

**EXPERIENCES OF  
KINSHIP FOSTER PARENTS**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Kinship foster care as a field of study in social work has been neglected in South Africa.

The difficulties currently experienced in obtaining unrelated foster parents, warrant a closer look at kinship foster care.

The aim of this study was to gain an understanding of the distressing and joyful experiences of kinship foster parents in fostering a relative's child. Their role as kinship foster parents, and how it relates to their role as a relative of the child, was explored. The study further explored the impact which kinship foster care may have on the kinship parents' relationship with their extended family.

A literature study was undertaken during which it was evident that kinship foster care is becoming increasingly popular as a placement option for children needing out-of-home care.

An interview schedule was constructed and administered to the entire population, of one welfare organisation, consisting of seventeen kinship foster parents. Twelve kinship foster parents participated in the study. This study therefore provides a limited picture on kinship foster care.

(ii)

The overall findings in this study showed that the majority of children in kinship care are cared for by the maternal families.

When the respondents experience problems in obtaining the foster care grant, it could influence their relationship with the social workers. It seemed as if foster parents are under the impression that it is the task of social workers to see to the payments of these grants. From the sample, it seemed as if kinship foster parents are mostly sympathetic towards problems experienced by social workers which hinder them in their service delivery, and are willing to contact them if they experience any problems.

It seemed as if most kinship foster parents enjoy fostering the child and receive emotional and financial support from their friends and family. Kinship foster parents' relationships with their family members (the parent of the child) could be influenced by that family member's involvement with a partner. The respondents were of the opinion that the relationship tends to be better if they accepted the partner of the parent as suitable.

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## **DEFINITIONS**

1. **Foster care** : This refers to the “statutory substitute care within the family circle for children who cannot be cared for by their parents in the short, medium or long term while services are continued to the parents in order to return the children to their care within a specific period” (New dictionary for Social Work/Nuwe woordeboek vir Maatskaplike Werk 1995 sv “foster care”).
  
2. **Foster parent** : A foster parent is “..... a person other than a parent or guardian in whose care a foster child is placed under the Child Care Act, 1983 (Act 74 of 1983) or the Criminal Procedure Act, 1977 (Act 51 of 1977)” (New dictionary for Social Work/Nuwe woordeboek vir Maatskaplike Werk 1995 sv “foster parent”).
  
3. **Related foster care** :
  - 3.1 Related foster care refers to a subform of foster care where the foster parent “fosters a relative’s child” (South African National Council for Child and family Welfare 1987: 9).
  
  - 3.2 This is the term used in South African literature, for what is known in international literature as “kinship care.”

4. **Kinship care** :

- 4.1 Kinship care refers to the “placement of children with relatives” (Dubowitz, Feigelman & Zuravin 1993: 153). Kinship care is the term used in American and Australian literature.
- 4.2 Kinship care sometimes includes a much wider understanding of relatives and therefore may include even “fictive kin such as godparents and other close family associates.” Prater, cited by Hegar (1993: 369), even includes those who share ethnic or cultural ties in his definition of kinship care.
- 4.3 Ainsworth & Maluccio (1998: 3) use terms such as relative foster care or family foster care to refer to kinship foster care.
- 4.4 For the purpose of this research study, the abovementioned definition of Dubowitz et al (1993: 153), will apply.

5. **Family** :

“Persons related by blood or marriage” (New dictionary for Social Work/Nuwe woordeboek vir Maatskaplike Werk 1995 sv “family”).

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 REASONS FOR THE CHOICE OF THE RESEARCH SUBJECT

The researcher's interest in the subject of kinship care originated in her being previously employed as a social worker dealing specifically with foster care and reconstruction services. More than 50% of the foster care placements being supervised by the researcher were kinship care placements. These kinship foster parents felt that being a relative had an impact on the foster care placement. Their foster children's biological parents did not always respect their house rules, and often interfered in the placement. At times they also caused problems between members of the extended family and the kinship foster parents. According to the report of the Department of Health Services and Welfare (1990: 44) these concerns of kinship foster parents are shared by unrelated foster parents. The researcher and fellow social workers questioned why the biological parents very seldom resumed their parental responsibility to care for their children. Is it because they know the foster parents very well? Could it be that they relate well to their children whilst visiting them at the family member's house and that they therefore do not see the need to resume their parental responsibilities? Is it maybe more socially acceptable to have your children living with a family member than with non-relatives, and that the social pressure to resume the parental responsibilities is therefore not so immense as when children are residing with non-relatives?

Could the lack of social pressure have caused reconstruction to take place at a much slower rate, and is this the reason why children often continue to stay on with the kinship foster parents? The researcher believes that research into kinship care as a phenomenon can shed some light on these questions.

The researcher is currently employed as a social worker in a residential care facility for children where foster care often develops out of a relationship between the child and family or friends. Not only are the biological parents of importance, but the other family members also play a very important part in the lives of the children in the residential care facility. The researcher is of the opinion that some of the children in the residential care facility could actually be placed in foster care with members of their families. To facilitate this, the facility and the family can work "in partnership" as described by Ainsworth & Small (1997: 18). The researcher wanted to know what it would be like for relatives to foster a family child.

Research which focuses on both distressing and joyful experiences of kinship foster parents could provide some indication of the impact that fostering a relative's child may have on the foster family. This knowledge could assist the researcher and other social workers in understanding how a family deals with

kinship care if it involves their own family members and to prepare relatives for the task of fostering a family member's child.

Knowledge of kinship care could become increasingly important as more children could need out-of-home care due to social issues such as AIDS, child abuse and poverty. There is already a shortage of non-related foster homes in most areas of the Eastern Cape and the mentioned social issues could place a further burden on the foster care system. This is confirmed by many social workers with whom the researcher has daily contact when they approach her for possible placements for children in the residential care facility. In a recent article by Grant (Go & Express 25 June 1998: 3), an urgent appeal was made to people to become foster parents for children with special needs. Through experience as a social worker, the researcher agrees with Dubowitz, Feigelman & Zuravin (1993: 155) in their belief that there are shortcomings in the foster care system, such as inadequate monitoring of and support to foster parents and foster children. These shortcomings can only be addressed if research information is available to guide practice and policy formation.

Dubowitz et al (1993: 155) further feels that the state has the ethical and legal responsibility to ensure that children who are removed from parental care receive adequate care after their removal. The researcher is of the opinion that each

welfare organisation should share this ethical and legal responsibility with the government. Each social worker should therefore want to base her practice on theoretical knowledge. As limited South African literature is available on this subject, the researcher hopes to contribute to the theoretical knowledge on kinship care with this research study.

## 1.2 **RESEARCH GOALS**

By doing research into the experiences of kinship foster parents, a body of knowledge would be compiled which could be used by social workers when preparing relatives for their task of fostering a family member's child.

## 1.3 **OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH**

The objectives of the research are:

- 1.2.1 To gain a deeper understanding of both the distressing and joyful experiences of kinship foster parents when they foster a family member's child,
- 1.2.2 to explore the kinship foster parents' role and how it relates to their role as relatives of the child, and

1.2.3 to explore how fostering a relative's child impacts on their relationship with their extended family.

#### 1.4 **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

The researcher decided upon an exploratory-descriptive research design as this type of design usually precedes other types of research.

Exploratory designs allow the researcher to gain insight into a situation, phenomenon, community or person (Bless & Higson-Smith 1995: 42). Yegidis & Weinbach (1991: 76) explain that exploratory designs are usually employed in situations where we know very little about the topic or problem. After a literature review was done, covering both foster care in general and kinship care as a sub-form of foster care, the researcher came to the conclusion that limited South African literature is available on the specific area of kinship care. The researcher was able to locate mostly American and Australian literature on the topic.

Kinship care is therefore a topic on which little information exists in South Africa and an exploratory design would be the most appropriate to use as it can serve as a basis on which knowledge and new insight can be built into the phenomenon of kinship care.

Descriptive designs allow for the accurate description of a wide variety of

characteristics of the population under investigation (Rubin & Babbie 1997: 109). The design will be descriptive as kinship foster parents can describe their beliefs and the facts as they perceive it. The researcher integrated qualitative and quantitative methods in collecting and interpreting data.

“Qualitative assessment methods give clinicians access to a client’s meaning systems, frame of reference, personal beliefs, cognitive schemes, values, cultural realities and personal motivations” (Franklin & Jordan 1995: 281). It is for this reason that the researcher decided to interview twenty kinship foster parents. The researcher later found that the entire population of kinship foster families under the supervision of the Christelik Maatskaplike Raad (CMR), East London, consisted of only seventeen families. Two families denied that they are kinship foster parents, a further two decided not to participate in the research and one family left East London, which left the researcher with twelve kinship foster parents who were willing to be interviewed.

Interviews are one of the qualitative methods of obtaining research data, which are most suitable when relatively low levels of previous conceptualisation, theory building and research findings in a given area of inquiry exist (Grinnell 1988: 273). A semi-structured interview schedule was developed on the basis of literature reviewed. Semi-structured interviews allow respondents the freedom to talk

about the topic and to give their views, but allow the researcher to ask questions within an established framework (Bell 1993: 94).

The researcher held preliminary interviews with two kinship foster parents to ascertain whether the central items on the interview schedule were of significance to them. Data was analysed systematically by using a list of categories and by sorting data into the different categories. Data was then presented by utilising different presentation methods. Recommendations were made from the data.

## **1.5 LIMITATION OF THE RESEARCH**

1.5.1 Although it was proposed that twenty kinship foster parents would be interviewed, the population consisted of only seventeen kinship foster parents. Twelve kinship foster parents from one welfare organisation were interviewed. It is therefore clear that the findings of this study cannot be safely generalised to children in kinship care elsewhere. Other differences such as difference in service rendering and programmatic differences might also have an effect on the researcher's ability to generalise. It is accepted that the families involved will differ in significant ways other than just in terms of the nature of the relationships in the family. According to Creswell (1994: 162) qualitative research pays attention to particulars of a

case rather than generalisations. The researcher will therefore seek to interpret the data obtained from kinship foster parents.

1.5.2 The sample of kinship foster parents used in this study group might resemble the racial distribution of the clients of the welfare organisation, but not of the Eastern Cape.

1.5.3 The scope of this study is limited as it only focus on the experiences of a small number of kinship foster parents. In order to gain a clearer understanding of their experiences it would have been beneficial to have interviewed other family members as well, as this study produces a limited picture of the experiences that are associated with kinship foster care.

1.5.4 With any interview, there may be the danger of bias as the interviewer may have an effect on the interviewees. To keep the possibility of interviewer bias constant, the researcher will collect all of the data herself. Bell (1993: 95) is of the opinion that if only one researcher conducts the interviews, the bias may be consistent and may therefore go unnoticed.

## 1.6 **PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED WITH THE RESEARCH**

Kinship care is a sub-form of foster care. Literature on foster care does not

always make a distinction between kinship care and non-related foster care, but tends to describe foster care in the broad sense of the word. The researcher found it difficult to ascertain whether literature on foster care was in fact describing kinship care or non-related foster care, or both.

In Chapter three the researcher was therefore limited in her utilisation of the available literature, as she could only make use of that literature which specifically referred to kinship care. If this specification was not made, the researcher had to assume that the literature included both kinship care and non-related foster care.

As mentioned earlier, the researcher experienced problems with the sample of kinship foster parents. The seventeen families which made up the total population of kinship foster families, were less than what the researcher anticipated.

Twelve kinship foster parents were interviewed, as two families felt that they do not fit the criteria of being a kinship foster parent, one family left East London and two families chose not to participate in the research.

## **1.7 VALUE OF THE RESEARCH**

With this study the researcher hopes to contribute to the limited South African literature that is available on kinship care. It is hoped that this study will provide information on the needs of kinship foster parents. Although kinship care is often

considered as a placement option for children needing care, the researcher hopes to further promote it as a placement option by focussing on both the strengths and weaknesses of this sub-form of foster care, as was indicated by the participants.

It is hoped that this research will show possible areas for social work intervention with kinship foster parents. The researcher felt that this research could show areas for possible support to kinship foster parents.

## 1.8 ORGANISATION OF THE RESEARCH

Chapter one of this study consists of a general introduction.

Chapter two is a review of foster care in general.

Chapter three consists of a review of the available literature on kinship care as a sub-form of foster care.

Chapter four explains the research design used and the methodology of the research.

Chapter five deals with the findings pertaining to the interviews held with kinship foster parents and data is analysed.

Chapter six includes a summary, recommendations and conclusion.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **AN OVERVIEW OF THE GENERAL ASPECTS OF FOSTER CARE**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

Foster care is one alternative care option for children who need out-of-home care. As a service field it has many complexities and variations which should be considered by service providers. In this chapter, an overview of foster care is provided, based on a review of available literature on the subject. This chapter does not deal specifically with any of the sub-forms of foster care. In chapter three kinship foster care as a sub-form of foster care will be discussed in detail. This chapter rather focuses on the characteristics of foster parents, their recruitment, selection and preparation for foster parenthood. The services provided to foster parents and their experience of being a foster parent will also be dealt with in this chapter. As a starting point, the term “foster care” will be explained in more detail.

