggests that the key to foster parents' promotion of the voice of children is the quality of listening. It is important to note that it is important for adults to pay attention to their tone of voice, stance and facial expressions (Head, 1998). Bray et al. (2011) suggests that there are two tasks involved in achieving two-way communication between children and adults. The first task is to bolster the ability of children to express themselves in an adult

dominated environment. The second task is to enable adults to both listen and to respond to children. The participants shared the following with regard to listening:

It is important [listening] because I will get a chance to discuss with them what is acceptable and what is not acceptable in the family. I will also get a chance to tell them why I am not in agreement with whatever they [children] might want. (P3) [Information in brackets provided by the researcher.]

[By listening actively] they [children] will be able to share their own ideas. (P4) [Information in brackets provided by the researcher.]

A child knows that when he talks or she talks you are there to listen. They are free to express their feelings. (P1)

Although the perceptions and attitudes of the participants reflect that they were of the view it was important to listen to the views of their children, there were also instances and certain situations where the participants were of the view that no discussions and open dialogue were necessary. Although this could be viewed as contradictory to their willingness to enter into dialogue with their children, perhaps their desire to protect their children was greater and thereby influencing their decisions and a more authoritative parenting style was evident.

The participants expressed concerns regarding the influence of peer pressure on their children to engage in substance abuse or to get involved in sexual relationships. When the participants were of the view that their children were placed in vulnerable situations, no bidirectional communication took place and the participants felt it was their duty to inform their children that such behavior would not be tolerated within their family. In these instances the parents had an overwhelming desire to protect their children from what they perceived as dangerous situations. Two of the participants had the following to say:

I will not allow them to walk up and down the streets, wearing inappropriate clothing and attracting negative attention. (P3)

Sometimes you just have to take charge as a parent. (P6)

It was the perception of the participants that in some instances children need to just follow the instructions and rules of adults. The participants followed an authoritative parenting style with regard to certain decisions and did not consider engaging their children in dialogue about what they perceived as being ‘difficult’ decisions and social challenges. Steinberg (2001, p. 9) is of the view that although in some instances an authoritative parenting style can be beneficial to adolescents, it is also important for parents to allow adolescents to develop their own opinions and beliefs. Steinberg refers to this as “psychological autonomy granting.

The findings of a recent study completed by Coetzee, Dietrich, Otjombe, Nkala, Khunwane, van der Watt et al. (2014) found that female-headed households were more likely to engage in parent-adolescent communication amongst black populations. The findings of this study also highlighted the key role that mothers play in parent-adolescent communication. This is consistent with the social and political history of South Africa, as the country now has a large proportion of female-headed households.

In the context of child protection, if participation in decision-making is indeed another possible protective factor, it is something that needs further exploration. It would be important for the participants to be better equipped with the necessary communication skills and to be provided guidance in order for them to feel more confident in effectively entering dialogue with their children around topics that they deem to be placing their children at risk. This guidance would be more crucial as their

children grow older and enter their teenage years and would hopefully assist the foster parents to reduce barriers they have towards participation in decision-making regarding certain topics.

As mentioned, in a child protection environment there could be challenges and tension between protecting children on the one hand, and allowing children to participate in decision-making processes. It could, therefore, be reasonable to suggest that because foster children are deemed vulnerable and in need of care and protection, the adults and caregivers in their lives could have a stronger commitment to the responsibility of protection rather than participatory processes.

The concept of protection versus empowerment is a critical element within foster care or any child protection environment. Child protection is used to denote the view that children are not able to protect themselves and are, therefore, in need of protection from the state and its agents (Littlechild, 2000). According to Jamieson (2011), the attitudes of adults towards participation in decision-making could inadvertently silence the voice of children and these attitudes could be a major obstacle to the acceptance of children as the holders of certain rights. In the context of this study it could be reasonable to suggest that this is indeed the case.

Commonly identified in literature is the view of Lee who explains that adults often see children either as active constructors of meaning or as objects of change (as cited in Vis et al., 2011). Perhaps a barrier to participation in decision-making regarding certain topics was the parents' own self-interest toward maintaining their own position towards children in certain instances. It was certainly evident from the discussions and comments when the perceptions of the participants were that they had to be the "boss" and that they would not tolerate their authority being questioned. This

aspect links in to the context of culture playing a role (which will be discussed under another theme) and also to parents not having adequate information in the evolving capacities of children. This also links in to the ambiguous parenting role where at times parents question themselves as to whether they are doing things the “right way”. Training and skills development are needed to address this issue. Training and skills development will also assist child protection organizations and foster schemes to be able to understand the challenges foster parents face in this regard and to empower them with the correct knowledge that will assist them in navigating the challenges of protection and empowerment during participatory processes. This will also assist parents in being able to understand their ambiguous emotional experiences when it comes to protection and empowerment within the participation discourse.

Category 3: Systemic influences that challenge participation in decision-making.

The influence of social systems such as the micro-system, exo-system and macro-system was not a pre-selected focus group question. One of the questions was “What challenges do you think you would face when you allow your children to participate in decision-making?” This category was influenced by the perceptions of the participants. The participants were of the view that most of the challenges to participation in decision-making came from external influences. The researcher wanted to explore participation in decision-making holistically, taking into account the various social systems foster children are part of while the context of participation in decision-making was explored. As the researcher would like to convince her audience that the findings are genuinely based on a critical investigation of the data and not dependent on a few well-chosen examples Silverman (2005, p. 211).

Social systemic influences provoke feelings of anxiety and emotional stress for the participants and they voiced concerns about feeling uncertain as to how to handle these influences. Participation in decision-making is influenced by the micro-system (such as friends, schools, peers), the meso-system (connections between micro-groups), the exo-systems (communities) and macro-systems (cultural values, policies and laws) (Muir & Goldblatt, 2011). Systemic influences are divided into four main sub-categories, namely: 1) Children's refusal to listen to the advice of their parents; 2) The influence of peers and the society to engage in negative and high risk behavior such as substance abuse and pressure to engage in a sexual relationships at a young age; 3) Involvement of children in monetary decisions (for example, schools and educators would expect children to go on outings because they are recipients of foster grants; and 4) The maturity level of children.

Children's refusal to listen to the advice of their parents.

The participants were of the view that as their children got older and entered adolescence it was difficult to discuss things with them and they found it challenging and hurtful when their children refused to listen to their advice – especially about matters where they (the participants) were of the view that children could be hurt and they would not then have a “bright future”. It was in these instances, as previously mentioned, where the foster parents adopted an authoritative parenting style with the view that they were protecting their children and that they were operating in the best interest of their children. It would have been interesting to probe the participants for why they think adolescents will not listen to their advice and to explore what could be at the root of this kind of behaviour. Two of the participants shared the following:

It is difficult if the child does not listen to what you tell them. I sit down with the child and make her understand how it feels if someone does not listen to you. It hurts when children do not listen. (P5)

When children do not listen it is painful and challenging. It is very painful. (P1)

Influence of peers and society.

The participants were concerned about societal influences on their children and they wanted to protect their children by being authoritative in their parenting style. There was a direct link between behaviour and participatory processes and the participants were of the view that it was their responsibility to guide their children in the right direction so they “do not stray”:

I tell them that if they involve themselves with the wrong people and engage in drugs and alcohol they will not have a bright future. I am putting them in line because I love them. (P2)

Yes, they will start drinking if they dress like this [revealing clothing]. (P3) [Information added by the researcher.]

If he [the participant’s son] drinks alcohol he will get bad friends who will teach him bad things. (P4) [Information added by the researcher.]

Involvement of children in monetary decisions with regard to foster grants

The fact that children know they are the recipients of foster grants and sometimes ‘demanded’ money because they see foster care grants as being their money, made it very difficult for the participants. The participants perceived these situations as a loss of parental authority and their attitude was that the foster grant money should be used to provide food and clothing for their children. There are some contradictions in the responses of the participants and it was evident that the topic of finances was not a topic that they felt was appropriate to discuss with their children as it was deemed a private matter. Conversely, the

participants had not considered that by discussing financial matters this could assist their children to be more financially intelligent, for example, and would open up dialogue about these important matters. The perceptions and attitudes of the participants towards involving their children in financial issues were that they experienced a loss of parental control and authority:

They [children of the participants] all know about the foster grant money. They are told at school. (P3)

[Information added by the researcher.]

They [teachers] tell the children at school that we must give them money because they are getting the foster grant. (P3) [Information added by the researcher.]

They [children of the participants] demand that money [foster grant] money. (P1) [Information added by the researcher.]

I need that money to come to me. (P1)

The maturity level of children.

The attitudes of the participants towards participation in decision-making were that participation should not be based on age alone. Although some of the children were perhaps old enough chronologically to be legally part of the decision-making, the participants would not consider participation if they were of the view that their children were not emotionally mature enough to be part of the decision-making. The participants agreed on this matter and verbalized that one could involve children more in decision-making from the age of 14 years:

Always keeping in mind their level of maturity of the mind. (P9)

It is true we should always consider the age and level of understanding of children. (P8)

For me I will not consider the child's age only but by maturity stage. (P9)

These attitudes reflect the psychological concept of the evolving capacities of children. The participants want to protect their children from dangers that society presents and there exists a complex and sensitive inter-relationship between the need for recognition of the capacity of their children to exercise mature judgments and the role of legal protection (Lansdown, 2005). The concept of evolving capacities is not a concept that the participants were familiar with and they were confused about how well their children or teenagers are able to understand the risks involved and being able to make judgments about the dangers of substance abuse and engaging in sexual relationships, for example. The participants were of the view that their children could be more involved in decision-making from about the age of 14 years.

The attitudes of parents regarding age versus maturity in participatory processes would be classified as an influence of the macro-system. The Children's Act 38 of 2005 (South Africa, 2005) states that children should be empowered to contribute to, and share in decisions that affect their lives with due weight being given to their opinions according to their age and maturity. It is clear that age alone cannot be a determinant of participation and parents/foster parents/care-givers should also consider the level of maturity of children.

More recent research points to the fact that some sceptics are of the view that children are not competent enough to engage in decisions and age is; therefore, commonly used as a delineating factor. This view, which is often linked to developmental stages, is being robustly challenged (Woodhead & Faulkner, 2000) and it is suggested by Kellett (2011) that social experience is a more reliable marker of competence and maturity.

The influence of the different social systems that affect the lives of foster children within a child protection environment is critical to take into consideration when discussing participation in decision-making. One of the factors that challenged the participants was their

children's refusal to listen to them and this caused them to experience ambiguous emotions. The question that probably needs to be asked is why children refuse to listen to their parents' advice with regard to important aspects. How to reconcile these tensions is something that needs further exploration. The importance of conducting research with adolescent participants with regard to the topic of children's participation is highlighted. It would also be beneficial to explore the perceptions and experiences of adolescents regarding participation in decision-making and this is a recommendation for future research.

Another factor was the influence of peers and the fact that society accepts certain behaviours which the participants deemed as inappropriate. Unacceptable behaviour included things such as substance abuse and engaging in sexual relationships at an early age. As previously mentioned, the participants refused to discuss unacceptable behaviour with their children and simply set the boundary that these types of behavior would not be tolerated. No bidirectional communication took place and the participants adopted an authoritative parenting style. The involvement of children in financial decisions was not deemed necessary as this topic was reserved for discussions between adults only and it was deemed not to be the business of children. The participants; however, experienced ambiguous emotions and they felt ill-equipped to deal with these emotions when their children questioned their use of the foster grant money. The maturity level of children is an interesting concept and although the participants were not familiar with evolving capacities, the fact that they said age alone was not a determining factor when it came to involving children in decision-making, was interesting to note. Some of these views are related to culture and personal belief systems and this will be explored under the fourth and final theme.

Category 4: The influence of culture on child participation in decision-making.

When contextualizing participation in this particular study, it is important to recognize that the attitudes and perceptions of the participants are based on their life world and their experiences include female-headed households in resource-poor settings. Only two of the participants had husbands living with them. In South Africa women head nearly half of all households (Department of Health, 2007). Although there are many reasons for female-headed households, this issue is increasingly related to what (Goebel, Dodson, & Hill, 2010, p. 576) refer to as “contemporary macro-economic conditions” and premature death brought on by HIV/Aids (Gilbert, Selikow, & Walker, 2010). It is interesting to note that the majority of participants in this study were widows and were of the view that they are the leaders in the home and it is their responsibility to role-model positive behaviour to their children.

In the context of an isiZulu culture, there are some decisions that should only be made by adults and no consultation is deemed necessary with children nor appropriate. The participants were of the view that some decisions were simply “none of their business” (their children). Cultural decisions deemed unsuitable for child participation include the payment of *lobola*, slaughtering a goat for cultural reasons and any decisions with regard to financial matters. *Lobola* is an African term used in Southern Africa whereby a bridegroom’s family makes a payment in cattle or cash to the bride’s family shortly before the marriage will take place (Dictionary, 1995). The participants were of the view that in some instances no discussion was required when it came to aspects around substance abuse and sexual relations, for example. The participants would not allow certain behaviours. The attitudes of the participants in this regard can possibly be traced back to cultural practices and their own experiences as being excluded as children (Bray et al., 2011). In these instances no communication was deemed necessary with their children, irrespective of their ages:

Although it is good to involve children in other decisions, sometimes when adults discuss other stuff children must go to their bedroom and not be part of those decisions. Like if we are planning a family celebration or paying of *lobola*. (P3)

Discussing big stuff, especially cultural stuff or family matters, we do not allow them to participate. (P6)

Children must be told that they cannot take the mother's position [head of the home]. (P8) [Information added by the researcher.]

Family decisions, for example slaughtering a goat, so there is no need to involve a child when we talk about that because it is none of their business. (P1)

In the context of this study, the foster parents found themselves at times in an ambiguous parenting role. On the one hand, they wanted to actively collaborate with their children on aspects that impact their lives but on the other hand, they were not willing to discuss certain issues with their children and this made active bidirectional communication and participation difficult. The participants were willing to discuss “small decisions” such as every day decisions with their children. When it came to “big” decisions such as substance abuse and sexual relationships, they felt there should be no discussion with their children and the participants were then authoritative in their parenting and communication style. These situations that arose with their foster children invoked frustration and heartache and they felt disrespected that their children and adolescents at times would not listen to them. They said this made them feel unloved and it was important to be loved as a mother.

Research points to the importance of parents collaborating with adolescents and points to the importance of parents having discussions on sensitive topics without lending judgment to the ideas of their adolescents and then working in a collaborative manner to find a solution to the problem. If parents are involved in discussing

sensitive issues in an open and caring manner, this tends to promote the overall health and well-being of youth (Levin & Currie, 2010). According to Lansdown (2001), it is through learning to question that children acquire skills and competence to develop their thinking and to exercise judgment in the myriad of issues that will confront them as they approach adulthood. As previously mentioned, assisting children to develop psychological autonomy, can be a protective factor (Steinberg, 2001).

DISCUSSION

In order to appropriately contextualize the findings of this particular study, it was important to understand the context and the life world of these participants. The Ugu district in which these participants live would be classified as a rural district where 54% of the population are females (Statistics South Africa, 2001). An important aspect of this population group is that this group reflects a cohort that is more vulnerable to HIV/Aids, crime and violence. Social indicators point out that 15.9% of people residing in the Ugu district have no formal education and 64% have an education level below grade 12 (Statistics South Africa, 2001). One challenge facing this particular district is the impact of absent fathers in the lives of children.

The participants in this study have all undergone extensive parent and foster parent training at the child protection organization and all are involved in community strengthening forums and receive ongoing support through social workers and case workers by attending weekly support groups. The foster training programme has a large focus on empowering and strengthening families and the foster families receive ongoing support and guidance through the services of social workers, case workers and by attending support groups. It will; therefore, be through this “lens” that the

participants view child participation in decision-making as a process in their lived world.

Participation enhances a sense of belonging, family unity and connectedness (thematic category 1) and this was a theme running through the entire data set. The participants placed great value on the importance of building strong and healthy families. Strengthening their families and building unity within their families were deemed important values. Working in unity, and not alone, was seen as a primary indicator of having a successful future and life. The participants were also emotionally engaged with their children and seemed to have a genuine desire for their children to succeed in life. The participants perceived that as role-models in the lives of their children, they could shape their children's lives either positively or negatively. It was important to the participants to set the platform to build relationships of trust and honesty.

In relation to thematic category 2, which was that participation encourages inter-generational dialogue and bidirectional communication, the findings of this study revealed that although the term "child participation" was not really a concept that was familiar to the participants, they were collaborating with their children about certain decisions. After explaining to the participation what the term meant, it was evident that the attitudes and perceptions of the participants towards child participation in decision-making were generally a positive. The participants were of the view that to involve children in decision-making was beneficial to both the children and parents. Certain topics would; however, never be discussed with children and these decisions were mainly cultural and financial decisions with regard to protection where the participants were of the view that children could be placed at risk

for engaging in negative behaviours. In these instances the participants took an authoritative parenting role and no collaboration or bidirectional communication took place.

Thematic category 3 referred to the challenges the participants experienced regarding aspects of participation and this was mainly due to external systemic influences. Challenges experienced by the participants were their children's refusal to listen to their advice and the influence of macro-system factors on their children. The participants found this behavior hurtful and emotionally difficult to cope with and this provoked negative intra-personal emotional responses and caused them to experience ambiguous emotions regarding their capabilities as parents. The participants understood the difficult transition from childhood to adolescence and they desired to be able to assist their children in making a successful transition. They wanted their children to take more responsibility for their own well-being and they viewed themselves as being the primary role-models who guided their children through life challenges. Systemic influences of peer relationships were challenging for the participants to deal with and in these instances there would be no bidirectional dialogue and they would resort to an authoritative parenting style. The participants lacked the necessary skills to effectively deal with these challenges in a way that will contribute to an enabling environment for their children to participate in decision-making.

In conceptualizing participation in decision-making within a child protection environment, the researcher endeavored to apply the ecological theory of Bronfenbrenner and after the completion of the study the researcher is of the opinion that participation in decision-making is too multi-faceted to be explored from one

view such as a rights perspective. A social ecological approach is the only way to shed more light on this topic due to the fact that it takes into account the many different social systems that can affect individuals. In the context of this study the values, norms and parenting practices within this culture play a significant role in the perceptions of parents towards participation in decision-making.

This study also aimed to view participation in decision-making through the lens of health promotion which has, according to O'Connell, a focus on wellness of the "whole" child taking into consideration environmental factors (as cited in Prilleltensky, 2010). The researcher is of the view that future research on child participation in decision-making should have a health promotion focus while emphasizing the importance of autonomy in enhancing personal wellness. The researcher is further of the view that participatory processes should take into account the social inter-relating systems that impact individuals. These systems are crucial within the environment of child protection.

In order to form a better understanding of the complex and multi-faceted nature of participation in decision-making, several possible theoretical models of participation were explored as being possible frameworks that could be applied to enable participation in decision-making. The participation models of Hart (1992) and Treseder (1997) were deemed inappropriate in the context of this study because of their failure to take into account the cultural components of participation. The perspective of Lundy (2007) was deemed appropriate because of its attention paid to giving children the space so that they can express their views. The "voice" of children cannot be seen in isolation. Lundy (2007) is also of the view that to merely listen to children is not enough and does not constitute authentic participation. The researcher

is of the view that the newer TYPE model, based on a health promotion perspective (Wong et al., 2010), is a very relevant and appropriate model to further enable participation in decision-making. This model focuses on democratic decision-making between adults and children. It is a collaborative model where adults and children really engage with one another in an authentic manner. In the researcher's opinion this opens up the way for bidirectional communication between adults and children and allows opportunities to engage with each other regarding the different world views of adults and children.

In conceptualizing participation in decision-making within the context of child protection, this study contained several strengths that increased the utility of the findings. This study highlighted the possibility that child-participation could possibly be a protective factor for children, especially for children residing in a child protection environment or foster care. Only a few studies have highlighted the possibility that participation in decision-making could possibly be a protective factor and could possibly enhance the overall health and well-being of children. Social research with children who reside in child protection or any alternative care setting tends to focus on problems and possible negative mental health problems associated with the institutionalization of children.

