



**The transition of individuals within a township
from Grade R through to Grade 2**

by

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As I reflected on this journey, one word kept coming to mind – *experience*. I agree with the definition in the Merriam-Webster dictionary, that defines *experience* as “something personally encountered, undergone, or lived through”. I have certainly had significant *experiences*, I have also undergone a positive transformation, and lived through a unique life *experience*. Even though I feel that I have got far more than what I contributed, my personal journey and *experiences* would have been futile without many who helped, encouraged, and enriched my life in so many different ways during the long period of study. I should therefore like to give special thanks to all of the following:

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I would like to elaborate on the closing paragraph of this study by offering this my final reflection: In the face of many challenges, variables and my own limitations, I myself made use of many different coping strategies. Some of these strategies were highly effective while others did not have the desired effect, and I would caution other people from using them. In spite of these difficulties, my eagerness and excitement at being confronted by new and valuable knowledge empowered me in various ways that I could not originally have foreseen. But of one thing I am certain: without the personal and social support I received from a wide variety of people, I would never have been able to benefit from the life-changing experiences of engaging in this doctoral study. I am accordingly grateful to all those who supported me with their kindness, generosity, wisdom, and enthusiasm, and for all those without whom I would never have been able to complete these studies.





Declaration of Authorship

I, Elanéy Nieuwenhuizen, declare that the study titled: *The transition of individuals within a township from Grade R through to Grade 2* is my own work and that all sources and citations from literature have been acknowledged in-text and referenced in full.

Signature:

Date:



The purpose of this study was to explore, describe and explain the transitions of individuals within a twinship from Grade R through to Grade 2, and thus offer an in-depth description of such participants' transition experiences and perspectives. I focused my investigation on the overall transitions of the individuals within a twinship from Grade R through to Grade 2, and included variables such as stress, stressors, emotions, coping, and life skills.

In this qualitative research study, I used a case study research design and conducted the research from both an interpretivist and social constructivist point of view. The primary participants in the research were two monozygotic individuals within a twinship (boys), their mother, and their Grade R, Grade 1 and Grade 2 teachers. I commenced the fieldwork when the individuals within a twinship were in Grade R and five years old, and tracked their transitions through until their Grade 2 year when they were eight years old. During their Grade R year, I taught the individuals within a twinship certain life skills by utilizing creative, age-appropriate worksheets and play activities. I continued to utilize such activities as a catalyst for collecting data throughout their Grade 1 and Grade 2 years. I also conducted semi-structured interviews with their mother and teachers. During visits to their school, I also observed the individuals within a twinship in their natural setting.

The findings of the study suggest that the transition of the individuals within a twinship effected mainly trouble-free transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2 largely because of their positive attitudes and behaviour, their self-confidence, their pleasure in tackling new experiences, the security and support they enjoyed as co-individuals within a twinship, their satisfying friendships, the positive qualities of their teachers, the learned life skills, their realistic expectations of Grade 1 and Grade 2, and their ability to cope satisfactorily with their academic work. The negative stressors during these transitions were bullies and the disruption caused by disobedient children.

A key finding of this study was that the transition of the individuals within a township to *Grade 2* was, to some extent, *more stressful* than their transition to Grade 1 because of more demanding academic expectations in Grade 2. In spite of this, they characterized their Grade 2 holistically as enjoyable and rewarding.

The learned life skills helped them to cope with various stressors, though the *overall support structures* of the individuals within a township were most influential in their largely trouble-free transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2. The learned life skills enabled the participants to deal successfully with bullies, to develop rewarding friendships, and with emotional control. It was apparent throughout this research that the individuals within a township enjoyed all the advantages of supportive social structures including a stable and safe home and school environment, This resulted in good relationships with each other, their parents siblings, teachers and friends.

Key concepts

- Transition
- Individuals within a township
- Twin
- Twins
- Foundation phase
- Stress
- Coping
- Life skills
- Social support structures



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1.1 INTRODUCTION

Dockett and Perry (2011:374) have suggested numerous reasons why it would be worthwhile to describe and examine the perspectives and impressions of children at the time when they are starting school. Firstly, children are the experts on their own lives and they live out their childhood experiences in the present. Secondly, the experiences of children are different from those of adults, and if we are able to acquire a clear understanding of their experiences, we may be able to respond to whatever it is that is important to them. Furthermore, it is by listening to children with care, attention and respect that we are able to make their personal interests and concerns a reality. When we take the trouble to elucidate the way in which children perceive the world, we give them the gift of being heard in an adult environment in which children's voices may be silenced by the preconceptions of adults. When we open ourselves to the opinions, feelings and thoughts of children, we are tacitly admitting to ourselves and to them that their experiences are also valuable, important, interesting, as well as being part of the total picture of the world inhabited by all of us.

Hirst, Jervis, Visagie, Sojo and Cavanagh (2011:30) concluded that many transition programs tend to focus mainly on the *orientation* of the child, as well as on the social and emotional factors that are influential in a child's successful transition to, and adjustment in, school.

Booyesen and Grosser (2008:377) refer in their study to one of the goals included in the National Curriculum Statement of South Africa. This goal states that all learners (referring thereby to all learners from Grade R to Grade 12) need to obtain the necessary social skills that will enable them to work with others, listen to others, ask constructive questions, pay attention at appropriate moments, praise others, and deal with conflict appropriately. One of the most important observations in this study, for the purposes of this research, was that the majority of learners in the Foundation

Phase *do not display satisfactory levels of social competency* (Booyesen & Grosser, 2008:378).

One of my main reasons for engaging in this study was that I support and subscribe to the reasons that Dockett and Perry (2011:374) advance for accessing children's' perspectives at the beginning of their school careers. In addition to this, I am also in agreement with Hirst *et al.* (2011:30) when they observe that social and emotional factors may be influential when individuals within a township transition from Grade R to Grade 2. In this study, I was mainly concerned with the feelings, thoughts and understanding of individuals within a township as they transition from Grade R through to Grade 2. This study makes extensive use of the voices and attitudes displayed by the individuals within a township as it strove to understand their opinions about the transition process by making use of their own words and, as it were, 'looking through their own eyes'.

1.2 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

The rationale of this study is that it is, firstly, a pro-gradation and expansion on the research that I carried out in my master's degree (Prozesky, 2005). My specific purpose in that research was to identify and describe the particular stressors that are experienced by Grade 1 learners in their school environment. One of the recommendations I made at the conclusion of that study was that it would be useful if further research were to be carried out to examine and clarify, in a more holistic manner, the stressors that are experienced by Grade 1 learners.

The second rationale for this study is that, for the past six years, I have been working as a life skill facilitator for children who were 4 years old and who were in all standards up to Grade 7. During this time I particularly observed how many children struggle to cope with schooling, and especially with the demands made of them in the first year of their school attendance (Grade 1). Because I have a particularly keen and passionate interest in the wellbeing of Grade 1 and Grade 2 children and in their experience of these challenging but exciting transitional years, I decided to formalise my interest in them by pursuing research by means of doctoral research.

In my master's degree, I identified and described, as I have already noted above, the stressors that are experienced by Grade 1 learners. In my doctoral research, I identified, described, and examined in greater depth the transition that children make from preschool to Grade 1 and thus to Grade 2.

While most studies in this field focus on a single transition such as that from Grade R to Grade 1, it is my contention that a more comprehensive and useful conceptualisation of what is involved in transition can be obtained by working with a multi-step process such as the transition from Grade R through to Grade 2. This research therefore focuses on the multiple steps involved in the longer transition from Grade R to Grade 2. My preparatory examination of the literature database on these themes led me to the conclusion that there is a scarcity of South African studies that focus on the transition experiences of individuals within a township. I therefore developed the intention of contributing to the accumulated and existing knowledge on this theme.

1.3 ORIENTATION

1.3.1 TRANSITION FROM PRESCHOOL TO PRIMARY SCHOOL, SCHOOL READINESS, SCHOOL SUCCESS, AND LIFE SKILLS

In a study undertaken in 2005, Cassidy (2005:151) arrived at the conclusion that many teachers (working as participants in the process) have arrived at independently by means of their own observations, namely that children have very little time to settle into their new environment and familiarise themselves with the kind of behaviour that is expected of them as they *transition* from preschool to primary school. Cassidy (2005) also noted that the Grade 1 children in his study were no longer so active in acquiring the necessary scholastic skills as they were in adapting socially and emotionally to the challenging demands of the school and the physical, intellectual and social expectations of their teachers. While I agree with Cassidy (2005:151) that Grade 1 children are indeed more preoccupied in adapting socially and emotionally to the requirements of their school and teachers, I also contend that such children should also actively focus on the scholastic skills they need as well as the social and emotional skills they require to cope with their

schooling experiences. It is my contention that it is insufficient for teachers to focus only on the social and emotional skills required by children in Grade 1.

Lilia, Neuhart-Pritchett and Neuhart-Pritchett (2008:256) have identified five domains which they believe must be addressed in the pursuit of *school readiness*. These domains include those of physical well-being and motor development, social and emotional development, approaches to learning, language development, as well as cognitive and general knowledge. They also identified eight factors that affect the *transition to school* in their research. These are social adjustment skills, attitudes toward school, the expectations of behaviour and action, physical attributes, family issues, as well as the education environment in general.

Dockett and Perry (2008:274) also mentioned five factors that exert a decisive influence on *school readiness*, which are similar to those of Lilia *et al.* (2008:256). Their list includes children's health and physical development, their social and emotional development, and their idiosyncratic approaches to learning, language development and communication. Cognitive and general knowledge were also among the five conditions that these researchers mention as contributing to school readiness. I am in complete agreement with the findings of these researchers with regard to the domains, areas and factors that they identified as indispensable for school readiness in children and the successful transition to school and from one grade to another.

Apart from the above-mentioned components, which are crucially important for children because they make a significant impact on their ability to *transition to school*, Laverick (2008:321) also identified other key components that are necessary for the support of young children as they *start school*. These additional components include a consideration of the developmental characteristics of young children, the establishment of relationships with their families, the recognition of certain factors that affect successful adjustment to new situations, and the implementation of strategies that assist young children in the *transition* process itself. I am also in agreement with Laverick (2008:321) when he states that children will benefit from a support structure before and during a transition process.

Some of the skills concerned with *school readiness* in the above-mentioned studies also correlate with skills that researchers have identified when examining the conditions that contribute to *school success*. Brigman, Lane, Switzer, Lane and Lawrence (1999:2) conducted a study that involved 145 preschool children between the ages of 4 and 5. They then identified the following skills as being most predictive for long-term *school success*: attending skills, listening skills, and social skills. They also found that the academic success of children increased in proportion to the number of such skills that they possessed. While I agree that attending, listening and social skills are essential for school success, I would further contend that the ability to practise such skills also contributes to the ease with which individuals within a township are able to progress from Grade R through to Grade 2.

As a result of their study, McClelland and Morrison (2003:1) concluded that learning-related social skills in preschool children, such as independence, responsibility, self-regulation, and cooperation, might well make a demonstrable positive impact on *school success* in higher grades. It is my contention in this study that such skills not only make a positive impact later in the child's school career, but that they also positively affect a child's early school success and school transition processes. Lilia *et al.* (2008:256) also suggest that children who make a smooth *transition* and who experience early *school success*, tend to acquire and maintain higher levels of social competence as well as academic achievement throughout their school careers. I am in agreement with the conclusions of Lilia *et al.* (2008:256) that a smooth transition from one grade to another in the earliest school years also enhances a child's social competence and level of academic achievement.

In their national survey of *transition* practices of kindergarten teachers, Early, Pianta, Taylor and Cox (2001:206) concluded that optimal *transitions* for children are best supported when various steps are taken prior to the child's first day of school in a format where various face-to-face contacts with the children concerned and with their families are established. During the course of my research, I realised that most transition practices are group-orientated, that they occur only after the beginning of the first school year to a class as a whole, and that individualised sessions with children are extremely rare (Early *et al.*, 2001). The belief that preschool programmes can enhance and strengthen *school readiness* has also been mentioned by Gormley, Phillips and Gayer (2008:1723). But it is my contention

that transition practices prior to the first day of school may be more beneficial for children because they may reduce the effect of certain stressors and ambient uncertainties. In spite of this, I argue that a transition programme after the first school year has commenced, may also offer children certain advantages because those who run such programmes will be able to address the immediacy of the stressors that children are experiencing from day to day as they attempt to cope with their transition experiences.

A child's experience of the beginning of school is one of the first but most important passages that any child will have to cope with during his or her years in school education. *Starting school*, leaving home, moving to a new city and starting a new job, are all life situations that engender feelings of excitement, apprehension and fear in most people. If the experiences of a child with regard to all these transitions are all positive, affirming and inspiring rather than negative and traumatising, it will be much easier for that child to cope with any new challenges involving change in his or her future (Berne, 2003:1). While I agree with Berne that positive and affirming experiences in the child's past may exert a beneficial influence on the ability to cope with changes in the future, it has been my experience that positive experiences of change in the past do not necessarily guarantee a positive experience of change in the future in the same way that a negative experience of change in the past may not necessarily result in a negative experience of change in the child's future. I therefore hypothesise that while past experiences of change may indeed exert an impact on any experience of change in the future, every transition or experience of change that the child experiences should be regarded as a complete whole and that it should be viewed as such. It is therefore my contention that it is not feasible to make generalisations about the effect that past experiences of change will have on future or present experiences of change.

While many children do experience school as a positive, affirming and challenging place, there are many children who do not. Many children in fact associate their school years with feelings of unhappiness that vary in intensity from one child to another.

“By preparing your child for school, which involves teaching him the skills that will help him adapt to his new environment, ... you will make these years as stress-free as possible” (Berne, 2003:2).

Fabian (2000) is of the opinion that children experience the first year of school as radically different from what they had been accustomed to in their preschool and in their home environment. The dislocation engendered by such differences may well affect the way in which children adjust to school, and it also suggests to us that the extent of a child's emotional and social well-being may be an accurate predictor of just how well or badly they may settle into school.

Phatudi (2007:145) made significant conclusions in her study of how well children from disadvantaged backgrounds made the transition from preschool to school and from home to primary school. Most of the children who were participants in her study were of the opinion that primary school was better than preschool because primary school offered them opportunities for learning how to read, pass examinations, which may assist them to eventually find jobs so that they could buy food, clothes and cars for their parents. Phatudi (2007) also stated that the children seemed to know what to expect from primary school. She found that the children in her study knew, for example, that a school was a "big building", that they needed to be able to read and write, and that there would be "no more sleeping" during school times (one of the features of their pre-primary schooling).

1.3.2 INDIVIDUALS WITHIN A TWINSHIP

Rosemary, Theroux, Josephine and Tingley (1978:77) observed that individuals within a township continued to grow in independence during their preschool years, something that is common to most children. They also noted that individual preferences with regard to clothing, toys and the need to have more contact with the outside world become more prominent in the lives of these children. For the purpose of this study, I agree with the findings of Rosemary *et al.* (1978:70), and have thus argued that contact with other children of the same age gives individuals within a township a head start in their ability to choose separate friends. I also agree that separation from their mother is an advantage because it is in preschool that they will acquire the ability to carry through a successful separation in kindergarten. These researchers also noted that the intimacy as well as security of individuals within a township relationship may make it difficult for them to form external relationships with friends at a later stage (Rosemary *et al.*, 1978:71). Klein (2003:12) also observes that other children in preschool may relate to the individuals within a township as part

of that twinship while some may relate to either of them as individuals. It is on the basis of their early experiences with others that the individual within a twinship will acquire the ability to contract and nurture new social relationships. For the purpose of this study, the individuals within a twinship' friends and social circles will be explained by themselves, as well as their own relationship with one another.

On the topic of individuality within a twinship, Rosemary *et al.* (1978:75) note that while most identical individuals within a twinship show no signs of jealousy, their central challenge is one of identity formation. In contrast to this, fraternal individuals within a twinship may struggle with feelings of jealousy that are engendered by their different personalities as well as their contest for the parents' attention. For the purpose of this study, I will consider the life skills of being able to form an identity, and maintain individuality and uniqueness. I will pay attention to how the participant individuals within a twinship perceived themselves, firstly, as individuals as such, and, secondly, as individuals *within* a twinship. These characteristics as well as the similarities and differences they manifest within a twinship were examined from their own point of view and from the point of view of the other participants in the study, who were the researcher, their mother, and their Grade R, Grade 1 and Grade 2 teachers.

With regard to the dominance and dependency of individuals within a twinship, Friedrich and Rowland (1984:296) noted that a possible misconception about individuals within a twinship is that one of the individuals within a twinship may be required to be *in charge of* the relationship. They also noted that while it occasionally happens that one of the individuals within a twinship may sometimes develop dominance in a certain area of the relationship, even this perceived dominance may change as the pair develop and grow. It is true that some individuals within a twinship may even feel incomplete without the co-twin, and that other individuals within a twinship may need the presence of the co-twin to complete their sentences or to be able to stop crying or fall asleep. When individuals within a twinship are treated as opposites, they may begin to experience dependency as well as challenges around their self-image. Finally, Malmstrom and Poland (1999), in Klein (2003:3), mention that if individuals within a twinship are to develop individual uniqueness and independence, adequate and sympathetic parenting is indispensable. In the absence of such pro-active parenting, one individual within a

twinship may assume a more dominant role and the other individual within a twinship may adopt a more passive and submissive role. Even though there is a scarcity of literature that deals specifically with individuals within a twinship and their prospects for school readiness, Taal (2000:107) mentions that every individual case is different and that no generalising statements can be made that are valid for all individuals within a twinship.

For the purpose of this study, I agree with Taal (2000:107) when he says that every twinship is unique and that it develops and grows in the context of a distinctive and unique background. I also therefore agree that generalising statements that will be valid for all twinships, should not be made.

1.3.3 STRESS, STRESSORS AND COPING

Lazarus and Folkman (1998:1) note that while the term *stress* is widely used in the biological and social sciences, it is also encountered in education. They also point out that we are constantly confronted with messages about how *stress* can be prevented, managed and even eliminated in our popular culture (Lazarus & Folkman, 1998:1).

“Stress has become a household word, and we are flooded with messages about how it can be prevented, eliminated, managed, or just lived with. A major reason for the currently high profile that stress research and theory has acquired is abundant evidence that it is important for our social, physiological, and psychological health” (Lazarus, 1999:27).

Stress occurs in all kinds of situations but particularly at home, at work, in school, and anywhere where people are compelled to form close relationships with one another – a necessity for members of a family, and for students, teachers, co-workers and lovers (Lazarus, 1999:29). According to Lee (2003:9), children have different reactions to *stress*. When some children experience stress, they may display signs of anger and exhibit an abnormally high demand for attention. Other children in the same situation may withdraw from the group or the situation or feel increasingly anxious and frightened. Primary school children may react to stress by whining or not attending to friendships and other important school matters. In such

circumstances, they may also find it difficult to describe their feelings and may conclude that they are unloved (Lee, 2003:12).

In my own master's study, I pointed out that the findings showed that certain *stressors* are already present during the Grade 1 year (Prozesky, 2005:102). I identified the following positive and negative *stressors* that are encountered by children in a Grade 1 urban school environment:

1.3.3.1 Positive stressors

⌘ The teacher

It was found that the Grade 1 learners in my study generally had a positive perception of their teacher. I also concluded in the study that children preferred a teacher who maintained discipline in the classroom and who created and maintained an orderly atmosphere.

⌘ The need for learning and teaching

It was found that the main goal of most of the learners in the study was to pass Grade 1 so that they could proceed to Grade 2. Most of these learners were therefore motivated to work hard in school.

⌘ Friendships

During the course of my study, I discovered that most of the participant Grade 1 learners had a strong need for a friend or company in the playground. The most important need for these learners was to have someone – anyone – who would be with them during break time so that they would not have to play on their own or be seen standing alone during break time. While some of the children found it difficult to make friends at the beginning of the year, others found it both easy and pleasant to make new friends.

1.3.3.2 Negative stressors

⌘ Noise and chaos in classrooms

The findings of my study indicated that Grade 1 learners seemed to appreciate a classroom environment in which order, silence and discipline were maintained. Further investigation suggested that the reason for this was, firstly, that if order,

silence and discipline were maintained, the learners would be able to concentrate on and complete the work that was expected from them. Secondly, the participants in the study felt that if the disruption caused by certain children were to disrupt the whole class, this might in turn upset the teacher, and the children were not comfortable with the prospect that the teacher might be upset.

⌘ **Bullies and teasing on the playground**

Participants in the study indicated that some Grade 1 learners laughed and teased their fellow Grade 1 learners. The learners who participated in the interviews stated that nobody liked to be teased or ridiculed. They reported that some of the children, especially the boys, would form small groups from which they would venture to hit or bully others.

⌘ **Fear of older learners in school**

According to the Grade 1 learners in this particular school, the older children would sometimes steal their money, take their food, or even pinch or hurt them in other ways.

I used the definition of *stress* provided by Hobfoll (1998:55) for the purpose of this doctoral study. Hobfoll (1998:55) noted that stress develops in circumstances in which a threat occurs or in which a person loses resources¹. He therefore concluded that stress occurs wherever resources are threatened or lost, or where a person fails to obtain an adequate amount of necessary resources. One of the ways in which stress can manifest is, according to De Wit & Booysen (1994:145), in the form of external pressure or in the form of a particular stressor that induces pressure or anxiety. I used these definitions of stress in my study of how individuals make the transition within a township from Grade R through to Grade 2.

In Selye (1982), as in Monat and Lazarus (1991:29), *stressors* are defined as the demands that evoke a patterned response. Lee's (2003:9) definition is similar: he defines a *stressor* as a factor that causes *stress*. Page and Page (2007:144) elaborate on that by providing the following examples of *stressors* encountered in the school environment: the teacher's attitudes, mannerisms, behaviour, personality,

¹ A resource include objects, conditions, and personal characteristics as well as energies that are themselves valued for survival (Hobfoll, 1998:54).

English as a second language, harassment, peer pressures, homework, evaluation, academic pressure, competition, extracurricular activities, and the length of the school day. They add that children in kindergarten, first grade and second grade sometimes feel stressed about schoolwork, completing creative projects correctly, and understanding work assignments. For the purpose of this study, I described and explained certain factors that may evoke stress because of positive and negative stressors encountered during the transition of individuals within a township from Grade R through to Grade 2.

According to Page and Page (2007:145), there are others stressors apart from those encountered in schoolwork. Such *stressors* include peer relationships (peer pressure, sharing, arguing and friendships), personal injury (getting pushed, kicked or hurt, emergency drills, theft, loss of personal belongings), the loss of personal comfort and space (homework interfering with personal time, the school schedule, a loss of recess time, noise, changing classes, and the teacher being absent at various times during the day or merely entirely absent from school).

Lazarus (1999:102) defines *coping* as the way in which people manage certain life conditions that they experience as *stressful*. It is my contention that one might say that, to some extent, *stress* and *coping* are necessarily complementary. Stress levels may therefore become high when *coping* is ineffective, and they may, by the same token, become lower when coping is effective. But this is not always the case because people may experience high levels of stress even when their coping is effective. Lazarus (1991:12) offers another definition of coping. He suggests that *coping* consists of cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage the specific external or internal demands that a person finds taxing because those demands begin to exceed the ability of the person to process them. In Table 1.1, Moos and Schaefer (1993) in Goldberger and Breznitz (1993) sets out a number of basic coping strategies (as described originally in Zeidner and Endler, 1996:28).

Table 1.1: Four basic categories of coping strategies with eight associated coping subtypes (Zeidner & Endler, 1996:28)

Basic coping categories	Coping subtypes
Cognitive approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Local analysis (Did you think of different ways to deal with the problem?) ○ Positive reappraisal (Did you think about how you were much better off than other people with similar problems?)
Behavioural approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Seeking guidance and support (Did you talk with a friend about the problem?) ○ Taking problem-solving action (“Did you devise a plan of action and follow it?”)
Cognitive avoidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Cognitive avoidance (Did you try to forget the whole matter?) ○ Resigned acceptance (Did you lose the hope that things would ever be the same again?)
Behavioural avoidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Seeking alternative rewards (Did you become involved in new activities?) ○ Emotional discharge (Did you yell or shout to let off steam?)

Coping, according to Beck (2004:280), may also be defined in the following way:

“... any way that we may voluntarily try to control stress or anxiety in ourselves. Coping activities are self-regulatory. The individual consciously does something to deal with his or her own situation.”

I adopted the assumption implicit in this definition for the purposes of this study. This assumption is that a learned *life skill* may act as a coping mechanism for school-related *stressors*. What follows from this is the further assumption that, when we focus on finding techniques for coping with school *stressors*, we need to equip learners with suitable *life skills* so that they will be able to cope with the stressors that arise in their lives. We may not be able to teach learners to eliminate such stressors completely, but we may be able to make them skilful enough to prevent stressors from impacting negatively on their lives. In other words, we may make the assumption that if a *life skill* may serve as a coping skill, they may even be conceptually equivalent to one another.

According to Rooth (2000:28), the need for primary school children to acquire certain *life skills* is of the utmost high importance. During the primary school years, the life skills that children learn may be preventative. Such skills will enable them to ameliorate the impact of the various social-emotional stressors that they encounter in their environment. *Life skills* may also hold out benefits because once children have learned such skills, they will be able to use them later in their adult lives. I agree with Rooth (2000:28) about how important it is to furnish primary schoolchildren with a variety of basic life skills. I feel very strongly that it is essential not to underestimate the importance of life skills in the lives of preschool children in particular.

Ebersöhn and Eloff (2006:4) have stated that the concept *life skills* is virtually self-explanatory. People who possess *life skills* are able to enrich their lives in meaningful ways. After examining and discussing various definitions of life skills, Ebersöhn and Eloff (2006:57) concluded that all *life skills* have the following things in common:

“Interpretations of the concept life skills have the following in common: the focus in each case is on those skills and strategies that enable an individual to act in accordance with the demands of the self, others and the environment” (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2006:57).

The World Health Organization has defined *life skills* as a group of psychosocial competencies and interpersonal skills that help people to make informed decisions, think critically, solve problems, think creatively, build healthy relationships, have empathy with others, and *cope* with their lives in a healthy and productive manner (Page & Page, 2007:45). Page and Page (2007) elaborate on the critical importance of life skills in young people from the earliest years and throughout childhood, adolescence and adulthood development. They note that because most students have to deal with a variety of pressures, concerns and problems, they need *life skills* so that they will be able to meet the challenges with which life confronts them (Page & Page, 2007:45). For the purpose of this study, I agree with Rooth (2000:28), Ebersöhn and Eloff (2006:4), and Page and Page, (2007:45), about the importance of *life skills* and the role that *life skills* may play in a person’s life from the earliest years through to adulthood. In this study, however, I focused on the kind of *life skills* that are necessary for individuals within a township as they transition from Grade R

through to Grade 2. With this in mind, I discussed and explained why an appropriate number of *life skills* is indispensable for learners at this level.

Rooth (2000:11) is of the opinion that the acquisition of appropriate *life skills* can enable individuals to *build capacity*. *Capacity building* in this sense means that individuals are able to build on their inherent potential and grow and develop as individuals. When individuals are thus empowered, they believe in themselves and are able to cope with life. Such a capacity also enables them to be more motivated to do what they have to do and realize their latent abilities and potential. Individuals who have the necessary capacity are able to take ownership of their lives and exercise the kind of control over their lives that is appropriate to their age level and situation. Such people have a sense of being in charge of what is happening to them, and they also feel more confident when facing the challenges that life presents to them. For the purposes of this study, I agree with Rooth (2000:11) that life skills enable an individual to build capacity in his or her life and so increase a sense of empowerment, all of which are of importance during transition processes.

Because life skills provide us with *tools* for meeting the challenges of everyday life, they are a necessary precursor to a healthy lifestyle and the management of *stress*. Studies in Gillbert and Orlick (2002:54) have also demonstrated that elementary school children have the ability to learn certain stress control strategies. For the purpose of this study, I agree with Gillbert and Orlick (2002:54) that elementary school children have the ability to learn certain stress control strategies. But I also believe that preschool children, who are younger than elementary school children, are able to learn certain control strategies.

I shall now discuss the two additional but related forms of *coping*, namely emotion-focused coping and problem-focused coping (Zeidner & Endler, 1996:9). Emotion-focused coping may be defined as coping that includes strategies that involve self-preoccupation, fantasy and conscious activities that affect regulation (Zeidner & Endler, 1996:9). Emotion-focused coping has been defined by Hobfoll (1998:97) as the private, internal coping that people use to blunt threatening and painful thoughts and feelings. Beck (2004:21) states that while emotion-focused coping does not change a situation, it does help us to feel better about it. Zeidner and Endler (1996:9) note that emotion-focused coping includes the techniques of positive

reinterpretation and acceptance, and that negative emotion-focused coping involves denial, avoidance, and dwelling on negative emotions.

At the other end of the coping continuum we find problem-focused coping. Zeidner and Endler (1996:9) state that problem-focused coping involves strategies by means of which individuals reconceptualise, solve or minimise the effects of stressful situations. Hobfoll (1998:128) notes that most problem-focused coping is regarded as “healthy” because it helps people to achieve their goals. Examples of this kind of coping include seeking support, planning, or waiting for the proper time to take action. According to Hobfoll (1998:97), one may regard problem-focused coping as a general class of behaviours. Individuals use problem-focused coping to solve their problems of adjustment and adaptation.

For the purpose of this study, I agree with Hobfoll (1998:97), who states that we can measure coping by assessing the extent of our problem-solving skills when we are confronted with difficult situations. By contrast, we can assess an individual’s coping ability by how well he or she manages his or her life when beset by problems (Hobfoll, 1998:97).

In the literature review that I undertook for the purpose of this research, I focused particularly on those factors that influence the *transition to school* and *school readiness* (Berne, 2003; Cassidy, 2005; Dockett & Perry, 2008; Early *et al.*, 2001; Fabian, 2000; Gormley *et al.*, 2008; Laverick, 2008; Lilia *et al.*, 2008; Phatudi, 2007). In addition to this, I focused on factors that contribute to *school success* (Brigman *et al.*, 1999; Lilia *et al.*, 2008; McClelland & Morrison, 2003). I also paid particular attention in the literature survey to the *stressors* that children experience in their earliest school years (Prozesky, 2005), the *life skills* that they can use as *coping* mechanisms when dealing with transition-related *stressors*, and to *coping* itself as a more general theme (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2006; Hobfoll, 1998). It is necessary to point out that I struggled to find any substantial research on the theme of children’s personal experiences and their perceptions of the challenges they encounter in Grade R through to Grade 2. There was an absence of studies about the coping techniques that are currently being used to deal with these perceived *stressors*. I could also find little research into the use of *life skills* as *coping* mechanisms and there was also an absence of any in-depth discussion about

whether life skills are needed to support children during their *transition* from preschool to primary school. In addition to this, I failed to find any research on the topic of children's transitional experiences during their *Grade 2* year in primary school.

My main purpose in this study was not to establish whether or not life skills would reduce the levels of stress experienced by Grade 1 and Grade 2 learners. The focus of my investigation was rather on the nature of the overall transition of individuals within a township from Grade R through to Grade 2. I therefore included variables such as stress, stressors, emotions, coping, and life skills for consideration because they all contributed significantly to the main theme of this study.

1.4 STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The purpose of this study was to explore, describe and explain the transition of individuals within a township from Grade R through to Grade 2 so that I would be in a position to offer an in-depth description of such participants' transition experiences and perspectives.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTION

The primary research question that guided this study was:

How do individuals within a township transition from Grade R through to Grade 2?

In order to arrive at an answer to the primary question, I devised the following five secondary questions:

- Which life skills are necessary for young children during their transition from preschool through to Grade 2?
- What are the perceived stressors that are experienced or identified by each of the participants during the transition from Grade R to Grade 2?
- Which coping strategies did the individuals within a township use to cope with certain identified stressors both before and after life skill facilitation took place?
- How do their Grade R as well as Grade 1 and Grade 2 teachers facilitate and mediate life skills with the children in their classrooms?