#### **2.2 THE TERM “FOSTER CARE”**

The term “foster care” is an umbrella term that covers a wide variety of situations in which a child is cared for in a family other than its own.

In countries such as the United States of America and Australia, foster care is a generic term which includes Agency group homes, formal kinship care and family foster care (Downs, Costin & McFadden 1996: 297 - 311). According to the researcher, group homes will usually be classified as children's homes or residential care facilities in South Africa. Children in these facilities are not usually described as foster children.

The term "foster care" is mostly used in the social work profession to refer to the process by which a child is legally placed with foster parents who have been recruited and selected for the task of fostering. They may also receive an allowance or a fee to take care of the child (Triseliotis, Sellick & Short 1995: 11). The researcher believes that people sometimes use this term even for an informal placement of a child negotiated between two parties without the intervention of any welfare organisation. The term "fostering" can even be used inappropriately to refer to the relationship between a sponsor and the child whom he sponsors. This term may lead to the misconception that a relationship exists between the sponsor and the child, while this may in fact not be the situation at all. The sponsor may only provide for the financial needs of the child and not for the emotional needs of that child (Tolfree 1995: 185).

The term “foster care” does not refer only to children. It can include adults as well. Kufeldt & Allison (1990: 10) describe a form of foster care in which the child and his parents are under the care of the foster parent. This “shared care” reinforces reconstruction work as the child and parents still form a family unit. Cornish (1991: 57) describes a similar type of foster care in which the “whole family” is placed with experienced foster families known as “host families.” According to the researcher the term “host families” can create some confusion for readers. Although the term refers to experienced foster families in the American context, it is often used in South Africa to describe a family which accommodates a child from a residential care facility for weekends or holidays. These “hosts” might or might not have contact with the biological parents of the child. The importance of the biological parents in the lives of their children is discussed with host parents (Swanepoel 1996: 31). The researcher does not believe that it is a common phenomenon that these host parents take care of the child’s whole family.

It is clear that it is necessary to define the context in which one will use the term “foster care.” If this is not done, confusion may easily develop. For the purpose of this research study, the definition as described on page ix of the research document will apply.

## 2.3 CHARACTERISTICS OF FOSTER PARENTS

People are unique, therefore each foster parent will present different characteristics. The following characteristics are some that are displayed by most foster parents:

### 2.3.1 Motives of foster parents to foster a child

Foster parents may have various reasons for wanting to foster a child. These needs and desires can mask underlying attitudes. Social workers should familiarise themselves with both the conscious and unconscious motives of foster parents for wanting to foster a child (Josselyn in Tod 1971: 18 - 31). Only through an in-depth screening process can these motives be identified. Unconscious motivations on the part of the foster parent may surface later when the child is already placed with them (Fish in Maidman 1984: 219). The researcher agrees with Josselyn that social workers must familiarise themselves with the conscious and as far as possible with the unconscious motives of foster parents as these can easily lead to a breakdown in the foster placement when they surface later.

The researcher is of the opinion that most foster parents' conscious motivation for fostering seems to lie in their positive attitude towards

children. Foster parents often have children of their own for whom they wish to find a friend. They hope to enrich their children's lives by having a foster child at home. Another popular reason for wanting to foster a child seems to lie in a couple's inability, for whatever reason, to have children of their own. Often a couple has attempted to adopt a child, but because of delays in the adoption process, have felt the need to have a foster child as a substitute for the adopted child. From experience, the researcher believes that childless couples' motives to foster a child should be thoroughly investigated as they may be more at risk regarding the foster child. They may deny that the foster child has biological parents.

These couples may however, if found acceptable, be used in cases where the foster child is very demanding or it is likely that little or no contact will exist with biological parents (South African National Council for Child and Family Welfare - further referred to as SANCCW 1987: 99). The researcher is of the opinion that the maturity of the childless couple must be taken into account. As they do not have children of their own, they may lack the experience to care for a very demanding child. Their ability to care for such a child should be assessed before the child is placed with them.

As a social worker, the researcher experienced that foster parents may have as a motive to foster a child, the desire to express their maturity through parenting, to see a child grow up, to care for those in need of care and in this way to be useful to their communities.

Triseliotis et al (1995: 39) describes a tradition that developed over many centuries whereby families took care of foster children out of kindness and sheer altruism and with no financial compensation. According to the researcher, the poor financial situation in the country may discourage people from fostering children without any financial compensation. It may encourage people to foster a child purely to supplement the family income. The SANCCW (1987: 9) describes the need for financial assistance as one of the reasons why people specifically apply to foster a relative's child. It seems to be of importance to social workers that they investigate the reasons for prospective foster parents applying to foster children.

### **2.3.2 Ages of foster parents**

Literature often differs on the exact age group of the majority of foster parents. Rankin (1983: 12) found that the majority of foster parents are over the age of 39, with most of them over the age of 55. Stein (1981: 76) suggests that most of the foster parents are slightly older than what Rankin

described and suggests that they are between 45 and 59 years of age.

The researcher believes that any person over the age of 35 should normally have reached stability in their work and living arrangements and should therefore, if they apply to become a foster parent, be able to provide some stability to the child in need of care. Age alone should not, however, be the sole selection criterion for screening prospective foster parents.

The SANCCW (1987: 94) concludes in their guide on foster care practice that the age of a foster parent only has a negative influence on the foster care placement, when their age affects their ability to care for a child. The researcher is of the opinion that older foster parents may have a wealth of experience about life which they will be able to share with the foster child.

### **2.3.3 Educational characteristics of foster parents**

Foster parents are likely to have less than a high school education (Stein 1981: 76; Dubowitz et al 1993: 157). The research done by Rankin (1983: 12) shows slightly different results with more than half of the foster parents having an educational level of standard six or higher. A very small number of foster parents were shown to have no education whatsoever. It was found that foster mothers had a lower educational level than foster fathers. It is important to note that Rankin only studied coloured foster

parents and these characteristics may not apply to other racial groups.

According to the researcher, the educational level of a foster parent only impacts negatively on the child if it hinders their ability to care for the child.

#### **2.3.4 Income and occupation of foster parents**

According to Stein (1981: 76) foster parents earn slightly less than the national median. Foster fathers are seldom in skilled positions while foster mothers are usually unskilled. Rankin (1983: 12) indicates that a very large number of the coloured foster families studied, had a monthly income of less than R401. Most foster parents were employed as skilled workers and 23% of foster parents were pensioners or grantees, with 33% being semi-skilled workers.

The SANCCW (1987: 94) concludes that it is important that foster parents should have a stable income which is sufficient for the maintenance of the family. The foster mother should preferably not be employed outside the home and the foster father should be a reliable worker. They realise however that it is not always possible to prescribe these conditions, particularly when one considers less privileged communities.

### **2.3.5 Marriage and family relationships**

Rankin (1983: 12) indicates in her study that most foster parents were married, although a very large proportion were widowed, and a surprising eight percent had never been married.

Stable family and marital relationships should be vital factors in the screening of foster parents. Foster parents should be in agreement about important aspects such as child rearing practices. The decision to foster should be a family decision and should not be the need of just one member of the family (SANCCW 1987: 96).

The characteristics of foster parents give a general idea of whom the people are who foster children. Knowledge of these characteristics can assist the social worker in selecting the person best suited to foster a specific child. Good recruitment methods and preparation of prospective foster parents can further ensure the success of foster care.

## **2.4 RECRUITMENT, SELECTION AND PREPARATION OF FOSTER PARENTS BY THE SOCIAL WORKER**

### **2.4.1 Recruitment of foster parents**

Social workers can make use of a variety of methods to recruit

prospective foster parents. Advertisements in popular newspapers are amongst the favourite methods used by social workers. Advertisements can highlight the reasons why foster parents are needed and can reach many people. According to the Department of Health Services and Welfare (1990: 39) this is not the most popular method of recruitment utilised by the organisations included in their study. They indicated that foster parents usually discuss foster care with others and that they recruit people in this way to become foster parents. This seems to be the most effective recruitment method utilised by the organisations included in their study. Another successful recruitment method utilised, is that of requests for prospective foster parents made at church gatherings.

Radio and television interviews can provide an opportunity to reach a large number of people. According to the researcher, people will not necessarily respond to such recruitment methods as they do not have the same personal touch to them as, for example a social worker who addresses a group of people in person. The Department of Health Services and Welfare (1990: 39) believes that radio and television interviews have an impact on people, but that the effects are short-lived and do not always reach the target group.

It was not possible to ascertain which of these recruiting methods was the most effective. For recruitment to be effective, it needs to be an ongoing process (SANCCW 1987: 98).

#### **2.4.2 Selection of foster parents**

A social worker is responsible for the selection of foster parents. Fish (in Maidman 1984: 222 - 223) describes a selection process which includes telephonic contact, a general orientation interview, a home visit and an interview with all members of the applicant family present. The social worker can have individual interviews with the prospective foster mother and foster father or it can be held conjointly. Applicants can be asked to undergo a medical examination. A police check on prospective foster parents can be done. References can be followed up in written form, telephonically or in person. Other procedures found to be useful by Fish (1984: 223) in the selection process include the use of questionnaires, ecomaps and genograms. This will help the social worker to form an understanding of the family dynamics of the applicant family.

If applicants are really unsuitable, this should be conveyed to them in the most tactful, honest way. Their good will can be channelled into other areas of child welfare work (SANCCW 1987: 98).

Selection of foster parents seems to be a labour intensive task which should be done very thoroughly.

### **2.4.3 Preparation of foster parents**

Much of the success of the placements may rely on how well all parties have been prepared for foster care.

Triseliotis et al (1995: 124) suggests that the social worker can, in preparing the child, its parents and the foster parents, begin by explaining why such a move is necessary. The fears and anxieties which such a move can create can be discussed with everyone. The social worker can further explain what foster care usually involves and what living with another family may entail.

In preparing the foster parents for fostering, the social worker can focus on how this may impact on their family. It is important that their own children are also prepared for the changes that might occur.

To diminish the impact which the foster child might have on the foster family, the social worker can arrange that the foster parents and biological parents meet each other before the placement. The biological parents can

then provide valuable information on the child's health, routines and patterns of living. A meeting between the child and foster family can eliminate some of the anxiety which both parties may experience.

Before the child moves into his or her new home, visitation arrangements need to be discussed with foster parents and biological parents. The foster parents can obtain a written contract from the social worker stipulating the parents' rights. This will help them to understand their role as foster parents in relation to the rights of biological parents (Triseliotis et al 1995: 124).

The researcher is of the opinion that foster parents who are well prepared for their task, are more likely to make a success of it.

In reality, it seems as if the social workers sometimes neglect to prepare foster parents adequately for their task. Rankin (1983: 42) found in her study that foster parents was not always informed as to the potential problems which they might experience in fostering. They were not always informed of the rights and obligations of the biological parents.

Preparation of foster parents is a task which should not be neglected by social workers, as it may have a negative impact on the relationship between foster parents and biological parents.

## **2.5 SOCIAL WORK SUPPORT GIVEN TO FOSTER PARENTS**

Aldgate (in Triseliotis 1980: 39) describes the social worker's primary tool in foster care services as the way in which he uses himself in providing support. The social worker must continue to be sensitive to the needs of individuals.

Support methods which could be used include training, financial assistance and providing support groups for foster parents. Foster parents dealing with difficult children may need rest periods from time to time. These can be organised by the social worker (Triseliotis et al 1995: 98).

Foster parents may look to the social worker for practical and emotional support in relation to the child for whom they are caring. It is important that the social worker acknowledges the price which foster parents have to pay in looking after the foster child. They have to share their time, privacy, possessions and relationships with the foster child. Social workers can show that they value foster parents by actively listening to foster parents, showing interest in them and putting time aside to talk to them (Triseliotis et al 1995: 84 - 85).

If foster parents feel that they have a working relationship with the social worker, they will feel valued. If they are not included in decisions, invited to training sessions and support groups, or if the social worker does not make sure that they receive their allowance, they will feel undervalued (Sellick 1992: 54 - 66).

Shaw & Hipgrave (1983: 57 - 58) identify the need for social workers to learn to work directly with children. According to them, social workers lack intervention skills in working directly with children. This hinders them in supporting foster parents as they are unable to provide advice on effective helping techniques. They are often able to assist foster parents in understanding the child's difficulties, but they are unable to provide practical advice on dealing with these problems.

The researcher believes that if social workers obtain the skills in working directly with children, then they will be more able to provide support to foster parents.

## **2.6 THE ROLE OF THE FOSTER PARENT**

The question can be asked: how does the role of the foster parent differ from that of the biological parent? Through the discussion of the various tasks of foster parents, it is hoped that differences in the roles of foster parents and biological parents will be highlighted.

### **2.6.1 Physical care tasks of the foster parent**

The first and most obvious task of a foster parent is to physically care for the child. If the physical needs of the child are met, the foster parent will be able to establish a relationship with the child (SANCCW 1987: 88).

The responsibilities which a foster parent has for the physical care of the child does not differ much from that of the biological parent. Fish (in Maidman 1984: 222) believes that feeding, clothing, housing and emotionally supporting a child are non-negotiable aspects of parenting.