Herman (as cited in Levin & Currie, 2010) states that the field of mental health wellness has received very little attention to date. As previously mentioned, it is vitally important when contextualizing participation in decision-making within child protection to consider this complex phenomenon holistically, rather than from one single perspective. In this regard further studies and additional knowledge are needed in order to support participation in decision-making, not only because it is a

right of children, but also because participation is a proponent of the overall emotional, psychological and physical wellbeing of children who are part of the child protection system.

This study also highlighted challenges and the influence of culture and the society with regard to participation in decision-making. The fact was emphasized that significant role-players in the lives of children often experience ambiguous feelings as they try to understand the life world of children and adolescents which is so different from their own life world. The importance of families as “anchors” for children has been confirmed. The importance of the relationship between children and parents has been stressed as important.

If we look at literature in relation to health promotion, negative and strained relationships between parents and children often cause adolescents to report health complaints (Låftman & Östberg, 2006). Literature shows us that the level of risky behaviour of adolescents has been associated with their perceptions of their mothers’ trustworthiness and accessibility (Guilamo-Ramos, Jaccard, Dittus, & Bouris, 2006). In this study the participants (foster mothers) perceived themselves as accessible and trustworthy and yet found it difficult and challenging to communicate with their children on certain topics. The participants found themselves in an ambiguous parenting role, which caused them to experience emotional distress. This was reflected in both theme 1 and 2 where the participants wanted to engage in bidirectional communication but found it challenging and then resorted to an authoritative parenting style. This also links with theme 3 where the systemic influences of peers and challenges concerning children not listening to the advice of their parents were challenging to the participants.

In terms of future research it would be beneficial to train social workers and mental health professionals who work with children and families, on the importance of child participation in decision-making so that practices can be improved in the context of child protection from a psychological perspective. This training should also be included in foster care so that foster parents are aware of the importance of child participation and have the necessary skills to be able to contribute to an enabling environment for children's participation.

The findings of this study can also be a preliminary step in the development of guidelines and a best-practice approach to participation in decision-making in foster care that would ensure that ethical guidelines are followed and that the best interest of the child stays a priority. Having such guidelines available with a best-practice approach would further facilitate the Department of Social Development's primary objective of caring, protecting and promoting the well-being of children in South Africa. Best-practice guidelines would also assist child protection organizations to be able to incorporate skills training programmes on child participation when they offer foster parent training.

The results of this study need to be contextualized with several limitations. The sample size was small and reflected the isiZulu culture and predominantly female-headed households. It is recommended that future work should include studies from other child protection organizations and should also incorporate a larger sample. Future research should also explore the perceptions and attitudes of professionals who work with children within a child protection setting because their perceptions and attitudes will also either enable or disable participation. Finally, this study did not take into account the "voice" of children which is central to any participatory experience.

It would be interesting to explore how foster children perceive participation and how they view inter-generational communication with their foster parents. Do foster children feel listened to, for example, and do they feel that their views are really honestly and authentically considered.

Conclusion

This study highlighted the psychological benefits to children when they are involved in participatory processes. A critical element is whether participation could be a protective factor in the overall health and well-being of children. This study has provided insight and information about some of the challenges within the context of a child protection environment that parents face in balancing the tension between protection and empowerment. Parents themselves need support, knowledge and skills to assist them to better manage and navigate the life challenges they face with their children. Parents also need support to facilitate bidirectional communication and the different perspectives of parents and children need to be considered in order to find a mutually beneficial way to manage these challenges effectively.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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SECTION C

CRITICAL EVALUATION, LIMITATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

Section C provides an overview of the study with a focus on the evaluation of the findings in the context of the research question and aims of the study. Components such as the chosen research design, methods of data collection, data analysis procedures and trustworthiness of findings will be discussed. Furthermore, this section reflects on the experiences of the researcher during the research process. Limitations of the study are identified and recommendations for future research and practice are provided.

Evaluation of the study

The research question was: *What are the perceptions and attitudes of foster parents regarding child participation in decision-making processes?* In the context of this study participation was viewed generally to include everyday decisions (big and/or small) that impact the life of children. A child protection environment was specifically chosen to conduct this study due to the fact that participation in decision-making in this context has not been adequately explored, as substantiated by the literature review in Section A. A sample of “best-case scenario” foster parents was drawn from a child protection organization in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, through purposive and convenient sampling methods. A “best-case scenario” sample means that the researcher has purposively chosen a sample of participants that she thought would be competent to effectively answer the research question. Criteria for the “best-case scenario” participants (in this case foster parents) were compiled and the researcher was of the view that it was important to have a sample of competent foster parents who had gained many years of experience dealing with the complexities of a child

protection environment and foster care. The final sample consisted of nine participants, seven of whom came from female-headed households. All of the participants were first language isiZulu-speakers and ranged in age between 47 and 66 years. Participation was entirely voluntary and the identities of the participants were protected by giving each participant a unique code. The code did not include any identifying personal details of individuals who participated in the study. The aim of this study was not to generalize the findings and the researcher aimed to explore participation in decision-making within the unique context of a child protection environment.

The research question was qualitatively explored and described through an interpretive descriptive approach which provided a rich and thick description of the subjective perceptions and attitudes of foster parents towards child participation in decision-making. In the researcher's opinion, this was an appropriate and effective research methodology as qualitative research aims to provide a deeper understanding and to provide a rich description of a social phenomenon. From a psychological perspective there exist certain categories of experiential processes, one being that of perception. The term "perception" refers to a higher level of information processing in the human perceptual experience and indicates experiences with definite meaning (Jordaan & Jordaan, 2003). In conceptualizing participation in decision-making, the researcher wanted to explore the individual and personal meaning that participants had towards participation. Attitude on the other hand, refers more to a cognitive way of thinking about something or the perspectives of individuals on a phenomenon, for example. By exploring both attitudes and perceptions of the participants, the researcher was of the view that this would provide a more in-depth understanding of the uniqueness and complexities of this phenomenon.

Data were collected from two focus groups where the participants were asked six pre-selected questions. During the focus group discussions the participants were given optimal speaking time to share their life world perceptions and attitudes regarding child participation in decision-making. The participants each made a collage that depicted their answers to the six pre-selected questions. A collage can be described as a technique where one uses various materials (for example: photographs, pictures, newspaper clippings, beads, written words) which are glued on to cardboard or paper in order to present a pictorial expression of a particular theme or topic. An interpreter was available to ensure the translation of the responses of the participants due to the researcher only speaking English. This was important in order for the researcher to be able to clarify and to correct any assumptions or any inaccurate understandings of the responses of the participants. Initially it was difficult for the participants to illustrate their thoughts and attitudes onto the collage as they were unsure as to how to go about this and some verbalized concerns about “getting it wrong”. Once the researcher; however, clarified that there was no right or wrong way to create a collage and that the aim was to understand each and every person’s own unique attitude and perceptions towards child participation in decision-making, the participants relaxed and began to create their collages while chatting together comfortably. The participants enjoyed the interaction with each other and this exercise of creating a collage helped the participants to orientate themselves with regard to their own thoughts, attitudes and perceptions towards child participation in decision-making. Making a creative collage also brought about spontaneous responses from the participants and this was a successful starting point towards the central themes of the discussions that followed. The collages were discussed, transcribed and then thematically analyzed. The focus group discussions were recorded by audio-visual methods.

The primary aim of this study was to conduct an in-depth exploration of the attitudes and perceptions of foster parents regarding the concept of child participation in decision-

making within the context of a child protection environment. It was; therefore, essential that true and first-hand accounts of the experiences of the participants regarding this concept was adequately explored. The interpretation and understanding of the perceptions and attitudes of the participants towards child participation in decision-making were done through meaningful thematic analyses of the findings which were validated by the verbatim quotes of the participants. Four main thematic categories emerged from the data. The four categories were: 1) participation in decision-making enhances a sense of belonging; 2) participation in decision-making encourages inter-generational dialogue and bidirectional communication; 3) the exo-system and macro-system influence participation; 4) cultural influences. The sub-categories were integrated into the relevant categories and presented as part of the category due to the small sample size.

The researcher's paradigm for comprehension of the perceptions and attitudes of the participants towards child participation in decision-making was predominantly from both a rights perspective and a health promotion perspective. From the outset the researcher viewed it as being important to explore participation in decision-making holistically, taking into account the environmental factors and critical elements that could either enable or stifle participation in decision-making. The researcher is of the view that this approach brought about a more meaningful understanding of the complexities of child participation in decision-making within the context of foster care and a child protection environment. A holistic approach also viewed participation in decision-making within the wider social systems that impact the lives of foster children and provided space for critical aspects such as culture and environmental factors to be contextually explored.

To ensure trustworthiness the researcher made sure that she did not impose any of her own ideas or attitudes onto the participants during the data gathering process. The researcher

mainly acted as a facilitator and ensured she clarified anything about the responses of the participants that she did not understand.

The experiences of the researcher

The researcher has been interested in the experiences of children who reside in any form of alternative care ever since she worked as a counsellor in a foster care environment. Many of the challenges children experienced and expressed in counselling sessions were that they felt the adults in their lives did not listen to their viewpoints and they often felt disillusioned with social workers and other professionals who had been part of their placement process. Many of the foster care children conveyed to the researcher that they were not informed about any of their placements and that in fact nothing was discussed with them. This caused the researcher to want to further explore this issue.

The implementation of the Children's Act 38 of 2005 (South Africa, 2005), gave rise to the participatory rights of foster children to be involved in decision-making processes. Foster children have rights to be listened to and their views about such things such as their foster placements must be considered by the adults in their lives (for example the social workers involved). Research suggests that social workers can feel insecure about communicating with children (Vis, Strandbu, Holtan, & Thomas, 2011) and, according to Alderson, can even lack the necessary skills and guidance for proper communication (as cited in Vis et al., 2011). The researcher realized that there could be complexities and dilemmas to face regarding participation in decision-making within the child protection context. The researcher also acknowledged that children can have all the rights in the world but to great extent children rely on the significant adults in their lives to make participation in decision-making a reality in their lives. It was for these reasons and the fact that the researcher had previously worked in a child protection organization that

prompted her to explore the possibility and feasibility of conducting a study within this context of child protection and alternative care. After conducting a literature review as a background to the study, the review confirmed that there was a lack of current research and interventions with regard to enabling authentic participation in decision-making within an environment of alternative care especially within the South African context.

The researcher then set about finding a suitable child protection organization that would be willing to allow her to conduct a research study. Initially, the researcher wanted to interview foster children to find out their views on participation in decision-making within the foster care environment. But after careful consideration it was decided that perhaps a better approach would be to explore the perceptions and attitudes of foster parents because they are the significant people in the lives of their foster children and their views can either hinder or enable child-participation in decision-making. The researcher was of the view that perhaps children do know what their rights are, but in many instances, they are powerless to ensure these rights are fulfilled and it is here that adults play a significant role in the fulfilment of children's rights.

The researcher identified a child protection organization that is prominent in the field of foster care. The researcher had no prior personal interaction with this organization as it is quite a long travelling distance from where the researcher resides. After initial contact with the senior social worker at the organization by way of email explaining what the research study was about, a meeting was arranged between the social worker and the researcher. This meeting was the first of several meetings to occur before any research was conducted. The organization wanted to ensure that the study would be a good "fit" for them as an organization. Permission was obtained from the board of directors and chief executive officer of the organization and the researcher visited the organization again to have a final meeting with the staff who oversee the foster care programme.

The researcher was of the view that focus groups would offer an opportunity for the participants to connect on an inter-personal level and would provide a platform for participants to share their thoughts, attitudes and perceptions regarding child participation. All of the participants said they enjoyed discussing things in a group as they felt that they learned from each other. This also demonstrated to the researcher that the participants were eager to learn new skills and were willing to learn new ways of parenting.

During the focus group discussions the researcher found it challenging at times having to work through an interpreter. It was difficult to be sure that what the researcher stated, was adequately translated by the interpreter and it was equally difficult for the researcher to be entirely confident that she understood the responses of the participants. The researcher ensured that throughout the discussions she would ask the interpreter to be sure to interpret everything the participants said, even if it seemed irrelevant to the research question. The researcher did not want to miss any of the finer nuances during the discussions. This was the researcher's first experience of working with a rural community and isiZulu speaking participants. In retrospect the researcher is of the view that perhaps two interpreters would have been more appropriate in order to ensure the information relayed was correct. Despite the language barrier, the researcher found the participants to be welcoming and engaging during the process and it was not difficult for the researcher to connect with them on a relational level.

Another challenge was working with the transcripts. The interviews were recorded by way of a video camera as well as audio methods. This was discussed with the participants beforehand and they were all in agreement that this was acceptable and it was incorporated into the indemnity form as well. These recordings were sent to an isiZulu speaking social worker for transcription with the instructions to transcribe verbatim. Transcripts were not

“cleaned up” in any way and the instruction from the researcher was to include everything and not omit such things as “ums and ahs” or false starts. This resulted in transcripts that could be classified as being written in “broken English” and perhaps not making sense at times. However, the researcher is of the opinion that this was vital in this study due to the fact that the researcher cannot understand or speak isiZulu and this helped her enormously when coding the transcripts as it caused her to engage with the data on a daily basis to ensure that her interpretation was not just her own interpretation, but was based on a true reflection of the data. Most of the participants had only a basic understanding of English and it is for this reason that the researcher did not want transcripts that had been cleaned up and wanted it to be a true reflection of what the participants said.

On a more personal level the researcher found the research process to be extremely rewarding. The researcher especially found the focus group discussions fulfilling. One of the participants opened up her home so that we could have the focus group discussions there. This was the researcher’s first experience in the field and her first experience of working with participants of a different culture. It was interesting to observe the interaction of the participants and how they enjoyed working in a group. The participants were actually so excited to be part of a research study and felt “honoured” that the researcher wanted to hear about their children and their families and that in a small way their experiences could help other foster parents. The researcher came away from these focus group meetings feeling that she had been given a glimpse of the importance these parents placed on building strong families. The participants are not rich in monetary terms, but they are rich when it comes to social connections, coming alongside one another and supporting one another. It was the researcher’s first experience of the *Ubuntu*-principle and also the perception of a collective wellness as opposed to individuality.

The researcher regrets that she could not carry out an initial pilot study. A pilot study would certainly have highlighted the fact that six questions were too many and would have highlighted that in fact some of the questions did overlap one another. Fewer questions would have provided more time for a deeper exploration of each question. The distance to travel to this community made it logistically difficult. It was also logistically difficult to get all the participants together in one central venue. Bearing this limitation in mind, the researcher is satisfied with the findings and results.

Limitations of the study

Certain elements can be regarded as limitations of the study.

Small sample size

The number of participants and the fact that they were a homogeneous group could be regarded as a limitation of the study due to the limited data that could be seen as being not representative and could not be generalized at all.

No pilot study

Had the researcher conducted a pilot study, then the aspect of the participants feeling initially a bit overwhelmed by the phrase “participation in decision-making” could have been addressed. It would also have given the researcher the opportunity to test the pre-selected questions to ensure that these questions would provide enough valuable information to be able to effectively answer the research question. Logistically it was difficult to arrange these meetings. The participants live approximately a two and a half hour drive away from where the researcher resides and the participants do not all live in close proximity to each other. Travelling by taxi is expensive so the researcher had to ensure that the focus group discussions were held in a convenient place for all the

participants. The participants also meet once a month for training and parent support and the researcher had to fit in with these dates and times in order to be able to have the participants all in one place.

Use of an interpreter

Although a first language isiZulu-speaker translator was used to clarify certain questions and answers, it was difficult for the researcher to fully connect with the participants and the process of interpreting/translating seemed to hinder the natural flow of conversation. Some of the interpretations or nuances could have been lost or unclear due to the process of interpreting. To rectify this limitation the researcher could have used an experienced translator in research psychology. She could have ensured that there was more than one translator to strengthen the accuracy of both the statements, questions and responses.

Recommendations and implications for future research and practice

In this section several recommendations will be suggested for professionals working in the field of child protection or related fields, and recommendations will be made for foster parents with regard to creating an enabling environment for child participation in decision-making. The findings of this study could serve as the groundwork for any related professional or academic undertaking. A suitable undertaking would be a follow-up study using the findings as an informed framework for an intervention strategy and best-practice guidelines aimed at establishing an enabling environment for child participation in decision-making within a child protection environment. The informational framework and best-practice guidelines could also be utilized by mental health professionals such as psychologists, counsellors and social workers when working with foster parents within a child protection environment. The informational framework could specifically be applied in training

situations where child protection organizations offer assessments and training to prospective foster parents. The researcher is of the view that based on the findings of this study, there are several focus areas that need to be further researched. The following practical suggestions are based on the findings of this particular study only and the theoretical perspective of a child health promotion would be suggested.

Possibility that participation in decision-making could be a protective factor

The first focus area would be to explore the possibility that if children are involved in the decision-making processes and their views are considered regarding things that affect their lives, then this could be a protective factor and can result in positive psychosocial outcomes. Given the context of child protection, this is an extremely important aspect that needs further exploration and research. From a health promotion perspective there is certainly growing interest in the factors that contribute to the promotion of health and wellness in children. The researcher has stated from the outset that in her opinion child participation must be viewed holistically and from a multi-dimensional point of view. The researcher is of the view that participation is complex and cannot just be viewed from a rights perspective, especially within child protection given the complexities within this environment.

Development of an informed framework to enable participation in decision-making within a child protection context

Mannion (2007) postulates that children's participation research needs to move towards a model that addresses the tensions and the cultural problems that can be associated with a rights perspective. The researcher concurs with this viewpoint. Based on the theoretical models explored in this study it is evident from the findings that none of these models are suitable and cannot be applied in the totality in a child protection environment. The findings in this study reveal that children's participation

in decision-making within this specific context ranges between no participation and no consultation at times, to partial participation at times. It was clear that the adults (in this case foster parents) held the most power and they exercised control over which topics to discuss and which topics not to discuss with their children.

At the outset of the study the researcher was of the view that Lundy (2007) would be an appropriate model of participation because this model suggests children are given the opportunity to express their views, they must be supported to have their voices heard, someone must actively hear their opinions and ideas and finally children's views must be acted upon (appropriately) to influence change. Within this model it is important that children's views and ideas must be acted upon to influence change. In the context of this study the participants needed more training and skills in order to fully understand this concept before implementation could be possible.

The health promotion model (TYPE pyramid) was another possible model proposed by the researcher as this model takes into account intergenerational linkages and has a focus on building upon the intrinsic strengths of young people. The TYPE pyramid presents five different types of participation and the researcher is of the view that the closest and more realistic type of participation in the context of this study would be "pluralistic" where both adults and young people work together and where adults serve as role-models but the decisions made are shared decisions. From the findings of this study it is evident that not all decisions are shared and collaborative. However, it could be suggested that the participants were not unwilling to have shared decision making with their children, but rather they were unsure as to how to go about this. Parents need more training in order to assist them in helping their children to articulate their opinions and views. It could be suggested that parents also need to be

made aware of the importance of stimulating social responsibility in their children as this can be a factor in the prevention of psycho-social problems. Any health promotion perspective has a focus on the prevention of problems, early identification and calls for being proactive in an approach. According to De Winter, Baerveldt, and Kooistra (1999), from a developmental perspective, the denial of children's participation is to be considered a risk-factor for adequate social and moral development. It is also a risk factor for the emergence of psychological problems.

It is therefore, crucial that more research is conducted in order to provide a contextually relevant model of participation, suitable for child protection that takes into account culture, context and the various systems that children form part of. This is a unique environment and calls for a unique model of participation that can be applied in a child-friendly manner in the context of child protection.