- What are the expectations of individuals within a township with regard to Grade 1 and Grade 2?

1.6 GENERAL ASSUMPTIONS

I made the following **assumptions** prior to undertaking this research, and each of them informs and supports the development of my argument and the conclusions that I reached:

- Grade R, Grade 1 and Grade 2 learners are able to use acquired life skills as coping strategies for coping with stressors during the transition from Grade R through to Grade 2.
- While these life skills may assist Grade 1 and Grade 2 learners to cope with certain stressors, they may not be able to alleviate the fears that are experienced by learners during the transition from Grade R through to Grade 2.
- The stressors that I identified in my master's degree (the teacher's attitude, friendships, the need for education, physical pain and injury, the disconcerting presence of older children, bullying and teasing, and noise and chaos in the classroom), comprise some but not all of the stressors that are experienced by Grade 1 learners.
- Being part of a township may be beneficial for one or both of the individuals during the transition from Grade R through to Grade 2.

1.7 DEFINITION OF TERMS

This study was also conceptualised in terms of the following concepts, which I shall discuss in depth in the literature review chapter.

⌘ **Transition**

Corsini (2002:1017) defines a *transitional* period as the interval between two states (as, for example, between one state of equilibrium and another). In this study, the three *transitional* states are preschool (Grade R, which is the year before formal school), and the first and second year in primary school (Grade 1, the first year of formal school and Grade 2, the second year of formal school).

⌘ **Individuals within a twinship**

Taal (2000:106) defines fraternal individuals within a twinship as individuals within a twinship of the same gender or a one boy-one girl combination. They are not identical. Clegg and Woollett (1982:12) offer a more in-depth, biological definition of non-identical individuals within a twinship or fraternal individuals within a twinship. Fraternal individuals within a twinship come into being when the mother produces two separate eggs during the same cycle, both of which are fertilized by different spermatozoa, which travel separately into the uterus. Fraternal individuals within a twinship are at all times connected to separate and different placentae, amnions and chorions. Such individuals within a twinship are also called binovular or dizygotic individuals within a twinship. In other words, they develop from *two* separate fertilized eggs or zygotes. For the purpose of this study, which is predicated on monozygotic individuals within a twinship (boys), I will use the term “individuals within a twinship” because it is my considered opinion that individuals within a twinship are two separate individuals who together form one twinship.

⌘ **Grade R, Grade 1 and Grade 2**

According to the Unesco International Bureau of Education, *Grade R* (the reception year) is defined as the year preceding Grade 1. Grade R caters for children who are 5 years of age (Unesco International Bureau of Education, 4:2006). According to the South African Schools Act (South African School Act, 1996, Act 84 of 1996), *Grade 1* is the first school year in primary school, and it is determined by the child’s calculated age for a certain grade (the number of the grade plus 6 ($1 + 6 = 7$)). A Grade 1 learner will therefore most probably be turning 7 in Grade 1. Grade 2 is therefore the year following Grade 1. Most children will probably turn 8 in their Grade 2 year. For the purpose of this study, both the individuals within a twinship examined in this study turned 6 in their Grade R year, 7 in their Grade 1 year, and 8 in their Grade 2 year.

⌘ **Stressors**

According to the American Psychological Association (2007:898), a *stressor* may be defined as any event, force or condition that results in physical or emotional stress. *Stressors* may be internal or external forces that require adjustment or coping strategies on the part of the affected individual. Corsini (2002:951) defines a *stressor* as a stimulus, event or situation that physically or psychologically taxes the

adaptive capacity of an organism. Such an event may also be injurious to the organism. For this study, I regarded a *stressor* as anything, positive or negative, that exerts an effect on pre-primary and primary participants.

⌘ **Stress**

The American Psychological Association (2007:898) has stated that *stress* causes changes that affect nearly every system of the body, and that such changes influence how people feel and behave. Corsini (2002:951) defines *stress* as the forces that exert a deleterious effect on organism, effects that disturb its normal equilibrium (homeostasis). The changes that result from stress cause physical and psychological strains that make it necessary for an individual to adjust to such demands.

Hobfoll (1998:28) observed that stress is engendered by a state in which valued goals are threatened or lost, or a state in which individuals are unable to create the necessary conditions for obtaining or sustaining their goals. For the purposes of this study, I regarded the term *stress* as that state in which people find themselves when they are confronted with particular stressors.

⌘ **Emotions**

The American Psychological Association (2007:325) defines *emotions* as complex reaction patterns that incorporate a number of different experimental, behavioural and physiological elements which an individual uses in an attempt to cope with personally significant matters and events. Emotions typically also involve feelings. According to Corsini (2002:324), an *emotion* is any mental state that is characterised by various degrees of feeling, and it is usually accompanied by motor expressions. The subjective state of an emotion may be pleasurable, frightening, threatening, or of some other nature. Common *emotions* are anger, fear and love. For the purposes of this study, I define *emotion* as any feeling that is present in the participants as a result of their transitions from preschool to primary school, feelings that are experienced as stressors and that require a response in terms of the participant's life skills.

⌘ **Coping**

Zeidner and Endler (1996:25) define *coping* as a stabilising factor that can help individuals to maintain their psychosocial adaptation during stressful events or situations. According to Lazarus and Folkman (1998:141), coping is the constantly changing cognitive and behavioural effort that individuals exert to manage specific external and/or internal demands that they experience as taxing or exceeding the resources of their ability to cope. Hobfoll (1998:128) commented that *coping* as a behavioural style supposes that individuals will display characteristic modes of coping in certain situations. Ebersöhn and Eloff (2006:53) describe *resilience* as the adaptational skill that individuals need to cope successfully with demanding circumstances so that they remain functional and able to enjoy their lives. In this study, I define *coping* as any resource that the participants were able to use to *cope* with or deal with the challenges that they encountered in their transition from preschool to primary school.

⌘ **Life skills**

Ebersöhn and Eloff (2006:4) refer to *life skills* as the wide range of proficiencies or coping behaviours that people use so that they can function effectively in the modern world.

“Life skills are essential skills that make life easier and increase the possibility of us realising our potential and becoming productively involved in the community ... Life skills are skills necessary for successful living and learning” (Rooth, 2000:6).

I shall now elaborate on the correlation between *life skills*, as defined by Ebersöhn and Eloff (2006:4), and the Learning Area Life Orientation of the National Curriculum (2002) for Grade R Grade 1 and Grade 2. According to the South African National Curriculum, there are eight learning areas². These include language, mathematics, natural sciences, technology, social sciences, arts and culture, life orientation, and economic and management sciences (Department of basic Education in RSA, Revised National Curriculum Statement Grades R-9, 2002:13).

² A learning area is a field of knowledge, skills and values which has unique features as well as connections with other fields of knowledge and learning areas (Department of basic Education in RSA, Revised National Curriculum Statement Grades R-9, 2002:13).

This statement also defines Foundation Phase learners to include Grade R to Grade 3 learners. The individuals within a township in this study therefore fell into the Foundation Phase category, together with their Foundation Phase teachers. Three of the eight mentioned learning areas are also relevant to the Foundation Phase. They include Literacy, Numeracy, and Life Skills. According to the formal teaching time allocations for the Foundation Phase, 25% of learners' time should be allocated to Life Skills (Department of basic Education in RSA, Revised National Curriculum Statement Grades R-9, 2002:17).

Life Orientation has been defined as those skills that guide and equip learners for life and life's possibilities. Life Orientation was also designed to prepare learners for meaningful and successful living in a rapidly changing and transforming society. Life Orientation as a learning area is designed to develop skills, knowledge, values and attitudes that will empower learners to make informed decisions and take appropriate actions with regard to their health, social development, personal development, physical development, and their orientation to the world of work (Department of basic Education in RSA, Revised National Curriculum Statement Grades R-9, 2002:30).

Ebersöhn and Eloff (2006:4), and the Learning Area Life Orientation of the National Curriculum (2002) for Grade R Grade 1 and Grade 2, all agree that life skills may make life easier, more productive and more satisfying for individuals through the realisation of their full potential in society together provided that they are accompanying gains in personal growth and optimal living. It is the opinion of Ebersöhn and Eloff (2006:4) that life skills focus mainly on life skills as *coping mechanisms*, whereas the Learning Area Life Orientation defines life skills as more than coping mechanisms alone. For the purpose of this study, I am in agreement with Ebersöhn and Eloff (2006:4), and have described and explained life skills as coping mechanisms that learners (as individuals within a township) can use to cope with stressors during their transition from Grade R through to Grade 2.

1.8 PARADIGMATIC PERSPECTIVE

"A paradigm is a way of looking at the world. It is composed of certain philosophical assumptions that guide and direct thinking and action" (Mertens, 1998:6).

Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999:7) state that *paradigms* help to determine the particular questions that researchers ask about constructs. In this study, I have utilised an interpretivist and social constructivist qualitative approach. According to Mouton (1986, in De Vos, 1998:240), the term, *interpretive* refers to:

“...the fact that the aim of (qualitative) research is not to explain human behaviour in terms of universally valid laws or generalisation, but rather to understand and interpret the meanings and intentions that underlie everyday human action” (De Vos, 1998:240).

My method in this research was not to describe the participants in terms of generalisations but rather in terms of their own, unique experiences. Interpretative research methods, according to Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999:123), try to *“describe and interpret people’s feelings and experiences in human terms rather than through quantification and measurement.”*

For researchers in this tradition, research questions can be answered by extending the influence of the regular language used by the participants and by combining it with their expressions so that the researcher will be able to arrive at a clearer understanding of the participants’ social world (Terre Blanche & Durrheim 1999:123). Such researchers rely heavily on first-hand accounts because their purpose is to describe what they see in rich detail through the use of evocative language (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999:124). Throughout the study I attempted to make sense of the meanings that the participants offered, and I took careful note of their different points of view, their experiences, and their understanding of their transition within their township from Grade R through to Grade 2, from an interpretivist point of view. In this way I focused very strongly on the perceptions and meanings of the participants rather than on my own (researcher’s) world. My constant focus was on the participants and their worlds and how they perceived them.

I also decided to also make use of a social constructivist paradigm because of the way in which Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999:148) described this paradigm. Social constructivists strive to analyse how different signs and images from participants have the powers to generate particular representations on the part of

the participants and how certain objects underlie the experiences of the participants and objects in the study.

Social constructivists tend to use qualitative and interpretive methods, and are concerned with meaning in the sense that they attempt to demonstrate how certain understandings and experiences can be understood in terms of interpretive methods derived from larger discourses (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999:48). Because our personal reality is socially constructed, we need a variety of mental constructions to apprehend it. Some of these mental constructions may even be in conflict with one another. It is possible to obtain knowledge about the way in which people understand their personal world through a careful and attentive study of the opinions, views, meanings, prejudices, events, assumptions and actions that people use to construct their meanings. In this view, there is no single truth or axiom that explains all things. Instead, we accept that human beings use different understandings and perceptions to make sense of their worlds and their experiences.

De Vos (1998:240) noted the similarities between social constructivists and interpretivists with regard to the theory of meaning or hermeneutics. The basic assumption of Mertens (1998:11) about the interpretivist or social constructivist paradigm is that both are socially constructed by people who are actively involved in their own epistemological processes. It is also necessary for research into understanding the complexity of the lived experiences from the point of view of those who live in it. There is, however, a difference between the two which I would like to emphasise. This difference is that social constructivists differ from interpretivists in that they believe that reality can be completely understood by arriving at an adequate understanding (interpretation) of the various meanings that participants attach to their life worlds (in this instance Grade 1 and Grade 2). Social constructivists, by contrast, interpret reality by attempting to understand the way in which people construct their own reality relative to their experiences of the world.

Guba and Lincoln (1994) classify the difference in research paradigms in terms of the distinctive ontology, epistemology and methodology that each employs. I make use of the same paradigmatic approaches in this study that De Vos (1998:246) used to elucidate these models.

The *ontological* approach that I utilised enabled me to obtain an in-depth understanding of how the world of the participants was constituted by the participants' personal experiences, ideas and feelings during the transition periods. I have also taken into account the multiple realities that are part of the experiential world of the participants in the research.

As far as my *epistemological* approach is concerned, I sought to understand the way in which participants arrived at a personal understanding and knowledge of their experiences through interacting and listening to what they had to say – as well as to what others involved in the research study told me. I was constantly aware during the process of the research that the kind of knowledge or understanding that I was looking for would only be acquired through the application of empathy. I also remained aware that I needed to understand the participants as individuals who know rather than objects who are known, and that my individual knowing as the researcher was of subsidiary importance to my quest to understand what the participants knew. Because qualitative research techniques are best suited to research of this kind, I made use of qualitative methods to gather data and to analyse and interpret the findings.

1.9 RESEARCH SITES AND SAMPLING

I conducted this study in Johannesburg in the Gauteng province of South Africa with a family that consisted of a father, a mother, individuals within a township (boys), and a younger sister and baby brother. The primary participants included the mother and the two four-year olds (who were four years old at the commencement of this study). They were monozygotic individuals within a township (boys). The other participants were their Grade R teacher, their Grade 1 teacher, and their Grade 2 teachers. By the time I commenced the fieldwork, the individuals within a township were 5 years of age and in Grade R, with the prospect of turning 6 at the end of their Grade R year. I commenced the fieldwork in September of 2009 when they were in their Grade R year, and tracked their transitions through to November of 2011 when they were in their Grade 2 year.

The experiences of the individuals within this township were integral to this study. I attempted to understand the stressors they might have experienced, why they

experienced those particular stressors, and how they coped with those stressors. Because the individuals within a township attended a government school, their teachers taught the national curriculum, which include the Learning Area Life Skills. I also examined how their teachers taught life skills to their learners as well as the differences and similarities between life skills and coping strategies. I conducted semi-structured interviews with the individuals within a township's mother and teachers so that I could acquire a more in-depth understanding of my research theme and the worlds inhabited by the participants. I used creative, age-appropriate worksheets and play activities as the main source of collecting data about the individuals within a township. I undertook most of this research at the family's home, which was their natural environment. I also visited their school for the interviews that I had scheduled with the teachers who were involved with the individuals in a township. I supplemented these activities with observation sessions in the classroom and on the playground.

One of the reasons why I selected the particular participating individuals in a township was, firstly, because the mother of the individuals within a township willingly offered to allow me to engage her children for my research during an informal conversation about my research theme. My second reason for choosing these particular individuals as participants was as follows: because the two participants were individuals within a township from the same family, and because they lived under the same conditions in the same environment and background, there was a strong likelihood that I would be able to obtain data from this unique situation that may relate to the observations of other researchers who had explored parallel situations. In a study undertaken by DiLalla and Mullineaux (2008:108), the researchers noted that the processes that occurred during the transition might be especially relevant to co-individuals within a township, not only because of the parent/child and teacher/child effect that they had on one another, but also because of the way in which siblings are understood to affect one another. These researchers also noted that not only do the participating individuals in the parent/child, teacher/child and sibling relationships, affect one another, but that individuals within a township may have a greater effect on one another because they are of the same age and share a special bond of attachment.

I was therefore very careful to take the effect that individuals within a township had on one another into account during this study. The transactional process thus had implications for the ways in which the individuals within a township interacted with one another as well as with other people. These interactions have an important influence on the children's behaviours and their experiences in the classroom. But because individuals within a township are the central concern of this study, the findings of this study focused specifically on individuals within a township and were not generalised.

1.10 RESEARCH DESIGN

Strauss and Corbin (1990:17, in De Vos, 1998:240), state that *qualitative research* means different things to different people. In this study, the qualitative research in the case study research design have been conducted from both an interpretivist and social constructivist point of view.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000:181) states that a case study provides a unique example of real people behaving in real situations, and that this enables readers better to understand ideas more clearly than when such ideas are presented merely as abstract theories or principles. Cohen *et al.* (2000:182) also argues that case studies portray what it is like to be in a particular situation. Case study researchers are thus able to portray realities from close range and offer precise descriptions of these realities. Denzin and Lincoln (2000:443) have noted that a case study is not a methodological choice, but rather a choice of what is to be studied. In this study, the researcher studied the case itself, with particular emphasis on the transition of individuals within a township from Grade R through to Grade 2.

While a case study draws attention to the question of what can be learned or understood about a single case, it can also be defined as two entities (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:443). First of all it may be understood as a process of inquiry about the case and secondly a process of inquiry about the product of that entity.

Leedy and Ormrod (2001:149), by contrast, define a case study as the in-depth study of a particular individual, programme or event for a defined period of time. For this study I selected as my participants two preschool individuals within a township

for a period of three years while they were passing through their transition from preschool through to Grade 2.

In my role as a case study researcher, I looked particularly for both the expected and unexpected, and common and uncommon features, although, in the end, the research describes more unexpected and unusual findings than one might expect (Stouffer, 1941, in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:447). I studied the participants intensively in their natural worlds, in their home environment and their school environment, and focused particularly on their activities and the way they behaved in their natural worlds. I also gathered data about their historical backgrounds. I described the physical settings in which the research took place (their home and school environments) in great detail. I also took into account the participants' economic and social backgrounds as well as the differences and similarities in their personalities. In my role as the researcher, I also looked at other cases which might shed light on my own case study (Stouffer, 1941, in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:447).

I took the following factors into account when undertaking this case study (Denscombe, 2003:30): I focused strongly on one aspect of the theme that I was investigating, namely the transition of the individuals within a township from Grade R through to Grade 2. My main purpose in doing this was to illuminate the general by examining the details of the particular. I studied certain features in a qualitatively detailed way so that I would be able to amass the kind of valuable information and unique insights that would make the research an in-depth study. My concentration on *relationships* and *processes* were essential features of my method throughout the duration of the study. By making use of a case study design, I was able to amass sufficient detail to unravel some of the complexities of the situations I encountered. The discipline of engaging in a case study enabled me to deal with the case as a whole even as I was attempting to elucidate how some of the parts affected one another. Another advantage of undertaking a case study is that it gives one various opportunities to explain why certain events occurred.

I therefore studied the participants in their *natural settings*, which included their home and school environments. There were certain advantages that derived from studying the individuals in a township in their natural settings. These included the fact that they were more comfortable in their natural settings. I assumed that they

felt more confident in their own environments and settings because these were places in which they had already established relationships. I also used a *variety of sources and multiple types of data* to shed additional light on my investigation. Some of these techniques that provided additional data included participant observation techniques, the collection of documents, the conduct of semi-structured interviews, and age-appropriate activities with the individuals involved. In addition to this, I used field notes, transcriptions and audiovisual material in the form of photographs as additional sources from which to mine useful data.

Nisbet and Watt (1984:184) arrived at the following conclusions about the strengths and weaknesses of case studies, all of which I took into account in this study. Firstly, they suggest that the findings about participants can be more easily understood by interested readers and observers when they are written up in everyday, non-professional language. When participants speak for themselves, they are more immediately intelligible. Because the main focus of my study was on young individuals within a township (boys), various unique features emerged that may have been lost if I had utilised a quantitative data collection method. I noted above that a quantitative data collection method could have offered insight into other, similar situations and cases as well as the possibility of shedding light on the interpretations contained in similar cases. A vital advantage of the case study format was that it could be undertaken by a single researcher without the assistance of a full research team. This particular research format allowed me to notice and take account of any unanticipated events or uncontrolled variables.

I also took into account the known weaknesses of case studies such as those described by Nisbet and Watt (1984:184). One such weakness is that it did not allow me to make generalisations from my findings. But my goal as a researcher was not to arrive at any specific truth about the situation, but rather to undertake an in-depth study that would be rich and layered in detail and nuance. Another weakness particular to this case was the fact that its complexity made it impossible for me to crosscheck facts and assertions simply because I was working on my own. I compensated for this by endeavouring to arrive at findings, to analyse themes and to inscribe my findings in a truthful and ethical manner by using member checks, conducting an intensive literature study, and by consulting extensively with existing experts in the field.

1.11 DATA COLLECTION

“Everybody has the skills required to do interpretive research, but to do it well one needs to turn those into specialized research skills”

(Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999).

The major sources for data collection in case studies include observations, interviews, secondary analysis, and audiovisual materials (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001:149). I made use of all of these data-collecting resources and strategies in this study, and spent a great deal of time with the participants so that I would be in regular contact with them.

My main interest during my interactions with the participants was how these individuals within a township experienced their transition from preschool through to Grade 2 and the meanings that they ascribed to these experiences. I also bore in mind the fact that the same actions and situations could well have been interpreted differently by different researchers. As the researcher, I strove to arrive at interpretations that were also valid for the participants concerned (Jupp, 1989:121, in De Vos, 1998:279). I also took the following factors into account when observing the participants (a more detailed description of each of these will follow later in the study): the natural setting, the duration of the study, holism, empathy, and insight (De Vos, 1998:280).

My main data collection activities included creative worksheets as well as age-appropriate activities with the individuals within a township. I conducted semi-structured interviews with the primary participants' mother, as well as their preschool and primary school teachers at various junctures during the three-year period of field work. I used these interviews to gain a detailed picture of the participants' beliefs as well as their perceptions and the meanings they attributed to the themes in which I was primarily interested (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delpont, 1998:302). The main reason for spending so much of my limited time with the participants' mother, teachers and schools, was that it allowed me to obtain a holistic view of how the individuals within a township experienced the transitions in which I was interested. Such a focus also prevented me from becoming sidetracked by observations of other children in their school

Since I regarded the participants as the experts on their subjects, feelings and experiences, I gave them as many opportunities as possible to tell their own stories. My questions in interviews, for example, were nearly always open-ended. The interviews were carefully recorded and audio-visually taped for future transcription and retrieval of every detail and nuance. Another strategy was that I used the time immediately after every interview to capture my field notes so that I would lose as little data as possible. I therefore recorded my observations before talking about them. My field notes included the things that I heard, saw, experienced, and thought about during the course of the interviews with the participants. My observations were recorded verbally on audiotape, and I also used photographs to illustrate certain aspects in this study such as worksheets and the activities produced by the individuals within a township. By using photographs, I was able to enrich my conclusions with visual evidence (De Vos, 1998:326).

1.12 DATA ANALYSIS

During data analysis, a researcher becomes intimately involved with the participants and with the data that has been generated. This is one of the main reasons why analysing qualitative data can be so challenging as well as a highly creative activity (De Vos, 1998:334).

Researchers who use an interpretivist paradigm mostly prefer to make use of inductive data analysis (Jansen, in Maree, 2007:3). Because of the requirements of the interpretivist method, I included more than one reality, or, in other words, *multiple realities*, in this study.

I shall now discuss the strategies that I used to analyse the data that was amassed for this study. These strategies are listed by Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999:141), and include *familiarisation and immersion*. This meant in effect that I had to immerse myself in the material as thoroughly as possible by intensively and repeatedly reviewing all the texts, in addition to living in my own reality. I read and reread all the transcriptions while making notes, brainstorming, and drawing diagrams.

I used the inductive method which implies arriving at propositions by examining great quantities of data. By using this method, I established the emerging organising principles of my conclusions.

Coding was another key strategy that I used in the study. As I developed themes, I disaggregated the data and split it into ever-smaller secondary themes by making use of different colours for the specific themes, along with numbers for the secondary themes that I identified. Since this kind of coding process is descriptive, I continuously compared and contrasted the identified themes so that I could optimise the descriptive power of the categories.

By using *elaboration* (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999:141), I was able to capture the finer nuances of meaning, and this allowed me to refine my exploration of the themes more carefully. This step also required me to revise my coding system until I had located the most significant possible insights for the study.

In the final step of data analysis, I made use of *interpretation and checking* (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999:141). I completed my analysis for this study by making use of categories with various themes that fitted all the data that had been gathered after I had completed all of the steps mentioned above.

1.13 RIGOUR OF THE STUDY

Because the sample for this study was small, and because I had no intention of generalising my findings, I did not undertake any of the steps required for generalisability. Instead, I strove to create the potential for *transferability* in the study. In order to make this possible, I included rich and detailed descriptions of the research context, as well as the participants' perceptions and their experiences.

As an interpretivist and social constructivist researcher, I did not assume that I was investigating a static and unchanging reality. Instead I assumed that the participants might have behaved differently and have had different opinions if the context were different.

I also set great store by *dependability* in this study. As with transferability, I aspired to *dependability* in this study primarily through my own rich and detailed descriptions (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999:63). My original audio recordings of each session and transcripts helped to add depth to this study as I listened to them again and again while checking the accuracy of the transcriptions.

Another activity that I took into account was Mason's (2002:7) *active reflexivity*. As researcher, I understood my role in the research process to be that I needed to compile rich and detailed descriptions of what the participants experienced in the transition of the individuals in a township from Grade R through to Grade 2. I therefore constantly reflected upon my actions and my role as the researcher in the context of the whole project.

Prolonged engagement is another important strength in this study. Because of the duration of the research, I was able to obtain a wealth of rich and in-depth details about what the participants thought and felt.

1.14 MY ROLE AS RESEARCHER

For the purposes of this study, I reflected critically on my role as the researcher (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). I entered into a committed and collaborative partnership with the participants for the purpose of collecting and analysing the data I received from them in order to arrive at a nuanced understanding of their transition experiences. Because I conducted the fieldwork for this research over a period of three years with the participants, I was able to establish the kind of solid and trusting relationship with them and their caregivers that were essential for the success of this study. I attempted at all times to be a sensitive observer as I observed the participants in their natural settings, which they mostly experienced as safe and comfortable environments. My duty as a researcher was to record the phenomena I observed as faithfully as possible, even though I became devoted to the participants in this study.

Because of my personal affection for the participants, I had to be continuously aware of my own possible prejudices and distortions. I therefore read and reread the findings and reflected on them before committing them to writing. I also raised

additional questions when they arose and incorporated the questions and answers into the record of the analysis of the phenomena where appropriate. My role as researcher also compelled me for ethical reasons fiercely to protect the anonymity of the participants throughout the research process. I also therefore needed to tell them that they were free to withdraw from the project if ever they felt like doing so. Finally, my first duty as a responsible researcher was always to respect their desires and wishes and to represent the truth as I saw it comprehensibly and with due sensitivity.

1.15 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

I also committed myself to the ethical conduct of this study, as it is embodied in the statement of Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999:66) when they noted that *“ethical concerns should be an integral part of the planning and implementation of research”*.

The reason for committing oneself to ethical guidelines right from the beginning of the study is to protect the welfare and rights of everyone involved in the research. I particularly committed myself to respecting the *autonomy* of all the participants, especially the two young boys who were members of a township and my main objects of research. Their voluntary participation gave them the absolute freedom to withdraw from the process at any stage without incurring any kind of negative penalty or reaction. The terms of the ethical agreement also gave them the right to refuse to answer any question or participate in any activity. They were fully aware of this at all stages of the process. Because interviews formed an integral part of my research method, I was careful to schedule all interviews by prior arrangement at reasonable times that would suit all concerned.

The ethical requirements of *confidentiality and anonymity* required that the identity of all the participants, as well as all information or data that might be gathered, would be sought and collated under conditions that preserved their confidentiality and anonymity. I duly told all the participants that their identities as well as data and conclusions I collected would only ever be revealed in such a form that would protect their anonymity and confidentiality at all times. I have been careful to implement these guarantees at all times.

Because of the ethical requirement of *informed consent*, I was obliged to obtain the free consent of the participants to participate in the research process at all times. In addition to this, all the participants were carefully informed about the research process as well as what I hoped to achieve thereby. Constant dialogue between myself and the participants also assured that all of those involved were well informed about the process of the inquiry for as long as they were participating.

The ethical requirement of *non-maleficence* required me not to harm the participants or any other person involved in the research process in any way at all. In order to comply with this principle, the participants were never asked to participate in any activity for which they were not competent. I was fully aware that, because of their age, the individuals within a township were still in a specific developmental stage that is characteristic of their age group. Because I was aware that their involvement in the research took place at what was often a stressful time for the participants, I engaged professionals who were immediately available to assist them if necessary. In the event, it was not necessary to make use of this professional help at any time during the course of the study.

The issue of *trust* as an ethical consideration was also foundational to the pursuit of this research. The trust that developed gradually between myself and the participants throughout the interviews and during the in-depth data collection period was not pursued for my personal material benefit or gain.

I was also very careful to design research that would be *beneficial* to the participants, the other researchers, and to the interests of society as a whole. By including the participants' personal experiences and different opinions and attitudes in the findings, I was able to suggest and expand upon useful information and themes that I knew would be useful for future children and parents in the same situation. I was also certain that the life skills that I helped to facilitate in the participants during the transition of the individuals within a township from Grade R through to Grade 2, would be *beneficial* to them, both in the present and in the future as coping mechanisms which might enhance the quality of their lives in difficult circumstances.

Another ethical consideration that I took into account was that I would *publish the findings* as a true reflection of what had actually occurred during the research, and that I would not manipulate the data or the conclusions to establish an enhanced but inaccurate reflection of what had occurred.

1.16 POSSIBLE LIMITATIONS AND CHALLENGES

One of the limitations of this study was the fact that, for this particular case study, the primary and secondary participants numbered only seven people. Out of these seven participants, the individuals within a township (the two boys) were the main participants. The fact that the main participants in the research were individuals within a township, limited me as the researcher from generalising my findings to children who were not individuals within a township. While this inability to draw generalised conclusions represented a limitation, the main purpose of the study was not to make generalisations, but rather to share the available in-depth meanings and experiences of the participants with whomever might benefit from them. Another limitation was the fact that the fieldwork lasted for three years. Because of this, I might well have lost my participants because of any number of unanticipated circumstances such as possible trauma or the removal of the principal family to another inaccessible location. Another possible limitation of this study was that I might have unavoidably become too closely involved as a researcher in the lives of the participants because of the close relationship I was obliged to develop with them over an extended period of time.

1.17 LAYOUT OF CHAPTERS

The chapters for this thesis were organised as follows:

CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW AND RATIONALE

Chapter 1 provides the background to the study. This chapter contains a general overview of the study together with an introduction and the rationale for the study. This chapter sets out the research problem, the research questions, the implications of the paradigm, as well as definitions of the concepts used. It also contains a preliminary discussion of the research design and the methodology.

CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter details the conceptual framework of the study, together with an in-depth exploration and discussion of the literature.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design is described in detail in this chapter. The data collection, data analysis and interpretation methods that were introduced in detail in Chapter 1 are discussed in further depth in this chapter.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS

Chapter 4 presents the data and the format of the data, together with my analysis of the data and the findings. The research findings are summarised in this chapter.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter offers the main conclusions of the study. In this chapter the findings are further explained and correlated with the conceptual framework for this study and are related to the research questions that were outlined in Chapter 1. This chapter also makes recommendations for further research that could be usefully be undertaken in this field.



Chapter 2

Exploring existing literature as background to the study

2.1 TRANSITIONS BETWEEN GRADE R, GRADE 1 AND GRADE 2

2.1.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 2 reports on the literature review that I conducted about all of the central constructs of this study, namely *transition*, *individuals within a township*, *Grade R*, *Grade 1* and *Grade 2*, including the supplementary variables in the study, namely *stress*, *stressors*, *life skills* and *coping*. In what follows below, I examine, describe and discuss all of these concepts in depth, while making reference to the relevant studies in which these themes are contained. The chapter concludes with the conceptual framework upon which this study was based.

2.1.2 TRANSITION IN GENERAL

“Young children will not learn properly until they have made a secure transition to nursery or school” (Fisher, 2003:55).

Although Dunlop and Fabian (2007:6) argue strongly that there is no single definition for the concept of transition, transition can be defined in educational terms as the process of moving from one life-changing situation to another. This process is often accompanied by a movement from one specific phase of education to another. Fabian and Dunlop (2007:33), describes transition as the different moves³ that children experience. Bronfenbrenner (1979:26) speaks about an *ecological transition* and defines it as what happens when one’s position in the environment changes because of a transformation in one’s role, one’s setting, or both. Bronfenbrenner (1979:27) also uses the term *educational transition* when he refers to what happens when children enter an educational institution. During such an educational transition, the child’s family serves as the primary developmental context whereas the school serves as the secondary developmental context. It is

³ *Moves* refer to the time between settling in and the first visit, a long-term physical move from one locality to another, a change of teacher(s) in a school year, and to the change of a group of children who move into or out of a particular class (Dunlop & Fabian, 2007:34).

within this developmental context that issues of *adjustment*, *identity changes*, *role changes*, and *relation changes*, are all of primary importance.