The most important difference between foster parenting and natural parenting can be found in the fact that the foster parents may not see the child grow up, although they love and care for the child. For this reason the foster family need to be emotionally stable in order to cope with the possible reunification of the child with its own family (SANCCW 1987: 96 - 101).

### **2.6.2 Emotional tasks of the foster parent**

Foster children are often emotionally deprived or damaged children because of their previous home circumstances. These children need love and security. They may present emotional or behavioural difficulties

because of their traumatic experiences. Treatment of these problems may be necessary. The foster parents often identify these problems first and have the responsibility of reporting it to the social worker, who will then arrange for treatment. The foster parents are involved in the treatment programme and have to give support to the child whilst he or she is in their care. They need to assist the child in coming to terms with the separation from his or her parents (SANCCW 1987: 88 - 89).

Separation from familiar people may have a distressing impact on a child. They may be anxious, uncertain and confused. In addition, they may be unable to communicate their experiences and put their feelings into words (Triseliotis et al 1995: 117).

Foster parents do not immediately have an emotional bond with the child, although it later develops (SANCCW 1987: 96 - 101).

### **2.6.3 Social tasks of the foster parent**

The foster parents need to accept the child as he or she is and also show acceptance towards the biological parents of the child. They need to help the child to establish positive relationships with their own children. Where the child is emotionally deprived and under-stimulated, the foster

parent needs to enhance the child's developmental level to the point where he or she can maintain himself or herself socially (SANCCW 1987: 89).

The child as an individual has skills, hopes and fears. In order to assist the child in areas of difficulty, the child's social behaviour needs to be observed (Corrigan & Floud 1990: 29).

#### **2.6.4 Educational tasks of the foster parent**

Older foster children often need to adjust to a new school environment.

Foster parents need to accompany the child to the school on the first day.

They need to inform the teacher of the child's status as a foster child. They

need to take an active interest in the child's school progress and extra-

mural activities. They should identify problems at school and learning

problems. Their educational tasks include education in aspects such as

social behaviour, table manners, road safety etc. The aspects of education

will depend on the child's needs and the extent to which the child has been

neglected (SANCCW 1987: 90). Fish (in Maidman 1984: 229) feels that

foster parents must ensure that special school personnel evaluate and assist

the child.

## 2.7 THE FOSTER CHILD AND HIS/HER BIOLOGICAL FAMILY

When a child is in foster care, services are provided to them, their biological and foster families.

### 2.7.1 Services to the foster child

Services to the foster child may focus mainly on the child whose special needs require interventions by physicians, social workers and educators. Therapeutic day care can be provided for the child to allow foster parents some time off from ongoing child care. Social workers can intervene to resolve difficulties between the foster parents and the child. The bulk of services should be directed towards the child to help him or her to resolve the difficulties that necessitated his or her placement in foster care (Minahan 1987: 645).

Social workers need to arrange contact between the child and its parents. Contact helps the child and parents to be able to confront the reasons why the child cannot live at home. It helps the child to form realistic views of his or her family and prevents idealisation of the parents. Contact can free the child from worries and reassure him or her that he or she is not forgotten by the parents. When the child is free from worries, he or she can focus on improving his or her relationships with the foster family and will be able to develop mentally and emotionally (Blacher 1994: 143).

### **2.7.2 Services to the biological parents**

Social workers can render services to the biological parents who may require professional assistance to solve problems. Family counselling can be provided to resolve parent-child problems. Like with the child, the bulk of social services is directed towards resolving the difficulties that necessitated the placement of the child (Minahan 1987: 645).

Aldgate (in Triseliotis 1980: 23) views social worker activity, whether it is general encouragement, practical support or more intensive problem solving or help with emotional difficulties, as beneficial, as she indicates that it has a significant effect on the return of the child to the parent.

Contact seems to decline substantially after two years in care. It seems as if the social workers become less enthusiastic about encouraging parents to maintain contact. The longer children therefore remain in care, the less likely they are to return home.

Downs et al (1996: 287) mentions the importance of teamwork in the visitation process. Trained foster parents can help to teach biological parents parental skills, help in building relationships and bringing them in contact with various resources that can be utilised for the benefit of the child.

## 2.8 CONCLUSION

Foster care is a wide service field consisting of various sub-forms such as kinship foster care. According to the literature, the term foster care can be understood in different ways. In this study, foster care refers to the statutory placement of a child within a family circle, when out-of-home care is needed for the child. The literature further suggests that foster parents have conscious and unconscious motives for wanting to foster a child. These conscious motives include being kind, wanting to look after a child because of being childless and wanting financial compensation for fostering a child. The unconscious motives are more difficult to detect and can only be detected through thorough discussions with the prospective foster parents during the recruitment, selection and preparation phases. Social work support should be given to foster parents by providing training and financial assistance. In training foster parents, the social worker can focus on the tasks of the foster parents, which include providing for the physical, emotional, social and educational wellbeing of the child. Services to the child and the biological parents should take the foster parents into consideration as a teamwork approach can be beneficial to all parties. In the next chapter, kinship foster care as a sub-form of foster care will be discussed.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **KINSHIP FOSTER CARE**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

Kinship foster care is one sub-form of foster care which seems to have gained much popularity as a placement option for children entering out-of-home care. One of the reasons for this trend is the lack of non-related foster parents. This phenomenon is highlighted by articles in popular newspapers which often describe the need of welfare organisations to obtain foster parents. De Kock (Rapport 12 July 1998: 27) highlighted the urgent need for foster parents once again. Relatives are usually the first option considered by social workers when a child needs out-of-home care. Knowledge regarding their experiences will help social workers to assess whether the kinship foster care placement is the most appropriate type of placement for a child.

In this chapter, attention will be given to the characteristics of kinship foster parents. The services provided to kinship foster parents will also be described.

### 3.2 THE TERM “KINSHIP CARE”

The term “related foster care” is used in South African literature to refer to the placement of a child in the care of a relative. Usually the term refers to a legal placement of a child in foster care, either in terms of the Child Care Act, Act 74/83 or in terms of the Criminal Procedures Act 51/77. This term can, however, also be used to refer to the placement of children by private arrangement in the care of relatives (SANCCW 1987: 9).

“Kinship care” is the term used in most American and Australian literature to refer to a placement of children in foster care with relatives. This term can include not only the extended family system, but can also refer to close family friends, people who have similar beliefs or people from the same ethnic group (Hegar 1993: 369).

The terms “relative foster care” or “family foster care” are also used to refer to kinship foster care (Ainsworth & Maluccio 1998: 3). In a personal interview with Dr. Frank Ainsworth (1998) he felt that the use of one term should be promoted so as to avoid confusion. It is for this reason that the researcher decided to use the term “kinship foster care” as this is the term most commonly used in international literature to refer to the placement of children with relatives.

Tolfree (1995: 185 - 187) believes that it is common to find children living with relatives. According to him, the responsibility for child care in most non-western societies, is not seen as the sole responsibility of the biological parents. It is shared by many people within the extended family system. This responsibility sometimes also falls onto the local community. These forms of indigenous fostering will not normally be labelled as “fostering” as it is normally negotiated as an informal agreement between two parties without any welfare agency involvement.

Tolfree (1995: 186) describes some of these traditional forms of fostering. In India it was customary for children to live with their teachers for the period whilst they received their formal education. They now more often board with relatives. In Sierra Leone it is common for children to be raised by other adults such as relatives, friends or even neighbours or patrons instead of by their own biological parents. They commonly spend the majority of their first six years of life with an older woman. These “grannies” are not necessarily related to the child. The term “granny” used for these older women, can create confusion as they can easily be mistaken as members of the child’s extended family. This fascinating form of indigenous foster care is continued by other younger adults when the child is older than six years. These children often experience hardship in the “foster placement” and are expected to contribute towards the household economy of the

“foster parents.”

These children are often denied food as a means of punishment and they are less likely to have access to medical treatment when they are ill. Another practice is the use of these “foster children” as security against a loan. Older girls are used as household maids. It must be remembered that these children are not legally placed in foster care, although their care is described in literature as foster care, and may be inappropriately classified as “kinship foster care” (Tolfree 1995: 185 - 187).

### **3.3 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF KINSHIP FOSTER PARENTS**

Limited research on the characteristics of kinship foster parents exists. It is, however, felt that relatives might have a higher commitment to the foster child than non-relatives. A suitable relative could also be an effective role model for the biological parent and allow a degree of supervised parenting which will help the family in the reunification process (Dubowitz et al 1993: 154).

#### **3.3.1 Motives of kinship foster parents to foster a relative's child**

Kinship foster parents often want to care for and keep the members of the family together (Downs et al 1996: 300). They may, however, also foster a relative's child in order to obtain a foster care grant. Domestic

difficulties may also be experienced with the child's biological parents (SANCCW 1987: 9).

In cases where there is conflict between the maternal and paternal family, the motive of the kinship foster parents may also include keeping the children away from the "other" family, thereby excluding either the maternal or paternal family. Kinship foster parents may also foster the related children because of a sense of duty. They may feel that the family's good name and honour needs to be protected (Department of Health Services and Welfare 1990: 43). They may not want the children to live with strangers.

### **3.3.2 Ages of kinship foster parents**

Most related foster parents in the United States are typically grandparents of the children, although children are also cared for by aunts, older siblings or other relatives (Dubowitz et al 1993: 155). A similar situation could easily be found in South Africa.

Kinship foster parents are usually older than the non-related foster parents (Ainsworth & Maluccio 1998: 6). It seems as if the majority of kinship foster parents fall between 41 and 60 years of age (Gebel 1996: 11).

The researcher believes that the age of grandparents may present difficulty when placing younger children with them. Older people may have health problems and may find it difficult to fulfil the parental role. They do, however, possess a wealth of experience especially if their own children have already grown up. Age should only be considered if it has a negative influence on the ability of the kinship foster parent to care for the child.

An immediate question that arises is whether the older kinship foster parents will have sufficient resources to support them in their efforts to care for the foster children. In an investigation into this issue, Downs et al (1996: 299) found that when the entire kinship network is looked at, this network usually provides the foster parents with enough resources.

### **3.3.3 Educational characteristics of kinship foster parents**

Kinship foster parents are often less educated than unrelated foster parents (Gebel 1996: 10). Dubowitz et al (1993: 157) found in their study that fewer than half of the foster parents had completed high school.

### **3.3.4 Income and occupation of kinship foster parents**

Kinship foster parents tend to have lower incomes (Ainsworth & Maluccio 1998: 6). Given their often lower educational level, it can be that

they find it extremely difficult to find employment or to find well-paid employment (Downs et al 1996: 299). Dubowitz et al (1993: 157) found that nearly half of the caregivers studied by them were employed. Three quarters of these kinship foster parents were employed full time.

### **3.3.5 Marriage and family relationships**

Kinship foster parents are frequently single women (Ainsworth & Maluccio 1998: 7). One third of the caregivers studied by Dubowitz et al (1993: 158) were married.

A positive aspect of kinship foster care is that with a few exceptions, most of the children are placed with relatives which appropriately match their own race, culture and ethnicity. This is not always the case with non-related foster care placements. The children therefore grow up having a sense of belonging. This is vital in the formation of relationships. Conflict between the biological parents and the kinship foster parents can exist. Conflict can even include other members of the extended family network (Department of Health Services and Welfare 1990: 43).

One of the questions which should still be addressed through research, is that of the impact of kinship foster care on biological parents (Ainsworth & Maluccio 1998: 13). These relationships should be investigated. The researcher hopes to address this question to some extent in this research study, by specifically asking about the relationship between kinship foster parents and the biological parents of the children.

### **3.4 RECRUITMENT, SELECTION AND PREPARATION OF THE KINSHIP FOSTER PARENT BY THE SOCIAL WORKER**

#### **3.4.1 Recruitment of kinship foster parents**

A social worker will usually approach family first when considering alternative care for a child. Sometimes, however, the child has already been residing with a relative for some time. After some difficulties, these relatives may approach the social worker with the view to become foster parents for the child. In most cases it is not difficult for the social worker to locate one or more members of the child's extended family (SANCCW 1987: 9).

#### **3.4.2 Selection of kinship foster parents**

When selecting kinship foster parents, the social worker needs to look at aspects such as the nature and quality of the relationship between the child

and his or her relative, the desire and ability of the kinship foster parent to protect the child from further abuse and maltreatment and their ability to provide nurturing to the child. The kinship foster parents need to be willing to accept the child into their home. Likewise the biological parent needs to be positive towards the placement of the child with kin and the relationship between the biological parent and kinship foster parent must be positive. The kinship foster parent needs to be able to meet the child's developmental needs (Child Welfare League of America 1994: 44 - 45).

As with unrelated foster parents, the social worker should also look at the family dynamics of the kinship foster parents. Aspects which should receive attention, are the presence of alcohol or drug abuse and any form of abuse or neglect.

### **3.4.3 Preparation of kinship foster parents**

It is the duty of the social worker to inform and explain to relatives the full implications of fostering. They should receive the same information as non-relative foster parents, although the uniqueness of being a relative to the child, should also form a part of the selection and preparation of related foster parents (SANCCW 1987: 9 - 11).

