

**The experiences of adult children who grew up in female-headed families**

by

WINNIE KEATLEGILE MABELANE

submitted in accordance with the requirements  
for the degree of

MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

SUPERVISOR: MR N P KGADIMA

CO-SUPERVISOR: PROF M D M MAKOFANE

JUNE 2016

## DECLARATION

I declare that the study: **The experiences of adult children who grew up in female-headed families**, is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

.....

SIGNATURE  
(Ms. Keatlegile Mabelane)

.....

DATE

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

First and foremost, I thank Almighty God for granting me the strength, wisdom, and perseverance through this rocky journey. Ebenezer!

- I am grateful to my two dedicated supervisors Professor MDM Makofane and Mr NP Kgadima for their commitment to unleashing the potential within me. Your support and thoughtful guidance have been overwhelming. Thank you for taking me by the hand on this journey and helping me explore greater heights I never thought I could reach. I will always be grateful for your selfless and undivided attention. It was a privilege and an honour to work with you.
- Thank you to Dr. Marichen van der Westhuizen for assisting me with the independent coding, and to the editor Ms Bell for editing the final research report.
- I extend my sincere gratitude to all the research participants who willingly offered their time to share their rich and unique experiences that informed this study.
- I am indebted to my colleagues at the Department of Social Work at Unisa for their valuable support. A special thank you goes to the Chair of the Department Dr MP Sesoko for her understanding when I had to take leave of absence from work numerous times to complete this research report.
- I am grateful to my partner Ntsako Maluleke and my beautiful daughter Thatego for accepting with magnanimity my absences from home and always coming home late. To my mother Lillian “Lulu” Mabelane, thank you for bearing the brunt of raising me alone. I am what I am today because of you. I love you very much. Not forgetting my two beautiful sisters Mpho and Kgaugelo Mabelane for their inspiration, love, and unwavering support throughout my life. I love you more every day. Thank you to my cousin Lucia Masalane and my brother Timothy Maimela for cheering me on throughout this journey.
- Most importantly, I am grateful to my late grandmother Elsie Senana Mabelane. I wish you were here to enjoy the fruits of your hard labour. Thank you for all the sacrifices you made for me and shaping me into the person I am today. All the achievements in my life are credited to you.

## **ABSTRACT**

Female-headed families have become a major component of society, globally and locally. South Africa has also witnessed an increase in the number of female-headed families. Children raised in female-headed families have been reported to be disadvantaged in several ways. Many are said to be performing poorly at school, having low self-esteem, experiencing early sexual activity, and displaying adverse behaviour. Hence, the views of adult children who grew up in female-headed families were explored to inform social work practice.

A qualitative, explorative, descriptive, and contextual study was undertaken with 12 participants whose ages ranged from 25 to 35 years. The goal of this study was to gain insight into the experiences of adult children who grew up in female-headed families. Data was gathered through semi-structured interviews and analysed following Tesch's (in Creswell, 2009) framework. Data was verified using Lincoln and Guba's model of trustworthiness.

The major findings highlighted first, a deep-seated need to understand reasons for being abandoned by their fathers. Second, the resources inherent within female-headed families, often overlooked, revealed the strengths that these families possess. Third, spirituality as the foundation of their resilience during difficult times dominated the participants' accounts of being raised in female-headed families. Fourth, various support structures emerged as fundamental components, requisite for the optimal functioning of female-headed families. The implications for social work and recommendations for future research are presented.

### **Key terms**

Female-headed families, adult children's experiences, single mothers, family strengths, extended families.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION .....	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	ii
ABSTRACT.....	iii
CHAPTER ONE .....	1
GENERAL ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY .....	1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Background to the study .....	1
1.3 Problem statement.....	7
1.4 Motivation for the study.....	8
1.5 Research question, primary goal, and objectives of the study .....	10
1.5.1 Research question .....	10
1.5.2 Research goal and objectives .....	11
1.6 Theoretical framework.....	12
1.7 Research Methodology .....	13
1.8 Ethical considerations .....	15
1.8.1 Voluntary informed consent .....	16
1.8.2 Anonymity and confidentiality .....	16
1.8.3 Management of information .....	17
1.8.4 Protection from harm .....	17
1.9 Clarification of key concepts .....	18
1.9.1 Adult child .....	18
1.9.2 Challenges.....	18
1.9.3 Experiences .....	19
1.9.4 Female-headed family.....	19
1.9.5 Perspectives.....	19
1.9.6 Social work .....	19
1.9.7 Social worker .....	20
1.9.8 Strengths .....	20

1.10 Structure of the report .....	21
CHAPTER TWO .....	22
APPLICATION OF THE QUALITATIVE RESEARCH PROCESS .....	22
2.1 Introduction.....	22
2.2 Research methodology.....	22
2.3 The research approach .....	22
2.4 Research design .....	24
2.4.1 Explorative design .....	25
2.4.2 Descriptive design.....	25
2.4.3 Contextual design.....	26
2.5 Population and sampling.....	26
2.5.1 Purposive sampling technique .....	27
2.5.2 Snowball sampling.....	28
2.5.3 Sample size .....	29
2.6 Preparing participants for data collection .....	29
2.7 Method used for data collection.....	31
2.8 Pilot test .....	34
2.9 Method of data analysis .....	35
2.10 Data verification.....	36
2.10.1 Credibility .....	37
2.10.2 Transferability.....	38
2.10.3 Dependability.....	38
2.10.4 Confirmability.....	39
2.11 Reflexivity.....	39
2.12 Conclusion .....	40
CHAPTER THREE .....	41
PRESENTATION OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS .....	41
3.1 Introduction.....	41
3.2 Biographical profile of the participants .....	41
3.3 Discussion on themes, sub-themes, and categories in relation to literature.....	43
3.3.1 Theme 1: The participants' descriptions of their childhood background .....	45

3.3.2 Theme 2: The participants' specific experiences related to being raised in female-headed families .....	49
3.3.2.1 Sub-theme 2.1: The role of maternal grandmothers .....	49
3.3.2.2 Sub-theme 2.2: Participants' execution of household chores .....	50
3.3.2.3 Sub-theme 2.3: Enforcement of discipline within a female-headed family.....	53
3.3.2.4 Sub-theme 2.4: Relationships with significant others .....	58
3.3.2.5 Sub-theme 2.5: Provision of basic needs within a female-headed family .....	72
3.3.2.6 Sub-theme 2.6: Absence of the father in participants' lives .....	74
3.3.2.7 Sub-theme 2.7: Involvement of the mother's male partner .....	80
3.3.2.8 Sub-theme 2.8: Resilience of the mother in a female-headed family .....	82
3.3.2.9 Sub-theme 2.9: Strengths of growing up in a female-headed family .....	84
3.3.2.10 Sub-theme 2.10: Challenges of growing up in a female-headed family .....	90
3.3.3 Theme 3: Support systems for female-headed families .....	91
3.3.3.1 Spiritual support.....	91
3.3.3.2 Community support .....	93
3.3.3.3 Extended-family support.....	95
3.3.4 Theme 4: The participants' recommendations regarding support services for female-headed families .....	98
3.3.4.1 Sub-theme 4.1: Support to children growing up in female-headed families .....	98
3.3.4.2 Sub-theme 4.2: Support to mothers heading families .....	100
3.3.4.3 Sub-theme 4.3: Inclusion of fathers whose children are growing up in female-headed families .....	102
3.3.4.4 Sub-theme 4.4: Inclusion of extended families and communities .....	103
3.3.4.5 Sub-theme 4.5: Support in dealing with animosity between the participants' paternal and maternal families .....	103
3.4 Conclusion .....	104
CHAPTER 4 .....	106
SUMMARIES, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....	106
4.1 Introduction.....	106
4.2 Summary of the previous chapters.....	106
4.3 Summaries, conclusions, and recommendations of the research study .....	107
4.3.1 Summary and conclusions based on the research process .....	107

4.3.2 Summary and conclusions based on the research findings .....	110
4.3.2.1 Theme 1: The participants' descriptions of family background .....	110
4.3.2.2 Theme 2: Specific experiences related to being raised in a female-headed family .....	110
4.3.2.3 Theme 3: Support systems of the female-headed family .....	113
4.3.2.4 Theme 4: Recommendations regarding support services to female-headed families .....	113
4.3.3 Recommendations based on the research study .....	114
4.3.3.1 Recommendations for practice .....	114
4.3.3.2 Recommendations for policy .....	115
4.3.3.3 Recommendations for education .....	116
4.3.3.4 Recommendations for further research .....	116
4.4 Conclusion .....	116
REFERENCES .....	118

#### **List of Addenda**

Addendum A: Letter requesting the individual's participation in the research project .....	140
Addendum B: Informed consent to participate in the study .....	142
Addendum C: Consent form requesting permission to publish information .....	143
Addendum D: Statements and declarations .....	144
Addendum E: Acknowledgement from Human Sciences .....	145
Addendum F: Application for ethics clearance .....	146
Addendum G: Letter from Editor .....	148



## **List of Tables**

Table 3.1: Demographic details of the participants.....	42
Table 3.2: Themes, sub-themes, and categories.....	44

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **GENERAL ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY**

#### **1.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides a detailed overview of the study on the experiences of adult children who grew up in female-headed families. The background, problem statement, and motivation for the study are provided followed by a brief outline of the research methodology, data analysis, and chapter outline.

#### **1.2 Background to the study**

Female-headed families have become a major element within society, both globally and locally (Holborn & Eddy, 2011:2). An increasing number of children are brought up in female-headed families. For instance, in the United States of America, prior to the 1960s, almost 90% of all children lived with both their biological parents until they reached adulthood, but this number has declined, following a dramatic increase in the number of female-headed families (McLanahan & Schwartz, 2002:36). Approximately 50.4% of children in the USA are growing up in female-headed families (U.S Bureau of the Census cited by Elliot, Powell & Brenton, 2015:353). In Sub-Saharan Africa, although family structures differ across race and ethnicity, there has also been a substantial increase in the number of female-headed families. In Botswana, for example, 47% of families were headed by women in 2002, with more than 60% of children growing up in these families (Akinsola & Popovich, 2002:762). In 2011, the number of children growing up in female-headed families increased to an alarming 78% (Malinga & Ntshwarang, 2011:1). South Africa has also witnessed an increase in the number of female-headed families, and the number recorded in 2009 was 31.2%, and 39.4% in 2011 (Statistics South Africa, 2009:13; 2011:6). Although these figures do not give a clear breakdown of female-headed families resulting from divorce, widowhood, or the never-married, the prevalence of these families is nevertheless sufficient evidence of this increase.

Due to the increasing number of children living in female-headed families, researchers have become immensely interested in the effects and the impact of female-headed families on child wellbeing and development (Nixon, Greene & Hogan, 2015:1046). There is plethora of literature on female-headed families, and various factors which account for the increase in female-headed families have been documented. One key reason for the formation of this family type is the escalating rate of divorce and separation in marriage (Kpoor, 2014:1960). Cohabitation, where partners consensually agree to live together and bear children outside marriage, is another explanation leading to female-headed families. Desertion is another reason, where men abandon their children because they find it difficult to fulfil their role as father or are in pursuit of a different lifestyle. The death of a father also brings into existence the female-headed family, and the mother takes over all responsibilities of raising the children. There are also women who, by choice, decide to be single mothers “in order to gain a sense of independence and efficacy” (Kpoor, 2014:1961).

There is also a significant increase in literature which investigated the effects of female-headed families on children’s wellbeing and development and the experiences of parents heading these families (Nixon *et al.*, 2015:1046); however, the much-needed voice of children who have first-hand experience being raised in female-headed families is lacking (Krampe, 2009:876). Most previous findings on female-headed families focus on negative consequences, partly because researchers were inclined to depart from the Family Deficit Perspective, which views families headed by females as pathology, labelling them as “broken or disrupted” families (Zhan & Sherraden, 2003:192; Wang, Buffalo, Bakr & Sparato, 2004:136; Uchenna, 2013:112). Hence, a plethora of literature compares female-headed families with the ideal two-parent families, and it is evident that children from female-headed families struggle on a wide range of indicators. Since all the standard indicators of the quality of life are not functioning independently of each other but are reciprocally connected (Swartz, 2010:100), children from female-headed families are likely to find it difficult to navigate successfully through all these indicators. The focus of past research was directed to economic standing, behaviour, health, academic performance, and relationships with significant others (East, Jackson & O’Brien, 2007:14).

The wellbeing of children from female-headed families is threatened by extreme levels of poverty and economic hardships inherent in these families (Zeiders, Roosa & Tein, 2011:78). Such poverty is attributed largely to the fact that the mother has to shoulder the responsibility of providing for the family alone (Bavier, 2007:59; Craigie, 2012:259). In many instances, these mothers have limited education and experience and therefore find themselves working in low-paying jobs which leave them on the verge of poverty (DeFina, 2008:156). Schuck (2005:544) detected a link between poverty and the maltreatment of children, particularly those from female-headed families who are thought to be at greater risk of abuse and neglect from various sources, such as neighbours and relatives (Schuck, 2005:544). However, Madhavan and Roy (2012:811) contends that the assumption that non-resident biological fathers do not support their children is flawed. The absence of biological fathers does not necessarily equate to absence of support because many non-resident biological fathers are actively involved in their children' lives. Among African communities, mothering is shared by grandmothers, aunts, and caregivers (Everet, Marks & Clarke-Mitchell, 2016:336). On the other hand, fatherhood may be fulfilled by social fathers such as grandfathers, uncles, teachers, and pastors (Makofane, 2015:24). In the face of adversity, single mothers have continued to demonstrate a capacity for resilience (Everet *et al.*, 2016:337).

There are also reports of an array of problematic behaviour among children from female-headed families (Martin, Emery & Peris in Coleman & Ganong, 2004:283), and a higher rate of early sexual activities among female children from these families (Ellis, Bates, Dodge, Ferguson, Horwood, Pettit & Woodward, 2003:815). There is a close association between boys and girls growing up in female-headed families and risky sexual behaviour. Studies report that compared to children born in two-parent families, children in female-headed families tend to indulge in promiscuous relationships, which have serious implications such as unplanned pregnancy and contracting sexually transmitted infections (Akinsola & Popovich, 2002:762; Simons, Burt & Tambling, 2013:460). Male children are reported to be more likely to engage in delinquency and violent behaviour, and experience difficulty in finding and keeping a job as a result of the lack of a father figure in their lives (McLanahan & Schwartz, 2002:37; Coleman in

Richardson, 2009:1042). Although Zeiders *et al.* (2011:78) attribute disruptive behaviour to a lack of economic resources in some families, while other authors conversely associate these negative outcomes with the mother's lack of education. However, some authors contend that educated mothers are better equipped to offer skills and advice on how to cope with life events, and boost their children's sense of control (Booth, Scott & King, 2010:590).

Female-headed children are also disadvantaged when it comes to their health (DeBell, 2008:428). In a study conducted by Akinsola and Popovich (2002:768) on the quality of life in female-headed families, malnutrition emerged as a common denominator in children's health problems. The study indicated that children were exposed to diets that lacked protein and other vital nutrients necessary for optimal growth and development. The mother's limited economic resources are primarily blamed for the deficiency in nutrients, leading to malnourished children. Although female-headed families were reported to have two to three meals a day, meat, fruit and vegetables were rarely included in their diets (Akinsola & Popovich, 2002:768). Furthermore, willingness to seek health care services was found to be severely hampered by a lack of transportation, despite the evolving primary health care systems.

Children from female-headed families have also been associated with poor academic achievements. They are more likely to drop out of school, be expelled or suspended and to repeat a grade (Balcom, 2002:283; DeBell, 2008:428; Mudyan & Lee, 2010:445; Harcourt, Adler-Baeder, Erath & Pettit, 2013:2). Such outcomes are accredited to three aspects. The first is that children feel disheartened and do not commit fully to their studies due to the lack of educational resources as their mothers usually cannot afford to provide their children with all the materials they need to excel at school (DeBell, 2008:428). The second is the mothers' lack of enough time to fully involve themselves in their children's school activities; hence, they struggle to monitor their children's attendance and commitment to learning (Mudyan & Lee, 2010:445). The third is the absence of the biological father that seems to contribute to maladjustment during the child's preschool and early school years (Jackson, Preston & Franke, 2010:50). There is

compelling evidence that the presence of the biological father in the child's life contributes positively towards the child's academic achievement (Makofane, 2015:30).

Sibling relationships are regarded as the longest standing relationships in a person's life (Voorpostel, Van der Lipper & Flap, 2012:330). The study by Deater-Deckard, Dunn and Lussier (2002:585) suggests that siblings from female-headed families show a higher degree of rivalry and conflict than siblings from two-parent families, and this is attributed to three traits which are normally found in female-headed families. The first is based on the notion that single mothers experience multiple partner changes, and suggests that partner transition is a predictor of family relationship quality. A second explanation is that single mothers go through intense levels of stress and have limited resources, factors which are known to contribute to poor family relationships. A third possible explanation is that the lack of another resident adult to help with childrearing and other tasks is a contributing factor.

Parenting has a significant impact on children's development. The parenting practices adopted by parents affect children's feelings and behaviour (Tramonte, Gauthier & Willms, 2013:2). Families in which two parents are present are believed to provide a more stable environment for their children compared to female-headed homes because two parents assist each other in rearing their children. Moreover, shared parenting rather than single parenting may increase the likelihood of positive developmental outcomes in children (Simons *et al.*, 2013:468). Single, female parents in particular have been found to be less authoritative, providing minimal discipline, monitoring, and supervision (Kleist, 2001:374). Effective parenting is frequently compromised because of the length of time single mothers spend working in order to support their children, and this results in constant fatigue (Roman, 2011:578). However, authoritative parenting characterised by responsiveness was mostly deemed conducive to positive behavioural outcomes (McKinney, Morse & Pastuszak, 2016:1205).

However, other researchers have reported contradictory results on the effects that single-parent households have on children. Pike (2003:196), for instance, conducted a study on children from female-headed families and children from two-parent families to measure their competence and self-esteem. It was evident from the study that children

from female-headed families perform as competently as their two-parent peers, and in some instances, outperform their counterparts. Although children who are raised in female-headed families are vulnerable, some authors contend that not all children from these households are prone to low-educational grades (Zhan & Sherraden, 2003:192). Similarly, Wang *et al.* (2004:145) rigorously challenge the hypothesis of the “pathology of matriarchy” in studying the relationship between female-headed families and educational achievement, and held that female-headed families do not have any effect on educational achievement. Some authors (Najman, Behrens, Anderson, O’Callaghan & Williams cited by East *et al.*, 2007:15) are also of the view that children do not need both parents for psychological wellbeing and positive outcomes. Furthermore, children from female-headed families whose parents remained single were less likely to present with behavioural problems as they experienced less parental conflict than children from two-parent families.

Snyder and McLaughlin (2004:131) dispute the view that female-headed families lack social and economic support. They contend that children from female-headed families often spend periods of time living with other families, usually the parental home of the mother. This family of origin serves to provide social and economic support. Grandparents are regarded as the “heroic figures” of the female-headed families as they have been seen to improve the family’s financial resources in terms of their assistance in the upkeep of the family (Sun & Li, 2014:1443). Grandparents have also increased the levels of social and parenting resources as they assist in the physical care of children (Sun & Li, 2014:1443). Additionally, children in female-headed families, particularly boys, rely on their uncles who play the role of father figure in their lives (Richardson, 2009:1042). The uncle’s role has been seen as a valuable strategy in preventing delinquency and violent behaviour in the lives of young males.

The study conducted by Golombok and Badger (2009:154) on children raised in female-headed families, highlighted that single mothers often have an intense level of emotional involvement with their children and maintained a stricter role within the home. In addition, Nixon, Greene and Hogan’s (2012:16) study show how single mothers and

children negotiate their relationships; how they share close and exclusive relationships; and their ability to maintain a clear distinction between the parent-child roles.

This study aims to explore the experiences of adult children who grew up in female-headed families in order to gain insight of their life world.

### **1.3 Problem statement**

The number of female-headed families has grown rapidly over past decades, and researchers have elucidated that growing up in a female-headed family often leads to unfavourable outcomes (McLanahan & Schwartz, 2002:37; Ellis *et al.*, 2003:815; East *et al.*, 2007:14; Mudyan & Lee, 2010:445; Pougnet, Serbin, Stack, Ledingham & Schwartzman, 2012:552; Harcourt *et al.*, 2013:2). Conversely, other researchers assert that there is no perceived adverse relationship between female-headed families and negative outcomes, as reported by some research (Pike, 2003:196; Wang *et al.*, 2004:137).

Other researchers concede that female-headed families may have deleterious effects on children, but categorically state that such outcomes are caused by risk factors such as poverty and the lack of social support, and not by the female-headed family structure *per se* (MacCallum & Golombok, 2004:1416). In essence, research has emerged with conflicting reports on the effects of female-headed families on children's wellbeing and development. Much attention has been paid to the negative outcomes usually associated with living in female-headed families, but the experience of growing up in a female-headed family from the perspective of the adult child has not been thoroughly explored (Nixon *et al.*, 2015:1046). Given the prevalence of female-headed families, it is crucial for social workers to understand the needs, challenges, and strengths of adult children from female-headed families in order to provide services and assistance that will improve their social and psychological wellbeing (Walsh, 2012:3).

The problem statement for this study reads as follows: Although female-headed families have been studied in-depth, the extensive body of literature which had investigated the effects of female-headed families on children's wellbeing has not paid attention to the children's view of being raised in female-headed families (Krampe, 2009:876);



therefore, information on the experiences of adult children on the challenges and strengths of growing up in female-headed families is lacking.

#### **1.4 Motivation for the study**

There are two significant issues that piqued the researcher's interest in this area. First, as a social worker providing social work services to vulnerable children, the researcher has often had the experience of working with groups of children raised by single mothers. They face multiple problems such as delinquent behaviour, early sexual activities, and poor performance at school. The primary aim of consulting with these children was to offer them support in order to improve familial relations at home. Understanding the challenges and strengths of these children from their perspective holds the promise for social workers to improve support services to them and may also serve as a baseline for future policies which will inform effective intervention strategies (Walsh, 2012:3).

Second, the motivation to pursue this study was also shaped by the deficiency in the body of literature relating to the experiences of adult children, with special reference to the challenges and strengths of growing up in female-headed families. There is an extensive body of literature which investigated the effects of female-headed families on children's wellbeing and development, and the experiences of parents heading these families; however, the much-needed voice of children who have first-hand experience of being raised in female-headed families is lacking (Krampe, 2009:876).

Moreover, there is lack of a qualitatively gained and locally contextualised understanding of the perspectives of adult children on the challenges and strengths of growing up in female-headed families; it is therefore important that qualitative research be conducted within the social work domain. The researcher engaged in a search for literature relating to the topic under study. The university librarian, Ms Erasmus, was also consulted and the following 14 relevant articles matched the study topic: *Being a good mom: low-income, black single mothers negotiate intensive mothering*, by Elliot *et al.* (2015); *The impact of state minimum wages on child poverty in female-headed families*, by DeFina (2008); *Children raised in mother-headed families from infancy: a*

*follow-up of children of lesbian and single heterosexual mothers, at early adulthood*, by Golombok and Badger (2009); *Resiliency in South African and Belgian single-parent families*, by Greef and Aspeling (2007); *Maternal parenting in single- and two-parent families in South Africa from a child's perspective*, by Roman (2011); *Parenting Among Low-Income, African-American Single Mothers with Preschool-Age Children: Patterns, Predictors and Developmental Correlates*, by McGroder, (2000); *The influence of female-headed families on Black achievement*, by Mudyan and Lee (2010); *It's what's normal for me: Children's experiences of growing up in a continuously single-parent household*, by Nixon et al. (2015); *The adjustment of Australian children growing up in single-parent families as measured by their competence and self-esteem*, by Pike (2003); *Female-headed families and poverty in rural America*, by Snyder and McLaughlin (2004); *Single Parenting, Psychological Well-being and Academic Performance of Adolescents in Lagos, Nigeria*, by Uchenna (2013); *The effect of female-headed families on education attainment: a comparative analysis of white and Black respondents*, by Wang, Buffalo, Bakr and Sparato (2004); *Negotiating Relationships in Single-Mother Families: Perspectives of Children and Mothers*, by Nixon et al. (2012); *The Quality of Life of Families of Female-Headed Families in Botswana: A Secondary Analysis of Case studies*, by Akinsola and Popovich (2002).

Of the total number of articles searched, only four were conducted through a qualitative approach; the remainder used a quantitative approach. Of the four qualitative articles, only two investigated the attributes of children within their family structures, and all the researched children were from divorced families. Two journal articles published locally are based on: *Resiliency in South African and Belgian single parent families*, by Greef and Aspeling (2007); and *Maternal parenting in single and two parent families in South Africa from a child's perspective*, by Roman (2011). Both these articles focused on single-parent families resulting from divorce, and none paid attention to the perspectives of adult children on the challenges and strengths of growing up in female-headed families. Therefore, the dearth of locally conducted research on the topic warrants further investigation.

The rationale for the research will be to explore the experiences of adult children on the challenges and strengths of growing up in female-headed families. The aim is to understand the children's experiences as they reveal valuable aspects of being raised in female-headed families. The study hopes to gain a better understanding of the experience of children growing up in female-headed families which would shed light on the entire social work profession in terms of providing effective support. Understanding the experiences of adult children in the context of growing up in female-headed families will assist social workers to offer appropriate support services, tailored to the needs of children growing up in these families, and also to minimise any negative events which might be anticipated.

### **1.5 Research question, primary goal, and objectives of the study**

The following section focuses on the research question, primary goal, and objectives of the study.

#### **1.5.1 Research question**

Qualitative inquiry strives to ask questions and move away from formulating hypotheses, and undertakes to confirm them (Mack, Woodson, MacQueen, Guest & Namey, 2005:3). A research question is a way of expressing the researcher's interest in the phenomenon under study (Sharam, 2002:11). David and Sutton (2011:12) refer to the research question as the "guiding star" that helps the researcher navigate through the research process. Furthermore, a well-formulated research question enables the researcher to keep following that guiding star, even during the difficult times, and to avoid unnecessary modifications during the research process. According to O'Brien and DeSisto (2013:83), a well-formulated question must be relevant, feasible, focused, and ethical but most importantly, it must be researchable.

To measure the researchability of a research question is to determine whether the question is clear within an implied approach, and includes variables of interests within the specific population (O'Brien & DeSisto, 2013:83). A researchable question must, as Sandberg and Alvesson (2011:25) would argue "suggest the type of study that would best answer the question." This study will not search for an objective truth, but will

rather, through a research question, seek to understand the lives of adult children as they give accounts of their experiences growing up in female-headed families.

As the study was guided by a research question, it was important to prepare a grand tour question which would help focus the study and provide guidance to the researcher how to conduct the research (Orme & Shemmings, 2010:69). This question sheds light on the focal point, paves the way for investigation in the study, and provides focus for data collection (Maxwell, 2013:229). Therefore, the research question served to explore and find answers to the phenomenon of concern to the researcher. Furthermore, the research question helped narrow the focus of the particular phenomenon in a clear and appropriate manner.

The research question for this study was formulated as follows:

- **What are the experiences of adult children who grew up in female-headed families?**

The section below provides the goal and objectives of the study.

### **1.5.2 Research goal and objectives**

A research question exerts influence on the aim or goal and objectives of the study. The research goal gives a broad indication of what the researcher wishes to achieve and to determine the type of study to be conducted (Klopper, 2008:66). Thomas and Hodges (2010:38) refer to a research goal as the “overarching purpose of the research project which set the stage for the objectives of the study.” Delgado (2006:78) emphasises that it is imperative to state a well-thought-out goal as it is this goal that keeps the project alive and feasible to achieve to the end. It is the research question that inspires the goal of the study. The goal expresses the primary focus and provides a clear destination of where the study aspires to go. The goal of this study is to gain insight into the experiences of adult children who grew up in female-headed families.

The objectives are seen as the steps taken to accomplish the goal of the study and state what the purpose the collection of data will achieve (Gilbert, 2008:53). They provide clear and realistic ways to realise the goal of the study (Kirby, Greaves & Reid,

2006:125). Additionally, objectives state the specific outcomes which are measurable and attainable that the researcher expects to accomplish within a given timeframe (Gilbert, 2008:53). Thus, the research objectives advocate answers to the “how” part of the research goal, and help the researcher to manoeuvre through the research process. The research objective of this study was:

- **To explore and describe the experiences of adult children who grew up in female-headed families**

The overall research objective was divided into the following task objectives:

- To obtain a sample of adult children (between ages 25 and -35) who were born and raised in female-headed families, living in the City of Tshwane.
- To conduct semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with a sample of adult children from female-headed families.
- To sift, sort, and analyse data according to the steps of qualitative data analysis proposed by Tesch (in Creswell, 2009:186) in order to interpret data.
- To describe the perspectives of adult children on the challenges and strengths of growing up in female-headed families.
- To interpret and conduct literature control in order to verify the findings.
- To draw conclusions and make recommendations on the findings of the experiences of adult children who grew up in female-headed families.

## **1.6 Theoretical framework**

Social work has as its primary goal to help people in need and address social problems, placing strong emphasis on challenging social and economic injustice (Roff, 2012:202). Social work practice encompasses an approach that emphasises the strengths and resources of people and their environment in realising its goal to help address social and economic needs and injustice (Guo & Tsui, 2010:234). The strengths perspective discourages the use of a deficit-based approach that assigns disempowering labels to individuals, categorising them in terms of pathology (Saleebey cited by Raffaelli &

Wiley, 2012:349). Therefore, this approach turns the focus from personal defects, deficits, and disease to the discovery of strengths and the identification of risk and protective factors. Inherent in the strengths perspective are various elements that can be applied to families. The family strengths perspective aims to identify factors that contribute to family wellbeing across diverse cultural settings (Raffaelli & Wiley, 2012:350). Families are defined as unique; possessing traits, talents, and resources that translate into strengths within the family.

According to the strengths perspective, strengths render families resilient in periods of adversity; therefore, social workers must cultivate and enhance the strengths of their clients (Smith, 2006:16). Furthermore, strengths perspective helps social workers learn a new language of strengths and positive human qualities that are often unrecognised, unnamed, and unacknowledged in the helping process (Guo & Tsui, 2010:235). The assessment of female-headed families from a strengths perspective will offer family members an opportunity to discover inner strength and enhance their potential and abilities to recover from adversity. The notion of traditional two-parent families has resulted in female-headed families being labelled as pathological, thus undermining the strengths inherent within them. The belief that female-headed families is pathology to society is attributed to the fact that previous research conducted on these families departed from the pathological view. Images of teenage pregnancy, matriarchal households, absent fathers, identity crises, and poverty have all combined to construct female-headed families as damaged and dysfunctional. It is on this basis that the strengths perspective was considered appropriate for this study as this perspective transforms the professional relationship of social workers and their clients from an unequal dyad to an equal, collaborative partnership for problem solving.