Dunlop and Fabian (2007:13) elaborate on their definition of transition as a complex process in which individuals are involved in continuous social activities which become the arena in which they attempt to adapt themselves to the challenges of the new social conditions that they encounter. Griebel (2000:23) refer to transition as “a complex field of theory and research” because it describes the radical changes to which an individual must adapt as he or she grapples with the challenges presented by the transition. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) argue that it is not events themselves that constitute a transition, but rather the manner in which an individual demonstrates how he or she *cope*s with such events. Within the framework of the current study, I made the assumption that whatever life skills the individuals within a township might acquire during their Grade R year, could serve them as vitally important coping skills for the purpose of making their transitions from Grade R to Grade 2.

For the purpose of this study, I also concur with the views of Dunlop and Fabian (2007:13) when they note that a transition is often erroneously conceptualised by researchers as a once-off process that only happens on the first day on which individuals find themselves within the new situation. Since children in reality often go through many different transitional stages during a particular academic year, it contributes nothing of value or interest to define *transition* as comprising those events that occur only on the day when children arrive in their new classroom at the beginning of a particular educational year. It is the opinion of Bruner (1996) that it makes more sense to assume that the totality of one particular annual transition is made up of a number of constituent transitional stages, each of which may be vitally important to the development of a child's confidence and maturity. One may observe, for example, that any particular environment's characteristics imply predetermined shared values, beliefs and traditions that are already present in the educational and social environment when the child arrives on the first day of the school year.

For the purposes of this study, I have assumed that the individuals within a township's school environments in Grade R, Grade 1 and Grade 2, all serve as the

main environment in which various transitions take place even as the family continues to serve as the primary developmental context for these individuals. Other role players who are present in these environments include the children themselves, their teachers, parents, their new friends, and their existing friendships.

Dockett and Perry (2008:275) make reference to the National Education Goals Panel (1997) in the United States tripartite definition (child-school-community) when they discuss school readiness. They take this stance because they argue that it is not only the attributes of readiness that are important in children, but that the school's readiness to receive children as well as the family and community's ability to support children are all of importance for making an effective and smooth transition. During the course of their study, they reached the conclusion that it is also the responsibility of schools and communities to assist a child to make an effective transition to each new grade, and that one cannot place the onus of making an effective transition solely on the children themselves and on their ability to change and adapt to new or difficult situations (Dockett & Perry, 2008:275).

Giallo, Treyvaud, Matthews and Kienhuis (2010:3) also provide substantial evidence in their study that the transition of children to primary school is not only important for the children themselves, but also for their parents. It is for this reason that they conclude that the parents of such children all need that kind of information and skill in life management techniques that will enable them to help their children to make effective transitions. In this study, however, I focused primarily on the children.

It was one of my assumptions that the school in particular, which includes both teachers and the headmaster, play a crucial role in the transition process. I also assumed that the teachers' attitudes and their sensitivity to the children's emotions and their backgrounds, would make an impact on each of the children in their care. The corollary of this assumption is that it is therefore necessary for teachers to know as much as possible about each of the children in their classes even before the commencement of the school year. My further assumption was therefore that it is important for teachers to treat children primarily as individuals rather than merely as members of a group.

Margetts (2002:105) is of the opinion that a child's adjustment to school depends on a combination of background as well as personal factors. Because of the variability of these factors, the nature of the transition process may fluctuate between children, schools and communities. I concur with Margetts's (2002:105) observation that every individual transition process may be different, and that there may be as many transition processes as there are children, schools and communities. I therefore accepted as a further assumption that one of the greatest challenges when assisting children to make transitions is the necessity of acquiring a deep and thorough appreciation of the diversity of the children themselves, and of their schools and communities.

Grové (1981:11) draws attention to the importance of the role of parents during a child's transition process as well as the school's responsibility for a child's development during his or her transition to school. Irvine and Stewart (2008:11) argue that if children are to thrive from the very beginning of their school careers, the responsibility for their well-being depends more on their parents than on the children themselves. Since I also concur with the assertions of Irvine and Stewart about the secondary importance of the role of parents in a successful transition to primary school, I made the assumption that parents do not play a more important role than the children themselves in making a uncomplicated transition. In spite of this, I accepted, for the purposes of this study, that parents do in fact play a vital role in influencing the attitudes of their children and securing their well-being during this crucially important period in their lives.

Pluckrose (1994:9) also emphasizes the role that the school and community play during the transition process as well as in the first year of a child's school career:

They are going to enter a place where their knowledge and understanding is to be deepened and extended. What do we need to know about these new members of our school community? How can we build upon what they know already? What do they need of us – as individuals and as a group? (Pluckrose, 1994:9).

A successful transition to school may strengthen the possibility that children will experience positive social, emotional and academic outcomes during their time in school (Hirst *et al.*, 2011:5). Cassidy (2005:147) noted a number of the most

important factors that Grade 1 teachers identified for making a successful transition from pre-school to primary school as well the successful transfer of information from pre-schools. The experience of the teachers in that study provided evidence that personal visits by teachers to the pre-schools, so that the children could meet their future primary school teacher and so that the teacher could meet the children, exerted an enormously beneficial influence on the subsequent development of the children.

This finding was made somewhat equivocal by the fact that different teachers visited the pre-schools for different reasons. Some of them visited the children with the intention of getting to know them while others used this opportunity to discuss the problems and difficulties that the children themselves raised (Cassidy, 2005:148). The importance of children being able to transfer useful information from their pre-schools was an issue of deep concern for many of the respondents in this study. The reason for this, they indicated, was because they themselves had very few and limited opportunities for becoming familiar with the children, their abilities and interests (Cassidy, 2005:149). These respondents were also of the opinion that the ability of children to adapt to the new school situation is heavily influenced by their self-esteem, their confidence in their ability to behave appropriately in school, their mastery of social skills, and their ability to take responsibility for their personal belongings. The respondents also agreed that the ability of a child to comply with rules and to adapt to a teacher's expectations were vitally important predictors of a smooth transition (Cassidy, 2005:150).

In order to emphasize how challenging the transition to school is for a child, whether the transition be to kindergarten or to a primary school, I referred to the study conducted by Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta (2000:505), which set out to obtain "an ecological perspective" on kindergarten transitions. These researchers concluded that the entry to formal schooling forms part of every school during a child's developmental process, and that it is characterised by tensions between stability and change and between the ability to adjust to new challenges and to maintain the usefulness and security that are provided by established patterns and habits. It is for this reason that social support is particularly important for children during this period in their lives. For the purposes of this study, I explored the various forms of social

support that were present or absent during the two transitions of individuals within a twinship from Grade R to Grade 2.

2.1.3 FACTORS THAT MAKE THE TRANSITION PERIOD MORE EFFECTIVE

In the study undertaken by Dockett and Perry (2003), the researchers concluded that the most significant factors that influenced the transition to school included knowledge, ideas, facts, and an understanding on the part of the children of a few important concepts. They also included factors such as the ability of the children to adjust themselves socially to the school context, their ability to interact with a large group of children, and the efficiency of their motor skills (such as their ability to tie their own shoe laces and hold their pencils correctly). Other significant factors which they examined included the attitudes of the children towards their school as well as their ability to follow rules. They also took note of the physical attributes of the children (including their age and general health), together with any family issues the children had about the interaction of their families with the school and any important changes that had occurred within their families (Dockett & Perry, 2003:30). The final factors which they examined included the characteristics of the educational environment as an influential factor that affected the transition of the children to their new school (Dockett & Perry, 2003:31).

A study conducted by Early *et al.* (2001:199) makes reference to *the ready school movement*. Adherents of this movement shifted their attention away from the children's readiness for school and concentrate rather on the schools' readiness for children – all of which is in accordance with the recommendations of the National Education Goals Panel (1998, in Early *et al.*, 2001:199). A “ready” schools' main concern is how best to create meaningful links between families, preschools, and the communities in which they find themselves (Pianta, Cox, Taylor & Early, 1999, in Early *et al.*, 2001). By following this method, they examined the connection between the children's families, their schools, the communities in which they lived, and the children's experiences of their first day of school.

Throughout this study, I made the same assumptions as those of the ready school movement. This was in line with my other assumption (mentioned above) that the better informed teachers were about every individual in their class, the better would

be the outcome of the transition period. I remained aware that the sheer size of classes for which teachers were responsible militated against the possibility that any single teacher would be able to get to know every child in his or her class intimately. I nevertheless maintained my assumption that if children were given the opportunity to visit their future schools and classrooms and make the acquaintance of their teacher before the beginning of the following school year, this connection would play an important part in mitigating the anxiety that children feel when they are compelled to move into unfamiliar settings. But in spite of my assumption in this regard and my belief in the recommendations of the ready school movement, I continued to assume that the children themselves make the most important contribution to the success or otherwise of whatever transitions they make. My position throughout this study was therefore that the individual child, the school, and the parents are all equally indispensable and necessary for successful and uncomplicated transitions. It follows from this that I assumed that it was not the school alone that was the single most important role player in the transition process, but that child, the parents, and the school, all acting in concert, could be analysed in terms of the functions and responsibilities that were appropriate to each of them.

Laverick (2008:321) mentions four key components that contribute to the appropriate support of young children who are starting out in school. Laverick's research included a consideration of the developmental characteristics of young children, the recognition of those factors that affect adjustment to new situations, the importance of establishing relationships with the families of children, and the implementation of strategies which assist children in making this transition a smooth transition. Although Laverick mentions these four components in the context of providing appropriate support for children who are starting school, I also emphasised that these four components were important for helping children directly to effect successful transitions.

I also assume that other factors such the teachers awareness of the developmental characteristics of the children in his or her care, the maintenance of a friendly environment, the capacity of children to make new friends, and the ability of children to adjust to the demands of their new classroom, all played an important role in making the transition experience less stressful. I also assumed that the existence of a healthy relationship between parents and teachers, characterised by good

communication and mutual respect, would be helpful during this period. Finally, I made the assumption that a teacher who is engaged in implementing specific strategies to help children to make their transitions, would be of great value. I agreed with the statement made by Loizou (2011:53) that teachers need to allocate children with whatever amounts of space and time they need to feel part of their new situations and the environments in which they find themselves.

In a Finnish study by Ahtola, Silinskas, Poikonen, Kontoniemi, Niemi and Nurmi (2011), the researchers investigated whether or not the existing transitional practices that participating teachers were implementing in their preschool-elementary schools, contributed to children's academic development in Grade 1. Their main focus in this study was how to implement effective school-level policies that would compensate for the evident discontinuities between elementary school grades and primary school (Ahtola *et al.*, 2011:295). The four existing kinds of transitional practices in their study included:

- the organisation of activities in which both children and teachers from preschools and primary schools would participate.
- the passing on of useful information to future school entrants.
- an in-depth look at whether the curricula of pre-primary and primary schools had been adequately compiled and revised by both the pre-primary and primary school staff.
- the provision of opportunities for families to meet the primary and pre-primary staff who would teach their children in the following year.

They concluded that if school transitions were to be successful, it would be necessary to pay due attention to the establishment of meaningful relationships between the children concerned, their families, and the primary and pre-primary schools in which the children would enrol in the following year (Ahtola *et al.*, 2011:301).

My main purpose in this study was not to examine, analyse, or reach conclusions about the adequacy or otherwise of the participants *academic* development in each of these grades. My focus was rather on an in-depth exploration of the adequacy of the communication that took place and the relationships that were established

between the primary and pre-primary schools, the participants, and their respective families.

Li, Mak, Chan, Chu, Lee and Lam (2012:5) investigated the effectiveness of a play-integrated programme that was designed to enhance a smooth transition for children from preschool to primary school. The two contributions of this programme were to devise activities that would help the children concerned to become familiar with primary school life, and the construction of play activities that would enhance the children's problem solving skills, their interpersonal communication skills, their ability to express their emotions in an appropriate way, and to assist children to improve their stress-coping techniques. Their results demonstrated how the children in the experimental group experienced greater happiness in their transitional periods, how they encountered fewer difficulties in making the necessary psychological adjustments, and how they had fewer worries than the corresponding children in the control group. Because of their success in achieving their goals, the researchers concluded that their play-integrated programme was effective in facilitating a smooth transition for the children to primary school.

Throughout the study I also supported the conclusions reached by Li *et al.* (2012:5) with regard to the two main recommendations about how to familiarise children with what would be expected of them in their primary schools and how children could be taught the skills they needed to make their present and future transitions more effective and less disturbing.

Loizou (2011:54) argues in his study that although transition programs and activities are effective in easing the ways in which children assimilate new experiences between preschool to Grade 1, children also need to be empowered to voice their needs during the transitional process and to be presented with opportunities for reconfiguring, where necessary, their existing culture and identity. He maintains that if this is done, one might expect productive and appropriate outcomes from the programs that they recommend, which begin at school.

Hemmeter, Ostrosky and Fox (2006:583) argue in their study that having the ability to develop satisfying social relationships, to communicate one's emotions effectively, and to engage in constructive problem solving, are all vitally important

skills that young children will need if they hope to make successful transitions during their school careers.

Hanley, Heal, Tiger and Ingvarsson (2007:295) concluded from the evidence they gained in their study that the preparation of preschool children for any possible social complications that they might experience in their transition from kindergarten to primary school, is probably the most important task for all early childhood teachers. While I fully support this conclusion on the part of Hanley *et al.* (2007:295), I would add (in line with what I have stated above) that it is not only the responsibility of the children's early childhood teachers, but also that of their primary school teachers and parents, to prepare children in whatever ways are necessary for the success of their future educational transitions.

The strategies which I recommend in the study for successful transitions between Grade R and Grade 2, include certain life skills. Although it is my contention that most individuals learn better in practice rather than from theory, I strongly believe that it is possible for people to prepare themselves to cope with specific difficulties and problems by learning certain life skills in advance. In this context of this study, this means that one should be able to prepare children in advance to make successful transitions from Grade R to Grade 2. For the purpose of this study, I identified techniques for the achievement of self-knowledge and personal identity as the skills that would best serve the interests of the participating children. When people have an accurate understanding of who they really are as well as an accurate knowledge of both their strong and weak points, they will have a strong advantage over others in terms of their sense of belonging and their self-confidence as they face the challenges of making difficult transitions. Healthy self-esteem also enables individuals to feel more confident and competent in new, threatening and uncertain environments. Coping strategies that enable an individual to exercise emotional self-control may also help such individuals face difficult situations without breaking down or resorting to inappropriate emotional displays.

In order to cope with stressors such as bullying and intimidation, self-confidence, self-respect and coping skills are indispensable for defusing challenging situations. I also assumed throughout this study that important life skills for making the transitions from Grade R to Grade 2 would include those life skills that enable a

person to develop a sound sense of belonging, confidence, control and self-respect, as well as practical ways of coping with prevalent stressors. Although some individuals may struggle to exercise such life skills even after they have been taught to do so, it is my belief that, with the right attitude, practice and motivation, most individuals of average skills would be able to use such life skills to defuse challenging situations and, in the case of the individuals within a township, it would enable them to experience smooth transitions from Grade R to Grade 2.

Margetts (2002:106) makes the assumption that the transition to school, and the way in which children adjust to what they find in that school, may be easier for children when they are already familiar with certain situations, when the channels of communication are open, when parents are properly informed about the new school, and when teachers are familiar with the developmental needs of the children they teach as well as any relevant previous experiences of such children. Broström (2002:52) argues that one of the most important needs of children during their transition to school is to feel comfortable in their new school environment. This would mean in effect that a child should feel a sense of well-being in addition to the realisation that he or she *belongs* in the school environment. Brooker (2008:12) conceptualises a successful transition as that which happens when a child feels competent, strong and able to handle new experiences with confidence and appropriate initiatives.

For the purposes of this study, I concur with the description by Brooker (2008:14) of the specific needs that children have during these transitional periods. I went out of my way to explore, analyse and describe these needs of the children in my study by utilising various research tools and devices. Such needs included the necessity for children to have an adequate sense of self-worth, a positive sense of identity, and the need for them to live within a matrix of supportive personal relationships. I examined the role the trusted adults and familiar peers played in the lives of these children. I noticed that once the children had acquired a clear understanding of the rules and routines that prevailed in the school, and when they enjoyed good communication with their teacher, they also displayed a sense of personal control and purpose. The ability of the children in the study to make the right choices and sound decisions and to control their emotions, also made the transition process much easier for them. Paige-Smith and Craft (2010:71) argue that it may be

possible for children to develop healthy self-esteem and proper self-confidence if they are given the right kinds of support.

In order to facilitate children's successful transition and adjustment so school, Von Suchodoletz, Trommsdorff, Heikamp, Wieber and Gollwitzer (2009:565) concluded in their study of the role of behaviour regulation in kindergarten, that the use of behaviour regulation skills may become universally necessary if teachers want to effect the successful transition of children into the school milieu. The findings of Ahtola *et al.* (2011:7) suggest that, to promote successful school transitions, the relationships among children, families, pre-school and elementary schools, should be improved through the exercise of appropriate transition practices. Transition practices may however create new problems because what may be helpful for one child in a specific context, may not be appropriate for another child in a different context. But for the purposes of this study, I support the above-mentioned practices because they may facilitate less stressful transitions for children between Grade R and Grade 2, provided that a strong emphasis is placed upon the necessity for maintaining healthy communications between the school administrators, teachers, parents and children.

2.1.4 CHALLENGES CHILDREN MIGHT EXPERIENCE DURING TRANSITION

In South Africa, Grade R was instituted by the National Department of Education for the purpose of preparing children for the more structured and formal activities of Grade 1. Although Grade R is more playful and informal than Grade 1, the structure of Grade R activities does help to prepare children for what they will find in Grade 1. Unfortunately, however, there is still a substantial number of schools in South Africa that have no Grade R facilities for classes, with the result that a large number of children in this country do not obtain the advantages of having attended a Grade R class. In the South African Governments' News Paper of 2 August 2010, there was an article that stated that, between 2003 and 2008, the percentage of Grade 1 children who received pre-primary schooling, had increased from 60% to 80%. Goal 11 of the Department of Education's Action Plan to 2014, entitled "Towards the realization of schooling 2025", is *to improve the access of children to quality early childhood development below Grade 1*. The Department of Education has also indicated that it is their intention to ensure that all children who will be in Grade 1 in

2015 will be able to enrol in a Grade R class in 2014. My concern about this is that although the Department of Education places a strong emphasis on the importance of literacy and numeracy in their statement, they made no reference to the importance of life skills, which I believe to be as important as literacy and numeracy.

Another difficulty that arises during the transition process are problems associated with attachment. According to a study by Seven (2010:347), the attachment representation and social behaviours of children were concurrent with their adaptation during their transition from preschool to primary school. Seven (2010:348) notes in his study that stable peer relationships facilitate school adaptation. His findings provide evidence to show that adaptive problems during grade one were caused by insecure attachment and social behaviours. Another interesting result was that the children who were closely observed during the course of this study displayed the *same* behaviours in both pre and-primary school. His initial report was that children who were secure in their attachment, adapted more successfully to school – in contrast to what happened in the case of insecure children. Seven (2010:353) therefore concluded that secure attachment is a significant variable in school adaptation.

For the purpose of this study, I will explore the relationships between the participants and their parents, and correlate them with the ambient environmental factors and social resources (as is shown in the conceptual framework for this study) so that I will be in a position to answer my research question and provide a rich and detailed description of the relationships I observed during the course of this study.

2.1.5 SCHOOL READINESS

“Readiness for school is an ongoing process, not a specific point that is reached”
(Woolfson, 2004:88).

Scott-Little, Kagan and Frelow (2006:163) define the term *school readiness* in their study as particular sets of skills and knowledge that contribute to children’s later success in school. Thompson and Raikes (2007:24) define school readiness not only as a product of cognitive and linguistic preparation, but as the corollary of social

skills, the ability to cooperate, self-confidence, self-regulatory competencies, and socio-emotional qualities. They also note that school readiness may include the inherent characteristics of a child as well as the influence of the child's most important relationships and the social context of his or her early development.

In their discussion of challenges that attend the transition from preschool to school, Irvine and Stewart (2008:14) note that a child's security can be easily shaken and for this reason they may feel anxious and nervous. They argue that this happens when the normal, everyday disruptions of life at school and home become the cause of fears. It is in such circumstances, they argue, that even minor problems can become a cause of disorientation because of ignorance and unpreparedness of the children. I support the contention of Davin and Van Staden (2005:4) when they argue that school readiness is difficult to measure or define for the following two reasons. Firstly, different researchers and scholars have proposed widely divergent definitions of school readiness, and, secondly, it is extremely difficult if not impossible to assess the impact that a child's parents and other significant adults make on a child's development and his or her school readiness (however it may be defined). Grové (1981:10) defines school readiness as the condition in which the child finds himself or herself when he or she is able to cope with the formal demands of school because of his/her maturity, his/her social maturity, and also his/her emotional maturity – three aspects of school readiness that Grové (1981) regards as indispensable. Bub (2009:25) concludes her study into the effects of classroom support on children's social and behavioural skills during transition points, by noting that school readiness involves the preparation of children's minds, emotions, social capacities, and personalities to cope with whatever they will encounter during transitions and during their new school year.

For the purposes of this study, I agree with the findings of Bub (2009:25) that it may be helpful to prepare children's minds. I understand the statement to mean that it is helpful to help them to deal with their thoughts and emotions, and that it is necessary for adults to listen to them and to provide them with the skills that they will need to exercise control over their emotions and take advantage of their best social capabilities. In short, I understand it to mean that it is desirable to teach children beneficial socializing skills and norms of acceptable social behaviour. But I am also of the opinion that it may be difficult, if not impossible, to effect any helpful

changes in a child's *personality* with the intention of making him or her better able to cope with the kind of experiences that children encounter in school. I have also assumed throughout this study that different personalities may need different kinds of preparation for the transition periods, with the result that it becomes necessary to focus on children as individuals rather than as groups.

Olsen and DeBoise (2007:47) argue in their study that a child's social, emotional and behavioural development may exert a significant effect on school readiness. Webster-Stratton and Reid (2004:96) postulate in their study that emotional control, behaviour control, and the formation of healthy friendships, are all necessary prerequisites for school readiness and for academic success.

Roberts, Lim, Doyle and Anderson (2011:117) observe in their study that emotional well-being and social competence are indispensable conditions for a successful transition from kindergarten to primary school. In their study, Arnold, Bartlett, Gowani and Merali (2006:3) argue that there is an inseparable link between school readiness and the success or otherwise of a transition. In order to undertake a smooth transition, children must be *ready* for school, and, equally importantly, schools must be *ready* for the children that they admit. In addition to this, it is important to note that the readiness of parents should also be part of the process. Davin and Van Staden (2005:5) point out that some authorities have labelled the above-mentioned definition as unsatisfactory because it places a strong emphasis on the readiness of the *school* and not the possibilities inherent in individual children. They regard school readiness as a fixed state, a notion that is highly problematic.

The *readiness to learn* instead of *readiness for school* offers an alternative way of approaching this phenomenon. In the context of the two definitions, namely school readiness versus readiness to learn, I have assumed that the term school readiness is still the best operational definition because while school readiness includes a concern with the fitness of an individual school, it also pays close attention to the fitness and preparedness of the child. Although this definition includes the term *school* as its key concept, I do not feel that it excludes the developmental and emotional maturity of the child.

The definition provided by Davin and Van Staden (2005:5) of *readiness to learn* regards this concept as reflecting that stage of development when an individual is able to understand and grasp the specific concepts and skills that are necessary if a child of a particular age is to cope successfully with transitions and then the difficulties inherent in them. This definition also takes account of a child's ability to pay attention and concentrate, a child's intellectual ability, a child's motivation to learn, a child's health, a child's emotional maturity, and the domestic and community environment in which the child lives. According to Davin and Van Staden (2005:5), all these factors are important in assessing readiness to learn. Strong motivation, self-belief, listening skills, friendliness and self-reliance are also regarded by Woolfson (2004:89) as important personal qualities for school readiness.

For the purposes of this study, I concur with the opinions of Davin and Van Staden (2005) and Woolfson (2004) because they support a holistic view of all the most necessary and important factors in school readiness. Readiness to learn therefore is a complex and multilayered concept that is not susceptible to an easy definition. Although I kept all of the above-mentioned concepts in mind during the course of the study, I chose to make use of the term *school readiness* as I pursued the research preparatory to answering the research question.

2.1.6 THE APPROPRIATE TIME FOR A CHILD TO BE ENROLLED FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL

“Their emotional, intellectual, social and physical growth is personal, and their experience of life egocentric. The attempt therefore to classify children by their age alone is full of pitfalls” (Pluckrose, 1994:8).

It is obvious from Pluckrose's statement above (1994:9) that he feels strongly that age should not be the determining factor for every school entry permission. He also notes that most children are about five or six years old when they enter primary school for the first time. Scott-Little *et al.* (2006:163) note that a child's chronological age is still linked to a child's school readiness in most parts of the world. They also point out that some states of the United States have eligibility age/birth cut-off points for kindergarten. They note that the concept of school readiness as constituting a set of *skills*, has received an immense amount of attention from teachers. Berne

(2003:30) also emphasizes that *emotional readiness* is more important for school readiness than mere physical readiness.

For the purposes of my study, I have assumed that emotional readiness, physical readiness, and social and intellectual readiness preparatory to starting school are all equally important and that they all exert a reciprocal effect on one another. In addition to that I further assumed that emotional readiness, physical readiness, social and intellectual readiness are all necessary conditions for an individual who is starting school although they will obviously further develop all these skills and states during the years to come. It is my assumption that these four components are interconnected and equally important. I have also made the assumption throughout this study that some of these skills and conditions will be emphasised and that others will be neglected in accordance with an individual's background and preferences, the influence of the child's parents and other significant adults in the child's life, as well as other intrinsic factors.

In the United Kingdom, children are enrolled for formal school at the age of five. In Norway, the age of school entry was recently reduced from seven to six years of age. German, French and Italian children are enrolled in school for the first time at the age of six. In the United States, grade school begins when the child is six years old, and kindergarten is still optional in some of states (Brooker, 2008:26).

Griffen and Harvey (1995) found that 80% of principals and teachers were of the opinion that younger children were disadvantaged in comparison to older children when they started school at the same time. The preferred age of the commencement of formal education recommended by the majority of principals and teachers was at least five years of age. According to the teachers who participated in this study, children who entered school at an older age had been given additional time to mature emotionally and socially. Both of these factors are of importance in fostering the kind of self-esteem and confidence that children need to cope with the demands of school and to feel good about themselves.

For the purposes of this study, I am of the opinion that children should not be able to be enrolled in a school at an age that is earlier than that recommended by the participating teachers in the study undertaken by Griffen and Harvey (1995), who

emphasise that school readiness should be predicated upon *emotional maturity*. I am therefore in total agreement with the recommendations of the Department of Education with regard to the age at which a child will be admitted to school in South Africa. This means that a child in South Africa will start school (in Grade 1) in the same year in which he/she turns seven. I do, however, acknowledge that it is possible to make exceptions for children to attend school either one year earlier or one year later. It is my opinion that these decisions are also personal, and that it is up to the parents and teachers who know the child to decide what is in the best interest of the child concerned.

2.2 INDIVIDUALS WITHIN A TWINSHIP

“The goal of raising twins is to bring each of them to mature adulthood, [so that they are] capable of making independent decisions that affect their lives... Without learning the necessary skills during the formative years for making their own choices, they become emotionally incapable of functioning independently”

(Rosemary *et al.*, 1978:76).

2.2.1 DEFINITIONS AND BACKGROUND

According to Prindle Fierro (2010:1), the most recent data about twin birth rates for 2008 in the United States of America was 32.6 twin births per 1000 of single-child births. Although this number has more than doubled since 1980, it has remained moderately stable in the years since 2008. One of the reasons for this may be that there has been a huge increase in the number of *in vitro* fertilizations performed in the past few years. Segal (1999), states that twin studies have demonstrated that, when it comes to intelligence and personality characteristics (introversion, sociability and temperament) and cognitive capacity, these characteristics are strongly affected by genetic predispositions. Research into physical characteristics such as height, weight, and propensity to disease, have also shown the overwhelming influence of genetic predisposition (Klein, 2003:4). While I am in agreement with Segal (1999) that intelligence and personality characteristics, cognitive capacity, and physical characteristics, are all strongly influenced by genetic predisposition, I am also of the opinion that an individual's environment, parenting and the resources in his/her environment, also play a crucial role in that child's overall and specific development.

2.2.2 CONTEMPORARY ATTITUDES TOWARDS INDIVIDUALS WITHIN A TWINSHIP

The twin researcher, Marjorie Leonard (in Friedrich & Rowland, 1984:267), calls the most common and frequent reactions and responses to individuals within a twinship a “cultural sugar-coating”. She bases this observation on the way in which people in Western culture tend to react towards individuals within a twinship. The comments that people make when they encounter such individuals within a twinship for the first time are usually sentimental and condescending (although, no doubt, mostly well meaning), and they may include phrases such as, “Oh, how lovely”, “What fun” or “How sweet they are”. Some ‘myths’ about individuals within a twinship include the assumption made by some people that because individuals within a twinship are often regarded as one unit, it amounts to an exception to the rules when it becomes obvious that individuals within a twinship might have opposite as well as complementary characteristics. Individuals may also entertain an expectation that identical individuals within a twinship are physically and mentally similar or even identical, that they are best friends and that all can communicate telepathically (Clegg & Woollett, 1982:267). My personal attitude towards individuals within a twinship is that they are two individuals who together make a twinship. For the purpose of this study, I have only included monozygotic individuals within a twinship, and I will provide an in-depth description below of how they themselves and certain role players in the lives of the individuals within a twinship perceive them. These role players include the individuals within a twinship themselves, their mother, and their Grade R, Grade 1, and Grade 2 teachers.

2.2.3 BONDING BETWEEN INDIVIDUALS WITHIN A TWINSHIP

“Twinship is the closest of all human relationships. Exceeding the bond of mother and child” (Rosemary et al., 1978:3).

Friedrich and Rowland (1984:268) points out that because individuals within a twinship usually spend 24 hours a day in the company of a co-individual within a twinship throughout their early childhood, their relationship is of an exceptionally special nature. Klein (2003:1) also mention that because individuals within a twinship share their early life experiences, this creates a special kind of intimacy between them. She also notes that this primary bonding experience creates

exclusive as well as distinct developmental stages for infants and young individuals within a twinship, stages that robustly affect their later development. The exceptional bonding attachments that they form with one another create unique strengths and distinct limitations for each individual within a twinship. Friedrich and Rowland (1984:271) further note that the closeness of individuals within a twinships' relationships may be strongly influenced by the uniqueness of the individuality of each of the individuals within a twinship. Rosemary *et al.* (1978:3) also observe that individuals within a twinship don't need a lot of encouragement to remain close to one another because they are already so dependent on one another. Klein (2003:1) makes reference to the connectedness, trust, and understanding between individuals within a twinship. It is hardly therefore surprising that they enjoy each other's company, and that they tend to long for close and intense personal relationships because connections of this kind constituted their initial and primary experiences in life. For the purpose of this study, I am in agreement with Rosemary *et al.* (1978:3) when they noted that individuals within a twinship spontaneously form a close connection and bond, especially in their early years. My own point of view, however, is that a strong bond and connection of this kind cannot be regarded as a given, and that it may be quite possible for some individuals within a twinship to go their separate ways independently of one another.

2.2.4 INDIVIDUALS WITHIN A TWINSHIP AS INDIVIDUALS

Some small individuals within a twinship may occasionally wonder if they are a complete person or half of a whole" (Friederich & Rowland, 1984:284).