### 3.5 SOCIAL WORK SUPPORT GIVEN TO KINSHIP FOSTER

#### PARENTS

In essence the support given to kinship foster parents should not differ significantly from that provided to non-relative foster parents. In some instances however, it may have more in common with the work done with the biological family. Kinship foster parents often received less support from the caseworker than the unrelated foster parent (Department of Health Services and Welfare 1990: 43).

Controversy exists about the role that governments should play in the support and supervision of kinship foster parents (Hornby, Zeller & Karraker 1996: 410).

Ainsworth & Maluccio (1998: 8) ask whether the support should be primarily financial, or service-related as well. Should kinship foster parents be required to receive counselling or other services if their needs are simply for financial assistance?

Some of the problems which kinship foster parents experience may very well require the intervention of a social worker. Contact between the child and the biological parents is one such area where kinship foster parents

may require the assistance of a social worker.

Thoburn (1994: 98) stresses the importance of contact between parents and child, whilst the child is in relatives' care. Where necessary, support must be given by arranging for access centres when the biological parents feel uncomfortable visiting in the relative's home. The kinship foster parents' attitude towards physical discipline may suggest a need for training and for more casework support.

A lack of finances should not be allowed to prevent the success of an appropriate placement. In the past, financial support has often been used as a means of supporting a kinship foster family. Contributions from biological parents should also be taken into consideration.

Some welfare organisations and individuals feel that kinship foster parents should look after the child in their care without financial support because it is a relative's child.

No clear answers to the question of financial support exist, but the researcher suggests that each case be dealt with on an individual basis when deciding whether or not financial support is needed by kinship foster

parents.

### 3.6 THE ROLE OF THE KINSHIP FOSTER PARENT

According to the researcher, kinship foster parents have the same role as non-related foster parents, although they have the additional role of being a relative to the child. People who foster a relative's child usually see themselves firstly as a relative of the child and thereafter see themselves in the role of foster parents (SANCCW 1987: 9). Because of their status as relatives, they have a lot of information on the child and family. They often have more information on the child and his or her biological family than the social worker. They often already have a relationship with the child.

When placing a child, it is important that consideration be given to maintaining the child's emotional ties. When the child is placed with relatives, he or she is with people who share their history and who can provide them with valuable information regarding his or her own parents. This child is also not a stranger to that particular family circle.

If the child is allowed to have contact with his or her biological parents, such plans can be arranged easier and the placement should therefore make reunification easier. Transition is less traumatic for the children who are

placed with relatives (Downs et al 1996: 298 - 299).

The disadvantage of placing a child with relatives is that it might be so easy for a parent to have contact with the child that it is eventually difficult to establish boundaries with the parent. The child might also get caught up with the dynamics present in the extended family, such as mother-daughter conflict, whereby the grandmother and biological mother of the child have difficulty in outdoing their relationship. The kinship foster parent may fear to ask for support from the caseworker in case the child is removed from their care (Downs et al 1996: 300 - 301).

The safety of the child within the kinship foster homes is less monitored than that in unrelated foster homes. A relative may deny that the parents represent a risk to the child's safety. Problem patterns may be present within the family system with more than one member of the extended family presenting the same problems which were present with the biological parent, and for which the child was removed from the parents' care.

If the foster parents are unable to provide for all the needs of the child, there are usually others close to them who will provide the additional care,

transport, supervision or other important forms of support.

Gebel (1996: 13) found that kinship foster parents were usually more positive towards the foster child than non-related foster parents who often indicated difficulties in handling the foster child. Kinship foster parents had a more favourable attitude towards physical discipline and a lower level of empathy towards children's needs.

### **3.7 THE FOSTER CHILD AND HIS/HER BIOLOGICAL PARENTS**

#### **3.7.1 The foster child**

Thoburn (1994: 94) cited Rose, who found that children placed with relatives are usually older than those placed in non-relative foster care. The foster children are usually able to cope with some disapproval of the biological parent shown by their kinship foster parent. The kinship foster parents again are able to recognise the advantages of encouraging continued contact, even with parents of whom they disapprove. Ainsworth & Maluccio (1998: 11) suggest that children stay longer in kinship care than in non-relative foster care.

These findings are confirmed by others such as Needle & Gilbert (1997: 96) who found that these children not only return less quickly to parental care, but are also less likely to be adopted than children in

non-relative foster care. Downs et al (1995: 298) suggest that one of the reasons for this, could be that grandparents who often take care of the children, do not wish to relinquish their role as grandparent to become a legal mother of the child. It may feel unnatural to them and contrary to cultural expectations. It may further mean a final abandoning of hope that their adult child will recover from the problems that led to the placement of the children.

One aspect which social workers should consider when placing a child with relatives, is whether the kinship foster parents will be able to protect the child from further abuse or maltreatment (Child Welfare League of America 1994: 44 - 45).

It was found that children in kinship care go home at a much slower rate than other children for the first few months of care, after which time the transition rules are roughly the same between kinship and non-related placements (Courtney 1994: 103 - 104).

Adolescents are less likely to be placed in kinship foster care than younger children, as family usually fear for difficult behaviour.

A study by Sawyer & Dubowitz (1994: 596) on the school performance of children in kinship care found similar educational problems between kinship foster children and non-related foster children.

### **3.7.2 The biological parents**

The biological parents may have easier access to the foster parents and the child, as they are relatives. Difficulties can arise with regard to the disciplining of the child by the kinship foster parent, when the biological parents disagree with the foster parents on the issue (SANCCW 1987: 10 - 11).

As mentioned, the rates of family reunification for children in kinship care are lower than those in non-relative foster care. Needle & Gilbert (1997: 93) suggest that a lack of appropriate service provision to biological parents and structural problems in the child welfare system could contribute to the low reunification rates.

Social workers usually work more with the biological mothers of children in kinship foster care than with the fathers of these children (O'Donnell 1995: 2).

### 3.8 CONCLUSION

Kinship foster care is not a new phenomenon. Many families have traditionally cared for the children who could not live with their parents. The literature highlights some advantages in placing children with kin, such as a sense of identity in the children and fewer disruptions for the child when he or she is placed. There are however also disadvantages such as conflict between biological parents and kinship foster parents. It is up to the individual social worker to weigh up the advantages and disadvantages in each individual case and placement.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

Saslow (1982: 24) is of the opinion that basic research produces little that can be immediately utilised to solve problems, it rather intends to increase one's understanding about the problems, than to solve it. Thus basic research is utilised by the researcher to gain some understanding about the experiences of kinship foster parents. The researcher does not wish to find solutions to the problems mentioned in Chapter one, but rather intends to gain some understanding about the experiences of kinship foster parents. The problems mentioned in Chapter one can be addressed in future research.

#### **4.2 RESEARCH DESIGN**

An exploratory-descriptive design is the most appropriate to use, as limited research has been done on kinship foster care in South Africa. There is a need to explore and describe this topic further.

According to Behr (1983: 90) descriptive research precedes other types of research as it tries to find what the existing situation contains. It describes various situations and events (Rubin & Babbie 1997: 109) and it is therefore interested in

the process, meaning and understanding which could be gained through words or pictures (Merriam 1988: 20). In a descriptive design there is no formal hypothesis (Bailey 1982: 38).

The research is descriptive as the researcher describes a phenomenon which is fairly new while being researched. The aim is to gain an understanding of the distressing and joyful experiences of kinship foster parents in fostering a relative's child. This information was verbally obtained from kinship foster parents. There is no hypothesis in this study.

Rubin & Babbie (1997: 108) state that exploration can always yield new insights into a topic. It seldom provides satisfactory answers to research questions, but instead hints at the answers and gives insights into the research methods that could provide definite answers.

The research is explorative as the researcher explores the role of the kinship foster parents and how this relates to their role as relatives of the child. The impact of kinship foster care on their relationships with their extended family is further explored. Exploration of these aspects of kinship foster care can provide new insight into these aspects.

### 4.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researcher makes use of a qualitative method, which, according to Rubin & Babbie (1997: 382) is more concerned with subjective tapping of the deeper meanings of human experience. The research study aims at describing the experiences and feelings of kinship foster parents from their own point of view.

Merriam (1988: 19 - 20) describes qualitative research as primarily concerned with process rather than with outcomes or products. It is further concerned with meaning, for example how people make sense of their lives, their experiences and how they structure their world.

The following experiences of kinship foster parents are of importance to the researcher;

- \* the experiences related to the social work services rendered by social workers,
- \* the experiences related to their role as foster parents, and
- \* how kinship foster parents experience family relationships.

According to Rubin & Babbie (1997: 186) the point of qualitative studies is to study and describe things in such depth and detail and from such multiple perspectives and meanings, that there is less need to worry about whether one particular measure is really measuring what it is intended to measure.

The researcher also uses quantitative methods in this study. Smith (1985: 1 – 11) suggest that if quantitative and qualitative research methods are used together to focus on a problem, then the strengths of one method may compensate for the shortcomings of the other. Qualitative studies may have weak reliability as other researchers may not be able to replicate the findings or may perceive different patterns. A further weakness may be that the populations to which the findings can be generalised are unknown. In designing this study, the researcher relied upon a statistical profile of the population in order to identify the individuals to be studied qualitatively.

#### **4.4 SAMPLING PROCEDURE**

The researcher utilises a non-probability sampling method, and more specifically, that of availability sampling.

This type of sampling relies on available subjects. According to Rubin & Babbie (1997: 268) it is a risky sampling method to use as subjects may or may not be available. Great caution should be taken if the researcher wants to generalise from his or her data. This sampling method is popular because of its ease and inexpensiveness. It does, however, seldom produce data of any general value (Rubin & Babbie 1997: 268).

Because it is inexpensive, easy to use and because the researcher wants a particular clientele, this sampling method is suitable to use. The researcher further does not wish to generalise from the data, but rather wishes to produce data which focuses on the experiences of kinship foster parents of one welfare organisation and which only hints at the possible experiences of other kinship foster parents elsewhere.

Grinnell (1988: 143) suggests that this sampling procedure is often used in social work research, for example with the clientele of a particular agency. Although it saves the researcher valuable time, it is less reliable than probability sampling methods.

After approval was granted to the researcher to conduct the study, a list of all kinship foster parents was made available to the researcher. The total population of kinship foster parents consists of seventeen families. This is less than what the researcher anticipated, and the researcher can therefore not take all the cases on hand, "until the sample reaches a desired size" (Bless & Higson Smith 1995: 94). The researcher is therefore using the total population of seventeen kinship foster parents, who have been under the supervision of the CMR from April 1998 until October 1998. Two of the families of the original population indicated that according to them, they did not fit the criteria of being a kinship

foster parent, although their social workers indicated that they were kinship foster parents. Twelve of the fifteen others were willing to be interviewed. Although the population is relatively small, it enabled the researcher to gather the information needed. Although the CMR works with all race groups, no people of mixed heritage were part of this population. The population of kinship foster parents is made up from the greater East London area.

#### 4.5 THE INTERVIEW AS DATA COLLECTION TOOL

##### 4.5.1 The respondents

Two foster parents were interviewed in order to pre-test the interview schedule. The researcher could ascertain through this procedure whether the questions asked were clear and minor changes could be made to the interview schedule.

Deutscher describes how he found that when interviewing people from different cultures, one cannot assume that a simple English “no” means “no” and a “yes” means “yes” as some cultural groups interpret “no” as meaning “yes” (Deutscher in Bulmer 1994: 226).

The researcher therefore, when interviewing people from different cultures, also has to ask for clarification on these words so as to avoid

misunderstandings. The researcher is of the opinion that it might be difficult for respondents to talk about their family as family matters can be very intimate and it may be even personally discrediting to the kinship foster parents to talk about the circumstances as to why they became the foster parents of a relative's child.

Lee (1993: 98) feels that for sensitive topics to be discussed between strangers, privacy, confidentiality and a non-condemnatory attitude are very important as this provides a framework of trust. The researcher tried to provide a framework of trust by showing a non-condemnatory attitude and allowing for privacy and confidentiality.

#### **4.5.2 Interview schedule**

The researcher has chosen to conduct interviews with the respondents. This provides the interviewer with the opportunity to ask the respondents to explain any unclear answers to questions, unlike questionnaires which do not allow for this type of interaction. Behr (1983: 145) is of the opinion that using interviews as a data collection method can be beneficial in obtaining information about complex topics or matters of a personal nature. According to Grinnell (1988: 306 - 313) interviews have the advantages of allowing for spontaneity, flexibility and control of the environment.

It is commonly used for respondents who have shared similar experiences. To have a certain amount of control over the interviews, the researcher has chosen a semi-structured interview for which an interview schedule, containing 48 questions, was developed. Fielding (in Gilbert 1993: 136) describes this type of interview as an interview where “the interviewer asks certain, major questions the same way”, but is free to alter the sequence and to probe for more information. This means that the researcher will have the freedom to explore in her own way, matters that may pertain to the research study.

#### **4.5.3 The interview process.**

Interviews were conducted as follows:

The researcher contacted subjects telephonically where possible. The purpose of the research interview was explained and kinship foster parents were asked whether they would be willing to be interviewed.