## **1.7 Research Methodology**

This study followed a qualitative research approach. Qualitative research emanates from the philosophical framework of the postmodern approach (Kirby *et al.*, 2006:16). The postmodern approach prefers multiple realities, than the positivist approach, which only favours an objective reality and adopts the methods of the natural sciences (Nicholls, 2009:529). Merriam (2002:4) asserts that an attempt to appreciate meaning

as socially constructed by the individuals through interaction with their ever-changing environment lies at the heart of understanding qualitative research. Merriam (2002:4) also posits that there are multiple constructs of meaning which change over time. Rather than attempting to validate claims of the experiences and meanings of the research participants, qualitative researchers explore ways of enhancing the understanding of a phenomenon as described by the participants (Carter & Little, 2007:1319). Qualitative research is concerned with studying things or people in their natural environment rather than contriving the setting to produce results (Hayhow & Steward, 2006:476).

Qualitative research is further described by Litchman (2010:5) as a way of knowing in which the researchers collect and interpret information gained from the research participants, using their eyes and ears. Qualitative researchers study phenomena as they appear, making sense of the meaning people ascribe to their social behaviour. Therefore, the perspectives of the research participants were the most important and the researcher aimed to understand the phenomenon under study from this standpoint. Further, the accounts derived from the participants in qualitative research provided unique and valid versions on their own terms.

It is also Yin's (2011:7) emphasis that qualitative research studies the meaning of people's lives under real world situations and represents the views and perspectives of the participants in the study. This definition encompasses the contextual conditions in which the participants find themselves, and facilitates insight into existing or emerging concepts, striving to use multiple sources rather than relying on a single source of data.

Qualitative research is suitable when an in-depth understanding of a particular phenomenon is limited and the researcher needs to explore the phenomenon through obtaining participants' accounts of that particular phenomenon (Rasmussen, Østergaard & Beckmann, 2006:93; Royse, 2008:270; Nicholls, 2009:528). The researcher concluded that the qualitative approach is most appropriate for this study as there is limited understanding of the experiences of adult children reared in female-headed families (Nixon *et al.*, 2015:1046). Previous research leaned towards treating female-headed families as monolithic, not realising the differences inherent in these families

and thus failing to differentiate between female-headed families due to death, divorce, childbearing outside marriage, or other causes (East *et al.*, 2006:285). As a result, previous research focused on children from divorced female-headed families, and applied their findings to children of never-married female-headed families.

The researcher interacted with the participants in their natural setting, interpreted their words and observations, and identified themes from the collected data. This enabled her to portray a picture of the phenomenon under studied, and to report on the participants' multiple perspectives.

A more comprehensive presentation on the application of the research methodology, namely the qualitative approach, research designs, method of data collection, analysis, and verification of data is provided in Chapter Three.

### **1.8 Ethical considerations**

This section presents the ethical considerations observed throughout the study. Reference is made to informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, management of information, and the precautions taken to protect participants from harm.

Inasmuch as the research needs to be validated for trustworthiness, it is also imperative in the whole research process to consider the human dignity of the people participating in the study (Gilbert, 2008:146). Qualitative researchers are expected to carefully look into the ethical aspects of any research project that they undertake. Ethics are the principles which guide the conduct of social research (Ramcharan & Cutcliffe, 2001:359). Good ethical research is based on the principle of discovering knowledge with the participants rather than on the subjects (Curtis & Curtis, 2011:16). David and Sutton (2011:30) suggest that ethics are principles which guide the researcher to protect participants from possible harm and to preserve their rights. Gibson, Benson and Brand (2012:19) warn that even a relatively minor issue such as lengthy and intensive interviewing may cause harm and distress to the participants, and the researcher needs to be mindful of both the timing and the manner in which the relationship with the participant is terminated.



In this study, the researcher first submitted a research proposal to the UNISA Departmental Research and Ethics Committee for review. The researcher undertook to scrupulously follow ethical practices in the proposal and, based on this undertaking, the committee granted approval to conduct the research (cf Addendum F). It was expected of the researcher to demonstrate respect for the human dignity of the participants. The following ethical practices were observed:

### **1.8.1 Voluntary informed consent**

Informed consent is a “procedure used to safeguard the rights of the participants to know that research is being conducted and to approve their participation” (Homan in Franklin, Rowland, Fox & Nicolson, 2012:1731). Sin (2005:279) also takes the view that research should be based on freely given informed consent by the research participants. They should be provided with enough information as to what the study involves and the information required from them, the potential risks as well as the benefits of their participation to the study project. Informed consent is therefore based on the notion that the participants of the research should be allowed to agree or refuse to participate in the light of comprehensive information concerning the nature and the purpose of the study. During the recruitment stage, the researcher explained to the participants that they have a right to accept or refuse participation in the study. Participants were also provided with enough information on the kind of questions they would be asked and their right to withdraw or renegotiate consent at any point so that they could make an informed decision to participate voluntarily in the study. The researcher further provided a standardised form which required them to formally agree in writing that they have decided to take part of their own free will (Addendum B).

### **1.8.2 Anonymity and confidentiality**

Confidentiality refers to information that has been communicated in trust and confidence, explaining that disclosure could result in prejudice (Giordano, O'Reilly, Taylor & Dogra, 2007:264). In the view of Goredema-Braid (2010:51), confidentiality means assuring and keeping the promise that specific details pertaining to what the participant has divulged will not be passed on to others, whereas anonymity refers to

the protection of specific identities of individuals involved in the research process. Anonymity is seen as a mechanism through which confidentiality is maintained. However, an integral element of the current study is sharing the findings with the relevant professionals to shed light on the experiences of female-headed families to enable them to provide effective support services. A general principle underlying confidentiality in this study is that the data generated was used exclusively for the purposes for which the participants gave consent as the researcher needed to report on and publish the findings. Furthermore, the researcher disclosed the findings without divulging any specific details relating to the individuals who took part in the research.

### **1.8.3 Management of information**

Confidentiality has implications for the management of information. The researcher needs to be vigilant when disclosing research results to ensure that people cannot be identified from the findings (Engel & Schutt, 2009:64). It is therefore critical to alter the participants' real names by creating special identity codes such as pseudonyms or case numbers when reporting the findings (Berg, 2009:90). To further ensure anonymity and confidentiality, the researcher ensured that data collected would be stored separately from any identifying details pertaining to the participants, and pseudonyms were used to protect their identities. The audiotapes and transcripts were destroyed at the completion of the study (Walliman, 2011:260).

### **1.8.4 Protection from harm**

The research process may evoke psychological distress in the participant, and it is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that the participant receives the necessary emotional assistance (Tamin, 2013:3). David and Sutton (2011:49) point out that the participants should be observed closely in order to recognise any distress they may experience as a result of participating in the study, and they advise that in studies dealing with sensitive issues which have the potential to engender distress, debriefing be provided for the participants. Debriefing is described as a component of stress management and a supportive measure for those involved in a perceived traumatic event (McCormack, Joseph & Hagger, 2009:115). The debriefing process attempts to

meet the individual's need to understand the emotional effects of the traumatic event (Stallard & Salter, 2003:446). The participants were afforded an opportunity to control the depth of information they intended to impart, and to decide to what extent they were prepared to share with the researcher. During the recruitment phase the participants were assured that they would be allowed to avoid issues which could cause discomfort and to only share information with which they felt comfortable. The researcher was willing and prepared to refer participants for debriefing should the interviews evoke overwhelming emotions that could cause psychological distress; however, none of the participants interviewed showed an interest in being debriefed.

## **1.9 Clarification of key concepts**

In this section, the researcher defined and clarified key concepts fundamental to the study. For the purpose and in the context of this study, the following definitions and meanings were used:

### **1.9.1 Adult child**

An adult child is an individual who has passed through the adolescent stage and is, according to Erikson's developmental stages, in a *love vs. intimacy* stage, and has the capacity to establish in-depth relationships with others (Parrish, 2010:69). Although a person who is 25 years of age or older may still be regarded as a child by his or her parents (Reczek, Liu & Umberson, 2010:1205), in this study an adult child refers to an individual between ages 25 and 35 who grew up in a female-headed family.

### **1.9.2 Challenges**

Challenges are factors that threaten the wellbeing of family life in the face of adversity and put the lives of the family members at risk (Sloth-Nielsen, 2004:2). They are defined as barriers to healthy relationships and communication patterns, and strain the family's capacity to function optimally (Xie, Xia & Zhou, 2004:207).

### **1.9.3 Experiences**

An experience is defined as the “sum of knowledge or skills gained in participating in an activity” (Sullivan, 2009:193). Parrish (2010:144) describes experiences as individuals’ perspectives on events and their meanings. For the purpose of this study, an experience denotes knowledge of the event gained through participation or exposure which includes feelings, attitudes, behaviour, perceptions, and needs (Grobler, Schenk & Mbedzi, 2013:48).

### **1.9.4 Female-headed family**

A female-headed family consists of a woman and her biological children, sleeping under the same roof and sharing domestic activities, with the woman as the decision-maker and sole provider of the family (McCarthy & Edwards, 2011:115). Rajaram (2009:2) describes a female-headed family as one which consists of a single, unmarried mother who lives with her children, with the woman as the breadwinner and head of the family. For this study, a female-headed family is defined as a family where a never-married mother lives with her dependent children, either alone or in a larger household, and is responsible for the rearing of her children.

### **1.9.5 Perspectives**

Perspectives refer to the representation of individuals’ thoughts, feelings, attitudes, beliefs, preferences, and evaluations (Epley & Waytz, 2009:1229). According to Bandura (2006:7), a perspective refers to a person’s evaluation of information inputs in order to create a meaningful picture of the world. In the context of this study, perspectives refer to adult children’s views and interpretation of their experiences of growing up in female-headed families.

### **1.9.6 Social work**

The National Association of Social Workers, according to Baker (cited by Zastrow, 2010:3), describe Social Work as “...the professional activity of helping individuals, groups, or communities to enhance or restore their capacity for social functioning and to create societal conditions favourable to their goals...[its] practice consists of the

professional application of social work values, principles, and techniques to one or more of the following ends: helping people obtain tangible services; providing counselling and psychotherapy for individuals, families and groups; helping communities or groups to provide or improve social and health services; and participating in relevant legislative processes. The practice of social work requires knowledge of human development and behaviour, of social, economic, and cultural institutions; and the interaction of all these factors.”

International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW, 2012) defines social work as follows: “The Social Work profession promotes social change, problem solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance wellbeing. Utilising theories of human behaviour and social systems, social work intervenes at the points where people interact with their environments. Principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work.”

### **1.9.7 Social worker**

A social worker is a person registered under Section 17 of the Social Service Professions Act No.110 of 1978, as amended. A social worker is a professional person who helps others to resolve problems and obtain resources, provides support during crises and facilitates social responses to needs (DuBois & Miley, 2011:3). For the purpose of this study, a social worker is defined as a registered professional person who renders social work services in an effort to help individuals, families, and communities to resolve problems and access required resources in order to achieve optimal functioning.

### **1.9.8 Strengths**

Strengths are factors that contribute to the wellbeing of family life across different events in the family. Xie *et al.*, (2004:204) define strengths as “those traits which facilitate the ability of the family to meet needs of its members and the demands made upon it by systems outside the family unit.” Parrish (2010:24) contends that strengths encompass relationship patterns, interpersonal skills and competencies as well as social and psychological characteristics which contribute to a healthy family identity.

Furthermore, these strengths may be embedded in the family's beliefs, cultural and ethnic heritage, or socioeconomic background.

### **1.10 Structure of the report**

The research report is divided into the following chapters:

#### **Chapter One: General orientation of the study**

This chapter provides an introduction and general orientation to the research report with specific focus on the following: introduction and problem formulation, problem statement, rationale for the study, research question, goal and objectives, research approach and design, ethical considerations, clarification of key concepts, and the content plan of the research report.

#### **Chapter Two: The application of the qualitative research process**

This chapter includes a presentation of the researcher's application of the qualitative research process.

#### **Chapter Three: Presentation and discussion of the findings**

In this chapter the research findings are presented and subjected to literature control.

#### **Chapter Four: Summary, conclusions, and recommendations**

The chapter provides a summary of the research report with an outline of the overall conclusions and recommendations.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **APPLICATION OF THE QUALITATIVE RESEARCH PROCESS**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides a detailed description of how the qualitative research process was applied in order to facilitate an understanding of the experiences of adult children who grew up in female-headed families. The focus is on the research approach and design, population and sampling, preparing participants for data collection, data collection, pilot test, data analysis, and data verification.

#### **2.2 Research methodology**

Methodology refers to a general approach to studying research topics which includes the analysis of methods, rules, and postulates used by specific disciplines (Payne & Turner, 2008:336). According to Carter and Little (2007:1317), methodology encompasses the theory and analysis of the assumptions, principles, and procedures in a particular approach to inquiry. Methodology denotes the description and explanation of methods and how research should proceed. It thus provides justification for the methods of a research project, and guides the research process to ensure that appropriate ways and means are followed.

#### **2.3 The research approach**

This study was based on a qualitative research approach. Qualitative research emanates from the philosophical framework of the postmodern approach (Kirby *et al.*, 2006:16). The postmodern approach focuses on the multiple realities of the social sciences as opposed to the positivist approach which favours an objective reality, and which adopts the methods relevant to the natural sciences (Nicholls, 2009:529). Merriam (2002:4) asserts that an attempt to appreciate meaning, as socially constructed by the individuals through interaction with their ever-changing environment, lies at the heart of understanding qualitative research. Merriam (2002:4) also posits that there are multiple constructs of meaning which change over time. Rather than attempting to validate claims of the experiences and meanings of the research participants, qualitative

researchers explore ways of enhancing their understanding of a phenomenon as described by the participants (Carter & Little, 2007:1319). Qualitative research is concerned with studying things or people in their natural environment rather than contriving the setting to produce results (Hayhow & Steward, 2006:476).

Qualitative research is further described as a way of knowing through which researchers collect and interpret information gained from the research participants, using their eyes and ears (Litchman, 2010:5). Qualitative researchers study phenomena as they emerge, and strive to make sense of the meaning people ascribe to their social behaviour. Therefore, the researcher's decision to embark upon a study which seeks to gain insight into the perspectives of the research participants was deemed justified. Furthermore, qualitative research facilitated the identification and selection of participants who were able to impart rich information.

The qualitative research undertaken was characterised by the following features, as described by Creswell (2009:175):

- Qualitative research is conducted in a natural setting where the participants experience the phenomena at hand. The researcher interviewed the participants in their natural context.
- The researcher is the key instrument in qualitative research. The researcher is not neutral, but is actively involved throughout the research process.
- Qualitative researchers utilise multiple sources of data and are not dependent on an exclusive or single data source.
- When analysing data, qualitative researchers engage in an inductive process, working back and forth to ensure that the emerging themes are collective of the participants' accounts. The researcher interacts with the participants, builds patterns, categories and themes, and identifies themes, subthemes, and categories derived from the data (Creswell, 2013:45). This is followed by a detailed research report that provides an understanding of the experiences of adult children who grew up in female-headed families.



- Qualitative research is more concerned with the meaning the participants attach to the phenomenon under study. In creating an interview guide, researchers formulate questions that allow them to explore the phenomena under study with the participants (Nicholls, 2009:640). The details of the interview guide depend on the topics and issues underlying the research study (Rubin & Babbie, 2010:104).
- The qualitative research process is flexible, and an appropriate design is employed to accommodate and reflect the ever-changing world of individuals.
- Qualitative research attempts to gain a comprehensive picture of the phenomenon under study.

## **2.4 Research design**

A research design is a work plan that the researcher uses with rigour to ensure that the research question is answered as unambiguously as possible (Orme & Shemmings, 2010:82). Furthermore, it provides a detailed outline of how the research will be conducted, how data is to be collected, what instruments are to be employed and how they will be utilised, and the means to be applied for analysing data.

According to Bhattacharjee (2012:22), a research design refers to the practical way in which the study will take place in an attempt to produce data that will satisfactorily answer the research question. However, Maxwell (2005:215) strongly contends that qualitative research requires a broader and less restrictive design that will allow the possibility of revising the work plan, if necessary. The research design therefore allows for tailoring the study to conform to unanticipated changes which may occur (Creswell, 2009:175). In essence, a research design determines how the participants will be chosen, the time and place where the research will be undertaken, how data will be analysed and disseminated, and whether it will allow for modification. The research design employed in this study was adopted based on the assumption that although flexible, it could be adapted during the research process in a way that would best answer the research question. In order to develop a deep understanding of the perspectives of adult children relating to the challenges and strengths of female-headed

families, an explorative, descriptive, and contextual research design was deemed appropriate.

#### **2.4.1 Explorative design**

Explorative design is considered appropriate in an area where little is known about the phenomenon to be studied (Bhattacharjee, 2012:6). It is set to explore any phenomenon which is relatively unknown, and creates a process of building knowledge (Zainal, 2007:3). Rubin and Babbie (2005:123) state that exploratory research is conducted to provide a foundational familiarity with a subject when a topic is relatively new and unstudied. The essence of explorative research design was comprehensively captured in the following quote (O'Leary, 2005:147): "In order to solve problems, you need to understand them. Without knowing prevalence...it is impossible to argue the need for or target solutions. Without understanding the cause...you can't work on prevention. Without understanding effects...you can't work on remediation. Without understanding who's at risk you won't know who to help. Put simply, you need to understand problems before you can deal with them."

Although there is sufficient knowledge about female-headed families and the negative effects associated with children growing up in these environments (McLanahan & Schwartz, 2002:37; Ellis *et al.*, 2003:815; East *et al.*, 2007:14; Mudyan & Lee, 2010:445; Pougnet *et al.*, 2012:552; Harcourt *et al.*, 2013:2), less is known about the challenges and strengths of female-headed families from the perspective of the adult children themselves (Nixon *et al.*, 2015:1046). This study therefore asked the "what" question in relation to an explorative design in understanding the lived experiences of adult children raised in female-headed families. The exploratory research design assisted the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of these adult children.

#### **2.4.2 Descriptive design**

Since the major purpose of social science research is to describe situations and events based on scientific observation (Rubin & Babbie, 2005:124), the descriptive design is set to describe the natural phenomena based on the data the researcher has collected

during the research process (Zainal, 2007:3; Noor, 2008:1603). However, the term “description” is used differently across different spectrums. In qualitative studies the term “description” refers to “conveying what it is like to walk in the shoes of people described” (Rubin & Babbie, 2005:125). A detailed description of the experiences of adult children who grew up in female-headed families is provided in Chapter Three of this research report.

### **2.4.3 Contextual design**

Contextual designs seek insight into the phenomena within the natural environment of the participants to gain a broader understanding of their experiences (Noor, 2008:1603). In qualitative research, a holistic stance is taken in which the context is included to provide a rich description of the subject’s world (Rubin & Babbie, 2005:123). The meaning and context of the phenomenon are disclosed. The participants were studied in their real world, and the researcher conducted interviews and engaged with them at venues of their choice in order to develop a better understanding of their experiences as adult children who grew up in female-headed families.

### **2.5 Population and sampling**

A population signifies the total number of subjects in the real world in which the researcher is interested (Gilbert, 2008:167). It encompasses all the possible cases with specific characteristics that could be included in the study (David & Sutton, 2011:226). Kirby *et al.* (2006:173) also assert that a population consists of all the participants who have the experience that interests the researcher. The population of this study comprised all adult children who had grown up in female-headed families, living in the three regions of the City of Tshwane at the time of the study, namely North West (Region 1), Eastern (Region 6) and Central (Region 3). .

Due to the large and infinite nature of the population, it was not feasible to include the entire community of interest; hence, a sample was selected from this population (Gilbert, 2008:167). A sample is a subset of individuals which is drawn from the entire population to form part of a study (Nicholls, 2009:590). Qualitative research assumes that people are different and that sampling a portion of the whole population does not

necessarily mean that the findings will be generalised to the entire population; hence, it is concerned with seeking information from participants who can offer thick descriptions of the phenomena under study. Polkinghorne (2005:139) argues that sampling connotes selected people who represent the larger population, and proposes that the term most suitable in this instance is **selection**. Nicholls (2009:590) contends that a sample is part of the population regardless of whether it can or cannot be representative of the population.

In the context of this study, it was considered important that the researcher select a sample purposively to inform an understanding of the phenomenon under studied. Hence, the non-probability purposive and snowball sampling techniques were deemed appropriate to select the sample.

### **2.5.1 Purposive sampling technique**

Purposive sampling involves choosing documents, or people from whom the researcher can substantially learn about their experiences (Polkinghorne, 2005:140). This sampling technique is employed where the researcher is acquainted with individuals who are suitable to inform the study (David & Sutton, 2011:232). Individuals who can provide relevant descriptions of their experiences are those who have lived these experiences. In this study, the researcher considered participants who could adequately reflect on and verbally describe their experiences. This process was carried out by generating a list of possible participants who have grown up in female-headed families and might be willing to avail themselves of the opportunity to share their knowledge.

The researcher selected participants who met the following criteria:

- Participants who were between ages 25 and 35 and able to reflect upon and elucidate their experiences of growing up in female-headed families, from childhood to adulthood.
- Participants who had been raised by their unmarried mothers who had remained single during the participants' childhood and adolescent stages.

- In order to ensure that the meanings verbally expressed by the participants correlated with the researcher's interpretation of those meanings, only individuals who were able to express themselves in English and Sepedi/Tswana were considered.
- For practical and financial reasons, the participants needed to reside in the City of Tshwane during the period of the interviews.

The researcher started by recruiting participants from her circle of friends, fellow church congregants as well as former colleagues who matched the criteria required for the study. Moreover, the researcher took advantage of social networks such as Twitter, Facebook, and WhatsApp to invite potential participants who could possibly provide rich information to inform the study. Recruitment through advertising was also considered when informal and social networks failed to provide informants to a point of data saturation. Attempts were made to advertise through the local radio stations in the selected areas to invite community members to participate in the study, but yielded no results. The researcher did not receive any replies from the station managers.

### **2.5.2 Snowball sampling**

Snowball sampling is concerned with reaching out to potential participants who are difficult to identify and contact (Sadler, Lee, Lim & Fullerton, 2010:369). Such participants may be difficult to reach because they are traditionally underserved, vulnerable, or because they fit within a set of narrowly defined characteristics (Gilbert, 2008:180). Recruiting through snowball sampling basically means asking the participants identified by the researcher whether they are aware of others who could contribute meaningfully to the study (Polkinghorne, 2005:139). Snowball sampling offers a way to overcome some of the recruitment challenges when inviting hard-to-reach subjects to participate in the study. Although this sampling method has been criticised because it seemingly only includes those within a connected network of individuals, it allows the researcher to study the network of contacts independently and to continue collecting data to a point where nothing new is generated (Sadler *et al.*, 2010:370). At the end of the interviews, the researcher would ask the participants if they knew of other

individuals who might fit the criteria and willing to participate in a recorded interview. This sampling technique was effective because some individuals were difficult to reach, and others identified did not feel comfortable to participate. Snowball sampling therefore helped the researcher to reach data saturation.

### **2.5.3 Sample size**

The purpose of qualitative sampling is to explore the range of opinions and different presentations of phenomena. Hence, qualitative research is concerned with the richness of information, and the number of participants required depends on the nature of the topic under study (O'Reilly & Parker, 2012:192). Therefore, the researcher needs to select an adequate sample size to sufficiently answer the research question. In qualitative research, adequacy is measured at the point of saturation. Data saturation refers to the depth as well as the breadth of the data collected (Gilbert, 2008:180). Some authors describe data saturation as the stage where there are no further emergent themes and nothing new is generated (O'Reilly & Parker, 2012:192).

In this study, the researcher did not determine the sample size at the outset, but was guided by the principle of data saturation. The researcher paid close attention to both the number and length of the interviews. Although it can be argued that data can never be truly saturated as there will always be new things to discover due to the uniqueness of life experiences, in this study data saturation was definitively attained as the researcher was guided by the principle of inductive reasoning which allowed parameters to be created to pursue only the areas of interest. As a result, after conducting a semi-structured interview with the twelfth participant, it was evident that no new information would emerge, and the data-collection process was terminated.

## **2.6 Preparing participants for data collection**

It is important for the researcher to find ways of gaining access to potential participants and attracting their attention by showing an interest in their experiences. Inasmuch as researchers need to plan and prepare thoroughly to interview the participants, they also need to be prepared in eliminating initial fears that participants might have about the research (Feldman, Bell & Berger, 2003:23). The researcher needs to hold initial

meetings with the participants in order to facilitate the development of rapport and discuss the forthcoming research process (Lloyd, Kalsy & Gatherer, 2007:68).

For the purpose of establishing rapport with the participants, the researcher contacted the individual participants known to her. Those individuals were provided with a letter which provided the background of the study by introducing the researcher and the topic of the research, the purpose of the research, benefits of forming part of the study, as well as ethical issues (cf Addendum A). During this initial contact, the researcher explained in detail the purpose of the research, and why the participants were considered for inclusion in the study. They were given three days to come to a rational and informed decision whether or not to form part of the study. The initial contact was then followed by a telephone call. In cases where the potential participants agreed to the interview, the following aspects were discussed further:

- The purpose of the study.
- Possible value of the study.
- The reason why they were considered for the study.
- The venue where the interview would take place.
- The duration of the interview
- The list of questions to be included in the interview.
- The use of a tape recorder during the interview and its purpose.
- All ethical considerations.

It must be noted, though, that in modern times the virtual, or Internet, world is a dominant method of communication, and the researcher made use of various social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and Twitter to invite prospective participants; some were invited via email. The potential participants could also respond using the same channels to air their concerns, which were then promptly clarified by the researcher. In cases where participants were recruited through snowball sampling, the researcher made an effort to arrange face-to-face sessions with such participants to provide them with an opportunity to become better acquainted with the researcher.

Such a session further allowed for formal introductions and to clarify any concerns prospective participants might have had about the interview questions.

## **2.7 Method used for data collection**

Qualitative research employs semi-structured interviews and open-ended questions to gather data (Bogolup, 2010:11). This method has proved to be effective in encouraging people to discuss and share their personal feelings, opinions, and experiences (Donalek, 2005:124; Merry, Clausen, Gagnon, Carnevale, Jeannotte, Saucier & Oxman-Martinez, 2011:976). Nyanjaya and Masango (2012:3) describe an interview as a method of collecting data of greater depth which provides an opportunity to gain insight into how people interpret and order their life world. In this study, the researcher used semi-structured interviews with the aid of open-ended questions contained in the interview guide. Potter (cited by Polkinghorne, 2005:142) defines interviewing as “a technique of gathering data from humans by asking them questions and getting them to react verbally.”

Semi-structured interviews, with the guide of the researcher, illuminate the participants' experiences (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006:315). An interview guide contains broad questions which prompt the participants to discuss their experiences in their own words (Haley, 2001:91). The interview guide was employed to guide the direction of the interview and included general prompts to ensure that the interview maintained focus, and that major themes of interest would be explored. The key questions in the interview guide were phrased in an open-ended manner to allow participants to expound on the topic, choosing their own scope and depth of responses (Merry *et al.*, 2011:978). The interview guide ensured that key areas of the study were covered.

The researcher used open-ended questions to reveal the rich, thick qualitative descriptions that enhance understanding because they require more than a “yes” or “no” answer. She created an opportunity for participants to express their thoughts and share more details about their experiences (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006:316). The questions in the interview guide flowed from general to specific to allow the participants to feel comfortable with the interview process (Roulston, deMarrais & Lewis, 2005:645).



This was achieved by opening the interview with a warm-up question to stimulate the discussion and create a climate conducive to the exploration of experiences.

The following biographical questions were asked:

- Gender.
- What is your current age?
- Do you have children?
- If yes, how many?
- What is your marital status?
- What is your highest qualification?
- Are you currently employed?
- If yes, what is your job title?
- Up to what age did you stay with your female-headed family?

These biographical questions did not form part of the main interview, rather the participant was given a form which contained these biographical questions to complete and submit to the researcher.

After gaining the biographical information from participants, the following open-ended questions were asked to gather information from the participants:

- Please share with me your family background.
- Describe your experience being raised in a female-headed family (prompts: parenting, provision, discipline).
- Describe how your family functioned on a daily basis.
- Share with me the support system that you had as a family and the contribution it made to your family life (prompts: religion, cultural practices, community, relatives).
- Describe your relationship with your mother (close, distant, challenges).
- Describe your relationship with your siblings (rivalry, competition, positives).

- Share with me how growing up in a female-headed family has informed your adult life (relationships with others, opportunities, disadvantages).
- What professional services do you think social workers could provide in terms of offering assistance to children in female-headed families?

In a semi-structured interview the researcher has an active role to play and is not in the interview merely to collect information from the participants. The researcher is seen as a key instrument in the research process and must be authentic, intuitive, and receptive to the unfolding story of the participant (Dallas, Norr, Dancy, Kavanaugh & Cassata, 2005:210). In an attempt to meet these qualities and recognise the complexity of the participants' experiences, the researcher depended on the following interviewing skills to assist the participants to elicit their lived experiences: active listening, probing, paraphrasing, reflecting, and summarising. Active listening is described by Grobler *et al.* (2013:49) as an activity which gives value and meaning to the situations which people find themselves in, and goes beyond hearing what people say about their situations. It involves taking note of their needs, emotions, silence, tears, and smiles. Throughout the interviews, active listening helped the researcher to grasp the rich descriptions in relation to the experiences and perceptions of the participants.

Probing assists in expanding an individual's thought processes, thus enabling the researcher to expose deeper information (Haley, 2001:93). Probing was used to encourage the participants to answer the questions in more depth in a non-directive way. Paraphrasing allows the researcher's own interpretation and rendition of the essential information articulated by the participant (Haley, 2001:94). In this study, paraphrasing was used to enhance the researcher's understanding of what the participant has said and to elicit further elaboration. Similar to paraphrasing, reflecting denotes reverting to the participant the emotions inherent in the message to check whether the researcher has accurately understood the message delivered (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006:316). Summarising draws together the gist of what the participant has said and encapsulates it in a condensed statement (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006:316). The researcher would summarise the main points of the interview and check with the participant whether the content has been understood as conveyed.