While individuals within a twinship obviously have the same rights as single children to fulfil their own potential and to become individuals, this may be more difficult for individuals within a twinship than it is for single children. During their early stages of development, the individuals within a twinship have to learn to differentiate themselves from their mother as well as from one another (Friederich & Rowland, 1984:281). For the purpose of this study I agree with the views expressed by Friederich and Rowland (1984:282) when they say that it might not be easy at an early stage of development for an individual within a twinship to be able to make the distinction between "my twinship" to "myself" (Friederich & Rowland, 1984:282). As individuals within a twinship get older, they sometimes share a joint identity which

enables one individual within a twinship to become upset or unhappy on behalf of both of them. This kind of confusion of identities may even persist into adulthood (Friederich & Rowland, 1984:283).

Esther Goshen-Gottestein, in Frederich and Rowland (1984:284), suggests in her work on individuals within a twinship in Israel, that it is more problematic and difficult for individuals within a twinship or for multiple children to identify with their mother (the first step that people take to their own identity) because it is necessary for a mother to divide her attention between the individuals within a twinship. Goshen-Gottestein add that the mothers of multiple children sometimes perceive the individuals within a twinship as though they were one complete personality. According to Frederich and Rowland (1984:284), it takes individuals within a twinship much longer to establish their individuality and to realise that they are in fact separate from one another. For the purposes of this study, I agree with Goshen-Gottesetin that it may be more difficult and problematic for individuals within a twinship to establish their own personal individuality and identity. I would add to this that the way in which their parents actually perceive individuals within a twinship (whether as a unit or as individuals within a unit), is a deciding factor in helping these individuals within a twinship to identify and establish his or her own unique individuality and identity.

Types of individuals within a twinship that have the most difficulty in establishing separate identities are same-sex, look-alike fraternal or identical individuals within a twinship. Rosemary *et al.* (1978:3) also mention that their individuality grows outwards from within, and that it exerts an effect on most areas of these children's lives from infancy to adulthood. They also note that the attitude of their parents as well as factors in their home environment shape the children's personalities to a large extent. For the purposes of this study, I agree with Rosemary *et al.* (1978) when they say that the attitude of the parents and the home environment exert a significant impact on the shaping of each child's personality:

“If the twins are thought of and treated as a unit, they will think of themselves as only halves of a whole and act accordingly” (Rosemary *et al.*, 1978:4).

2.2.5 THE INFLUENCE THAT EACH OF THE INDIVIDUALS WITHIN A TWINSHIP EXERT ON ONE ANOTHER

Friedrich and Rowland (1984:295) note that some observers attach a great importance to the details of the birth process, and that they make use of these details to assign roles and even distinctive characteristics to the individuals within a twinship. Although they do for supposedly humorous reasons, some individuals within a twinship may later appropriate these roles and characteristics as their own. Some of these stories may include habitual sayings such as “You won the fight to get out first”, or “She was patient and let you go first”. In spite of this, the most significant single influence on an individual within a twinship environment is probably the influence exerted by his/her co-individual within a twinship. It is highly unlikely, for obvious reasons, that during their pre-school years, either of the individuals within a twinship will spend more time with anyone else than with his/her co-individual within a twinship. Friedrich and Rowland (1984:288) found that although either of them will sometimes want to be with and do the same thing as his/her co-individual within a twinship, they will more frequently want to do things that show that they are different from their co-individual within a twinship. It is nevertheless my own belief that individuals within a twinship do exercise important and significant influences upon one another. While some of these influences may be positive, others may be negative. They include learning from one another to competing with one another and supporting one another in various situations. For the purposes of this study, I find myself in agreement with Cooper (2004:204) who argues that most positive aspects of being an individual within a twinship are affection, cooperation, encouragement, sympathy, empathy, understanding, stimulation, and mutual support.

A Norwegian study referred to by Friedrich and Rowland (1984:289) confirms that the temperaments of fraternal individuals within a twinship are far less alike than those of single brothers and sisters. They also note that fraternal individuals within a twinship are less alike than any two children who have been picked at random from a control group. This tendency for individuals within a twinship to polarize and to pull apart from the co-individual within a twinship is a strategy that they use to develop and to establish individual identities for themselves.

Friedrich and Rowland (1984:290) observed that individuals within a twinship may polarize in their behaviour, temperament and interests from an early age. Some examples of such polarisation include the movement away from introversion to extraversion, from being well-behaved to misbehaving, from being quiet to being boisterous and noisy, and from being tidy to being untidy. My personal belief is that individual temperaments are mostly unchangeable, whether one exists as an individual within a twinship or not.

The characteristic role that an individual within a twinship adopts in the pair, is most probably a reflection of that individual's natural inclinations, preferences, and abilities. Even so, it is quite possible that one or both of the individuals within a twinship will limit their full potential during their development. The reason why this happens is that one of the individuals believes that the other individual within a twinship is dominant in a particular area of achievement or behaviour (Friedrich & Rowland, 1984:290). I assume that the role that an individual within a twinship adopts may vary during the years as the individuals mature. I also believe that the individuals within a twinship may adopt several roles during their life span.

“Opting out” is a term that is often used in discussions about the behaviours of individuals within a twinship. Friedrich and Rowland (1984:292) define the term “opting out” as what happens when one individual within a twinship feels that he or she cannot compete with the co-individual within a twinship. Because of this belief, and in order to avoid failure, he or she may abandon any attempt at all to participate in that area of behaviour or endeavour. Such a pattern of behaviour may persist for as long as the individuals within a twinship remain together. Opting out is further described by Friedrich and Rowland (1984:294) as a result of unfavourable comparisons, which often exist within the mind of an individual within a twinship when there is no feedback or validation from the outside world. Since individuals within a twinship have a much closer object with whom to compare themselves than other children do, it is more common for individuals within a twinship to be hypersensitive about small differences between them – even though some of these differences may be distorted out of all proportion.

2.2.6 CHALLENGES OF BEING AN INDIVIDUAL WITHIN A TWINSHIP

Klein (2003:2) mentions that apart from all the delightful experiences that individuals within a twinship share, there are also challenges and difficulties. Among such challenges are the inability to set limits for other people and the complexities attendant upon being alone. Individuals within a twinship sometimes experience fear when they are not together with their co-individual within a twinship. They may also strive to make great efforts to achieve intimacy with others if the co-individual within a twinship is not present. This kind of behaviour may impede the psychological development of each of the individuals within a twinship. Another challenge that may arise for individuals within a twinship is the lack of communication. This is caused by the fact that because they are together for significant periods of time, they may demonstrate little or no need to communicate often with others, including their parents. They may also experience shame or guilt and even some confusion when they find themselves at the centre of attention because they are simply not accustomed to being alone in the spotlight. Klein (2003:9), Malmstrom and Poland (1999), and Pearlman and Ganon (2000) have observed that the public image that the individuals within a twinship share, as well as their early bond, are distinct challenges that single children do not have to cope with. Klein (2003:12) argues that the perceived lack of motivational, intellectual and emotional capacity to verbalize their shared relationship with new people, that is observed in some individuals within a twinship, occurs because individuals within a twinship are in one another's presence most of the time. They may therefore form a habit of not wanting to explain themselves to others.

Cooper (2004:204) also makes reference to dominance or dependence, competition, collusion, and exclusivity as possible challenges for individuals within a twinship. It is my personal belief that the challenges of being part of a twinship are in fact quite real. Even so, appropriate support at the right time, healthy relationships with people other than the co-individual within a twinship, a matter-of-fact and uncomplicated attitude towards being part of a twinship, and a commitment on the part of each individual within a twinship to establishing his or her own identity, may all be helpful in assisting these individuals to meet such challenges without undue stress or complications. For the purposes of this study, I am in agreement with Klein (2003) and Cooper (2004) when they assert that being part of a twinship is

challenging in various ways and to different degrees for all individuals within a township. They also make the assumption that one cannot make generalisations about these challenges and the effect they have because every township is unique and because the individuals within any particular township experience those challenges in unique ways.

2.2.7 THE WAY IN WHICH INDIVIDUALS WITHIN A TOWNSHIP SEPARATE FROM ONE ANOTHER IN THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Friedrich and Rowland (1984:310) are of the opinion that one of the main advantages of being individuals within a township is that they begin school in the same class, and that they therefore may suffer from fewer anxieties than single children, especially if they enrol in a school where they do not know anyone. On the issue of whether individuals within a township should be separated or not, Taal (2000:107) argues that because individuals within a township nearly always have a strong bond with one another, separating them might produce undesirable consequences. It is the opinion of Taal (2000:108) that when individuals within a township are starting school, that might not be the best time to separate them because of all the changes and adjustments that they already have to cope with. It stands to reason that if one has one's co-individual within a township in the same class, that might be a source of strength and security that makes the necessary adjustments to a new school easier. Klein (2003:20) is of the opinion that when individuals within a township have received good parenting, they will be able to separate from each other more naturally at the right time, and that they will also be able to tolerate and assimilate such a separation more easily when they are separated for the first time as older children or even as adults. It is my belief that while being in the same learning environment may be beneficial for some individuals within a township, it may not necessarily be beneficial for others. I also make the assumption (already mentioned above) that one should treat every township as a unique phenomenon and examine it in all its ramifications before one makes any decision about whether or not to separate the individuals within a township in their learning environment.

Apart from the advantages noted above, there may also be disadvantages to being a member of a township. One of these disadvantages is that both or either of the individuals within a township may restrict or otherwise inhibit one another's

behaviour, either consciously or unconsciously. Such behaviour patterns may inhibit one of the individuals within a twinship (or even both) from participating fully in some important area of school life if they are kept together (Friedrich & Rowland, 1984:311). Some close fraternal individuals within a twinship may not be able to manage or cope adequately with the difficulties involved in separation from their individual within a twinship at this early age of their lives (Rosemary *et al.*, 1978:80). In a study undertaken by DiLalla and Mullineaux (2008:124), the researchers found that when individuals within a twinship were separated from their co-individual within a twinship at school, there were more complaints from parents and teachers about difficulties with peers.

When individuals within a twinship rely too much on the dynamics of their twinship to make friends or to attract attention, this may exert an inhibitory effect on the development of their individual personalities and the coping strategies they require to deal with the outside world (Friedrich & Rowland, 1984:279). In the same way as their constant togetherness may inhibit individual development, it may also make it more difficult to separate them at a later stage (Friedrich & Rowland, 1984:280). In a study by Segal (2006:473) that focused on whether individuals within a twinship should be in separate classrooms or not, the researcher noted that while some individuals within a twinship may suffer unnecessarily during a transition without their parents and without their co-individual within a twinship, single children were only suffering from being separated only from their parent(s). Other teachers are of the opinion that individuals within a twinship will struggle to develop as individuals if they are not separated from one another. When one individual within a twinship is especially dependent on the other individual within a twinship when it comes to making decisions or when one of the individuals within a twinship does all the talking, then it may be appropriate to separate them. Similarly, when one individual within a twinship is dominant and he or she outshines the other individual within a twinship, it may also be appropriate to separate them (Taal, 2000:109).

In his study, Segal (1999) found that monozygotic individuals within a twinship stayed together more frequently than dizygotic individuals within a twinship. Although monozygotic individuals within a twinship might not be together on a regular basis, it usually gave them enough satisfaction merely to be in the company of their co-individual within a twinship. Webbink, Hay and Visscher (2007:573)

argued in their study regarding the cognitive abilities of individuals within a twinship who were in the same class, that the advantages of sharing are that it puts them in a position to feel more confident in the company of their co-individual in a twinship. The advantages of being in separate classes might be that individuals within a twinship have opportunities to develop independently of one another and thus become less competitive towards one another. Van Leeuwen, Van den Berg, Van Beijsterveldt and Boomsma (2005:390) concluded from the evidence of their study on the effects of individuals within a twinship being separated in primary school that there is no discernible advantages and disadvantages that accrue to a twinship whether they are together in the same class or whether they are separated. But they do nevertheless recommend that the *parents* of the individuals within a twinship should decide what is best for the individuals within a twinship and for themselves.

For the purposes of this study, I agree with Leeuwen *et al.* (2005) about the desirability of separating individuals within a twinship in the learning environment. My point of view (already mentioned above) is that every individual within a twinship pair is unique and different, and that different factors must be taken into consideration before deciding on whether or not individuals within a twinship should be placed in the same classroom or in different classrooms in their schools.

2.3 STRESS

“There is abundant evidence to support the notion that if [it] not controlled, stress in modern society is a most serious threat to the well-being of man. Of course, the most important factor in such control is man himself” (Humphrey, 2004:9).

2.3.1 DEFINITIONS

Oxington (2005:i) defines stress as a person’s response to an unwanted situation. Humphrey (2004:2) offers the following general definition of the stress when he notes that it is “a constraining force or influence”. A definition offered by Selye (1975, in Humphrey, 2004:2), which I also included in my master’s study, is that “stress is a non-specific response of the body to any demand made upon it”. In other words, stress represents the changes that occur in the human body in response to a stressor or stimulus that mobilises the body's resources. Humphrey (2004:2) notes

that the reaction to a stressor may include a variety of physical as well as chemical changes, and that stress sometimes evokes a level of anxiety that exceeds the ability of the human being suffering from stress to contain. Since stress manifests both internally and externally, this makes adaptation difficult in those cases where a huge amount of increased effort is required by the human being concerned to maintain a satisfactory state of equilibrium between him or her and the external environment. An essential argument to remember is that stress is not an agent that produces these states mentioned above. Stress is rather the state that a person is in because of the agents or stressors experienced (Humphrey, 2004:3). Zeitlin and Williamson (1994:12) clarifies this by noting that stress is a *reaction* and that the stressors are the *events* or conditions that evoke the reaction.

I do not find myself in agreement with Oxingtons' (2005:i) definition of stress for the purposes of this study because my position is that stress occurs not only as a result of the intrusion of unwanted situations, but that, in some instances, stress may occur in desirable situations as well when a person is flooded by positive or pleasurable stressors.

I expanded my definitions of stress since the time of my master's research. I now regard stress in a much more in-depth and holistic manner, and I concur with the views of Lazarus (1999:37) when he asserts that stress, emotion and coping are all intricately linked phenomena. It is therefore also my own assumption that stress, emotion and coping are all integrally linked with one another during any stressful experience.

2.3.2 THE CLASSIFICATION OF DIFFERENT KINDS OF STRESS

Humphrey (2004:12) quotes Selye's comment that "stress is the spice of life". When one bears this in mind, it becomes obvious that stress can also be a desirable and positive experience (desirable stress), as opposed to a negative and unwarranted experience (undesirable stress or devastating stress). Humphrey (2004:12) also notes that Selye came to the conclusion that stress is a normal state and that it is impossible for human beings to avoid different kinds of stress because it is something intrinsic to human life.

Lazarus (1999:32) notes that Selye (1974) defines two kinds of stress, namely *eustress* and *distress*. Eustress is the constructive kind of stress that is associated with the emotions of empathy and positive striving. Such stress is compatible with good health. Distress by contrast is destructive, and because it frequently manifests as anger and aggression, it may damage human health. The well-known psychologists Poshner and Leitner, mentioned in Humphrey (2004:12), that the predictability and controllability of variables play important roles in the kind of stress we will experience. I agree with Poshner and Leitner about the fact that predictability and controllability are important variables in stressful situations. I also make the assumption that it is important to include considerations about stress in this study because the transition of individuals within a township from Grade R through to Grade 2, will inevitably evoke certain kinds of stress.

According to Humphrey (2004:14), there are two kinds of stress: emergency stress (which involves some kind of bodily injury) and continued stress (which involves more complex bodily reactions). While psychological stress may be evoked when a person predicts or imagines some emergency or threatening situation, any explanation of social stress (which includes evoked by social interactions) serves to confirm that individuals make an impact upon society and that society also influences individuals (Humphrey, 2004:15).

For the purposes of this study, I find myself in agreement with the definition of Selye's (1974) when he says that both eustress and distress may be dealt with in either a constructive or destructive manner. It is my belief that one's personal background and life experiences and personal choices all influence the way that individuals deal with various kinds of stress, even when some of the reactions seem merely to be impulsive. But my assumption throughout the study is that all individuals make personal decisions and choices about how they will deal with stress, and that continuous practice and effort are required of individuals if they hope to be able to deal with stress constructively. In this study I explored how the participants dealt either constructively or destructively with their stress during the transitions that they made from Grade R through to Grade 2, and the reasons for their behaviour in those situations.

2.3.3 STRESS, EMOTION AND COPING

Lazarus (1999:37) is of the opinion that stress, emotion and coping need to be observed and described as they occur in their relationships with one another. Since stress, emotion and coping always occur in conjunction with one another, it is imperative to examine them as they operate in concert. Within this triad, emotion acts as the superordinate component because it subsumes both stress and coping. Saarni (1999:vii) argues that emotion represents the animating processes of life and that emotion is present in every individual's experience of daily existence. I concur with the definition of Saarni (1999:vii) in this regard, and agree that emotion may be characterised as a manifestation of the energy and vibrancy of life. *Life skills*, which are sometimes conceptualised as coping, play an important role in the purpose of this study, and I will elaborate on them later in this chapter.

2.3.4 THE CAUSES OF SCHOOL-RELATED STRESS AMONG CHILDREN

Humphrey (2004:17) describes certain stressful experiences that are common to children. Between the ages of five and six, stressful experiences for children include being enrolled in school for the first time and not knowing what do in a classroom. For children between the ages of seven and eight, failure, being unpopular with other children, and the necessity to complete homework satisfactorily, are all common stressors. For the purposes of this study, I will elaborate on specific school-related stress experiences that affected the participants.

2.3.5 SCHOOL STRESS

2.3.5.1 The stressfulness of having to adjust to school

The entry by children into first grade is regarded by Humphrey (2004:71) as one of the most severe and stressful life events that they have ever experienced. Markham (1990:62) points out the large amount of psychological research that affirms that some of the most stressful periods in a child's life are in fact associated with school. Schultz and Heuchert (1983:17) note that the transition to school is stressful to some degree for all children and that the teacher is the central figure in the mediation of this stressful situation. Markham (1990:62), observes that stress may peak in a child's life when he or she is enrolled in school for the first time, when he

or she changes schools, during examinations, and at the onset and development of puberty. Other stressful features of school life may include excessive and unrealistic expectations of performance, bullying, learning difficulties, or *superior* intellectual abilities on the part of the child. For the purposes of this study, I have also assumed that the attitudes of the parent(s) to the transition to school might exert a significant influence (either positive or negative) on how well an individual child manages the transition.

2.3.5.2 Indicators of stress

Saunders and Remsberg (1987:25) feel that when children experience too little stress in their lives, they will become indifferent, irritated, discontented, and vulnerable to passing infections and illnesses. Too much stress, by contrast, may make children petulant, emotionally over-stimulated, fatigued, confused, and also at greater risk of becoming ill. When children experience more or less the most optimal amount of stress, they should feel contented, motivated, enthusiastic, and energetic.

2.3.5.3 Stressful school experiences

Goleman (1996) has argued that emotional distress can hamper and obstruct the intellectual abilities of children with the result that their capacity to learn effectively becomes inhibited. Goleman (1996) states that when a child experiences fear and stress, the flow of information that they need for responses and the solution of problems that arise in class may be obstructed and that this may be a cause of future failures.

Bahman and Maffini (2008:36) lists some school-related stressors as being low grades, challenging classroom settings, athletic requirements, peer relationships, clashes with teachers, and examinations. They also mention that when a child experiences high levels of stress, it becomes difficult for optimal learning to take place. Bahman and Maffini (2008:3) also made mention of Shonkoff's (2007) observation that when a child is facing a prospectively threatening situation such as the first day of school, it immediately becomes necessary for a child to find a way to cope.

For the purposes of this study, I concur with the views of Shonkoff (2007) that it is essential for a child to find coping strategies for stressful situations. I therefore explored as many different appropriate coping strategies which I viewed as important for the individuals within a township during their transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2.

In my own master' research (Prozesky, 2005), I identified a number of school-related stressors that were identified as stressful experiences by Grade 1 learners. The greatest positive stressor that was identified by the learners was their teacher. These learners expected the teacher to exhibit a warm and positive attitude towards them, and when this was forthcoming, it was greatly appreciated by the learners. They also preferred teachers to maintain a calm and disciplined atmosphere in their classroom (Prozesky, 2005:102). The Grade 1 learners in this particular school also demonstrated a great need to learn whatever was appropriate for them. Their main goal for Grade 1 was to pass and to continue through to Grade 2 in the following year. Friendship was also regarded by these learners as a positive stressor. Although having a best friend was not specifically mentioned by any of the learners, most of them wanted to enjoy the company of a friend during break times. None of them wished to be alone during break times. While the need to make friends at the beginning of the year was stressful for some of the participants in the study, for others it was easily achievable (Prozesky, 2005:103).

Negative stressors identified by the participants in the study included a chaotic atmosphere and excessive noise levels in the classroom. These learners were adverse to these two conditions because it made it difficult for them to concentrate and so to complete the work that had been set for them, and, secondly, because it upset the teacher. Bullies were also regarded as negative stressors, especially in the playground and especially when they came from among the Grade 1 learners themselves. Being laughed at or being teased were also regarded as bullying by the learners (Prozesky, 2005:103). The last negative stressor mentioned in this study was a diffuse fear of the older children. According to the Grade 1 participants, some of the older children in this school would steal the food and money of the Grade 1 learners and even pinch and punch them (Prozesky, 2005:104).

2.4 LIFE SKILLS AND RELATED TERMINOLOGY

Within the current literature that I reviewed, I identified certain constant phrases and themes as relevant to *life skills*. These themes included terms such as *emotional intelligence*, *emotional education*, *socio-emotional competence*, *socio-emotional effectiveness*, *emotional literacy* and *social competence* (Bar-On, 1997; Cefai & Cooper, 2009; Haggerty Sherrod, Garmezy & Rutter, 1996; Huges, Thompson & Terrell, 2009; Ciarrochi, Forgas & Mayer 2006). All of the above-mentioned authors made reference to the necessity for mastering certain coping skills, understanding one's emotions, and the ability to express and regulate one's feelings so that one would be able to enjoy a healthy and constructive life.

According to Bar-On (1997:3), *emotional intelligence* may be defined as “an array of personal, emotional, and social competencies and skills that influence one's ability to succeed in coping with environmental demands and pressures”. Cefai and Cooper (2009:17) used the blanket term *emotional education* to define the process by which children develop *emotional competence* through the development of social learning processes. They use the term *emotional intelligence* because it implies a broader and more inclusive definition than terms such as *emotional intelligence*, *emotional literacy*, *social learning*, *emotional learning*, and *social competence*. The term *emotional education* also enables us to focus on the multi-factorial nature of learning because it includes the biological, emotional, cognitive, and social aspects of learning.

Mosley (2009, in Cefai & Cooper, 2009:119), refers to *socio-emotional competence*, a complex term that refers to *emotional literacy* and various social skills. But they also prefer the term *socio-emotional effectiveness*, which was described by Ciarrochi *et al.* (2006:265) in the following quotation:

“A combination of emotional intellect, social effectiveness, and, perhaps, emotional intelligence itself might be represented by the term socio-emotional effectiveness – an individual's capacity to navigate the social world in an effective manner, accomplishing his or her goals as needed.”

Huges *et al.* (2009:323) argues that when a child is *emotionally literate*, he or she will be able to recognize, understand, label, express, and regulate his or her

feelings. They refer to these five categories as the RULER – the five components of *emotional literacy*.

Haggerty *et al.*, (1996:275) made reference to the term *social competence*, which may be regarded as those *life skills* that assist human beings to adapt to a variety of different ecologies and settings. When an individual possesses *social competence*, he or she will be able to integrate affect, cognition and certain behaviours into the holism of his or her life and thus accomplish specific social tasks and achieve desirable development outcomes.

In my understanding, *emotional intelligence*, *emotional education*, *socio-emotional competence*, *socio-emotional effectiveness*, *emotional literacy* and *social competence* are all subdivisions of the concept *life skills*. I further assume that each of the above-mentioned terms are subsumed in the more comprehensive term *life skills*. *Life skills* may thus, for example, enhance the participants' *emotional intelligence* and their *socio-emotional competence*. It is also evident that low levels of *emotional intelligence* and *socio-emotional competence* on the part of the participants may directly affect how quickly and effectively (or otherwise) participants might learn, grasp and apply the *life skills* that are described in this study.

But so that I would be in a position to answer my research questions, I did not focus primarily on *emotional intelligence*, *emotional education*, *socio-emotional competence*, *socio-emotional effectiveness*, *emotional literacy* and *social competence*. Although I kept all of these concepts in mind, I focused instead on the concept of *life skills*.

My goal was therefore not to measure the participants' *emotional intelligence* or attempt to understand whether or not they were *socio-emotionally competent* or *effective*. Instead I focused more narrowly on the transitions that the individuals within a township made from Grade R through to Grade 2. My understanding was that if the participants were taught *life skills* that were appropriate in their situation, this may also increase the participants' levels of *emotional intelligence*, *emotional education*, *socio-emotional competence*, *socio-emotional effectiveness*, *emotional literacy* and *social competence*. I therefore abstained from making an in-depth

investigation of these concepts and was instead satisfied with providing explanations of my opinions about *life skills* and the current literature in the field.

2.4.1 LIFE SKILLS

“All learning has an emotional base” (Plato, in Baham & Maffini, 2008:1).

Goudas, Dermitzaki, Leondari and Danish (2006) adopted the definition of Danish and Nellen (1997) that defines life skills as physical, behavioural or cognitive life skills. A definition of Life Orientation as a learning area in the Revised National Curriculum Statement for Grades R-9 (2006:26), includes a learning area which encompasses the development of skills, knowledge, values as well as attitudes. It also empowers learners to make informed decisions about health promotion, social development, personal development, physical development and their overall orientation to the world of work. Ebersöhn and Eloff (2006:50) define *life skills* as skills that help human beings to adapt to changes, to cope with difficulties and to confront conflicts or crises in an effective manner. In the context of the current study, I preferred to adopt the assumption of Ebersöhn and Eloff (2006:50) that while everyone is capable of becoming proficient in *life skills*, such *life skills* are largely acquired and learned. I therefore made the assumption that the participants in this study were capable of acquiring the necessary life skills through a learning process.

For the purposes of this study, I agreed with Ebersöhn and Eloff (2006:57) that the term *life skills* is more or less self-explanatory, and that such skills are essential for any individual who wishes to cope independently and competently with the daily activities and transitions in the environments in which they find themselves. Rooth (1995:2) described *life skills* as being necessary skills for optimal learning and for the conduct of a successful life. *Life skills* also serve as coping skills, which enhance the quality of human life.

In their definition of life skills, Ebersöhn and Eloff (2006:59) have included learning skills, basic skills, listening and verbal skills, adaptability, self-regulation (interpersonal), self-regulation (intrapersonal), group effectiveness, influential skills, and survival skills. For the purposes of this research, I adopted four of the above-

mentioned skills as relevant to my study. These particular life skills are adaptability, self-regulation (intrapersonal and interpersonal), and group effectiveness skills. All these skills are summarized in the following table:

Table 2.1: Fields of life skills (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2006:59)

Adaptation skills	Interpersonal self-regulation skills	Intrapersonal self-regulating skills	Group effectiveness skills
Behaviour: The ability to adapt appropriately to changing circumstances Decision making Interpersonal relationships	Self-understanding Self-worth Self-confidence A positive self-concept A positive attitude Personal strong and weak points Integrity Morals and values Goal-setting and motivation Emotional control	Responsibility Patience Independence An ability to cope with conflict anger, frustration and feelings	Social relationships Group relationships Cooperation skills Participation skills Group work Concerns for others Family and friendship skills

A thorough description of *life skills* by Ebersöhn and Eloff (2006:61) includes what they call assets,⁴ those personal qualities, talents and characteristics that an individual uses on a daily basis, and those abilities that are necessary for successful learning. It also encompasses coping skills, meaningful interactions with others, specific behaviour that result in achievements, and the specific ways in which people deal successfully with their problems and life experiences. Finally, *life skills* include those skills that enable people to perform whatever it is that they wish to do. Life skills also vary in accordance with the developmental stages of the person who is practising them and in dependence on the changes that occur in a human being's life situations.

Ebersöhn (1999:42) makes the assumption in her study that the mastery of certain *life skills* are necessary for all human beings, at every age and at all stages of human development. I concurred with this statement for the purposes of this study and therefore also assumed that it was necessary for the participants to learn and

⁴ The capacity, instinct, strength or natural gifts every human being has (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2006:61).

master specific life skills at the age and stage at which they found themselves for the duration of this study.

Ebersöhn (1999:17) argues in her study that the ability to recognise and describe emotions accurately is the first step towards the acquisition of *life skills*. Since an individual's thoughts make a direct impact on how that person feels in a specific situation and how that person will react in a particular situation, Ebersöhn (1999:18) argued that *life skills* are concerned with that domain of behaviour in which individuals react effectively or ineffectively. I agreed with Ebersöhn (1999) that it is by means of life skills that a person may be encouraged to behave more constructively and pay proper attention to those of his or her thoughts, emotions and behaviour that are important for effective living.

For the purpose of this study, I adopted Ebersöhn and Eloff's (2006:54) *phases of skill acquisition*, and utilised it with the participants during my facilitation of their *life skills*. Although I shall now offer a brief explanation of these phases, I will deal with them in more depth, and will at the same time discuss the methodology of this study in Chapter 3. According to Ebersöhn and Eloff (2006), every person who acquires a particular life skill will have to pass through the distinct phases of awareness, motivation and analysis, and follow this up with practice, revision and the application of the skill concerned in actual practice.

2.4.2 LIFE SKILLS DURING THE SCHOOL YEARS

“Children need momentous practice in order for them to develop skills”

(Bahman & Maffini, 2008:31).

Samanci (2010:147) argues in his study that one of the most important aims of primary education is to help children to adapt healthily and skilfully to social life. Skills that are necessary for adapting to social life include understanding other people, acting according to the demands of particular social environments, making friends, displaying acceptable behaviours were necessary, expressing oneself, dealing with problems, and establishing a good relationship with one's environment. Apart from these skills, Samanci (2010:147) asserts that there are four factors that play an important role during the process of developing primary school children's

social skills. These factors are the school itself, the children's family, their environment, and their personal characteristics. I am in agreement with the conclusion reached by Samanci (2010:147) with regard to the importance of these four factors during the acquisition and development of social skills. I used the four factors described by Samanci (2010:147) throughout the study, and explored them in the context of the participants' lives. More specifically, I investigated the individuals within a township in their family setting, their environment, and their school, and I set out to understand as best I could how their personal characteristics affected the process of acquiring the life skills they needed for the transitions they made from Grade R through to Grade 2.

Bilmes (2004:4) maintains that there are six important life skills that children need to develop in order to negotiate their world successfully. They are attachment, affiliation, self-regulation, initiative, problem solving, and respect. Bilmes (2004:4) also asserts that these skills develop out of whatever positive beliefs children have about the environment that surrounds them. Through attachment children will come to know that there are adults who love them and keep them safe. For a child to be successful in school and in life, he or she must believe that there are adults on whom they can depend on and adults who will nurture them and keep them safe. If a child is to be sufficiently relaxed so that he or she can form healthy friendships and be able to keep a friend, he or she needs the skill of affiliation. Children also need to identify themselves as members of a group, and to realize that the world does not only revolve around them (Bilmes, 2004:6). Children also need the self-management skills that are acquired through self-regulation so that they will be able to manage their emotions and control their behaviour – another of the skills crucial in children's development. Through managing emotions, children realize that actions have consequences, that certain forms of behaviour are culturally acceptable, and that it is they themselves and not their feelings that control their behaviour. There are some children who struggle with their transitions because of their unawareness of the fluctuations of their feelings and the fact that it is not necessary for their emotions to control their behaviour (Bilmes, 2004:7).

For a child to develop, grow and change in accordance with developing circumstances, he or she should be able to learn new things (Bilmes, 2004:8). Bilmes (2004:9) also notes that children need to learn problem solving skills in the same way that they learn how to dress themselves. The final life skill that Bilmes (2004) mentions as being important is respect. Children need to learn and realize that they themselves possess unique gifts and challenges – as do their peers. McClelland and Morrison (2003:206) mention in their research that social skills include independence, responsibility, self-regulation, and cooperation, and that these are all beneficial for pre-school children because they affect academic achievement and school success.