They were interviewed in their homes. Where no telephonic contact was possible to ask permission to interview them, the researcher did home visits. If kinship foster parents were not at home at the time when the researcher visited their homes, a letter which explained the purpose of the research

and which asked their permission to see them on a specific date and time, was left. They could then contact the researcher telephonically before the appointment, if they felt the need for it.

According to Merriam (1988: 20) the qualitative researcher is the primary instrument for data collection which is mediated through this human instrument. The researcher has to physically approach the people to record behaviour in its natural setting.

#### 4.6 ANALYSIS OF DATA

Data generated by qualitative methods is voluminous and can be overwhelming (Patton 1980: 297). To avoid the process becoming overwhelming, the researcher will sort information into categories as it is collected. Tesch, (1990: 97) sees the analysis of data both as a process of taking data apart and of putting it together into a larger and consolidated picture.

In analysing the data, Tesch (1990: 142 - 145) describes eight steps to be considered by the researcher. At first, one gets a sense of the whole interview, by reading through it carefully. One may also look for the underlying meaning in the text. After completing this task, a list of topics is made. Similar topics can be grouped together. The topics are now abbreviated as codes and these are

written next to the appropriate segments of the text. Descriptive data is now turned into categories and lines are drawn between categories to show their interrelationships. Data belonging to each category is assembled and preliminarily analysed. Recording of existing data can be done if necessary. The researcher will make use of this method of data analysis as described by Tesch.

According to Rubin & Rubin (1995: 251) when one is building towards overarching themes, one must examine and compare the material within categories and across categories. The researcher will examine data across categories. The material will then be interpreted in terms of the literature and theories in the social work field. After analysing the data, the findings will be reflected in the research report.

#### **4.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH**

A number of limitations were experienced.

4.7.1 Financial constraints allowed the researcher to interview only one organisations' kinship foster parents.

4.7.2 Although the sample used in this study consisted of the whole population of kinship foster parents of one welfare organisation, it may not represent

the experiences of kinship foster parents of other organisations. One cannot generalise the findings of the study.

4.7.3 Interviewer bias could have occurred. Data obtained from kinship foster parents reflects their subjective opinions.

4.7.4 The researcher experienced problems with the list of kinship foster parents provided by the welfare organisation. The researcher specifically asked for details on kinship foster families. Two of the families listed denied that they resort under this category, and could therefore not be interviewed.

#### **4.8 VALUE OF THE RESEARCH**

The research may be of particular value to the organisation which hosts the research, as it gives an idea on how their clientele experience the support and services rendered to them. It also highlights areas of particular concern to kinship foster parents. These could then be followed up by the welfare organisation. It could assist welfare organisations in future to prepare kinship foster parents for their tasks as foster parents and assist social workers in designing appropriate programmes.

The research might be of value to other organisations and social workers as it indicates areas for possible further investigation when screening kinship foster parents, when providing services to them and on possible needs which kinship foster parents may experience. One should be careful not to generalise the findings of this study.

#### 4.9 CONCLUSION

The research design used in this study is exploratory-descriptive in nature. A non-probability sampling method was used. Twelve kinship foster parents were interviewed and a semi-structured interview schedule was developed for this purpose. Afterwards, data was analysed and the findings were displayed in various ways. The limitations and difficulties of the study have been highlighted. The results of this study can now be assessed in the light of the methodological limitations of the study.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **ANALYSIS OF DATA**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The data which was collected after conducting interviews with kinship foster parents, had to be reduced, interpreted and converted into a readable format. Marshall & Rossman (1989: 114) describe these tasks as a process whereby a voluminous amount of information is reduced into certain patterns, categories or themes and then interpreted by using some schema, the aim of which is, according to Tesch (1990: 97) the emergence “of a larger, consolidated picture.”

In this chapter the findings will be divided into four sections;

- \* Section A: Biographical details of kinship foster parents. (Tables will be utilised to describe this),
- \* Section B: Kinship foster parents’ view on social workers and social work services,
- \* Section C: Kinship foster parents’ view on foster parenting, and
- \* Section D: Kinship foster parents’ view on the family relationships.

The information obtained is grouped together under these sections. The researcher will make use of pseudonyms to protect the identity of respondents.

## 5.2 SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS OF KINSHIP FOSTER PARENTS

An availability sampling method was proposed, but it was found that the population under study was small enough to enable the researcher to study the entire population rather than a sample. The size of the population does not allow for any generalisations. The entire population consisted of seventeen kinship foster parents which were under the supervision of the CMR, East London, since April 1998 and until October 1998. Twelve kinship foster mothers and none of the foster fathers were interviewed. The reason for this could be that kinship foster mothers still fulfill the more traditional role of being “spokesperson” for the children in their care. Therefore when it comes to providing information on the children, the foster mother will be more freely available than the foster father to provide such information.

Nine of these women were white, three were black, but no persons of mixed heritage were found in this population.

Eight kinship foster parents were married at the time of the study. Two are widowed, one has never been married and one is divorced. These findings contradict the assertion that over half of the children in kinship foster care are cared for in a household with a single adult (Dubowitz et al 1993: 158; Ainsworth & Maluccio 1998: 7)

### 5.2.1 Age and educational characteristics of kinship foster parents

**TABLE 1** Age and education

AGE	EDUCATIONAL LEVEL						TOTAL
	NO EDUCATION	-ST 6	ST 6	ST 8	ST 10	ST 10 -	
20 - 30				1	1		2
31 - 40			1		2		3
41 - 50	1				1		2
51 - 60		1	1				2
61+	1			2			3
TOTAL	2	1	2	3	4		12

Even though this sample was small it has a similar profile to that of the study groups researched by Dubowitz et al (1993: 156 - 157), Gebel (1996: 11) and Triseliotis et al (1995: 41). This similarity may be insignificant given the sample size of this study but is worth noting and makes an interesting comparison with these studies in terms of educational level and age. As can be seen from Table 1, only four kinship foster parents completed their high school education. Dubowitz et al (1993: 157) found that non-related foster parents were more likely than kinship foster parents to have completed their high school education.

Slightly more than half (seven) of the kinship foster parents are above 40 years of age, which is similar to the study groups of Dubowitz et al (1993: 157) and Gebel (1996: 11). Triseliotis et al (1995: 41) found that non-relative foster parents are usually slightly younger.

### **5.2.2 Employment status of kinship foster parents**

Seven kinship foster parents are voluntarily unemployed. Of these seven, two are pensioners and five are home-makers. It is interesting to note that research has found that more than half of kinship foster parents were not likely to be employed and are seldom employed outside their homes (Dubowitz et al 1993: 157; Gebel 1996: 10). In comparison, non-relative foster parents are more often employed outside their homes. Three of the kinship foster parents in this study are employed part-time and two are employed full-time.

Employment can impact on the role of the foster parents. Kim and Maria report that their working hours influence their contact with the social worker, as they are difficult to reach during their working hours. Home visits and meetings with the social workers are therefore limited. The telephonic contacts which they have with the social worker are thus very important to them. Maggie reports not having the time during working

hours to stand in queues in order to obtain the foster care grant. This causes some frustration for her, as she needs to be at work, yet also needs to obtain the foster care grant. She suggested that social workers investigate the reasons for the slow pay-out of these grants. This might indicate a misconception on her part regarding the role of social workers. Social workers often refer foster parents to the relevant government departments in order to obtain a foster care grant, but it is the duty of the pension officers to assist foster parents when problems occur with the pay-out of these grants.

Working hours of kinship foster parents further prevent them from spending time with the foster child. Doreen reports that she was unable to spend adequate time with the foster child and her husband had a similar problem. She sees this as one of the reasons why the foster placement broke down. She reports feelings of guilt because of being unable to spend time with the child.

The ideal situation seems to be one where the kinship foster mother is not employed outside the home (SANCCW 1987: 94). The foster mother will then have adequate time to spend with the foster child.

### 5.2.3 Gross monthly income and source of income of kinship foster parents

Those kinship foster parents who were receiving a foster care grant, were asked to exclude the amount when calculating their gross monthly income per family, as the researcher wanted to know whether these families have incomes other than the foster care grants. Some families have more than one source of income. The information which they provided are shown in Table 2.

**TABLE 2** Gross monthly income and source of income

GROSS MONTHLY INCOME	NUMBER	SOURCE OF INCOME	NUMBER
No monthly income		Salary	8
-R500	2	Receive a DG	
R501 - R1000		Receive a FCG	7
R1001 - R2000	2	Receive a OAG	
R2001 - R3000	1	Receive a CCG	
R3001 - R4000	1	Receive a non-government pension	2
R4001 - R5000	2	Interest on investments	
R5000+	2	Relatives support you	1
No response	2	No salary - commission base only	
TOTAL	12	TOTAL	18

**Keys:** DG: Disability grant      OAG: Old age grant  
 FCG: Foster care grant      CCG: Child care grant

Two foster parents chose not to discuss the monthly income of their family with the researcher. Bianca felt that such information is personal, but mentioned that her relatives assist her financially by supplementing her pension monthly. Linda provided another reason for not wanting to share the information. Her daughter supports her financially and she does not want to discuss her salary with her mother. Linda accepts this and does not pressurise her to volunteer the information, as she feels that each young person has to have "skelm" money - a term which she uses to describe the money which her daughter uses on herself instead of on the household.

Two families have a gross monthly income of less than R500,00. The foster care grant is the only stable monthly income in both these households. They seem to be largely dependant upon the foster care grant to ensure that the family is maintained.

Eleven of these households had more than three family members per household. The source of income is usually a salary or salaries. Seven of the foster parents received a foster grant, while the remaining five foster parents complained about not yet receiving the foster care grant.

It seems as if the problems experienced with the grant system can impact

on the relationship between foster parents and social workers. The researcher detected some negativity regarding service rendering from foster parents who experienced problems with the foster care grants. They felt that social workers did not provide adequate services to them. To quote Doreen: “(The social workers) did not help (her) to obtain financial help. (She) will give them three out of ten for their services.” It again reflects that kinship foster parents could have a misconception regarding the role of social workers.

#### **5.2.4 Experience as a foster parent**

The number of years experience which kinship foster parents have is shown in Table 3.

**TABLE 3 Number of years experience of kinship foster parents**

YEARS EXPERIENCE	NUMBER
Less than 1 year	1
Between 1 - 2years	7
Between 2 - 4 years	1
Between 4 - 6 years	1
Between 6 - 8 years	1
Between 8 - 10 years	
10 years +	1
TOTAL	12

The majority (seven) of the foster parents have between one and two years experience. Involvement in the foster care system is therefore something which is fairly new to them. One foster parent has 25 years experience and sees herself as a “professional” foster parent. She sees herself in partnership with social workers as she can share her expertise with the social workers and they can do the same with her.

#### **5.2.5 Related foster children versus unrelated foster children**

Only one kinship foster parent fosters unrelated children as well. She is the only kinship foster parent who has mentioned her involvement in a foster parent support group. Her involvement in this support group and her previous experience as an unrelated foster parent, seem to help her in dealing with the related foster children and the welfare system. Although her family is a support to her, the support group forms an additional supportive system.

#### **5.2.6 Kinship foster parents**

The way in which kinship foster parents are related to the children in their care, are shown in Table 4.

**TABLE 4 Relation to the foster child**

GRANDPARENTS	TOTAL	AUNT AND UNCLE	TOTAL
Maternal Grandparents	4	Maternal aunt and uncle	5
Paternal Grandparents	2	Paternal aunt and uncle	1
TOTAL	6	TOTAL	6

Van Emmenes (1988: 29) found that more of the children in kinship care are placed in the care of the maternal family. Interestingly enough, in this study, more of the maternal relatives are foster parents. Further research could focus on this interesting phenomenon and can try to find reasons for it.

#### **5.2.7 The main reasons for the removal of the child/ren from the care of his/her/their biological parent/s**

It is difficult to identify a single principal reason for each placement.

When trying to categorise the reasons, overlapping is evident and kinship foster parents' judgements inevitably are subjective and could be imprecise in varying degrees. Downs' et al (1996: 271) found that the major problems which bring children into foster care are problems related to parental functioning, it is interesting to note that in this study ten kinship foster parents felt that the reasons for the children's removal could be related to parental functioning. These include alcohol abuse, financial

problems, family violence, divorce, parental imprisonment and lack of parental skills. A lack of parental interest, neglect, desertion and difficult behaviour of children were also mentioned as possible reasons for removal.

In two families the children were cared for by relatives as one or both of their parents are deceased.

#### **5.2.8 Previous foster placements prior to the present placement**

It seems as if the majority of children were placed immediately after their removal from parental care. Eleven kinship foster parents indicated that they are not aware of any previous foster care placements. In three cases the foster children were in a Children's Home before their placement with relatives and it seems as if the Children's Homes played a major role in getting the family involved with the children. Usually a hosting situation led up to the child's placement in foster care. It is interesting to note that only one child experienced a previous placement in foster care. This was also a kinship foster placement. In this situation the relatives negotiated the change in placement with other relatives when it became clear that they would not be able to continue with the relationship because of their relocation to a different country. As a family they then involved the social workers in their decision. According to Van Emmenes (1988: 31), related children have an average of one move prior to their present placement.

In this study the researcher found that children were sometimes cared for on a private basis by different family members before their legal placement in foster care. It would be interesting to know how frequently children are moved on a private basis between different family members before their legal placement in foster care. Future research could focus on this issue.