Both paraphrasing and summarising afforded the participant time to clarify where the researcher may have missed the point, and conveys to the participants that they have been understood.

The researcher also relied on observation as another method of data collection. Observation is the selection and recording of the behaviour of people in their natural environment (Lambert, Glacken & McCarron, 2013:602). It is useful for generating in-depth descriptions of events, for obtaining information that is otherwise inaccessible, and for conducting research when other methods are inadequate (Walshe, Ewing & Griffiths, 2011:1049). The researcher observed and recorded that which transpired in the research context, and paid particular attention to the non-verbal behaviour, impressions, thoughts, ideas, and suppositions which were not explicitly expressed. These observations supplemented the rich descriptions provided by the participants and enabled the researcher to merge this information with the observations recorded to form a coherent whole of the account.

## **2.8 Pilot test**

Pilot testing usually involves a small sample to test research protocol, such as the data-collection method (Johanson & Brooks, 2010:395). Furthermore, pilot testing is not intended to produce results; the pilot data is excluded from the data obtained in the main study to avoid contamination.

The researcher conducted a pilot test by means of the interview guide with two participants who matched the criteria of the main study (Moore, Lapan & Quartaroli, 2011:256). The researcher employed the same sampling techniques as discussed in section 2.5. This exercise contributed to the emergence of meaningful insights which assisted the researcher to refine questions in a manner which would best answer the research question. The pilot test also assisted the researcher to prepare for the unexpected, and to perfect her interviewing skills (Strydom, 2005:206). The pilot test further assisted the researcher to set aside any preconceived ideas, to listen to participants' experiences, and to be as receptive as possible during the two interviews. From the pilot test it transpired that one of the questions was irrelevant to the research

topic. The question read as follows: *If your father were to initiate building a relationship with you, how would you react to that?* After a discussion with the supervisors, it was agreed that the question should be removed from the interview guide as it added no value to the study. The data obtained from the two participants who took part in the pilot test did not form part of the study.

## **2.9 Method of data analysis**

Data refers to raw information that has not been subjected to interpretation by the researcher and is still in its original form (Räsänen & Nyce, 2013:656). Furthermore, data analysis is one of the most important steps in the research process and can be referred to as the process of “cooking the raw data.” In general terms, it is regarded as a systematic search for meaning (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007:562).

In qualitative research, data analysis is a process of understanding and making sense of the information which the researcher has collected so that it can be communicated to others (Creswell, 2009:183). Blank (2004:188) asserts that it is a process of organising the mass of data into different categories to discover themes emerging from the information. Qualitative data analysis occurs concurrently with data collection to afford the researcher the opportunity to abandon data-collection techniques which are not relevant to the study and adopting those that are to fulfil the goal of the study (Merriam, 2002:14).

For the purpose of this study, the researcher analysed the data, guided by the following eight steps of Tesch (in Creswell, 2009:186):

- The researcher transcribed verbatim the audiotaped interviews. She then read through them all to elicit a sense of the whole. She read through the entire transcripts carefully, making notes of her ideas as they came to mind.
- The researcher selected one interview transcript randomly and perused it carefully in order to grasp its underlying meaning, asking herself, *what is this about?* She wrote down her thoughts in the margins of the transcript.

- After completing this task for several participants, the researcher made a list of all topics and categorised similar topics together. She listed these topics in columns, organising them as “major topics,” “unique topics,” and “leftovers.”
- The researcher then set up a fitting abbreviation for each of the identified topics.
- The researcher established the most descriptive wording for her topics and translated them into themes.
- The researcher made a final decision on the abbreviation for each theme.
- The researcher assembled the data belonging to each theme or category in one place, and conducted a preliminary analysis.
- The researcher recoded the existing data.

The researcher and the independent coder analysed data independently and reached similar conclusions as to the themes which emerged. Further discussions were held with the supervisor to finalise the themes, subthemes, and categories.

**2.10 Data verification** Data verification refers to an activity which determines whether the researcher’s conclusions are true and accurate. Research is subjected to rigour to ensure that findings are reflected factually and truthfully (Bulpit & Martin, 2010:7). In quantitative research, rigour is measured by reliability and validity. Validity determines the accuracy of the findings from the perspective of the researcher, participants, and readers (Creswell & Miller in Creswell, 2009:191). Reliability denotes the extent to which the analysed data can be repeated at different times or reproduced by different researchers (Mishler cited by Koro-Ljungberg, 2008:983).

There has been an intense debate among researchers whether criteria used in quantitative research to verify data can also be applied in qualitative research. Lincoln and Guba (in Krefting, 1991) have advocated for a reformulation of existing, or the introduction of alternative, criteria for assessing rigour in qualitative research. According to Krefting (1991:214), reliability and validity are concepts relative to quantitative research and do not fit into qualitative research.

Although qualitative research does not produce results which can be generalised to the wider population, it is imperative that the research findings are trustworthy and of high quality (Koro-Ljungberg, 2008:986). It is also important to bear in mind that while the quality of the findings is assessed for accuracy, qualitative research is not based on the search for an objective truth, but acknowledges various truths or multiple realities (Harper & Kuh, 2007:7). As a result, the quality of the findings is not based on arriving at the same reality or truth, but on revealing the multiple realities as recounted by the participants, and on demonstrating credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba in Krefting, 1991:215).

### **2.10.1 Credibility**

Credibility, which is seen as equivalent to internal validity, is the element that allows others to recognise the experiences contained within the study through the interpretation of participants' experiences (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011:152). It attempts to answer the question, *How congruent are the findings with reality?* (Shenton, 2003:64). The researcher used two data-collection techniques to enhance the credibility of the study. The first of the two techniques, namely semi-structured interviews, focused on the participants' experiences of growing up in female-headed families and to describe the challenges and strengths inherent in this family environment. The second technique involved documenting observations, subjective impressions, thoughts, ideas, and suppositions (hunches). This form of data collection is known as data triangulation and it serves as a means by which the weaknesses of one data-collection technique could be compensated by the strengths of another technique (Krefting, 1991:219; Sands & Roer-Strier, 2006:238). The accounts of the different participants presented multiple perspectives which facilitated the convergence of data around a particular theme, and strengthened the claims put forward by the participants.

Member checking is one of the most important techniques of ensuring credibility (Shenton, 2003:68). This technique affords the researcher the opportunity to present sufficient descriptions of the human experience as lived and perceived by the participant. In this study, the researcher shared the analysed data with the participants and afforded them an opportunity to comment on the findings and check whether the

emerging interpretations and conclusions were accurate representations of their experiences. None of the participants objected to the analysed data. Exposure to contradictory information is another way of enhancing credibility because it increases the accuracy of the results. The researcher exposed the participants to differing views and perspectives when discussing themes in order to search and account for negative instances and to ensure that all evidence was confronted, not only data that matched the core themes and arguments. The differing themes are discussed in Chapter Three.

### **2.10.2 Transferability**

Transferability refers to the ability to apply research findings of a particular study to other contexts or other participants (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:277, Shenton, 2003:69). The philosophical assumptions underpinning this study recognise that the extent to which an account or explanation can be judged true and accurate is arbitrary, because it accepts that there are multiple constructs of social reality (Merriam, 2002:4). There is no single meaning, interpretation, or universal application. Purposive sampling capitalise on the range of information that can be gained from the context in which a certain phenomena is investigated (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:277). Participants were purposely selected to gather thick description of data describe their experiences as the aim was to provide a representation and not a reproduction of reality and the multiple perspectives that exist

### **2.10.3 Dependability**

Dependability relates to reliability in quantitative terms and occurs when the methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation have been clearly described for another researcher to follow the decision trail used by that researcher (Krefting, 1991:221; Thomas & Magilvy, 2011:153). It requires the study to produce the same results if repeated. In order to establish dependability in this study, the researcher made use of the services of an independent coder and compared her own findings with those of the coder.

#### **2.10.4 Confirmability**

Confirmability is associated with objectivity which is a key criterion in qualitative research. It is an attempt to bring into awareness the researcher's influence to the study in order to ensure that the findings represent the ideas, feelings, and experiences of the participants rather than the predispositions of the researcher (Shenton, 2003:72). Reflexivity is a process where the researcher brings to mind all the preconceptions that may compromise the interpretations and validity of the findings (Thyer, 2001:19). During data collection and analysis, the researcher kept a journal to record her own assumptions, ideas, and feelings which had the potential to influence the findings, and she often sought and invited critique from her co-supervisor who has expert knowledge of the topic under study.

#### **2.11 Reflexivity**

This is a process of reflecting critically on the self by analysing personal values that could affect data collection and interpretation (Polit & Beck, 2012:589). It entails continuous re-examination and analysis of the researcher's own experiences, values and background, and any prejudices or theoretical inclinations that could influence the analysis and interpretation of the study findings. Considering the researchers' previous experience as a social worker who provided services to adult children from female-headed families, caution was exercised not to allow such to interfere with data gathering, analysis, and interpretation. The researcher engaged with the supervisors on the phenomenon under study in order to integrate the unique value and background brought to the intended study. Throughout this process the researcher remained aware of the interaction between self and data. Hence, she was able to maintain a neutral position during data collection to avoid biases. To ensure reflexivity, the researcher documented her own emotions, feelings, and interpretations following the interviews and transcription of recorded data. This continuous reflection enabled her to remain objective throughout.



## **2.12 Conclusion**

This chapter presented the research methodology followed in answering the research question of the study. It also indicated how the methodology was applied to realise the goal of the study. Evidence of how the researcher successfully manoeuvred through the research process in an attempt to comprehend the experiences of adult children who grew up in female-headed families was captured by paying careful attention to and detailing the application of the qualitative research approach, research design, population and sampling, data collection, data analysis, and ways in which rigour was achieved.

Chapter Three provides the end result to the application of the research methodology. Focus is directed to the findings accomplished from the study.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **PRESENTATION OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The focus of the study was to explore and describe the experiences of adults who grew up in female-headed families. A detailed description of the qualitative approach applied was presented, and semi-structured interviews were utilised to gather data and assist the researcher to gain insight into the world of adult children who grew up in female-headed families.

This chapter presents a discussion of the research findings. This discussion centres on comparing and contrasting the narratives of the 12 participants with literature. Data was analysed following Tesch's eight steps (Creswell, 2009:186). During data analysis, the services of an independent coder were used to give credence to the findings. Consultation with the independent coder and two supervisors led to an agreement on the four themes, 15 sub-themes, and three categories that emerged from the analysis. The researcher selected a family strengths perspective to interpret data, and verbatim quotations supported the findings that materialised.

#### **3.2 Biographical profile of the participants**

This section presents the biographical profiles of the participants who grew up in female-headed families. Twelve adults participated in the study. Prior to data collection, the criteria for inclusion of the participants in the sample were used to identify adults between ages 25 and 35 years who grew up in female-headed families in Pretoria and were proficient in either English or Sepedi. The demographic data presented in Table 3.1 below reflect the participants' gender, age, marital status, profession, and employment status. In order to ensure confidentiality and anonymity, alphabetical codes were assigned to participants to conceal their real names and identities.

**Table 3.1: Demographic details of the participants**

<b>P</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Marital status &amp; children</b>	<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Employed</b>
K	Male	34	Married for 11 years, 1 child	BA Degree	Yes
L	Female	34	Divorced for 4 years, 2 children	BA Degree	Yes
M	Female	33	Single	BA Degree	Yes
N	Male	33	Single	Diploma	Yes
P	Female	32	Single, 2 children	BA Degree	Yes
P	Female	32	Single, 1 child	Diploma	Yes
Q	Female	32	Single, 1 child	Certificate	Yes
R	Female	30	Married for 6 years, 2 children,	Diploma	No
S	Female	28	Single, 1 child	Grade 10	Yes
T	Female	26	Single	BA Degree	Yes
U	Male	26	Single	Grade 12	No
V	Female	25	Single, 2 children	Grade 12	No

Nine females and three males aged 25 to 35 years with an average of 30 years, participated in the study, all of whom fit the sixth stage (Intimacy vs Isolation) of Erik Erickson's psychosocial development. In this stage young adults (18 to 35 years) begin the process of blending their identities with those of friends (Corey, 2014:65). Once their identities have been established, long-term commitments with people other than family members are formed (Muller & Stroud, 2014:6). Therefore, young adults become capable of forming intimate and reciprocal relationships. They may even progress to the extent of making sacrifices and compromises for the success of such relationships (Malone, Liu, Vaillant, Rentz & Waldinger, 2016:499). Consequently, if individuals lack a strong sense of identity at this stage, they may find it difficult to form and maintain lasting relationships. This stage is characterised by marriage and long-term relationships with others. Successful completion of this stage can lead to comfortable and rewarding relationships and a sense of commitment, safety, and care within a relationship (Karkouti, 2014:258). Furthermore, avoiding intimacy and fearing commitment to relationships can lead to isolation, loneliness, and sometimes

depression. The majority of the participants (nine) were single at the time of the interviews, two were married and one was divorced. This may be attributable to major changes due to the delay in marriage in order to allow time to advance their careers and become financially secure (Hewitt & Baxter, 2011:45). Therefore, isolation and loneliness are crises anticipated as a result of the lack of committed relationships.

Despite the generally held belief that children in female-headed families perform poorly academically and are likely to drop out of school (Harcourt *et al.*, 2013:2), this assertion was disproved as five participants in this study had bachelor's degrees, three had diplomas, one had a college certificate, two were students both in their final year of obtaining university degrees, and only one had not passed matric (Grade 12). Of the 12 participants the majority (nine) were employed, two were still studying, and only one was looking for employment. This finding is in contrast to the view that children from female-headed families have trouble finding and keeping a job as a result of the lack of a father figure in their lives (McLanahan & Schwartz, 2002:37).

It is noteworthy that maternal grandmothers were involved in the upbringing of 10 of the participants. This is consistent with the finding by Kelch-Oliver (2011:77) that the supporting role of maternal grandmothers is more prevalent in female-headed families. Therefore, reference to grandmothers in this report refers to maternal grandmothers.

### **3.3 Discussion on themes, sub-themes, and categories in relation to literature**

This section presents four themes, sub-themes, and categories (Table 3.2) that emerged from data analysis, based on the perceptions and experiences of adult children who grew up in female-headed families.

**Table 3.2: Themes, sub-themes, and categories**

Themes	Sub-themes	Categories
1. The participants' descriptions of their childhood experiences		
2. The participants' specific experiences related to being raised in a female-headed family	2.1 The role of maternal grandmothers	
	2.2 Participants' execution of chores in the family	
	2.3 Enforcement of discipline within a female-headed family	
	2.4 Relationships with significant others	2.4.1 Relationships with siblings
		2.4.2 Participants' Relationships with their mothers
		2.4.3 Influence on intimate relationships
	2.5 Provision of basic needs within a female-headed family	
	2.6 Absence of the father in the participants' lives	
	2.7 Involvement of the mother's male partner	
	2.8 Resilience of the mother in a female-headed family	
	2.9 Strengths of growing up in a female-headed family	
	2.10 Challenges of growing up in a female-headed family	

Themes	Sub-themes	Categories
3. Support systems for female-headed families		
4. The participants' recommendations regarding support services for female-headed families	4.1 Support to children growing up in female-headed families	
	4.2 Support to mothers heading families	
	4.3 Inclusion of fathers whose children are growing up in female-headed families	
	4.4 Inclusion of extended families and communities	
	4.5 Support in dealing with the animosity between the participants' paternal and maternal families	

The following section presents the themes, sub-themes, and categories mentioned in the table above by providing verbatim quotations from the transcribed interviews, which were subjected to literature control.

### **3.3.1 Theme 1: The participants' descriptions of their childhood background**

The fluidity and diversity of family life are apparent in the participants' views as their subjective interpretation of a family reveals a more complex and dynamic experience of the role of a parent and other family members, a perspective that differs from the one that purports that family life revolves around mother and father as an economic and parental institution. The participants' family backgrounds shed light on their family composition, living arrangements, upbringing, as well as their general wellbeing when growing up.

While the majority (eight) of the participants lived predominantly with their mothers in the townships, only four lived with their grandmothers in the rural areas. The participants outlined a wide variety of family types when describing their family composition and living arrangements. Some of the family situations remained consistent over long periods, as shown by the following narrative:

*I grew up in Mabopane, which is a township in Pretoria. I was brought up by my single mom...my dad and my mom experienced some problems when I was very young and my dad moved on to marry someone else. I am told I was about three years at that time. Obviously I was young to understand what was really going on. We always had an auntie [helper] at home because she [my mother] had to work to be able to provide for all of us. I know that we were not rich but I don't remember lacking anything, you understand...like all the basics were covered...we went to Loretto Queenswood [private school] and after that we went to Prestige [private school]. I paid for my tertiary education but she paid for my sister's. After I matriculated I went to Tuks [University of Pretoria] and got a bursary and then after that I went to London...where I stayed for some time working and paying for my tertiary fees. (Female, 32 years)*

This narrative challenges the notion that female-headed families are living in extreme poverty (Zeiders *et al.*, 2011:78). Although the mother had to shoulder the responsibility of providing for the family single-handedly, she was nevertheless able to meet the basic needs of her family. The participant's narrative also contrasts with Madhavan and Roy's (2012:811) argument that non-resident fathers are actively involved in their children's lives. Similar findings are reported in Kpoor's (2014:1968) study conducted in Ghana that non-resident fathers did not provide money for the upkeep of their children because they were of the opinion that the women were capable of single-handedly providing for their children's needs as they were gainfully employed.

Nine participants shared that their family composition included external family members:

*I grew up in a location [township] called Mabopane. I was living with my grandmother, my mother and two aunts. We lived together as a family. My grandmother had four children; three of them are deceased. The eldest aunt passed on when I was still very young, followed by the other two. The eldest aunt left three children and the others had two each. My mom had only one child and later had my younger brother. The family consisted of female caregivers as my*

*grandfather lived in Rustenburg. So I grew up in a household that was made up of my mother, grandmother and mostly cousins. (Female, 25 years)*

*I was born and bred in Mamelodi [township], so basically I grew up in Mamelodi. We are four children, that is, two boys and two girls. I am the second in the family. We were also raised by our grandmother who was widowed for a very long time. Basically my mother and my grandmother are the ones who raised us. We moved in between my mother and my grandmother's houses. (Female, 34 years)*

*I grew up in Winterveldt in a family where my mother was the breadwinner for the whole family. We started living with my grandmother, my uncle was working in Johannesburg and my aunt was married. Her [aunt] marriage did not work out and she eventually came to live with us together with her seven children. My mother had two children at the time. You can imagine how big the family became, but my mother continued to be the breadwinner. My aunt was not working and my mother was working as a domestic worker. I can say I had a happy childhood as I was a jolly child, I liked to play, any game I would want to play like kite, diketo [an indigenous game played by two or more people with stones] and high jump. (Female, 33 years)*

*I grew up in the Free State, QwaQwa. I stayed with my mom, my aunt, my brother and my cousins. It was a big yard divided into three stands, one for my mom, one for my uncle and the other for my aunt. (Female, 32 years)*

Similarly, fewer children in female-headed families were found to be living exclusively in female-headed families; many in fact lived with extended families (Steil, 2001:359). Female-headed families have different demographic characteristics and their composition varies significantly from one family to another (Amoateng & Kalule-Sabiti, 2008:98). This is attributable to the social process affecting the formation of female-headed families. Furthermore, the participants provided their retrospective accounts of their living arrangements when extended families were common in African communities. As a result of urbanisation, higher education levels, and industrialisation, African communities have shown a decrease in the prevalence of extended families and an increase in African nuclear families (cf section 3.3.3 on a detailed discussion of extended families).

Two participants grew up in rural areas with their grandmothers while their mothers worked in the city.



*I grew up at my grandmother's place. We were many grandchildren. My aunt's children were about six as well as my three siblings. It was ok. You know home is home. It was all right. Koko [grandmother] was taking care of us. A lot...I can't even describe...She was like a mother to us...you know because my mother was not there staying in the city. (Female, 32 years)*

*I grew up in the Limpopo, gaMasemola. I was staying with my sister as my mother was working in Kempton Park as a domestic worker. My grandmother was helping us because my mom was working far away from home. At times she would come home on weekends, during the Easter holidays and festive season. My grandmother was not staying with us in the same house but she was staying closeby and would always come to check up on us and assist with whatever we needed help. It was just me and my sister. My younger brother was staying with mom at her workplace as he was still young. (Female, 28 years)*

A recent study by Makofane (2015) shows the vital role played by grandmothers in the upbringing of young African women. These accounts are consistent with the concept that members female-headed families spend periods of time living in other families, usually the parental home of the mother (Snyder, McLaughlin & Findeis, 2006:599). Quite often, a woman is likely to seek shelter at the parental home until she can practically and emotionally afford to establish her own home (cf section 3.3.2.1 on the role of maternal grandparents).

One participant who vacillated between two homes living with his mother and grandmother shared:

*I grew up in Secunda, Embalenhle, specifically in the Mpumalanga Province. I did my primary school until standard 3 [grade 5]...My mother got a boyfriend and relocated to Limpopo in Lebowakgomo. I stayed with her there [Limpopo] for a year, then I went back home to stay with my grandmother from when I was in standard 5 [Grade 7] until I matriculated [Grade 12]. (Male, 33 years)*

This storyline demonstrates the rift that may develop between mother and child as a result of the mother having a partner. Sub-theme 2.7 concentrates on the effects of the involvement of the mother's male partner in female-headed families.

### **3.3.2 Theme 2: The participants' specific experiences related to being raised in female-headed families**

Female-headed families have been associated with various negative impacts on children. Children from these families have been said to experience an array of problems on a wide range of indicators such as health, education, and economic status. The participants' understanding of their families and how they experienced their worlds as members of these families are discussed below, focusing on 10 sub-themes.

#### **3.3.2.1 Sub-theme 2.1: The role of maternal grandmothers**

Although caregiving responsibilities of maternal grandmothers reflect a range in frequency, intensity and level of involvement, any form of assistance received from them was acknowledged by the participants. Grandmothers fulfil different roles including protection, provision of stability and consistency for their grandchildren, and being a symbol of strength to family members.

The participants' mothers, on the other hand, had to work in order to provide their children with food, clothing, and school fees. When children returned home from school, grandmothers were there to receive them and to provide food and care.

*We had our grandmother, who was present at all times and like I said we had an aunty [helper] who would obviously do the laundry, ironing, cooking and cleaning so she would assume the role of a mother role. Mom would provide financial and emotional support while Koko [grandmother] would be the disciplinarian. (Female, 32 years)*

*My mom worked as a domestic worker, my grandmother was always there to make sure that we go to school and come back safe. Grandmother did everything like cooking and cleaning, but when my mother was home, she would also do the cooking and cleaning, they provided food and lunch money at school. (Female, 32 years)*

*Our grandmother was the one looking after us because our mother was working at an old-age home and stayed there. (Female, 26 years)*

*My grandmother was the one who was responsible for everything; she looked after us, made sure that we go to school. (Female, 28 years)*

Grandmothers act as buffers against any negative influence, and help improve the family functioning of their adult children who are raising children alone. One grandmother in a study carried out by Kelch-Oliver (2011:77) said: *“Her [grandchild] father has not had any part in her life. He’s not ever been a part of her life...the father is non-existent. Um, she knows who he is and that’s it. That was another reason I felt I needed to help my daughter raise this child, because there was no father figure for her.”*

Children raised by grandparents are reported to perform better in aspects of health, academic, and behaviour and Makofane (2015:28) attributed this to the loving and caring environment provided by grandparents to their grandchildren. Therefore, it is not surprising that participants referred to their grandmothers as strong pillars that made life worthwhile. The narratives also show that mothers in female-headed families bear the brunt of providing for their children’s needs, with the support of extended families.

### **3.3.2.2 Sub-theme 2.2: Participants’ execution of household chores**

Participants related the value of their relationships with their mothers through describing everyday tasks their mothers assigned to them to ensure routine, responsibility, and stability in their lives. In instances where siblings lived together, participants who were the eldest children were given major responsibilities for household chores, including taking care of their younger siblings.

*As the first born, I was expected to look after my younger brothers. I had to take the role of looking after the last-born in particular. (Male, 34 years)*

*I had to do most of the chores and also take the responsibility of taking care of my younger sister. (Female, 33 years)*

*I had a good relationship with my sister until my mom had our little brother. I think she [younger sister] felt that I was paying more attention to our brother as I had to take care of him when our mother was at work. I would wash my younger sister’s dirty uniform and make sure she has done chores, so I would always be on her case and she did not like it. I did that because I had to cover her mess because I was afraid of being punished. (Female, 32 years)*

*When my younger brother was about three years old, my mother brought him back home. My sister had a young baby to look after, so I had to take care of the younger brother. As a result we are very close. He thought I was his mom when he*

*was growing up as I showed him love and warmth like a mother would do.*  
(Female, 28 years)

Similarly, in a study by Gilford and Reynolds (2011:63) in Buffalo, USA, it was revealed that where no alternative support systems existed, the mothers did not have relief from parenting responsibilities, and as a result had no choice but to delegate some tasks to their elder children. Similarly, the study of Bakker and Karsten (2013:174) in the Netherlands shows that mothers in female-headed families were overburdened by sacrificing time to rear their children as they had to meet the demands of employment. They had no one to share their responsibilities and some major responsibilities were shifted to older children. Interestingly, Nixon *et al.* (2012:144) argue that involving children in household duties and family responsibilities does not necessarily lead to negative consequences but rather fosters earlier maturity, a sense of independence, and self-efficacy. Such competencies correspond with one of the distinctive features of the family strengths perspective, namely autonomy. Autonomy entails a strong sense of independence, internal locus of control, and self-efficacy (Early & GlenMaye, 2000:120).

Two participants conceded that they were positive role models for their younger siblings and were therefore expected to behave appropriately to fit the description. The participants shared the following:

*The expectation was that as an older brother you had to set an example, so it was making matters a little bit hard on my side. After the birth of the last-born, she [mother] had to wake up early in the morning to buy stock for her business, so I had to look after him, change nappies and do all sorts of things.* (Male, 34 years)

*You know that order [birth order], I am the older sister and she [mother] would tell the younger ones that they need to listen to me as the elder sister. My mom was working, as the eldest I would take the role of looking after the younger ones when mom was not there.* (Female, 34 years).

These storylines are consistent with Davies' (2015:686) contention that elder siblings are expected to act as benchmarks against which their younger siblings make sense of their own experiences. The strengths perspective advocates for participation, involvement, and success (Rapp, Saleebey & Sullivan, 2005:84). The dormant strength

revealed through these narratives underscores the high expectations of the participants which created an atmosphere of hope and optimism.

Assigning chores to children provide structure, discipline, and a chain of command in the household; therefore, consequences were inevitable when chores were not carried out as expected:

*We had chores assigned to us every day and we had to make sure that we complete them before thinking of going out to play. (Female, 34 years)*

*She [mother] made sure that we know about house chores because we were only boys. Though she made us work, she would get someone to wash and iron our clothes when she was at work. She made her best out of the whole situation. (Male, 34 years)*

*You could not just leave things lying around, when you come back from school, you could not go and play with friends without doing your part of the house chores. (Female, 32 years)*

*We woke up, went to school, did what we had to do as we had our responsibilities. (Female, 30 years)*

The participants' accounts of their daily functioning suggest that single mothers maintained order by assigning household chores to her children, and that instilled a sense of responsibility in them. This is contrary to Jurkovic, Thirkleid and Morell's (2001:246) assertion that children from female-headed families are disruptive and deviant because of a lack of a hierarchical structure in their relationships with their mothers. Conversely, the study by Nixon *et al.* (2012:153) shows that mothers in female-headed families are in control of their households, and the relationship with their children is characterised by distinct boundaries where they are able to assign children appropriate chores. Therefore, claims that relationships between mothers in female-headed families and their children consist of blurred boundaries which prevent them from exercising their authority over their children, are discredited. From a family strengths perspective, establishing clear roles and household routines strengthen family cohesion while supporting the development and wellbeing of family members (Orthner, Jones-Sanpei, & Williamson, 2004:160).

### 3.3.2.3 Sub-theme 2.3: Enforcement of discipline within a female-headed family

Discipline is one of the strategies that serve to structure children's experiences while at home and more importantly as they mature and venture outside the home (Shawler & Sullivan, 2015:2). Furthermore, it is regarded as a fundamental component of child rearing as it affords parents the opportunity to socialise children to make meaningful life choices. This sub-theme highlights the behaviour which leads to the enforcement of discipline and how it is administered and the person who enforces it.

As a result of frustration engendered by a lack of certain commodities, participants narrated how, as teenagers, they displayed disruptive behaviour.

*I would blame my mom for not buying me things I needed. She would tell me that she doesn't have money and it crossed my mind that I should go out and do something for myself. The thought of doing something would be anything to get cash. I had friends with whom we would try to make quick cash by stealing. (Male, 26 years)*

*My mother would work seven days straight and would get seven days off. The seven days that she would spend at work, I would use as an opportunity to get wild. I would go to parties and not sleep at home. The absence of the mother and lack of love from my father contributed to such behaviour. (Female, 25 years)*

*I felt that I lacked the love of my father and I was rebellious when I was a teen to a point where I did not listen to anyone. I ended up falling pregnant at a young age. (Female, 32 years)*

*...at some stage I was naughty, I would open my mom's purse and take one rand, open the fridge and serve myself something that did not belong to me, but I wouldn't say I was naughty to an extreme. (Male, 33 years)*

These storylines resonate with the findings of McLanahan and Schwartz (2002:37) that children in female-headed families may exhibit problematic behaviour due to the lack of a father figure who should act as a role model. However, Zeiders *et al.* (2011:78) attribute an element of this disruptive behaviour to the lack of economic resources and the quality of the parent-child relationship in female-headed families. Problem behaviour during teenagehood is not only displayed by children from female-headed families, but involvement in disruptive behaviour is common among adolescents across various

family structures. This is a cause of grave concern for society (Thijs, van Dijk, Stoof & Notten, 2015:599). Barret and Turner (2006:111) posit that adolescent problem behaviour is associated with certain family characteristics, while Pratt and Cullen (2000:934) argue that personality traits play a major role in the development of such behaviour.

At the heart of the unruly and unacceptable behaviour that the participants alluded to, were the mothers who were seen to be negotiating and managing household rules in an effort to maintain the distinct parent-child role in the family. Participants' accounts strongly reflected the roles that their mothers played in administering discipline and authority.