Brackett, Reyes, Rivers, Elbertson and Salovey (2012:219) point out that children need certain skills in order to become better adjusted to their school environments. These skills improve academic performance and social behaviours, and may therefore prevent behaviour problems and reduce stress and anxiety. Such skills allow children to recognise and manage their own emotions, to feel empathy towards others, to shape and maintain satisfying relationships, to make responsible decisions, and to cope constructively with challenges.

Ebersöhn and Eloff (2006:3) characterise life skills as a strategy for promoting resilience in children and in youth. They accordingly define resilience in the following way:

“Adaptation needed to cope skilfully with demanding circumstances. Coping in the face of difficulties so that one remains functional and enjoys life”

Fisher (2003:55) states that the natural resilience of children needs to be strengthened. Fisher (2003:56) also maintains that during the education of children, the foundations of trust, security, self-esteem and confidence need to be developed so that they can deal effectively with the stressors that they encounter in their daily lives. To emphasize the importance of all forms of self-confidence, Saunders and Remsberg (1987:12) state that children who are best able to deal with stress are those with adequate amounts of self-confidence. While I agree with their assertion that self-confidence is necessary, I am also of the opinion that it is not the only necessary skill that people need for dealing with stress. I assumed that if human beings are to be made capable of dealing with stress effectively, they would need a

number of life skills. While not everyone with self-confidence is able to deal with stress efficiently, it may nevertheless play an important role in the process.

Hanley *et al.* (2007:277) assert that the participating teachers in their research identified life skills such as communication, delayed tolerance, and friendship skills as important for early school success. After they taught these three skills to the children in their groups, they noted a 74% reduction in problem behaviour and a four-fold increase in preschool life skills. I accordingly also taught these skills during my sessions with the participants (see a later chapter for further details). Schiller (2009:20) refers to the research of Glossop and Mitchell (2005) into a child's readiness to learn in terms of social and emotional intelligence. They came to the conclusion that elements such as confidence, curiosity, intentionality, self-control, relatedness, capacity to communicate and cooperativeness were crucial elements for school success. De Klerk and Le Roux (2003:12) refer to self-knowledge, self-acceptance, self-awareness, communication, emotional control, values, beliefs, thinking patterns, social skills, problem solving skills and resilience as skills that are important if one wishes to increase the levels of emotional intelligence in children.

In a study done by Zins, Elias and Greenberg (2003:58), they refer to the five skills that were identified by means of research into the brain functions, learning, development and motivation of children by Elias, Zins, Weissberg, Frey, Greenberg, Haynes, Kessler, Schwab-Stone and Shriver (1997). These skills provide children with directions for their behaviour in every facet of their lives. These skills include self-awareness, social awareness, responsible decision making, self-management skills and relationship building skills (Zins *et al.*, 2003:58).

For the purpose of this study, I agreed with the findings of Hanley *et al.* (2007:277) that life skills such as communication, delayed tolerance, and friendship skills are all necessary for early school success. I further assumed that learned life skills played an important role in easing the extended transitions of individuals within a township from Grade R through to Grade 2.

2.4.3 COPING

“We shape our tools and afterwards our tools shape us” (Marshall McLuhan).

Lazarus (1991:112, in Frydenberg, 1999:17), defines coping as “the cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external or internal demands (and conflicts between them) that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of a person”. Frydenberg (1999:17) describes coping in terms of the thoughts, feelings and actions that someone uses in order to manage stress. Zeitlin and Williamson (1994:12) defines coping as a process of adaptation in order to meet the individuals personal needs and to act in response to the demands of the environment. During this process, an individual uses personal resources for managing frustrations, threats, routines and challenges to maintain a feeling of well-being. Zeitlin and Williamson (1994:12) also note that coping involves additional learned actions. Folkman (2011:189) refers to the broaden-and-build theory⁵ of Fredrickson (2001:218) regarding the adaptive utility of positive emotions such as interest and joy. This theory states that positive emotions may indicate safety to an individual and that it may signal to people that it is safe for them to explore their environment. Fredrickson (2001:218) also identifies what he regards as another use of positive emotions, namely that they are helpful for developing an inventory of coping strategies which can be kept in reserve until it is necessary to use them to cope with stress. For the purposes of this study, I agreed with the views of Fredrickson (2001) about the value of positive emotions in the coping process. I shall therefore discuss and explain which positive emotions the main participants used during the transition from Grade R through to Grade 2.

Sorensen (1993:15) notes that the way in which people cope with situations or events is mostly important when it comes to the consequences of stress. For the purpose of this study, I agreed with Sorensen (1993) about coping strategies and when it comes to the consideration of the consequences of stress. I will therefore explain how the individuals within a township exercised their coping strategies during their transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2.

⁵ The broaden-and-build theory details the adaptive functions of positive emotions (Fredrickson, 2001).

Lazarus and Folkman (1998:150) mention two types of coping: emotion-focused coping and problem-focused coping. While problem-focused coping is designed to help people to manage the problem that caused the stress, emotion-focused coping is designed to help people to regulate their emotional responses to the problem. While emotion-focused coping is what happens present when nothing can be done in a challenging situation, while problem-focused coping is what happens when conditions in a situation can be changed. Examples of emotion-focused coping are avoidance, minimization, distancing oneself from a situation, the making of positive comparisons, or looking for whatever positive values might be present in negative events. Problem-focused coping consists of strategies that are similar to those used in problem solving. When people define a problem, they generate alternative solutions on their other possible options in terms of potential costs and benefits. The difference between problem solving and problem-focused coping is that during problem solving, the individual focuses on the environment. But in problem-focused coping, the individual focuses on strategies that are directed inwards (Lazarus & Folkman, 1998:152). Zeitlin and Williamson (1994:453) refer to problem-focused coping as dealing with the problem itself so as to achieve the goal of altering the stressor through some predetermined solution to the problem. Emotion-focused coping regulates the negative emotional experiences of the specific stressor involved. Zeitlin and Williamson (1994:25) argue that coping may provide a stabilizing factor that may actually help individuals to sustain their psychosocial adaptation during stressful periods.

For the purposes of this study, the transitions from Grade R to Grade 1, and then later the transition to Grade 2, were the challenges that I felt could be dealt with by means of problem-focused coping. But since the participants had no choice about whether they wished to proceed to Grade 1 or not, there was no possible alternative solution to what amounted to a challenging environmental condition. They *possibly* learned their emotion-focused coping by means of the life skills I taught them during the transition process so that they would be in a position to regulate whatever negative experiences they encountered.

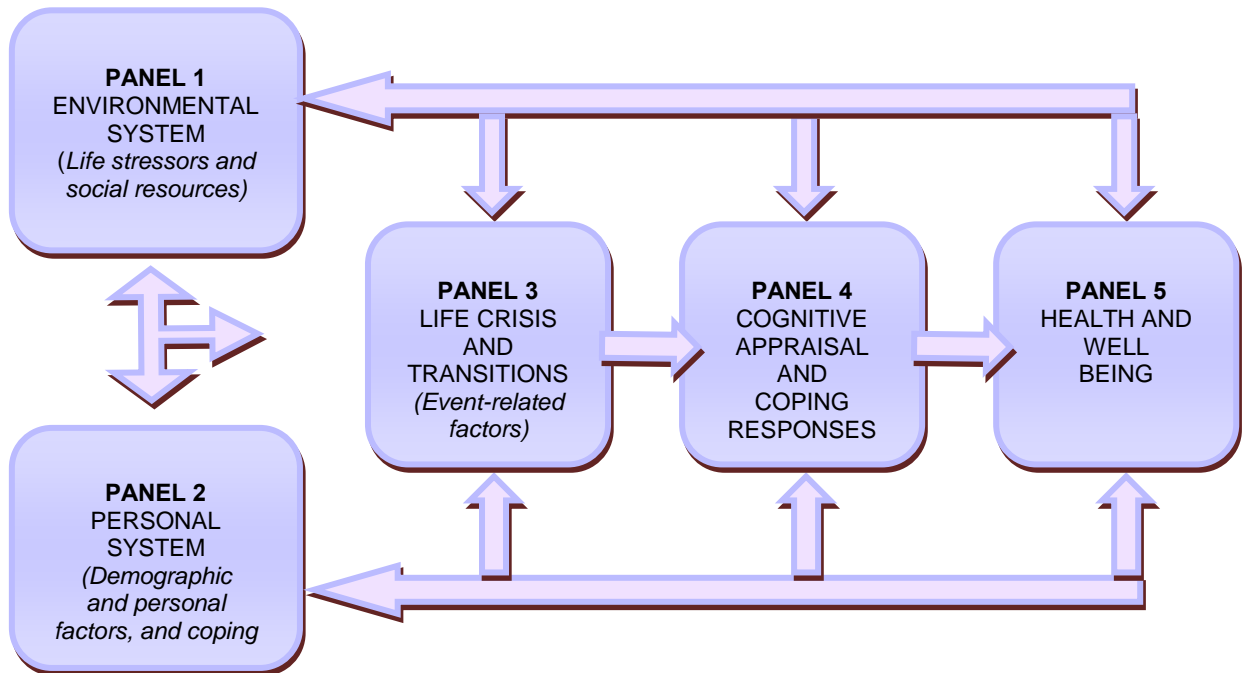
Folkman (2011:421) recommends that it may be helpful to expand our focus to include techniques from stress-and-coping through the inclusion of positive affect interventions. Because the inclusion of such approaches were beneficial to the

coping process, they made the participating individuals in the research being better equipped to adjust to any of the detrimental effects of stress that might have arisen. For the purposes of this study, I agreed with Folkman (2011:421) that we should also focus on stress-and-coping techniques through positive affect intervention. In this study, the various learned life skills served as positive affect interventions for the individuals within a township to use as life skills and positive coping method to reduce the effect of stressors during the transitions.

2.5 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

I decided to use Moos and Schaefer's (1993) coping process framework (set out in Zeidner & Endler, 1996:27) as a general conceptual framework for this study because it emphasises two important considerations that I considered to be appropriate for this study: Firstly, it emphasises that enduring both personal as well as more transient situational factors shapes the coping efforts of individuals (Zeidner & Endler 1996:26). The participants' coping methods, support and acquired life skills, together with their transitions to primary school and their ambient stressors at that time, affected and shaped their coping process that I investigated during the course of the study. Secondly, this particular framework emphasises the internal mediating role of cognitive appraisal and coping responses in the stress process. It also sets out the pathways in the framework that indicate that it is possible for reciprocal feedback to occur at every stage. In the context of this study, the participants were thus able to look back and reflect on the coping process, on what they had learned, on which of the resources were helpful, as well as what they intended to do in future (Zeidner & Endler 1996:27).

Figure 2.1: Conceptual framework for this study (Zeidner & Endler, 1996:27)



The environmental system (set out in panel 1) includes the ongoing life stressors in the environment (in this study, these consist of the positive and negative stressors that are evoked by the various transitions to primary school, as well as the social resources such as family support, teacher support and school support). The personal system (panel 2) is composed of the participants' socio-demographic characteristics as well as their personal coping resources such as self-confidence or positive anger management skills as well as emotion-focused coping and problem-focused coping. Both these environmental and personal factors influenced the transitions or life crises that the participants needed to face. The stressors included those that they encountered during their transition to primary school and in Grade 1, their first school year, as well as in Grade 2, their second school year (panel 3). It was by means of cognitive appraisal as well as by the participants' coping responses to the situation (panel 4) that their health and well-being was shaped (panel 5). The life skills the individuals within a township acquired in their pre-school for the purposes of this study, might very well be useful to them as coping responses that make a positive or negative impact on stressors they experience in Grade 1 and Grade 2. The five panels depict the main concepts that I utilised for the conduct of this study.

2.6 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I discussed, described and integrated the central constructs concerned with the transitions of the individuals within a township from Grade R through to Grade 2. These constructs consisted of transition concepts in general, a description of the challenges that these children might experience during their transitions, and their school readiness. I also elaborated on the individuals within a township, their attitudes as and when I found them, and on the nature of the possible bonding between them. I also discussed, described and explored the challenges which they could encounter as individuals, the challenges that resulted from being part of a township, the possibilities inherent in dominance and dependency within a township, the nature of individuality within a township during their preschool years, and the possibility of separating them in their learning environments. Since stress is also one of the key concepts in this study, I described the various conditions that resulted from stress, emotion and coping, the causes of school-related stress among children, and the concept of school-related stress for the purposes of this study. Lastly I elaborated on the nature and purpose of life skills. I focused on what I considered to be the most important life skills during the school years, and the nature of coping in general. In concluding this chapter, I incorporated and explained the conceptual framework that scaffolds this study. In the following chapter I discuss and describe the methodological processes that I used in my inquiry and research strategies, and the manner in which I applied them in the study.



Chapter 3

Research design and methodology

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I describe, explain and elaborate on the research methodology and strategies that I used for this study. I also justify my preference for an interpretive and social constructivist paradigm. In addition to this, I explain why I chose a qualitative case study research design, and why I selected this specific case and the participants who were involved in it. In this chapter, I also describe and explain the data collection techniques, the way in which I analysed the data, and the methods of interpretation that I used. I also explain why it is essential to maximise rigour in a study such as this, and why it was necessary to conduct this research in accordance with prescribed ethical principles. The chapter concludes with an examination of what I understand by my role as the researcher in this study.

3.2 PARADIGMATIC CONSIDERATIONS

3.2.1 METHODOLOGICAL PARADIGM

For the purposes of this study, I made use of qualitative research methods because they provided the most effective route for obtaining the data that I needed to answer my research questions. My main activity during the course of this study was to examine, explore and describe the lived experiences of real people in the real-time natural settings in which they would have found themselves had I not been there. In pursuance of this aim, my main focus of interest was directed towards the individuals within a township, as well as their mother and their teachers. These were essential activities because they provided the data that enabled me to understand how they as individuals made sense of the transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2. My main aim was therefore to use the data that I had collected to arrive at an in-depth description, understanding and interpretation of the human experiences of these individuals. I therefore made an intensive study of the various human interactions, the phenomena that surrounded them, the events to which they gave rise, and the human discourses that the individual participants constructed in order

to make sense of their lives and the events that were involved in the various transitions (Creswell, 2009; Hatch, 2002; Lichtman, 2010).

As a qualitative researcher, I sought to understand the world as it appeared from the point of view of the participants, and the manner in which the participants perceived the world that surrounded them rather than any supposed “objective” reality that might have been imposed on them by an external observer. It is also my responsibility as a qualitative researcher to gather all the data myself by means of a number of qualitative data gathering methods that I will describe later in this chapter. During this data-gathering process it rapidly became clear to me that the kind of data that is collected in a study such as this remains devoid of significance until the data has been processed by the researcher (Hatch, 2002:7).

Another characteristic of qualitative research of this kind is that the researcher needs to acquire a clear understanding of the different meanings which the participants construct so that they will be able to participate meaningfully in their social lives. Because I also regarded the particular social settings that I encountered in this study as unique, dynamic and complex, I sought to examine them as a whole. My main focus of interest was therefore on the inner emotional and mental states of the main participants. Because such states are not directly observable, I relied on my subjective judgments to identify, elucidate and describe them in the light of the data with which I was confronted (Hatch, 2002:9). As a qualitative researcher, my particular focus during my encounters with the participants was on deeper possible meanings of what I understood them to be saying and doing rather than on the surface appearances of these events (Lichtman, 2010:17).

3.2.2 META-THEORETICAL PARADIGMS

3.2.2.1 Interpretivist paradigm

Because I have positioned this research study within the interpretivist tradition, I need to elucidate what I understand with the processes that underlie the way in which we understand our personal and consensual realities. As an interpretivist, it is my belief that we, as human beings, are constantly involved in the construction and creation of a personal and collective social worlds, and that we do this by

negotiating the meanings of our actions with whomever we encounter during the course of our lives. It is important to add that I regarded the interpretation of events by myself, by the individuals within a township, by their mother, and by their Grade R to Grade 2 teachers, as equally important – even though the frequency of my interactions and contacts with the various participants varied throughout the course of the research. It is for this reason that all the variant understandings and interpretations of the same events are of equal importance because they conferred both meaning and validity (Roberts-Holmes, 2005:40) and multiplicity on this study.

I tried to use those research methods that enabled the participants to describe and interpret their feelings and experiences of the social world they lived in to maximum effect. I therefore tried always to focus on whatever first-hand experiences were available for examination, and I used the data from these descriptions to reconstruct what I had seen and heard in the richest possible detail. Since I was the primary data collecting and analysing instrument and agent in the research, I set out to make myself an expert in listening, questioning, and in the interpretation of information (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002:127). As a researcher within the interpretivist tradition, I found myself in agreement with Denzin (2001:1), who recommends that the researcher become proficient in capturing and representing the participants' voices, emotions and actions so that he or she will be able to become sensitive to the life experiences that shape the meanings by which they understand themselves and their lived experiences. As a researcher who was using an interpretivist tradition, I also found myself in agreement with Loots (2010:73) who explains that, however good one's intentions may be and however reliable one's methods may be, it is more than likely that we will probably never entirely come to know and comprehend all the nuances and shades of meaning that are embedded in the participants experiences and life worlds. The results of my research therefore represent only my own interpretation and description of the meanings that the participants in this study attributed to their personal experience of their own worlds.

3.2.2.2 Social constructivist paradigm

For the purposes of this study, I also made use of the social constructivist paradigm as meta-theoretical paradigm. In the paragraphs that follow, I explain the reasons why I adopted this position.

One of the main assumptions in this study is that knowledge and reality were socially constructed by the participants who were actively involved in the research process. It was my responsibility, as a researcher, to attempt to understand and make coherent sense of the way in which the participants put together and extracted meaning from their lived experiences (Mertens, 2009:16). As a social constructivist researcher, I found myself in agreement with Creswell (2009:8), who stated that one of the essential requirements for research of this kind is to rely primarily on the participants' views about the transitions made by the individuals within a township from Grade R through to Grade 2. I agree with Creswell (2009:8) that such opinions are neither fixed nor predictable, but that they acquire shape as a result of interactions with others and the influence of the historical and cultural norms that prevail in the lives of all the participants. As a social constructivist researcher, I therefore sought to understand exactly how the participants interacted with one another against the background of the context in which they worked and lived. This, I assumed, would enable me to understand the cultural and historical settings of the participants who were involved in this study. By making use of this paradigm, I placed myself in a position to produce my own understanding of the participants' social worlds from the data that my observations made available to me (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008b:247).

Because I am a social constructivist researcher, I was keenly aware of the fact that my own assumptions and background would influence my interpretation of the meanings that I attributed to the participants. I therefore tried to focus as dispassionately as I could on the meanings and interpretations that seemed to me to characterise the participants' world. But in spite of this, I did not distance myself from the data that I encountered, but strove, through sympathetic mutual engagement between myself and the participants, to reconstruct the various subjective realities that were the primary source of interest in this study (Hatch, 2002:15).

Another of the characteristics of social constructivist research that I appropriated to myself was to acknowledge that language plays a crucial role in the research process. For the purposes of this study, I did not analyse the language that was used by the participants from a linguistic point of view. Instead, I used the verbatim reports of the exchanges between myself and the participants as the raw data from

which I constructed my own interpretations of the social worlds of the participants. These social worlds can be interpreted as a kind of metaphorical language and a system of meanings the participants use to construct and maintain their own understanding of the experiences that they encounter (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002:151). Since I have often observed that young children frequently struggle to express what they want to say in words, I not only listened carefully and attentively to the actual words that they used, but I sometimes deliberately resorted to rephrasing their words as a way of assisting them to clarify the meanings so that I would be able to make sense out of their lived experiences. By using this particular technique, I was able to illuminate and eliminate potential misconceptions between me and the young participants.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN: AN INTRINSIC CASE STUDY

“A case study is not a methodological choice but a choice of what is to be studied”
(Stake, 2005, in Willis, 2008:210).

The section explains my reasons for choosing a particular research design and for selecting the participants in the study. For the purposes of this study, I deliberately chose an intrinsic type of case study, as it is defined by Stake (2003:136). In what follows, I seek to justify my choice of the methods that are selected as suitable for achieving the main purpose of my study. My intention as the researcher was to obtain a clear understanding of the subjective dynamic processes involved in the transition of the individuals within a township from Grade R through to Grade 2. I did not choose this case as it was representative of other cases nor because it illustrated a particular trait that I wished to emphasise. The particular case that I chose automatically interested me because of my profession, that of a life skills facilitator for children. I deliberately selected this case for my intrinsic case study because it fulfilled all the criteria that I needed to answer my research questions (Jones, Torres & Arminio, 2006:55).

An intrinsic case study design was used due to the main research question of this study. I wanted a better understanding of the transition of individuals within a township from Grade R through to Grade 2. This case itself was the main primary interest and not transition to school in general as in an instrumental case study,

where this specific case would have played only a supportive role. Neither where a number of cases studied as in a multiple case study (Stake, in Denzin & Lincoln, 2005:445).

The nature of case studies is illuminated by Bogdan and Biklen (2007:59), who use the metaphor of a funnel to elucidate its characteristics. They suggest that the beginning of any case study may be compared to the wide end of the funnel. In my own case study, I reviewed the potential of the people and places who could serve as sources for the data that I needed. Once I became interested in the particular individuals in a township who seemed most suitable for my purposes, I proceeded to cast my net more widely by investigating the suitability of the twins' home, their family, and their schools. It was only once I had satisfied myself in this regard that I began to collect the data that I subsequently sifted, evaluated, reflected on, and categorised. During these processes I had to make frequent decisions about the future direction of this study. Such decisions involved the way in which I would allocate my time in, whom I would interview, and the depth to which I would apply my probing and analytical skills. Such a process of review frequently necessitated the discarding of old plans and the adoption of new lines of intellectual inquiry.

I also tinkered with the overall design of the research and reviewed the suitability of the procedures that I intended to use to gather a sufficient amount of data to answer my research question. In this way, my research activities began to converge on a single focal point. I eventually decided to confine my data collection activities to particular sites that included the individuals within a townships' home and their pre-primary and primary school classrooms. I also decided to conduct separate interviews with their mother and with their Grade R, Grade 1 and Grade 2 teachers respectively. From my initial, broad investigative activities, I narrowed my focus and directed it towards intensive data collection and analysis. This is the narrow end of the funnel in the metaphor that Bogdan and Biklen (2007:59) use to explain how an investigator's activities progress throughout the course of research that makes use of a single case study.

I found myself in agreement with Willis (2008:211), who suggest that case studies are more appropriate when a researcher wishes to answer "how" and "why" questions, when a researcher has little or no control over events, and it is the

researcher's intention to investigate existing phenomenon within a real-life situation. I had already noticed that numerous “how” and “why” questions arose spontaneously during the interviews and sessions that I conducted with the participants. It is also evident to me that I had little or no control over the events during the transitions that the individuals within a township made from Grade R to Grade 2. Finally, it was also evident that the transitions of the individuals within a township from Grade R to Grade 2 represented a real-life situation.

Ellet (2007:13) refers to specific characteristics that should be evident in any case study. Such characteristics include the necessity for the participants to be the main providers for most of the content of the case. In this study, I relied to a great extent on the main participants to supply me with the data that I would use to construct the knowledge and represent the realities that are depicted in this study. This case study also included a strong focus on the way which the individuals within a township negotiated the various transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2. I was therefore able to gather enough information from the participants in order to arrive at satisfactory conclusions in this study. It was never my intention to be able to generalize from my own conclusions to other individuals who were similar in most respects to those in the study. My only concern was to be able to understand the experiences of the participants in terms of the meanings that they themselves constructed in order to make sense of their life worlds. I therefore confined myself to attempting to understand the experiences of the participants themselves so that I would be able to investigate the case with the depth that it required. This line of investigation was congruent with the advice given by Roberts-Holmes (2005:47) where he asserts that it is necessary for a researcher who uses a case study to generate rich, contextualised and detailed descriptions so that the reader will be able to use the descriptions to acquire a profound and textured sense of the realities that it sets out to explore.

3.4 PARTICIPANTS AND RESEARCH SITES

The two primary participants in conducting this study were a pair of Afrikaans five-year-old individuals within a township who were monozygotic twin boys (these individuals were five years old at the commencement of the study). My research into their lives lasted from September 2009 (when they were in Grade R) until November

2011 (where they were in Grade 2). They turned eight in November 2011. The individuals within a twinship had a very close fraternal relationship with one another and were each other's best friends. They had a younger sister of six years old, and a baby brother who was five months old at the commencement of the study. The majority of our sessions took place in their family home on their parents' plot which was situated on the Westrand, west of Johannesburg. Their home was the kind of place that any child would dream of. There is much space as they needed for riding their junior motorbikes, and for playing outside on their jungle gyms. There was also a super tube in which they could slide down into the swimming pool. Each of the individuals within a twinship had his own room, which was filled with toys. The atmosphere in the family home was both pleasant and relaxed, and was characterised by genuine affection, love and laughter. The mother of the individuals within a twinship, who was also one of the participants in this study, was a general medical practitioner, and their father worked as a quantity surveyor. During the period they were in Grade R and Grade 1, the family's domestic worker looked after them in the afternoons while the parents worked. In addition to these arrangements, both sets of grandparents lived in separate houses on their plot. Because of a family crisis, the domestic worker who had looked after them, resigned from service to the family in 2011, after having worked for them for seven years. The parents then decided that an *au pair* would be a suitable replacement as a childminder in the afternoons because she would be able to assist in their homework and drive in to their various school activities, which included gymnastics, art, rugby, cricket, mathematics, Lego, chess and swimming. The individuals within a twinship immediately formed a warm and trusting relationship with the *au pair*, and were very comfortable with her from the very beginning.

Their mother, also a participant in this study, as mentioned earlier, was the kind of "hands-on" mother who gives generously of her time and energy to her children. Because she worked mostly in the mornings, she was able to spend a great deal of time with her children in the afternoons. My interviews with the mother also took place in their home. Because her home language was Afrikaans, we conducted the interviews in Afrikaans.

The remaining participants were the Grade R, Grade 1 and Grade 2 teachers of the individuals within a twinship. They both had the same teacher in Grade R and were

together in the same class in Grade 1 as well. Before they were promoted to Grade 2, their parents, in consultation with their teachers, decided that they should be placed in separate classes for the duration of Grade 2. Both their pre-primary and primary schools were Afrikaans-medium schools.

Their preschool was situated on the Westrand, west of Johannesburg. The school where they attended had once been a domestic residence in an upmarket neighbourhood. There were 17 children in their Grade R classroom, and their teacher's personality was warm, effervescent, energetic, confident, sensitive, and assured. She made it a priority to become personally acquainted with every child, and all of the children seemed to adore her. She is widely experienced in her field because she had been a teacher for over 30 years. The classroom was spacious, and was filled with the children's art work and posters. The outside play area was enormous, and had been carefully laid out and landscaped. My interview with this Grade R teacher took place in her classroom, in which I was able to observe the individuals within a township during their playtime in the outdoor area of their preschool.

Their primary school was situated only five minutes away from their house. This school was very neat and tidy, and had a good reputation among the residents of the area. There were 4 Grade 1 classes. The individuals within a township's teacher had also been a teacher for nearly 30 years. She was neat, strict, and caring, and had a warm attitude towards the children. The size of the class was relatively large because it had 25 children. Since everyone had his or her own desk and chair, the individuals within a township did not sit alongside one another. One of the individuals within a township sat right in front against the teachers table, and the other sat two rows back. I interviewed this Grade 1 teacher after school hours in her own classroom, and was able to observe the individuals within a township during their school time in their classroom.

While the individuals within a township attended the same class in Grade 1, they were placed in separate classrooms in Grade 2. During the last two periods of one particular school day, I observed both Alex and Rick respectively in their separate

classrooms. Alex's⁶ Grade 2 teacher was very relaxed, warm and kind. There were 27 children in his class. Everyone had ample workspace with their own desk space and chair, although most of the children shared a double desk with two separate chairs. Alex sat in the middle row at the back, right in front of the teachers desk which was situated at the back of the classroom. Rick's⁷ teacher, who was also kind and warm but very strict and firm, was also the head of their department. The children in Rick's class also had sufficient workspace and their own chairs. Most of the children also shared a double desk. Rick sat in the middle row right in front of the classroom. The classroom was both organised and neat. I conducted a joint interview with both of their Grade 2 teachers after school had closed for that day. The school visits were all scheduled in advance by myself, and the teachers and I visited their school in order to make sure that we would arrive at the times agreed between us and the teachers.

3.5 RESEARCH PROCESS

In this section, I will briefly summarise the research process upon which this study was based. My research process began as an extension of the research that I undertook for my master's degree and focused on the positive and negative stressors that children might encounter during their Grade 1 school year. I also chose to focus particularly on those specific life skills that I regarded as necessary for a successful transition from preschool to primary school, as well as a number of other resources. The work that I had completed for my master's degree provided a sound foundation for my doctoral research because I had been active as a life skills facilitator for the previous eight years for children from the age of four to the age of thirteen. I had therefore completed a great deal of reading on these themes for my work and for my master's degree before the commencement of my doctoral studies. I also gathered a great deal of useful and pertinent information from my reading and from my involvement with teaching life skills to young children – information that would later serve as an indispensable resource for my doctoral research.

⁶ Since “Alex” is a pseudonym for participant 1, it is not his real name. The name “Alex” will be used throughout this study when referring to participant 1, one of the individuals within a township in order to protect his identity and ensure anonymity.

⁷ Since “Rick” is a pseudonym for participant 2, it is not his real name. The name “Rick” will be used throughout this study when referring to participant 2, one of the individuals within a township, in order to protect his identity and ensure anonymity.

All these preparatory processes took place before I began my sessions with the individuals within a township, whom I had selected as the main participants in my study. When I met the individuals within a township, I devised a custom-made intervention plan of the specific life skills that I wished to teach them before they entered Grade 1. I began my research sessions with the individuals within a township in September 2009 when they were already in Grade R. As my sessions with the individuals within a township progressed, I needed to re-evaluate some of the plans that I had made for individual sessions and adjust them according to the specific needs of the individuals within a township so that they would be prepared for their transition from preschool to primary school. The following session timetable (Figure 3.1) indicates the number of sessions that we completed during that period. The purple coloured months indicate the months in which sessions took place. The number within each purple block indicates the number of sessions I allocated to each month.

Figure 3.1: Session timetable – Sessions at home and school

	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
2009 Gr R									3	2	4	2
2010 Gr 1		1	4	1	3					1		3
2011 Gr 2						2	2	1		6		

I scheduled a total of 11 sessions for the Grade R year of the individuals within a township – ten sessions with the individuals within a township in their home and one session with their Grade R teacher at their pre-school. The sessions with the individuals within a township consisted of informal, in-depth conversations, age-appropriate games and activities that were completed on worksheets together with creative exercises, semi-structured interviews, observations, audio-visual recordings. My data collecting techniques during these sessions were the photographs I took and the field notes I made. Only one of these sessions failed to achieve its hoped-for outcome and planned goal (what happened in that case is outlined in Addendum 1). The session with their Grade R teacher included a semi-structured interview as well as a visit to their school so that I would be able to

observe the individuals within a township in their school environment. This session took place in December 2009. The main purpose of our sessions during the Grade R year was to facilitate life skills for the individuals within a township and to hear what their expectations were for Grade 1.

I completed a total of 13 sessions during their Grade 1 year. For ten of these sessions I visited the individuals within a township in their own home and used the same data gathering techniques that I have described above. Only one of these sessions did not reach its planned goal (see Addendum 2 for further details). I conducted two interviews with their Grade 1 teacher in October 2010 and December 2010 respectively. I also conducted an interview with their mother in December 2010 and visited their school on the same day on which I interviewed their teacher in October 2010 for the purpose of observing the individuals within a township in the real-time context of their Grade 1 classroom. These sessions with the individuals within a township did not include as many life skill facilitation sessions as was necessary during their Grade R year. While the Grade 1 sessions were concerned mainly with the way in which they experienced their transition to Grade 1, they also made provision for an extensive amount of revision of those life skills they had already learned and the way in which they experienced them in practice.