### **5.3 SECTION B: KINSHIP FOSTER PARENTS' VIEW ON SOCIAL WORKERS AND SOCIAL WORK SERVICES**

#### **5.3.1 Kinship foster parents' involvement with welfare**

Eleven kinship foster parents have been under the supervision of the CMR since they initially became foster parents. Only one approached another welfare organisation first, but because she was an employee of that welfare organisation, she was referred to the CMR, who could remain impartial in the situation.

Eight of the foster parents approached the welfare organisation with the request to place the children with them. Their reasons for approaching the welfare directly, include;

- \* to avoid problems between themselves and the biological parents,

- \* to obtain financial and material support, e.g. food, in order to care for the children,
- \* to obtain assistance with their personal problems e.g. the health problems of their own children,
- \* to reunite the related child with its family, e.g. to obtain a transfer of a child from a Children's Home, and
- \* because the biological parents have asked them to look after the children to avoid the placement of the children with strangers.

In the four cases where the foster parents were approached by the welfare, the referral source was a member of the extended family.

### **5.3.2 Kinship foster parents' experiences of the services which the social worker provides to them**

#### **a) The services which the social worker provides to the kinship foster parents**

According to kinship foster parents, social workers render a wide variety of services to them. Most of the mentioned services seem to centre around the foster child. Services which are directed towards the foster parent include;

- \* the provisions of a foster care grant,
- \* material assistance,
- \* assistance with referral of own children to mental health resources,
- \* inclusions in a foster parent support group,
- \* advice to and communication with the foster parents, and
- \* acting as a mediator between the foster parents and the biological parents.

Services directed to the biological parents, include;

- \* assisting biological parents to obtain treatment for their substance dependency.

Only one foster parent mentioned that social workers have administrative tasks as well.

Dubowitz et al (1993: 160) found that few relatives in their study reported receiving such services as medical assistance and therapy/counselling. This applies to this study as well. Downs et al (1996: 272) felt that large caseloads and overburdened child welfare practitioners can contribute to less than adequate service delivery. In this regard it seems as if the foster parents in this study are aware of the circumstances which hinder social workers in their service rendering. Maggie reports having knowledge of the high caseloads of social workers, while Kim felt that social workers are overburdened by the amount of work which they have. Foster parents show a commitment in assisting social workers in their service rendering, by declaring their willingness to come forward when they experience problems.

Not all the foster parents were understanding. Three foster parents felt that

they did not receive adequate services. Doreen felt that the services provided to them were very poor. She expressed having higher expectations about the social workers and the services which were to be rendered to her. She felt that she needed more assistance, contact and information from the social worker. Although she is aware that the social worker often experiences transport problems which hinder her in her service delivery, she still felt disappointed with the social worker when her expectation was not met. She would have liked the social workers to be more involved in the beginning of the placement and then thereafter when she experiences problems with the foster child. Maggie supports Doreen by suggesting that social workers should not withdraw before they are sure that the foster parents can cope with the situation.

All foster parents were able to provide information on the services which they found valuable. These include;

- \* Referral to various resources, e.g. mental health resources,
- \* support services,
- \* monitoring of the foster care placement,
- \* advice giving,
- \* assistance with grant-applications, and
- \* mediation between foster parent and biological parents.

b) **What additional services do you feel you need?**

In line with the assertion of Dubowitz et al (1993: 160) that foster parents seldom see social service rendering as necessary, five foster parents had no need for additional services to be rendered to them.

Money was reported only by Linda and Bianca as a need. Dubowitz et al (1993: 160) found this to be the most frequent need of kinship foster parents.

Other additional service needs which kinship foster parents report, are;

- \* material assistance, e.g. food
- \* assistance with obtaining employment for the foster children when he or she leaves school,
- \* assistance with obtaining an old age pension or disability grant for themselves,
- \* the monitoring of the contact between the child and his or her parents by investigating the parents' home circumstances before arranging visitation,
- \* more contact and assistance from the social workers,
- \* investigating what the need of the child is,
- \* providing more information, including providing foster parents with the official documentation to say that the child is legally in their care, and
- \* a speedy referral of parents to treatment centres.

c) **Contact between social workers and kinship foster parents**

Ten foster parents felt that they mostly initiate contact with the social worker. Nina and Bianca felt that both parties initiate contact on an equal basis. None of them reported that the social workers mainly initiates the contact.

Visitations at home ranged from fairly frequent to none at all. One foster mother reported seeing her social worker monthly. Four foster mothers see the social workers at home three or four times a year while the rest (five) have at least one or two visits per year. One foster mother reports that she is not visited at home while another reports only receiving one visit at home over the last six years.

The foster parents who received very little or no visitation at home describe their feelings as follows: Doreen, who reported receiving no visitation at home, felt “pushed aside” and that “the child was just dumped with (them) and (they) had to cope with him.” Maria, who reported one home visit during the six years that she has been fostering the child, provides some reasons for this and said that she had three different social workers during this time. The high turnover of social workers could have something to do with the frequency of contact. She further felt that she

would contact the social workers if she has a problem.

Four foster mothers have no telephones and cannot be contacted telephonically. For those who have telephones, the frequency of telephone contact ranged from very frequent (once a week) to none at all. The majority of foster parents (six) have telephonic contact with the social workers at least four times a year or even more frequently. Only two reported one or two contacts per year.

Eight foster parents felt that the contact which they received was sufficiently frequent for them. Four reports wanting more contact, three of which felt that once a month contact would be sufficient.

Linda is very adamant that she would like to have contact from the social worker and not from the social auxiliary worker. Party politics play a role in this attitude of hers, as the social auxiliary worker belongs to a different political party than she does. This could impact on the service rendering to the family.

### **5.3.3 Kinship foster parents' views on the services provided to the child/ren by the social workers**

Three foster parents reported no services being rendered to the children.

Two foster parents were not certain what services the social worker renders to the children. The others mentioned services such as;

- \* placing the child with the foster parents,
- \* interviewing the child and showing interest in the child,
- \* visiting the child at home and at school,
- \* providing the child with advice on how to find employment,
- \* providing a foster care grant with which they could care for the child,
- \* monitoring and extending the child's placement with the foster parents,
- \* referring the child to resources such as psychologists and educational facilities,
- \* taking children on outings and parties provided to foster children,
- \* including children in a special Christmas function for foster children.
- \* arranging visitations for the child with his or her parents, and
- \* providing counselling services to the children.

Seven of the foster parents did not see a need for the rendering of additional services to the child/ren.

Yolande and Linda felt that the foster care grant is not enough and that the social worker should help the children with food and clothes. Yolande felt that they should help with the payment of school fees.

Other additional services which are needed are reported by Doreen, Bianca and Maggie and include:

- \* more counselling and psychological help for the child,
- \* more contact with the child in order to evaluate the needs and feelings of the child, and
- \* assistance with schoolwork that is problematic to the child.

The frequency of contact ranges from twice a week to once a year. The majority (eight) of the foster parents felt that the social worker saw the children once a year. The foster parent who indicated that the social worker saw the child twice a week, meant that the social worker visits the school twice a week and sees a number of children there. It is not to say that the contact with these specific children does take place twice a week.

Dubowitz et al (1993: 161) reported that the majority of social workers have contact with the children four to six times annually. The findings here reflect less contact between the social workers and the children.

One foster parent reported being uncertain whether the contact was sufficiently frequent for the children. Four reported the need for more contact, with all four regarding once a month contact with the social worker as sufficiently frequent for the child/ren. The rest felt that the contact is adequate. Nicky felt that it is not always nice when the social worker

visits as this contact makes the children feel differently from other children.

#### **5.3.4 Kinship foster parents' views on the long term planning for the child/ren in their care**

Four of the kinship foster parents did not know what the agency's long term plans were for the children and could thus not express an opinion on this plan. Only one of them indicated a need to know what was in the plan.

Seven kinship foster parents felt that they know what the long term plan for the children entails. Adoption was the plan according to four of the seven kinship foster parents. Two of these kinship foster parents indicated that the initial plan had changed. In one case, the child had to return to a Children's Home after the child presented behaviour problems with which the foster parents could not cope. The foster mother described her initial feelings of happiness, because they were going to adopt the child. This initial happiness changed into sadness because "he had to leave our care." She could see that the child would receive the necessary treatment in the children's home which they could not provide, and that made her "feel good." Guilt could be present as she explained that they did not have much time to spend with the child. As a couple they could not cope with the

childs' behaviour and started to fight over small things. They blamed the child for the conflict which they experienced.

The initial plan for another child was changed when the foster parents made plans to relocate to another country. The child was transferred to another kinship foster placement. The foster mother, who was initially planning to adopt the child and found that the parents have to prove that they are not capable of parenting, explained: "I am dead against him going back - I cannot see the parents coming right. I think he should be adopted by someone." Acceptance has not yet set in. She worries about the child who is now in the care of her mother. "(Her) mom is old and might not be around for long, what will happen to (the child) then?"

The two kinship foster parents who anticipated that the children would be adopted by them, describe their feelings as positive towards adoption. Maggie voiced a real problem - that "children will grow up and might want to go back." She "(doesn't) want (the parents) to take them back." Kinship foster parents gets attached to the children just like unrelated foster parents and can even take sides; as Maria said "I feel that it's okay that he has contact with his mother", but "I (will) protect him against his father." Karen explained that she felt happy that the "child is with (her) and not

with the biological parents.” She describes herself as “emotionally upset” about the lack of development in the child. She had to put in a lot of effort before she could see some progress. She “loves” the child and is “very happy” that they will be allowed to adopt the child, “so that they can care for him as their own.”

Children were to return to parental care in three cases. One of these is definite, and two are just options if they cannot continue to stay with the foster parents. They show acceptance of the plans, as Vera explains: “I accepted it initially that he might go back because I thought his father would visit him. He did not, and I accepted it afterwards that the child will stay with me.” Nicky attributes this to her experience - “because of my 25 years experience as a foster parent, I did not find it difficult to accept the plan.”

In the case of the woman not knowing for certain what the plan entails, she explained how she would feel about the plan which she guesses is the future plan. She basically described what she wished for herself and the child; “I’m alone and quite lost when he is not here. If the parents get better, I would like to see him return.”

#### 5.4 **SECTION C: KINSHIP FOSTER PARENTS' VIEW ON FOSTER PARENTING**

##### 5.4.1 **Kinship foster parents' view on their tasks as foster parents**

Kinship foster parents regard foster parenting as providing for the needs of the child. Providing for the physical care of the children, receives high priority. Tasks such as providing food and clothing are some of the physical tasks which the SANCCW (1987: 88) include as having to be performed first before a meaningful relationship could be established with the child. As kinship foster parents usually have a relationship with the children, because of their connection as family members of the children, they can immediately focus on the emotional tasks of foster parenting. This seems to come naturally for them, as they often describe their task of loving the children and providing attention to them.

Kinship foster parents see themselves as educators of the children. They teach them new things, take the children on outings and see to their schooling. The important social tasks of the foster parents are to provide the religious upbringing of the child, to teach the child values, beliefs and good manners so that he or she can be socially accepted.

Other tasks include;

- \* disciplining the child,
- \* seeing to it that there is contact between the child and the biological parents,
- \* allowing the child choices when buying things for the child,
- \* providing the child with pocket money,
- \* keeping some money for emergencies (in other words, administering the foster care grant),
- \* providing a home to the child,
- \* helping the child to solve problems,
- \* setting some routine for the child to follow, and
- \* helping the child to adjust to family life and in social situations.

While eleven kinship foster parents found it enjoyable to look after the child, Maria reported that her immediate feeling was that of "lots of tears." She describes the aspects which she found not to be enjoyable. As a foster parent she has to cope with the children when they are sick. She worries because she is not the children's real mother. She is concerned that something might happen to them and that she will be held responsible for it, by the rest of her family. She finds it all the more difficult to care for sick children when she knows that there is no medical aid support for them. Having to take the children to a government hospital was a big frustration to her, because she felt the services in these hospitals are poor. It could be extremely difficult for working people to arrange time off work to see to the medical needs of the foster child and their employers may not be sympathetic towards their situation. Maria further found it difficult to

cope with having to send the children to school. She experienced all the feelings which a biological parent might have when sending a child to school for the first time. She was sad and worried and asked herself "why (is she) doing it to (herself)?" It is however a "nice" feeling when you are able to provide schooling and medical care to the child and can experience the child's love.

a) **Are you able to separate your role as a foster parent, from being a relative to the child? Motivate your answer**

Nine foster parents were not able to separate their roles. They felt that they are both parents to the child as well as related to the child. Some of the ways in which the two roles differ were described by foster parents. Nina finds that as a foster parent, you must be able to discipline a child while as a relative you would not have to do this. Maria agrees with Nina, but found that her role as relative (maternal grandmother) sometimes creates conflict as both she and her daughter (the biological mother) want to discipline the child. They seem to have sorted out the conflicting situations by agreeing not to differ on the matter of discipline in front of the child. The Child Welfare League of America (1994: 63 - 71) suggests an orientation program as a way to ensure that kinship foster parents are prepared for their task and know how to manage their relationship with the

child's parents. Although Maria did not report receiving such orientation, she was able to deal efficiently with the conflicting situations with the biological mother. Yolande feels that as a grandmother she can spoil the child, but as a foster mother she has the responsibility to care for the child. Kim describes it the best: "As a relative (she knows) the child. (As a foster parent, one) has to separate (oneself) to a degree as (one) can never really be a mother to the child." This is difficult, as the child does not regard them as foster parents, but as his family.