*She was playing both roles, that of a mother and father at the same time. I remember when she shouted at us, she would try to change her voice into that strong, bold male voice because she wanted us to hear loud and clear. (Male, 26 years)*

*One incident that I remember very well is when I went away with my friend and I did not come back home, she was very angry with me, even though she did not give me a hiding, I was very scared. (Male, 34 years)*

*Mom would sit you down and have a discussion with you, and point out the consequences of your actions. So mom would talk to you and tell you where you went wrong but she would not hit you or throw you out of the house, she would only speak to you about what you are not doing right. (Female, 32 years)*

The participants' experiences are consistent with the general view that mothers in female-headed families have higher levels of emotional involvement with their children, and maintained a stricter authority role than mothers rearing their children in two-parent households (Golombok & Badger, 2009:6). The strengths perspective affirms that families who set down rules and offer nurturance and discipline promote positive outcomes for members of the family (Orthner *et al.*, 2004:160)

In other instances, mothers would go as far as using harsher forms of discipline such as beatings, as stated in the following excerpts:

*My mom was strong and bold. She would discipline us through spanking or withdrawing some privileges like time to play with friends. (Female, 26 years)*

*My mother is very strict and she made sure that we get a good hiding. She would not speak to you twice. (Female, 32 years)*

*Most of the time when you get a hiding it would be when she [mother] tells you to do something and you don't...like when it is your turn to wash dishes, going to sleep without taking a bath and drinking water from the bottle in the fridge without refilling it. (Male, 34 years)*

*She would hit us with a stick. I was afraid of being smacked, even at school, so she would beat us as a way of administering discipline. (Female, 33 years)*

These storylines challenge the findings of Simons *et al.* (2013:468) which suggest that mothers in female-headed families are less authoritative and provide minimal discipline, monitoring, and supervision. However, in an effort to curb violence against children, corporal punishment has been abolished in South Africa (Maphosa & Shumba, 2010:387). This has not been well received by all as it is perceived to promote an escalation in misconduct by children. The following comment from Donald, Dawes and Louw (2000:16) suffice to demonstrate the resistance regarding the abolishment of corporal punishment: *"In the past, when you had the option of giving a hiding, the children were far more likely to behave and listen. I really dread to think of the calibre of adults we are going to be producing in the next ten years. I fear New Age philosophy is slowly eating away at the core of our moral fibre and destroying our children's lives."*

Two participants shared the view that the corporal punishment meted out by their mothers turned into physical abuse, which they attributed to the frustrations following the myriad responsibilities single parents have to contend with.

*She was harsh, now that I digest what happened with maturity, I see that she had stress. She was too strict. She would beat us terribly. (Female, 25 years)*

*I feel that my mom was abusing us when we were growing up because there was even a stage where neighbours had to intervene. She used to beat us, especially my sister. We would end up with those dark green bruises. (Female, 30 years)*

These narratives are consistent with the assertion by Jackson *et al.* (2010:56) that emotionally stressed single mothers are likely to resort to an aversive and coercive form of discipline. Runyon, Deblinger, Ryan and Thakkar-Kolar (2004:66) are of the view that parents who engage in extreme punitive practices have demonstrated deficits in



parenting skills, stress-related difficulties, and a breakdown in the relationship with their children. In addition, parents tend to judge misbehaviour harshly and have unrealistic expectations of their children (Price-Wolf, 2015:126).

The maternal grandmothers did not only play a role in bringing up their grandchildren, but were also actively involved in influencing and administering discipline.

*My granny was excellent when it came to punishing a child, she would beat the heck out of you. (Female, 33 years)*

*My grandmother influenced most of the discipline. That was her department. She was always near, and she would know when you have been up to no good and she would make sure that she brings you back on track. She would smack us with a stick; she always had a long stick beside her because she could not walk, so even when you tried to run away from her the long stick would reach you regardless. (Female, 28 years)*

*Most of the time when it comes to discipline that is where my grandmother came in. (Female, 32 years)*

Harper and Ruicheva (2010:221) view the grandmother as the central grandparent and an active disciplinarian in female-headed families. The participants in the study by Nixon *et al.* (2012:150) referred to their mother as the principal figure of authority who exercised discipline, but also indicated that their grandmothers would facilitate discipline when they were in their care. An African perspective departs from the notion that child discipline can be administered by virtually anyone older than the child (Adkison-Bradley, Terpstra & Dormitorio, 2014:199). Any child can be disciplined for insubordination or lack of obedience or respect without any prior consultation with the parents.

The experiences of the participants below show how both the mother and grandmother unite to enforce discipline:

*I would say my mother was the main disciplinarian as she also provided the main role in terms of parenting. But my grandmother would also lend a helping hand when my mom was hitting me. I would expect her to get in between us and stop mother from hitting me; instead, she would also hit me here and there. Those women would moer [Afrikaans term for severe beating] you. In terms of calling me to order, you know...my grandmother was there, but I knew that the buck*

*eventually stops with my mother. She was a typical black mother...you know...the type that does not take any nonsense, so yeah...discipline-wise, if there were issues of discipline that needed to be taken care of, they would both join forces to take care of them. Someone would view it as harsh or abusive...you know...but the message behind was that neither of them approved of my wrongdoings and they would tell me before that now we are going to moer you because of what you did. So many times I sort of welcomed the punishment because they would provide me with reasons for beating me. (Male, 33 years)*

*When it comes to discipline that is where my grandmother came in most of the time. My grandmother was just straightforward and blunt, when she doesn't like something she would say it there and there, even if it means picking up something to spank you with she would do it. On the other hand, my mom at first would just talk and say don't do this and that. But the moment you repeat the unwanted behaviour over and over again, she would get fed-up of talking and give you a hiding. At times, when I knew that I had crossed the line, I would wonder who is going to beat me between the two of them because they were so unpredictable. There were times I would escape and hide from my granny, but I would be certain that my mother will smack me. (Female, 34 years)*

It is not surprising that parents would start with a verbal discussion followed by a more severe second response when addressing the children's recurring transgressions. In some instances, it was also found that parents discuss matters with children and reserved physical discipline for more severe situations (Adkison-Bradley, Terpstra & Dormitorio, 2014:203).

However, the finding that both the mother and maternal grandmother join forces when disciplining children, diverges from Peng and Wong's (2015:18) findings in Japan that grandmothers do not get involved in enforcing discipline. Furthermore, the mothers in this study complained that their children are spoilt by their grandmothers as they always give them what they want and do not subject them to housework. The participants' accounts also challenged the notion that many female caregivers lack the legitimacy to impose strict discipline because of the emotional closeness to the children. However, the collaboration between the single mother and grandmother in disciplining children should be viewed in a positive light since the children will not take advantage of the grandmother and will learn about consistency when it comes to matters of this nature.

### **3.3.2.4 Sub-theme 2.4: Relationships with significant others**

Every human being has an innate desire to form enduring and cherished relationships with others (Shem, Kim, Sherman & Hashimoto, 2015:1575). It is with significant others that individuals share a broad range of experiences. Therefore, a person's ability to create and continue relationships with others is a typical human feature. Close relationships are important for an individual's emotional and physical wellbeing. Given this view, this sub-theme explores the quality of the participants' relationships with their significant others as well as the meaning attached to such relationships. Three categories emerged from this sub-theme, namely relationships with siblings, relationship with the mother, and influence on intimate relationships.

#### **Category 2.4.1: Relationships with siblings**

Sibling relationship is regarded as an exchange where both material and intangible matters are given and reciprocated (Rossetti & Hall, 2015:120). Siblings are suitable exchange partners because they share the same family context which ties them together their entire lives (Holl & Morano, 2014:7). Since the sibling bond is embedded in the family network, normative responsibilities towards the family help govern exchange among siblings (Burke, Taylor, Urbanno & Hodapp, 2012:36). Family members feel obliged to support each other, a feeling that is stronger for closer relatives (Rawson, 2009:229). Siblings also feel that they can rely on one other, even though actual support may be limited. This implies that people are willing to incur high costs in exchanges with their siblings because the latter have a strong normative obligation to return potentially large favours when needed. This category focuses on the interactions and important dynamics among siblings in female-headed families.

As some of the participants' living arrangements were not consistent over the long term, there were periods in their lives when they did not live under the same roof with their siblings, as the storylines below indicate. Thus, the closeness between them and their siblings fluctuated from not having a relationship at all to keeping each other at arm's length.

*All in all we are eleven, and we grew up together. When I was about ten years, my older siblings were not there, they lived with my father, we kept communicating with each other and now our relationship is even stronger as siblings and I think it is because of these two women [their mothers] who refused to be bitter because of this man [their father], so they understand that we have established a relationship and they support it. (Female, 30 years)*

One participant said the following about his half-sibling with whom he was not sharing a home.

*There's my half older brother, we were close, I was close with him, but I was close with my late sister before she passed on. I think we [referring to half-brother] got along very well because we were in the same situation, he was also raised by his mother and I was raised by my mother, so to a certain extent we shared something in common. (Male, 26 years)*

Sibling relationships are often characterised by ambivalence feelings of both closeness and distance; hence, it is expected that siblings would be involved in both negative and positive interactions (Tucker, McHale & Crouter, 2008:152). In addition, distance is also attributed to the quest to provide children with a better life, feed them, and provide better living conditions where the mothers find themselves in a situation that compels them to separate the children by sharing them with other relatives. Siblings living further apart find it difficult to practise solidarity (Voorpostel *et al.*, 2012:334). Furthermore, full biological siblings tend to have a closer and more supportive relationship than half-siblings.

Reflecting on the quality of the relationship they had with their siblings, participants provided descriptions characterised by conflicts and fighting which resulted in unequal treatment by their mothers. Some siblings developed rivalry as a result of perceived unfair treatment by their mothers.

*Look, it was not a good relationship...I also grew up being compared to my younger brothers...my mother used to say look your younger brother is better than you, you are failing at school, and you will amount to nothing and stuff like that. It caused serious rivalry between us. (Male, 34 years)*

*I have an elder sister, so we do not have a good relationship. I think bonding has to do with it because we grew apart...She can't stand my mom...she can't even stand me because she says I am the favourite. (Female, 32 years)*

*I didn't really get along with my sister because she was streetwise and she refused to be disciplined...I, on the other hand, was a good child and she thought my mom loved me the most. (Female, 30 years)*

These storylines are consistent with the finding by Whiteman, McHale and Soli (2011:5) that parents treat their children differently in response to their needs and personalities. Differential treatment is linked to less positive relationships from early childhood and has lasting implications for the quality of sibling relationships (Shanahan, McHale, Crouter & Osgood, 2008:481). Parental differential treatment has been associated with poorer sibling relationships and greater behavioural problems in the less-favoured sibling (Boisvert, Vaske, Taylor & Wright, 2012:7). The perception of unequal treatment may lead to negative self-evaluation. This may affect self-esteem and lead to disruptive behaviour in an attempt to regain parental attention (Meunier, Roskam, Stievenart, Van de Moortele, Browne & Wade, 2012:615). Although the assumption that parents should treat their children equally is widely held, from a family strengths perspective treating children differently may reflect appropriate, sensitive parenting that is modified to each child's needs and characteristics (Meunier *et al.*, 2012:613). Within this context, differential treatment is seen as normative when it is equitable and related to the child's characteristics, such as age, gender, and temperament.

In some instances, the mother fostered warmth and intimacy among her children, as this participant indicated.

*My mom never wanted her children to fight, she would sit us down and tell us where we are wrong, she would tell the younger ones to respect the elder ones and the older ones. She would indicate that they must love and respect the younger ones and not take advantage of our birth-order. (Male, 26 years)*

This account echoes the finding by Scharf, Shulman and Avigad-Spitz (2005:68) that parents exert considerable influence over their children's interpersonal relationships through giving advice and intervening in their interactions and disputes, thus instilling respect for their parents and siblings.

Furthermore, it must be noted that the relationship characterised by conflict and fighting does not necessarily mean that the children are not getting along at all. They would swing back and forth between adoring and detesting one another, as illustrated below.

*From birth, we were close. It happened that my brother passed away in September 2014. My sister and I have grown even closer, we would cover one another for wrongs done. My sister would cover for me when I had done something wrong and I would also do the same for her. That is how close we were. (Male, 26 years)*

*I remember that my sister would sacrifice for us because my mom would buy clothes for us in turn and at times my sister would compromise and tell her to buy for the younger ones only. (Female, 28 years)*

Although episodes of conflict may be frequent, it usually occurs in the context of generally positive relationships between siblings (Lamb & Sutton-Smith, 2014:6). Sibling relationships are not always negative and are generally characterised by a combination of their positive and negative interactions (Doughty, McHale & Feinberg, 2015:590). Furthermore, experiences of supportive and warm sibling interactions promote prosocial skills and positive peer interactions. From a family strengths perspective, such relationships are positive as they provide unique opportunities for interaction between individuals who differ in age, gender, and personality (Meunier *et al.*, 2012:615). Siblings are also more likely to hold the same values, a similar sense of origin and place, and an accumulation of shared crucial moments.

Reflecting on their current relationship with their siblings, participants related how they had grown to be tolerant of each other. The nature of the relationship is voluntary rather than dictated by parents. Although the intensity of the interactions may be decreased by various factors such as living apart from each other, participants reported lower levels of conflict and quarrels but rather an increased sense of closeness and warmth.

*I am a role model to them [siblings] and they are enjoying that because they can always call me for advice, so we have a good relationship. (Male, 34 years)*

*Even now as adults, we have come to know one another and love each other because we know what we have been through and how our mom struggled in her effort to raise us. (Female, 26 years)*

*We are staying far apart now but we still communicate every day, we check on each other. If there is one who is not well, we take efforts to drive and go and see them...it has brought us even closer. (Female, 28 years)*

*Growing up...as siblings, we had our sibling rivalry kind of relationships. We grew up fighting especially with the one that came immediately after me. Like I said, growing up in that family system provided an opportunity to be closer, and to look out for each other, now as we have grown up, it has set up...a good foundation. (Female, 33 years)*

*Now we [participant and brother] are close in an amazing way. We love each other so much and we look out for each other. I think it is because we have grown up. (Female, 32 years)*

*We get along very well. I would say today that they [siblings] are my support system. If I need something, they are the first people that I talk to, we are very close, and we share a lot of things. If I've got an issue, they will be the first people I go to and say you know what...this is not going okay, how would you advise me to go forward? Even for them I am the first port of call, if there is something they need, I am the first person they call and say this is the situation. (Male, 33 years)*

These expressions concur with the findings by Tucker *et al.* (2008:158) that older siblings describe their relationships as a source of support in social, scholastic, and familial issues. Supportive relationships among siblings are negotiated over time (Voorpostel, Van der Lippe, Dykstra & Flap, 2007:1046); hence, it is not surprising that the participants shared rich narratives about assistance and support existing between siblings in adulthood. In addition, the finding that older siblings are more likely to act as role models and support younger ones was emphasised. Moreover, positive interactions and closeness are attributed to siblings learning to cooperate and an increased ability to negotiate agreements (Scharf *et al.*, 2005:66). A positive relationship among siblings is a source of strength as they are more likely to support and care for one another in times of adversity.

However, not all participants had good experiences to share about their current relationships with siblings.

*I would not compare us to other people, yes, we are close but we also have our boundaries and at the same time we know that we are from the same mother and we are siblings. (Female, 33 years)*

Rivalry seemed to be prompted by competition, as one participant related:

*I have progressed in my life and my elder sister is a bit jealous because you know...society has that thing that as the eldest, you must achieve certain things before the younger ones. So, that is what is happening between me and my sister [elder] because I am now at a stage where my sister is still striving to get to and she constantly tells me that I think I am better off. (Female, 30 years)*

Rivalry between adult siblings is often triggered by competition, particularly when one or more possess characteristics or material possessions that the other sibling lacks (Slotter, Lucas, Jakubiak & Lasslett, 2013:1280). Essentially, rivalry in the relationship may compromise the strengths of the family as siblings are likely to reject one another and refuse to offer support in times of need or distress.

Interestingly, one participant indicated that the competition that existed among them and their siblings was healthy.

*I suppose with siblings there is a healthy competition and that is what we basically went through but it was never malice, right now it's a question of discussing things asking what one is doing, sharing information on events going on, the kind of car one wants to buy...that is our conversation. We need to push each other, we can't stay in the same spot, so in our relationship now, we are closer than we were when younger, even though when we were younger, honestly we were still close. (Female, 32 years)*

The finding refers to stimulating growth and development among siblings in terms of information sharing and acquisition of wealth. This experience supports previous findings that sibling relationships undergo developmental relationships with age, and as a result siblings become less involved in quarrelling and competition; hence, issues of power and status become less relevant (Scharf *et al.*, 2005:66; Voorpostel *et al.*, 2012:334).

Mutual support as a result of healthy competition among siblings leads to the acquisition of social, interpersonal, and cognitive skills that are important for their development (Hassrick, 2012:98). The family strengths perspective emphasises the recognition of strengths and resources of people and their environments (Roff, 2012:203). Thus,



positive competition among siblings is seen as a motivator to forge ahead in life despite difficulties.

#### **Category 2.4.2: Participants' relationships with their mothers**

The mother-child relationship is most likely to remain significant for both parties, more so when the child is raised by a single mother. In this category, participants reflected on their relationships with their mothers across their life span. Their accounts revealed various characteristics of their relationships, including interdependence, intensity, animosity, and the lack of quality time between mother and child.

The mothers of seven of the 12 participants were actively involved in their children's lives on a day-to-day basis. These participants reported having healthy relationships with their mothers. They described their relationships as close as they spent time together and, for instance, attended educational activities. These single mothers helped their children transition successfully into the various stages of their lives.

*We used to get along very well; we would sit in her [mother's] bed and had long chats. I always felt like I could confide in her. I remember the first time I kissed a boy we had a long conversation...I could talk to her even about dating. (Female, 32 years)*

*My relationship with my mom has always been very strong from when I was still very young. She has always been there for me because she tried to close that void that my father created in me, so if I needed anything or she realises that I am sad, she would call me and find out what is wrong. She gave me all the support that I needed as a young child; even now she still provides me with that support. There is nothing that I withhold from her. (Female, 32 years)*

*She was very involved in my schooling and had a healthy relationship with the teachers; when it was my birthday, she would bring a cake to my class, so the teachers also paid attention to her and constantly gave her feedback about my performance. (Female, 33 years)*

The study by Nixon *et al.* (2012:148) in Ireland, which explored the relationship between mothers and their children in female-headed families, also found that children similarly reflected the exclusive nature of their relationship with their mothers and this exclusivity was attributed to the mothers' involvement in their children's lives. Similarly, adult

children from female-headed families in a study by Sturgess, Dunn and Davies (2001:523) reported high levels of warmth and intimacy in their relationships with their mothers, purely as a result of mothers spending quality time with them. In addition, from the children's perspective, it is vital that they spend quality time with their mothers if their relationships were to be properly sustained and beneficial.

Women who head families experience challenges when they need to engage their sons on topics related to intimate relationships with girls. As a result, most African women rely on their brothers, fathers, and in some cases religious fathers, to engage their sons on such subjects.

*I was very close with my mom. I would hide my report and wait for her to come back, my aunt and uncles will insist on seeing it and I would say no, my mom has to see it first. That is how we were close. However, I would still not confide in her about my personal affairs not really, not really, I don't think we had ever gone that far. I think she is...she was a bit old-fashioned. There are certain things that I could not really discuss with my mother Okay...she would drop hints...you know, when I was about 16, she would talk about women but she will never go like you know girls...she would give examples as if she was talking about someone else, but I knew she was talking to me...you understand...but for me to go and say to her I have a girlfriend...That was reserved for my uncles...you know...my uncles were...they were very straightforward. They will tell me that we know that you are seeing someone and this is what you need to do. I would not to sit down with my mother and discuss heavy stuff. (Male, 33 years)*

This confirms the assertion that mothers speak freely to their female children but find it difficult to communicate with their male children regarding issues of sexuality (Maluleke, 2007:12). Part of the reason for this is that the onset of a daughter's menstruation acts as a marker of the child's fertility and sexual development, whereas boys have no specific biological markers (Nambambi & Mufune, 2011:122).

Five participants did not have an intimate relationship with their mothers when growing up as they spent a lot of time at work, far from home. Three participants saw their mothers only once a month and were thus unable to spend quality time with them.

*As I said that she was working most of the time, quite strenuous hours, she was loving but when it comes to that close emotional bond...where she would take us*

*to the park or play with us on a random day...we hardly had those days because she had to work most of the time. (Female, 34 years)*

*I just knew that my mom had too much to do, so most of the time, she has always been a working mother. The closeness is there, but that emotional intimacy is just one of those things I could say was missing or I realised was missing. (Male, 26 years)*

*My mother was not staying with us full-time as she was working...she did not understand us. (Female, 28 years)*

The findings of this study are similar to those of Miller and Ridge (2009:117), that the long working hours mothers were forced to spend away from their homes was one of the areas where different views and tensions were apparent. Furthermore, children wanted to spend more time with their mothers during school holidays, and thus preferred to have their mothers working during school terms. There is a reduction in family time when the mother is working despite the perceived material benefits since spending less time with children can have a negative impact on their childhood experiences (Koh, Stauss, Coustaut & Forrest, 2015:19). In South Africa, a major challenge for single women with children is that most are "stay-in" domestic workers and they are therefore unable to participate fully in their children's upbringing and development. The lack of engagement and difficulties between single mothers and their children was attributed to the length of time spent working in order to support their children (Roman, 2011:578).

Due to time constraints between mothers and their children, some of the participants relied on their primary caregivers, usually their grandmothers, for emotional support.

*She [mother] was not staying with us because she was working in the city. We would see her once a month when she came home month end. It would only be for two days she would go back. To be honest, I preferred Koko [grandmother] than her. (Female, 32 years)*

*Our relationship was good, but not excellent. We did not bond with her, that bond was not there...even when I had problems I would run to Koko [grandmother]. (Female, 33 years)*

Similarly, Bridges, Roe, Dunn and O'Connor (2007:550) note that grandmothers are of immediate comfort to their grandchildren when parents are not available to offer support. Participants looked up to their grandmothers for support more often than their parents as they shared a strong sense of emotional closeness with them.

Two participants shared that their relationships with their mothers were not close and cordial because of their mother's characters, personality traits, and lifestyles which hampered open discussions.

*I think the way she is as a person, since all of us are not the same, her emotions are secondary. I think she is an open person but emotional issues, especially deep emotional issues like pain and hurt, she does not talk about them...You know...there are people when they are hurt everybody around them would know but for her she will bring the other side of the good things and when she is hurt, she keeps it to herself and would not open up. So, I think that is one of the issues. The second one is just not having enough time, it was not cultivated from the beginning where we would say we would work on that. I think I'm an open person but at the same time I take my time, I wouldn't just talk about what is happening. I am an open but not talkative person, I am kind of reserved, so I take my time before I share deep emotional issues. (Female, 34 years)*

*If she was sharp and intelligent, we would not have struggled so much with finances, now. I am repaying my cousin the money that I borrowed from her to pay for my study fees. She [mother] could have invested money so that we can further our studies. Now it is a complete disaster as my grandmother has relocated to Rustenburg. My grandfather passed away, so there was no one looking after the house and we are from the royal family. So the community had requested her to come back so that the village can have someone to guide them. My uncle took over as the Chief in the village, so they are living full-time in Rustenburg. So, she [mother] is even misusing the foster care grant she is earning for my cousins as well as the child support grant for my eldest child. (Female, 25 years)*

Parenting practices influence how parents interact with their children, and ineffective parenting may negatively impact children's immediate and future lives (McKinney *et al.*, 2016:1207). Ineffective parents find it difficult to interact and engage with children in a way that would foster happy and successful adult children (Dannerbeck, 2005:200). Moreover, a lack of parenting skills can lead children to follow the same antisocial behaviour demonstrated by their parents.

The mother-child relationship, as in any other relationship, is characterised by both negative and positive interactions. Three participants reported tension with their mothers which arose from caring for younger siblings and other demands placed on them as older children. They were also concerned that they did not know the real truth about the whereabouts of their fathers, while mothers failed to carry out their obligations as expected.

*The relationship that I had with my mother was strenuous because I was feeling that it was too much on me as the first born. I was expected to look after my younger brothers and they [sibling] would also be mean to me and it would make things difficult. (Male, 34 years)*

*I think my relationship with my mom was just that, a relationship between a mother and a child but without effective open communication because I grew up mama not telling me about what happened between her and papa [father]. So I always asked myself what really happened between these two people, not able to ask her. (Female, 28 years)*

*Our relationship is not that good because she is not communicating...I won't say she is staying with us because she spends most of the time with her Ben 10 [slang for a boyfriend who is younger than her mother] boyfriend. Our relationship is not good because it got to a point where I had to report her to social services. In 2007 I finished my matric and I applied at UJ [University of Johannesburg], but due to lack of funds, I could not do the Psychology degree. In 2008, I remained home and she was working as a cashier at Spar. In 2009, I decided, you know what...you know that pressure of not going to university and all your friends are at university. I had to take drastic measures, and I made her apply for a loan, so that I can go to college. She got a loan and I went to Rosebank College to do Information Technology for a year. In 2009, I was nineteen years and I got my second child and then I dropped out of tertiary. (Female, 25 years)*

Female-headed families have the potential to burden and demand too much from their children as mothers often work full-time and children are assigned more duties and responsibilities (Burton, 2007:335). Moreover, overtaxing children with household duties is one of the dynamics that have been recognised as a hindrance to the effective functioning of female-headed families. A state of confusion and uncertainty is also engendered in children who either have no or insufficient knowledge of their biological fathers (Menning, 2002:658). This state of uncertainty could have serious

consequences for the child's security and results in the development of an insecure self-image and a confused sense of identity.

As mature individuals, four female participants have since reached out to their mothers as they came to realise what a single parent has to sacrifice to provide her children with a better life. This has helped them work through difficult issues and improve their relationships with their mothers. Although the bond has developed later in life, they revealed that they now share a strong and deep attachment.

*I have come to a certain realisation of my personal maturity that we cannot continue with that relationship that is limited to certain discussions or topics. I am open with her and invite her to open up and let her be that source of strength and my point of reference as I do not want to feel that there are some things that I cannot consult my mom about. I am opening up, reaching out to her and by so doing it enforces that flexibility within her and she is able to share workable solutions. (Female, 34 years)*

*I started developing a bond with her [mother] and that came as a result of growing up in all spheres of life. I also started realising that this woman loves me. (Female, 32 years)*

*Now we have a close relationship with my mother, we understand each other, and she confides more in me and she trusts me. (Female, 28 years)*

*But now that I have grown up, we have a relationship that is amicable. I can talk to her about anything, even about intimate relationships. I consult and tell her what is happening and ask for advice and she always gives me sound advice. (Female, 26 years)*

These findings corroborate previous research outcomes that the quality of the mother-daughter relationship is enhanced when the daughter reaches adulthood (Schwarz, 2006:210). This is attributed to the fact that both mother and daughter are functioning as independent adults in the relationship. In addition, the relationship can be viewed as voluntary, involving two individuals of equal status who are essentially independent of each other (Everet *et al.*, 2016:335).

A male participant shared that he had reconciled with his mother but still turns to his uncles for advice on certain issues.

*Now we do talk, we do talk... we don't really see each other that much, I only see her when I go home. Yeah! we would sit and talk...we would discuss things. She would ask me why I don't have a child at such an advanced age whilst my sisters already have and I explained to her my reasons and its fine.....we leave it there. I think there was always that boundary to say she is my mother and there are certain things I could not talk to her about. I know if I need to talk about something that is a bit heavy, I know where to go. I think she purposefully said you know that if you need stuff like these [men talk], your uncles are here, they are men at the end of the day, and I think they would be able to understand you far much better than I would. (Male, 33 years)*

In the African culture, it is believed that boys need men to guide them to become responsible men. This finding corroborates that of Ratele, Shefer and Clowes (2012:556) regarding the importance of social fathers. One of their participants responded, “*Tatomkhulu* [literally means “older father,” meaning paternal uncle older than one’s father] *was my role model because when my father was at work...my uncle would play a role of my father and he taught me how to be a man*”. Furthermore, social fathers are particularly important in mentoring South African boys and young men. Regrettably, the role of social fathers has been underestimated within the dominant assumption of the centrality of the biological father. Makofane (2015:35) also found that social fathers such as maternal uncles and grandparents acted as role models and offered a great source of strength as they helped influence the development of young African boys.

A participant indicated that her relationship with her mother improved after her husband’s intervention.

*It is better, but it has never been great. It only became better when I started dating my husband. He is the one who pushed me to mend things with my mom. There was a time when we were not for...on speaking terms for about a year. I was very young...I was still in high school. (Female, 30 years)*

This finding challenges the long-held view that in-law relationships can be troublesome. It confirms the assertion of Serewicz and Canary (2008:334) that in-law relationships

serve as a source of support to children and parents as they both benefit from mutual aid given to one another.

### **Category 2.4.3: Influence on intimate relationships**

Delving deeper into these intimate relationships, the researcher found it interesting to note that women were more vocal about the turning points in their relationships with boyfriends. They had high expectations of their partners and described how they used their intimate relationships to fill the void left by their absent fathers. Unfortunately, their pursuit to fill that gap was to the detriment of what they described as “best relationships.”

*This was evident through my relationship with previous boyfriends. I found myself expecting them to close that gap...to play all the roles. I expected them to play the role of a father and a boyfriend at the same time. (Female, 32 years)*

*It was hard for me to distinguish the relationship that I had with my boyfriend to that of my father, so in a way I found myself trying to project...or rather to extend this relationship to satisfy that void or close the gap that papa [father] was never there. I expected them to be my knight in shining armour and this placed pressure on them. (Female, 26 years)*

*was a struggle for me for quite a long time to accept that my intimate relationships will never replace the relationship I could have had with my father. You end up having...I don't know...these expectations that are just obscured because you feel that this person must take that role and failure to fulfil some of these expectations comes as an insult...or rather something unbearable...you expect this person to satisfy these two roles, to save the day and rescue your emotional turmoil. (Female, 33 years)*

*Most of the time, when that guy realises that I am expecting him to play a role of a father as well, it resulted in the dissolution of the relationship because he could not handle that. (Female, 32 years)*

These expressions resonate to some extent with those of East *et al.* (2007:16) in that their participants revealed a need for male reassurance and validation. In this study, the participants' need for male attention manifested through the expectation that their boyfriends should play the role of both lover and father. Participants attributed such a desire to the fact that they never enjoyed fatherly love when they were growing up.