In 2011 (their Grade 2 year), I visited the individuals within a township nine times in their own home. I conducted one interview with their Grade 2 teachers in October 2011, and one interview with their mother in July 2011. My single school visit in the year took place on the same day on which I interviewed their Grade 2 teachers. My goal during that visit was to observe the individuals within a township in their natural real-time school environment (referring specifically to their classrooms). Our sessions in that year consisted mainly of the same themes that had been used for sessions during their Grade 1 year. Table 3.1 summarises the main sub-themes of each session, the main session theme, the activities we engaged in, and the instruments we used.

Table 3.1: Summary of the main points discussed in the data-capturing sessions

Session 1: 16 September 2009	
Theme	<p>Friendliness Who am I? Feeling proud</p>
Activities	<p>Making a picture out of clay A story about friendliness Discussion about being friendly with others and with oneself Feeling proud of yourself Strong and weak points Drawing my family</p>
Instruments / materials	<p>Clay Coloured paper Storybook Crayons, a recorder and camera</p>
Session 2: 28 September 2009	
Theme	<p>The opinions of the individuals within a township about the differences and similarities between Grade R and Grade 1</p>
Activities	<p>One bag with differences and one bag with similarities Game with beanbag Individual interviews Informal questioning together Feeling drawing</p>
Instruments	<p>4 Paper bags Coloured paper 2 Beanbags Questionnaires Crayons, a recorder and camera</p>
Session 3: 30 September 2009	
Theme	<p>What is a feeling? Coping with angry and sad feelings</p>
Activities	<p>Practising punching, kicking and screaming with a pillow Role play about feelings Questions about feelings Animal game – Be proud of who you are. How do you feel today drawings? Talking about their feelings posters</p>
Instruments	<p>2 Pillows Animal game Coloured paper Stickers Crayons, a recorder & camera</p>

Session 4: 14 October 2009	
Theme	Be happy with who you are
Activities	Due to their tiredness, I rescheduled today's session to next week.

Session 5: 21 October 2009	
Theme	Be happy with who you are
Activities	Wishing clouds Animal game How do you feel today?
Instruments:	Coloured paper Icecream sticks Bright dots Glue Crayons, a recorder and camera

Session 6: 4 November 2009	
Theme	Feelings at school and at home
Activities	Individual semi-structured interviews Role play – Being in control of your feelings
Instruments	Paper A recorder and camera

Session 7: 11 November 2009	
Theme	Positive coping strategies for angry feelings
Activities	Volcano worksheet Drawing of myself feeling angry Practical exercises to enhance positive coping strategies
Instruments	Worksheets Coloured paper Crayons, a recorder and camera

Session 8: 18 November 2009	
Theme	Bullies and being assertive towards bullies
Activities	Revision of the activities of the previous session (I also handed each of them a laminated poster that illustrated positive coping skills.) Informal interviews on the topic of bullies Making bully information posters Role playing for the practice of assertiveness
Instruments:	A laminated key ring with positive coping strategies Coloured cardboards for posters and paper Pens Crayons, a recorder and camera

Session 9: 25 November 2009	
Theme	Making friends, sympathy and empathy
Activities	“Snap” game with questions about previous sessions How to make friends (using tubes and paper) Role playing techniques for making friends Feeling antennas
Instruments	Plastic tubes Coloured paper and pens Polystyrenes balls and coloured sticks Crayons, a recorder and camera

Session 10: 8 December 2009	
Theme	My school visit and my interview with the Grade R teacher
Activities	A semi-structured interview with the Grade R teacher My observation of the twins in their playground
Instruments	Notebook Pens A recorder and camera

Session 11: 9 December 2009	
Theme	First aid hands for Grade 1
Activities	Semi-structured interviews about Grade 1 A post illustrating various hands-on things to remember when entering Grade 1
Instruments	Glue Coloured cardboards and pens Crayons, a recorder and camera

Session 12: 22 February 2010	
Theme	Enjoyable and less enjoyable experiences in Grade 1 (stressors)
Activities	“Cowboys & Crooks” (Good and bad things about Grade 1 from the twins’ perspectives) Making cards to illustrate their experiences An explanation of the board game for the following weeks Revision of the volcano exercise
Instruments	Coloured paper Crayons, a recorder and camera

Session 13: 1 March 2010	
Theme	My school
Activities	Making posters for the board game Looking at and discussing the areas they visited and used on their school premises
Instruments	Big cardboards Crayons, a recorder and camera

Session 14: 8 March 2010	
Theme	Individuals within a township' experiences of Grade 1
Activities	Playing the board game
Instruments	Soldier and animal toys for the game Pens, a recorder and camera

Session 15: 15 March 2010	
Theme	How the individuals within a township experienced Grade 1
Activities	Playing the board game Revision of positive coping strategies
Instruments	Soldier and animal toys for the game Pens, a recorder and camera

Session 16: 29 March 2010	
Theme	How the individuals within a township experienced Grade 1
Activities	Playing the board game The revision of friendship skills
Instruments	Soldier and animal toys for the game Pens, a recorder and camera

Session 17: 14 April 2010	
Theme:	Individuals within a township' experiences of Grade 1
Activities	Playing the board game Revising friendship skills
Instruments	Soldier and animal toys for the game Pens, a recorder and camera

Session 18: 3 May 2010	
Theme	How the individuals within a township experienced Grade 1
Activities	Individual, in-depth semi-structured interview with each of the individuals within a township Drawings of themselves and their brother as they appeared in the classroom
Instruments	Coloured paper Crayons, a recorder and camera

Session 19: 10 May 2010	
Theme	How the individuals within a township experienced Grade 1
Activities	Playing the board game "Finish the sentences..." Revising the volcano activity and the topic of bullies
Instruments	Soldier and animal toys for the game Pens, a recorder and camera

Session 20: 17 May 2010	
Theme	Revision of Grade 1 and life skills experiences
Activities	Semi-structured interviews on the topic of bullies

	Revising positive coping strategies and the topic of bullies Semi-structured interviews about life skill experiences
Instruments	A recorder and camera Semi-structured interviews Notebook and pens

Session 21: 13 October 2010

Theme	Primary school visit
Activities	An individual semi-structured interview with the Grade 1 teacher Observation of the individuals within a township in their natural real-time classroom setting
Instruments	Notebook and pens Semi-structured interview Recorder and camera

Session 22: 8 December 2010

Theme	Individuals within a township
Activities	Individual semi-structured interviews on the topic of their township Drawing their family
Instruments	Notebook and pens Semi-structured interviews Coloured paper Crayons, a recorder and camera

Session 23: 8 December 2010

Theme	Interview with mother of the individuals within a township
Instruments	Notebook and pens Semi-structured interviews Recorder and camera

Session 24: 9 December 2010

Theme	Second school visit to the Grade 1 teacher
Activities	An individual semi-structured interview with the Grade 1 teacher
Instruments	Notebook and pens Semi-structured interview Recorder and camera

Session 25: 20 June 2011

Theme	Grade 2
Activities	Individual semi-structured interviews with individuals within a township
Instruments	Notebook and pens Semi-structured interview Recorder and camera

Session 26: 28 June 2011

Theme	Revising positive coping strategies
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	Grade 2
Activities	Semi-structured interview with the individuals within a township Homework – good and bad experiences
Instruments	Notebook and pens A semi-structured interview Recorder and camera Coloured paper

Session 27: 13 July 2011

Theme	Revising coping positive coping strategies Grade 2
Activities	A semi-structured interview with the individuals within a township A discussion about homework A practical game
Instruments	Notebook and pens Semi-structured interview Recorder and camera Coloured paper

Session 28: 13 July 2011

Theme	An interview with the mother of the individuals within a township
Activities	An individual semi-structured interview with the mother of the participants
Instruments	Notebook and pens A semi-structured interview Recorder and camera

Session 29: 1 August 2011

Theme	Grade 2
Activities	A semi-structured interview with the individuals within a township A discussion about homework
Instruments	Notebook and pens Semi-structured interview Recorder and camera

Session 30: 13 October 2011

Theme	Grade 2
Activities	A board game about Grade 2
Instruments	Notebook and pens Coloured posters Animal and life-like toys Pens and crayons Recorder and camera

Session 31: 18 October 2011	
Theme	Grade 2
Activities	An individual semi-structured interview with Alex Board game
Instruments	Notebook and pens Animal and life-like toys Posters Semi-structured interview Recorder and camera

Session 32: 18 October 2011	
Theme	Grade 2
Activities	An individual semi-structured interview with Rick Board game
Instruments	Notebook and pens Posters Animal and life-like toys Semi-structured interview Recorder and camera

Session 33: 25 October 2011	
Theme	Grade 2
Activities	Individual semi-structured interview with Alex Board game
Instruments	Notebook and pens Posters Animal and life-like toys Semi-structured interview Recorder and camera

Session 34: 25 October 2011	
Theme	Grade 2
Activities	An individual semi-structured interview with Rick Board game
Instruments	Notebook and pens Posters Animal and life-like toys Semi-structured interview Recorder and camera

Session 35: 26 October 2011	
Theme	A visit to the two Grade 2 teachers at school
Activities	A semi-structured interview with the Grade 2 teachers Observations of Alex and Rick in the context of their classrooms
Instruments	Notebook and pen Semi-structured interview Recorder and camera

3.6 FORMAL DATA-COLLECTING STRATEGIES

For the purpose of this study and because of the requirements of my role as a qualitative researcher who had selected a case study design, I searched for data that represented the personal experiences of the participants during the transitions to the individuals within a township from Grade R through to Grade 2 (Stake, 2010:88). In order to achieve this, I purposefully selected observation, interviews, various instruments, audiovisual materials and field notes as my main means of gathering data during my research. All of the data collection strategies were generated and conducted in the first language of the participants, which was Afrikaans. By the time I had concluded the data collection processes, I had spent a period of three years with the participants. This is one of the requirements that a case study researcher must comply with when he or she is collecting data (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001:149), e.g. spending extended time with participants. In the following section I will describe, explain and discuss my choice of data collection strategies.

3.6.1 OBSERVATION

“I hear and forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand”

(Confucius, cited in Lichtman, 2010:163).

Before I commenced with observation as a data-gathering technique, it was necessary for me to re-evaluate my goal for the entire research process. My stated goal at that time was to understand the participants' (they were two five-year-old twin boys), their specific setting (at school and home), and the various social phenomena that were peculiar to the transition processes in this study. I constantly had to remind myself to see and to experience the world through their eyes in every possible way (Hatch, 2002:72). This required immense concentration and an unwavering awareness of what I was hoping to achieve. For the purpose of this study, I adopted the role of *observer-as-participant* (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, in Mertens, 2009:367). This particular role was necessary because I was required to carry out my observations in settings where I had to take part in discussions and activities while I was making notes and observing the participants' behaviours and their experiences. I was not, however, a *complete observer*. In other words, I remained completely visible and present. I was also not in complete conformity with

the role of *participant-as-observer* because I was not experiencing the same situations that the participants themselves were experiencing. In the same way, I was also not actually in the role of a complete participant because I was not going through the transition process from Grade R to Grade 2.

Cohen *et al.* (2000:187) have argued that one of the tasks of an educational researcher is to explain the manner in which a social world is established and maintained. Throughout the duration of this research, I maintained the assumption that I would not be able to fulfil my intention of observing the participants and their day-to-day behaviour by simply creating and nurturing intimate and informal relationships with the individuals within a township in their natural environments throughout a period of three years. As an observer-as-participant, I was in a position to gather data and information directly from my own personal intuition and feeling reactions (Stake, 2010:90). Because I was acutely aware of the fact that no researcher would ever be able to see, hear or feel all the primary data for recreating and reconstructing the life worlds of the participants – I was exerting myself to the maximum to capture as much data as possible. As an observer-as-participant, it was my responsibility to understand as much as I could about what was happening during our sessions and to make sense of each situation as it arose rather than achieving a perfect understanding and reconstruction of how the participants were experiencing events – because such perfection is empirically unattainable (Stake, 2010:94).

My observations were also accompanied by the making of field notes in the form of a research journal during our sessions, and by the audio recordings that I made after each session when I was no longer in the situation itself (Creswell, 2009:182). One of the advantages of being an observer was that I was able to observe the participants' experiences at first-hand in real-life, real-time, actual situations as the individuals within a township progressed through the transitions involved in moving from Grade R through to Grade 2. These transitions included their experiences of things that happened and things that did not happen, and the extent to which they were able to apply the learned life skills that I had taught them during our sessions together.

One of the disadvantages of the methods that I had chosen was that it was sometimes difficult to interpret the participants actual behaviours, and the fact that I had to exercise constant vigilance in order to prevent myself from influencing the participants' behaviours either directly or indirectly (Mertens, 2009:352). As a professional life skill facilitator, I tend to assert myself positively in my work with children. But in my role as a researcher in this study, it was essential for me to refrain from exerting any influence one way or another on the outcomes of the sessions.

When I visited the schools and made my observations as a total non-participant observer in the school setting, there was no need for me to refrain from influencing any of the situations I observed because I was not directly involved in them. But during my sessions with the individuals within a township in their own home environment, in which the main participants were two extremely active boys, it was often difficult for me to be actively involved in the activities and management of the sessions while making observations and jotting down critical points at the same time in my research journal. I met the challengers of this difficulty by making continuous handwritten notes during our sessions and recording my personal experiences and observations in audio format *immediately* after each session. This minimised any potential loss of data and allowed me to reflect on the experiences of my research day. I referred to this data as my *anecdotal records* (MacNaughton, Rolfe & Siraj-Blatchford, 2001, in Roberts-Holmes, 2005:97). The anecdotal observations and records thus obtained provided me with sufficient data for my research diary in terms of remembered experiences and reflections on the significance of what I heard and seen (Roberts-Holmes, 2005:98). In addition to this, all the recordings that I made were captured so that I would later be able to make accurate transcripts of these recordings for future reflection.

3.6.2 INTERVIEWS

“Qualitative interviewing can be considered as a conversation with a purpose”
(Lichtman, 2010:139).

I also used interviewing as another data collecting technique because it was necessary for me to gather as much information from the participants as I could.

The interviews allowed me to gather a great deal of detailed information from the participants, including their thoughts and feelings about the various transitions the individuals within a township made between Grade R and Grade 2. They also allowed me to examine and explore how the individuals within a township experienced and applied the life skills that they had learned (Lichtman, 2010:140). These interviews also enabled me to interrogate the meaning structures that the participants used to classify their experiences as they attempted to make sense of their worlds – structures that are often unnameable to direct observation (Hatch, 2002:91).

For the purposes of this study I made use of *guided* or *semi-structured* interviews (Addendum 3) and *casual* or *unplanned* interviews that were usually based on open-ended questions. By using these two types of interviews, I was able to shift the focus away from myself as the researcher towards the interests and experiences of the participants in this study (Roberts-Holmes, 2005:109). These semi-structured interviews varied in length between 30 minutes and one hour, and took place mainly in the participants' home (Alex and Ricks' interviews, and the interview with their mother), and in their school environment (the interviews with their teachers and my observation of Alex and Rick). Although the main format of these interviews with the individuals within a township were the same, and my additional interviews with the teachers were the same, I was in a position to vary the questions as the situation sometimes demanded. I also made use of casual interviews when opportunities arose for me to talk to the participants about a specific topic that was relevant to this study (Lichtman, 2010:143).

There were often occasions on which the participants would mention something or begin an informal conversation, and that would result in a casual interview. The interviews with the individuals within a township were also sometimes individual interviews because I needed to interview them separately with the purpose of gaining trustworthy information. There was always the possibility in combined interviews that they would influence one another's answers and opinions. But there were also other occasions on which both of the individuals within a township were present in an interview together. The interviews that lasted between 30 minutes and one hour were those that took place with the mother (at home) and the teachers (at school). These interviews were always individual interviews. Before every interview

and session with all of the participants involved, I made the necessary arrangements for future interviews with the mother of Alex and Rick and with their teachers so that I would be able to negotiate the times that best suited them.

One of the most useful techniques that I frequently used during this study was probing. By means of probing I was able to elaborate, confirm and clarify exactly what the participants were saying (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Roberts-Holmes, 2005). Another technique that I used was to record and transcribe all of the interviews because this enabled me to devote most of my time during the interviews to my main purpose, which was active listening. I nevertheless frequently made simultaneous notes during the interviews so that I would be able to capture vital information and nuances of tone and emphasis (Creswell, 2009:182).

One of the advantages of using the interview format was that it enabled me to be exposed at first hand to the impressions and experiences of the participants, and also to obtain clarification about any of their responses that were obscure. By applying these methods consistently over the research period, I was able to gather an extensive range of rich and in-depth information because the interview format enabled me to develop close relationships with the participants and remain flexible to the needs of the moment in terms of data collection (Mertens, 2009:352).

One of the problems that is peculiar to the interview format is that, when one interviews children and adults, there is always the possibility that the interviewees will offer information and opinions that, in their understanding, is what they think I wish to hear rather than their genuine personal opinions and responses (Lichtman, 2010:143). In order to minimise this disadvantage of the interview format, I constantly reminded the participants that there were no right or wrong answers, and that they should simply tell me what they themselves thought, felt and experienced. I needed to hear truthfully about their own experiences and understandings about the various transitions that they made in their lives during the research period. One of the other challenges of the interview format is that it is extremely time consuming. In addition to this, it requires tremendous effort to record, transcribe, classify, analyse and compare all the data that is accumulated during the research process (Mertens, 2009:352). One way to cope with such difficulties is by creating and maintaining a

strict schedule and by applying intensive analytical techniques. All of these factors will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

3.6.3 ADDITIONAL DATA COLLECTING METHODS

I also elected to use additional methods to enrich my data-collecting capacity. These additional methods included various instruments such as structured activities, the use of audiovisual materials, and the making of field notes.

3.6.3.1 Structured activities and instruments

Because the principle participants in this research study were two male, five-year-old individuals within a township (five years old at the commencement of this study), normal observations and interview sessions would not have given me the depth and richness of insight that I needed to answer my research questions in a satisfactory way. I therefore sought to make use of a range of more creative activities that were suited to the mentality and interests of the individuals within a township. I accordingly devised a number of structured activities that would capture the attention and interest of the participants. I also went to great lengths to keep my discussions with the participants as child-centred as possible by not including my own suppositions, attitudes, or professional jargon. Such precautions enabled me to maintain a high quality of research and helped me to keep the data-gathering process child-centred (Roberts-Holmes, 2005:118). My structured activities, including more detailed descriptions of each of these activities is presented in (Addenda A-1 – A-3).

3.6.3.2 Audiovisual materials

As I noted earlier in this chapter, I used a camera to take photographs for the record and also used my cellular phone to record the interviews so that I could add them to my audiovisual archive of data. I made a point of taking photographs during my structured activities with the individuals within a township so that I would have a record of how the instruments and prompts looked. I needed to do this because the participants kept all the materials that I distributed to them and that they created during the sessions so that they would be able to use them to practise learned life skills both during and after the sessions. These photographs also helped me to manage my data collection and organising processes. In addition to that, I included

them in my thesis so that the reader would be able to acquire a clear idea of the activities and instruments that we used (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007:113). I also took a series of photographs of the natural environments of the participants in their actual, real-time environments. These photographs included views of their home and their schools so that I would ultimately be able to present a deeply textured, nuanced and rich and layered description of the physical and social scenes in which the participants found themselves. I was careful, however, to make sure that none of the photographs included images of the participants themselves. In this way, I was able to respect and guarantee their anonymity in accordance with the ethical principles that guided this research.

I was careful to record every interview. All of these interviews were later translated from Afrikaans into English, and transcribed for subsequent perusal and verification. I undertook the translation and transcription processes myself because my first language is Afrikaans and my second language is English. Before the commencement of each recorded session, I was careful to ask the participants for permission to record everything that we would say during the session. These recordings enabled me to verify through subsequent examinations of the transcriptions that no information of any importance had been overlooked or excluded. Even though transcription is an exhausting and demanding process, I decided to do it myself, firstly, because I was familiar with the personalities involved and all of the circumstances in which the recordings took place, and because I had a prior understanding of what was being referred to by the participants.

Creswell (2009:183) emphasises that the verification of content from perusals of the contents is one of the best methods for ensuring the reliability and trustworthiness of the data that has been gathered. In the second place, it was more cost effective for me, as the researcher, to transcribe the interviews myself because I was already familiar with what had taken place. In the third place, I would be able to use the transcriptions to familiarise myself with every aspect of what had taken place between myself and the participants. This would place me in the best possible position in the later stages of the research when I engaged in a comprehensive and reflective analysis (Roberts-Holmes, 2005:122). In the fourth place, the task of transcription would enable me to interact with the data in an intensive and intimate

way and would ensure that I had been actively engaged with the research material from the very beginning of the process (Mertens, 2009:424).

3.6.3.3 Field notes

I have already alluded to the fact that I made use of informal field notes during the interviews to record observations and impressions. For this purpose, I selected a notebook with two columns: one for the things that I had observed or heard during the sessions, and the other column for my own reflections and experiences and thoughts during the session and during a later reflection on the contents (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002:138). My field notes in my research journal thus enabled me to record explicit and first-hand impressions of what occurred during the sessions, and what I observed and experienced during my interactions with participants (Hatch, 2002:77).

3.7 DATA ANALYSIS

For the purposes of data analysis, I was guided by the observation made by Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2002:140), when they stated that there is no orderly procedure during interpretive analysis that is common to all such analyses. In spite of the truth of their observation, I selected the following strategies to help me with this process that had already started during the data-gathering stage.

The first two strategies I used to assist me in my analysis of the data were *familiarisation* and *immersion*. Both of these strategies proved to be immensely helpful for developing my ideas about the transitions that the individuals within a township made from Grade R through to Grade 2. I therefore collected all the data that I had gathered, and used it in conjunction with my field notes, photographs and transcripts to *immerse* myself continuously in the sense, meanings and atmosphere of the worlds in which the participants lived - thus to *familiarise* myself with everything that was important to them as well as the particular ways in which they habitually constructed the meanings in terms of which they interpreted and made sense of their life worlds. By reading the transcribed data and examining the photographs numerous times, I was able to use the data and artefacts to brainstorm

and thus expand upon my sense of the significance of everything that had taken place (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002:141).

During these processes, I made use of the “bottom-up” approach of creating *themes* by means of induction because this enabled me to look for significant themes and primary information by moving from innumerable examples to the identification of the recurrent themes that were embedded in the data. The purpose in using the method of inductive identification of themes is to isolate recurrent themes and categories of classification from a vast collection of seemingly chaotic information. During this process I focused on everything that had taken place during the interviews and sessions and began to identify different levels of complexity that progress from themes to sub-themes and from categories to sub-categories. I remained continuously aware throughout this process of inductive investigation of the overall purpose of this study as I engaged in my analysis of the data.

During my sessions with the participants and after every session, I reflected constantly on the data and reviewed it from every possible angle (Mertens, 2009:424). *Coding* was one of the most important strategies that I used in my analysis of the data. In my first approach to the particular selection of data, I made use of initial coding which allowed me to code individual words, lines and incidents. I later made use of focused coding. This means that I tested the initial codes on various parts of the total collection of data. This enabled me to establish how resilient the codes were in terms of the broader findings that emerged from this study (Mertens, 2009:426).

In addition I refer to Seidel and Kelle’s (1995:53) differentiation of codes. First of all, the identified codes in the data acted as objective and transparent representations of the facts in this study. The codes were also heuristic tools which enabled further investigation and discovery. These codes acted as markers to the way I rationalised the experiences of the participants during the data collection process of this study.

I also used the technique of *elaboration* in order to explore all of the identified themes more intimately. This enabled me to capture increasingly fine distinctions of meaning that had been overlooked during the initial coding process. Elaboration gave me opportunities to revise and refine my coding process and the earlier

conclusions. Elaboration also provided me with opportunities to restructure the material until I felt confident that the categories and themes that I had selected were a true and accurate reflection of the sense of meaning of all the data upon which this study is based (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002:144).

Finally, I made use of the techniques of *interpretation* and *checking* to provide a written explanation of my experiences of all the processes that I had studied. During this final stage of analysis, I had to check that no parts of the process had been ignored or overlooked, and that insignificant aspects of the data had been over-investigated and over-interpreted (thereby avoiding the trap of insignificance). During this latter phase, it was important for me to reflect on my role as the researcher and to reveal how I had participated in the data collection and analysis phases (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002:144).

3.8 RIGOUR OF THE STUDY

For the purposes of this study, I was guided by the requirements set out by Lincoln and Guba (1985:991), who suggest the application of standards of *credibility*, *transferability*, *dependability* and *confirmability* to confirm the reliability and rigour of any research that is undertaken by making use of a qualitative paradigm. I shall now discuss each of these standards in turn, and explain how I applied them to my research.

3.8.1 CREDIBILITY

I have already intimated that I made use of personal observations, interviews, field notes, photographs and transcriptions to gather data that would be able to support my findings and answer my research questions (Green, 2000:83). For the purpose of this study, I was guided by the assertion of Richardson (2000:14), who states that crystallisation is a more socially and semantically projected device than triangulation because the world consists of more than only three sides. I therefore made use of crystallisation in analyzing my data because it prevented me from perceiving events, people and words as preset, rigid and inflexible. The process of crystallisation is based on the metaphor of observing the world and everything that happens in it through a revolving crystal with many facets of refraction. The peculiar nature of

using this kind of crystal as a lens is that it enables one to perceive and understand the numerous facets that underline the nature of our consensual reality. The lens of this kind of perceptual crystal enables one to see an unlimited variety of shapes, essences, dimensions and perspectives that are opaque to normal, unaided vision. By using crystallisation as an analytical strategy, I was accorded a more multifaceted and deeper understanding of the transitions through which the individuals within a township progress from Grade R through to Grade 2. My final findings from this study were therefore based on an extensive process of crystallisation of the data (Nieuwenhuis, in Maree, 2007:81).

I also made use of prolonged engagement as one of my research strategies to enhance the credibility of my research findings in this study (Mertens, 2009:388). It was inevitable that *prolonged engagement* would take place because I studied every accessible aspect of the participants' lives over a period of three years. Because we formed close relationships during this period, I was able to gather a substantial amount of relevant and suggestive data. This intensive involvement with the main participants enhanced the assumed *validity* of the study. In order to prepare Alex and Rick for the termination of our three year project, I continuously reminded them during our last month, that our sessions were going to end in four weeks time. Together with the reminder, I explained to them what will happen in the future (regarding my weekly visits) and gave them practical ideas on how to use the learned life skills at school or home without me being present. On the day of my last visit, we had an informal celebration to emphasize their dedicated work during the three years and a realisation of my last visit.

Persistent observation was also an inevitable consequence of this research because I was intensively engaged with the principal participants throughout a three-year period for 29 one-hour sessions in total. I also conducted two 30-minute interviews with their mother, one 30-minute interview with their Grade R teacher, two 30-minute interviews with their Grade 1 teacher, and one 30-minute, combined interview with their two Grade 2 teachers. Even though I focused primarily on the individuals within a township during the course of this study, these supplementary interviews provided me with valuable additional insights into my research problem.

I also made use of *member checks* during the research process because I took pains to confirm with the participants themselves the accuracy and reliability of the responses and answers that I had obtained from them during our interviews. I engaged in these member checks so that I would be able to be sure that I had interpreted their responses accurately and so that I would have the necessary opportunities to exclude from the record any possible misunderstandings and misconceptions. Member checks enable a researcher to confirm that all the statements they have recorded are valid and true.

3.8.2 TRANSFERABILITY

My purpose in undertaking this study was not to make generalisable findings, but rather to interpret the meanings and actions of the participants within the context of this study alone. But since some meanings are universally applicable in innumerable contexts of human interaction, I was able to assert that the findings of this study might well be transferable in situations that bear a distinct and fundamental resemblance to all the facets of this study (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002:63). In order to produce transferable findings of this kind for this study, I was careful to make all of my descriptions as *rich and thick* as possible so that the findings of the study would achieve a level of realism, fidelity and richness that would be a true reflection of the events as they actually occurred (Creswell, 2009; Leedy & Ormrod, 2001).

3.8.3 DEPENDABILITY

As an interpretivist and social constructivist researcher, I was careful not to assume that I was engaged in the investigation of an unchanging or static reality that could be replicated in some other context. I rather expected the participants to act differently with diverse opinions in a changing context. Instead, therefore, of hoping for reliability, my intention was that my findings should be *dependable*. My intention was that by making use of the criterion of *dependability*, I would be able to persuade the reader that the findings actually occurred in the manner in which I described them (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002:64). By constructing thick and rich descriptions from the immense amount of detail that every session provided, and by

referring to my transcription of the interviews, it is my belief that I was able to achieve *dependability* in this study.

3.8.4 CONFIRMABILITY

I also made use of the criterion of *confirmability* by continually asking myself whether the data I had collected helped to confirm the ultimate findings of this study and their implications (De Vos, *et al.*, 2002:352). I strove towards the attainment of *confirmability* by making use of *reflexivity*. Reflexivity means that I used intensive self-reflection by constructing my own annotations on my interpretations of the findings from the vantage point of my own background and prior knowledge and experience. Reflexivity also allowed me to reflect critically on the research process and on my role as the researcher (Lichtman, 2010:121). I also relied very strongly on the contributions of the participants during member checking activities to enhance the *confirmability* of this study.

3.8.5 AUTHENTICITY

The basis of qualitative research include the illustration and description of people, places and events. Through authenticity in qualitative research, one may indicate whether these descriptions and illustrations correlate with one another and to which degree these different stances are fairly and evenly characterised (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Loots 2010). In this study, fairness was obtained through the representations by the researcher of all the value differences, views and conflicts by the participants. Ontological authenticity was obtained by the individuals within a township's conscious experience of their worlds becoming more informed and enriched, resulting in an enhanced understanding and application of life skills during transition from Grade R through to Grade 2. Tactical authenticity was also characterised in this study through the participants who were enabled to practically use the learned life skills as possible coping mechanism during their transition from Grade R through to Grade 2 (Mertens, 2009:259).

3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

I am in complete agreement with Green (2000:70) when he says that we have to use well-defined ethical principles to guide our research activities when we make decisions and measure the consequences and implications of our actions and the decision that we make. For the purposes of this study, I allowed myself to be guided by the insights of Babbie (2001:470) when he asserts that any individual who is involved in a research process, needs to be continuously conscious of what is appropriate and what is inappropriate in research. I therefore made use of the following ethical principles to ensure that my study complied with the highest ethical standards in all respects. These ethical principles included *autonomy, confidentiality and anonymity, informed consent, non-maleficence, trust, beneficial research* and sensitivity to the *implications of publishing any of the findings*. I shall now discuss each of these ethical principles in turn and explain how I implemented them during the course of this research.

3.9.1 AUTONOMY

I complied with the ethical principle of autonomy in this study by respecting the autonomy of each of the participants by ensuring that all participation was voluntary and conducted only after I had obtained the informed consent of each of the participants with whom I dealt. I also constantly reminded the participants that they were free to withdraw from this study or any activity involving the study at any time during the course of our interactions, and that they would not incur any kind of penalty or disadvantage by withdrawing their cooperation (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002:66).

3.9.2 CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY

I constantly reminded myself during the course of the study of my obligation to protect the privacy and identity of all the participants without exception to the maximum degree. It was only because of this kind of confidentiality that I was able to broach any number of sensitive subjects in a confidential manner. I also implemented the device of anonymity so that no one would be able review or identify any of the participants involved in this study at any later stage (Cohen *et al.*, 2000; De Vos *et al.*, 2002; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008a; Lichtman, 2010).