A further focus area that should be incorporated into an informed framework for professionals working with children in child protection – and should also be incorporated into foster parent training – is the importance of having authentic dialogue with children around challenging topics such as high risk behaviours. From this particular study the participants were of the view that to discuss certain things (such as substance abuse) would cause a negative pattern of behaviour in their children and would cause them to get involved with the “wrong crowd”. In this peer setting there would be pressure to abuse substances, for example. These situations were difficult for the participants to manage and they tended to resort to an authoritative parenting style where there was no room for inter-generational dialogue or any form of communication with their children. The participants would take control and no discussion would be allowed. In this regard the perceptions of the participants were that they were protecting their children from any possible dangerous situations. It is; therefore,

important that training offered to foster parents should incorporate some training on child development and also skills training on how to communicate with children regarding challenging topics. As mentioned earlier, this opening of a platform for discussion can be a protective factor against high-risk behaviour in young people and this needs to be understood by parents. In the context of this study there seems to be an overarching desire to protect the children from any sort of harm and it is reasonable to understand the concerns and attitudes of the foster parents in this regard. It is essential that foster parents are equipped to be pro-active when considering options for change. Foster parents also need to be equipped with the skills to help navigate their children and youth through challenging situations, by giving them a voice and to encourage pro-social behaviour.

Engage with children residing in child protection to explore their attitudes and experiences of participatory processes

Future research should focus on exploring the views of children and young people who live in a child protection environment. It is important to take into account the child's voice in order to be able to better identify best practice guidelines that not only take into consideration the views of parents, but also the views of the foster child. A larger sample size would be suggested in order to obtain more representative data of child participation in decision-making within child protection.

Development of best-practice guidelines

The findings of this study and future studies could be extremely helpful in providing best-practice guidelines and child-friendly interventions on how child protection organizations can create a platform for authentic dialogue and participation for children who reside in alternative care settings. Guidelines should also take into consideration that perhaps children in the care system are hostile to express their views due to their placements and

migrations to different foster homes, they sometimes feel that the process is detrimental to them. This is a critical element in respecting the views of children even if they do not wish to participate or share their opinions. These guidelines should focus not only on the psychological benefits to children should they be allowed to participate in decisions that affect their lives, but have a holistic focus – taking into account the “whole” child-principle of looking at health and wellness through the lens of health promotion.

Conclusion

This study succeeded in addressing a vital disparity in current research regarding child participation in decision-making within the specific context of child protection. The study achieved the principal aim which was to explore and describe the perceptions and attitudes of foster parents regarding child participation in decision-making in a holistic and appropriate manner. The researcher is of the view that this study managed to demonstrate an in-depth exploration of the perceptions and attitudes of the foster parents towards child participation in decision-making and the study yielded a thick description of these perceptions and attitudes. This study also highlighted several challenges to child participation that are perhaps unique to this environment together with certain critical environmental and cultural factors which challenge participation in decision-making. This study also validated the importance of foster children having a sense of authentic belonging and validated the importance of strengthening and building strong families. This study also highlighted the importance of children having a secure base and home environment that is nurturing and creates a sense of belonging and connectedness. Furthermore, this study emphasized the importance of viewing children in context and the importance of considering the values of culture when it comes to child participation. This is a multi-faceted concept and there is no “one size fits all”-approach.

This study concluded that further research is needed which will take into account the experiences of children who reside in alternative care/foster care. It is imperative that their voices are heard on the matter of participation. It is essential not to have a one-sided view on participation which can easily result in romanticizing children and their voices. Furthermore, participation cannot only be viewed from a normative perspective where participation is viewed as a legal entitlement and a right that should be implemented. It is essential to understand the notion of participation – especially related to children – as complex, multifaceted and dynamic. A holistic view on participation is thus recommended.

Perhaps it is reasonable to suggest that although participation is a right of children and there are certain undeniable psychological benefits to participation, it is the way that participatory processes are handled by adults that make participation a benefit to children. The researcher is also of the view that participation has to be viewed in context, taking into consideration the different systems that children in the care system form part of. It is for this reason that guidelines need to be formulated that are contextual, child-friendly and with a focus where the best interest of the child-principle is upheld. Vis et al. (2011) argues that in order to improve participation within the child protection system, formal regulations and guidelines need to be accompanied by a greater attention paid to the development of social work skills in working with children in a participatory manner.

This study aimed to view participation in context and it is; therefore, essential that parenting programmes are key to enhancing the capacity of care-givers to be able to understand the developmental needs of children. Parenting programmes can also assist in skills development for parents for them to be able to manage their children's behaviour using a positive parenting approach. In the context of this study this is extremely important as children grow older and present parents with other challenges. Care-givers, in this case foster

parents, must be the primary target for interventions because they are the role-players that can make significant changes that will not only impact families but the wider community and society.

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SECTION D ANNEXURES

Annexure A: Participant Informed Consent (IsiZulu)

Anyela kwezingane ekuthahweni kwezinqumo: ukuhlanganyela nosingabazali ukuhlola ukuqonda nesimo sabo.

Ukuvuma ukuhlanganyela kucwaningo.

Mina ngiwumfundi owenza iziqu ze Masters kwi(Research Psychology) E Yunivesithi yase

North-West, umhloli wami u Dokotela H.B. Grobler, nabambisene naye u Dokotela Hannelie Yates.

Ngenza ucwaningo olubheka imibono, nendlela abazizwa ngayo osingabazali, ekuhlanganyeleni kwezingane ekuthathweni kwezinqumo kwindawo yokulondoloza.

Ngingathanda ukukumema ukuba uhlanganyele kulolucwaningo , nokuthi uvume. Okulandelayo imininigwane mayelana nocwaningo ukuze wenze isinqumo sokuthi uyathanda ukuhlanganyela noma awuthandi.

1. INHLOSO YESIFUNDO

Inhloso yalesisifundo eyokuthi umcwaningi abheke achaze imibono, nendlela azizwa ngayo usingamzali, ngokubaluleka kokuthi ingane ihlanganyele kwizinqumo ezithathwayo. Uyacelwa ukuba ube yingxenywe ngoba nawe njengosingamzali uwena onendima enkulu ezimpilweni zezingane zakho kanti imibono nendlela ozizwa ngayo ibaluleke kakhulu kimina futhi izongisiza ngiqonde kangcono ngalendida yokuba izingane zibambe iqhaza kulendima yokunakekelwa , ngoba umongo awukaze ucwaningisiswe kahle phambilini.

2. INQUBO

Uma uvuma ukuba ingxenywe yalolucwaningo uzodingeka wenze loku okulandelayo.

Ukuhlanganyela kumaqoqo lapho uzocelwa ukuba wenze umfanekiso owenziwe ngezithombe okhombisa umbono wakho ngokuhlanganyela kwezingane ekuthathweni kwezinqumo. Iqoqo

ngalinye lizoba namalungu ayisishiyagalombili .Umfanekiso isilekeleli esibonakalayo lapho uzosebenzisa amabhuku, ama ribhoni, amaphephandaba nanoma ngabe yini okunye ,konke lokhu kuzonanyathiselwa esiqephini sika khalibhodi, ukwenzela ukuthi ukhombise imibono nendlela ozizwa ngayo ekuhlanganyeleni kwezingane ekuthathweni kwezinqumo. Konke okuzosetshenziswa kuzofika naye umcwaningi. Uzocelwa ukuba uhlanganyele wabelane ngimibono yakho, mayelana nalomfanekiso owenzile, kumaqoqo, kuphendulwa imibuzo ozobe ubuzwe yona kuqala. Lomsebenzi uzothatha isikhathi esingeke sidlule kumahora amabili kuya kwamathathu.

Umhlangano uyoba uqoshwa ngesithwebuli zithombe esithathayo kanye nesiqophi mazwi.

Umfanekiso zithombe owenziwe nawo uyothwetshulwa unikwe inamba yawo wodwa ekupheleni komhlangano wamaqoqo.

Emva kwalokho ,ngesikhathi esiyobe sivuma futhi esiyobe sihlelwe umsizi, , uyocelwa ukuba mhlawumbe uhlanganyele kwingxoxo umuntu nomuntu nomcwaningi. Lesigaba ngeke sithathe isikhathi esidlulile kwihora lesikhathi sakho.

Kuzona zombili lezizigaba uzocelwa ukuthi nihlangane endaweni evumelana nabaningi ongakwazi ukufinyelela kuyona. Lokhu kuzohlelwa unonhlalakahle wase GCF , uyokwaziswa kusenesikhathi ukuthi kuyohlanganelwa kuphi futhi nini.

3. UBUNGOZI/UKUNGAKHULULEKI

Lesisifundo asinabungozi obungakuvelela , kuncane kakhulu okungaba ingozi. kodwake njenganoma iluphi uhlobo locwaningo, uma ku khulunya ngemizwa kungenzeka uzizwe ungasakhululekile. Uma phakathi nocwaningo uzizwa ukuthi awusakhululekile nokuqhubeka, uvumelekile ukuphuma, noma ngabe ubususayinile uvuma. Ungacela futhi ukuthi noma yimiphi imininingwane obusuyinikezile ingabe isashicilelwa, noma ngabe imininingwane ibisishicilelwe yahlanganiswa neminye, iyosuswa . Umcwaningi uyokwenza isiqiniseko sokuthi usonhlalakahle oqeqeshiwe uyoba ekhona ukukunika usizo ukuthi uxoxe naye nanoma ngabe yini engakuphathanga kahle kulona ucwaningo.

4. IMFIHLO NOKUNGAZIVEZI GAMA

Imininingwane yakho iyogcinwa iyimfihlo akekho oyokwazi ukuthi uwena onike ulwazi oluthile, ekupheleni kocwaningo. Uma kuhlengenwe namaqoqo kuyomele uvume ukuthi ngeke uze ukhulume ngokuyobe kukhulunywa ngakho nabanye abangekho emaqoqweni. Igama lakho ngeke lize lisetshenziswe noma libhalwe phansi kunoma ikuphi okuyoshicilelwa okuyobe kuwumphumela walesisifundo, ithimba noma umcwaningi kuphela abayosebenzisa lemininingwane ozokwabelana ngayo nathi. Yonke imininingwane enobungozi iyovikelwa ngokuthi ikhiyelwe noma ibekwe kwi computer ekhiywayo yomcwaningi. Uma ucwaningo seluphelile, imininingwane iyogcinwa endlini ekhiywayo endaweni yase North –West University, kwi khampasi ese Potchefstroom.

5. INZUZO

Inzuzo ozoyithola njengozobe eyingxenye yalesisifundo kungaba ukuthi uyothola ukuqonda kakhulu ngokuthi izingane zhlanganyele ekuthathweni kwezinqumo kanye nokuthi uzothola ithuba lokuthi ubeke izimvo zakho.

Okuzotholakale kulesisifundo kungazuzisa umphakathi wonke ,njengosingabazali ababambe iqhaza nababheka izingane ezindaweni zokugcinwa kwezingane kanye nosonhlalakahle, amapsychologist,abasebenza nabazali,nanoma obani abasebenza ngokubheka umqondo nokucabanga kwindawo yokuvikelwa kwezingane (Child Protection or Alternative Care settings).Okuzotholakala lapha kungase kusize ngandlelayimbe kulolulwazana oselukhona kwi foster care kuphinde kunike nencazelo kwimibono nezidlela kosingabazali mayelana nohlanganyela kwezingane ekuthathweni kwezinqumo. Okuzotholakala lapha kunganika incazelo ebalulekile engagququzela izinhlelo zokuqeqeshwa kwalabo abanesifiso sokuba osingabazali esikhathini esizayo.

6. IZINDLEKO

Angeke kube khona zindleko oyozikhokha ngokubamba kwakho iqhaza kulesisifundo. Umcwaningi uyoza endaweni lapho nijwayele ukuhlanganela khona , uma nihlangene nabanye abazali emphakathini wakho.

7. INKOKHELO

Akukho nkokhelo ozoyithola ngokubamba kwakho iqhaza. Okokwehlisa uthuli kuzofika naye umcwaningi.

8. IMIBUZO

Yamukelekile imibuzo noma ngabe imuphi osethimbeni elizocwaninga ngaphambi kokuthi uvume. Ungathintana nami kulenombolo 073 412 120 4 noma u Dr. Grobler kule nombolo (081 299 174 5)

9. ULWAZI NGESIZOKUTHOLA

Esizokuthola kulolucwaningo sizokwabelana ngakho nawe uma sesiqedile ukwenza isifundo.

Isikhathi nendawo okuzokwenzeka ngako lokhu sizoxoxisana nabakwa Child Protection Organization uyobe sewaziswa kusenesikhathi.

Ngiyabonga ngokuthi uvume ukunikela ngesikhathi sakho esibalulekile ube yingxenye yalesisifundo.

Indlela obona ngayo njengomunye wabaneqhaza elikhulu ezinganeni zabo izosinika incazelo ebalulekile kakhulu umcwaningi kanye nesifundo socwaningo lokhu kuyabongeka kakhulu.

Uma ungathanda ukuba uhlanganyele uyacelwa ukuba usayine lapha ngezansi:

Ukhululekile ukuthi ungabi kulolucwaningo, noma uphume noma nini, noma ngabe kade usuvumile wasayina uvuma, angeke kube namibandela.

Mina, ----- ngokuzinikela ngiyavuma ukuba ingxenye yalesisifundo esibhalwe ngenhla. Angiphoqiwe noma ingayiphi indlela ukuthi ngibe

ingxenye futhi ngiyaqonda ukuthi ngingaphuma noma inini uma ngizizwa nginganelisekile uma sekuqaliwe. Futhi ngiyazi ukuthi igama lami ngeke lize livezelwe omunye umutnu ongesiyo ingxenye nokuthi imininingwane yonke iyogcinwa iyimfihlo. Ngiyazibophezela ukuthi ngingavezi lutho ezoshiwo amanye amalungu eqoqo uma kusetshezwa ngamaqoqo kubantu abangekho eqoqweni. Futhi ngiyaqonda ukuthi kukhona engingakuhlomula futhi kungenzeka mhlawumbe kube nobungozi. Uma ngifisa ukunaba kakhulu ngokuthile ukhona ozongisiza.

Usuku

Kusayina umhlanganyeli

Usuku

Kusayina othola imvume

Annexure B: English

Children's participation in decision-making: engaging with foster parents to explore their perceptions and attitudes

Consent to be a research participant

I am a master's student (Research Psychology) from the North-West University and my supervisor is Dr H.B. Grobler, with co-study leader Dr Hannelie Yates. I am working on a research study that will explore a foster parent's perceptions and attitudes towards children's participation in decision-making processes within a foster care environment. I would like to invite you to participate in this study and to give your consent. To follow is information about the study so that you can make an informed decision whether to participate or not.

1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is for the researcher to explore and describe a foster parent's perceptions and attitudes of the concept of children's participation in decision-making. You are being asked to participate in this study because as a foster parent you are a primary roleplayer in your children's lives and your perceptions and attitudes of children's participation in decision-making will be very valuable to me and will assist me in being better able to understand the complexities of children's participation within the context of foster care because this context has not been researched in any depth before.

2. PROCEDURE

If you agree to be a part of this research study you will be expected to do the following: Participate in a group activity where you will be asked to make a collage that will portray how you perceive children's participation in decision-making. There will be about eight participants in the group. A collage is a visual technique in which you will use magazines, bits of ribbon, newspapers

and any other items and this will be glued onto a piece of cardboard to enable you to creatively express your perceptions and attitudes towards children's participation in decision-making. These items will be supplied by the researcher. You will be asked to share your thoughts and your collage with the group, according to specific questions that will be given to you beforehand. This group activity will take between two to three hours.

The focus group session will be recorded by way of both a video camera as well as digital audio recorder. The collages made by you will also be photographed and given a unique number at the end of the focus group session.

At another occasion, and a suitable time arranged by the case worker, you will be asked to possibly participate in a one-on-one interview with the researcher. This should take no longer than 1.5 hours of your time.

For both of these sessions you will be asked to meet at a central venue that is convenient to you. This will be arranged by the case worker at Give a Child a Family and you will be notified in advance as to the venue and the time to meet.

RISKS/DISCOMFORTS

This is a relatively low risk study with limited foreseeable risk to you, but as with any research study there is always the possibility that when working with experiences of people you might feel some discomfort.. Should you at any time during the research feel you would like to withdraw, you are able to do so, even if you have completed the informed consent form. You can also ask that the information you have given be removed up to the point where the data have been analysed and integrated. The researcher will also ensure that a qualified social worker is available afterwards should you feel you would like to talk to someone further regarding any discomfort that you experienced as a result of the research.

3. CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY

Your information will be handled in a confidential manner and nobody will be able to know that it is you who gave specific information in the final research document. During the group activity you will need to agree that you will not share any information discussed in the focus groups, with outsiders. Your name will not be used in any publications resulting from this study and only the team or researchers will work with the information that you shared. All sensitive information will be protected by locking it up and storing it on a password protected computer belonging to the researcher. After the research has been completed, the raw data will be stored in a locked room on the premises of the North-West University, Potchefstroom campus.

4. BENEFITS

The benefits to you as a participant in this study could be that you will be able to understand more about children's participation in decision-making and have the opportunity to give your opinion.

The findings of this study could benefit the larger community such as foster parents who are involved in fostering children in an alternative care setting and also social workers, psychologists, case workers and any other mental health professional who work in the context of Child Protection or Alternative Care settings. The findings of this study could in a small way bridge the gap in the existing literature in foster care and offer an explanation as to the perceptions and attitudes of foster parents regarding children's participation in decisionmaking. The findings of this study could also provide valuable information that could enhance training programmes already in existence for assessment and training of future and prospective foster parents.

5. COSTS

There will be no cost to you as a result of your participation in this study. The researcher will come to a central place where you normally have your support group meetings in your local community.

6. PAYMENT

You will receive no payment for participation. Refreshments will be provided by the researcher.

QUESTIONS

You are welcome to ask any questions to a member of the research team before you decide to give your consent. You are welcome to contact myself on 0734121204 or Dr Herman

Grobler (018 299 1745)

7. FEEDBACK ON FINDINGS

The findings of the research will be shared with you after completion of the study. The time and place of this will be discussed with the Child Protection Organization and you will be notified accordingly.

Thank you for agreeing to give up your valuable time to participate in this study. Your insights as key role-players in your children's lives will provide valuable information to the researcher and the research study and this is appreciated.

Should you be willing to participate you are requested to sign below:

You are free to decline to be in this study, or to withdraw at any point, even after you have signed the form to give consent, without any consequences.

I, _____ hereby voluntarily consent to participate in the above mentioned study. I am not coerced in any way to participate and I understand that I can withdraw at any time should I feel uncomfortable during the study. I also understand that my name will not be disclosed to anybody who is not part of the study and that the information will be kept confidential. I undertake not to disclose any information given by other group members during the group activity to people outside the group. I also understand what I might benefit from participation

as well as what might be the possible risks. Should I need further discussions someone will be available.

Date Signature of Participant

Date: Signature of person obtaining consent

Original details: Dr HB Grobler(23376600) C:\Users\23376600\Documents\Mstudente\Elaine Venton\Consent forms\22 aug\Participant Consent Form Final with letterhead August 2014.docx.docm
22 August 2014

Annexure C: Informed Consent: Organizational

21 August, 2014

Give a Child a Family

Lot 32 Alexander Road

Gayridge

Margate

Durban

Attention : Ms Lydia Gordon (Director of Programmes and Senior Social Worker)

Dear Lydia

Consent Form

I am a master's student (Research Psychology) from the North-West University and my supervisor is Dr H.B. Grobler. I am working on a research study which endeavours to explore a foster parent's perceptions and attitudes towards children's participation in decision-making processes within a foster care environment. The research study has been approved by an Ethics Committee under the number NWU-00060-12-A1.