### 3.3.2.5 Sub-theme 2.5: Provision of basic needs within a female-headed family

It has been widely reported that female-headed families are faced with extreme levels of poverty and economic hardship compared to other forms of family structures (Craigie, 2012:259). Mothers in these families often have little education and experience, and are unable to secure well-paying positions in the workplace; they therefore find themselves working in low-paying jobs (Zeiders *et al.*, 2011:78). The discussion below focuses on sources of income and whether the mothers were able to provide for their families.

The participants related what their mothers were doing in terms of making sure that the family's needs were taken care of. Of the 12 participants, 10 indicated that their mothers were involved in informal labour as a source of income and depended on their small businesses such as selling vegetables and home-brewed beer to provide for their families. The participants stated the following:

*Our mother was a domestic worker and the sole breadwinner. She provided for us everything that we needed in the family. (Female, 32 years)*

*She [mother] was self-employed. I remember she used to brew traditional beer and sell it. Then she started selling fruits at the taxi rank and firewood as well. (Male, 34 years)*

*She brewed sorghum beer and she used money she got from selling beer to provide food, clothes and school fees for us. (Female, 34 years)*

*My mother was selling mala mogodu [tripe] and Koko's [grandmother] pension grant also assisted. (Female, 30 years)*

*Mama sold vegetables and the little that she got contributed towards the family income. (Female, 26 years)*

*My mom was working six days a week, including Saturdays, but she would knock off early on Saturdays. She would also sell vegetables at the train station to augment her income. (Female, 33 years)*

These accounts are consistent with the findings of Wu and Eamon (2013:275) in North Korea that most female-headed families have limited financial resources to provide for their children's needs. In the United States of America it was also found that a small number of mothers heading families are active in the labour market, but that a large

percentage of them work in low-paying retail or administrative jobs that do not offer benefits of any kind (Elliot *et al.*, 2015:353). Similarly, it was noted that single mothers face serious economic challenges, which may explain the growing number of single mothers living with partners, parents, or other relatives (Neblett, 2007:1084).

Only two participants reported that their mothers were formally employed.

*My mom worked at a mine in Secunda, so basically...in terms of provision I was covered because I knew that my mother provided everything I wanted. (Male, 33 years)*

*My mom was a doctor and she made sure that all our basic needs were met. (Female, 32 years)*

The findings indicate that some women heading families were educated, secured well-paying jobs, and thus able to meet their children's basic needs. This was in contrast to the notion that women heading families are uneducated, poor, and settle for low-paying jobs (Rahman & Akter, 2014:299)

Two participants shared their agony when witnessing their mothers' struggle to make ends meet, and acknowledged the difficulties their mothers experienced in accessing basic resources. They shared how they provided practical and active support to enhance their families' income.

*When I was doing matric, it became really hard for us so I just decided to go look for a job as a gardener and worked only on Saturdays. (Male, 34 years)*

*I dropped out of school when I was in standard eight [Grade 10] because I was older, I could see how bad the situation was, I wanted to go look for a job to help her, to lift the burden in the house, although she [mother] did not approve, I forced matters and dropped out of school, and today I regret the decision. I should have listened to her; at least I would have completed matric [Grade 12]. (Female, 30 years)*

The participants' accounts are contrary to the notion that children growing up in female-headed families display a plethora of problematic behaviour (Akinsola & Popovich, 2002:762; McLanahan & Schwartz, 2002:37; Coleman in Richardson, 2009:1042; Simons *et al.*, 2013:460). Conversely, an ethic of care was reflected in how children

positioned themselves as obligated and mutual providers of practical support and care within such families (Nixon *et al.*, 2012:149). This ethic of care is clearly a strength that social workers can capitalise on when rendering family preservation services to female-headed families.

### **3.3.2.6 Sub-theme 2.6: Absence of the father in participants' lives**

All 12 participants grew up in the absence of their fathers as a result of desertion. This theme reflects the participants' experiences of growing up in the absence of their fathers, and their feelings about initiating and maintaining contact with their fathers.

Participants' relationships with their fathers varied from having no relationship at all to having limited relationship. The narratives of the participants captured the importance of dual roles of parents in the lives of their children.

*I can say in a way because for me now I understand every child has a right and I think it is their birth right to have both parents with them and I believe there is a reason why God made it like that because the minute the parent is not there, even though the child's material needs can be catered for, you will find that the child is suffering in some way because one parent cannot be all that. There are two important roles that a mother and father should play in the children's lives.*  
(Female, 34 years)

This finding supports the notion that the different roles parents play in the lives of children, including the mutual influence between those roles, are important (Cinamon, Weisel & Tzuk, 2007:85). For instance, a participant in a study by Makofane (2015:31) wrote, "*what I missed from him was love because every child deserves to be loved by both parents but he was nowhere to be found*". However, there is an argument that children do not necessarily need both parents to thrive; rather, it is suggested that if children have at least one caregiver with whom they share a positive relationship, the wellbeing of those children need not necessary be adversely affected (Najman, Behrens, Anderson, O'Callaghan & Williams cited by East *et al.*, 2007:15).

The participants alluded to the difficulties they experienced by not having their fathers around when they needed them, and the missed life lessons that their fathers could have taught them had they been part of their lives. A male participant shared that:

*Growing up without your father is not nice...it is not nice because as a boy at times you feel that you need him to teach you about life. (Male, 33 years)*

Similarly, it has been noted that boys growing up without their fathers find it challenging to transition successfully from boyhood to manhood, as a participant in a study by Hunter, Friend, Murphy, Rollins, Williams-Wheeler and Laughinghouse (2006:432) said: *"I think it makes it difficult just growing up. Your dad is supposed to be there to teach them how to do certain things. So you know for me being with my mom, I mean in certain circumstances she cannot teach me some things, but she can't teach me what my daddy tells me from growing up, be a man, you know what I'm saying?"*

In another study, the absence of a biological father was described as a loss, although participants acknowledged the importance of their mothers and social fathers (Ratele *et al.*, 2012:561). This sense of deprivation is attributed to the dominant notion of patriarchy in many South African communities that place great emphasis on the father as the breadwinner and head of the household, and therefore the absence of such a male figure is perceived as a profound loss.

Six female participants also shared their experiences growing up without their fathers.

*It's hard because at times I feel that should he have been available in my life, things would be better in my life. (Female, 28 years)*

*It's difficult because you do not have a mentor, that person whom you can fall back on when the mother cannot help in certain areas of your life. The mother was a pillar because she was providing for me but for other things she just could not help. If you tell her about a boyfriend you are interested in, she would kill you instead of discussing with you the downfalls of dating at an early age. (Female, 32 years)*

The same sentiments were expressed by participants in another study (Hunter *et al.*, 2006:432). The findings referred to a young African woman who grew up without a father and wrote that, *it hurts listening to people speaking fondly about their fathers and yet you don't have a story about your own* (Makofane, 2015:32).

The participants related, as was evident from a study by Lopez and Corona's (2012:729), that children longed for their fathers to be more involved in their lives, and expressed sadness about their fathers' detachment.

Participants also shared their experiences relating to intimate relationships which were influenced by their need for male attention. A female participant reported how the lack of her father's love led to her being exploited by men who did not have her best interest at heart.

*I felt I lacked fatherly love, which is why I went outside to find love from other men and it came to a point where I was raped at the age of thirteen... (Female, 25 years)*

Similar experiences were also evident from a study by East *et al.* (2007:16). Participants revealed a sense of craving for male affection which they linked to the lack of love and warmth of an absent father. Psychoanalytic theory sheds light on early female sexual development in relation to the Electra complex which refers to the father-daughter relationship in childhood (Wakefield, 2006:823). The participant's desire to experience fatherly love is attributed to the Electra complex which explains how girls develop a sense of themselves and their personalities through relationships with their fathers.

Five participants articulated their need to understand the circumstances surrounding their fathers' lack of involvement in their lives. They needed to fully comprehend the reasons and contexts of their departure from their lives as they had unanswered questions. Although the participants expressed the need to communicate with their fathers, they did not show interest in initiating and maintaining relationships with them, as illustrated below:

*As I grew up I wanted to know and gain an understanding of my father's whereabouts. I was told by my grandmother that he had problems with my mom when she was pregnant with me and he then left her. (Female, 32 years)*

*I think if I were to meet him, one question that I would ask would be, why did you leave me? (Female, 28 years)*

*I am not sure if I still want to go back there and start and maintain a relationship with him. I think just knowing him will be good enough and maybe just to ask him a*

*few questions...why didn't you come back? What happened? What did I do wrong? (Female, 26 years)*

*I felt that my father has abandoned me and I kept asking myself that why did he not come looking for me? I felt that he did not do enough by going to my mom's workplace to ask about me. Why did he not come to my granny's place to look for me? (Female, 30 years)*

The findings are similar to those in Makofane's (2015:34) study as participants showed no interest in forming relationships with their absent fathers. For instance, one participant considered her father dead by saying: *"I feel that he is such a coward and irresponsible father. So, he is dead and buried to me"*. However, these storylines are in contrast to other findings in which adult children hoped to meet their fathers and establish meaningful relationships with them (East *et al.*, 2007:17). The participants' disinterest in tracing their fathers is attributed to the fact that they never had any form of contact with them during childhood.

Even though some participants needed an explanation as to the reasons their fathers were not involved in their lives, they accepted what their mothers had told them that led to their break-up with their fathers.

*Mama told us that daddy has moved on with another woman and that we would not see him anymore. I felt shattered and ended up looking down on myself. (Female, 32 years)*

The same sentiments were expressed by a participant in another study in which a participant associated her low self-esteem with abandonment by her father (Makofane, 2015:33). There is a strong view that a father's presence or absence shapes the way daughters think about themselves, their relationships, and the world as a whole (Way & Gillman, 2000:328-329).

According to four participants, the subject was not open to discussion as their mothers chose not to elaborate on the circumstances of their father's absence.

*I don't think so...I think...it was not something that she discussed with us but you could see that he was not participating in our maintenance. I remember at primary school, the principal called me and said you guys have not paid school fees for*

*three months, you need to tell your mom and when I told her I could see she was desperate to make a plan, you know and the plan did not include my father because he had his other family that he was looking after...No...like to be completely honest, there wasn't a time where I was in whatever situation where I thought and said, oh! I wish my dad was here. I never...I still don't feel the absence of my dad and maybe it's because we spent...or I spent the better part of my life without him...you see. So that is what I know. Perhaps if I knew something different then I would have something to miss. (Female, 32 years)*

*I remember I used to make noise a lot about the issue of my father and she [Mother] couldn't give me answers. (Female, 30 years)*

*My younger brother has his own father, so one day I asked her [mother] who my father was and she did not even answer me. (Male, 34 years)*

*As I was growing up, I realised that my mom did not tell me who my father was. I think she was wrong. She was supposed to tell me who my father was and what happened to him. (Female, 28 years)*

The findings support the view that mothers are the gatekeepers of the father-child relationship (Krampe, 2009:887). Mothers are also regarded as either facilitators or inhibitors of what transpires between men and their children (Daly, Ashbourne & Brown, 2009:64). It has been noted that extended families mostly related to the mother play a major role in caring and providing for the children and it appears to inhibit children's contact with their fathers (Swartz, 2013). Similarly, in a recent study by Madhavan, Richter and Morris (2014:18), it was found that fathers attributed their lack of involvement to resistance on the part of the mothers because when the relationship dissolves, they negatively influence the child against the father. The participants in another study cited paternal disinterest as a reason for not disclosing the father's whereabouts to their children (Manyatshe & Nduna, 2014:47).

Eight participants' accounts revealed that growing up in female-headed families where fathers were absent was the norm and nothing out of the ordinary. A male participant stated:

*I grew up around that situation [refers to the environment]. It was a norm. It was not an exception for him [father] not to be there...it was a norm. Some of my friends were raised by their mothers or grandmothers. (Male, 33 years)*

In South Africa, the increase in female-headed families is attributed to the migrant labour system. As early as the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Black households in rural South Africa have been dependent on income transfers from members of the household living away from home, mostly working in the mines and in the white-owned agricultural sector (Harington, McGlashan & Chelkowska, 2004:69). These workers were forced to live in closely guarded compounds, their families were not allowed to live with them, and they were given permission to leave the mines only once in a while to visit their families (Deumert, Inder & Maitra, 2005:305). Therefore, many of the families were left in the care of women.

It could therefore be anticipated that female participants would not initially notice their fathers' absence since this was the norm within their communities. Three participants commented as follows:

*...it was just later in life because it has just been like that...though I knew that my dad is not part of us, though I knew him that he is out there somewhere, but...you know, when you are a child it is a bit difficult to bring everything into the picture, to bring it together that there is no dad. (Female, 34 years)*

*It was only when there were certain topics that other children were talking about at school or when asked, that I really became aware that I do not have a dad. (Female, 28 years)*

*I remember I was in sub-A [Grade 1, 6 years old] and the teacher instructed us to draw a family tree and that was when I started asking myself questions, realising that I do not have a father... (Female, 26 years)*

These sentiments are similar to those provided by participants in Golombok and Badger's (2009:6) study that growing up in a female-headed family is acceptable. One participant shared: *"It doesn't really bother me at all. I suppose it might have been different if I'd had two parents from the start, but ehm! I don't really give it that much thought at all. It's what's normal for me".*

Another study found that a sense of normality surrounding children's family experiences, which stemmed from exposure to similar situations within the peer group, or in the wider community (Nixon *et al.*, 2015:1057). Thus, children extrapolate from



their own experiences as well as from knowledge of other families, and come to define their experiences as normative.

### **3.3.2.7 Sub-theme 2.7: Involvement of the mother's male partner**

Unmarried mothers are likely to form and enter into intimate relationships. Eight participants recounted their experiences with their mothers' intimate partners. These relationships brought about ambivalence in the participants' lives, because for some these relationships had some benefit, while others brought suffering and interruptions in their relationships with their mothers. The information presented below shed light on the participants' experiences in relation to their mothers' dating and/or having an intimate relationship with another man.

Three participants who benefitted from their mothers' intimate relationships stated that:

*She [mother] stayed with our stepfather<sup>1</sup>, though he did not stay with us full-time, but he was there also helping to provide for our basic needs. (Female, 32 years)*

*But I should also appreciate my step-father for being there for us, playing that role of a provider for our needs. (Female, 34years)*

*He [mother's partner] came into the picture when I started school at the age of seven, he was there. He was the one buying school uniforms and paying for our school fees. (Male, 34 years)*

As young children, the participants' basic needs were met with the assistance of their mothers' male partners. When a partner moves into a female-headed family, the economic standing of the family changes for the better (Hilton & Kopera-Frye, 2006:31). This may be attributed to the income and other resources that a mother's partner brings into the household which raises the family's standard of living.

The participants' accounts also revealed that introducing a partner into the family put strain on the mother-child relationship. The confusion was brought about by the lack of clarity on the roles, responsibilities, and tasks of the mother's partner within the family. These intimate relationships the participants' mothers had also brought drastic changes to the family dynamics as children had to move between their parental homes and that

---

<sup>1</sup> The participants referred to their mother's partners as stepfathers although they were not legally married.

of their grandparents to accommodate the mother's partner. Four participants felt rejected when their mothers entered into new relationships:

*I was 15 years old when she introduced the stepfather but I did not like the idea of a stepfather. (Female, 33 years)*

*When the stepfather showed up, I felt my relationship with her [mother] was cut and I stayed angry most of the time. She could not understand why I was always angry and I also could not explain that I do not want this person to stay with us. (Female, 32 years)*

*We never had a father figure at all and there came a person whom we felt was getting all the attention. My mother used to take recipes from her employers and she would cook nice meals for us and when the stepfather was there I would feel that all the attention was directed towards him and we were not getting all those special treats, though he was not staying with us on a full-time basis. (Female, 32 years)*

*Let me just say my stepfather was not too welcoming of me...I remember at some stage I left school in the middle of the year for about two months, because he did not want to stay with me. My mother decided that I must go back home [rural area] and stay with granny. (Male, 33 years)*

Consistent with these accounts, Bildtgård and Öberg (2015:5) posit that a new relationship might challenge family boundaries and the new partner may not be welcomed by the children. This is because children are often affected by the loss of time and focus which is directed to the couple by both of the involved individuals. Meeting a new intimate partner might have a significant impact on children, and it is suggested that the mother must deal with conflicting loyalties between the partner and her children (Cooney & Dunne, 2001:837). Similarly, children in female-headed families are usually unwilling to share their mothers' affection with another, and are often resentful of the attention she bestows on an outsider (Schwartz, McRoy & Downs, 2004:89) as they share close and exclusive relationships with their mothers (Nixon *et al.*, 2012:16). In addition, boundaries, roles and task confusion are more prevalent when a new partner enters the family system, thereby creating dysfunctional relationships and depression (Gold 2010:219). Such disruptions will compromise the strengths of the family.

### 3.3.2.8 Sub-theme 2.8: Resilience of the mother in a female-headed family

Resilience is defined as the capacity to overcome adversity or to thrive despite challenges (Power, Goodyear, Maybery, Reupert, O'Hanlon, Cuff & Perlesz, 2015:2). It is often associated with factors such as personality characteristics, or access to resources and support (Simon, Murphy & Smith, 2005:427). This theme shows the resilience of mothers in female-headed families and their ability to demonstrate positive responses to adverse situations.

Despite many challenges encountered in their journey of growing up in female-headed families, participants reported a sense of pride in their mothers for being able to overcome and endure hardships. They acknowledged that they did not grow up in the best of situations, but appreciate their mothers for providing for them and ensuring that they flourish even in dire situations.

*The resilience and persistence that my mother and grandmother were blessed with as well as the strength and discipline that they had...there was always a plan. I always say when things are not okay, my grandmother would have worked out a plan right there and there, my mother would have done something...you know...I always draw strength from that even when I feel things are not going the way they are supposed to. I'm like, come on...I've seen my mother, grandmother hustling basically, so that is one thing I always draw strength from and say you know what...those women were very strong...for me, they way I've seen life through their eyes. The way they did things has really benefitted me greatly. (Male, 33 years)*

*Maybe let me start from this side...raising kids alone is not easy, as I say a lot of things...it's like a puzzle came together when I grew up and started to make sense of life itself...She is a hard worker even now to this point and the experience I have is that she was loving but a lot of times, you know...I just knew that my mom had too much to do. So most of the time, she has always been a working mother working most of the time. But the experiences were good because even though we were raised by a single parent, there was never that gap in my life where I would say because I don't have a father or felt that I am lacking. (Female, 34 years)*

*My mother has a sense of responsibility. I think my mother would have been bitter if she was somebody else, having to raise a child alone when the other parent is alive and healthy. My mom was not bitter at all, she never really complained about her situation. So for me...that is why I am not the kind of guy to whine a lot*

*because I was exposed to that environment where you need to find an alternative where there is none. There were always means of doing something in that house, you know...so I think if I can have half of the courage she had, I will go far in life.*  
(Male, 34 years)

Although, according to some authors, many of the mothers heading families were in low-paying jobs, they were nevertheless able to stretch available resources to make the best of a dire situation (Elliot *et al.*, 2015:353). Similarly, it was found that mothers heading families were experienced in developing strategies for survival and meeting their families' needs under difficult circumstances (Orthner *et al.*, 2004:165). The view of mothers filling both roles of mother and father is a strength that suggests an awareness of the duality of mothers' parenting responsibilities.

Because of the lack of employment or working in low-paying jobs, the participants' mothers found it difficult to meet the material needs of their children, but that did not prevent them from ensuring that they bring out the best in their children. The following narratives are based on the participants' reflections on how they lacked basic necessities and the extent to which their mothers would go to great length to provide for them.

*We would wake up in the morning without having breakfast, go to school and have nothing during lunch...You'll just drink water and go back to class. Back home in the afternoon, you find mama made a plan to put something on the table for us to eat.* (Female, 32 years)

*I remember at some point when my mom was laid off from work, with seven children, it was not easy; we had to live on what she could bring on each day and she made sure that we never went to bed on an empty stomach.* (Female, 26 years)

These experiences support an African Sepedi adage that says, *mma o tswara thipa ka bogaleng*, meaning that mothers do everything within their power to protect and provide for their children.

One participant described how life was like a roller coaster for them as there were instances when they lived comfortably, and times when they were in dire need.

*When mama was working, it was nice because she strived to make us happy. She would bring all the treats and provided for us. Then she would lose her job then life became chaotic and miserable for us. Then she would find another job and our life would pick up again.* (Female, 32 years)

Being a breadwinner is challenging, especially when a mother heading a household loses her job and has children to care for (cf Theme 1 for a detailed discussion on extended families).

While it has been widely reported that the mother's next of kin usually help by taking care of the children (Steil 2001:359; Kpoor, 2014:1967; Sun & Li, 2014:1443), one participant related how her mother single-handedly had to meet the financial needs of the extended family.

*I grew up in a family where my mother was the breadwinner for the whole family. My aunt was not working and my mother was working as a domestic worker.* (Female, 33 years)

The participants' sentiments are similar to those expressed by women raising children alone, that their maternal capabilities bring them pride and positively reinforce the sense that they are good mothers (Darychuk & Jackson, 2015:453). Researchers report that financial deprivation in female-headed families is prevalent and it is a common explanation for children's poor cognitive development and consequently poor academic achievement in school (Sun & Li, 2014:1441). The outcome of this study does not support this view because, despite the lack of resources, participants clearly performed relatively well academically.

### **3.3.2.9 Sub-theme 2.9: Strengths of growing up in a female-headed family**

The participants shared the strengths inherent in their families as well as valuable lessons they had learned growing up in female-headed families in the face of adversity. Furthermore, the narratives illustrate how participants capitalised on these lessons and strengths.

A sense of independence and self-reliance were experienced by five participants after seeing their mothers succeed in raising them by themselves.

*The realisation that as a woman I am capable of doing anything I want and not to rely on any man, but just as me standing alone...I don't need to draw anybody in my equation. If I need help I can ask but personally, I am capable of doing anything I want and also the fact that I am the driver of my destiny, you do understand. (Female, 32 years)*

*I think I have become one young lady who is strong emotionally and otherwise. I feel it was a motivation for me to grow up without a father because maybe if I had a father I would be spoilt and would not have taken my education seriously. I would not have a refuge because my mom was struggling already. If I did not educate myself, I would be expanding a circle of growing up without a father and that of destitution. So for me, his absence was a motivation for me to really work hard and get out of this circle of destitution and the only way was to educate myself. (Female, 26 years)*

*What I have realised with me and what I have seen on my horoscope, I love to be independent. Very independent...but...as I was growing up, I told myself to focus on myself getting educated, buy a house and do things for myself. I did not count on marriage because I wanted to rely on myself. I came alone on this planet and I wanted to have the necessary means to raise my children. You understand...I love to be independent. I do not care what you do for me or do not do for me, I do not depend on other people, I do not hold on to what is not mine. As I am sitting with you now, I knew that one day I must go and find my own place to stay. So...yeah! I did not even promise myself any marriage and think that I would be married and not go to school and rely on someone to support me...noo! I do not want to depend on anyone. (Female, 32 years)*

*I have learned to stand up for myself and not wait for somebody to come and do things for me because there are situations in life that require one to stand and do something. Coming from a female-headed family, I just grew up seeing my grandma doing something and mama doing something on the other side, so when I grew up, the same ethic that they had, in a way I employ it in my life. My situation has taught me to work for myself, though it is not bad for other people to say I can marry a rich man who would do things for me, but for me it has taught me that I don't have to marry a rich man, I can be a rich woman myself and it has taught me to be a hard worker, more than anything else. (Female, 34 years)*

*I look at how well my mother has raised all her children, for me the influence on me is that I can make it in life...when you grow up without a dad who would stand up for you any moment when you are bullied, you learn to stand up for yourself the whole time. You know that if you do not stand up for yourself, no one would. (Male 34 years)*

The participants drew strength from their challenges as they turned adversity into opportunity, and took advantage of these opportunities to determine their own destiny. The participants' accounts resemble the lived personal stories in a study where single mothers described how their children negotiated greater independence and self-sufficiency (Clark, Stedmon & Margison, 2008:576). Similarly, autonomy and self-reliance of the children in female-headed families was found to be useful to get ahead in society, and parents encouraged children to become independent and self-sufficient (Keller, Borke, Yovsi, Lohaus & Jensen, 2005:34). The participants' accounts differ from the conclusion that children in female-headed families are likely to drop out of school, be expelled or suspended, or to repeat a grade (Mudyan & Lee, 2010:445). Rather, the participants in this study viewed their family situation as a source of inspiration to remain focused on achieving their life goals, regardless of challenges.

Seven participants also shared how the difficulties that they had to contend with turned into opportunities for personal growth and development as they felt comfort and pride in their mothers' caregiving abilities. Inspiration and motivation also dominated their descriptions of the strong points they acquired through their journey.

*When I look at her [mother], she is a perfect example of a go-getter. She might not have been able to achieve her goals as quickly as she wanted to, but she stayed in the game and she would say its fine, this is the goal that I want to achieve, at the end I will get there although it might take time but I will push and succeed. So that is what I have drawn from my situation. (Female, 32 years)*

*When you lack certain things in life that serves as an encouragement for you to work hard because you know that if you do not work hard, you might end up having nothing. (Male, 34 years)*

*It has just taught me that as women, we have so much strength within us...you know...my grandmother raising us, and she was there for all of us...and I look at my mother as well raising all these children. For me the influence that they had on me is that I can make it in life as a woman. Yes, there are many challenges in life but I can succeed. (Female, 33 years)*

Through their efforts to coach and create supportive family environments, mothers in female-headed families displayed a variety of coping strategies that their children could emulate. The messages that the participants received from their life situations came in

the form of concrete examples, as described by a participant in the study by Everet *et al.* (2016:344). *“She [her mother] showed me what it was to be a strong African-American woman, you know, and not relying on the resources of what the world offers”*. Furthermore, mothers recognised the importance of teaching their children to be comfortable with the self, to acknowledge their inner strengths, and to draw from that strength in order to persevere and survive.

Family cohesion emerged very strongly from the participants’ accounts as they shared how their mothers endeavoured to create loving relationships and interaction among all members of the family.

*Although we were struggling financially, we grew up well because our mom taught us to look out for one another as siblings. When I am sick, I know for sure that my sisters and brothers are there for me. So there was that cohesion amongst us, that emotional bond within us...regardless of our circumstances.* (Female, 26 years)

*Cohesiveness and unity that was in the family were amazing. My mom would say as she was a religious person, she would tell us that it is not about what you have or can do, it is about the unity that we have. We might not have everything in the family but because of this unity, the neighbours in the community would never point at us and say these people do not have much. But the unity that we had was strong and kept us going.* (Male, 26 years)

Moriarty and Wagner (2004:203) also found that mothers in female-headed families engaged more in routines such as spending more time together as a family to facilitate an ongoing process of enhancing feelings of family cohesion and instilling family values that ultimately foster family growth and evolution. It is suggested that when providing family preservation services, social workers should capitalise on the strengths of families such as spending quality time together, and open communication and cohesion among family members (Moore, Chalk, Scarpa & Vandivere, 2002:3).

Resilience emerged as a strong element that enabled the participants to overcome challenges in their lives. Some participants developed a strong character from the experience which helps them resist external pressure, as illustrated below:

*I am not easily influenced and that is because of the circumstances that I have been through at home. I grew up in a family where our mom was always trying to*



*instil a positive outlook on life and to be content with what we had. We learned to accept our family situation and not try to be like others. So when I have friends I am not easily influenced because I was taught to accept myself and my situation from a young age. (Female, 32 years)*

*My circumstances have made me a responsible person, to be firm and to stand up for myself. In 2013 I learned that I am HIV-positive, so when I found out, I did not cry like other people when they find out that they are HIV-positive. I told myself that I know the circumstances where I come from. I am not going to succumb to this status. I grew up struggling and I am not going to let it add to my struggles. I will put HIV aside and live my life the way I want to. (Female, 25 years)*

The participants revealed an ability to regain a state of equilibrium in the face of adversity in order to sustain and enhance their functioning. The resilience in children from female-headed families is attributed to the spirit that their mothers have demonstrated in confronting the hardships in their lives, and their ability to bounce back from the most adverse situation (Nikolova, Small & Mengo, 2015:488). Resilience is the capacity to change, adapt, and grow in spite of ongoing stress or adversity (Brown, Howcroft & Muthen, 2010:339). It is the ability to successfully cope with stress and bounce back in difficult situations. For instance, in a study by Hong and Welch (2013:54) a mother raising her children alone described resilience figuratively by saying: “*It is better to be like a blade of grass, its roots are strong and although the leaf bends with the wind it does not break*”. Children from even the most highly dysfunctional or resource-deprived families manage not only to survive but also forge decent lives for themselves (Goodman, Llyod, Selwyn, Morgan, Mwongera, Gitari & Keiser, 2015:15). Thus, resilience within female-headed families can be utilised by social workers to help them realise their strengths and to view difficulties as stepping stones to achieve optimal family functioning.

The participants felt strongly about making a difference in their family’s lives and ensuring that their children do not grow up in circumstances similar to their own.

*My relationship with my child is very strong because I do not want my child to grow in my absence in whatever way. So my background has really contributed positively and has made me to love and appreciate a family. (Male, 34 years)*

*When I had my first child, I started looking at life through a different lens and was more focussed on completing my university qualification so that I could give him a better future. (Female, 32 years)*

The participants' experiences cultivated a determination to provide the best for their children. Similarly, participants in another study revealed that they only want what is best for their children and would go to any length to make sure that their children do not grow up the way they did (Makofane, 2015:33). The findings challenge the notion that men who grew up in absent-father homes are unlikely to get involved in the upbringing of their own children (Pougnnet *et al.*, 2012: 552). Furthermore, women who grew up in female-headed families were also more likely to raise their children without partners.

Upon reflecting on how the family situation has affected their relationships with other people, participants shared that:

*Coming from that family has taught me to adapt to different situations, so it was easier for me to relate and cope with people of different characters. (Female, 26 years)*

*I don't have issues meeting new people. When I got into a room full of people I don't shy away and sit alone in a corner or something. (Female, 34 years)*

These experiences challenge the findings by Harper and McLanahan (2004:395) that children growing up in female-headed families have lower self-esteem and struggle to form and maintain relationships. The findings, however, resonate with those by Everet *et al.* (2016:343) that single mothers teach their children about their self-worth and value while growing up.

One participant spoke about her relationships with intimate partners and described how she cannot commit to a relationship that does not fulfil certain needs.