3.9.3 INFORMED CONSENT

Before the commencement of this study, the mother of the two main participants, the individuals within a township, voluntarily offered me the chance to enrol her individuals within a township (both boys) for the purposes of this study. At the commencement of the study, they were both five years of age. Because they were at a young age, I visited their home and explained my proposed study in a full and open manner to them. I did this in the language with which they were most familiar, their first language, Afrikaans. I gave them detailed information about the kind of activities in which we would participate should they agree to cooperate with me in pursuing this study. Once their parents and they themselves had given their approval for me to continue with this study with them as principal participants, I requested all of them to sign the individual consent forms that I had prepared for them (Addendum B). During the process of obtaining their informed consent, I was careful to present only the most accurate and detailed information to the participants so that they would be in a position to make valid voluntary and accurate decisions about their possible participation. I also followed this process with the teachers that I enlisted as participants (Cohen *et al.*, 2000; De Vos *et al.*, 2002, Denzin & Lincoln, 2008a; Lichtman, 2010; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002).

3.9.4 NON-MALEFICENCE

Adherence to the principle of non-maleficence means that the researcher is confident that no activity or question will harm the participants in a study at any time in any way. I therefore made use of age-appropriate activities and questions, and also remained sensitive to the possibility that the transitions through which the individuals within a township would pass might be both stressful and disturbing. I also included their mother and their teachers as secondary participants in this process. There were some days on which, although I had already prepared various activities and questions for interviews for the duration of particular sessions, I arrived only to discover that the participants were either too tired or too excited to participate in any of the activities that I had planned for the day. During such sessions, I showed my respect for their feelings by abandoning my carefully planned activities and involving myself in their desires and wishes on those specific days.

3.9.5 TRUST

For the purposes of this study, I complied with the requirement stated by Green (2000:76) that it is always necessary to earn the trust of participants and never take that trust for granted. Because I enjoy the privilege of spending over three years in close relationships with the individuals within a township and their mother as participants, I was able to gain their trust and to form long-lasting, durable, and meaningful relationships with each of them. But my relationships with the teachers who also agreed to participate, were different because I spent more of my research time with the individuals within a township and their mother. My relationships with the teachers were nevertheless characterised by deep respect and trust, although, because of a very limited time that I spent with them, the nature of the trust between us was somewhat different than that which I enjoyed with the individuals within a township and their mother.

3.9.6 BENEFICENCE

I was also confident that my research topic and research content would be beneficial to other researchers involved in this field and even, possibly, to the participants themselves (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002:66). This confidence embodied the ethical principle of beneficence. It was evident to me that the life skills that the participants learned as possible coping mechanism would benefit the individuals within a township during their transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2, and that they may also have provided insightful and useful information to their mother, who was also one of the participants in this study.

3.9.7 PUBLISHING OF THE FINDINGS

For the purposes of this study, I endeavoured to write this thesis in the most accurate way possible so that the readers of my thesis would be able to acquire a clear understanding of the contents and meaning of this study. In doing this, I made use of the guidelines of De Vos (2002) and Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2002), who offered advice about how the writing and publishing of findings could also comply with a necessary ethical principle. In the first instance, I went to great pains to ensure that the final report was accurate, objective, and explicit, and that it contained all the essential and supporting information that might be needed by

readers and researchers. Secondly, I went to great trouble to avoid including any personal bias in my findings. In pursuance of this aim, I explicitly identified all the resources and individuals that I had consulted. I also explicitly acknowledged some of the shortcomings, errors and weaknesses as arose during the course of this study. Thirdly, I undertook to inform all of the participants about the findings of this study in as objective manner as possible, and to express my personal gratitude to all the participants who were involved.

3.10 MY ROLE AS RESEARCHER

For the purpose of this study, I found myself in agreement with Lichtman (2010:16) when he states that the researcher plays a pivotal role in all qualitative research. I therefore accepted the responsibilities of my role as a qualitative researcher, and strove to be both serious and intense but also flexible and sensitive. I was serious and intense, for example, in the planning and preparation of the research. But I allowed myself to be flexible and sensitive during the actual sessions with the participants.

I fully accept my research role as a data collector, an information gatherer, and as a reality constructor and interpreter. I simultaneously accepted and adopted my role as the main and primary instrument for data collection and analysis, although I continued to be a sensitive observer on all occasions involving in the research (Lichtman, 2010:16). I recognise that I was in a collaborative partnership with the participants so that I would have the privilege of collecting and analysing data for this study. Throughout the study, I continuously reminded myself of my main aim, which was to acquire a clear understanding of the phenomena I had set out to understand (Maree & van der Westhuizen in Maree, 2007:41).

Since it was inevitable that I would filter all the information that I collected through my faculties and perceptions as a qualitative researcher and human being, I acknowledged the fact that my own experiences, values, views, and background would influence my final interpretations in this study (Lichtman, 2010:16). I therefore relentlessly strove to remain unbiased and to put my own values, views and background assumptions aside as I pursued the enterprise of understanding, exploring, reconstructing, and experiencing the values, views, experiences,

meanings and backgrounds of the participants. Lastly, I adopted the role as an individualist as one of my research roles. By this I mean that every aspect of the research that I conducted (including all my analyses and interpretations) are distinctly individual in nature. This implies that I claim no infallibility for any of my conclusions and methods because there is no single definitive truth in qualitative research. All of my understandings and interpretations were based on my own individual ability to use the available data to arrive at conclusions that were meaningful for me within the framework of my chosen methodology and procedures. It was therefore evident to me that any other researchers conducting the same research might well come up with different interpretations and understandings of the same data. All of this is what I mean by claiming that I fully accepted my role as an individualist.

3.11 CONCLUSION

I have used this chapter to justify and explain various aspects of my research methodology. I therefore discussed my preferred paradigmatic assumptions and the methodological paradigms that I utilised in this study. In addition to this, I have justified my use of an intrinsic case study design as the one that would be most suitable for the purposes of this study. I described the participants and the research processes that scaffolded this study. I have also included a summary of the data-capturing sessions and have also included a description of the formal data-collecting strategies that I used in this study. I also included a justification of my data analysis process together with a discussion of how I maximised the rigour and validity of this study. I also discussed, explained and justified the ethical principles that I used to guide this study in great detail. In the closing paragraphs of this chapter, I also explained the requirements imposed upon me by my role as a researcher.

In the following chapter, Chapter 4, I will present the integrated reports that contain the findings of this research. I will also use this chapter to relate the results that I obtained to the research findings contained in current existing literature pertaining to this theme.



4.1 INTRODUCTION

While analysing the accumulated data upon which this study is based, I remained mindful of the definition provided by Merriam (1998:193) when she states that a case study is an intensive and a holistic description and analysis of a single bounded unit. My main purpose in analysing the data in this way was to arrive at a clear understanding of the many and varied factors involved in the case study. I therefore analysed all the experiences of the participants and the principal role players, and the meanings that they attributed to those experiences, as they reacted to the various transitions that the individuals within a township made between Grade R and Grade 2. Although Chapter 3 already explains, in a comprehensive, detailed and in-depth way, the methods I used during my analysis of the data, I will once again briefly describe my data analysis process in this chapter together with a comprehensive explanation of the research findings of this study.

Every interview, observation, photograph and field note, together with my research journal entries, constituted the raw material upon which the intensive phase of data analysis in this case study was based. The results of this intensive phase of data analysis was that all the information that I had obtained, together with the putative meanings that were attributed to that information, were brought to the surface and given coherent shape (Merriam, 1998:194). My constant intention as I engaged in interpretive analysis was to remain close to the data and faithful to my understanding of what it meant so that I would be able to interpret the data from a position of emphatic understanding (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999:139). This was made easier by the fact that I was the only person who was present at every data collecting session and by the additional fact that I personally collected all the data myself.

In order to prepare myself for the data analysis process, I continually read and reread through all the transcriptions of the data. This resulted in what researchers

call familiarisation and immersion, both of which provided me with opportunities to break down the data into categories. During this process, I made use of different colours and symbols to divide the data into the different categories that I had identified. The final stage in this process occurred when I elaborated and further interpreted the data that I had categorised in this way analysed (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999:140).

The following section contains an in-depth description of the context of this study, which was provided by the individuals within a township, their family and home environment, as well as their Grade R, Grade 1 and Grade 2 environments. What follows after that is a description of the three themes that underlie the primary research question in this study. An introduction will be provided for each theme, together with an outline of tables, quoted self-descriptions obtained from the participants, and concluding reflections on each of the themes that is presented. This chapter will conclude with the answers that I provided to the secondary research questions.

4.2 CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

My conclusions and comments in this section are based on my personal observations, my field notes, and my interviews with all of the principal participants, and they are intended to give the reader a clear, in-depth and reliable (trustworthy) description of the participants and the research process as a whole. By describing every interview and the participants in detail, I was able to incorporate characteristics and descriptions that I might have overlooked if I had derived my descriptions only from my own field notes and personal observations. These descriptions are therefore obtained from my technique of holistically incorporating all participants who was involved in this study.

4.2.1 PARTICIPANT 1 - ALEX⁸

This section presents a detailed description of Alex from the data provided by his directly quoted self-descriptions, my observations as the researcher, my field notes

⁸ “Alex” is a pseudonym for participant 1, and it is not his real name. The pseudonym “Alex” was used throughout this study, and it always refers to participant 1, who was one of the individuals within a township. The use of pseudonyms was designed to protect the participant’s identity and ensure his anonymity.

and my research journal. I have also made use of descriptions and observations provided by Alex's Grade R, Grade 1 and Grade 2 teachers, and by his mother.

When I began my fieldwork in 2008, Alex, who is one of the individuals within a township, was 5 years of age. He subsequently turned 6 in his Grade R year. He turned 8 in 2010, and was attending school in Grade 2 at the point where I completed my fieldwork. Alex has blond hair and blue eyes, and is short in comparison to other children in his age group. Alex is generally relaxed and calm in his approach to life. He is very sensitive to the feelings of others, and when someone else is in obvious discomfort or crying, this upsets him and he might become emotional. He is not a temperamentally competitive person, and although he enjoys coming first in any group activity or doing well, such concerns are not his main focus in life and do not reflect his primary motivations. Whenever he does do well, he regards such an achievement as a "bonus". He likes watching television, and enjoys a wide variety of sports such as rugby, swimming, tennis, gymnastics and athletics. He also enjoys relating any story in rich detail. Alex is very obedient where necessary, he clearly has a strong sense of what is right and wrong, and he knows what is expected of him in all the situations in which he finds himself. While Alex is the kind of person who doesn't boast about his achievements, he grasps information quickly and without much effort. His written scholastic work sometimes displays a degree of carelessness. Maybe this is because he tries to complete his academic work as quickly as possible. Alex is, by and large, a loving, caring and compassionate person who is popular among his peers.

It is clear to an observer that Alex takes pride in the fact that he is an obedient child, and that he has good manners. During interaction, it becomes rapidly obvious that he is in touch with his feelings and is proud of himself as an individual.

"I listen to my mom when I have to go to bed." (Interview 1, Alex, line 25)

"I always say thank you." (Interview 1, Alex, line, 31)

"I feel sad when someone is not nice to me." (Interview 3, Alex, line 12)

"When I'm happy, my heart beats fast." (Interview 3, Alex, line 21)

"When I think of being scared, I think of the colour blue." (Interview 3, Alex, line 20)

"When I think of being happy, I think of the colour yellow or orange." (Interview 3, Alex, line 23)

Some of the most salient characteristics that I observed in Alex throughout the study were his sensitivity towards others and his aversion to people who would say and do things that were offensive to him and to others. Even though he had no special need of prominence in his groups and no overwhelming desire to be centre-stage, he appreciated some degree of recognition and positive feedback from time to time. Because of his sensitivity, he sometimes reacted with strong emotions when confronted with unpleasant responses from others, as when, for example, they teased him about his unusual height (he was shorter than average for a boy in his age group). His unhappiness about this only appeared during our second-last session, although he had, according to his own testimony, been unhappy about it for quite some time, it appeared that no one had been aware of his unhappiness. On the whole, however, Alex's experiences of school were constructive and positive rather than negative.

“Alex was very angry after school when I saw him because some of the other children had said rude things to him.” (Interview 5, researcher, field notes, line 1)

“While observing Alex at his Grade R school, they were playing outside. Alex went to look for his brother, who was hiding. Alex and a friend went to look for Rick. Some of the girls told me that Alex was very nice and that they liked to catch him while they were playing. Alex doesn't like the attention from the girls and is shy. While some of the boys were running a race, all the girls cheered Alex all the way. Alex plays with lots of other boys and is popular among his friends.” (Interview 9, researcher, field notes, line 1-10)

“Alex wanted to sound all his words during our session. I could see that that was what they were doing in class. Alex also practised writing words on his own the whole time. I reached the conclusion that Alex may feel proud when he got things right which he did so at school, and that he was motivated to practise the work. Alex enjoys learning new things that he couldn't have done before, for example, he learned to write “ (Interview 11, researcher, field notes, line 32)

“Alex is very happy at school and at home.” (Interview 16, researcher, field notes, line 1)

“Alex rushed through his work. He wasn't neat but wanted to get his work done as quickly as possible. For him, to complete his work as quickly as possible, no matter the number of mistakes, is better than taking his time with fewer mistakes and neater work.” (Interview 26, researcher, field notes, line 3)

“I made the observation today that although everyone always assumes that Alex is strong and fine, he also needs motivation and he wants to hear compliments about himself. Sometimes, when he is upset about people teasing him about his height, he forgets about all his talents and the things that he is good at. It is especially in these vulnerable times that he needs some encouragement and positive feedback from his loved ones. The problem is that he won’t always tell his loved ones that he is upset or feeling down, and so they are not always aware of his feelings, which complicate the situation a little.” (Interview 27, researcher, research journal, line 2)

“I could see that Alex and Rick are happy at school and in control of the things happening around them at school. Alex is also feeling better about the teasing because he told his teacher about it. I can see that he is not completely happy yet, but he is feeling much better. Today he could easily tell me about his talents and strengths.” (Interview 28, researcher, research journal, line 1)

“While visiting their classroom for observation, I could see that Alex was participating well in the class activities. They were busy with speeches. During the period, I could see that Alex was getting a little bit bored listening to all the speeches. He then began to fidget with the boy next to him, and with his pens and books. I need to add that it was the last period of the day, and that it was very hot outside and in their classroom. He also answered the questions successfully. He is very relaxed and he listened to his fellow classmates’ speeches even though he was bored.” (Interview 31, researcher, field notes, line 9-15)

It seems that Alex’s teachers felt kindly towards him, and that his Grade 1 and Grade 2 teachers in particular were aware of his easy-going personality. Alex’s Grade R, Grade 1 and Grade 2 teachers commented on the calmness of his manner. All his teachers were aware of his kind-heartedness and loving attitudes. But Alex’s teachers also noticed that, in contrast to his general calmness, he displayed a tendency to rush through his work, and that this sometimes resulted in incorrect and untidy work. Alex’s teachers experienced him, by and large, as an obedient, academically talented and devoted learner while he was in their classrooms.

“Alex is very relaxed and protective of his younger sister.” (Interview 9, Grade R teacher, line 30)

“Alex has a very laid-back personality, and is very relaxed. He hasn’t reached his full potential yet because he gets lost in his own little world.” (Interview, 19, Grade 1 teacher, line 136)

“Alex can talk a lot and he will tell a story in great detail. You mustn’t rush him while he is busy telling his story; you must listen to the whole story. He is good in mathematics, but because he always rushes through his work, he makes unnecessary mistakes. He thinks that when he finishes first, he is the best, regardless of the number of mistakes he has made.” (Interview 29, Alex’s Grade 2 teacher, line 77-79)

Alex’s mother also emphasized his easy-going personality and the way in which he rushes through his work. Apart from the fact that Alex find it pleasurable to win, he has no need to be concerned about his abilities. He is aware of all his talents and strengths.

“With the homework, Alex tries to see how fast he can finish his work so that he can go and play.” (Interview 24, mother, line 24)

“Alex enjoys it when I tickle him and physically play with him.” (Interview 24, mother, line 46)

“Alex doesn’t have the will or motivation to give his all. When the teacher asked the class to colour in a picture on their own, Alex asked if they had to. When the teacher replied it was not necessary but that it would be nice, Alex stated that he would not colour in the picture. He is also very witty in class. His teacher also said he can do better with a little more effort. So I want to try to motivate him more. If I promise a Nintendo game if he gets 4s for all his subjects, then he will put some effort into his school work.” (Interview 24, mother, line 74-78)

“Alex is not the bragging type. But sometimes when Alex finishes his speech quickly, he will automatically say Rick’s speech too.” (Interview 24, mother, line 91)

“At times, you can see that Alex wants to tell you that he is good at something, but he doesn’t. He likes to win. You can see that he knows he is good, but he is down to earth. He doesn’t have to hear that he is good the whole day long.” (Interview 24, mother, line 98-103)

4.2.2 PARTICIPANT 2 – RICK⁹

This section provides a detailed description of Rick. It is compiled from his own directly quoted self-descriptions, from my observations as the researcher, from entries in my research journal, from my field notes, and, finally, from the descriptions and observations that were made by Rick’s Grade R, Grade 1 and Grade 2 teachers and by his mother.

Rick who is one of the individuals within a township. He has brown hair and brown eyes. Rick is an active and energetic person. Achievements are important to him and he enjoys competition as one of the important components in his life. Rick was, for example, tremendously pleased when he was made class captain and when he obtained an award. He is very proud of his achievements. Even though he is inclined to boast about his accomplishments, he always does so in a healthy, enthusiastic and charming manner. When he experiences victory or when he achieves something, he is clearly filled with satisfaction and delight. Although he takes pleasure in winning, he is also happy when his brother, Alex, does well. Rick has a great sense of humour and laughter forms a regular part of his daily life. He is also a sports enthusiast and participates in rugby, cricket, swimming, tennis, gymnastics and athletics. In the academic field, Rick needs to put in effort. Although he experienced reading problems at first, he improved after exercises, attending extra classes, and obtaining the correct medical prescription. The work in Rick’s school books is very precise, and he takes enough time to write tidily, a skill of which he is very proud. Rick has a large number of friends, and he is popular among his peers. Rick is a loving and caring person, and he greatly admires and appreciates his family.

It is clear to an observer that Rick is proud of his personal talents, advantages and achievements. All this emerges when he refers to his personal identity. It was also clear to me that the way in which others perceived him was important to him. He also had a strong need to be noticed and to be considered to be a talented and intelligent person.

⁹ “Rick” is a pseudonym for participant 2, and it is not his real name. The pseudonym “Rick” was used throughout this study, and it always refers to participant 2, who was one of the individuals within a township. The use of pseudonyms was designed to protect the participant’s identity and to ensure his anonymity.

"I am good at drawing." (Interview 1, Rick, line 18)

"I've got lots of friends." (Interview 16, Rick, line 96)

"I am Rick, and you must tell people that I behave well." (Interview 20, Rick, line 50)

"I must give my trophy back tomorrow, I had it yesterday and the day before." (Interview 21, Rick, line 115)

"This week I enjoyed helping my mom, and I got a achiever sticker because I cleaned the bathrooms at school." (Interview 23, Rick, line 28)

It became apparent to me during our sessions that Rick placed enormous value on all his achievements and accomplishments – from being class captain, to getting an achiever label into his achievements in sport. It was also clear to me that Rick's awards and accomplishments contributed to his sense of self-worth. Another prominent aspect of his personality that I noticed was his love of fun and his sense of humour. He also had the ability to become excited about any situation or task. Rick's school work was always very neat, and I observe the amount of effort and time he invested in his work. He did this because he arrived great self-satisfaction from the high quality of his work. It seemed to me, on the whole, that Rick really enjoyed school and everything that happened in it.

"During our session, Rick went to fetch his Grade R books to show me all his hard work." (Interview 9, researcher, field notes, line 46)

"Later on, he showed me more of his books." (Interview 9, researcher, field notes, line 66)

"Rick was extremely playful during our session." (Interview 11, researcher, field notes, line 31)

"Rick likes to play, to do silly things, and to have fun during our sessions." (Interview 12, researcher, field notes, line 2)

"Rick is very happy and content." (Interview 16, researcher, field notes, line 2)

"I feel so proud of Rick because he no longer becomes so upset and angry when he loses. He has really matured. Although he still doesn't like to lose, he handles losing far better than he did last year." (Interview 21, researcher, research journal, line 2)

"Rick was very playful and silly, and didn't want to do any work today." (Interview 25, researcher, field notes, line 15)

“Rick’s work is very neat and precise.” (Interview 26, researcher, field notes, line 3)

“Rick likes to blow his own trumpet about his achievements, although he does so in an inoffensive way..”(Interview 27, researcher, field notes, line 1)

During my observations in Rick’s Grade 2 classroom, I wrote the following: *“Rick listened carefully to his fellow classmates. When it was his turn to speech, he was a little bit nervous but he performed very well and with confidence. He carefully gathered all his thoughts. With every question from the teacher, he raised his hand to answer. The teacher made his day when she asked Rick to choose a winner for today’s speeches. He stood proudly while observing all the speeches. He was very obedient in class and he enjoyed announcing the winners.”* (Interview 30, researcher, field notes, line 6-14)

Rick’s fun-loving personality was also observed by his teachers, together with his love of activity. Rick’s teachers experienced him as a pleasant and eager learner. Both his Grade 1 and Grade 2 teachers felt that Rick and Alex needed to be separated in Grade 2. Rick’s Grade 2 teacher noted the strength of his character as it emerged in Grade 2.

“Rick is the clown of the classroom. Sometimes he gets very silly. He is very protective of his younger sister.” (Interview 9, Grade R teacher, line 29) and

“Rick would have got left behind if they had been in the same class in Grade 2.” (Interview 19, Grade 1 teacher, line 122)

“Rick is definitely very active and energetic.” (Interview 19, Grade 1 teacher, line 138)

“I don’t have any problems with Rick in my class.” (Interview 29, Rick’s Grade 2 teacher, line 80)

It is evident from their interactions that Rick’s mother knows exactly how to deal with him as an individual. She is realistic about his strengths and weaknesses and seems to strive to do what is best for him. Rick’s mother also confirmed that he became frustrated when he struggled to do something, and that he tended to want to give up in those situations.

“Rick never complained about his Grade 1 work, but he did struggle with his reading. The speech therapy is also helping in combination with the Ritalin, although it is not necessary for him to take it every day.” (Interview 18, mother, line 72)

“Rick likes to brag, and he will always make a story bigger than it really is. I always tell him not to tell lies and how important it is for him to tell the truth. He always wants to know how much the other person got and so forth.” (Interview 18, mother, line 83)

“If Rick struggles with something, he will give up.” (Interview 24, mother, line 24)

“If Rick struggles, he will become very frustrated and angry. The same thing happens when things doesn’t go his way. But if I accommodate him in what he wants, he is the most wonderful little angel.” (Interview 24, mother, line 28 -30)

“It is important for me to handle Rick with love and sensitivity. You must spend quality time with him. Rick and I act as master chefs together. When Rick and I went for all his extra reading lessons, he really enjoyed our individual, alone-time together.” (Interview 24, mother, line 44-50)

“Rick is also clever, but he sometimes doesn’t get things right as quickly as his brother (Alex). It may take him a little longer. He knows this and is OK with it, but when he is feeling tired, it becomes an issue. He will get frustrated, impatient and will start crying.” (Interview 24, mother, line 79-89)

“One aspect that I am very relieved about is that no one teased Rick because of his glasses. His glasses weren’t an issue at all.” (Interview, 24, mother, line 155)

4.2.3 THE INDIVIDUALS WITHIN A TWINSHIP

My aim in this section is to provide rich and in-depth descriptions of the individuals within a twinship and the various roles they played as a co-individuals within a twinship as they related to one another. I also provide additional information about factors such as their competitiveness, their relationship in school and in class, how they perceived each other, and their individual roles within a twinship. Though I am tentative about this, I also make some comparisons between the participating individuals within a twinship. I also discuss how other role players, including their teachers and mother, experienced them at school and outside of school.

When I examine the transcriptions of my interviews and my field notes, there is very little data of competition between Alex and Rick. On the contrary, they usually

support one another. But since Rick is more competitive by nature than Alex, he will sometimes become upset when he is not first in achievement or recognition. While Alex was usually fairly indifferent to coming first, it was obvious that he liked it when it happened. On the whole, their relationship with one another is healthy and supportive rather than competitive.

“Yes, I came last in gymnastics one time when Rick won.” (Interview, 15, Alex, line 20)

When his brother Rick had become upset because he had lost the game again, Alex said the following: *“We can go again, it’s okay.”* (Interview, 15, Alex, line 64)

“Alex is not competitive at all, and that is why certain things like competition, or not winning, do not bother him.” (Interview, 18, mother, line 82)

“Alex is always first. I am not going to work with you today.” (Interview 15, Rick, line 15)

“Rick wanted all Alex’s animals and Alex didn’t mind giving them to Rick.” (Interview 13, researcher, field notes, line 21)

“Rick doesn’t like to lose, and it makes him very upset and emotional, and results in him becoming out of control at times.” (Interview 15, researcher, field notes, line 1)

“I want to be first.” (Interview 15, Rick, lines 13, 27, 29 and 41)

“I am always last.” (Interview 15, Rick, line 37)

“I came first in gymnastics and Alex came 5th.” (Interview 15, Rick, line 118)

“I got two achiever labels and Alex only got one.” (Interview 23, Rick, line 32)

“Rick is much more competitive than Alex.” (Interview 24, mother, line 93)

“Rick told me about, and then showed me the medals that he had won for gymnastics. He is very proud of them.” (Interview 25, researcher, field notes, line 14)

“Can I quickly tell you something? Alex and I are among the top ten gymnasts.” Interview 26, Rick, line 76)

On one day during interview 15, I saw Rick really upset. It was the only time that I saw him upset in this way. It happened because he was defeated in some informal game with his brother. Although he displayed a lot of negative emotion, that was the only time in which he was upset to that extent during the three years of my research. During that session I observed that Rick was tired because he had an unpleasant day. Even though I knew winning was important for Rick, the day on which this

happened wasn't a normal day for Rick, and so I assumed that there may have been other factors unknown to me that might have explained his unusual behaviour on that day.

During the course of my research, the only things that Alex and Rick didn't like about one another was when they caused one another physical pain, and when they would take one another's personal belongings (mainly toys). All these situations occurred in their home environment.

"I get angry when my brother takes my toys." (Interview 5, Alex, line 14)

"I didn't like it when my brother punched me at home because it hurt." (Interview 23, Alex, line 8)

"When we fight is it quick; then it is over and done with." (Interview 23, Alex, line 25)

"It makes me angry when Rick is naughty and hurts me at home." (Interview 27, Alex, line 84)

"Alex pinched me at home. I didn't like it." (Interview 23, Rick, line 28)

"I get angry when Alex takes my things at home because it is bad." (Interview 27, Rick, line 80)

While they were in Grade R and Grade 1, Alex and Rick were in the same classroom and had the same teacher. Before they were promoted to Grade 2, their mother, in consultation with their Grade 1 teacher, decided that it would be better for them both to be placed in separate classes in Grade 2. They decided this for a variety of reasons that will be explained later in this section. From my own personal observations and from Alex and Rick's descriptions of their experiences, it seemed to me that although they had enjoyed being in one another's company when they had been placed in the same class, it was time for them to attend separate classes in Grade 2. It should, however, also be noted that most of the children from their pre-school had gone to other primary schools. Alex and Rick were two out of five children from their pre-school to attend the same primary school. It was my opinion that it had been helpful to keep them together in their Grade 1 classroom, especially in view of the fact that it was a new environment and that they would have to make new friends. But I had no reservations about the desirability of them being separated

in Grade 2. They themselves were quite happy about it because they met up during break times when they played together. From this I concluded that the time that they spent together during breaks, was more important for the individuals within a twinship than any time they would have spent together in the same Grade 2 class.

"We enjoy being in the same class." (Interview 10, Alex, line 7)

"I enjoy it at school when my brother plays with me." (Interview 15, Alex, line 39)

"It is nice to have my brother in my class because he is my brother." (Interview 15, Rick, line 65)

"I enjoy it when my brother plays with me at school." (Interview 15, Rick, line 68)

"I don't miss Rick in the class because I see him at break." (Interview 21, Alex, line 69)

"We play together every break when we play 'opies' (open the gate)." (Interview 21, Rick, line 134)

"I've noticed that being in different classrooms was not a problem in any way for either of them" (Interview 21, researcher, field notes, line 174)

Alex and Rick enjoyed a brotherly relationship with one another in school. Because they had a special bond with one another, they would protect and support each other whenever necessary. They would always support one another and there were no reports of quarrels or physical fights between them at school. Both of them were aware that they could rely on support from one another at school. They would always enjoy their times of recreation together. But at the same time, they were also obviously able to function successfully and independently of one another. This is perceptible by their independence of one another in their Grade 2 year when they were no longer in the same class together. They therefore proved that it was possible for both of them to stand on their own feet and to be separate and distinct individuals whenever their co-individual within a twinship was not physically present.

I have used the following categories in order to provide a clear description of Alex and Rick's perceptions of one another. These categories are: their fondness for one another, their distinctive differences, the way in which they constructed individual meanings about being individuals within a twinship, their personal characteristics, and their distinctive individualities. It is my opinion that their perceptions about one

another might to some extent have affected their experiences of their transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2.

It was clear that both Alex and Rick experienced a great deal of compassion for one another. Even in those relatively rare situations in which they were upset with one another, they would both nevertheless still answer questions about their co-individual within a twinship in an affectionate manner. Even though they were two distinct individuals and were proud of being so, I observed that there was an intense and profound connectedness between them although they generally enjoyed a relaxed relationship. Although both of them appeared to be proud of being an unique and individual human being, they were at the same time just as proud of being members of a twinship.

“My brother is nice.” (Interview 16, Rick, line 100)

“I like my brother Rick.” (Interview 16, Alex, line 108)

“During the three years with Alex and Rick, there wasn’t one incident which I could recall in which I heard that they didn’t like each other. Whenever I asked them about each other, it would always be positive. I really experienced the fondness they felt for one another throughout this study.” (Interview 34, researcher, research journal, lines 3-5)

When Alex and Rick answered my questions about whether they were alike or whether they were different, they both agreed that they were different for the following reasons: their distinctive physical appearances, their different friends and, and for the different sports in which they participated. I immediately noticed that neither of them referred to their different *personalities* or *characteristics* in order to explain their differences or similarities. I also observed that neither Alex nor Rick assumed that either of them was “superior” to their co-individual within a twinship. Whenever they as individuals talked about being different and unique within the context of their twinship, they simply stated this in a matter-of-fact manner and justified their opinions with reference to physically verifiable facts. It was also apparent to me that neither of them wanted to be similar to his co-individual within a twinship. They were both proud of their individual differences from one another within a twinship.

"We are a little bit different. Rick's hair is darker than mine. We look different." (Interview, 20, Alex, line 11)

"We are different. Alex's feet are bigger than mine and I am taller than Alex." (Interview 20, Rick, line 56)

"We have the same friends, mostly." (Interview 20, Rick, line 63)

"We do different things. I play rugby and Rick plays cricket." (Interview 20, Alex, line 36)

"We play the same sports, but Alex doesn't play cricket like me." (Interview 20, Rick, line 70)

Alex and Rick were both quite confident that they were distinctive individuals within a twinship. The significance of a twinship to both of them was that each of them had a brother. One could sense their pride in their individuality from the fact that they always referred to themselves as two people rather than as one. Both of them liked the idea of being part of a twinship, and their special bond with one another was observable at all times during my interactions with them. I regarded their approach to being part of a twinship as healthy and natural because of the fact that they were comfortable both as individuals and as members of a twinship. I also observed on different occasions that both Alex and Rick perceived themselves primarily as individuals and secondarily as individuals within a twinship.