I hereby would like to ask for your consent to conduct the research within your organization with foster parents who have been screened and deemed suitable participants based on the criteria set out by the researcher. The title of the project is: Children's participation in decision-making: Engaging with foster parents' to explore their perceptions and attitudes

1. Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to explore and describe foster parents' perceptions and attitudes towards the concept of children's participation. As foster parents are primary role-players in their children's lives, their attitudes, beliefs and perceptions of children's participation will be very

valuable information and will assist the researcher in being better able to better understand the complexities of children's participation within the context of foster care because this context has not been researched in any depth before.

2. Participants

Purposive sampling will be used and participants will be selected who will be best able to answer the research question. Participants will be identified by yourselves, a prominent Child Protection Organization, where it will be possible to identify best case scenario foster parents who are willing to participate in the research study. Foster parents will be identified by the case manager of Give a Child a Family based on the following criteria as suggested by the researcher and the participants will give permission to be contacted by the researcher:-

- The supervising social worker has recommended the foster parents
- The foster parent has been fostering children for no less than one year but preferably at least for 5 years.
- The foster parent will have gone through a process of screening and will have gone through the normal statutory process of Children's Court and their foster children will be legally placed with them by way of a valid Court Order.
- The foster parent will have foster children in their care between the ages of 8 years and 18 years.
- The foster parent has not had any placement of foster children in their care breaking down/or had any foster children removed from their care by the case worker or supervising social worker.

3. Procedure

Participants will receive consent forms and have enough time to discuss it with someone they trust to make an informed decision to sign the forms. The content of the forms will also be discussed with them before the onset of the group activities. Participants will be asked to participate in of two focus group sessions, one being held in the morning and the other in the afternoon. Depending on the data obtained from the focus groups, participants may be asked to participate in an individual interview at a later occasion. Individual interviews will take about an hour. In the focus group the participants will be asked to make a 'Collage' that will portray their perceptions and attitudes towards children's participation, according to specific questions that will be given to them. All the necessary items for the collage will be supplied by the researcher. On completion of the collage the participants will be asked to share their personal reflections and thoughts with the group on the specific questions asked.. This should take about two to three hours of the participant's time. The researcher will have two groups of participants in order to keep the groups small. A maximum of 8 participants per group is suggested.

The focus group sessions will be recorded by way of both a video camera as well as a digital audio-recorder. The collages made by the participants will be given a unique identification number and will be photographed. The one-on one interviews will be audio-recorded using a digital recorder.

Dependent on the analysis of the data collected in the focus group the researcher will decide whether to have an individual interview with each participant or to have another focus group with all the participants. The decision as to what is going to be more appropriate will be advised, in writing, to yourselves, prior to the second date of data collection. This procedure should take no longer than 1.5hrs of the participant's time.

4. Risks / Discomfort

This is a low risk study with limited foreseeable risks to participants. But, as with any research study, there is always the possibility that when exploring subjective content, there could be a level of

discomfort for participants. Should any participation feel they would like to withdraw from the study then they are free to do so at any point in time – even if they have completed the informed consent form before commencement of the study. The researcher will ensure debriefing takes place after the focus group activity and individual interviews. The researcher will ensure that participants have access to a qualified social worker if they have the need to talk to someone regarding issues that emerge due to the content of the focus groups and individual interviews.

5. Confidentiality and Anonymity

The information provided by the participants will be handled in a confidential a manner and no individual's identifiers will be used in any publications resulting from this study and only the team of researchers will work with the information that was shared. During the focus groups participants will need to agree that they will not share any information discussed in the focus groups with outsiders. All sensitive information will be protected by locking it up and storing it on a password protected computer in a locked office occupied by the researcher. After the research has been completed the raw data will be stored in a locked room on the premises of the North-West University, Potchefstroom campus. The translator and research assistant will also sign forms of confidentiality. The translator will be a social worker allocated by Give a Child a Family and the research assistant will be a social worker who works with the researcher in another foster care facility.

6. Benefits

The benefits to participants could be that as foster parents they gain a more in-depth understanding of the concept of children's participation. Children's participation is a child's fundamental right as stated in the Children's Act (38 of 2005). The study will also give foster parents a platform in which to have their views and opinions heard and considered.

The findings of this study could benefit the larger community such as foster parents who are involved in fostering children in an alternative care setting and also social workers, psychologists,

case workers and any other mental health professional working in the context of Child Protection or Alternative Care settings. The findings of this study could in a small way bridge the gap in the existing literature in foster care and offer an explanation as to the concept and complexities of children's participation. In exploring perceptions and attitudes of foster parents regarding children's participation, this study could add valuable insight into constructing a new social reality that could lead to children's participation with the context of foster care being better understood and thereby enhanced. The findings of this study could also provide valuable information that could enhance training programmes already in existence for assessment and training of future and prospective foster parents.

7. Costs

There will be no cost to participants as a result of their participating in this study.

8. Payment

Participants will receive no payment for being part of the study. Refreshments for the participants will be supplied by the researcher.

9. Questions

Please do not hesitate to ask any questions before giving your consent. Should you need clarity on any aspect of this research study you are welcome to contact myself on 0734121204 or my supervisor, Dr Herman Grobler on 018-2991745.

10. Feedback on findings

The findings of the research will be shared with you and your management team after completion of the study and a suitable date and time will be discussed with you. However, no personal information will be made known. Feedback will be done in such a manner that no individual responses during the groups and interviews will be recognized.

Thank you for agreeing to allow me to conduct this study within your organization. Your time and effort in making this possible is greatly appreciated. I trust the findings of this study will provide valuable information on children's participation for your organization.

E S Venton (Researcher)

Date

Signature of Director of Programmes on behalf of
Child Protection Organization

Date

Signature of Person obtaining Consent

Annexure D: Confidentiality Forms Research Assistants

Confidentiality agreement

Children’s participation in decision-making: engaging with foster parents to explore their perceptions and attitudes

I understand I am operating in the capacity of a Research Assistant and my role is to assist the researcher with any necessary tasks in the Focus Group sessions. I acknowledge that I will have access to information shared by the participants in the focus group session and some of this information may be confidential in nature. I agree that all information will be treated by me in a confidential manner. I agree that any discussion concerning the research study will only be discussed with the researcher and I will not disclose or divulge any information to anyone else.

I understand the above and agree to uphold the confidentiality of the participants and any other information pertaining to the research study in general.

Name of Research Assistant: _____

Signature of Research Assistant _____

Date: _____

Researcher: _____

Annexure E: Focus Group Questions

The Research question is: Children's participation in decision-making: Engaging with foster parents' to explore their: perceptions and attitudes

QUESTIONS FOR FOCUS GROUP

1. How do you understand children's participation in decision-making?

2. In your opinion, should children be allowed to participate in decision-making?
 - If yes, please motivate as to why you say this
 - If no, please motivate as to why you say this

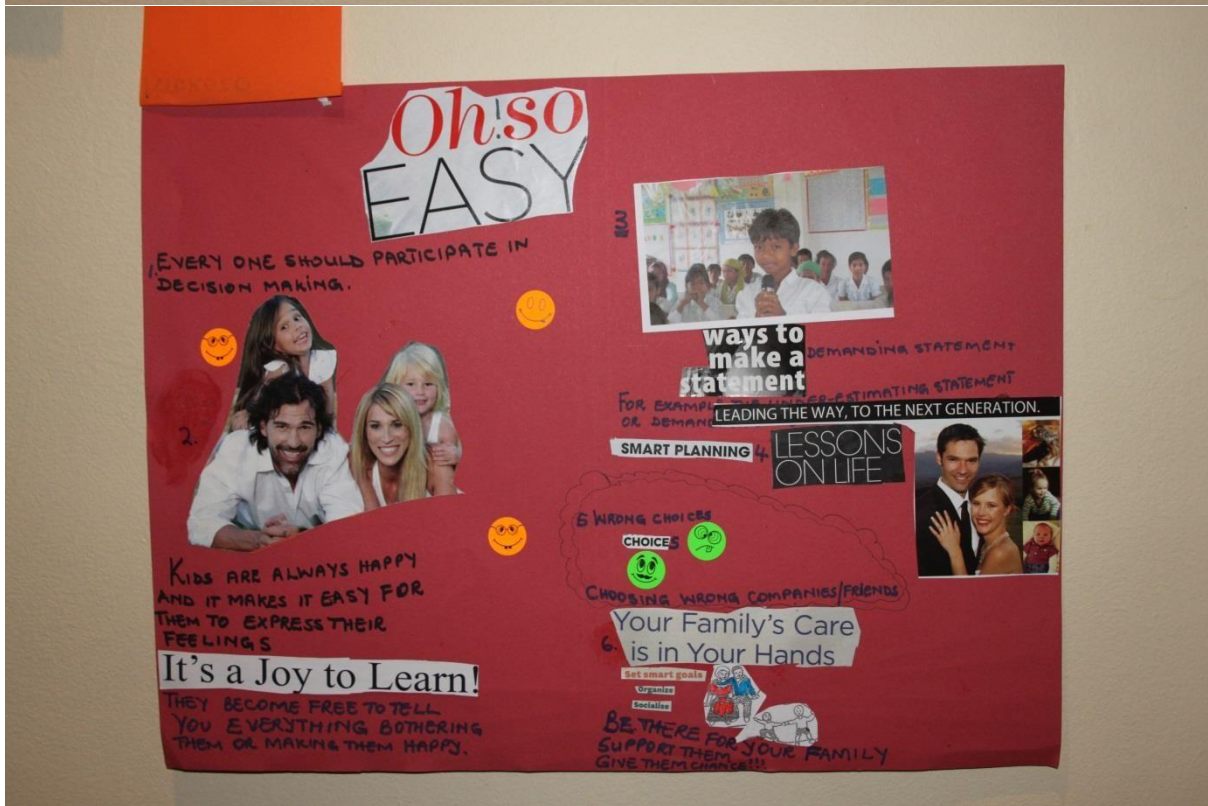
3. Are there things that make it difficult for you to allow children to participate in decisionmaking?
 - if so, what are these things?

4. When do you think children should be allowed to participate in decision-making and when not?

5. What challenges do you think you could face if you allow children to participate in decision-making?

6. Have you any suggestions on how children's participation in decision-making can be improved?

Annexure F: Example of creative collage



Annexure G: Example of Researcher's Reflective Notes

April 10th 2014

Today I attended a support group that is held every month for the foster mothers who foster children through Give a Child a Family. The aim of the visit was two-fold. Firstly, to meet the ladies and to explain what the proposed study was about and to ensure that I would be a good 'fit' for the organization and they would be a good 'fit' for me in relation to the proposed study. The drive down to Port Shepstone was very long with lots of roadworks and we eventually arrived at 9am. We had arranged to meet at a community church where all the ladies could get too easily. Some walked and others were picked up by the social worker of the organization. I was accompanied by Lunga who is a qualified social worker and I had asked her to be my research assistant in the event of the study being realized.

Due to the language barrier where participants were isiZulu speaking I could only sit and listen to the conversations between the ladies and Lunga translated what was being said. It was a very interesting day. One of the primary discussions was around should parents be honest with children. Should they tell children they were fostered for example. The facilitator explained at great length that one must always be honest with children and not hide anything from them because as they get older and find out the truth they will be angry with the parents for lying to them. After the meeting I was taken into the rural areas to see how the people lived and to visit some of them in their homes. As this is the first time I have been in an area like this it was quite an eye opener driving through the long grass with huge pot holes and little children walking around and dogs just running in front of the car. It gave me an idea of what doing research in this context would be like. There were no bathroom facilities and that was quite a challenge for me. However, I learned one thing and that is with research in the field go prepared.

What struck me the most today was the huge welcome I received from the ladies. They invited me into their very humble homes with pride. They lined their children up so I could meet them and they were beautifully turned out with polished shoes and ironed clothes. They were so proud of their foster children and referred to them as their children. They were excited that somebody wanted to know more about them as foster parents and to discuss their challenges with them.

The ladies said they loved the support groups and felt they got so much help there. They felt they could not do it alone without help and they enjoyed sharing and learning from each other.

I came away from today with a sense of excitement and a sense that this study had great possibilities. I came away with a renewed passion and energy and gratefulness for being able to be involved in this type of work. The ladies did not have much by way of material things but they were rich beyond measure in love and they appeared happy and content with their lot in life.

I realize there could be some challenges re the language barrier but I am excited about the way forward and excited about the proposed study and I do feel that the fit is a good one. I can't wait to get started.

Annexure H: Translation IsiZulu

04 September 2014

Research Project - Give a Child a Family

Group 2

Consent form

Translator: Ilona leliphepha enganichazela ngalo ngthi kuyomele nilisayine uma sekushaye isikhathi, kodwa nina nobabili beningekho munye kupela owayekhona. Bbengekho laba abilili ilona kuphela owayekhona

Translator _ This is the paper that I explained about to you that I said you would have to sign at one stage, you were both not there only one of you was there.

Resercher: Mhlambe kuzomele silibheke ngokushesha leliphepha ukubona ukuthi wonke umuntu uyaliqonda futhi akanankinga nokushiwo kulona bese eyasayina, sizpbe sesiqhubeka ke.

Researcher: Maybe I think let us go through it quickly and just see that everyone understands and is happy with the consent form to sign and then I will take it from there.

Translator: Kusho ukuthi ngalelalanga ngabafundela ababekhona, into incwadi yesivumelwano eshu kuthi uyavuma yokuzokwenzeka lana, lesivumelwano yinto ezokwenzeka lana lokuthi uyavuma , njengoba liwumqulu wamakhasi awu 4 liyachaza ukuthi yini ezokwenzeka lana inhloso yalessifundo ukuthi yini u Elaine uyafunda e Univsithithi yase noth west wenza I Masters, la efundo khona kumele enze njani ukuthi abe nengxoxo nabantu ababuze ukuthi inhloso yalesisifundo yini, ukuthi kufanelekile yini ukuthi izingane nazo zibe yingxenye uma kuthathwa izinqumo lezo , inhloso yalesisifundo ilokhoke, kwase kubhalwa inqubo ukuthikuzohamba kanjani. Kuchazwe ukuthi uma uvuma ukuba ingxenye yalolucwaningo nizohlukaniswa nibe ama group amabili, njengoba nibonile ekuseni , manje sekungena nina nizokwenza I collage ngmaphepha lawa, kunemibuzo ewu 6 enibuzwe yona uma nibuzwa lemibuzo niyaphendula bese ufaka nesithombe saloko okubuzwayo

ukukhombisa impendulo yakho, bese kuthiwa ubungozi, okanye ukungakhululeki kuyachazwa ukuthi lesisifundo asinabungozi lesifundo ngoba ingxoxo nje ezobakhona besekuba imfihlo kusho ukuthi ukho konke lokhu esizobe sikwenza lana , into esizozikhuluma lana kugcina phakathi kwethu asizokukhuluma lokhu esizokukhuluma siku discuse ngoba sizofika isikhathi sokuthi si discusa umuntu nomuntu , konke sokugcina kuthina ngeke kuphumele ngaphandle,. Enye indawo isho ukuthi imfihlo, ukuthi lento eyenzeka lana izogcinwa lana phakathi kwethu ngeke ize iphumele ngaphandle, besekuba nendawo yenzuzo, into ozoyizuzwa lana ilolulwazi ozoluthola ngesikhathi sixoxa kumaxoxo, izindleka , kuthiwa azikho izindleka ozongena kuzona ngokuba ingxenye yalolicwaningo , inkokhelo, kuthiwa ayinkho inkokhelo ozoyithola ngokuba ingxenye yalolucwaningo, uma usuvuma uzobe ususayina ku page 4. Uma ususayinile kunendawo lana , ethi noma ususayinile uma uzizwa ungasathandi ukuqhubeka nocwaningo ungayeka, ngeke ubekwe icala kuthiwe usayinile, kumele uphendue yonke imibuzo, uyovunyelwa ukuyeka ucwaningo akekho oyothi ngoba ubususayinile qhubeka , uma uzizwa ungasakhululekile uvumelekile ukuphuma kucwaningo. Leliphepha lichaza konke lokhu, kusho ukuthi uma uvuma uzobe ususayina laphana ku page 4.

Translator:Ok, so for those who were not here when we did this form, this is a booklet or an agreement letter, it looks big, four pages but it is because it explains everything that will happen , Elaine is doing her Masters degree, at North West University, she was given the topic of doing the research to people and ask them how they perceive children's participation in decision making, so this is the purpose for this research. It says here if you agree to participate in this research you will be divided into groups like we did, this morning was another group and now its your group, you are expected to answer six questions, as a group member you are expected to make a collage, you can add pictures and beads, everything is provided for you, then write what your collage mean to you and then at the end of the group session we will all share what we have written. You can write your answer and add a picture to show you answer.

Then it says the dangers of the research, it explains that, there will be no danger in participating in this research, there will be confidentiality on what we will be sharing in this group, what ever we share here, will remain within us. Whatever we will be discussing here will remain with the group; we will not discuss it with anyone else. The benefit of the research, this means that you will benefit from sharing your experiences with the other ladies.

Expenses, it says you there will be no expenses you will pay by participating in this research.

Payment, it says you will not get payment for participating in this research. If you agree with all of this you can sign on page 4, write today's date and sign that you would like to be part of this. After you have signed, then you decide in the middle of the research that you are no longer interested, you are free to withdraw from the research. Signing this document does not bind you not to withdraw; if you feel you want to withdraw you are more than welcome to do so. If you feel uncomfortable about a question or anything you are free to do so. If you agree with all of this will you please sign at the bottom of page 4.

Researcher: Monica did you explain about group confidentiality do they understand that and just ask the ladies if they have any questions before they sign.

Umcwangingi: Monica ingabe ubachazelile ngemfihlo noma ngabe ukhona mhlambe onombuzo ngaphambi kokuthi asayine? Noma kukhona okungacacile enifuna ukukuqondisisa kahle. Akekho ok.

Participants: No

Researcher: Ok will you help them to sign and then I will explain the process.

Research assistant: Lapha usayina igama nesibongo ne date yanamuhla.

Research Assistant: here you sign with your name and surname and today's date.

Signing of consent form

Researcher: Monica Just before we start, will you introduce whoever is here and what their roles are?

Ngaphambi kokuthi siqale ngicela ukwazisa bonke laba esihamba nabo nokuthi bazokwenzani.

Introductions

Translator:Lona u Kerry, umsebenzi azobe ewenza ukuqopha lomsebenzi esiwenzayo njengoba ngasho ukuthi kuzobe kuqoshwa loku esizobe sikusho. Bese kuba u Lunga uhamba naye, uyi I Social worker u Lunga baqhamuka e Hillcrest, bese kuthi yena u Elaine uyi psychologist.

Translator: The camera lady, the social worker, the researcher

Researcher: Thank you Monica, Maybe we need to start with the process, just want to say to the ladies that you very much. Doreen that for letting us use her house and we chased you out, we very sorry, you have been so gracious we really appreciate it such a lovely place and thank you all ladies, do you all ladies understand English, oh, Monica can just fill in.

Translator: Amanzi noswidi okwenu , uma nizizwa senomile, nilokhu ninambitha.

Water and sweets are yours, you are free to enjoy it.

Ladies: Thank You

Children walking in, and out collecting their food

Researcher: Anyway let us go through the process, it's a small group I think we should be, you know , we had a big group just now, everybody had to share sorry it took so longer then we thought, what we going ask you to do, there is a list of questions here. I think Monica had explained to you what we going do here is there six of questions we gonna do , there a six question I think Monica has told you, I am looking to explore what is the parents attitude is for the foster parents perceptions and attitude towards children decision making to participate in decisions making the other group asked me if it small decisions or small decisions we talking about all kind of decisios,I really want to know how do you feel as foster moms in allowing children to participate in decisions. What I am going to ask from you, first of all you going to make a collage, Monica can explain what that is you see there is books there is magazines , the books are normally good you can cut our pictures, there is beads there is pens you can write if you want to , you can draw if you want, you can stick things on, you

can cut pictures out, initially we find with the other group when you start you not to sure what am I actually going to do here, but as you look at the picture subconsciously it just seems to trigger something and then you like that picture, just cut it out and put it in a little pile there and stick it in a piece cupboard. But I want you to do there are questions , six questions when you make your collage please just try and answer the questions the question number one, start with question number one , and after we have done that, I am going to ask you just to share, we can share, we have to share in your collage there is no right or wrong you can do it you can be as creative as you like you can do what you like it its about each and every person attitude and how do you see it and the everybody is different that's fine. Monica maybe if you don't mind just making sure that everyone understands the questions and how we gonna go in answering questions number one number two afterwards everyone understands what they to do.