*I was raised in a manner that when I don't like certain things in a relationship, I speak out about them and if there is no change, I simply move on with my life. (Female, 33 years)*

The independence that some adult children who were raised in female-headed families have, enable them to move away from unfulfilling intimate relationships (Keller *et al.*, 2005:34). The independence and self-determination exercised by individuals who grew

up in female-headed families is a strength that would enable them to determine and foster healthy, intimate relationships.

### **3.3.2.10 Sub-theme 2.10: Challenges of growing up in a female-headed family**

The strengths perspective offers a different view of how individuals function in their environment (Peacock, Forbes, Markle-Reid, Hawranik, Morgan, Jansen, Leipert & Henderson, 2010:642). It emphasises individuals' assets rather than their deficits or problems. However, negative experiences or challenges are not ignored from a strengths perspective; rather, they are acknowledged as one part of the individual's personal experiences and are used to focus on the individual's strength (Black, 2003:341). The participants' challenges are highlighted (in sub-themes 2.8 and 2.9 above) and this section focuses on the current, day-to-day challenges as a result of growing up in female-headed families.

Regardless of the successes and opportunities mentioned by the participants, they still seem to feel deserted by their fathers. Eleven participants were of the view that their fathers willingly chose not to take part in their lives. As a result, they sometimes felt pain and discontentment.

*My father has caused me a lot of pain because he would have been there for me if he wanted to. (Female, 26 years)*

*It is somewhat painful. I am always wondering whether my life would have been different if he was there for me. (Female, 28 years)*

*I remember a time when we were still renting a flat with my husband, he did something that I thought was terrible to me and I felt extremely....extremely angry. The first time he disappointed me, I was crashed...I pushed our son over the balcony and he was injured. My son was removed from my care and I was admitted to a psychiatric clinic for about four months, and through counselling I discovered that I had a lot of unresolved issues from my childhood and they were creeping into my adult life and influencing how I handle situations around me. (Female, 30 years)*

The same was true for participants from East's *et al.* (2007:16) study whose narratives were replete with descriptions of abandonment, hurt, resentment, anger, and feelings of pain and being unloved. The most recent study also revealed that a father's absence

left some participants emotionally wounded as they felt lost, unloved, rejected, and betrayed by their unreliable fathers (Makofane, 2015:31). Such feelings can have adverse effects on the emotional wellbeing of children growing up in the absence of their fathers. Hence, psychosocial support is crucial as the emotional and psychological consequences of such experiences have not received the necessary attention.

### **3.3.3 Theme 3: Support systems for female-headed families**

This theme outlines support systems from which female-headed families draw strength and courage. The participants reported various forms of support they received when they were growing up in female-headed families. The cultural, spiritual, and social functions are brought about by the social networks in which the family participates (Kebede & Butterfield, 2004:358). Moreover, social networks are effective in mediating and buffering stress, reducing isolation, supporting life changes, and providing role models, information, and resources (Richardson, Johnson & St Vil, 2014:493). The following support systems, namely spiritual, cultural, familial, and community support identified by the participants are discussed below.

#### **3.3.3.1 Spiritual support**

Nine participants articulated that despite challenges in their upbringing, they found solace and strength in God (Supreme Being), the fundamental teachings of the Bible, and role models they had in churches. Their belief in God was a source of meaning and inner peace that brought feelings of comfort and optimism, as illustrated by the following accounts:

*Look, from my mother's side it was difficult to get support from her family. She was the first born of five girls, we have no uncles and her mother was the second wife, so it was also tough for her mother. My mother had to take the role of making sure that her younger siblings went to school, and at the same time cared for us. The thing that supported me was the church because at the time when I was doing grade 7, I had started going to church and I feel that it really played an important role in my upbringing. It also relieved her from stress because that meant I spent less time on the street with friends, and my younger brother also followed me. We completed matric and life started to change. But she did her best in the*

*circumstances, but support structure from her family was never there. (Male, 34 years)*

*Teachings from the Bible, teachings that I got from the church and the relationships I developed with the children of God. When you look at the people who have a close relationship with God and are successful it motivates you in such a way that you want to be closer to God so that you can be successful as well. (Female, 30 years)*

*The church played an important role because as you know within the church there are get-togethers established for women, you see...women of prayer...those were the women who were always supportive to mama through prayers and also with material things like toiletries. They would visit just to check on us. If there were church trips that we could not afford, they would pay for us and even buy us food and make sure that we are not different from the others because we do not have money. (Female, 26 years)*

*We are from a Christian family, whenever we encountered a problem, my grandmother would wake up early on Sundays to pray to God to lift the burden. We found the church as a source of relief and strength because when we were at church we even forgot that we do not have food at home. (Female, 25 years)*

The same findings were made in the study on stressors and coping strategies used in female-headed families (Broussard, Joseph & Thompson, 2012:198). A participant in their study described her reliance on faith and the relief that came with support received from people at the church. The same was true for Moriarty and Wagner's (2004:201) participants, that the church was an important part of their lives that brought meaning and relayed a sense of belonging in times of difficulty. The ability for churches to form and retain strong links with family members in female-headed families over time is important and should be seen as strength for social workers to draw from during practice.

Three participants observed cultural rituals as part of their spiritual practice to find comfort and peace in the midst of challenges. Those who did not know their paternal history and had no contact with their fathers were of the view that they were disadvantaged considering that certain rituals had to be performed to prevent misfortune and to allow them to prosper in life.

*When things were not going well at home, we would call upon the ancestors to intervene but there are things that require the attention of your paternal aunt. How would you know your aunt when you don't even know your father? Through consultation with traditional healers at times you learn that the ancestors want certain rituals to be performed to appease them. Only the paternal aunt can help in such matters, otherwise misfortune blocks your success in life. (Female, 28 years)*

Some Africans practise ancestral worship founded on the belief that the dead live on and are capable of influencing the lives of those who are still living (Bogopa, 2010:1). It is believed that ancestors are capable of either blessing or cursing those who are still living (Munthali, 2006:368). This finding concurs with that of Makofane (2015:33) that some cultures require that a special ritual ceremony should be performed by the paternal family to welcome the birth of a child and introduce the child to the ancestors. The process of ancestral worship takes place in the form of a lifecycle, proceeding from birth to death (Mokgobi, 2014:26). There are certain ritual ceremonies that cannot be performed without a particular relative who should fulfil certain obligations (Bogopa, 2010:2) such as paternal aunts, as indicated by the participants in this study. Furthermore, failure to perform certain rituals in honour of the ancestors may bring about health-related problems as well as misfortunes in life (Berg, 2003:196). This aspect calls for social workers' understanding, acknowledgement, and appreciation of diverse cultural backgrounds.

### **3.3.3.2 Community support**

People in the community also play a significant role in the lives of the participants. For instance, neighbours fulfil a crucial need when support from familial ties is not readily available (Shaw, 2005:505). One of the participants shared how he learned practical skills as a result of playing and engaging with children in the neighbourhood.

*I remember this old man who was very skilful and had his children helping him when fixing his car. I would play with his kids and when he calls them to do something I would also take part and learn. I eventually learned how to build a house and other things, like fixing cars. (Male, 34 years)*

This sentiment confirms the African traditional proverb: that it takes a village to raise a child. African people live in the company of others and share concepts of raising

children together (Masango, 2006:939). The exposure the participant had motivated him to acquire skills that would be useful to him and others in future.

According to four participants, neighbours offered support by providing them with material needs.

*Our neighbours would bring mealie meal [a staple food in Southern Africa made from maize] and some toiletries...that is how we survived. It was always a privilege for us to know that we could rely on the support from our neighbours. We felt that there was someone who understood our situation...someone who cares. (Female, 26 years)*

The role of the community was also mentioned by mothers raising children alone in a Canadian study conducted by Valtchanov, Parry, Glover and Mulcahy (2014:189). They pointed out that assistance from neighbours has been quite remarkable considering the distance from their immediate families.

Two participants described the church as their community where they felt comfortable.

*The church as well provided support, though it was not in terms of finances, but just going to church, singing...you know...Christmas carols, practising dramas we felt we belonged to a community that had our interest at heart. (Female, 33 years)*

Similarly, it has been noted that churches in African communities provide its members with a positive identity, a sense of self-worth, and also serve as social centres where they could sing, dance, and discuss community concerns, thus playing a key role in fostering a sense of community (Este, 2004:6).

The community support network and resources such as libraries also play a crucial role in relaying and disseminating beneficial information, as described by one of the participants:

*Today I am a university student because of the information that I received from my peers at the library about university entry requirements and the process to follow when applying for funding. (Female, 25 years)*

The finding supports the view that community support networks offer access to relevant information and resources (Weisz, Quinn & Williams, 2015:8). Family connections with

community members also provide access to information and resources such as available job opportunities (Raffaelli & Wiley, 2012:351).

### **3.3.3.3 Extended-family support**

Extended family support has been characterised by terms such as proximity, frequency of interactions, closeness, and mutual assistance (Weisz *et al.*, 2015:8). Extended families play a critical role in the context of female-headed families. For instance, mothers in female-headed families use the support of extended families in the maintenance of their children (Taylor, Larsen-Rife, Conger, Widaman & Cutrona, 2010:469). Conversely, some extended family members may become a source of stress to these mothers rather than offering support as the relationship may not be characterised by reciprocity (Brodsky cited by Kpoor, 2014:1972).

Ten participants shared experiences on the support they received from their extended families, and the extent to which they were involved in helping them to successfully cope with stressors associated with female-headed families.

*My uncle who passed away loved us a lot, although he could not buy us clothes and all that he tried his best. When you lacked something at school...he would give you money and also gave advice on relationships and what to look out for in a life partner, things that we could not discuss with mom. Many times, we would call him and he would come running to help. We all relied on him. (Female, 32 years)*

*When mama was coming home late, my uncle and aunt would come to check whether we have already started preparing supper, when we don't have money to buy bread, they would give us the money and mama would reimburse them when she came back. (Female, 32 years)*

*My uncle had his own family but would come and rescue us. He made sure that when mom is knocking off late, he would come to check up on us and sometimes even cook for us and do our laundry. (Female, 25 years)*

*Generally, the burden is just too much for any mother raising her children alone...It is too much. In my situation my mom had the support from her family...she would go to work, wake up at four in the morning to leave at five o'clock but she didn't worry about what's going to happen to me. She knew that...my uncle was a driver and he left at six, so he would wake me up, I'll then take a bath, and go to school. When I came back there was someone in the house to look after me, so I think to*



*a certain extent that made her life easier, she had a support system, so she didn't have to worry about what's gonna happen to me when I came back from school.*  
(Male, 33 years)

The participants' accounts are consistent with previous findings in Finland (Europe) that family support networks provide valuable assistance to female-headed families as they are able to utilise social and economic resources that exist within the extended family unit (Leinonen, Solantaus, & Punamäki, 2003:501). In London, extended families are regarded as a viable form of support because the female-headed family does not live and function in isolation but in extended family situations (Sgarbossa & Ford-Gilboe, 2004:256). In Michigan, USA, extended family members are instrumental in providing support to female-headed families, and this support has been indicated as a protective factor in the wellbeing and mental health of members of these families (Taylor, Forsythe-Brown, Taylor & Chatters, 2014:148). African female-headed families also enjoy support from extended families in raising children. In African culture, the maternal uncle plays a critical kinship role (Madhavan & Roy, 2012:803). A mother's brother must be consulted in all matters affecting his sister's children (Richardson, 2009:1042). Furthermore, he helps with food and clothes, and acts as mediator when disputes arise within the family. He also has power when children's marriages are arranged. One participant stated: *"...with the help of my two uncles, of course. My two sisters also helped my granny in my rearing as they were responsible for taking me to school."* (Makofane, 2015:27)

For two participants, although they could not receive any support from their fathers, their paternal relatives stepped in to provide and fill the gap left by their absent fathers.

*We were very close to my paternal aunt...until she passed on. We were so close I think she was very concerned. She would see me playing soccer with my friends and call me to ask if I was okay and to check whether there was something she could assist me with...you know she was genuinely concerned...I think in that family...in my father's family she was the only person who had the level of concern for me. I stopped going there after she passed on. She would ask stuff like how is school, why are you playing soccer with your school shoes? She was close to my mom as well; she would come home and enquire about my wellbeing. I think to a*

*certain extent she knew that her brother was not really that responsible, so she felt like she needed to play a part in my life. (Male, 33 years)*

*The main support we received was from my paternal aunt, though she was staying in Polokwane, she made means to come and check up on us every month at home, and she would bring along groceries. She was a store manager at the time and she would also give my mom money to buy whatever we needed in the house. When it was really hard we would call her and tell her that we are stranded and immediately she would, despite the distance, make sure that she comes to our rescue. (Male, 26 years)*

These storylines are in contrast to the findings by Reynolds (2009:21) in Britain that suggest separation or breakdown of the relationship between mother and father leads to children losing or having minimal contact with their paternal kin unless the father actively works towards sustaining family ties. Madhavan and Roy (2012:805) conducted a comparative study between South Africa and the USA and established that paternal kin members are likely to take on particular roles only when the biological father is living with the child.

However, two participants experienced difficulties in accessing support from their extended families, largely because of practical issues such as distance, as demonstrated by the following account:

*It was difficult to get support from my mother's side of the family because they were staying far away from us and it was costly to reach each other, so they would rarely pay us a visit. (Female, 26 years)*

The relatives' resources determine the extent to which they are able to assist female-headed families. It should be noted that deficiency in support from the extended family was by no means due to inequitable relationships or the choice not to care for the female-headed families. For instance, in a study on stress, social support, and depression, it was found that all mothers in female-headed families were involved in relationships characterised by mutual aid and support (Cairney, Offord & Racine, 2003:446). However, social workers should be cognisant of the fact that families that are separated by distance may find it more difficult to fulfil particular family roles and

functions (Suzuki, 2010:41), and thus need to have access to available resources in their communities.

### **3.3.4 Theme 4: The participants' recommendations regarding support services for female-headed families**

The participants reflected on their challenges and strengths of growing up in female-headed families, and recounted their views of how social workers could be of assistance to such families. Social workers need to gain insight into female-headed families by engaging with children from such families in order to provide services and assistance that will improve their social and psychological wellbeing (Walsh, 2012:3). Five sub-themes emerged from the participants' suggestions in relation to social work services to female-headed families.

#### **3.3.4.1 Sub-theme 4.1: Support to children growing up in female-headed families**

In this instance, three participants strongly felt that social fathers should be sought and encouraged to mentor and nurture young boys with absent fathers.

*Help with finding men who will avail themselves to talk about intimate topics with boys will be useful. (Male, 33 years)*

*Building support groups for young men, and create an environment where men will go out with young men and spend time with them. This can really make a difference. It is also important to emphasise what is contained in the Children's Act about parental roles, responsibilities and rights of unmarried fathers, so that they can have access to their children and know their rights. Mothers need to be educated about the role of the father in a child's life. A social worker can really play a big role here. In South Africa, it is within the Children's Act that parents have responsibilities and rights to have relationships with their children whether married or unmarried. (Male, 34 years)*

The findings confirm what young African women from homes with absent fathers have often said, that they relied on men such as maternal uncles and grandfathers in their lives who were willing to share their knowledge, skills, and experiences (Makofane, 2015:34). Fatherhood is beyond the scope of the biological father and it is defined by its functions such as caregiving, playing, providing support, and teaching (Bzostek,

2008:959). Some authors conclude that social fathers play a significant role in fostering positive life outcomes and monitoring and regulating youth behaviour, including providing emotional and psychological support (Ratele *et al.*, 2012:554),

Nine participants believed that empowering children in female-headed families and forming support groups would go a long way towards helping them resolve unanticipated problems. The following suggestions were offered:

*If we had groups [support] where we could share our experiences and get to know that there are other people going through the same situations as us, I don't think we could have encountered some of the problems that we had to endure. To tell the truth, I needed encouragement, I needed support and I could not find it, I went out looking for it at the wrong places. (Female, 25 years)*

*We did not even have any information about social workers but I think if we had social workers back then, who could support us psychologically and socially in a sense of counselling just to instil that thing...you know...give us those life skills and guide us that even though your father is not here...this is how you can handle things...you do not have to be angry and this is how you can handle conflict. (Female, 26 years)*

A support group is an organisation of people who share the same needs and challenges and who meet to discuss their experiences, share ideas, and provide emotional support for one another (Toseland & Rivas, 2014:20). It is an effective method in helping people to realise they are not alone. Groups also convey the experience of commonality that allows people to experience a sense of belonging and continuous learning (Fellenz, 2006:581).

Three participants also felt that social workers should play a role of mediator in families to iron out unclear issues, address subjects such as family secrets, and help family members engage in open discussions about their circumstances, freely and transparently. The participants' expressions are encapsulated by the following narrative:

*I believe social workers can still have a positive input into this situation. I grew up in a father absent environment, something that was never talked about in my family, and I always had questions that I still ask myself to this day as an adult. So I feel social workers can help bridge that gap of communication between mothers and their children to talk about issues and just clear things up. (Female, 28 years)*

Similarly, in another study, the participants indicated that they were not told the truth about who their real fathers are, and thus grew up regarding their social fathers (maternal uncles) as their biological fathers (Makofane, 2015:29). The mothers in female-headed families do not often discuss the absence of fathers with their children, especially when the fathers failed to initiate contact with their children (Sano, Richards & Zvonkovic, 2008:1712). Furthermore, mothers were left with negative feelings of anger, frustration, and disappointment which eventually led to conflict between them and the children's fathers. It is important to bear in mind that human beings have the desire for a sense of identity, and therefore some children from female-headed families who never knew or had contact with their biological fathers may be hurting and experiencing unresolved issues which may adversely affect their relationships with others.

#### **3.3.4.2 Sub-theme 4.2: Support to mothers heading families**

A variety of subjective propositions came through about how mothers heading families can be supported by social workers. Inherent in these propositions were the notions that even though they could rally informal support, these mothers also need formal psychosocial support considering that their emotional wellbeing is often strained by the dual roles and responsibilities they carry.

*I feel social workers could help by equipping them with parenting skills and add to what they already know and have so that they can be good parents. With my mom it was not easy for her raising seven children who were at different stages of development on her own. She had to manage and be a parent to all of us, so social workers can equip such mothers with coping and parenting skills as well as how to nurture herself as a parent and feel good about herself. (Female, 26 years)*

*I think it would be of help mostly in terms of emotional and psychological support. Things were made easier for my mom because she had the support structure through my uncles, but I think she would have benefitted largely if she received psychological counselling as well. (Male, 33 years)*

*I think social workers can help mothers deal with whatever issues they are facing for them to raise their kids properly. If they don't have the necessary support, when things get heavy, their outlet will be the kids. If they can talk to somebody and voice their fears, their expectations of what they want in life that would sort of limit the burden they feel emotionally. I think it's more emotional than anything else*

*because I know that there is that stigma attached to single mothers that denotes that there is something wrong with them. So maybe most women would wonder if there is something wrong with them, why they don't have husbands, or maybe why did he leave? So, social workers can just check if the females [women] are really comfortable with the situation that they are in. (Male, 34 years)*

The more resourced the mother is, the more positive she is about her sense of self and wellbeing (Wall, Aboim, Cunha & Vasconcelos, 2001:219). Thus, when a mother feels positive about her self-esteem, she is more able to carry out her expected tasks in an efficient and effective manner; and her children will benefit from that. Some authors are of the view that mothers should be provided with counselling to help reduce their psychological distress and depressive symptoms that manifest as a result of readjustments in life (Al-Krenawi, Graham & Fakher-Aldin, 2003:496).

One participant mentioned that the government can do more than provide social grants, and should rather focus on sustainable economic development.

*I fully support the government's initiative of giving out social grants which these families rely upon, but should it happen that the grants are stopped, the mothers should be able to make plans on how are they are going to sustain their families. So social workers need to empower them on how to build a stronger economy in order to sustain themselves and their children. Empowering these mothers would be a good start so that they can be able to stand for their families and not wait for the government to do something for them. (Male, 26 years)*

This narrative is consistent with a suggestion that the USA's intervention strategies should focus on women heading families to pursue careers to make a practical impact on their economic wellbeing (Momsen, 2002:147). Additionally, inasmuch as female headship is not always correlated with poverty, women heading households are worthy of special attention in terms of their economic development due to the fact that they face disadvantages based purely on their gender (Buvinić & Gupta, 2011:259). Empowerment is at the core of the family strengths perspective. It involves processes of assisting families to discover and expand resources and tools within them (Saleebey, 2013:13), thereby building their self-reliance.

### **3.3.4.3 Sub-theme 4.3: Inclusion of fathers whose children are growing up in female-headed families**

All the participants stated that their fathers were not involved in their upbringing. Although many were upset by their fathers not showing interest in their lives, they did not discredit them through their mothers' influence. As a result, they felt strongly that such absent fathers need to be involved in their children's lives, and establishing relationships with their children may prove valuable.

*Having fatherhood projects and groups would also be helpful, where fathers would be helped and given support to build relationships with their children, topics about helping them to know about their children's school activities should be explored.*  
(Male, 34 years)

*We need to stop this culture where the father is only the provider and have no other role to play in the family.* (Female, 33 years)

*Social workers could help by encouraging fathers to support their children financially and in other ways. Should my father have been around and given me the support I required, perhaps I could be having a degree or a higher qualification.*  
(Female, 30 years)

*I think it is important to encourage mothers to openly talk to their children about their fathers. I mean we know that a child is brought into this earth by two parents. At least these children must be told the truth about who their fathers are and make a decision for themselves whether they want to build a relationship with their fathers or not.* (Female, 34 years)

Fatherhood has indeed evolved from the ideals of the colonial father, the distant breadwinner, to the modern involved dad as co-parent (Cabrera, Tamis-LeMonda, Bradley, Hofferth & Lamb, 2000:127). Father involvement captures three areas which are evident in various studies on how fathers can fulfil their roles amid the shifting broader environment (Marsiglio, Amato, Day & Lamb, 2000:1184). These areas are accessibility – a father's presence and availability to the child; engagement – a father's experience of direct contact and interaction with the child; and responsibility – a father's participation and accountability for the child's welfare and care. Particular attention should also be paid to promoting father involvement as this can exert a powerful influence on both children and their fathers (Barnett & Hyde, 2001:784).

#### **3.3.4.4 Sub-theme 4.4: Inclusion of extended families and communities**

The extended family and the community also dominated the discussions as these were seen to provide vital albeit informal support. Participants described how they thought social workers could effectively include extended families and communities in their strategies to offer support to female-headed families.

*The social worker should not help the mother and the child only, but, address issues with the whole family involved in the upbringing of these children. (Female, 30 years)*

*I remember the role of our neighbour; she would just call us and relate an interesting story to us, so the community can also play a big role in such families. (Female, 33 years)*

*If they are doing their community work and identify female-headed families, they have to provide empowerment, monitor such families, encourage them and link them with available resources. (Female, 25 years)*

The potential for client empowerment is enhanced when professionals incorporate informal networks into their interventions (Sgarbossa & Ford-Gilboe, 2004:235). Therefore, it can be argued that informal networks provide economic assistance, emotional security, and protection. The link between informal networks and formal assistance can yield positive outcomes such as an improved quality of life for members of female-headed families.

#### **3.3.4.5 Sub-theme 4.5: Support in dealing with animosity between the participants' paternal and maternal families**

Disputes between parents and their families hinder participants' efforts to establish relationships with their fathers as well as their paternal kin. The mothers and their kin play a significant role in gatekeeping and can, directly or indirectly, restrict contact between children and their paternal families. The participants shared the need for social workers to promote reasonable relationships between both parents even though they may no longer be together.

*Social workers can help the parents to build the relationship for the sake of their children, as with my parents, there was some animosity between them, so I had no*



*relationship with my paternal family. Although in my head I knew I had a paternal family, they were non-existent to me. They did not stay far away from my home, but I just knew that I was not supposed to even think of visiting them. So I think more than anything relationship is more important, I mean there are fathers who have separated with their wives but they choose to maintain good relations with them for their children's sake. So I think social workers...may facilitate relationship networks within families, strengthening families, for the sake of the children to grow up having healthy relationships with both parents and getting to understand the role of the mother and father and relating to both of them, I think this would be very helpful. (Female, 34 years)*

*It would go back to uniting the two families, because there are children involved. When I was growing up, I felt I deserved to know my paternal family as well. Inasmuch as my father did he not explore all avenues to look for me; I needed him to support me financially. I remember I would go to school with torn jeans when I was in high school. Did I really have to suffer because things did not work out between them? Social workers should help them find a way of working together for the benefit of the children and put their differences aside. It was really not fair for me to bear the consequences of their failed relationship. (Female, 30 years)*

Mothers play a pivotal role in facilitating the relationship between children and their paternal family. The mothers in female-headed families may restrict their children's contact with their paternal family because of the lack of paternal involvement in the upbringing of children, or out of anger towards absent fathers as they are perceived as having opted out of their responsibility in caring for their children (Fagan & Barnett, 2003:1023). Another frequent posited reason for the restrictions is the father's insufficient financial contributions toward the child's wellbeing (Trinder, 2008:1314). However, Makofane (2015:31) cautions that the father's mere presence in the home should not be regarded as the only measure of his support to his children, but rather that his presence and his financial support should be considered as two separate issues relating to his connection to his children.

### **3.4 Conclusion**

This chapter presented the research findings derived from the transcribed interviews with the 12 participants who grew up in female-headed families. The biographical profile of participants was laid out in the first section, followed by a discussion of four themes,

15 sub-themes, and three categories, providing direct quotes from the transcribed interviews and subjecting them to literature control.

The first theme focused on the participants' descriptions of their family background. The second theme looked at particular experiences related to growing up in female-headed families. This was followed by theme three, which presented the support systems found in female-headed families. Lastly, theme four discussed the participants' recommendations regarding support services to female-headed families. Their accounts were suggestive of helping children in female-headed families pay attention to their mothers, incorporating fathers and extended families in support programmes, and assisting families to deal with conflict situations that impede contact between children and their paternal kin.

Chapter Four will provide the summary, conclusions, and recommendations from the research study.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **SUMMARIES, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

The goal of this study was to gain insight into the experiences of adult children who grew up in female-headed families. This chapter completes the research report by reflecting on previous chapters, the qualitative research process followed, and the findings. Conclusions and recommendations are also presented, based on the research process and findings.

#### **4.2 Summary of the previous chapters**

Chapter One provided a detailed overview of the study on the experiences of adult children who grew up in female-headed families. The background, problem statement, and motivation for the study were provided. The research question, goal, and objectives which guided the investigation were presented. Qualitative research methods were introduced, followed by a theoretical framework which informed the study. Informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and management of information as fundamental ethical considerations that guided the researcher's conduct were also illustrated. Finally, key concepts utilised in the study were clarified.

Chapter Two focused on a comprehensive description of how the qualitative research process was applied to understand the experiences of adult children who grew up in female-headed families. The application of the research approach and designs, identification of the population, selection of the sample, preparation of the participants for data collection, data collection method, pilot testing of the interview guide, data analysis, data verification, and reflexivity were explained.

Chapter Three provided the findings from the research process through narratives of the 12 participants. The qualitative data was independently analysed by the researcher and an independent coder. Four themes, 15 sub-themes, and three categories emerged. Verbatim quotations from the transcripts were used to present the findings. The family

strengths perspective was utilised to interpret and perform literature control by comparing and contrasting them with previous findings.

Although the traditional two-parent family is widely regarded as the norm, there has been an increase in female-headed families which are viewed by others as deviant. As a result, many researchers who perceive female-headed families as harmful, conducted research focusing on information seeking to highlight only the negative effects of such families on children.

However, the family strengths perspective departs from the premise that all families have strengths, regardless of their structure. It discourages the use of a deficit-based approach that assigns disempowering labels to families and categorises them in terms of pathology, but rather focuses on the inherent strengths that these families possess. The Manual on Family Preservation (2010) mandates social workers to provide family preservation services from a strengths perspective to help families face their various problems and challenges, and to identify and capitalise on their strengths and resources when resolving social problems. Therefore, the use of the family strengths perspective for this study is appropriate.

#### **4.3 Summaries, conclusions, and recommendations of the research study**

The following section provides summaries of the qualitative research process, major findings, conclusions reached, and recommendations.

##### **4.3.1 Summary and conclusions based on the research process**

A qualitative research approach was employed in pursuit of answering an overarching research question in this study. The researcher was able to explore the experiences of adult children who grew up in female-headed families, and subsequently described their subjective experiences. The following research question was derived from the topic and paved the way for the researcher to delve into the participants' experiences:

- **What are the experiences of adult children who grew up in female-headed families?**

The overall, broad goal for the study was:

- **To gain insight into the experiences of adult children who grew up in female-headed families**

This goal was accomplished as the research methodology and techniques used provided an avenue for participants to provide extensive accounts of their experiences growing up in female-headed families (cf Chapter Three).

In order to accomplish the aforementioned goal, the researcher accomplished the following research objective:

- **To explore and describe the experiences of adult children who grew up in female-headed families**

The above research objective has been achieved, and detailed descriptions of the participants' experiences were provided in Chapter Three.

The task objectives enabled the researcher to sequentially follow a well-structured process to attain the major goal. The overall research objectives were:

- To obtain a sample of adult children (between ages 25 and 35) who were born and raised in female-headed families and resident in the City of Tshwane.
- To conduct semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with a sample of adult children from female-headed families.
- To sift, sort, and analyse data according to the steps of qualitative data analysis proposed by Tesch (in Creswell, 2009) in order to interpret data.
- To describe the perspectives of adult children on the challenges and strengths of growing up in female-headed families.
- To interpret and conduct literature control in order to verify the findings.
- To draw conclusions and make recommendations on the findings of the experiences of adult children who grew up in female-headed families.

Through word-of-mouth and social media, the researcher was able to recruit 12 suitable participants who were,

- between ages 25 and 35 at the time of the interviews;
- raised by their unmarried mothers who remained single during the participants' childhood and adolescent stages; and
- residents of the City of Tshwane and regarded as having rich information in the area under investigation.

Semi-structured interviews facilitated by open-ended questions contained in an interview guide were conducted with participants in order to obtain required information. The interview guide was pilot-tested with two participants to establish the structure and sequence of the open-ended questions. This process helped the researcher to put into practice her interviewing skills. Thereafter, semi-structured interviews were digitally recorded after permission was granted by the participants. The sample size was not predetermined from the outset; the researcher was guided by the principle of data saturation which was reached after 12 participants had been interviewed and no new information emerged.