Vera, Maggie and Bianca felt that they were able to separate the two roles. Vera motivates this by explaining that she knows that if the welfare takes the child, it will be in his best interest. As a foster mother, she will allow this, but as a family member she would never allow the child's father to take him away from her. Maggie was able to separate her roles in the beginning, but then the child became like her own and she is no longer able to see the difference between the two roles. Bianca felt that she is firm with the foster child as a foster mother, while she receives positive feedback from the parents about his care, as a member of the family who looks after him.

#### **5.4.2 Kinship foster parents' view of how their friends react to them fostering a relative's child**

Kinship foster parents do mention to friends that they foster the child.

The overall reaction of their friends was that of acceptance and happiness that the child is not cared for by strangers. Van Emmenes (1988: 61) found that there is no stigma attached in telling friends about the status of the child as a foster child.

Praise from friends was often experienced by foster mothers. According to Bianca, her friends think that she is tough to take something like this on. Friends think that the foster parents do a good job, especially when they see that the foster child is well-behaved and will then often encourage the foster parents to continue with the good that they are doing. Doreen said that “(friends) praised (them) as they felt (that they) are doing something extraordinary to care for someone else’s child”, and according to Kim “(the friends) said that they did not think they would have done it themselves.”

The majority of foster parents (eight) felt that the reactions of friends did not change their feelings towards foster care. They mostly still feels positive towards foster care.

Kim, Yolande and Linda report feelings of being more positive because

of their friends' reactions. Kim describes it as follows: "It makes you more positive if (the friends) think what you do is good."

The support which friends provide seems to play an important role.

They can take the children for an afternoon or over holidays in order to assist the foster parent. Maria describes that she used to be proud and did not discuss her feelings with her friends. When she learned to trust them and started to open up to them, she felt that the situation was easier for her to cope with. Now she wonders why she had not confide in them a long time ago.

Doreen (who experienced the involvement of welfare rather negatively) describes the reaction from the welfare as changing her feelings towards the negative. "If the welfare changes their attitude, I will consider it again to foster a child as I used to be positive about it."

## **5.5 SECTION D: KINSHIP FOSTER PARENTS' VIEW ON THE FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS**

### **5.5.1 Kinship foster parents' view on the relationship between their own child/ren and the related foster child/ren**

In many aspects, the biological parent, the kinship foster parent and the child will experience the foster placement in the same way as a non-related

placement (SANCCW 1987: 11). The researcher believes that one such aspect may be the relationship between the kinship foster parents' own child and the related foster child. The fact that the foster child is related to the foster family, does provide an interesting dimension to the relationship.

The decision to foster a relative's child seems to be something which is discussed amongst the immediate and extended family. When one member of the family is not able to look after the child, another family member will usually take over the caring role. This could result in a situation where the child is shifted from one relative to another. Doreen mentioned just such a situation with the child which she fostered. He used to stay with various family members on an on/off basis, before he was legally placed in their care. This seems to impact on the child, as "he did not know what it was like to stay long with one set of people - he did not know how to react. A permanent home was something new to him." She draws the conclusion that together with various other aspects mentioned elsewhere in this chapter, the various movements and subsequent difficulty of the child to adapt to a more permanent environment, caused the placement to break down.

Members of a family group do not necessarily know each other and have contact. Maggie, Vera and Nicky reported that there was no contact between their own children (Maggie and Nicky) and younger grandchildren (Vera) and the related foster children before their placement. These kinship foster parents had irregular contact with the biological parents of the related foster children. The relationships were only established after the children's placement in foster care.

Dubowitz et al (1993: 159) found that over half of kinship foster parents felt that the children in their households have always been positive towards the placement of the foster child. In this study, the remaining nine kinship foster parents reported good relationships between their children and the related foster children. These positive relationships seem to continue.

McFadden (1996: 550) however feels that fostering a child can irrevocably affect family roles despite initial denials of difference and expectations that the family will continue to function as it has in the past. The foster child has the potential to disrupt existing roles of the foster parents' own children. The "baby" of the family may be suddenly displaced by two younger quasi-siblings or the oldest child may become a middle child.

The researcher believes that such role changes could lead to problems of jealousy, conflict and even to the inappropriate projection of certain behaviour between the foster child and the foster parents' own children.

Nina, Karen and Bianca report some jealousy between their own children (Nina and Karen) or grandchildren (Bianca) and the related foster children. Karen described that it was difficult for her as a parent and foster parent to "please" all the children. They competed with each other for her attention.

McFadden (1996: 551) found that the foster parents' own children struggle with ambivalence, embarrassment about the misbehaviour of their foster siblings, a sense of injustice because of different standards of behaviour and a strong desire to see things work out for the sake of their parents.

Nina and Doreen experienced the foster children as having "influenced" their children negatively by displaying behaviour problems. It could have been that their children felt "angry with (the) foster children for making (their) family life difficult" like McFadden (1996: 551) suggests. These feelings were however not reported. In both situations, the foster placements eventually broke down.

Regardless of how well the foster child likes the foster family, conflictual elements might be present in their relationship. The foster child is the product of one set of rules and values, but in the foster home must conform to different standards (McFadden 1996: 551). Some conflict between the children was reported by Nina, Doreen, Nicky, Kim and Bianca. All explained however that the conflict was more or less the “normal fighting” which would occur from time to time between children.

Foster parents’ own children often feel strong loyalty to their parents and wish to please their parents by supporting the fostering decision. (McFadden 1996: 551). Maggie and Karen see their own children playing a very protective role towards the foster children. Maggie further reports that her child shows a caring attitude towards the related foster children. Her own child, who showed these tendencies, was affected by the changing family roles, as described by McFadden (1996: 550). She was the “baby” in the family, but has become a middle child. It is interesting that the kinship foster mother describes this child of hers as “a real little mother” towards the foster children, thereby perhaps implying that this child supports the fostering decision fully.

While the relationship between kinship foster parents’ own children and

the related foster children seems mostly to be positive, the behaviour of the related foster child can influence the relationship between the foster parents.

This study found that few kinship foster parents mentioned that the foster child has difficult behaviour. This agrees with the findings of Dubowitz et al (1993: 164) that few relatives (nine percent) describe the child in their care as difficult. This is surprising, given the frequent behavioural and emotional problems amongst these children. It is possible that many of the kinship foster parents are not aware of the children's mental health difficulties, or that they felt reticent about complaining.

Difficult behaviour of the foster children can influence the foster parents' relationships. It was interesting to find that in both cases where kinship foster parents experienced that the foster children "influenced" their (Nina and Doreen) children, the foster placement eventually broke down. Doreen reported that "(her) marital relationship deteriorated to such a degree that it was (a case of) either the child goes or (they) divorce." She "felt that (the child) must go as (her) husband and (she) started to fight over small things." She reported difficult behaviour such as excessive lying and

stealing for which the child was referred to a psychologist. McFadden (1996: 551) explains that a foster parent who experiences conflict and stress in living with a disturbed child can easily experience marital problems. In such instances the child may serve as a scape goat for the couple's strife.

According to Doreen, the child was the reason they experienced marital conflict. The psychologist suggested that he return to a Children's home, because he does not see himself as part of their family. A small number of children placed with relatives re-enter care because of the relatives' inability to handle the child's behaviour. (Downs et al 1996: 294). This applies to this study as well, where two of the twelve foster parents experienced behavioural problems with the children in their foster care, which eventually led to the children re-entering alternative out-of-home care.

#### **5.5.2 Kinship foster parents' view on their relationship with the related foster child**

Foster parents experienced a great desire to become involved, when they learned about the plight of the foster children. Maggie described her feelings as follows: "When I saw (the children), I had to get involved. I tried at first to help the mother..... I wanted to help as much as I could."

Nine foster parents reported having good relationships with the children before their placement, while three did not have contact with the children before.

Maggie, Vera and Nicky had to build relationships with the children, as they did not know them. They all reported being able to do so. Nicky reports that she now feels like a real mother to them. The children initially were confused when they arrived, but they now call her "mother." All the other kinship foster parents reported no change in the relationship or a continuing good relationship after the placement of the children.

Nina and Doreen experienced an ending to the relationship when the children were removed from their care to be placed in a children's home. Nina did not experience any change in the relationship between her and the child directly after she was legally placed in her care. She later found that she had to become more strict with the child as the child started to test the relationship. Doreen experienced a similar situation. She reported effort to try to combat the deterioration of the relationship. She also reported becoming more strict with the child. Other ways of trying to salvage the relationship included, giving the child more responsibilities and bribing him by giving him pocket money. It is interesting to note that in

both Nina and Doreen's situations the children whom they fostered, were already in previous placements. In Doreen's case, the child was previously in a children's home while the child in Nina's care experienced several informal kinship placements before his formal placement in her foster care.

Foster parents often report feelings of being "like a real mother" to the child. They therefore see themselves as providing discipline to the children in their care. Linda felt that she can now discipline the child as the child is legally in her care. Bianca describes herself as the disciplinarian with the child accepting her as such. Maria felt that since his placement in her care, she can shout at the child in order to discipline him. It seems that the children in their care accept their ways of discipline as the foster parents did not report any problems which disciplining the child caused in their relationship.

Gebel (1996: 7 - 13) found that kinship foster parents talk problems out with the children, and favour physical discipline. It would be interesting if future studies could investigate the discipline methods used by kinship foster parents in detail.

### **5.5.3 Kinship foster parents' view on their relationship with the biological parents of the child/ren in their care**

Debra, Linda, Nicky and Doreen report having good relationships with both the biological mother and father, before the placement of the children. Only Nicky reports a deterioration in the relationship with both parents, mainly because of little contact with them.

Bianca and Kim report good relationships with the parents, except when they are under the influence of alcohol. Kim "gets very angry with the parents for what they do to the child." She tries to avoid them because of the substance abuse and this could influence her relationship with them. "It would create conflict when the parents were drunk - it damaged (their) relationship. They said hurtful things ... which are not easy to forget. It is difficult for (the foster mother) to come to terms with it. There was friction between (the foster parent and biological parent) before. They blamed (the foster parents) for the child's placement." Bianca reports that she should have tried to send her son and his wife for treatment. She seems to blame herself for his problems. She explained that she did not know that it could progress to this degree.

Foster parents seem to have a good relationship with their own family member, whether it is the biological father or mother. Maria, Yolande,

Karen, Nina and Maggie report feelings of unease with the person with whom their own family member got involved, even before the child was placed with them. They describe this person with words such as “foolish, biggest enemy, very bad, violent and not good.” In most incidents they felt that their family member’s involvement with this person caused problems in their relationship with their family member. The deterioration of the relationship started at various stages of their family member’s involvement with this person. In some instances the foster parents immediately disliked the person and in others the relationship problems started later in the relationship. Maria describes this deterioration best; “(Their) relationship was good, until (the biological mother) fell pregnant when she was still at school. (The foster parents) would have supported her, but she ran away with the father of the child. (They) did not approve of him.<sup>4</sup> She was under his influence. Her social status decreased. She started to drink, her work deteriorated and she did not care about her appearance. She even started to beg for money from strangers. (The) relationship (between the foster parents and the biological mother) was bad then.” It seems as if Maria withdrew somewhat from the biological parents. Downs et al (1996: 270) found that children in foster care usually have parents with serious personal and environmental problems and who receive insufficient support from other adults. The problems of the parents often cause people to withdraw

and as the parents receive less support, so their problems increase and the vicious cycle continues. Maria further reflects on how difficult it is for her to be told by friends, what her relative is up to. She does not care about the honour of the family, which is so important to Maria.

Nina, Karen and Yolande report no difference in their relationship with their family member, but a continuing poor relationship with the partner of their relative.

Maria and Maggie were able to report a significant improvement in their relationship with their own family member. Their relationship with the non-related parent continues to be poor. In both cases the reason for the improvement seems to be a break in the so called “undesirable” relationship of which they did not approve.

#### **5.5.4 Kinship foster parents’ view of the relationship between them and the rest of their extended family**

The emphasis is here on the kinship foster parents’ own extended family.

The extended family of their relative’s partner are not taken into consideration here.

All kinship foster parents reported that their extended families agree that they should foster the children. Downs et al (1996: 278) see the value in finding as many support systems as possible for the child in foster care. One way of identifying support is to do a genogram with the parents to identify members of the kinship network who can be a support to the child and parents during the placement and who might become a resource for permanency.

Kinship foster parents similarly found it valuable to identify other members of the kinship network who can act as a support system to them although they did not necessarily use a genogram to do so. Karen experience the support of other relatives when they include the child in activities and when they talk about his family history to him. Bianca receives financial support from relatives and is at times relieved from having to look after the child when relatives invite him to spend weekends with them. They further support her emotionally and are concerned about her. Debra's extended family takes the children for holidays.