Translator: Njengoba sizozala nje, ngike ngasho ngathi sizophendula imibuzo ewu 6, kumele siqale sibheke ukuthi umbuzo siyawazi ukuthi usho ukuthini, sizosebenzisa amabhuku namapeni, njengoba esho nje ukuthi ayinkho impendulo e right ne wrong. Thina kumele siphendule ngendlela esibona ngayo, uma kukhulunywa lendaba yokuthathwa kwezinqumo. Nokuthi ubona kanjani wena ukuthi izingane zibe indlenye uma kuthathwa izinqumo. Ngoba nazo ziyingxenye yomndeni walekhaya. Kungaba izinqumo ezincane noma izinqumo ezinkulu. Uma ngaba kuyizinqumo ezizothinta impilo yazo. Njengoba nazo kwezalaykhaya nje izingane, ngabe nibona kanjani ukuthi izingane zibe ingxenye

Researcher: Monica can you also ask that ladies what is it that they understand what we mean about decision making.

Translator: Kungabe sonke siyayiqonda le eyokuthathwa kwezinqumo, niyayiqonda ukuthi ichaza ukuthini icacile kinina niyizwa kahle noma ukhona ungezwisisi kahle

Participant 1: Ngicabanga ukuthi kucacile, ngicabanga ukuthi ukwenza noma ukuthatha isinqumo, into ewushintsho, kusho ukuthi sekukhona okuzokwenzeka emndenini okukade kungenzeki, manje ubonisana nezingane ngoba nazo zizothinteka ngalezozinqumo futhi ziyingxenye yomndeni.

Translator: So just want to verify if she understands it correctly, but the way she looks at it means that there is gonna be change in someone's life , the family or change in someone else's life, as part of the family it is important to be part of that decision making since it gonna affect your life.

Researcher: That's true, you can just explain that sometime its also small decisions, just everyday decisions , can be simple things what to wear, what to eat can we go to a friend, you know there is big decision and there is a middle decision, thy need to keep their minds open, and perceptions and attitudes , how did they their view it you know just make sure everyone understands that and if everyone is happy and understand then we can go to the questions.

Translator: So kunjengoba esho u Elanie , okunye okubalulekile ukuthi njengokuthi okunye nje njengokuthi uzogqokani uma uya esikoleni,noma ungavakasha, hayi izinqumo ezinkulu kuphela kodwa nezinquomo ezincane. Izinto ezenzeka zonke izinsuku ekhayeni.

Reseacher: Is everyone happy to go to the questions, is anyone else wants to ask or add anything.

Translator: Kucacile singaya embuzweni wokuqala

Participants: Yes

Researcher: Please tell them I do not want them to look and be stressful it must be a fun time the other ladies enjoyed it, just fun time , if you not sure ask about the question

Translator: Niyithokozele, ningayithathi serious.

Researcher: It takes a bit of time to get your mind going.

Researcher: Ok have you explain is everyone understands now what to do and thy can start to answer to look at questions.

Translator: imibuzo nansi eduze kwethu singabuka nakuyona.

Participant 2: Namabhuku lawa siqale ngawo

Researcher: Sorry what I did not say when we finish the collage remember we going to go round in a group answer question 1; make sure that collage answers this question.

Translator: Ok, kusho ukuthi uma sesiqedile ukuphendula umbuzo umbuzo wokuqala , sizobe sesiphendula umuntu esho ukuthi kungakube yena ubona kanjani, kumele wazi ukuthi izithombe lezi zihambisana nawuphi umbuzo.

Resecher: Ok, are they ready to get going.

Translator: Yes, (laughing) Reseacher: Are

you ready?

Participants: yes (laughing)

Translator: Asiqelenike Umbuzo wokuqala,

1.Kungabe ukuqonda kanjani ukuhlanganyela kwezingane ekuthathweni kwezinqumo?

2. Ngowakho umbono, ngabe kumele izingane zihlanganyele ekuthathweni kwezinqumo?

- uma uthi yebo, uyacelwa uchaze ukuthi uvuma ngaliphi

- uma uthi cha, uyacelwa uchaze ukuthi uphika ngaliphi

3. Umbuzo wesibili, ngowakho umbono kungabe zikhona izinto ezenza kube nzima kuwena ukuthi uvumele izingane zihlanganyele ekuthathweni kwezinqumo?

- uma zikhona, ngabe uyobe usuyachaza ukuthi iziphi lezizinto.

Bese kuthi umbuzo wesithathu uthi.Kunini lapho ubona kufanele izingane zivunyelwe zihlanganyele, kunini futhi lapho ubona sengathi akumele zivunyelwe, ekuthathweni kwezinqumo? (End of Tape 1)

Tape two

Participants working on their collage.

Researcher: Monica if you could ask the ladies before we go on to the collage, how did they find this experience. We going to start with Doreen

Zulu: Monica ngaphambi kokuqhubeela phambili , ngakube abantu basizwe kanjani lesifundo.

Sizoqala ngo Doreen.

Participant 1: It felt good doing this exercise, because other things we are not aware of, the things we do at home, when someone come with different view and opinions than it became clear.

Zulu: Ngikuthokozele ukwenza lesifundo, ngoba ezinye izinto asizinaki, izinto esizenza emakhaya,kodwa uma sekuboniswana ngemibono kuyezwakala.

Researcher: Was it the questions that were not easy to understand, or actually wanted to put in the picture

Zulu: Kungabe imibuzo ebinzima noma , ukufaka izithombe obekunzima.

Participant 1: I did not understand well in the beginning, but I realized it was not that difficult to do

Zulu: Bengingaqondi kahle ekuqaleni, kodwa kuthe sekuqhubeka , hay kwacaca.

Researcher: it became easier. Ok thank you, and the other ladies, how did you experience this?

Zulu: kwase kuba lula. Kulungile ngiyabonga, abanye bona basizwe sinjani isisifundo?

Participant 2: I am waiting for the question, sis Monica Zulu:

Ngisalindele umbuzo , sis Monica.

Translator: How did you find the experience?

Zulu: usizwe sinjani lesifundo?

Participant 2: It was difficult, especially looking at this big name, decisions, I was confused a bit, but after it was clarified, it became easier to understand it; decision is to come to an understanding

Zulu: Bekunzima, ikakhulukazi leligma lezinqumo, benginokudideka kancane, kodwa emva kokucaciselwa, kuzwakale kucaca; isiqumo ukufinyelela esivumelwaneni.

Researcher: Oh, then it was easy, oh, thank you

Zulu: Oho , kwase kuba lula, ngiyabonga

Participant 2: Yes

Zulu: Yebo

Participant 3: I was nervous at first and I even though it was difficult, but then I came to an understanding that people are different with different opinions and then I relaxed.

ZULU: bengisaba ekuqaleni ngaze ngacabanga ukuthi kunzima, kodwa ngakhumbula ukuthi abantu banemibono ehlukene ngezinto ezahlukene, ngase ngiyakhululeka.

Researcher: And then did it get easier.

ZULU: Kwase kuba lula.

Participant 3: It became easy, because you are also patience with us, no one is shouting and forcing us to understand, but the atmosphere is relaxed and we are comfortable with you.

ZULU: Kube lula, ngoba futhi uyasibezezelela, akekho osithethisayo asiphoke ukuthi sizwe ngenkani, kodwa sikhululekile asinankinga nawe. Researcher: Did you feel anxious initially

ZULU: ngabe nizizwe ningakhululekile kusaqala.

Participants: Yes initially

ZULU: yebo kusaqala

Researcher: or did they feel more relaxed, you do not feel anxious now?

ZULU: Noma nizizwe ningenankinga, nizizwa kanjani manje?

Participant 1: I was very anxious at the beginning, I felt it would have been much better if I we in the fist group, because our group is smaller, I just wondered of theirs was better than this one.

ZULU: Benginokusaba ekuqaleni, ngize ngacabanga ukuthi mhlambe bekuzoba ngcono ukube bengikuleliqembu lokuqala, ngoba leli lethu iqoqo, lincane, bengicabanga nje ukuthi mhlambe elabo belingcono.

Researcher: Why did she say that?

ZULU: Yini usho kanjalo?

Translator: because if you are in a bigger group it seems as if like things are much much better, in a small group, ok

ZULU: ngoba uma useqoqweni elikhulu kubukeka sengathi izinto zingcono kunaseqoqweni elincane.

Participant 1: Spot light

ZULU: Uyagqhama

Participants: Yes

ZULU: Yebo

Researcher: Ok, that is very interesting but also in a small group you can also have sharing and more time, because with a big group it's a lot, you do not give everyone a chance, but thank you for being honest, but are they all feeling more relaxed or not, no one is drinking, ask who wants to volunteer to go first.

ZULU: Kulungile , ngiyayithanda leyo, kodwa eqoqweni elincane uthola isikhathi esiningi sokubonisana, Kanye nesikhathi esiningi, ngoba eqoqweni elikhulu , abalitholi bonke abantu ithuba, kodwa ngiyabonga ngokuba neqiniso, kodwa manje wonke umuntu usekhululekile noma cha, akekho ophuzayo, ngicela ungibuzela ukuthi ubani ofuna ukuqala.

Participant 1: Me

ZULU: Imina

Researcher: OH, Doreen, ok she is being very brave ZULU: Oh,

Doreen unesibindi.

Participants: laughing

ZULU: bayahleka

Question 1

Researcher: How do you understand of children participation?

ZULU : Ukuqonda kanjani ukuba izingane zibe ingxenye yokuthathwa kwezinqumo?

Participant 1 : I think it is good to involve children in decision making, because it makes it easier for you as an adults if they go and break the rules you just go and remind them of the decisions you made jointly, they will not tell you they did not know it was a mistake

ZULU: ngicabanga ukuthi kuhle ukwenza izingane ingxenye ekuthathweni kwezinqumo, ngoba kwenza kube lula uma bephula imithetho ukuthi bangabuyi bathi uwena owabatshela kodwa ubakhumbuze ukuthi woknke umutnu wavumelana ngalokhu akekho ozothi ubengazi ukuthi kuyiphutha akwenzile.

Researcher: Ask Doreen what is that picture mean to her.

ZULU: Buzau Doreen ukuthi isithombe sisho ukuthini kuyena.

Participant 1: This means that I and my children discuss everything together, we have no secretes

ZULU: Lesithombe sikhombisa mina nabantwana bami sikhuluma ngakho konke asinazimfihlo.

Researcher: Mm, and is that important for her,

ZULU: Mm, lko kubalulekile kuyena

Participant 1: Yes

ZULU

Yebo.

Researcher: Ok, thank you Doreen, ok, who is going to go next?

ZULU: Ngiyabonga Doreen , ubani ozolandela?

Participant 2: Me,

ZULU: imina

Researcher: Is it Ethel, is this your number one Ethel

ZULU: u Ethel angithi, uyena unamba 1 wakho lona.

Participant 2: I said here it is good to involve children in decision making, because if a child grows up with no boundaries the child will stray, a child needs to be guided into the right directions, so that the child will have a good foundation, the child will be a responsible adult and God-fearing person, because of the good background.

ZULU: Ngithe lana kuhle ukuhlanganyela nezingane ekuthathweni kwezinqumo, ngoba uma umntwana ekhula ngaphandle kwemithetho, uyonhlanhlatha, umntwana kumele aqondiswe endleleni elungile, ukuze umntwana abe nesisekelo esihle, umntwana uyokhula abe qotho esabe UNKuluNkulu, ngenxa yemuva elihle.

Researcher: Ok, thank you Ethel, ok

ZULU: ok, siyabonga

Translator: Now it's your turn, no hiding anymore

ZULU: Mnje sekuyithuba lakho, akusekho ukucasha.

Researcher: Where is your question one, tell us about your picture, why you put that picture in question one

ZULU: uphi umbuzo wakho wokuqala, awusixoxele ngesithombe sakho, yini indaba ufaka isithombe embuzweni wokuqala.

Participant 3: I chose this picture because facial expression is important if you are talking to a child, one needs to always have a smiley and welcoming face for the children, I also agree that children should be allowed to be part of decision making, it is important because they will also grow up to be adults and parents one day, in order for them to be responsible adults, it is important that they are taught in their early life.

Ngikhethe lesithombe ngoba ubuso bakho bubalulekile uma ukhuluma nomntwana, umuntu kumele ehlezi emomotheka enobuso obuhle ezinganeni, ngiyavulelana nokuthi izingane zibe ingxenye ekuthathweni kwezinqumo, ngoba nabo bazokhula babe abazali ngelinye ilanga, ukuze abe abazali abaqotho kuhle bafundiswe kusenesikhathi.

Researcher: And why did she say it's important with the smiley face

ZULU: Yini athi kubalulekile ukumamatheka?

Participant 3: It is because , if you tell them something you like something and you are happy your facial expression must show, and if you tell them something you really do not like, they must also see it in you face. Your facial expression must show that you mean it not just saying it,

Ngoba uma ubatsela into oyithandayo kumele ubuso bukhombise, uma ubatshela into ngayithandi nalapho ubuso kumele bukhombise, kumele babone ebusweni . kumele ubuso bukhombise ukuthi uqonde loko okushoyo hayi ukuthi uyazikhulumela nje.

Researcher: Mm, Ok, I understand, thank you, ZULU: mm

ngiyabonga, ngiyezwa.

Researcher: Ok, Doreen,

Question 2, if yes why if no why just need to know her opinion

Participant 1: I said yes,

ZULU: ngithe yebo

Researcher: Tell me what Doreen said here ZULU:

utheni u Doreen lana.

Participant 1: I said yes, because the children will not come back and tell you that they did not know they were not supposed to do what ever mistake they have made, if you include them everyone is safe, you know you have done your job, I want them to grow up to be better people

ZULU: ngithe yebo ngoba izingane ngeke zibuye zithi bezingazi ukuthi zenze iphutha, uma zihlanganyela, wonke umuntu uphephile, uyazi uwenzile umsebenzi wakho, ngifuna bakhule beyizingane eziziphethe kahle.

Researcher: ok, thank you

ZULU: ngiyabonga

Participant 2: I said yes, ok, I said yes children should be involved in decision making, so that they will be controllable in life, you want to them to be controllable because the decisions are about their lives.

ZULU: ngithe yebo,ngba ngifuna izingane ziqoqeke empilweni, uma ufuna izingane ziqoqeke, uma usuna ziqoqeke nazo azibe ingxenye ngoba impilo yazo le.

Researcher: Why does she feel if she lets them participate they are not going to be uncontrollable? Why did she say that?

ZULU: Yin indaba abone sengathi zizoqoqeke uma ziba ingxenye, yini athi zozoqoqeke?

Translator: ok, Sister Ethel you got the question?

ZULU: angithi uwuzwile mbuzo sis Ethel?

Participant 2: Please will you repeat for me?

ZULU: ngicela ungihindela.

Participant: Yes they will be out of hand if you do not involve them, if a child live under certain house rules , they will be controllable, if you involve them they will always know what is allowed and what is not allowed at home.

ZULU: yebo bazophuma esandleni uma unganganyeli Kanye nabo, uma ingane ihlala pansi kwemithetho, izoqoqeke, uma uhlanganyela nabo bazokwazi okulungile nokungalungile.

Researcher: So I just to make sure that I understand her correctly, so once she sets boundaries, its like rules and boundaries, that everyone is being involved and everyone so everyone knows so that's the house rules, everyone has been involved in those house rules and discussing them is that right?.

ZULU: Ngifuna ukwazi nje ukuthi ngizwe kahle yini, uma ebeka imigomo njengemithetho nemigomo, wonke ohlanganyelile uyazi ukuthi nansi imithetho yasekhaya, wonke umutnu ube ingxenye yokubekwa kwaleyo mithetho.

Participant 2: Ok, I will tell you what I do with my children at the moment at home, I have three children at home at the moment, because the older one is at University, they know I have told them their daily duties, they know exactly who does dishes or who cleans the rooms, everyday they know their duties, if they are coming from school, they know they have to do their chores before they eat, on a Sunday we all wake up early because we are all going to church, everyday at 6 in the evening it's a prayer time, everyone must be at home, all these are the house rules and they respect them.

ZULU: Ngizokutshela nje ukuthi ngenza njani nezingane zami, nginezingane ezintathu ekhaya, ngoba lona omunye useYunivesithi, ziyazi ngizibekele imisebenzi yansuku zonke, zazi khale ukuthi ubani wenzani, zazi zonke izinsuku imisebenzi yazo. Uma zibuya esikoleni, ziyazi ziqala ngemisebenzi mande zidle. NgamaSonto sonke sivuka kakhulu, ngoba siya enkonzweni, zonke izinsuku ngo 6, isikhathi sokukhuleka, wonke umutnu kumele abe sekhaya, yonke lena imithetho yasekhaya , bonke bayayazi.

Researcher: Just finally, just before those house rules does she discuss it with the children or does she say this are the rules and you expected to comply or does she let them say something.

ZULU: okokugcina, ngaphambi kwalemithetho yasekhaya, ngabe uyabonisana nezingane noma uyazitshela bese elindela zona ziyihloniphe, noma nazo kukhona ezikushoyo.

Participant 2: You got me (laughing),

ZULU: Wangibamba (ehleka)

Translator: Ok, tell us more on how these rules came about.

ZULU: awusitshele kabanzi ukuthi lemithetho yaqala kanjani?

Participant 2: I will tell you what happened, as you know some children are lazy, I sat and watched them being lazy, and one day I gathered them in a room and told them that it will be hard when they grow up and they know nothing, I told them they had to take turns in doing some house chores, I sat them down and explain that I was not trying to abuse or being hard on them but I was helping them, in case something happens to me and I no longer with them. I told them I did not had it easy in life, although other people pass comments saying I am a hard worker but I know working hard pays off. But I treat them if they are good with their chores; I take them out to Town.

ZULU:Ngizokutshela ukuthi kwenzeka kanjani, njengoba nazi ukuthi ezinye izingane ziyavilapha, ngangilokhu ngizibuka nje , kwase kuthi ngilinye ilanga ngabahlanganisa ndawonye , ngabatshela ukuthi kuyoba nzima uma bekhula bengazi lutho, ngabatshela ukuthi kumele basintshane ngokwenza imisebenzi yasendlini, ngabachazela ukuthi angizami ukubahlukumeza kodwa ngizama ukubasiza, uma mina sengingasekho ukubenzela. Ngabachazela ukuthi mina ngakhula kanzima, yize abanye abantu beke bathi ngiyazigqilaza, kodwa ngiyazi ukusebenza kanzima kuyaholela. Uma benze kahle ngiyabajabulisa , ngibayisa edolobheni.

Researcher: So that's still very participation orientated, because mom say something children say something. Monica, ask if anyone else feel the same about that particular, you know, people feel the same are they in agreement with her?

ZULU: naloko kusawukuhlanganyela, ngoba umama usho okuthile nengane isho okuthile.

Monica buza ukuthi nabanye babona kanjani ngabe bayavumelana naye ngalokhu akushoyo?

Participants: yes we agree

ZULU: Yebo siyavuma

Researcher: Ok, number three

ZULU: sesiya kumbuzo wesithathu. Translator: Is it

number two or number three Participant 3: I said

yes.

ZULU: ngithe yebo

Translator: Why did you say yes?

ZULU: Yini uthe yebo?