The eight steps of qualitative data analysis by Tesch (in Creswell, 2009:186) were followed. The services of an independent coder were solicited to objectively analyse the transcripts based on the semi-structured interviews conducted with the participants. This process provided credence to the study. Subsequently, the researcher, the two supervisors, and the independent coder held a telephonic discussion on the outcomes of the analysis to reach consensus. From this process, four themes, 15 sub-themes, and three categories were agreed upon and used in reporting the findings (cf Chapter Three).

The conclusions and recommendations with regard to policy, practice, education, and future research are presented.

### **4.3.2 Summary and conclusions based on the research findings**

A summary of the four themes, 15 sub-themes, and three categories that emerged following data analysis as well as the researcher's conclusions are presented below:

#### **4.3.2.1 Theme 1: The participants' descriptions of family background**

The participants described their family backgrounds which shed light on the diversity inherent in the structure of female-headed families. The narratives revealed that such families are not monolithic, but that they have different demographic characteristics that vary significantly. The participants' accounts painted a picture of their family composition, living arrangements, upbringing, as well as their general wellbeing while growing up. While eight of the participants lived predominantly with their mothers their family types, family composition, and living arrangements were dissimilar. Based on the participants' accounts, it is concluded that female-headed families and their extended, mostly maternal, families are successfully assimilated, providing them with material and emotional support.

#### **4.3.2.2 Theme 2: Specific experiences related to being raised in a female-headed family**

The findings show that grandmothers assumed several roles while caring for their grandchildren. They provided stability and consistency and also became a symbol of strength and protection. Grandmothers helped with household chores, thus enabling single mothers to focus on working and providing for their families. They also taught and supervised their grandchildren about household chores and how to maintain their homes in an orderly manner, thus ensuring that children executed their tasks responsibly. Some participants had less intimate relationships with their mothers when growing up, as their places of employment were far from home and they found it difficult to bond with their children. Their grandmothers could not completely fill this void. In hindsight, however, participants appreciated their mothers' efforts to work and provide for their families. Their mothers' absence required of some participants to play a more mature role in the family such as caring for their younger siblings. These challenges

impacted their own childhood as they were called upon to expend so much time to successfully carry out their expected responsibilities.

Ambivalent feelings about the role of stepfathers (referring to their mothers' boyfriends who were not residing with them full-time) on their lives were expressed. Some were uncomfortable with their stepfathers while others appreciated their contribution towards their livelihoods. These participants have developed a better understanding of life, and some are working towards mending their relationships with their mothers because they have learned to appreciate the sacrifices their mothers made in an attempt to give them a better life. Sibling rivalry was relegated to the past and a closer relationship developed between children as they matured. This phenomenon can confidently be described as one of the strengths of female-headed families.

Although the participants grew up in one-parent families, they acknowledged the importance of the dual roles of both parents in the lives of their children. This is attributed to their experiences of growing up without their fathers, and missing out on important lessons that they would otherwise have learned. Some of the participants were angry because of their fathers' disinterest and they therefore failed to initiate and maintain relationships with them. They nevertheless articulated the desire to understand their fathers' reasons for not being involved in their lives, although they accepted their mothers' explanations around the circumstances that led to the failure of their relationships. Some participants retained this sense of abandonment and desertion by their fathers well into adulthood.

Despite the many challenges the participants encountered while growing up in female-headed families, they nonetheless viewed their family situations positively. Stricter forms of discipline were applied when they went astray and this demonstrated that their mothers, with the assistance of grandmothers, were in many instances able to negotiate and manage household rules in an effort to maintain the distinct parent-child role in the family. On the other hand, their way of administering discipline and maintaining order was thought to be unduly severe, evidently attributed to stress-related difficulties that often accompany sole parenting.



The participants identified the following strengths of female-headed families:

- Developing feelings of independence and self-reliance which emerged from witnessing their mothers succeed in raising her children single-handedly.
- Experiencing difficulties that nevertheless culminated in opportunities for personal growth and development as they felt comfortable and proud of their mothers' caregiving abilities.
- Family cohesion emerged very strongly from the participants' accounts as they shared how their mothers encouraged loving relationships and interaction among all members of the family.
- Their experiences contributed to building strong characters, and this had also assisted them to resist external pressure.
- Their mothers' resilience impressed the participants and they were of the view that the lessons they had learned will enable them to overcome life challenges in the future.

Regardless of the challenges in the participants' lives, they were able to identify the strengths within their families which enhanced their personal strengths.

The participants encountered the following challenges:

- Living with feelings of desertion by their fathers who were absent in their lives was an unpleasant experience.
- Using intimate relationships to fill the void left by their absent fathers which consequently led to failed relationships with their partners.

The researcher concluded that some of the participants had challenges with self-esteem as they deemed themselves unworthy of love as a result of their fathers' desertion and abandonment. It is believed that these unresolved issues hampered their efforts to become involved in sustainable intimate relationships. It was interesting to note that nine participants were single at the time of the study (cf Table 3.1 in Chapter Three).

#### **4.3.2.3 Theme 3: Support systems of the female-headed family**

Female-headed families enjoy substantial support from various systems from which they garner strength and courage. Participants observed that their connection with God gave them a sense of direction and guidance. Therefore, it may be assumed that Christian values provide a sense of hope to members of female-headed families. For some participants, not knowing their fathers' whereabouts and lack of contact were viewed as a cultural disadvantage, because they believe that certain rituals have to be performed to prevent misfortune. A connection with their ancestors would ensure prosperity in their lives. However, the support participants enjoyed from their extended maternal families kept them grounded as they felt protected, mentally healthy, and that their general wellbeing was taken care of. Community support was also indicated as crucial in offering support, especially the dissemination of valuable information regarding career guidance and available job opportunities.

#### **4.3.2.4 Theme 4: Recommendations regarding support services to female-headed families**

The participants' recommendations for social work support services, based on their personal experiences, are as follows:

- Encourage the involvement of social fathers (such as uncles, grandfathers and responsible men from the church or communities) to nurture and mentor young boys with absent fathers on how to become men.
- Conduct support groups to help children realise that they are not alone, that there are others who experience the same challenges.
- Social workers mediate among family members to address difficult issues, break taboos, and help family members engage in open discussions about their circumstances, freely and transparently.
- Offer psychological support to mothers heading families to enhance their emotional wellbeing.

- Help non-resident fathers to become actively involved in their children's lives and establish meaningful relationships with their children.
- Effectively making use of informal networks as a strategy to offer support to female-headed families.
- Promote amicable relationships between maternal and paternal families for the benefit of the children.

These recommendations are realistic to the social work profession as they are embedded in the core business of social work practice. Social work practice based on the family strengths perspective is about learning what attributes family members possess, and capitalising on those resources to help them improve and strengthen their family functioning.

#### **4.3.3 Recommendations based on the research study**

Based on the research findings and research process, the researcher makes the following recommendations for practice, policy, education, and future research.

##### **4.3.3.1 Recommendations for practice**

Social work professionals should:

- Strengthen and develop parenting skills training programmes for single mothers heading families in order to improve effective parenting and family functioning.
- Embark on teaching mothers communication skills to enable them to share with their children information about their fathers.
- Assist children from female-headed families to address identity issues.
- Initiate mentoring programmes such as the buddy system where male children are mentored to become responsible men.
- Market their services in schools and identify children in need for early intervention. This will help curb the anger and bitterness that children often harbour because of a difficult childhood.

- Join forces with churches to offer effective and efficient services to members of female headed families.
- Liaise with potential employers on behalf of students from such families who receive financial support from the National Student Financial Aid Scheme to help them access the labour market, thus combating unemployment and poverty.
- Offer social support to absent fathers, and encourage them to become more involved in parenting and in their children's lives in general.
- Offer different support groups for children and mothers from female-headed families.
- Employ a family strengths perspective in practice, focusing on female-headed families' competencies and unique cultural characteristics instead of deficits and challenges.
- Need to become familiarised with the family strengths perspective to family preservation.
- Understand the functions of social networks, and critically assess how such networks can be integrated into social work interventions as strengths-based resources for social development.
- Conduct in-depth assessments of individuals' backgrounds regarding their upbringing as this has implications for social workers' understanding of relationships among children raised in female-headed families.

#### **4.3.3.2 Recommendations for policy**

- The Children's Act 38 of 2005, specifically section 21, together with the Maintenance Act 30 of 2005 encourage fathers to participate in and meet their social and financial obligations to their children. Therefore, policymakers should consider effective systems to enforce child maintenance systems and ensure that breadwinners, especially men, take responsibility for positive fatherhood and child support. Various forms of maintenance for those who are unable to provide monetary rewards should be explored.

- Policymakers should provide a voice for children in female-headed families to promote better informed policymaking, allowing the development of policies that integrate children's needs and perspectives rather than adopting a purely adult perspective in the approach to decision making.

#### **4.3.3.3 Recommendations for education**

- The social work curriculum should underscore the family strengths perspective in conjunction with the Manual on Family Preservation Services (2010) in modules based on child, youth, and family care.
- Social work programmes should address the importance of spirituality in children's lives. Departments and/or schools of social work need to develop curricula and field education to foster an understanding of spirituality in children's lives.

#### **4.3.3.4 Recommendations for further research**

Future research should focus on the following:

- Explore and describe the experiences and challenges of social workers who offer services to female-headed families.
- Investigate how spiritual theories and practices should be developed and integrated within the discipline of social work.
- Explore the experiences of both children and mothers in female-headed families to extract their rich and in-depth perspectives.
- Investigate existing support services for children growing up in female-headed families to evaluate and monitor their effectiveness.

### **4.4 Conclusion**

This last chapter of the research report provided summaries and an overview of the qualitative research method as presented in the first two chapters. Furthermore, a summary of the major research findings according to the four themes, followed by conclusions and recommendations based on the research findings, were presented. The discussion culminated in the presentation of recommendations for further research

in relation to practice policy and education, as well as recommendations for future research.

## REFERENCES

- Adkison-Bradley, C., Terpstra, J. & Dormitorio, B.P. 2014. Child discipline in African-American families: a study of patterns and context. *The Family Journal: Counseling and Therapy for Couples and Families*, 22(2):198-205.
- Akinsola, H.A. & Popovich, J.M. 2002. The quality of life of families of female-headed households in Botswana: a secondary analysis of case studies. *Health Care for Women International*, 23:761-772.
- Al-Krenawi, A., Graham, J.R. & Fakher-Aldin, M. 2003. Telephone counselling: A comparison of Arab and Jewish Israeli usage. *International Social Work*, 46(4):495-509.
- Amoateng, A.Y. & Kalule-Sabiti, I. 2008. Socio-economic correlates of the incidence of extended households living in South Africa. *Southern African Journal of Demography*, 11(1):75-102.
- Aspers, P. 2004. Empirical phenomenology: an approach for qualitative research. *Journal of Human Studies*, 9(1):1-13.
- Bakker, W. & Karsten, L. 2013. Balancing paid work, care and leisure in post-separation households: A comparison of single parents with co-parents. *Acta Sociologica*, 56(2): 173-187.
- Balcom, D.A. 2002. Absent fathers: effects on abandoned sons. *Journal of Men's Studies*, 6(3):283-296.
- Bandura, A. 2006. Social cognitive theory: an agentic perspective. *Annual Review Psychology*, 52:1-26.
- Barnett, M., Scaramella, L., Neppl, T., Ontai, L. & Conger, R. 2010. Intergenerational relationship quality, gender and grandparent involvement. *Family Relations*, (59):28-44.
- Barnett, R.C. & Hyde, J.S. 2001. Women, men, work, and family: An expansionist theory. *American Psychologist*, 56(10):781-796.
- Barrett, A.E & Turner, J. 2006. Family structure and substance use problems in adolescence and early adulthood: Examining explanations for the relationship. *Addiction* 101(1):109-120.
- Bavier, R. 2007. Income and expenditures. *Gender Issues*, 24(1):59-80.

Berg, A. 2003. Ancestor reverence and mental health in South Africa. *Transcultural Psychiatry*, 40(2):194-207.

Berg, L.B. 2009. *Qualitative research methods: for the social sciences*, 7<sup>th</sup> ed. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Bhattacharjee, A. 2012. *Social science research: principles, methods and practices*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Florida: Creative Commons Attribution.

Bildtgård, T. & Öberg, P. 2015. New intimate relationships in later life: consequences for the social and filial networks? *Journal of Family Issues*, 1-25.

Black, J.C. 2003. Translating principles into practice: implementing the feminist and strengths perspectives in work with battered women. *Affilia*, 18(3):332-349

Blank, G. 2004. Teaching qualitative data analysis to graduate students. *Social Science Computer Review*, 22(2):187-196.

Bogolup, E. 2010. The obligation to bring about good in social work research: a new perspective. *Qualitative Social Work*, 9(1):9-15.

Bogopa, D. 2010. Health and Ancestors: The case of South Africa and beyond. *Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology*, 10(1):1-7.

Boisvert, D., Vaske, J., Taylor, J. & Wright, J.P. 2012. The effects of differential parenting on sibling differences in self-control and delinquency among brother-sister pairs. *Criminal Justice Review*, 37(1):5-23.

Booth, A., Scott, M.E. & King, V. 2010. Father residence and adolescent problem behaviour: are youth always better off in two-parent families? *Journal of Family Issues*, 31(5):585-605.

Bridges, L.J., Roe, A.E.C., Dunn, J. & O'Connor, T.G. 2007. Children's perspectives on their relationships with grandparents following parental separation: A longitudinal study. *Social Development*, 16(3):539-554.

Broussard, L. 2006. Understanding qualitative research: a school nurse perspective. *The Journal of School of Nursing*, 22(4):212-218.

Broussard, C.A., Joseph, A.L. & Thompson, M. 2012. Stressors and coping strategies used by single mothers living in poverty. *Affilia: Journal of Women and Social Work*, 27(2):190-204.



- Brown, O., Howcroft, G. & Muthen, T. 2010. Resilience in families living with a child diagnosed with hyperactivity/attention deficit disorder. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 40(3):338-350.
- Bulpit, H. & Martin, P.J. 2010. Qualitative data collection: who am I and what am I doing? Becoming a qualitative research interviewer. *Nurse Researcher*, 17(3):7-16.
- Burke, M.M., Taylor, J.L., Urbano, R. & Hodapp, R.M. 2012. Predictors of future caregiving by adult siblings of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. *American Journal on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*, 117:33-47.
- Burton, L. 2007. Childhood adultification in economically disadvantaged families: A conceptual model. *Family Relations*, 56:329-345.
- Buvinić, M. & Gupta, G.R. 2011. Female-headed households and female-maintained families: Are they worth targeting to reduce poverty in developing countries? *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, 45(2):259-280.
- Bzostek, S.H. 2008. Social fathers and child well-being. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 70(4):950-961.
- Cabrera, N.J., Tamis-LeMonda, S., Bradley, R.H., Hofferth, S. & Lamb, M.E. 2000. Fatherhood in the twenty-first century. *Child Development*, 71(1):127-136.
- Cairney, J., Boyle, M., Offord, D. & Racine, Y. 2003. Stress, social support and depression in single and married mothers. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*, 38:442-449.
- Carter, S.M. & Little, M. 2007. Justifying knowledge, justifying method, taking action: epistemologies, methodologies and methods in qualitative research. *Qualitative Health Research*, 17(10):1316-1328.
- Cinamon, R.G., Weisel, A. & Tzuk, K. 2007. Work-family conflict within the family. *Journal of Career Development*, 34(1):79-100.
- Clark, A., Stedmon, J. & Margison, S. 2008. An exploration of the experience of mothers whose children sustain traumatic brain injury and their families. *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 13(4):565-583.
- Coleman, M. & Ganong, L.H. 2004. *Handbook of contemporary families: considering the past, contemplating the future*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Cooney, T.M & Dunne, K. 2001. Intimate relationships in later life: current realities, future prospects. *Journal of Family Issues*, 22:838-858.

Corey, G. 2014. *Theory and practice of counselling and psychotherapy*. United Kingdom: Cengage Learning.

Craigie, T.L. 2012. Informal child support contributions in black female-headed families. *Review of Black Political Economy*, 39:259-265.

Creswell, J.W. 2009. *Qualitative inquiry & research design: choosing among five approaches*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Creswell, J.W. 2013. *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Curtis, B. & Curtis, C. 2011. *Social research: a practical introduction*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Dallas, C.M., Norr, K., Dancy, B.L, Kavanaugh, K. & Cassata, L. 2005. An example of a successful proposal: Part II. *Western Journal of Nursing Research*, 27(2):210-321.

Daly, K.J., Ashbourne, L. & Brown, J.L. 2009. Fathers' perception of children's influence: Implications for involvement. *The Annals of the American Academy*, 6(24):61-77.

Dannerbeck, A.M. 2005. Differences in parenting attributes, experiences and behaviors of delinquent youth with and without a parental history of incarceration. *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice*, 3(3):199-213.

Darychuk, A. & Jackson, S. 2015. Understanding community resilience through the accounts of women living in West Bank refugee camp. *Affilia: Journal of Women and Social Work*, 30(4):447-460.

David, M. & Sutton, C. 2011. *Social research: an introduction*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Davis, K. 2015. Sibling, stories and self: the sociological significance of young people's sibling relationships. *Sociology*, 49(4):679-695.

Deater-Deckard, K., Dunn, J. & Lussier, G. 2002. Sibling relationships and socio-emotional adjustment in different family contexts. *Social Development*, 11(4):571-590.

DeBell, M. 2008. Children living without their fathers: population estimates and indicators of educational well-being. *Social Indicators Research*, 87:427-443.

DeFina, R.H. 2008. The impact of state minimum wages on child poverty in female-headed families. *Journal of Poverty*, 12(2):155-174.

Delgado, M. 2006. *Designs and methods for youth-led research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Department of Social Development. 2010. Manual on Family Preservation Services. Pretoria: Department of Social Development.

Deumert, A., Inder, B. & Maitra, M. 2005. Language, informal networks and social protection: Evidence from a sample of migrants in Cape Town, South Africa. *Global Social Policy*, 5(3):303-328.

DiCicco-Bloom, B. & Crabtree, B.F. 2006. Making sense of qualitative research: the qualitative interview. *Medical Education*, 40:314-321.

Donald, D., Dawes, A. & Louw, J. 2000. *Addressing childhood adversity*. Cape Town: David Philip Publishers.

Donalek, J.G. 2005. Demystifying nursing research: the interview in qualitative research. *Urologic Nursing*, 25(2):124-125.

Doughty, S.E., McHale, S.M. & Feinberg, M.E. 2015. Sibling experiences as predictors of romantic relationship qualities in adolescence. *Journal of Family Issues*, 36(5):589-608.

DuBois, B. & Miley, K.K. 2011. *Social work: an empowering profession*. 7<sup>th</sup> ed. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Early, T.J. & GlenMaye, L.F. 2000. Valuing families: Social work practice with families from a strengths perspective. *Social Work*, 45(2):118-130.

East, L., Jackson, D. & O'Brien L. 2006. Father absence and adolescent development: a review of the literature. *Journal of Child Health Care*, 10(4):283-295.

East, L., Jackson, D. & O'Brien L. 2007. 'I Don't want to hate him forever': understanding daughter's experiences of father absence. *Australian Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 24(4):14-18.

Elliot, S., Powell, R. & Brenton, J. 2015. Being a good mom: low-income, Black single mothers negotiate intensive mothering. *Journal of Family Issues*, 36(3):351-370.

Ellis, B.J., Bates, J.E., Dodge, K.E., Fergusson, D.M., Horwood, L.J., Pettit, G.S. & Woodward, L. 2003. Does father absence place daughters at special risk for early sexual activity and teenage pregnancy? *Journal of Child Development*, 74(3):801-821.

Engel, R.J. & Schutt, R.S. 2009. *The practice of research in social work*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Epley, N. & Waytz, A. 2009. Perspective taking. In Reis, H.T. & Sprecher, S. *Encyclopaedia of Human Relationships*. Thousand Oaks: Sage. 1229-1232.

Este, D.C. 2004. The Black church as a social welfare institution: Union United Church and the development of Montreal's Black community, 1907-1940. *Journal of Black Studies*, 35(1):3-22.

Everet, J.E., Marks, L.D. & Clarke-Mitchell, J.F. 2016. A qualitative study of the Black mother-daughter relationship: Lessons learned about self-esteem, coping, and resilience. *Journal of Black Studies*, 47(4):334-350.

Fagan, J. & Barnett, M. 2003. The relationship between maternal gatekeeping, paternal competence, mother's attitudes about the father role, and father involvement. *Journal of Family Issues*, 24(8):1020-1043.

Feldman, M.S., Bell, J. & Berger, M.C. 2003. *A practical and theoretical guide for qualitative researchers*. New York: Altamira Press.

Fellenz, M.R. 2006. Toward fairness in assessing student group work: a protocol for peer evaluation of individual contributions. *Journal of Management Education*, 30(4):570-591.

Fontenla, M. & Gould, D. 2003. Young people with Parkinson's disease: report of a pilot study to identify the research issues and approaches to data collection. *Nursing Times Research*, 8(3):213-226.

Franklin, P., Rowland, E., Fox, R. & Nicolson, P. 2012. Research ethics in accessing hospital staff and securing informed consent. *Qualitative Health Research*, 22(12):1727-1738.

Gibson, S., Benson, O. & Brand, S.L. 2012. Confidentiality and anonymity in qualitative research. *Nursing Ethics*, 20(1):18-29.

- Gilbert, N. 2008. *Researching Social Life*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Gilford, T.T & Reynolds, A. 2011. "My mother's keeper": The effects of parentification on Black female college students. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 37(1):55-77.
- Giordano, J., O'Reilly, M., Taylor, H. & Dogra, N. 2007. Confidentiality and autonomy: the challenge(s) of offering research participants a choice of disclosing their identity. *Qualitative Health Research*, 17(2):264-275.
- Gold, J.M. 2010. Helping stepfathers step away from the role of father: directions for family intervention. *The family Journal: Counseling and Therapy for Couples and Families*, 18(2):208-214.
- Golombok, S. & Badger, S. 2009. Children raised in mother-headed families from infancy: a follow-up of children of lesbian and single heterosexual mothers, at early adulthood. *Human Production*, 0(00):1-8.
- Goodman, M.L., Llyod, L.E., Selwyn, B.J., Morgan, R.O., Mwongera, M., Gitari, S. & Keiser, P.H. 2015. Factors associated with general self-efficacy and resilience among youth heads of households in Kenya. *Journal of Health Psychology*, 1-18.
- Goredema-Braid, B. 2010. Ethical research with young people. *Research Ethics Review*, 6(2):48-52.
- Greef, A. & Aspelung, E. 2007. Resiliency in South African and Belgian single-parent families. *Acta Academica*, 39(2):139-157.
- Grobler, H., Schenk, R. & Mbedzi, P. 2013. *Person-centred facilitation: process, theory and practice*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Cape Town: Oxford.
- Guo, W. & Tsui, M. 2010. From resilience to resistance: A reconstruction of the strengths perspective in social work practice. *International Social Work*, 53(2):233-245.
- Haley, J.M. 2001. A transcultural strengths assessment interview guide for parent caregivers. *Home Health Care Management and Practice*, 21(2):90-98.
- Harcourt, K.T., Adler-Baeder, F., Erath, S. & Pettit, G.S. 2013. Examining family structure and half-sibling influence on adolescent well-being. *Journal of Family Issues*, X(XX):1-23.

Harington, J.S., McGlashan, N.D. & Chelkowska E.Z. 2004. A century of migrant labour in the gold mines of South Africa. *The Journal of the South African Institute of Mining and Metallurgy*, 1(3):65-71.

Harper, C & McLanahan, S. 2004. Father absence and youth incarceration. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 14(3):369-397.

Harper, S.R. & Kuh, G.D. 2007. Myths and conceptions about using qualitative methods in assessment. *New Directions for Institutional Research*, 136:5-14.

Harper, S. & Ruicheva, I. 2010. Grandmothers as replacement parents and partners: The role of grandmotherhood in single-parent families. *Journal of International Relationships*, 8(3):219-233.

Hassrick, M.M. 2012. 'Controlled Disruptions': How Ethnic Organizations Shape White Ethnic Symbolic Identities. *Cultural Sociology*, 6(1):93-112.

Hayhow, R. & Steward, T. 2006. Introduction to qualitative research and its application to stuttering. *International Journal of Language and Communication Disorders*, 41(5):475-493.

Hewitt, B. & Baxter, J. 2011. Who gets married in Australia? The characteristics associated with a transition into first marriage. *Journal of Sociology*, 48(1):43-61.

Hilton, J.M. & Kopera-Frye, K. 2006. Loss and depression in cohabiting and noncohabiting and custodial single parents. *The Family Journal: Counseling and Therapy for Couples and Families*, 14(1):28-40.

Holborn, L. & Eddy, G. 2011. *Fractured families: a crisis in South Africa*. South African Institute of Race Relations. Johannesburg: South Africa.

Holl, E. & Morano, C.L. 2014. Supporting the next generation of caregivers: Service use and needs of adult siblings of individuals with intellectual disability. *Inclusion*, 2:2-16.

Hong, R. & Welch, A. 2013. The lived experiences of single Taiwanese mothers being resilient after divorce. *Journal of Transcultural Nursing*, 24(1):51-59.

Hunter, A.G., Friend, C.A., Murphey, S.Y., Rollins, A., Williams-Wheeler, M. & Laughinghouse, J. 2006. Loss, survival, and redemption: African-American male youths' reflections on life without fathers, manhood, and the coming of age. *Youth & Society*, 37(4):423-452.

International Federation of Social Work. 2012. *Definition of Social Work*. [Online]. Available from <http://ifsw.org/policies/definition-of-social-work> [Accessed 26 April 2016].

Jackson, A.P., Preston, K.S.J. & Franke, T.M. 2010. Single parenting and child behavior problems in Kindergarten. *Race and Social Problems*, 2:50-58.

Johanson, G.A. & Brooks, G.P. 2010. Initial scale development: sample size for pilot studies. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 70(3):394-400.

Jurkovic, G.J., Thirkield, A. & Morrell, R. 2001. Parentification of adult children of divorce: A multidimensional analysis. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 30:245-257.

Karkouti, R.M. 2014. Examining psychosocial identity development theories: A guideline for professional practice. *Education*, 135(2):257-263.

Kebede, W. & Butterfield, A.K. 2004. Social networks among poor women in Ethiopia. *International Social Work*, 52(3):357-374.

Kelch-Oliver, K. 2011. The experiences of African-American grandmothers in grandparent-headed families. *The Family Journal: Counseling and Therapy for Couples and Families*, 19(1):73-82.

Keller, H., Borke, J., Yovsi, R.D., Lohaus, A. & Jensen, H. 2005. Cultural orientations and historical changes as predictors of parenting behaviour. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 29:229-237.

Kim, Y. 2010. Pilot study in qualitative inquiry: identifying issues and learning lessons for culturally competent research. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 10(2):190-206.

Kirby, S.L., Greaves, L. & Reid, C. 2006. *Experience research social change: methods beyond mainstream*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Canada: Broadview Press.

Kleist, D.M. 2001. Single-parent families: a difference that makes a difference. *The Family Journal*, 7(4):373-378.

Klopper, H. 2008. The qualitative research proposal. *Curationis*, 31(4):62-72.

Koh, E., Stauss, K., Coustaut, C. & Forrest, C. 2015. Generational impact of single-parent scholarships: Educational achievement of children in single-parent families. *Journal of Family Issues*, 36(1):1-26.

- Koro-Ljungberg, M. 2008. Validity and validation in the making in the context of qualitative research. *Qualitative Health Research*, 18(7):983-989.
- Kpoor, A. 2014. Household Maintenance and Decision Making in Lone Female Parent Families in Ghana. *Journal of Family Issues*, 35(14):1959-1979.
- Krampe, E.M. 2009. When is the father really there: a conceptual reformulation of father presence. *Journal of Family Issues*, 30(7):875-897.
- Krefting, L. 1991. Rigor in qualitative research: the assessment of trustworthiness. *The American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 45(3):214-222.
- Lamb, M.E & Sutton-Smith, B. 2014. *Sibling Relationships: Their Nature and significance across the lifespan*. New York: Psychology Press.
- Lambert, V., Glacken, M. & McCarron, M. 2013. Using a range of methods to access children's voices. *Journal of Research in Nursing*, 18(7):601-616.
- Leech, N.L. & Onwuegbuzie, J. 2007. An array of qualitative data-analysis tools: a call for data-analysis triangulation. *School of Psychology Quarterly*, 22(4):557-584.
- Leinonen, J.A., Solantaus, T.S. & Punamäki R. 2003. Social support and the quality of parenting under economic pressure and workload in Finland: The role of family structure and parental gender. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 17(3):409-814.
- Leman, P., Bremner, A., Parke, R.D. & Gauvain, M. 2012. *Developmental Psychology*. Berkshire: McGraw-Hill.
- Litchman, M. 2010. *Qualitative research in education: a user's guide*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Lloyd, V., Kalsy, S. & Gatherer, A. 2007. The subjective experiences of individuals with down syndrome living with dementia. *Dementia*, 6(1):63-88.
- Lopez, V. & Corona, R. 2012. Troubled Relationships: High-risk Latina adolescents and nonresident fathers. *Journal of Family Issues*, 33(6):715-744.
- MacCallum, F. & Golombok, S. 2004. Children raised in fatherless families from infancy: a follow-up of children of lesbian and single heterosexual mothers at early adolescence. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 45(8):1407-1419.