## **5.6 CONCLUSION**

Twelve kinship foster parents were interviewed. The biographical detail provided in Section A provides a profile of the kinship foster parents who were interviewed.

It is clear from the sample and findings discussed under Section B of this report, that kinship foster parents often approach welfare organisations to request that the children legally be placed with them. If not, their family usually acts as the referral source.

Although most kinship foster parents seemed to be satisfied with the services rendered to them, more than half of them felt a need for additional services to be rendered to them. They less frequently felt that the children needed additional services.

Foster parents mostly initiate contact with the social workers and often show some understanding about the aspects which hinder social workers in providing services to them.

In Section C, kinship foster parents' views on their roles were discussed.

As foster parents, they care for the child, and the support which they receive from friends plays an important role in assisting them with their task and often creates a positive feeling about foster care.

In Section D the kinship foster parents' views on family relationships were discussed. It seems as if foster parents move towards being more positive

about their own relatives and often see the relatives' partner as the reason for the problems which their relative experiences. More kinship foster parents represent the maternal families of the children. The next chapter will draw conclusions from these findings and make some recommendations.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter the researcher will discuss the findings. The primary goal of the research was to gain an understanding as to the way in which kinship foster parents experience fostering a relative's child. The little that has been written about kinship foster care, has tended to focus on other aspects of kinship foster care. Ainsworth & Maluccio (1998: 13) explain the need for research into the experiences of kinship foster parents.

#### **6.2 CONCLUSIONS ON THE RESEARCH**

The conclusion reached in each section of the previous chapter is discussed.

##### **6.2.1 Conclusions on Section A: Biographical details of kinship foster parents**

Twelve kinship foster mothers were interviewed, which therefore only provides a limited picture of the experiences of kinship foster care.

As the majority of children in kinship foster care are cared for by the maternal family, it would be interesting to know how the paternal families of these children feel about the fact that the child is in the care of the maternal family. It would be interesting to know if the paternal families

of these children visit them when they are cared for by the maternal families.

The majority of kinship foster parents in this study were white people, with a small percentage being from the black population. The findings of this study can not be generalised.

Four kinship foster parents reported that being employed, and specifically their long working hours, have an impact on their role as a foster parent. They find it difficult to establish contact with social workers during working hours and do not always have the time to spend with the foster children or to obtain the foster care grants.

More than half of the kinship foster parents receive a foster care grant. Slightly more than half of the foster parents who are not yet receiving foster care grants, report experiencing problems with the grant system. Those who do not yet receive a foster care grant, seem to experience the social service delivery to them, more negatively. They seem to think that it is the role of the social workers to ensure that they do not experience problems with obtaining foster care grants.

### **6.2.2 Conclusions on Section B: Kinship foster parents' view on social workers and social work services**

Although a variety of services are rendered to kinship foster parents, with which they mostly seem to be satisfied, seven seem to have a need for additional services to be rendered to them. It seems as if they prefer that social workers have at least once a month contact with them, especially in the beginning. Most kinship foster parents show understanding towards the difficult circumstances under which social workers have to provide services. They are also often willing to contact social workers when they experience problems.

Most foster parents felt that they do know what the long term plan for the children entails. They felt happy with the plans made for the children. Not all the social workers did, however, involve the foster parents by explaining the plans to them.

### **6.2.3 Conclusions on Section C: Kinship foster parents' view on foster parenting**

Although the majority of foster parents were happy to foster the child and were able to enjoy their task as a foster parent, one foster parent felt that fostering a relative's child can be extremely difficult at times. She felt that it is difficult to cope with children when they are sick and when there is

no medical aid support for them.

#### **6.2.4 Conclusions on Section D: Kinship foster parents' view on the family relationships**

The normal relationships of children, which at times involves conflict, were evident. It was interesting to note that those children who “influenced” the foster parents’ own children with their behaviour, are no longer with the foster parents, as the relationships broke down.

It seems as if most of the foster parents were experiencing positive relationships with their own family member until this person became involved with a person of whom the family did not approve. The relationships then deteriorated and seemed to improve only when their relative was no longer in a relationship with the “unsuitable” person.

Extended family seems to be an effective support system to the foster parents. This study, however, only focuses on the extended family of the foster mother.

### **6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE RESEARCH**

The recommendations of each section are discussed.

### **6.3.1 Recommendations on Section A: Biographical details of kinship foster parents**

It is recommended that social workers plan their service rendering by taking the working hours of the foster parents into consideration. They should further support the foster parents when they experience stress between their work and family situations. They should preferably inform prospective foster parents of the impact which their work situation could have on performing their role as foster parents.

Foster parents seem to experience problems in obtaining the foster care grant. The researcher feels that the government should do all in its power to rectify the problems experienced with the grant system, as foster parents seem to have the misconception that it is the role of the social worker to rectify these problems. Welfare organisations could however play an important role as advocates in order to make sure that the government addresses these problems. If they do not, the problems experienced with the foster care grants will continue and could possibly continue to impact on the relationship between the social worker and the foster parent.

### **6.3.2 Recommendations on Section B: Kinship foster parents' view on social workers and social work services**

As kinship foster parents mostly show understanding towards the difficult work circumstances of social workers, social workers should guard against exploiting their understanding attitude. Social workers should do all in their power to continue rendering an effective service, even under difficult circumstances. Social workers should plan their service rendering according to the needs of the foster parent. They should therefore have a discussion with the foster parents to assess their needs. They should further involve the foster parents in the decisions regarding the child's future. They should ensure that the foster parents know what the future plan for the child in their care entails.

### **6.2.3 Recommendations on Section C: Kinship foster parents' view on foster parenting**

One foster parent described the difficulties when there is no medical aid support for the foster child. The researcher recommends that all medical aid schemes look into the possibility of assisting foster parents to place the foster child on their medical aid, as not all medical aid schemes allow for it to happen.

#### 6.3.4 Recommendations on Section D: Kinship foster parents' view on the family relationships

The researcher recommends that social workers investigate complaints from foster parents regarding the behaviour of the foster child, thoroughly. Assistance to foster parents who experience problems of this nature, could avoid a break down in the relationship between them and the foster child.

#### 6.4 FUTURE RESEARCH

It is hoped that this study will stimulate others to carry out similar studies as the child welfare field can only benefit from it. It may be necessary to duplicate this study with other groups of kinship foster parents so as to determine whether the descriptions given in this study of kinship foster parents, reflect them in general rather than just that of one unique group. Future research should be done on:

- \* the experiences of the paternal family when the maternal family fosters the child,
- \* the discipline methods used by kinship foster parents,
- \* the experiences of kinship foster parents from other race groups, which are excluded in this study,
- \* the frequency of moves which a foster child experiences between different family members.

In-depth interviews will provide more detailed information on the experiences of kinship foster parents and should be used as research tool. A bigger sample of foster parents would allow for more representative findings.

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## APPENDIX 1

### INTERVIEW SCHEDULE OF THE EXPERIENCES OF KINSHIP FOSTER PARENTS

#### SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS OF KINSHIP FOSTER PARENTS

1. Welfare Organisation: .....

2. Gender :

Male	Female
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3. Marital Status : .....

4. Age category:

-20	20 - 30	31 - 40	41 - 50	51 - 60	61 +
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5. Racial classification:

White	Black	Mixed heritage	Other .....
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6. Educational level:

- St 6	St 6	St 8	St 10	Other .....
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Specify other .....

7. Employment status:

Unemployed voluntary	Part time	Sessional
Unemployed involuntary	Full time	Own business

8. Source of income:

8.1 Salary	
8.2 Receive any form of a social grant D.G. / Foster parent / O.A./ Child care	
8.3 Receive a non-government pension	
8.4 Interest on investments	
8.5 Relatives support you	
8.6 No salary - commission base only	
8.7 Other	

Specify other .....

9. Gross monthly income (excluding foster care grant).

-R500	R501-R1000	R1001-R2000	R2001-R3000	R3001-R4000	R4001-R5000	R5001+
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10. How long have you been a foster parent?

Less than 1 year	Between 1 - 2 years	Between 2 - 4 years	Between 4 - 6 years	Between 6 - 8 years	Between 8 - 10 years	10 years +
---------------------	------------------------	------------------------	------------------------	------------------------	-------------------------	------------

11. How many children do you foster?

Related foster children

Unrelated foster children

1	2	3	4	5	5+		0	1	2	3	4	5	5+
---	---	---	---	---	----	--	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

12. How are you related to each of your foster children?

12.1	Grandparent	
	a) maternal	
	b) paternal	
12.2	Aunt / Uncle	
	a) maternal	
	b) paternal	
12.3	Sister/brother	
12.4	Other e.g. cousin .....	

13. Why was/were the child/ren removed from the care of his/her/their biological parent/s?

13.1	Child/ren has/have no parent/s	
13.2	Parent/s is/are unfit to care for child/ren because of being "mentally challenged"	
13.3	Parent/s assaulted/ill-treated the child/ren or allowed for it to happen	
13.4	Caused/conduced to the seduction/abduction or prostitution of the child/ren	
13.5	Displayed habits/behaviour which might have injured the physical/mental/social well-being of the child/ren	
13.6	Parent/s failed to maintain the child/ren adequately	
13.7	Parent/s neglected the child/ren	
13.8	No knowledge of the reason for removal	
13.9	Other	

Specify other .....

14. Was/were the child/ren in previous foster placements before his/her/their placement with you?

Yes	No	Uncertain
-----	----	-----------

15. If the answer to question 14 was yes, how many previous foster placements has/have the child/ren been placed in?

**SECTION B: KINSHIP FOSTER PARENTS' VIEW ON SOCIAL WORKERS AND SOCIAL WORK SERVICES**

16. Which welfare organisation became involved in the placement of the child/ren?

.....

17. Is this the same welfare organisation which became involved in the placement of the child/ren with you?

Yes	No
-----	----

18. How did this welfare organisation become involved in the placement of the child/ren with you?

.....  
.....  
.....

19. Name all the services which the social worker provides to you.

.....  
.....

20. Of all the mentioned services that a social worker provides, which was the most valuable to you?

.....  
 .....  
 .....

21. What additional services do you feel you need?

.....  
 .....  
 .....

22. Name all the services which the social worker provides to the child/ren.

.....  
 .....  
 .....

23. What additional services do you feel the child/ren need?

.....  
 .....

24. Who mostly initiates contact?

You	Social Worker
-----	---------------

25. How frequently does the social worker contact you?

	FREQUENCY	HOME VISITS	TELEPHONE CONTACT
25.1	Once a week		
25.2	Once a month		
25.3	Once a year		
25.4	Other		

Specify other .....

26. Is this contact sufficiently frequent for you?

Yes	No	Uncertain
-----	----	-----------

27. If the answer to question 26 was no/uncertain, what frequency of contact would you prefer?

.....

.....

28. How frequently does the social worker see the child/ren?

28.1	Once a week	
28.2	Once a month	
28.3	Once a year	
28.4	Other	

Specify other .....

.....

.....

29. According to you, is this sufficiently frequent for the child/ren?

Yes	No	Uncertain
-----	----	-----------

30. If the answer to question 29 was no/uncertain what frequency of contact do you think the child/ren would prefer?

.....

.....

31. Do you know the agency's long term plan for the child/ren?

Yes	No	Uncertain
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32. If the answer to question 31 was yes, explain the plan.

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.....  
.....

33. How do you feel about the plan?

.....  
.....  
.....

**SECTION C: KINSHIP FOSTER PARENTS' VIEW ON FOSTER PARENTING**

34. Describe the most important things that you do for the foster child/ren.

.....  
.....

35. Are you able to separate your role as a foster parent, from being a relative to the child/ren?

Yes	No
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36. If the answer to question 35 was no, explain why you are not able to separate your roles.

.....  
.....

37. Do you tell your friends that you are fostering a relative's child/ren?

Yes	No
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38. If the answer to question 37 was no, why do you choose not to tell people that you foster the child/ren?

.....  
.....  
.....

39. If the answer to question 37 was yes, describe your friends' reactions when they heard that you are fostering a relative's child/ren?

.....  
.....  
.....

40. Did your friends' reaction influence your feelings with regard to foster care?

.....  
.....  
.....

41. As a kinship foster parent, describe the aspects of foster parenting which you enjoy.

.....  
.....  
.....

**SECTION D: KINSHIP FOSTER PARENTS' VIEW ON THE FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS**

42. Describe the relationship between your child/ren and the related foster child/ren before he/she/they was/were legally placed in your foster care.

.....  
.....  
.....

43. Describe how the relationship between the child/ren changed after the child/ren was/were legally placed in your care.

.....  
.....  
.....

44. Describe your relationship with the foster child/ren before he/she/they was/were legally placed in your foster care.

.....  
.....  
.....

45. Describe how your relationship with the foster child/ren changed since the child/ren was/were legally placed in your foster care.

.....  
.....  
.....

46. Describe your relationship with the biological parent/s before the child/ren was/were legally placed in your foster care.

.....  
.....

47. Describe how your relationship with the biological parent/s have changed since the child/ren was/were legally placed in your foster care.

.....  
.....  
.....

48. How does your extended family feel about you fostering the child/ren?

.....  
.....  
.....