Participant 3: I agree with involving children in decision making, if you do not tell them anything they will be clueless, they can do what ever they want, and they can sleep and do no chores, because they were not told what to do

Githe ngiyavuma, ngoba uma ungabatsheli lutho, bazokwenza noma ngabe yini abayithandayo, bangazilalela , bangenzi misembenzi yasekhaya.

Researcher: I just want to clarify sorry, is this your number two? Ok, can you just ask her how this relates to number two and what does the picture mean to her.

ZULU: Ngifuna ukucacisa nje , ngabe umbuzo wesibili lona? Nama mbuze ukuthi isithombe sihlobene kanjani nombuzo wesibili, nokuthi sisho ukuthini kuyena.

Participant3: It means that as a family you need to sit together, when you have to decide on something important everyone must be involved, it will not work if you tell one by one, as a parent or an adult you must be a role model, you need to get everyone seated and be the leader of the discussions. If you do not do that as a parent, they will go astray.

ZULU: Isithombe sisho uuthi umndeni uhlala ndawonye, uma kumele kuthathwe isinqumo esithile, wonke umuntu kumele abe khona. Uma ungumzali noma umdala kumele ube isibonelo, kumele

uhlalise wonke umuntu phansi ube umholi wnkulumo. Uma ungakwenzi lokho njengomzali, izingane zizoduka.

Researcher: Ok, thank you, Ok, Doreen, we are on you now, number three now, ZULU: ok

Doreen, ngiyabonga manje sesenza umbuzo wesithathu.

Question 3

Participant1: I said no ZULU:

ngithe cha.

Researcher: Ok, she said no any reason Doreen you said no, can you explain a little bit further?

ZULU: uthe cha, Doreen, awuchaze kabanzi ukuthi yini uphike?

Participant: I said no because, as a parent you must always have time to sit with your children, to make them feel comfortable to share anything with you. Children must be free and comfortable in sharing anything with you.

ZULU: Ngithe cha, ngoba njengomzali kumele ube nesikhathi sokuhlala nezingane zakho, ukuze uzenze zikhululeke, ukuthi zisho noma yini kuwena. Izingane kumele zikhululeke ukukhulma noma yini nawe.

Researcher: Did any of the other ladies, have any of the other ladies answered yes to this question,

ZULU:Kungabe ukhona ophendule ngo yebo kulombuzo?

Participant 2: I said yes, yes sister.

ZULU: ngithe yebo sisi

Translator: which are those things?

ZULU: Iziphi lezo?

Participant 2: Is that for number three?

ZULU: Ngabeloko okwesine?

Translator: Yes

ZULU : yebo

Researcher: Doreen said no, I want to know from the other ladies, if they said yes.

ZULU: U Doreen uthe , cha, ngifuna ukwazi kwabanye ukuthi ukhona yini othe yebo

Participant 2: I said no sister, because if you involve them, you are setting an example of when they grow up, they will follow the same example, its what they also will have to do.

ZULU: Ngithe, Cha sisi, ngoba uma uhlanganyela nabo, ukhombisa isibonelo ukuthi uma nabo sebekhulile, bazolandela loku okwenzayo, nabo benze kanjalo.

Translator: Ok, sister Maina, what did you say.

ZULU: sis maina, wena utheni?

Participant 3: I said yes, there are times and things that needs to be discussed by adults first then maybe they can be discussed with children and sometimes you just do not discuss them with the children at all, because the children's mind is still not matured enough.

ZULU: ngithe yebo, zikhona izikhathi kukhona izinto okumele zikhulunywe abantu abadala kuphela, mhlambe beseke zidluliselwa ezinganeni, mhlambe futhi ungazikhulumi nhlobo nezingane, ngoba imiqondo yezingane ayikavuthwa kahle. Researcher: Can you just give us an example of something

ZULU: ungazinika nje izibonelo?

Participant 3: Other things does not make sense to children especially when they are not matured enough, for them it will be just an information that will not make sense to them, or the shameful things.

ZULU: Ezinye izinto azizwakali kahle ezinganeni, ikakhulukazi uma zingavuthiwe kahle emqondweni, kubona kungaba into abangayizwa kahle noma babone kuyihlazo.

Translator: Like which shameful things will those be, make an example

ZULU: Njengaziphi nje izinto ezingaba amahlazo, yenza isibonelo

Participant 3: Maybe if I tell a four or younger child that they must not go around because they will get raped, a child that age will not have a clue what it means to be raped and might just shout the name rape and maybe even use the word inappropriately. It is important that we pass to the children something that will make sense to them, and always keeping in mind their level of maturity of the mind.

ZULU: Mhlambe nje ake ngithi ngitshele ingane eneminyaka emithathu noma emine ngithi ayimusa ukuzula ngoba izodlwengulwa, ingane engako ngeke yazi nokuthi yini yona leyo, ingamane isuke imemeze lona leligama lokudlwengula, nama ilisebenzise nama ikuphi. Kuballekile ukuthi izingane sizitshela loku ezizokuqonda , futhi sibheke nedlela yokuhlakanipha kwazo kwengqondo.

Researcher: So she is saying taking child age into consideration and sort of children development stage

ZULU: okusho ukuthi uchaza ukuthi kumele sibheke ukusebenza komqondo wengane nokukhula kwayo.

Participant 3; Yes I want them to understand what it means to her what I tell them.

ZULU : yebongifuna akuqonde lokhu engimtshela kona.

Researcher: Ask the other participants that now that she has shared does that put a different life you know different perception, on the points the other two shared now.

ZULU: Awubuze abanye ukuthi bona babona kanjani kulokhu akushoyo , ngabe kukhona okuhlukile kunalokhu abebekusho.

Participant 2: Yes, the thing is , the word decision is broad , it makes it difficult, she is right in saying the child's age and the level of development the child is at. It is true we should always consider the age and level of understanding of children before we say big words to the child.

ZULU: Yebo igama nje lezinqumo likhulu, lenza kube nzima ukuchaza kahle, loku akushoyo kuyikona, kubalulekile ukubheka iminyaka yengane nokukhula komqondo wakhe nje.

Kumele sibone ukuthi ukhule kangakanani ngomqondo mande sikhulume naye.

Researcher: So they saying it depends on child the age and age development stage and also what type of influence it will have on a child,

ZULU: kusho ukuthi bathi kubalulekile ukubona ukukhula komqondo wontwana , bese siyabona singakhuluma sigcinephi naye.

Translator: yes Reseacher:

Question 4

Participant 1: I think children should be involved if it something to do with their future and dreams, but the other things, serious thing like, maybe a child was raped or sexually abused, you cannot discuss that with the other children but only with the child concerned.

ZULU: Ngicabanga ukuthi izingane kumele zihlanganyele uma leyonto ifaka izifiso zabo namaphupho abanawo,kodwa ezinye izinto ngeke uzikhulume nazo zonke izingane, njengokuthi mhlambe kukhona ingane edlwenguliwe, ngeke utshele ezinye kodwa kuphela leyo edlwenguliwe.

Researcher: Can you ask Doreen let us say serious decisions, something like this, what age you think children should be , involved in serious decisions, compare to everyday decision, does she think its an age thing?

ZULU: Ngicela ungibuzele u Doreen ukuthi imiphi iminyaka abona ukuthi ifanele, lapho ingane ingatshelwa khona izinto ezifana nalezi, uma siqhathanisa nezinqumo zansuku zonke, ngabe ucabanga ukuthi kumele kuye ngeminyaka?

Participant 1: at about 14 and more

ZULU: Mhlambe uma ineminyka eyishumi nane nangaphezulu.

Researcher: Ask the other ladies what they think of that age.

ZULU: Buza abanye ukuthi bona babona kanjani.

Participant 2: Ok, for me I have Buhle, 10 years and Mbali 11 years, and Bonga is 14, I tell them everything, especially if it's something that that will endanger their future. I think at six you can start telling them something that will be age appropriate. I think it is no use trying to hide something's to the children because they already seeing them on television, and they already know more than the adults do.

ZULU: Mina ngino buhle una 10, uMbali una 11, no Bonga ona 14, ngibatshela konke, ikakhuu uma ngibona ukuthi into engabalimaza ekusaseni labo. Ngicabanga ukuthi kusukela eminyakeni eyisithupha ungaqala ubatshela izinto ezingangeminyaka yabo.

Translator: So you saying it must start at six years?

ZULU: usho ukuthi uma beneminyaka eyisithupha kulungile?

Participant 2: Yes, I say so, because in our times we had grandmothers who told us stories, but there are not a lot of grandmothers anymore, we have to do it ourselves

ZULU: yebo ngisho njalo ngoba ngezikhathi zethu ogogo ibona ababesitshela izinto, manje abasekho ogogo kakhulukazi, ithina mane esizenzela umsebenzi.

Researcher: Ok, the other lady ZULU:

abanye bona bathini.

Participant 3: I agree that the children should know the truth, but for me it should depend on the child's mental developmental stage, other children mature faster than their years but others are old in years but far behind with maturity, for me I will not consider the child's age only by maturity stage of the child. Other children are so backward with their maturity. I have a younger boy who is much clever than his older sister, I choose what I tell each one of them because their maturity is not the

same. But I agree with Ethel because maybe her children are more matured and understand more, but for me I cannot ignore the fact that the child's level of development is not the same.

ZULU: niyavuma name ukuthi izingane azitshelwe, kodwa akuye ngokukhula komqondo womntwana, ezinye izingane ziyashesha ukukhula ngokomqondo, kodwa ezinye zikhula ngimizimba imiqondo isalele emuva. Mina nje ngonomfana okhulile, kodwa muncane kakhulu umqondo wakhe uma uqhathanisa nowakubo omncane. Ngiyamvumela u Ethel ngoba mhlawimbe izingane zakhe zinemiqondo esheshayo, kodwa mina nje ngithi umqondo wengane okukhombisayo ukuthi mtsheleni.

Researcher: Did you tell these ladies are very clever, that is what the children's Act say, you should look at child's age developmental stage and level of maturity.

ZULU: ubatshelile kodwa ukuthi bahlakaniphe kangakanani, ilokho Kanye okushiwo umthetho sisekelo, kumele ubheke ukukhula komqondo wengane nokuthi uhlakaniphe kangakanani.

Question 5

Researcher: Ok, let us do the other two questions, number five, maybe there is no challenges, its fine

ZULU: ok, asenzi lemibuzo emibili esele, kumbuzo wesihlanu uma zingekho izingqinamba kulungile.

Participant 1: I said not challenges, because we discuss everything together ZULU: Ngithe

azikho izingqinamba, ngoba sixoxa konke ndawonye.

Researcher: No challenges, ok, number five

ZULU: Azikho izingqinamba, umbuzo wesihlanu

Participant 2: I do not see any challenges, they will grow up knowing their parents rules and expectations. They will grow up to be happy children because they were told all the life challenges and discussed with them.

ZULU: Angiboni zingqinamba, bazokhula bazi imithetho yabazali babo. Bazokhula beyizingane eziqinisekile ngoba bazobe bazi ukuthi batshelwa izingqinamba zempilo futhi nabo baba ingxenye yokhuluma ngazo.

Researcher: Where is you number five?

ZULU: Muphi umbuzo wesihlanu kuwena?

Participant 2: I put a picture of this happy boy to show that he is happy, growing in a home with good house rules and he had good foundation

ZULU: Ngifake isithombe salomfana ojabulile, ukukhombisa ukuthi ukhulele ekhaya elinemithetho.

Researcher: She does not see any challenges, ok next lady ZULU:

Akaboni zingqinamba, kulungile , olandelayo.

Participant 3: I said yes they are

ZULU: Ngithe mina akhona

Researcher: She said yes, she sees challenges?

ZULU: uthi zikhona izingqinamba?

Participant 3: I see that there might be some challenges when involving children in decision making, for example I stay close to my sister, and if I am not at home and my sister is in urgent need of something, because I involve them in all decisions, they might deny my sister to take whatever she needs because I am not there and that will contradict with what I have told my sister that she is more than welcome to take whatever she wants from my house anytime. Sometimes children must just let adults make decisions.

ZULU: ngibona sengathi zingaba khona izingqinamba uma sifaka izingane kuzona zonke izinqumo, isibonelo nje ngihlala eduze kasisi wami, uma ngingekho ekhaya kukhona akufunayo ngokuphuthuma, ngoba nazo izingane ziyingxenye yezinqumo, zingamqabela usisi wami ukuthi

athathe noma yini ayifunayo ngoba mina angikho, manje loko kuzodida usisi wami ngoba mina ngamtshela ukuthi noma yini ayifunayo angayithatha endlini yami.

Ngesinye isikhathi izingane kumele ziyeke abntu abadala bathathe izinqumo.

Researcher: Mm, ok, and the other ladies what is their opinion on that?

ZULU: mm. abnye babona kanjani?

Participant 2: What number sister?

ZULU: unamba bani sisi Translator: Its

number 5.

ZULU unamba 5

Researcher: From the different opinion that there could be challenges.

ZULU: umbono ohlukile wokuthi izingqinamba zingaba khona.

Participant 2: Have we not done number five?

ZULU: Asikawenzi yini unamba 5?

Translator: We have, now we taking about what sister Maina said, and the example she used of her sister wanting to take something to cook from her house. Do you think there could be some challenges?

ZULU: Sesiwenzile manje sikhuluma ngalokhu okushiwo u sisi Maina, nesibonelo sokuthi usisi wakhe kukhona akufunayo kwakhe ,ngoba mhlambe efuna ukupheka. Wena ubona ukuthi ingaba khona ingqinamba ?

Participant 2: I also agree with her,

ZULU: Nami ngiyamvumela

Translator: Maybe it needs to be clarified which decisions must involve children and which one must not.

ZULU: Mhlambe kumele kuhlukaniswe ukuthi iziphi izinqumo ezifaka izingane nokuthi iziphi ezingazifaki.

Participant 2: Children must be told that they cannot take the mother's position if she is not there.

ZULU: Izingane kumele zazi ukuthi ngeke zithathe indawo kamama uma umama engekho.

Researcher: Ok, the last question, then we can have something to drink, we nearly done, I just want to know if you have got any suggestion

ZULU: Kulungile, umbuzo wokugcina, emva kwalokho sesingathola okuphuzwayo, sesiyaqeda, ngifuna ukwazi ukuthi ukhona yini onokuthile afisa ukukusho isiphakamiso..

Participant 1: I did not hear clearly?

ZULU: angizwanga kahle?

Translator: What suggestions do you have?

ZULU: Zikhona iziphakamiso onazo?

Participant 1: we can discuss all this in our support group because we share a lot of things, but it will be hard to tell someone who is not in our support group because they will think you want to run their lives for them.

ZULU: Singakuxoxa konke lokhu emihlanganweni yethu, kodwa kungaba nzima ukutshela umuntu ongekho nathi ngoba angathi ufuna ukumtshela ukuthi ayiphile kanjani impilo yakhe.

Researcher: Is there anything the other ladies want to share.

ZULU: ngabe kukhona abanye abafisa ukukusho?

Participant 2: As a parent you need to have a manner of approach to children, children must not be afraid to approach you as their parent; you must play with your children and be approachable.

ZULU: njengomzali kumele ube nendlela yokuthatha ingane, izingane akumele zisabe ukukhuluma nawe, kumele udlale nezingane ungeneke.

Researcher: Ok, anything to add or.

ZULU: Kukhona ofuna ukugcwalisela ?

Participant 3: It will not be easy just to talk to anyone unless they share their challenges with you, but with your family you can discuss

ZULU: Ngeke kube lula ukukhuluma nanoma ubani kuphela uma bekuxoxela izinkinga zabo, ngaphandle komndeni wakho ungaxoxa nawo.

Researcher: Thank you that comes to an end of our research, tell the ladies thanks very much to all of them, I just to ask just in closing how did you find that Doreen, the sharing .

ZULU: Ngiyabonga , sesifike esiphethweni socwaningo lwethu, ngicela ungibongele kakhulu kubona , Doreen konke lokhu obekwezeka ukuzwe kunjani.

Participant 2: for me I learned a lot from this exercise, I thought I was the best and today's exercise proved to me that I am doing my work the way it should be. I was also encouraged just from sharing ideas with the other ladies, that doing things the old fashioned way is still relevant, I am now going to improve on what I knew already.

ZULU : Mina ngifunde ukhulu namuhlanje, bengicabanga ukuthi ngenza kahle kodwa namhlanje ngifunde okunye. Futhi kungisizile ukwabelana ngolwazi nabanye , nokuthi ukwenza izinto ngendlela yakuqala kusalungile, ngizoqhubeka kulokhu ebengivele ngikwazi.

Translator: Ok, sister Maina

Participant 3: it was a good exercise; in a group like this it's nice because you get to learn different parenting techniques and ideas, one learns a lot from discussions and sharing with the other people, today was beneficial for me, I got to share my perceptions and experiences and I got to hear what others think and what they have experienced.

ZULU: Bekuwumsebenzi omuhle, kumnandi uma sihlangene siyiqoqo kanjena, ufunda izindlela ezintsha zokukhulisa ingane, ngizuze lukhulu namhlanje, nami ngakwazi ukwabelana nolwazi enginalo.

Researcher: Mm, Ok

ZULU: Ngiyezwa

Participant 1: I learnt a lot from this good exercise, I will keep it in mind

ZULU: Ngifunde likhulu kulesifundo sanamuhla, ngiyohlezi ngisikhumbula.

Researcher: Ok, thanks very much, thank for giving up your time, I know its late now in the afternoon, and I would like to ask if any of the ladies would like to take a picture with their collage, you do not have to

ZULU: Ngiyabonga kakhulu, ngokunikela ngesikhathi senu, ngiyazi isikhathi sesihambile, ngicela ukubuza ukuthi ukhona yini ongathanda ukuthatha isithombe nomfanekiso wakhe, uma ningathandi kulungile nalokho.

Participants: Yes it's fine.

ZULU: Yebo kulungile.

Annexure I: Translation English

04 September 2014

Research Project - Give a Child a Family

Group 2

Consent form

Translator: Ilona leliphepha enganichazela ngalo ngthi kuyomele nilisayine uma sekushaye isikhathi, kodwa nina nobabili beningekho munye kupela owayekhona. Bbengekho laba abilili ilona kuphela owayekhona

Translator _ This is the paper that I explained about to you that I said you would have to sign at one stage, you were both not there only one of you was there.

Resercher: Mhlambe kuzomele silibheke ngokushesha leliphepha ukubona ukuthi wonke umuntu uyaliqonda futhi akanankinga nokushiwo kulona bese eyasayina, sizpbe sesiqhubeka ke.

Researcher: Maybe I think let us go through it quickly and just see that everyone understands and is happy with the consent form to sign and then I will take it from there.