- Mack, N., Woodsong, C., MacQueen, K.M., Guest, G. & Namey, E. 2005. *Qualitative research methods: a collector's field guide*. North Carolina: Family Health International.
- Madhavan, S. & Roy, K. 2012. Securing fatherhood through kin work: A comparison of Black low-income fathers and families in South Africa and the U.S. *Journal of Family Issues*, 33:801-822.
- Madhavan, S., Ritcher, L. & Morris, S. 2014. Father contact following union dissolution for low-income children in urban South Africa. *Journal of Family Issues*, 35(1):1-23.
- Malone, J.C., Lui, S.R., Vaillant, G.E., Rentz, D.M. & Walinger, R.J. 2016. Midlife Eriksonian psychosocial development: Setting the stage for late-life cognitive and emotional health. *American Psychosocial Association*, 52(3):496-508.
- Maluleke, T.X. 2007. The youth's perceptions of sexuality in the Limpopo Province of South Africa. *Health S.A Gesondheid*, 12(3):3-16
- Makofane, M.D.M. 2015. "Not all men are fathers": experiences of African women from families with absent fathers. *Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk*, 51(1):22-44.
- Malinga, T. & Ntshwarang, P.N. 2011. Alternative care for children in Botswana: a reality or idealism? *Social Work and Society*, 9(2):1-13.
- Manyatshe, L. & Nduna, M. 2014. Keeping it secret: Mother's concerns in dealing with undisclosed paternity of their children. *Gender Questions*, 2(1):66-83.
- Maphosa, C. & Shumba, A. 2010. Educator's disciplinary capabilities after the banning of corporal punishment in South Africa. *Journal of Education*, 30:387-399.
- Marsiglio, W., Amato, P., Day, R.D. & Lamb, M.E. 2000. Scholarship on fatherhood in the 1990s and beyond. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 62:1173-1191.
- Masango, M.J.S. 2006. African spirituality that shapes the concept of Ubuntu. *African Spirituality*, 27(3):930-943.
- Maxwell, A.J. 2005. *Qualitative research design: an interactive approach*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Los Angeles: Sage.
- Maxwell, A.J. 2013. *Qualitative research design: an interactive approach*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Los Angeles: Sage.
- McCarthy, J.R. & Edwards, R. 2011. *Key concepts in family studies*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

- McCormack, L., Joseph, S. & Hagger, M.S. 2009. Sustaining a positive altruistic identity in Humanitarian aid work: a qualitative case study. *Traumatology*, 15(2):109-118.
- McLanahan, S. & Schwartz, D. 2002. Life without father: what happens to children? *Journal of Contexts*, 1(35):35-44.
- McGroder, S.M. 2000. Parenting among low-income, African-American single mothers with preschool-age children: patterns, predictors and developmental correlates. *Child Development*, 17(3):752-771.
- McKinney, C., Morse, M. & Pastuszak, J. 2016. Effective and ineffective parenting: Associations with psychological adjustment in emerging adults. *Journal of Family Issues*, 37(9):1203-1225.
- Menning, C.L. 2002. Absent parents are more than money: the joint effect of activities and financial support on youths' educational attainment. *Journal of Family Issues*, 23(5):648-671.
- Merriam, S.B. 2002. *Qualitative research in practice: examples for discussions and analysis*. San Fransisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Merry, L., Clausen, C., Gagnon, A.J., Carnevale, F., Jeannotte, J., Saucier, J.F. & Oxman-Martinez, J. 2011. Improving qualitative interviews with newly arrived migrant women. *Qualitative Health Research*, 21(7):97:6-986.
- Meunier, J.C, Roskam, I., Stievenart, M., Van de Moortele, G., Browne, D.T. & Wade, M. 2012. Parental differential treatment, child's externalizing behavior and sibling relationships: Bridging links with child's perception of favoritism and personality and parents' self-efficacy. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 29(5):612-638.
- Miller, J. & Ridge, T. 2009. Relationships of care: Working lone mothers, their children and employment sustainability. *Journal of Social Policy*, 38(1):103-121.
- Mokgobi, M.G. 2014. Understanding traditional African healing. *African Journal for Physical, Health Education, Recreation and Dance*, 2:24-34.
- Momsen, J.H. 2002 Myth or math: the waxing and waning of the female-headed household. *Progress in Development Studies*, 2(2):154-151.
- Moore, K.A., Chalk, R., Scarpa, J. & Vandivere, S. 2002. *Family strengths: Often overlooked, but real*. Child Trends Research Brief.

Moore, T.S., Lapan, S.D. & Quartaroli, M.T. 2011. Case Study Research. In Lapan, S.D. & Quartaroli, M.T. & Reimer, F.J. *Qualitative research: an introduction to methods and designs*. San Fransisco: Jossey-Bass. 243-270.

Moriarty, P.H. & Wagner, L.D. 2004. Family rituals that provide meaning for single-parent families. *Journal of Family Nursing*, 10(2):190-210.

Mudyan, N. & Lee, M.S. 2010. The influence of female-headed households on Black achievement. *Journal of Urban Education*, 45(4):424-447.

Muller, T. & Stroud, L. 2014. Identity formation and its role in optimal human development: A psychobiographical study of artist Jackson Pollock. *New Voices in Psychology*, 10(1):3-15.

Munthali, A.C. 2006. Health problems that require no “medication.” The case of ancestor-related illnesses among the Tumbuka of Northern Malawi. *Nordic Journal of African Studies*, 15(3):367-379.

Nambambi, N.M. & Mufune, P. 2011. What is talked about when parents discuss sex with children: Family-based sex education in Windhoek, Namibia. *African Journal of Reproductive Health*, 15(4):120-129.

Nduna, M. & Jewkes, R. 2011. Undisclosed paternal identity in narratives of distress among young people in Eastern Cape, South Africa. *Journal of Child Family Studies*, 20:303-310.

Neblett, N.C. 2007. Patterns of single mothers’ work and welfare use: What matters for children’s well-being? *Journal of Family Issues*, 28(8):1083-1112.

Nicholls, D. 2009. Qualitative research: part one – philosophies. *International Journal of Therapy and Rehabilitation*, 16(10):526-533.

Nicholls, D. 2009. Qualitative research: part two – methodologies. *International Journal of Therapy and Rehabilitation*, 16(11):586-592.

Nikolova, S.P., Small, E. & Mengo, C. 2015. Components of resilience in gender: a comparative analysis of HIV-outcomes in Kenya. *Journal of STD & AIDS*, 26(7):483-495.

Nixon, E., Greene, S. & Hogan, D. 2012. Negotiating relationships in single-mother households: perspectives of children and mothers. *Family Relations*, 61:142-146.

- Nixon, E., Greene, S. & Hogan, D. 2015. "It's what's normal for me": children's experiences of growing up in a continuously single-parent household. *Journal of Family Issues*, 36(8):1043-1061.
- Noor, K.B.M. 2008. Case Study. A strategic research methodology. *American Journal of Applied Sciences*, 5(11):1602-1604.
- Nyanjaya, A.K. & Masango M.J. 2012. The plight of absent fathers caused by migrant work: its traumatic impact on adolescent male children in Zimbabwe. *Theological Studies*, 68(1):1-10.
- O'Brien, M.J. & DeSisto, M.C. 2013. Every study begins with a query: how to present a clear research question. *NASN School Nurse*, 28(83):83-85.
- O'Leary, Z. 2005. *Researching real-world problems: a guide to methods of inquiry*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- O'Reilly, M. & Parker, N. 2012. 'Unsatisfactory Saturation': a critical exploration of the notion of saturated sample sizes in qualitative research. *Qualitative Research*, 13(2):190-197.
- Orme, J. & Shemmings, D. 2010. *Developing research based social work practice*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Orthner, D.K., Jones-Sanpei, H. & Williamson, S. 2004. The resilience and strengths of low-income families. *Family Relations*, 53(2):159-167.
- Parrish, M. 2010. *Social work perspectives on human behaviour*. New York: Open University Press.
- Payne, S.A. & Turner, J.M. 2008. Research methodologies in palliative care: a bibliometric analysis. *Palliative Medicine*, 28:336-342.
- Peacock, S., Forbes, D., Markle-Reid, M., Hawranik, P., Morgan, D., Jansen, L., Leipert, B.D. & Henderson, S.R. 2010. The positive aspects of the caregiving journey with dementia: using the strength-based perspective to reveal opportunities. *Journal of Applied Gerontology*, 29(5):640-659.
- Peng, Y. & Wong, O.M.H. 2015. Who takes care of my left-behind children? Migrant mothers and caregivers in transnational child care. *Journal of Family Issues*, 1-24.

- Pike, L.T. 2003. The adjustment of Australian children growing up in single-parent families as measured by their competence and self-esteem. *Journal of Childhood*, 10(2):181-200.
- Polit, D.F. & Beck, C.T. 2008. *Nursing research: principles and methods*, 8<sup>th</sup> ed. United States of America: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.
- Polkinghorne, D.E. 2005. Language and meaning: data collection in qualitative research. *Journal of Counselling Psychology*, 52(2):137-145.
- Pouget, E., Serbin, L.A., Stack, D.M., Ledingham, J.E. & Schwartzman, A.E. 2012. The intergenerational continuity of fathers' absence in a socioeconomically disadvantaged sample. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 74(1):540-555.
- Power, J., Goodyear, M., Maybery, D., Reupert, A., O'Hanlon, B., Cuff, R. & Perlesz, A. 2015. Family resilience in families where a parent has a mental illness. *Journal of Social Work*, 0(0):1-17.
- Pratt, T.C. & Cullen, F.T. 2000. The empirical status of Gottfredson and Hirschi's general theory of crime: A meta-analysis. *Criminology* 38(3):931-964.
- Price-Wolf, J. 2015. Social support, collective efficacy, and child physical abuse: Does parent gender matter? *Child Maltreatment*, 20(2):125-135.
- Raffaelli, M. & Wiley, A.R. 2012. Challenges and strengths of immigrant Latino families in the rural Midwest. *Journal of Family Issues*, 34(3):347-372.
- Rahman, S. & Akter, S. 2014. Determinants of livelihood choices: An empirical analysis from rural Bangladesh. *Journal of South Asian Development*, 9(3):287-308.
- Rajaram, R. 2009. *Female-headed households and poverty: evidence from the national family health survey*. [Online]. Available from <http://www.frbatlanta.org> [Accessed 26 June 2014].
- Ramcharan, P. & Cutcliffe, J.R. 2001. Judging the ethics of qualitative research: considering the "ethics as process" model. *Health and Social Care in the Community*, 9(6):358-366.
- Rapp, C.A., Saleebey, D. & Sullivan, W.P. 2005. The future of the strength-based social work. *Advances in Social Work*, 6(1):79-90.

Räsänen, M. & Nyce, J.M. 2013. The raw is cooked: data in intelligence practice. *Science, Technology & Human Values*, 38(5):655-677.

Rasmussen, E.S., Ostergaard, P. & Beckmann, S.Z. 2006. *Essentials of social science research methodology*. Denmark: Nayarana Press.

Ratele, K., Shefer, T. & Clowes, L. 2012. Talking South African fathers: a critical examination of men's constructions and experiences of fatherhood and fatherlessness. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 42(4):553-563.

Rawson, H. 2009. "I'm going to be here long after you've gone": sibling perspectives of the future. *British Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 38:225-231

Reczek, C., Liu, H. & Umberson, D. 2010. Just the two of us? How parents influence adult children's marital quality. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 72(5):1205-1219.

Reynolds, T. 2009. Exploring the absent/present dilemma: Black fathers, family relationships, and social capital in Britain. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 624(1):12-28.

Richardson, J.B. 2009. Men do matter: ethnographic insights on the socially supportive role of the African-American uncle in the lives of inner-city African-American male youth. *Journal of Family Issues*, 30(8):1041-1069.

Richardson, J.B., Johnson, W.E. & St. Vil, C. 2014. I want him locked up: Social capital, African-America parenting strategies and juvenile court. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 43(4):488-522.

Roff, S. 2012. Non-governmental organisation: The strengths perspective at work. *International Social Work*, 47(2):202-212.

Roman, N.V. 2011. Maternal parenting in single- and two-parent families in South Africa from a child's perspective. *Social Behaviour and Personality*, 39(5):577-586.

Rossetti, Z. & Hall, S. 2015. Adult sibling relationships with brothers and sisters with severe disabilities. *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*, 40(2):120-137.

Roulston, K., deMarrais, K. & Lewis, J.B. 2003. Learning to interview in the social sciences. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 9(4):643-668.

Royse, D. 2008. *Research methods in social work*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. Australia: Thomson Brooks/Cole.

Rubin, A. & Babbie, E.R. 2005. *Research methods for social work*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. Belmont, C.A: Brooks/Cole.

Rubin, A. & Babbie, E.R. 2010. *Research methods for social work*. 7<sup>th</sup> ed. Australia: Brooks/Cole.

Runyon, M.K., Deblinger, E., Ryan, E.E. & Thakkar-Kolar. 2004. An overview of child physical abuse: Developing an integrated parent-child cognitive-behavioral treatment approach. *Trauma, Violence & Abuse*, 1(5):65-86.

Sadler, G.R., Lee, H., Lim, R.S. & Fullerton, J. 2010. Recruiting hard-to-reach United States population sub-groups via adaptations of snowball sampling strategy. *Nursing and Health Sciences*, 12(3):369-374.

Saleebey, D. 2013. *The strengths perspective in social work practice*. 6<sup>th</sup> ed. USA: Pearson.

Sandberg, J. & Avelsson, M. 2011. Ways of constructing research questions: gap-spotting or problematization? *Organisation*, 18(1):23-44.

Sands, R.G. & Roer-Strier, D. 2006. Using data triangulation of mother and daughter interviews to enhance research about families. *Qualitative Social Work*, 5(2):237-260.

Sano, Y., Richards, L.N. & Zvonkovic, A.M. 2008. Are mothers really “gatekeepers” of children? Rural mothers’ perceptions of non-resident fathers’ involvement in low-income families. *Journal of Family Issues*, 29(12):1701-1723.

Scharf, M., Shulman, S. & Avigad-Spitz. 2005. Sibling relationship in emerging adulthood and in adolescence. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 20(1):64-90.

Schuck, A.M. 2005. Explaining black-white disparity in maltreatment: poverty, female-headed families, and urbanization, *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 76:543-551.

Schwartz, A.E., McRoy, R.G. & A. Downs, C. 2004. Adolescent mothers in a transitional living facility: An exploratory study of support networks and attachment patterns. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 19(1):85-112.

Schwarz, B. 2006. Adult daughters’ family structure and the association between reciprocity and relationship quality. *Journal of Family Issues*, 27(2):208-228.

- Serewicz, M.C.M. & Canary, D.J. 2008. Assessments of disclosure from the in-laws: Links among disclosure topics, family privacy orientation and relational quality. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 25(2):333-357.
- Sgarbossa, D. & Ford-Gilboe, M. 2004. Mother's friendship quality, parental support, quality of life and health work in families led by adolescent mothers with preschool children. *Journal of Family Nursing*, 10(2):232-261.
- Shanahan, L., McHale, S.M., Crouter, A.C. & Osgood D.W. 2008. Linkages between differential treatment, youth depressive symptoms, and relationships siblings. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 70:480-494.
- Sharam, B.M. 2002. *Qualitative research in practice: examples for discussion and analysis*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. San-Fransisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Shaw, B.A. 2005. Anticipated support from neighbors and physical functioning during later life. *Research on Ageing*, 27(5):305-525.
- Shawler, P.M. & Sullivan, M. 2015. Parental stress, discipline strategies and child behavior problems in families with young children with autism spectrum disorders. *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities*, 1-10.
- Shem, J.M., Kim, H.S., Sherman, D.K. & Hashimoto, T. 2015. Cultural differences in support provision: The importance of relationship quality. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 41(11):1575-1589.
- Shenton, A.K. 2003. Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for Information*, 22:63-75.
- Simon, J.B., Murphy, J.J. & Smith, S.M. 2005. Understanding and fostering family resilience. *The Family Journal: Counseling and Therapy for Couples and Families*, 13(4):427-436.
- Simons, L.G., Burt, C.H. & Tambling, R.B. 2013. Identifying mediators of the influence of family factors on risky sexual behaviour. *Journal of Child & Family Studies*, 22(1): 460:470.
- Sin, C.H. 2005. Seeking informed consent: reflections on research practice. *Sociology*, 39(2):277-294.



Sloth-Nielsen, J. 2004. *Realising the rights of children growing up in child-headed households: a guide to laws, policies and social advocacy*. Community Law Centre: Cape Town.

Slotter, E.B., Lucas, G.M., Jakubiak, B. & Lasslett, H. 2013. Changing me to keep you: State jealousy promotes perceiving similarity between the self and a romantic rival. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 39(10):1280-1292.

Smith, E.J. 2006. The strengths-based counseling model. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 34(1):13-79.

Snyder, A.R. & McLaughlin, D.K. 2004. Female-headed families and poverty in rural America. *Journal of Rural Sociology*, 69(1):127-149.

Snyder, A.R., McLaughlin, D.K. & Findeis, J. 2006. Household composition and poverty among female-headed households with children: Differences by race and residence. *Rural Sociology*, 71(4):597-624.

Social Service Professions Act (Act No.110) of 1978. See South African Council for Social Service Professions. 1999.

Stallard, P. & Salter, E. 2003. Psychological debriefing and young people following traumatic events. *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 8(4):445-457.

Statistics South Africa. 2009. *Living conditions of households in SA*. Pretoria, South Africa.

Statistics South Africa. 2011. *Marriages and divorces*, Pretoria, South Africa.

Steil, J.M. 2001. Family forms and member well-being: A research agenda for the decade of behaviour. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 25:344-363.

Strydom, H. 2005. The pilot study. In De Vos, A.S., Strydom, H., Fouché, C.B. & Delport, C.S.L. *Research at grass roots: for the social sciences and human service professions*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers. 205-216.

Sturgess, W., Dunn, J. & Davies, L. 2001. Young children's perceptions of their relationships with family members: Links with family setting, friendships, and adjustment. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 25(6):521-529.

Sullivan, E.L. 2009. *The sage glossary of the social and behavioural sciences*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Sun, Y. & Li, Y. 2014. Alternative households, structural changes, and cognitive development of infants and toddlers. *Journal of Family Issues*, 35(11):1440-1472.

Suzuki, S. 2010. The effects of marital support, social network support and parenting stress on parenting: self-efficacy among mothers of young children in Japan. *Journal of Early Childhood*, 8(1):40-66

Swartzs, M.K. 2010. Predictors of health-related quality of life in asthmatic children. *Journal of Asthma & Allergy Educators*, 1(3):100-108.

Swartz, S., Bhana, A. & Versfeld, A. 2013. *Promoting young fathers' positive involvement in their children's lives*. Human Sciences Research Council: South Africa.

Tamin, J. 2013. Can informed consent apply to information disclosure? Moral and practical implications. *Clinical Ethics*, 9(1):1-9.

Taylor, R.J., Fosryste-Brown, I., Taylor, H.O. & Chatters, L.M. 2014. Patterns of emotional social support and negative interactions among African-American and Black Caribbean extended families. *Journal of African American Studies*, 18:147-163.

Taylor, Z.E., Larsen-Rife, D., Conger, R.D., Widaman, K.F. & Cutrona, C.E. 2010. Life stress, maternal optimism and adolescent competence in single-mother, African-American families. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 24(4):468-477.

Temple, B. 2008. Narrative analysis for written text: reflexivity in cross-language research, *Qualitative Research*, 8(3):355-365.

Thijs, P.E., van Dijk I.K., Stoof, Robin. & Notten, N. 2015. Adolescent problem behavior: The gender gap in European perspective. *European Journal of Criminology*, 12(5):598-615.

Thomas, D. & Hodges, I.D. 2010. *Designing and managing your research project: core skills for social and health research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Thomas, E. & Magilvy, J.K. 2011. Scientific inquiry. Qualitative rigor or research validity in qualitative research. Tramonte, L., Gauthier, A.H. & Willms, 16:151-155.

Thyer, B.A. 2001. *The handbook of social work research methods: reliability and validity in qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Toseland, R.W. & Rivas, R.F. 2014. *An introduction to group work practice*. 7<sup>th</sup> ed. England: Pearson.

Tramonte, L., Gauthier, A.H. & Willms, J.D. 2013. Engagement and guidance: the effects of maternal parenting on children's development. *Journal of Family Issues*, XX(X):1-25.

Trinder, L. 2008. Maternal gate closing and gate opening in post-divorce families. *Journal of Family Issues*, 29(10):1298-1324.

Tucker, C.J., McHale, S.M. & Crouter, A.C. 2008. Links between older and younger adolescent siblings' adjustment: The moderating role of shared activities. *International Journal of Behavioural Development*, 38(2):152-160.

Uchenna, A. 2013. Single parenting, psychological well-being and academic performance of adolescents in Lagos, Nigeria. *Journal of Emerging in Educational Research and Policy Studies*, 4(1):112-117.

Valtchanov, B.L., Parry, D.C., Glover, T.D. & Mulcahy, C.M. 2014. Neighborhood at your fingertips: Transforming community online through a Canadian social network site for mothers. *Gender, Technology and Development*, 18(2):187-217.

Voorpostel, M., Van der Lippe, T., Dykstra, P.A. & Flap, H. 2007. Similar or different: The importance of similarities and differences for support between siblings. *Journal of Family Issues*, 28(8):1026-1053.

Voorpostel, M., Van der Lippe, T. & Flap, H. 2012. For better or worse: negative life events and sibling relationship. *International Sociology*, 27(3):330-348.

Wakefield, J.C. 2007. Attachment and sibling rivalry in little Hans: The fantasy of the two giraffes revisited. *Journal of American Psychoanalytic Association*, 1(55):799-819.

Wall, K., Aboim, S., Cunha, V. & Vasconcelos, P. 2001. Families and informal support networks in Portugal: the reproduction of inequality. *Journal of European Social Policy*, 11(3):213-233.

Walliman, N. 2011. *Your research project: designing and planning your work*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Los Angeles: Sage.

Walsh, F. 2012. *Normal family processes: diversity and complexity*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: The Guilford Press.

Walshe, C., Ewing, G. & Griffiths, J. 2011. Using observation as a data-collection method to help understand patient and professional roles and actions in palliative care settings. *Palliative Medicine*, 26(8):1048-1054.

Wang, G., Buffalo, M.D., Bakr, S. & Sparato, L.P. 2004. The effect of female-headed households on education attainment: a comparative analysis of white and black respondents. *Journal of Applied Social Science*, 21(2):135-150.

Way, N. & Gillman, D.A. 2000. Early adolescent girls' perceptions of their relationships with their fathers: a qualitative investigation. *The Journal of Early Adolescence*, 20(3):309-331.

Weisz, B.M., Quinn, D.M. & Williams, M.K. 2015. Out and healthy: Being more "out" about a concealable stigmatized identity may boost the health benefits of social support. *Journal of Health Psychology*, 1-10

Whiteman, S.D., McHale, S.M. & Soli, A. 2011. Theoretical perspectives on sibling relationships. *Journal of Family Rev*, 3(2):124-139.

Wu, C. & Eamon, M.K. 2013. Employment hardships and health insurance coverage in single-mother families during and after the great recession. *Affilia: Journal of Women and Social Work*, 28(3):273-283.

Xie, X., Xia, Y. & Zhou, Z. 2004. The strengths and challenges in Chinese immigrant families. *Great Plains Research*, 14(2):203-218.

Yin, R.K. 2011. *Qualitative research from start to finish*. New York: Guilford Press.

Zhan, M. & Sherraden, M. 2003. Assets, expectations, and children's educational achievement in female-headed households. *Social Service Review*, 77(2):191-211.

Zainal, Z. 2007. Case study as a research method. *Journal Kemanusiaan*, 9:1-6.

Zastrow, C.H. 2010. *The practice of Social Work - A comprehensive work text*. 9<sup>th</sup> ed. USA: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company.

Zeiders, M.S., Roosa, M.W. & Tein, J. 2011. Family structure and family process in Mexican-American families. *Family Process*, 50(1):77-91.

## **ADDENDUM A: LETTER REQUESTING THE INDIVIDUAL'S PARTICIPATION IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT**

Dear Participant

I, **Keatlegile Mabelane**, invite you to participate in a research project titled: **The experiences of adult children who grew up female-headed families**

The purpose of the research is to capture the experiences of growing up in female-headed families with the aim of assisting social service professionals to improve interventions beneficial for children growing up in female-headed families.

An hour of your time will be requested to be interviewed using a tape recorder provided you have signed the consent form to participate in the study. Field notes will also be taken to record your responses. During the interview the following questions will be directed to you:

- Please share with me your family background.
- Describe your experience being raised in a female-headed family (prompts: parenting, provision, discipline).
- Describe how your family functioned on a daily basis.
- Share with me the support system that you had as a family and the contribution it made to your family life (prompts: religion, cultural practices, community, relatives).
- Describe your relationship with your mother (close, distant, challenges).
- Describe your relationship with your siblings (rivalry, competition, positives).
- Share with me how growing up in a female-headed family has informed your adult life (relationships with others, opportunities, disadvantages).
- What professional services do you think social workers could provide in terms of offering assistance to children in female-headed families?

The involvement may open up old wounds and should that be the case, you will be referred for debriefing with your consent of course.

Ultimately, the findings of the research will be presented to the Departmental Research and Ethics Committee in a form of a report and will be published in a professional journal. I wish to emphasise that pseudonyms will be used to protect your confidentiality and anonymity. Please do not hesitate to ask for clarification on any matter relating to the study.

Thank you in advance

.....

Ms. W.K Mabelane

## ADDENDUM B: INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY

I ..... volunteer to participate in a research project conducted by **Ms W.K Mabelane**, a student from Unisa. I understand that the project is designed to gather information on **the experiences of adult children who grew up female-headed families**

My participation in this project is voluntary. I understand that I will not be paid for my participation. I may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time without penalty. If, however, I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview session, I have the right to decline to answer any question or to end the interview.

Participation involves being interviewed only by the student researcher indicated above from Unisa. The interview will last approximately 45-60 minutes. Notes will be written during the interview. An audio tape of the interview and subsequent dialogue will be made. If I do not want to be taped, I will not be able to participate in the study.

I understand that the researcher will not identify me by name in any reports using information obtained from this interview, and that my confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain secure. Subsequent uses of records and data will be subject to standard data use policies which protect my anonymity.

I understand that this research study has been reviewed and approved by the Departmental Research and Ethics Committee and for research problems or questions I may contact the researcher's supervisors, Mr Kgadima at (012 429 6515) and Professor Makofane (012 429 6884) or the committee through the Chairperson, Professor Alpaslan on (012 429 6739).

I have read and understand the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

.....  
Signature

.....  
Date

## ADDENDUM C: CONSENT FORM REQUESTING PERMISSION TO PUBLISH INFORMATION

As part of this project, I have made an audio-recording of you. I would like you to indicate (with ticks in the appropriate blocks next to each statement below) what uses of these records you are willing to consent to. This is completely up to you. I will use the records only in ways that you agree to. In any of these records, names will not be identified.	Place a tick [✓] next to the use of the record you consent to
The records can be studied by the research team and quotations from the transcripts made of the recordings can be used in the research report.	
The quotations from the transcripts made of the recordings can be used for scientific publications and/or meetings.	
The written transcripts and/or records can be used by other researchers.	
The records and quotations from the transcripts made of the recordings can be shown/used in public presentations to non-scientific groups.	
The records can be used on television or radio.	
_____ Signature of participant	_____ Date



## ADDENDUM D: STATEMENTS AND DECLARATIONS

<b>STATEMENT BY OR ON BEHALF OF INVESTIGATOR(S)</b>	
I, Keatlegile Mabelane, declare that	
I have explained the information given in this document to _____ (name of participant); he/she was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions; this conversation was conducted in English and no translator was used.	
Signed at _____ on _____ 2014	
 _____	
 _____	
Signature of investigator/representative	Signature of witness

## ADDENDUM E: ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FROM HUMAN SCIENCES



### THE COLLEGE OF HUMAN SCIENCES RESEARCHER ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Hereby, I **Winnie Keatlegile Mabelane**, in my personal capacity as a researcher, acknowledge that I am aware of and familiar with the stipulations and contents of the

- Unisa Research Policy
- Unisa Ethics Policy
- Unisa IP Policy

And that I shall conform to and abide by these policy requirements

Signed: .....

Date: 02/05/2014

## ADDENDUM F: APPLICATION FOR ETHICS CLEARANCE



### DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date: 15 October 2014

Ref #: DR&EC\_2014\_001<sup>1</sup>

Name of applicant: **WK Mabelane**

Student #: **35564598**

Dear Ms WK Mabelane,

#### Decision: Ethics Approval

Open Rubric

**Name:** WK Mabelane, 25503 Tokologo Street, Extension 7, MAMELODI EAST, 0122. Tel 078 8150548/ [mabelwk@unisa.ac.za](mailto:mabelwk@unisa.ac.za)

**Supervisor:** Mr PN Kgadima & Co-supervisor: Prof MDM Makofane

**Proposal:** THE EXPERIENCES OF ADULT CHILDREN GROWING UP IN FEMALE-HEADED FAMILIES

**Qualification:** Master of Arts (Social Work)

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the **Department of Social Work's Research Ethics Review Committee** for the above mentioned research.

The application was reviewed in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics by the Department of Social Work's Research Ethics Review Committee on 22 May 2014.

**Final approval is granted for the duration of the project.**

*The proposed research may now commence with the proviso that:*

- 1) The researcher/s will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.*
- 2) Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study, as well as changes in the methodology, should be communicated in writing to the Department of Social Work's Ethics Review Committee. An amended application could be requested if there are substantial changes from the existing proposal, especially if those changes affect any of the study-related risks for the research participants.*

<sup>1</sup> Note:

The reference number [top right corner of this communiqué] should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication [e.g. Webmail, E-mail messages, letters] with the intended research participants, as well as with the Department of Social Work's RERC.



University of South Africa  
Preller Street, 14 Auckland Ridge, City of Tshwane  
PO Box 392, UNISA 0003 South Africa  
Telephone: +27 12 429 3111 Facsimile: +27 12 429 4150  
[www.unisa.ac.za](http://www.unisa.ac.za)

- 3) *The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study.*
- 4) *[Stipulate any reporting requirements if applicable].*

Kind regards,

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Prof AH Alpaslan

**Chair: Department of Social Work Research Ethics Review Committee**

alpasah@unisa.ac.za

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

**Prof RMH Moeketsi**

**Executive Dean: College of Human Sciences**

## ADDENDUM G:LETTER FROM EDITOR

### **CERTIFICATE OF VERACITY**

#### **Master of Arts in Social Science in Social Work**

#### **THE EXPERIENCES OF ADULT CHILDREN WHO GREW UP IN FEMALE- HEADED FAMILIES**

**Winnie Keatlegile Mabelane**  
(35564598)

---

I, the undersigned, hereby certify that the editing process comprised the following:

##### Language editing

- Syntax.
- Sentence construction.
- Grammar, punctuation, and spelling.
- Appropriate word selection.
- Final proofreading.

##### Format/layout editing

- Uniformity in page layout.
- Formatting in-text citations/sources in reference list.

---

Freelance editor	:	S M Bell
Completed	:	June 2016
Signature	:	<i>Sue Bell</i>



**TRANS-EDIT - EDITING & AUDIO TRANSCRIPTIONS**  
Cell: 072 685 8040 / 072 953 7415  
Website: [www.manu-type.co.za](http://www.manu-type.co.za)  
Email: [mt@trans-edit.co.za](mailto:mt@trans-edit.co.za)