Translator: Kusho ukuthi ngalelalanga ngabafundela ababekhona, into incwadi yesivumelwano eshu kuthi uyavuma yokuzokwenzeka lana, lesivumelwano yinto ezokwenzeka lana lokuthi uyavuma , njengoba liwumqulu wamakhasi awu 4 liyachaza ukuthi yini ezokwenzeka lana inhloso yalessifundo ukuthi yini u Elaine uyafunda e Univsithithi yase noth west wenza I Masters, la efundo khona kumele enze njani ukuthi abe nengxoxo nabantu ababuze ukuthi inhloso yalesisifundo yini, ukuthi kufanelekile yini ukuthi izingane nazo zibe yingxenye uma kuthathwa izinqumo lezo , inhloso yalesisifundo ilokhoke, kwase kubhalwa inqubo ukuthikuzohamba kanjani. Kuchazwe ukuthi uma uvuma ukuba ingxenye yalolucwaningo nizohlukaniswa nibe ama group amabili, njengoba nibonile ekuseni , manje sekungena nina nizokwenza I collage ngmaphepha lawa, kunemibuzo ewu 6 enibuzwe yona uma nibuzwa lemibuzo niyaphendula bese ufaka nesithombe saloko okubuzwayo

ukukhombisa impendulo yakho, bese kuthiwa ubungozi, okanye ukungakhululeki kuyachazwa ukuthi lesisifundo asinabungozi lesifundo ngoba ingxoxo nje ezobakhona besekuba imfihlo kusho ukuthi ukho konke lokhu esizobe sikwenza lana , into esizozikhuluma lana kugcina phakathi kwethu asizokukhuluma lokhu esizokukhuluma siku discuse ngoba sizofika isikhathi sokuthi si discusa umuntu nomuntu , konke sokugcina kuthina ngeke kuphumele ngaphandle,. Enye indawo isho ukuthi imfihlo, ukuthi lento eyenzeka lana izogcinwa lana phakathi kwethu ngeke ize iphumele ngaphandle, besekuba nendawo yenzuzo, into ozoyizuzana lana ilolulwazi ozoluthola ngesikhathi sixoxa kumaxoxo, izindleka , kuthiwa azikho izindleka ozongena kuzona ngokuba ingxenye yalolicwaningo , inkokhelo, kuthiwa ayinkho inkokhelo ozoyithola ngokuba ingxenye yalolucwaningo, uma usuvuma uzobe ususayina ku page 4. Uma ususayinile kunendawo lana , ethi noma ususayinile uma uzizwa ungasathandi ukuqhubeka nocwaningo ungayeka, ngeke ubekwe icala kuthiwe usayinile, kumele uphendue yonke imibuzo, uyovunyelwa ukuyeka ucwaningo akekho oyothi ngoba ubusayinile qhubeka , uma uzizwa ungasakhululekile uvumelekile ukuphuma kucwaningo. Leliphepha lichaza konke lokhu, kusho ukuthi uma uvuma uzobe ususayina laphana ku page 4.

Translator:Ok, so for those who were not here when we did this form, this is a booklet or an agreement letter, it looks big, four pages but it is because it explains everything that will happen , Elaine is doing her Masters degree, at North West University, she was given the topic of doing the research to people and ask them how they perceive children's participation in decision making, so this is the purpose for this research. It says here if you agree to participate in this research you will be divided into groups like we did, this morning was another group and now its your group, you are expected to answer six questions, as a group member you are expected to make a collage, you can add pictures and beads, everything is provided for you, then write what your collage mean to you and then at the end of the group session we will all share what we have written. You can write your answer and add a picture to show you answer.

Then it says the dangers of the research, it explains that, there will be no danger in participating in this research, there will be confidentiality on what we will be sharing in this group, what ever we share here, will remain within us. Whatever we will be discussing here will remain with the group; we will not discuss it with anyone else. The benefit of the research, this means that you will benefit from sharing your experiences with the other ladies.

Expenses, it says you there will be no expenses you will pay by participating in this research.

Payment, it says you will not get payment for participating in this research. If you agree with all of this you can sign on page 4, write today's date and sign that you would like to be part of this. After you have signed, then you decide in the middle of the research that you are no longer interested, you are free to withdraw from the research. Signing this document does not bind you not to withdraw; if you feel you want to withdraw you are more than welcome to do so. If you feel uncomfortable about a question or anything you are free to do so. If you agree with all of this will you please sign at the bottom of page 4.

Researcher: Monica did you explain about group confidentiality do they understand that and just ask the ladies if they have any questions before they sign.

Umcwangingi: Monica ingabe ubachazelile ngemfihlo noma ngabe ukhona mhlambe onombuzo ngaphambi kokuthi asayine? Noma kukhona okungacacile enifuna ukukuqondisisa kahle. Akekho ok.

Participants: No

Researcher: Ok will you help them to sign and then I will explain the process.

Research assistant: Lapha usayina igama nesibongo ne date yanamuhla.

Research Assistant: here you sign with your name and surname and today's date.

Signing of consent form

Researcher: Monica Just before we start, will you introduce whoever is here and what their roles are?

Ngaphambi kokuthi siqale ngicela ukwazisa bonke laba esihamba nabo nokuthi bazokwenzani.

Introductions

Translator:Lona u Kerry, umsebenzi azobe ewenza ukuqopha lomsebenzi esiwenzayo njengoba ngasho ukuthi kuzobe kuqoshwa loku esizobe sikusho. Bese kuba u Lunga uhamba naye, uyi I Social worker u Lunga baqhamuka e Hillcrest, bese kuthi yena u Elaine uyi psychologist.

Translator: The camera lady, the social worker, the researcher

Researcher: Thank you Monica, Maybe we need to start with the process, just want to say to the ladies that you very much. Doreen that for letting us use her house and we chased you out, we very sorry, you have been so gracious we really appreciate it such a lovely place and thank you all ladies, do you all ladies understand English, oh, Monica can just fill in.

Translator: Amanzi noswidi okwenu , uma nizizwa senomile, nilokhu ninambitha.

Water and sweets are yours, you are free to enjoy it.

Ladies: Thank You

Children walking in, and out collecting their food

Researcher: Anyway let us go through the process, it's a small group I think we should be, you know , we had a big group just now, everybody had to share sorry it took so longer then we thought, what we going ask you to do, there is a list of questions here. I think Monica had explained to you what we going do here is there six of questions we gonna do , there a six question I think Monica has told you, I am looking to explore what is the parents attitude is for the foster parents perceptions and attitude towards children decision making to participate in decisions making the other group asked me if it small decisions or small decisions we talking about all kind of decisios,I really want to know how do you feel as foster moms in allowing children to participate in decisions. What I am going to ask from you, first of all you going to make a collage, Monica can explain what that is you see there is books there is magazines , the books are normally good you can cut our pictures, there is beads there is pens you can write if you want to , you can draw if you want, you can stick things on, you

can cut pictures out, initially we find with the other group when you start you not to sure what am I actually going to do here, but as you look at the picture subconsciously it just seems to trigger something and then you like that picture, just cut it out and put it in a little pile there and stick it in a piece cupboard. But I want you to do there are questions , six questions when you make your collage please just try and answer the questions the question number one, start with question number one , and after we have done that, I am going to ask you just to share, we can share, we have to share in your collage there is no right or wrong you can do it you can be as creative as you like you can do what you like it its about each and every person attitude and how do you see it and the everybody is different that's fine. Monica maybe if you don't mind just making sure that everyone understands the questions and how we gonna go in answering questions number one number two afterwards everyone understands what they to do.

Translator: Njengoba sizozala nje, ngike ngasho ngathi sizophendula imibuzo ewu 6, kumele siqale sibheke ukuthi umbuzo siyawazi ukuthi usho ukuthini, sizosebenzisa amabhuku namapeni, njengoba esho nje ukuthi ayinkho impendulo e right ne wrong. Thina kumele siphendule ngendlela esibona ngayo, uma kukhulunywa lendaba yokuthathwa kwezinqumo. Nokuthi ubona kanjani wena ukuthi izingane zibe indlenye uma kuthathwa izinqumo. Ngoba nazo ziyingxenye yomndeni walekhaya. Kungaba izinqumo ezincane noma izinqumo ezinkulu. Uma ngaba kuyizinqumo ezizothinta impilo yazo. Njengoba nazo kwezalaykhaya nje izingane, ngabe nibona kanjani ukuthi izingane zibe ingxenye

Researcher: Monica can you also ask that ladies what is it that they understand what we mean about decision making.

Translator: Kungabe sonke siyayiqonda le eyokuthathwa kwezinqumo, niyayiqonda ukuthi ichaza ukuthini icacile kinina niyizwa kahle noma ukhona ungezwisisi kahle

Participant 1: Ngicabanga ukuthi kucacile, ngicabanga ukuthi ukwenza noma ukuthatha isinqumo, into ewushintsho, kusho ukuthi sekukhona okuzokwenzeka emndenini okukade kungenzeki, manje ubonisana nezingane ngoba nazo zizothinteka ngalezozinqumo futhi ziyingxenye yomndeni.

Translator: So just want to verify if she understands it correctly, but the way she looks at it means that there is gonna be change in someone's life , the family or change in someone else's life, as part of the family it is important to be part of that decision making since it gonna affect your life.

Researcher: That's true, you can just explain that sometime its also small decisions, just everyday decisions , can be simple things what to wear, what to eat can we go to a friend, you know there is big decision and there is a middle decision, thy need to keep their minds open, and perceptions and attitudes , how did they their view it you know just make sure everyone understands that and if everyone is happy and understand then we can go to the questions.

Translator: So kunjengoba esho u Elanie , okunye okubalulekile ukuthi njengokuthi okunye nje njengokuthi uzogqokani uma uya esikoleni,noma ungavakasha, hayi izinqumo ezinkulu kuphela kodwa nezinquomo ezincane. Izinto ezenzeka zonke izinsuku ekhayeni.

Researcher: Is everyone happy to go to the questions, is anyone else wants to ask or add anything.

Translator: Kucacile singaya embuzweni wokuqala

Participants: Yes

Researcher: Please tell them I do not want them to look and be stressful it must be a fun time the other ladies enjoyed it, just fun time , if you not sure ask about the question

Translator: Niyithokozele, ningayithathi serious.

Researcher: It takes a bit of time to get your mind going.

Researcher: Ok have you explain is everyone understands now what to do and thy can start to answer to look at questions.

Translator: imibuzo nansi eduze kwethu singabuka nakuyona.

Participant 2: Namabhuku lawa siqale ngawo

Researcher: Sorry what I did not say when we finish the collage remember we going to go round in a group answer question 1; make sure that collage answers this question.

Translator: Ok, kusho ukuthi uma sesiqedile ukuphendula umbuzo umbuzo wokuqala , sizobe sesiphendula umuntu esho ukuthi kungakube yena ubona kanjani, kumele wazi ukuthi izithombe lezi zihambisana nawuphi umbuzo.

Resecher: Ok, are they ready to get going.

Translator: Yes, (laughing) Reseacher: Are

you ready?

Participants: yes (laughing)

Translator: Asiqelenike Umbuzo wokuqala,

1.Kungabe ukuqonda kanjani ukuhlanganyela kwezingane ekuthathweni kwezinqumo?

2. Ngowakho umbono, ngabe kumele izingane zihlanganyele ekuthathweni kwezinqumo?

- uma uthi yebo, uyacelwa uchaze ukuthi uvuma ngaliphi
- uma uthi cha, uyacelwa uchaze ukuthi uphika ngaliphi

3. Umbuzo wesibili, ngowakhoke umbono kungabe zikhona izinto ezenza kube nzima kuwena ukuthi uvumele izingane zihlanganyele ekuthathweni kwezinqumo?

- uma zikhona, ngabe uyobe usuyachaza ukuthi iziphi lezizinto.

Bese kuthi umbuzo wesithathu uthi.Kunini lapho ubona kufanele izingane zivunyelwe zihlanganyele, kunini futhi lapho ubona sengathi akumele zivunyelwe, ekuthathweni kwezinqumo? (End of Tape 1)

Tape two

Participants working on their collage.

Researcher: Monica if you could ask the ladies before we go on to the collage, how did they find this experience. We going to start with Doreen

Participant 1: It felt good doing this exercise, because other things we are not aware of, the things we do at home, when someone come with different view and opinions than it became clear

Researcher: Was it the questions that were not easy to understand, or actually wanted to put in the picture

Participant 1: I did not understand well in the beginning, but I realized it was not that difficult to do

Researcher: it became easier. Ok thank you, and the other ladies, how did you experience this?

Participant 2: I am waiting for the question, sis Monica

Translator: How did you find the experience?

Participant 2: It was difficult, especially looking at this big name, decisions, I was confused a bit, but after it was clarified, it became easier to understand it; decision is to come to an understanding

Researcher: Oh, then it was easy, oh, thank you

Participant 2: Yes

Participant 3: I was nervous at first and I even though it was difficult, but then I came to an understanding that people are different with different opinions and then I relaxed.

Researcher: And then did it get easier.

Participant 3: It became easy, because you are also patience with us, no one is shouting and forcing us to understand, but the atmosphere is relaxed and we are comfortable with you.

Researcher: Did they feel anxious initially

Participants: Yes initially

Researcher: or did they feel more relaxed, you do not feel anxious now?

Participant 1: I was very anxious at the beginning, I felt it would have been much better if I were in the first group, because our group is smaller, I just wondered if theirs was better than this one.

Researcher: Why did she say that?

Translator: because if you are in a bigger group it seems as if like things are much much better, in a small group, ok

Participant 1: Spot light

Participants: Yes

Researcher: Ok, that is very interesting but also in a small group you can also have sharing and more time, because with a big group it's a lot, you do not give everyone a chance, but thank you for being honest, but are they all feeling more relaxed or not, no one is drinking, ask who wants to volunteer to go first.

Participant 1: Me

Researcher: OH, Doreen, ok she is being very brave

Participants: laughing

Question 1

Researcher: How do you understand of children participation?

Participant 1 : I think it is good to involve children in decision making, because it makes it easier for you as an adults if they go and break the rules you just go and remind them of the decisions you made jointly, they will not tell you they did not know it was a mistake Researcher: Ask Doreen what is that picture mean to her.

Participant 1: This means that I and my children discuss everything together, we have no secrets

Researcher: Mm, and is that important for her,

Participant 1: Yes

Researcher: Ok, thank you Doreen, ok, who is going to go next?

Participant 2: Me,

Researcher: Is it Ethel, is this your number one Ethel

Participant 2: I said here it is good to involve children in decision making, because if a child grows up with no boundaries the child will stray, a child needs to be guided into the right directions, so that the child will have good foundation, the child will be a responsible adult and God-fearing person, because of the good background.

Researcher: Ok, thank you Ethel, ok

Translator: Now it's your turn, no hiding anymore

Researcher: Where is your question one, tell us about your picture, why you put that picture in question one

Participant 3: I chose this picture because facial expression is important if you are talking to a child, one needs to always have a smiley and welcoming face for the children, I also agree that children should be allowed to be part of decision making, it is important because they will also grow up to be adults and parents one day, in order for them to be responsible adults, it is important that they are taught in their early life.

Researcher: And why did she say it's important with the smiley face

Participant 3: It is because, if you tell them something you like something and you are happy your facial expression must show, and if you tell them something you really do not like, they must also see it in your face. Your facial expression must show that you mean it not just saying it,

Researcher: Mm, Ok, I understand, thank you,

Researcher: Ok, Doreen, question 2, if yes why if no why just need to know her opinion Researcher

Participant 1: I said yes,

Researcher: Tell me what Doreen said here

Participant 1: I said yes, because the children will not come back and tell you that they did not know they were not supposed to do what ever mistake they have made, if you include them everyone is safe, you know you have done your job, I want them to grow up to be better people

Researcher: ok, thank you

Participant 2: I said yes, ok, I said yes children should be involved in decision making, so that they will be controllable in life, you want to them to be controllable because the decisions are about their lives.

Researcher: Why does she feel if she lets them participate they are not going to be uncontrollable? Why did she say that?

Translator: ok, Sister Ethel you got the question?

Participant 2: Please will you repeat for me?

Participant: Yes they will be out of hand it you do not involve them, if a child live under certain house rules , they will be controllable, if you involve them they will always know what is allowed and what is not allowed at home.

Researcher: So I just to make sure that I understand her correctly, so once she sets boundaries, its like rules and boundaries, that everyone is being involved and everyone so everyone knows so that's the house rules, everyone has been involved in those house rules and discussing them is that right?.

Participant 2: Ok, I will tell you what I do with my children at the moment at home, I have three children at home at the moment, because the older one is at University, they know I have told them their daily duties, they know exactly who does dishes or who cleans the rooms, everyday they know their duties, if they are coming from school, they know they have to do their chores before they eat, on a Sunday we all wake up early because we are all going to church, everyday at 6 in the evening it's a prayer time, everyone must be at home, all these are the house rules and they respect them.

Researcher: Just finally, just before those house rules does she discuss it with the children or does she say this are the rules and you expected to comply or does she let them say something.

Participant 2: You got me (laughing),

Translator: Ok, tell us more on how these rules came about.

Participant 2: I will tell you what happened, as you know some children are lazy, I sat and watched them being lazy, and one day I gathered them in a room and told them that it will be hard when they grow up and they know nothing, I told them they had to take turns in doing some house chores, I sat them down and explain that I was not trying to abuse or being hard on them but I was helping them, in case something happens to me and I no longer with them. I told them I did not had it easy in life, although other people pass comments saying I am a hard worker but I know working hard pays off. But I treat them if they are good with their chores; I take them out to Town.

Researcher: So that's still very participation orientated, because mom say something children say something. Monica, ask if anyone else feel the same about that particular, you know, people feel the same are they in agreement with her?

Participants: yes we agree

Researcher: Ok, number three

Translator: Is it number two or number three Participant 3: I

said yes.

Translator: Why did you say yes?

Participant 3: I agree with involving children in decision making, if you do not tell them anything they will be clueless, they can do what ever they want, and they can sleep and do no chores, because they were not told what to do

Researcher: I just want to clarify sorry, is this your number two? Ok, can you just ask her how this relates to number two and what does the picture mean to her.

Participant3: It means that as a family you need to sit together, when you have to decide on something important everyone must be involved, it will not work if you tell one by one, as a parent or an adult you must be a role model, you need to get everyone seated and be the leader of the discussions. If you do not do that as a parent, they will go astray.

Researcher: Ok, thank you, Ok, Doreen, we are on you now, number three now,

Question 3

Participant1: I said no

Researcher: Ok, she said no any reason Doreen you said no, can you explain a little bit further?

Participant: I said no because, as a parent you must always have time to sit with your children , to make them feel comfortable to share anything with you. Children must be free and comfortable in sharing anything with you.

Researcher: Did any of the other ladies, have any of the other ladies answered yes to this question,

Participant 2: I said yes, yes sister.

Translator: which are those things?

Participant 2: Is that for number three?

Translator: Yes

Researcher: Doreen said no, I want to know from the other ladies, if they said yes.

Participant 2: I said no sister, because if you involve them, you are setting an example of when they grow up, they will follow the same example, its what they also will have to do.

Translator: Ok, sister Maina, what did you say.

Participant 3: I said yes, there are times and things that needs to be discussed by adults first then maybe they can be discussed with children and sometimes you just do not discuss them with the children at all, because the children's mind is still not matured enough.

Researcher: Can you just give us an example of something

Participant 3: Other things does not make sense to children especially when they are not matured enough, for them it will be just an information that will not make sense to them, or the shameful things.

Translator: Like which shameful things will those be, make an example

Participant 3: Maybe if I tell a four or younger child that they must not go around because they will get raped, a child that age will not have a clue what it means to be raped and might just shout the name rape and maybe even use the word inappropriately. It is important that we pass to the children something that will make sense to them, and always keeping in mind their level of maturity of the mind.

Researcher: So she is saying taking child age into consideration and sort of children development stage

Participant 3; Yes I want them to understand what it means to her what I tell them.

Researcher: Ask the other participants that now that she has shared does that put a different life you know different perception, on the points the other two shared now.

Participant 2: Yes, the thing is , the word decision is broad , it makes it difficult, she is right in saying the child's age and the level of development the child is at. It is true we should always consider the age and level of understanding of children before we say big words to the child.

Researcher: So they saying it depends on child the age and age development stage and also what type of influence it will have on a child,

Translator: yes Reseacher:

Question 4

Participant 1: I think children should be involved if it something to do with their future and dreams, but the other things, serious thing like, maybe a child was raped or sexually abused, you cannot discuss that with the other children but only with the child concerned.

Researcher: Can you ask Doreen let us say serious decisions, something like this, what age you think children should be , involved in serious decisions, compare to everyday decision, does she think its an age thing?

Participant 1: at about 14 and more

Researcher: Ask the other ladies what they think of that age.

Participant 2: Ok, for me I have Buhle, 10 years and Mbali 11 years, and Bonga is 14, I tell them everything, especially if it's something that that will endanger their future. I think at six you can start telling them something that will be age appropriate. I think it is no use trying to hide something's to the children because they already seeing them on television, and they already know more than the adults do.

Translator: So you saying it must start at six years?

Participant 2: Yes, I say so, because in our times we had grandmothers who told us stories, but there are not a lot of grandmothers anymore, we have to do it ourselves

Researcher: Ok, the other lady

Participant 3: I agree that the children should know the truth, but for me it should depend on the child's mental developmental stage, other children mature faster than their years but others are old in years but far behind with maturity, for me I will not consider the child's age only by maturity stage of the child. Other children are so backward with their maturity. I have a younger boy who is much clever than his older sister, I choose what I tell each one of them because their maturity is not the same. But I agree with Ethel because maybe her children are more matured and understand more, but for me I cannot ignore the fact that the child's level of development is not the same.

Researcher: Did you tell these ladies are very clever, that is what the children's Act say, you should look at child's age developmental stage and level of maturity.

Question 5

Researcher: Ok, let us do the other two questions, number five, maybe there is no challenges, its fine

Participant 1: I said not challenges, because we discuss everything together

Researcher: No challenges, ok, number five

Participant 2: I do not see any challenges, they will grow up knowing their parents rules and expectations. They will grow up to be happy children because they were told all the life challenges and discussed with them.

Researcher: Where is you number five?

Participant 2: I put a picture of this happy boy to show that he is happy, growing in a home with good house rules and he had good foundation

Researcher: She does not see any challenges, ok next lady

Participant 3: I said yes they are

Researcher: She said yes, she sees challenges?

Participant 3: She sees that there might be some challenges when involving children in decision making, for example I stay close to my sister, and if I am not at home and my sister is in urgent need of something, because I involve them in all decisions, they might deny my sister to take whatever she needs because I am not there and that will contradict with what I have told my sister that she is more than welcome to take whatever she wants from my house anytime. Sometimes children must just let adults make decisions.

Researcher: Mm, ok, and the other ladies what is their opinion on that?

Participant 2: What number sister?

Translator: Its number 5.

Researcher: From the different opinion that there could be challenges.

Participant 2: Have we not done number five?

Translator: We have, now we taking about what sister Maina said, and the example she used of her sister wanting to take something to cook from her house. Do you think there could be some challenges?

Participant 2: I also agree with her,

Translator: Maybe it needs to be clarified which decisions must involve children and which one must not.

Participant 2: Children must be told that they cannot take the mother's position if she is not there.

Researcher: Ok, the last question, then we can have something to drink, we nearly done, I just want to know if you have got any suggestion Participant 1: I did not hear clearly?

Translator: What suggestions do you have?

Participant 1: we can discuss all this in our support group because we share a lot of things, but it will be hard to tell someone who is not in our support group because they will think you want to run their lives for them.

Researcher: Is there anything the other ladies want to share.

Participant 2: As a parent you need to have a manner of approach to children, children must not be afraid to approach you as their parent; you must play with your children and be approachable.

Researcher: Ok, anything to add or.

Participant 3: It will not be easy just to talk to anyone unless they share their challenges with you, but with your family you can discuss

Researcher: Thank you that comes to an end of our research, tell the ladies thanks very much to all of them, I just to ask just in closing how did you find that Doreen, the sharing .

Participant 2: for me I learnt a lot from this exercise, I thought I was the best and today's exercise proved to me that I am doing my work the way it should be. I was also encouraged just from sharing ideas with the other ladies, that doing things the old fashioned way is still relevant, I am now going to improve on what I knew already.

Translator: Ok, sister Maina

Participant 3: it was a good exercise; in a group like this it's nice because you get to learn different parenting techniques and ideas, one learns a lot from discussions and sharing with the other people, today was beneficial for me, I got to share my perceptions and experiences and I got to hear what others think and what they have experienced.

Researcher: Mm, Ok

Participant 1: I learnt a lot from this good exercise, I will keep it in mind

Researcher: Ok, thanks very much, thank for giving up your time, I know its late now in the afternoon, and I would like to ask if any of the ladies would like to take a picture with their collage, you do not have to

Participants: Yes it's fine.

Annexure J: Draft 1: Data Analysis

Elaine Venton

Research Question

Data Analysis : Initial Codes for Focus Group 1

Number of Participants = 6

QUESTION ONE : HOW DO YOU UNDERSTAND CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-
MAKING?

Initial Codes:

1. Children feel loved and part of the family
2. Makes home happy and peaceful
3. Creates a sense of belonging
4. Opens way for inter-generational communication
5. Creates a sense of togetherness
6. Creates a sense of mutual sharing
7. Involved – not separated from the family

This was probably the most difficult question and all the participants struggled to initially answer this question. The meaning of participation in decision making was explained to the participants beforehand, and they said they understood, but when it came to applying it to the collage and explaining their understanding of children's participation they did not find it easy. Interestingly, this question was answered as we went through the other questions and as the participants relaxed more. Some participants said the word 'participation' was a big word to them and at first they did not understand what it meant, but after explanation and as we went through the focus group questions they understood it more clearly.

THEME 1: FAMILY UNITY

Participation in decision-making creates a sense of belonging and togetherness in the family

Creates An opportunity for mutual sharing of feelings

Creates a sense of being involved in the family – not separated

Makes home happy and peaceful

“I said it is good to involve children in decision-making. It makes the children happy, it makes the home to be a peaceful and a happy place to live. The children feel loved and a big part of the family” (participant 2).

“It is good to involve children in decision-making. The family is together” (participant 4).

“Oh so easy. It feels easy for me to involve children in decision-making because it gives a child a sense of belonging. The child knows that I belong to this family whenever they make decisions. I am involved in those decisions – I am not separated” (participant 1).

“I also said it is good to involve children although there were some challenges in the beginning. It is not easy to get children on the same page as you but one needs to be patient with them and if you involve them they feel they are part of the family” (participant 5).

THEME 2 : OPENS WAY FOR INTER-GENERATIONAL DIALOGUE/
COMMUNICATION

Children will feel free to express their feelings to their parents

Creates a sense of sharing

“I also agree. Children will be free to tell you about their feelings, what they like and what they do not like” (participant 6).

“I also said it is good to involve children in decision making so that we can discuss what is expected from them and what is allowed from children and what is not allowed and visa versa” (Participant 3).

QUESTION 2 IN YOUR OPINION, SHOULD CHILDREN BE ALLOWED TO PARTICPATE IN DECISION-MAKING? If yes, please motivate why you say this. If no, please motivate why you say this.

Initial Codes:

1. Easy to express their feelings
2. Free to tell you what is bothering them
3. Makes you become a friend
4. You are there to listen
5. Whenever you make a decision you learn from others
6. Only way to keep peace at home
7. Important to discuss what is acceptable and not acceptable in the family
8. Children share their ideas with you
9. Children can have brilliant ideas
10. Age of the Child
11. Depends on what decisions

THEME 2 : OPENS WAY FOR INTERGENERATIONAL
COMMUNICATION

Creating a safe space for children to participate

Children share their ideas with you

Importance of adults listening to children

Children feel free to tell you what is bothering them

Importance of family rules and explaining boundaries

“Yes, because kids are always happy and it makes it easy for them to express their feelings. It is a joy to learn, they become free to tell you everything that is bothering them or making them happy” (Participant 1).

“It makes you become a friend, a child knows that whenever she talks or he talks that you are there to listen so they are free to tell you whatever, to express their feelings like I don’t like that or I am not going there or I like that” (participant 1).

“It is important because I will get a chance to discuss with them what is acceptable and what is not acceptable in the family. I will also get a chance to tell them why I am not in agreement with whatever they might want” (participant 3). “They will be able to share their own ideas” (participant 4).

THEME 3 : DON’T UNDERSTIMATE THE VIEWS OF CHILDREN

“I also said it is a good idea. Sometimes one might think that a child is still young but you would be surprised at how brilliant the child’s ideas are.

“while children should be allowed to participate as children – forcing them to behave as mini adults is neither desirable nor appropriate – they are capable of making informed and analytical contributions and should be recognized as such

(Lansdown, Promoting Children's Participation in Democratic Decision-Making 2001 : 16)

All children are capable of expressing a view and there is no age limit imposed on the exercise of the right to participate. It extends therefore to any child who has a view on matters of concern to them. Very small children and some children with disabilities may experience difficulties in articulating their views through speech but can be encouraged to do so through art, poetry, play, writing, computers or signing (Lansdown, 2)

There were certain instances where the foster parents felt children should not be involved in decision-making. This was not a direct question for the focus group, but it did flow directly from this question and I am of the view that the information and data is very valid and adds significantly to the study.

Type of Decisions

Decisions regarding money

Cultural decisions

"It depends on what type of decisions you are going to take as a family. For example in our culture there are those things we normally do like slaughter a goat for example, so there is no need to involve a kid. It is none of their business. We only involve them in decisions that they are part of" (participant 1).

QUESTION 3: ARE THERE THINGS THAT MAKE IT DIFFICULT FOR
YOU TO ALLOW CHILDREN TO PARTICIPATE IN IN DECISION-
MAKING? IF SO, WHAT ARE THESE THINGS?

(Challenges to Participation)

THEME 1: TYPES OF DECISIONS -

Cultural Decisions

- Money Decisions (ie. Foster grant)

-

THEME 2: PROTECTION VERSUS ENABLING PARTICIPATION

THEME 3: INFLUENCE OF THE MACRO SYSTEM

- School
- Peer Pressure
- Alcohol/Drugs/Inappropriate dressing
- Children's refusal to listen to advice of parents

Types of Decisions

"There are things that make it difficult for me to involve children in decisionmaking.

Sometimes a child can make a demanding statement. For example you are discussing about the month end and the child say you are not going to use my money because I am getting the foster grant. I need that money to come to me"

(participant 1).

"they demand that money" (participant 1).

“Yes, this month end I saw one mother and a daughter in town and the daughter said, I want this shirt , skirt and shoes” (participant 4).

“she wanted shoes and books and the mother said no, this is the money I have got and I have to buy groceries. The child said no, I want more. She cried and everyone was looking at the child. The mother said I do not know what do with this child as she wants the money.”

“The form we fill in at schools ask if child is getting foster grant or not. So you have to fill in that the child gets the grant. So whenever the child has an excursion and maybe you feel the excursion is not good for your child, the school will tell the child that you are getting the money and that you must come and pay. Then the child will demand. So you cannot involve the child in decision making when you are going to talk about the money” (participant 1).

“you have to invest for the future because they are still young, they need to go to their tertiary education, they demand it as it is” (participant 1).

“They (meaning the children) all know about the foster grant money”. “They are also told at school” (participant 3).

“my grandchild she always say to me tell my mother it’s the first today so I am sure she has something for me” (participant 6).

“At school they wrote asking us for R180 for excursion to Margate. Just last month they went to Gamalakhe and Gcekeni and they will be going to Margate soon. They tell them at school that we must give them money because they are getting the foster grant” (participant 3).

“I told mine they are not going to Margate” (participant 2)

“Sometimes you just have to take charge as a parent” (participant 6).

PROTECTION VERSUS ENABLING PARTICIPATION

Parents want to protect children from high risk behaviours – drugs, alcohol, mixing with the ‘wrong people’. If they do these things then they will not have a ‘bright future’.

Inappropriate Dressing

“There are some things that make it difficult to involve children in decision making. For example I will not allow them to walk up and down the streets, wearing inappropriate clothing, attracting negative attention” (participant 3)

“They will start drinking if they are dressed like this” (participant 3).

“This boy (pointing to collage) is lonely. He is alone at night away from home so it is easy for him to get bad friends and start smoking and drinking at a younger age, you see this one is still very young” (participant 4)

Children’s refusal to listen to advice of parents

“It is difficult if the child does not listen to what you tell them. Look at this picture of a flower, it shows love, it shows I love them, there must be love at home at all times” (participant 5)

“I sit down with the child and make her understand how it feels if someone does not listen to you” (participant 5)

“It hurts when children don’t listen” (participant 5)

“When children don’t listen it is confusing and challenging” (participant 1)

“Yes, it is painful. Very painful” (participant 1)

“I said he must go and get his learner’s licence he said no, I will do it my way” (participant 1)

When the child has grown up it is very difficult They will want to do what they want and visit friends as they please and want to tell me how they want to be treated. I will never

discuss with them the things I think are not good for them, like the picture of the way I will not allow them to dress” (participant 6).

“It is sometimes argued that giving children rights places them outside adult protection – that if their views are taken seriously, they will make decisions and act in ways that place them at risk. This is to misunderstand the nature of the rights embodied in the CRC. The Convention does not give children full adult rights. Rather, it gives children opportunities to express their views, they will be far better protected. Adults can only protect children if they know what is happening in their lives and only children can provide that information (Lansdown pg7)

QUESTION 4

WHEN DO YOU THINK CHILDREN SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO PARTICIPATE IN DECISION MAKING AND WHEN NOT

(To a large degree this question was already answered in question 3 regarding challenges to participation)

MAIN THEME: TYPES OF DECISIONS

- Cultural Decisions
- Money

“It is good to involve children in other decisions so that they will be free and we live a peaceful life, but sometimes when adults discuss other stuff children must go to their

bedroom and not be part of those discussions. For example: like if we are planning a family celebration or paying of lobola to another house. Children will go there before the adults and tell those people and the whole thing will be spoil. This is what they did” (participant 3).

“When they are grown up they must be allowed to participate, like when they are in their teenage years, it is fine to participate but when they are still young they must not be part of some decisions, especially family meetings with extended family members” (participant 4)

“If someone come to the house – even a neighbour to discuss something – we ask them to go and play outside. They must leave the room and leave the adults talking” (participant 5)

“In small decisions if they are asking about what they need for themselves and if we can afford what they are asking for or not, its fine, but if we are discussing big issues especially cultural stuff or family matters we do not allow them to participate” (participant 6).

“I want this. This is my money. Is challenging” (participant 1)

QUESTION 5

WHAT CHALLENGES DO YOU THINK YOU COULD FACE IF YOU ALLOW CHILDREN TO PARTICIPATE IN DECISION-MAKING?

MACRO INFLUENCES

- Loss of parental influence and authority

“wrong choices, wrong friends because once they choose wrong friends it will be difficult for me to control them. Because they take the influence from the outside”

(participant 1)

“the challenge will be when the child will have bad company and they will start drinking and going to taverns at night” (participant 4)

“I do not see any challenges because we are now one, we understand each other and because we talk about things” (participant 5).

“Children will be out of control, girls will come back pregnant at a young age and the boys will start taking drugs and alcohol” (participant 6).

“What I think is that a child who commits to a relationship with an opposite sex before they finished school, its bad. The child must finish school first. IF they rush into things they will not have a bright future I want for them. After studying the child can do what they like” (participant 2).

QUESTION 6

HAVE YOU ANY SUGGESTIONS ON HOW CHILDREN’S PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING CAN BE IMPROVED?

MAIN THEME: IMPORTANCE OF MAINTAINING FAMILY UNITY

- Building healthy inter-personal relationships
- Spending quality time together
- Honest communication
- Importance of the mother’s guidance
- Must work together as a family in order to succeed
- Participatory decision-making

“Your family’s care is in your hands. Set smart goals, organise like family outings, picnics, memory box. You sit down as a family and talk about what happened. Be there for your family, support them, socialise with your family”

(Participant 1)

“You must not sit down at home and do nothing at home” (participant 1)

“All I want for them when they are grown up is I want them to be as beautiful just like these two in the picture” (referring to her collage) (Participant 2)

“I do not have a picture but I have written here making a joint decision with them will help them to get a chance to share their views as well” (participant 4)

“If we make decisions together there will be no misunderstandings. All boundaries will be clear. I would like them to have a bright future, they can buy their own cars, a nice house, anything, and they can enjoy life” (Participant 6).

FOCUS GROUP 2

PARTICIPANTS : 3

QUESTION 1 : HOW DO YOU UNDERSTAND CHILDREN’S PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING?

Importance of Collaborative Decision Making

Open Communication – no secrets

Importance of Parental Guidance (Role Modelling)

“I think it is good to involve children in decision making because it makes it easier for you as an adult if they go and break the rules you just go and remind them of the decisions you made jointly. They will not tell you they did not know it was a mistake” (participant 1).”

“I and my children discuss everything together, we have no secrets (participant 1) “It is good to involve a child in decision making because if a child grow up with no boundaries the child will stray, a child needs to be guided into the right directions so that the child

will have a good foundation, the child will be a responsible adult and a God fearing person because of the good background” (participant 2)

“I also agree children should be involved in decision making. It is important because they will grow up to be adults and parents one day. In order for them to be responsible adults it is important that they are taught in their early life”

(participant 3)

QUESTION 2 : IN YOUR OPINION, SHOULD CHILDREN BE ALLOWED TO PARTICIPATE IN DECISION MAKING? IF YES, PLEASE MOTIVATE

WHY YOU SAY THIS. IF NO, PLEASE MOTIVATE WHY YOU SAY THIS.

Collaborative Decision Making

Importance of clear boundaries

“I said yes because children will know what is expected of them. If you include them everyone is safe, you know you have done your job. I want them to grow up to be better people” (participant 1)

Annexure K: Article Preparation Guidelines

A. Style: APA format. The entire manuscript needs to be formatted in “APA style”. The Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (6th Edition) should be used as the style guide for the preparation of manuscripts, particularly with respect to such matters as the order and naming of each of the elements of the paper, citing of references, preparation of the reference list, contents of the Author Note, and the use of headings, abbreviations, numbers, and symbols as well as the presentation of Tables and Figures. Although commonly omitted, the following components must be included in empirical papers: 1) The set up (i.e., Introduction) of the paper should review the extant literature with a clear articulation of the incremental contribution this study makes and end with clear, testable study hypotheses (even if exploratory in nature) derived from the literature; 2) APA style description of the Methods, APA style Results presentation (and data analysis strategy) that follows from the hypotheses/extant literature, Discussion, and References.

B. Abstract: 250 words. Use a structured format that includes each of these 5 headings BACKGROUND, OBJECTIVE, METHODS, RESULTS, and CONCLUSIONS. BACKGROUND: Delineate in one or two sentences the theoretical or empirical basis for the study; OBJECTIVE: Outline the goal of the study or hypothesis to be tested; METHODS: Describe the participants, important study design characteristics, and main methods used. RESULTS: Describe the main findings; and CONCLUSIONS: Make clear what the take-home message is for readers.

C. Ethics Statement: *Child and Youth Care Forum* follows the ethics of scientific publication as detailed in the Ethical principles of psychologists and code of conduct (American Psychological Association, 1992). All research must meet these ethical guidelines, including adherence to the legal requirements of the study country. Within the Methods section, authors should indicate IRB approval (or adherence to the legal requirements of the study country and that 'informed consent' has been appropriately obtained).

D. Conflict of Interest: All submissions require a declaration of interest in the methods section when potential conflict may be present in the form of grants, employment by, consultancy for, shared ownership in, or any close relationship with, an organization whose interests, financial or otherwise, may be affected by the publication of the paper. E. Access to Data: If the study includes original data, at least one author must take responsibility for the integrity of the data and the accuracy of the data analysis.

F. Design: Within the methods describe the “Design”. For all intervention papers: Papers that use an Open Trial/Uncontrolled design should conform to the Transparent Reporting of Evaluations with Nonrandomized Designs (TREND) guidelines (Information can be found at <http://www.cdc.gov/trendstatement/>). In these studies the design, by its nature, is limited in establishing the efficacy of the intervention. In addition to following the TREND guidelines, authors of non-controlled studies should include reference to longitudinal findings (or use normative comparisons, reliable change indices) to benchmark the findings reported. Papers should also reference previous studies and the size of the effect produced in the current study as compared to other previous studies using similar outcomes. In this regard Cohen’s *d* (or similar effect size metric) should be reported. Studies reporting a randomized design should conform to the Consolidated Standards of Reporting Trials (CONSORT) guidelines (information can be found at http://www.consort_statement.org/). All intervention studies should report the design and follow either the TREND or CONSORT guidelines.