"We are two people." (Interview 20, Alex, line 16)

"Twins means to have a brother." (Interview 20, Alex, line 41)

"It is nice to be twins." (Interview 20, Alex, line 42)

"We are two people." (Interview 20, Rick, line 60)

"Twins means brothers." (Interview 20, Rick, line 73)

"I don't want to be like my brother. I want to be me." (Interview 20, Alex line 18)

"I don't want to be like Alex. I want to be Rick." (Interview 20, Rick, line 61)

"On many occasions, it was clear to me that both Alex and Rick were proud of the fact that they were part of a twinship. I observed their relationship and the meaning of being part of a twinship as special and unique, and as something that not everyone has. It felt like something they could show off at school and something that was "untouchable". (Interview 21, researcher, research journal, lines 10-14)

“During the course of this study, it was clear to me that both Alex and Rick were proud of the fact that they were part of a twinship, but at the same time, they were proud of who they were as individuals. For me, they perceived each another as unique individuals, and a twinship part was just an added bonus for them, something that added fun to their lives.”
(Interview 28, researcher, research journal, line 5-8)

During that time when they were in Grade 1 and Grade 2, it became clear to me that they flourished when they were together but also when they were placed in separate classrooms. When they were together in Grade R and in Grade 1, and when they were placed separately in Grade 2, both of them appeared to be equally content and satisfied. It was noticeable, however, that they are certain of their independence from one another more clearly during the year when they were placed in different classrooms in Grade 2. It was during that year that they were perceived more as separate individuals than as individuals within a twinship. In the long run, the different role players in this study agreed that it would be more rewarding to separate Alex and Rick, mainly because it would give each of them opportunities to be and act as individuals, each with its own distinctive accomplishments and identity.

Grade 1

“It was a relief to have a friend with them. It was easier to have a brother with them in class because they were able to borrow stationary from one another and they always possessed a back-up system. When one of them got into trouble, they were able to help one another. Although they were good friends, their closeness could lead to conflict because they shared common friends and always wanted the same things as one another. It was a coping mechanism for each of them to have a friend with them at all times because then they knew that they didn’t have to do everything alone.” (Interview 18, mother, line 29-36)

“The two of them have different interests. The one is not stronger or better than the other one. They are just different personalities. That is also one of the reasons for separating them next year.” (Interview 18, mother, line 77)

“It will be better to separate the twins in Grade 2 for academic reasons. Alex and Rick both exert positive and negative influences on one another. The negative influence became evident when Rick forgot his pencil. And Alex would always go and help Rick when he got behind in his work.” (Interview 19, Grade 1 teacher, line 128-135)

And Alex also gave Rick the correct answers when Rick got his answers wrong. The positive influence was evident in the fact that both Alex and Rick were never jealous of one another.” (continue - Interview 19, Grade 1 teacher, line 128-135)

Grade 2

“The fact that they are in separate classrooms this year is for the best. They are more on their own now. Otherwise the one is class captain and the other one is not. When they are in their own classes, it is better. The teachers can’t see how cute they are as twins anymore. The teachers can see them now as individuals now, and that is good.” (Interview, 24, mother, line 63-66)

“I think I will from now on always keep them separated in class. When they are in separate classes, it always feels to me as though I’ve got four kids. When they were together, it felt more like a package. Now it is literally one-one. It is more difficult for me. The ‘twin-package’ was easier to handle.” (Interview 24, mother, line 140-143)

“I think it is better to separate them in class. It gives each child the opportunity to make his mark when he is not always categorised as his brother’s twin. Both of them have different characters. It gives them the chance to be themselves and to achieve things on their own.” (Interview 29, Alex’s Grade 2 teacher, line 66-68)

4.2.4 THE FAMILY OF THE INDIVIDUALS WITHIN A TWINSHIP AND THEIR HOME ENVIRONMENT

Since I have already presented a rich and detailed description of the individuals within a twinship’s family in Chapter 3, I will now focus on the descriptions and experiences of the family that I recorded during the interviews. It is clear to me from the outset that the mother and father enjoy a strong, healthy and stable marriage, and that they see eye to eye and support and encourage one another in all matters regarding the discipline of their children. My perception was that the individuals within a twinship felt secure and contented with the individual roles their mother and father played in the family. I also perceived that the mother exercised the more nurturing and caring functions while the father assumed the role as head of the household and planner and executor of entertainment events. It seemed obvious to me from my personal observations and my interviews with the participants that both Alex and Rick received unconditional love, attention and support in their home environment.

“Our family is close but not that close. We have got a very good backup system because all the grandparents also stay on our plot. Sometimes, when I have to work, their grandfather will pick them up from school. I make sure I take them to school every morning. While we talk about everything, it is sometimes necessary for me to drag information out of them. The kids will play more with their father than talk to him. On the other hand, they will rather talk to me about things. With their dad, there is a lot more physical contact. He plays rough with them, wrestling with them, or having pillow fights. The boys enjoy that.” (Interview 18, mother, lines 43-51)

“I love my new baby brother. It is nice to have him at home.” (Interview 21, Alex, line 104)

“With both the new baby and the new au pair girl, the adjustments were excellent for everyone. There were absolutely no issues.” (Interview 24, mother, lines 25)

“I am a strict mother, but the kids also take lots of chances with me. They know I don’t only talk once, but ten times. I won’t hit them, but if they push me to the limit, then I will punish them in the bathroom. So I will say that I am strict, but in a loving manner. I also try to teach them things in a loving manner. I am not the fun one: their father is. When he comes home, he will wrestle with them. I will draw with them, for example. I strive to raise them with Christian values.” (Interview 24, mother, lines 1-10)

“If they have a problem, they will rather talk to me than to their father. If someone hurts them, then I am like a tiger. I will go and fight with that person.” (Interview 24, mother, lines 12-17)

“Their father is very strict. He only talks once. Both I and my husband support one another when it comes to discipline. He will always back me. With values, morals and discipline, we are on the same team.” (Interview 24, mother, lines 36-41)

4.2.5 GRADE R ENVIRONMENT

When I entered their Grade R classroom, I was instantly welcomed by their sincere, warm and loving teacher. She was very spontaneous and natural, and willingly showed me around the school ground. Their preschool was situated in a fairly high socio-economic area in a safe environment. The surrounding houses were neat and tidy. The majority of the children attending this specific school came from a single- or dual-income family. The school had the appearance of what might have once been a private residence before it was refurbished as a preschool (Addendum contains digital photos of the Grade R environment). Both the surroundings and the

school building appeared to be very neat, safe and carefully planned. The inside of the classroom was filled with colourful posters. There were an ample number of plastic containers that were filled with all kinds of useful and appropriate adjuncts such as blocks, Lego, craft materials, and puzzles. The atmosphere in the classroom was warm and cheerful. The children seemed to be contented, relaxed and affectionate towards their teacher and towards their fellow class mates both in the classroom and outside in the play area. The teacher appeared to be in control of her class, and order and discipline prevailed both inside and outside the classroom. Because I visited the preschool towards the end of the year, the children were mostly engaged in revising and finalising their work in addition to being able to enjoy a lot of free time outside in the play area. The outside play area was highly suitable for pre-schoolers. It was spacious, and was furnished with a wide variety of play areas and equipment that was designed to encourage and extend the skills of pre-schoolers during their school hours. The Grade R teacher also showed me the school's library, which served a dual purpose as a library and as a therapy room for the speech and occupational therapists. Their Grade R teacher has been a teacher for 32 years all in all, and had spent a total of 20 years in this particular school. When one considers the words below, one can understand why the individuals within a township regarded play as their most enjoyable and main activity in Grade R.

"Today we've played outside, on the jungle gym, and we ran and played rugby. We also played in the sand, we did some work, and we ate and played again." (Interview 1, Rick, line 10)

"I enjoy it the most when someone jumped with me on the trampoline at school. It is so nice!" (Interview 1, Alex, line 12)

"The boys ran outside, and they also played in the sand and on the jungle gyms. They are very active in the playground outside, and they are really enjoying themselves." (Interview 9, field notes, lines 1, 6, 9 and 10)

4.2.6 GRADE 1 ENVIRONMENT

The primary school that the individuals within a township attended is a very popular and growing school situated in a prestigious area although it prides itself as being a

school with a farm-like atmosphere within the city. The majority of the children who attended this school came from families who lived within a large security estate close to the school. The Grade 1 classroom was situated on the ground floor (Addendum A-2 contains digital photos of the Grade 1 environment). The class itself was spacious, neat and well organized. All the walls were decorated with the letters of the alphabet, numbers, words, posters and colourful and striking posters and faces. The teacher in charge of the class displayed great warmth and a great deal of confidence in her work. One could immediately feel and sense respect that the children had for their teacher. By making reference to the following lived experiences of the participants, I was able to establish that their activities in the Grade 1 environment consisted mainly of work that was prescribed for Grade 1, of sports, and of various recreational activities with one another and with their friends in Grade 1.

"We get homework in Grade 1." (Interview 10, Alex, line 20)

"During our session, I could see that Alex was really intrigued with his school work. He was busy making plus sums the whole time and enjoying it." (Interview 13, researcher, field notes, line 2)

"We don't get lots of homework." (Interview 17, Alex and Rick, line 68)

"Their teacher helps Rick a lot with his reading. She will sit with him and help him." (Interview 24, mother, line 137)

"We've got friends and we help other children." (Interview 10, Alex, line 35)

"This one boy sits in the back of the class and our teacher doesn't even know he is there because he so clever. He is our friend." (Interview 17, Alex, line 40)

"Most of our friends went to another primary school. We miss them but we still see them sometimes at gymnastics or competitions." (Interview 17, Alex, line 50 -55)

"The school didn't make a big deal out of the transition to Grade 1. The school isn't very big and so the teachers will tell us immediately if there are problems. I thought it was going to be more difficult to adjust for the twins because they didn't know the children in the school. But they were fine and happy." (Interview 18, mother, lines 39-41)

"Grade R is not nice... Grade 1 is." (Interview 10, Alex, line 50)

"Grade 1 is the best." (Interview 10, Rick, line 58)

“Both of the individuals within a township enjoyed drawing their school on the cardboard and they seemed really happy and contented in Grade 1. They really enjoy school. Rick showed me all his Grade 1 books and Alex sounded all his words.” (Interview 11, researcher, field notes, line 1)

“It is nice at school.” (Interview 16, Rick, line 94)

4.2.7 GRADE 2 ENVIRONMENT

The individuals within a township attended the same primary school in Grade 2 that they did in Grade 1. Although the Grade 2 classrooms were in the same building as the Grade 1 classrooms, the Grade 2 classrooms were on the second floor now rather than on the ground floor, as they had been the year before (Addendum contains digital photos of the Grade 2 environment). Both of their classrooms attended by the participants were spacious, well organised and full of interest and character. All of the walls were covered with examples of cursive writing, weather charts, birthday charts, life skill posters, achiever sticker posters, and posters with black stickers for those occasions when the children were disobedient. Each child was provided with adequate workspace. The atmosphere in both of their classrooms was warm, orderly, disciplined and pleasant. Alex’s teacher had already served as a teacher for the previous 16 years, and this was her third year as a Grade 2 teacher in this school. She enjoyed Grade 2 because, as she humorously noted, it was the year “in which the children were out of their nappies but had not yet moved into high heels”. Rick’s teacher also happen to be the Head of the Department. She had been a teacher for 30 years, and when I met her, she was serving her sixth year as a Grade 2 teacher in this particular school.

In order to illustrate the vivid realities of the lived experiences of the individuals within a township and to enrich the description of the Grade 2 environment enjoyed by the participants, I organised everything that the participants related to me during the interviews in terms of a number of categories. These categories included their physical characteristics during that year, their friends, their work and academics, their teachers, and their overall attitudes to what they experienced in Grade 2.

Alex's experiences in Grade 2 were different from what they had been in Grade 1, and they related mostly to the physical differences that they observed during the course of the year.

"Grade 2 is different from Grade 1 because we sit in a different place now in another classroom. My teacher has a white board. In Grade 1 the teacher had a green board. The chairs are also different. Our chairs are black now. In Grade 1 we had wooden chairs."
(Interview 21, Alex, line 53-55)

While Alex regarded the children in his class as his new friends, Rick referred to his friends from last year as his friends. He seems to have made only one new friend in Grade 2.

"My friends are different now from those I had in Grade 1. My friends now are the kids in my class." (Interview 21, Alex, line 84)

"I still have the same friends I had in Grade 1. I have just one new friend." (Interview 21, Rick, line 140)

It was evident that the workload that they had to cope with in Grade 2 made a definite impact upon the participants. The mother of the individuals within a township recalled that the excessive workload in Grade 2, and the fact that Alex and Rick were in separate classrooms (and therefore did not have exactly the same homework every day), placed an extra strain upon her as their mother. The individuals within a township also seemed to experience the workload as somewhat overwhelming and certainly challenging.

"Grade 2 is different from Grade 1 because we didn't get achiever stickers in Grade 1. We didn't have as many books in Grade 1 as we have in Grade 2. We also didn't have time tables in Grade 1 and we didn't have a white board in Grade 1. We make sums on our white boards." (Interview 21, Rick, line 118-122)

"One thing that I've noticed is the heavy workload in Grade 2. It is much more than it was last year. It is hard for them if they want to play and they must first do their homework."
(Interview 24, mother, line 22)

“They get the same homework. But sometimes one of them has lost his paper or the paper is not in their books. Then it is chaos.” (Interview 24, mother, line 145)

“Everything is the same in Grade 2 as it was in Grade 1 except for the workload. We have much more work.” (Interview 26, Alex, line 55)

“Grade 1 is boring because you have to sound all the words the whole time.” (Interview 26, Alex, line 80)

“I don’t like the workload in Grade 2, but it is good for us.” (Interview 26, Rick, line 83)

“Yes, the work is nice in Grade 2.” (Interview 26, Rick, line 84)

“When they talk about Grade 2 , they always refer to the workload. But they still enjoy Grade 2. They are very proud of their achievements in gymnastics. They are stressed about Grade 3 already because they are going to write with pens in cursive writing. They won’t be able to erase their mistakes. I can see that the workload is making great demands on them, but they are still able to cope with it. They both seem very happy, active and lively.” (Interview 26, researcher, research journal, lines 1-5)

Both of the individuals with a twinship were delighted with their Grade 2 teachers – as was their mother who was of the opinion that each of the individuals within a twinship had been allocated the teacher that was most suitable for him. Alex’s teacher was more informal and calm in her approach. Rick’s teacher was more strict and formal. I observed that both of these are teachers brought out the best in each of them and complemented the strength and weaknesses of their individual personalities.

“I am very happy with each of their teachers and I think both of them are in the right teacher’s class. Alex’s teacher is a loving teacher. She said when Alex smiles at her then everything is over. Both of their marks were better this term than in the first term.” (Interview 24, mother, line 68)

“Rick’s teacher is much stricter than Alex’s teacher. Rick’s teacher won’t let any mistake pass whereas Alex’s teacher is very relaxed and doesn’t mind a small mistake here and there. Both of the teachers encourage the children to do everything on their own. This is different from what it was like in Grade 1, where everything was done for them.” (Interview 24, mother, line 135)

“I am very pleased with both their teachers. Both of them get along very well with each of the boys.” (Interview 24, mother, line 139)

All in all, the participants experienced Grade 2 as positive. I further observed that although both Alex and Rick truly enjoyed Grade 2, it represented a challenge for them. Both the work and workload made significant demands on them. During our sessions and interviews, they told me that they have struggled, but that the struggles were challenging to them (they made special reference to the challenge of getting so much homework). It was in Grade 2 that Alex was teased about his height, and this was an unpleasant experience for him. But when he had dealt with that uncomfortable situation, he felt relieved.

“If I close my eyes and see Grade 2 in front of me, I become angry because the kids are teasing me about my height.” (Interview 27, Alex, line 109)

“I feel better this week because the kids aren’t teasing me so much anymore. The teacher said she would give them black stickers for their books if they kept on teasing me.” (Interview 28, Alex, line 1-8)

“Grade 2 is nicer than Grade 1.” (Interview 26, Rick, line 71)

“Rick needs to put in great efforts to succeed.” (Interview 29, Rick’s Grade 2 teacher, line 111-113)

“If I close my eyes and see Grade 2 in front of me, it looks nice!” (Interview 27, Rick, line 105)

“I enjoy Grade 2 because I am always behaving and so the class captains never write my name on the board. I am the class captain tomorrow.” (Interview 21, Rick, line 110)

“Grade 2 is much nicer than Grade 1.” (Interview 21, Rick, line 124)

“Rick definitely needs to put in some extra effort to grasp all the work. Even though he is also clever, he needs to work harder than Alex to do well. The work is definitely easier for Alex than for Rick.” (Interview 24, mother, line 172)

“We play hide and seek in Grade 2, me and my brother play together.” (Interview 22, Rick, line 150 and 154)

I made the observation that Rick struggles with the work in Grade 2 – even though he struggles to admit it. (Interview 26, researcher, research journal, line 22)

4.3 FINDINGS UNDERLYING THIS STUDY

In the following section I will set out answer to my primary research question. Three themes emerged from my analysis of the data. Theme 1 emerged most prominently from the accumulated data. Certain aspects from theme 1 are also subsumed in theme 2 and theme 3.

4.3.1 THEME 1

The transitions of the individuals within a township from Grade R through to Grade 2 were largely uncomplicated

When I consider the overall import of the research, it seems to me that the transitions made by the individuals within a township from Grade R through to Grade 2, were largely uncomplicated. I generated the following nine factors (illustrated in Table 4.1) during the data analysis process to indicate possible reasons why the transitions of the participants from Grade R through to Grade 2 were generally uncomplicated. Seven of the nine categories collected in the table below were experienced as positive and affirmative by the participants, whereas two of these categories represented experiences that were both positive and negative (mixed). I shall provide a detailed explanation for each of the following nine categories of experience.

Table 4.1: Possible reasons why the transitions of the participants from Grade R through to Grade 2 were largely uncomplicated

+	Their positive attitudes and behaviour
+	Their self-confidence and pleasurable new experiences
+	Their position as co-individuals within a township
+	Friendships
+	Their Grade R, Grade 1 and Grade 2 teachers
+	Learned life skills
+	Their Grade 1 and Grade 2 expectations
+ & -	Homework and academics
+ & -	Bullies and Disobedient ¹⁰ children

¹⁰ For the purpose of this study, the mentioned ‘disobedient children’ were the perceptions of both the individuals within a township. I did not pertinently focus on disobedient children during this study, but rather on the perceptions of the study’s participants.

What follows below are detailed explanations of each of the possible reasons why the participants' transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2 were largely uncomplicated.

4.3.1.1 Positive attitudes and behaviour

The individuals within a township maintained positive attitudes to whatever they experienced in Grade 1 and Grade 2 during their transition processes. Their **positive attitudes** may therefore have made their transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2 generally uncomplicated. On numerous occasions they used words and phrases that demonstrated that they were contented with their school and that they experienced their home life as satisfying. The individuals within a township frequently referred in different ways to Grade 1 and to Grade 2 as evoking pleasant experiences, feelings and emotions. There was numerous data in the data to demonstrate that both of them took pleasure both in their work and in their recreational activities. The individuals within a township both agreed that they enjoyed many more positive experiences than negative experiences at school. My field notes and observations also confirmed that they were contented and satisfied in both their home and school environments.

I also observed that the individuals within a township developed an increasing sense of **accomplishment** and **maturity** in their year in Grade 2. It was also obvious to me that they were extending their range of activities and skills of their Grade 2 year, and that they had the sense of increasing **accomplishment** and **maturity**. They may also have transferred the benefits of such experiences into the later grades that they attended. Alex also noted quite explicitly that there were many more pleasant sides to life in Grade 2 than there were negative features, and this may have been the reason why he chose to focus on the positive aspects of school life rather than on the negative aspects. For the purposes of this study, it is my opinion that Alex and Ricks' positive attitudes and their predominantly positive emotions were of fundamental importance for achieving satisfying and mainly uncomplicated transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2.

Positive attitudes

"Grade 1 is much better than Grade R." (Interview 10, Alex, line 50)

"We had a good day. We played and worked." (Interview 11, Rick, line 22)

"Both of the twins enjoyed drawing their school on the cardboard and they seemed really happy and contented in Grade 1. They really enjoy school." (Interview 11, researcher, field notes, line 1)

"Grade 1 is so nice!" (Interview 12, Alex and Rick, line 155)

"Rick is very happy at school and at home." (Interview 16, researcher, field notes, line 1)

"Alex is very happy and contented at school and at home." (Interview 17, researcher, field notes, line 2)

"It is going well in Grade 1." (Interview 17, Alex and Rick, lines 11 and 12)

"I enjoy Grade 2." (Interview 21, Alex, line 23)

"Grade 2 is much nicer than Grade 1." (Interview 21, Alex, line 61)

"I enjoy Grade 2. It is nice." (Interview 21, Rick, line 108)

"I am very happy in Grade 2." (Interview 21, Rick, line 164)

"There are more nice things at school than bad things." (Interview 27, participant Alex, line 42) and

"I could see that Alex and Rick were happy at school." (Interview 28, researcher, research journal, line 1)

Both Alex and Rick manifested positive behaviours in Grade 1 and in Grade 2. I noted that their behaviour and body language was **relaxed**, **participative** and attentive (**listening**) in class, all of which I regard as indicators of positive behaviour. Their Grade 1 and Grade 2 teachers also confirmed their **relaxed**, **obedient** and **good-natured** behaviour in class. I therefore made the assumption that the good behaviour mentioned by their teachers referred to their relaxed participation in class activities, the attentive way in which they were listening to their teacher, their obedience to legitimate orders and their good-natured reactions to events around them. I regarded all of these manifestations of good behaviour as indicators of the largely uncomplicated transitions they made between their grades.

Positive behaviour

"Alex is very relaxed at school." Interview, 19, Grade 1 teacher, line 136)

“Alex is playful and will hide the books of the person sitting next to him.” (Interview, 19, Grade 1 teacher, line 144)

“I enjoy Grade 2 because I’m always behaving so the class captain don’t write my name on the board.” (Interview 21, participant Rick, line 110)

“I don’t have any problems with Rick in my class.” (Interview 29, Rick’s Grade 2 teacher, line 80)

“After every question from the teacher, he raised his hand to answer.” (Interview 30, researcher, field notes, line 10)

“While visiting their classroom for observation, I could see that Alex was participating well in the class activities.” (Interview 31, researcher, field notes, line 9)

“Alex was very relaxed and listened to his fellow classmates’ speeches even though he was bored.” (Interview 31, researcher, field notes, line 15)

4.3.1.2 Their self-confidence and pleasurable new experiences

Alex and Rick demonstrated a **healthy** and **realistic self-confidence** together with feelings of pride in themselves and in their talents. Rick’s **positive** and **obedient behaviour** (his principal was referring to how efficiently he cleaned the bathrooms and how well he presented good work to his principal), may also have contributed to his sense of **self-worth**. I also observed that both Alex and Rick were **in control** of school-related matters – something that may be an indicator of **self-confidence**. I assumed that in order to effect a successful transition, it would be necessary for them to have a high degree of self-confidence. I therefore came to the conclusion that because both Alex and Rick showed positive attitudes and indications of a healthy level of self-confidence, their transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2 were generally uncomplicated.

Self-confidence

“I am good at drawing.” (Interview 1, Alex, line 18)

“I am good at rugby.” (Interview 16, Rick, line 74)

“I want to be my own person.” (Interview 20, Alex, line 23)

“I am also clever.” (Interview 20, Rick, line 54)

"I will be class captain tomorrow." (Interview 21, Rick, line 110)

"I feel proud to wear my glasses." (Interview 21, Rick, line 148)

"I got an achiever sticker because I had cleaned the bathrooms at school." (Interview 23, Rick, line 28)

"You can see that Alex knows he is good in academics, but is modest about that. He doesn't have to hear it the whole day." (Interview 24, line 100)

"This week is nice because I am the class captain." (Interview 27, Alex, line 20)

"It was also nice when I could show off my good work to the principal." (Interview 27, Rick, line 47)

"I could see that Alex and Rick were in control of the things that happened around them at school." (Interview 28, researcher, research journal, line 1)

"Although he was a bit nervous with his speech, he performed very well and with confidence. He stood proudly while observing all the speeches. He was very obedient in class and enjoyed announcing the names of the winners." (Interview 30, researcher, field notes, line 8-14)

Both Alex and Rick **took pleasure** in being confronted with and in **embracing** the challenges of new opportunities. Both the possibilities of the tuck-shop and the events on the rugby field were new and pleasurable experiences for them. They both eagerly embraced and **succeeded** in the opportunity of making and developing new friendships because most of their Grade R friends had been enrolled in other primary schools. Other additional normal and pleasurable experiences were learning the skills of typing, performing mathematical calculations, and participating in athletics. All of these new skills also have given them an additional sense of **accomplishment**. This was confirmed in my opinion by the fact that they took great pleasure in all of these new experiences. It also seemed to me that the prefects and headmaster created an ambient atmosphere of **safety and comfort** in their new, unfamiliar school environment. It was obvious to me that Alex and Rick managed to make the most of these new experiences because there was more than enough data to show that they found them **pleasurable** and **exciting**. By taking pleasure in their new experiences and by embracing new opportunities that came their way, Alex and Rick were able to enjoy the largely uncomplicated transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2.

Pleasurable new experiences

“I like it when we drink cold drink at school from the tuck-shop.” (Interview 10, Rick, line 36)

“We enjoy playing tennis, rugby and doing maths in Grade 1.” (Interview 10, Alex and Rick, line 38)

“The prefects take good care of us, but if we don’t know something, we go to the headmaster to get help.” (Interview 10, Alex, line 55)

“We like our headmaster.” (Interview 12, Rick, line 165)

“The nice things at school are our work, play, our teacher. We are also getting better at having friendships, kicking the ball, eating during break, and making new friends.” (Interview 12, Rick, lines 31, 34, 36, 41, 42, 43, 47, 48, 50)

“We are getting more clever at school. It is nice to buy something at the tuck shop, and it is nice to learn.” (Interview 12, Alex, lines 41, 42, 44, 46.)

“It was nice in the computer room because we could type.” (Interview 16, Rick, line 52)

“Most of the time we were more on the rugby field than in the classroom because we do a lot of athletics, which we love.” (Interview 26, Alex, line 34)

“One of the things I like most about Grade 2 is doing athletics.” (Interview 26, Rick, line 105)

4.3.1.3 Their co-individual within a twinship

During the course of the fieldwork sessions, the only negative response that I recorded between the co-individuals within a twinship, occurred in their home environment (4.2.3). There may have indeed been other negative incidents between the individuals within a twinship at school, but there were no such indications of any such negative incidents in my data. On the contrary, the data I was able to collect during my interviews and sessions with the participants, made it clear that Alex and Rick **supported** and **protected** one another at school. Each of them probably also felt safe in the company of his co-individual within a twinship and valued the friendship of his co-individual in the classroom and during break. I regarded the fact that both of them appeared to be confident and contented in Grade 2 without their co-individual within a twinship in their class, as an indicator of the possibly solid, strong and trustworthy bond that they developed in their relationship, as well as an indicator of each individual’s independent identity. Additional positive indicators of the strength of the bond between Alex and Rick were their sympathy and empathy

towards one another and intuitive way in which they understood each other. After a careful examination of all the data, I came to the conclusion that the support, protection, trust and camaraderie that Alex and Rick demonstrated towards one another was fundamentally important in helping them to effect largely uncomplicated transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2.

“It is nice to have my brother in my class because then I have a friend.” (Interview 15, Alex, line 23)

“It won’t bother me if we are not in the same class next year.” (Interview 15, Alex, line 29)

“We enjoy playing together during every break.” (Interview 15, Alex, line 41)

“My brother and I never fight with each other at school.” (Interview 15, Rick line 78)

“It is nice having my brother with me in class because I have a friend.” (Interview 15, Alex, line 82)

“I like having my brother in my class because he is my brother and I enjoy it when he plays with me during break.” (Interview 15, Rick, line 139 & 142)

“It was a relief for each of them to have a friend with them. It made it was easier for them to have a brother with them in class. It was a coping mechanism to have a friend with them at all times because they knew they didn’t have to do everything alone.” (Interview 18, mother, line 29 and 36)

“Rick and I are not in the same class anymore, but it doesn’t bother me because we meet each other every break when we play ‘opies’ (open the gate). So then we know where the other one is..“ (Interview 21, Alex, line 66)

“In the majority of our sessions, the positive attitudes between Alex and Rick were evident. I observed their sympathy and empathy towards each other, as well as their affection and understanding, especially in particular school situations. They would always back one another and it seemed as though each of them really understood their co-individual within a twinships’ lived school experiences.” (Interview 21, researcher, research journal, lines 8-14)

4.3.1.4 Friendships

During the course of this study, I observed that both Alex and Rick were popular among their peers. Not only did they have one another as friends, but they also enjoyed numerous other friendships as well. Both Alex and Rick found it easy to

form new friendships, and they both took pride in their friends. Even though they admitted missing their previous friends from Grade R, they compensated for that loss by making new friends. In the absence of their co-individual within a twinship, it appeared that both of them maintained their confidence and their ability to feel contented in the company of their other friends. In my opinion, this also illustrates the health of the relationship between Alex and Rick because it indicates how both of them were able to form and benefit from friendships independently of their co-individual within a twinship. The data in the study confirmed my perception that their individual skills in making friends and maintaining a healthy relationship with one another, contributed to their largely uncomplicated transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2.

“Alex plays with lots of other boys and is popular among his friends.” (Interview 9, researcher, field notes, line 10)

“We made good new friends.” (Interview 10, Alex, line 27)

“One of the nice things at school is that we are able to make new friends.” (Interview 12, Rick, lines 31 & 50)

“I like having friends.” (Interview 12, Alex, lines 39)

“Today was nice because I played with my friends on the rugby field.” (Interview 12, Alex, lines 104)

“The thing I most enjoyed at school today was making friends. I made new friends.” (Interview 12, Rick, lines 110 & 112)

“Grade 1 is nice... We have lots of friends.” (Interview 16, Alex and Rick, line 105 & 106).

“We made other friends in this school but not so many. Our old friends will come and visit us at our home.” (Interview 17, Alex, line 60)

“Yes, we miss them but we have other friends now.” (Interview 17, Rick, line 62)

“We have the same friends and separate friends.” (Interview 20, Alex, line 29)

“I’ve got friends other than those I had in Grade 1. I am now friends with the kids in my class.” (Interview 21, Alex, line 84)

“I don’t mind not being in the same class as Alex anymore because I have lots of friends.” (Interview 21, Rick, line 136)

4.3.1.5 Their Grade R, Grade 1 and Grade 2 teachers

Both Alex and Rick were explicit in appreciating the valuable role that their Grade R, Grade 1 and Grade 2 teachers played in their encounters and experiences. During the interviews with the participants, it became evident to me that their Grade R teacher displayed sincerity, warmth and love, and that they experienced these qualities. Their Grade 1 teacher was also helpful and comforting. The fact that Alex twice referred explicitly to his Grade 2 teacher as pleasant, is probably an indication of how much he appreciated his teacher's ability to be sensitive towards him as well as her ability to display empathy, which he also greatly appreciated. It therefore became apparent that Alex's Grade 2 teacher probably made him feel safe in situations in which he felt vulnerable. Alex's Grade 2 teacher also mentioned to me that one should never rush Alex when he is telling a story (which he usually did with rich circumstantial details in a time-consuming way). These admirable qualities on her part demonstrate her sensitive understanding of Alex as an individual child in her class and her patience and empathy in coping with them.

Rick's Grade 2 teacher also experienced him as a positive individual. On the day when I visited the school to see Rick's Grade 2 class and interview his teacher, it became evident to me that she took notice of him and supported his leadership role in overt ways. This indicated to me that she was aware that one of his main talents was that he was able to be responsible in leadership roles. She asked Rick, for example, to choose the winner for the best speech on the day that I attended her class. Rick demonstrated great delight in this exercise and appreciated his teacher for giving him such opportunities. In the context of this study, I was able to observe that the positive and commendable qualities that their Grade R, Grade 1 and Grade 2 teachers demonstrated in their dealings with the participants, played an essential role in effecting their largely uncomplicated transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2.

Grade R

My experience and perception of the characteristics of the individuals within a township's Grade R teacher illustrates her personal sincerity, warmth and love. The children appeared to be contented and relaxed in her presence. She was in control of her class. According to their Grade R teacher, it was extremely important to emphasise the transition to Grade 1 during the last term of the year (Interview 10, researcher, field notes, lines 4-8).

Grade 1

"We like our teacher." (Interview 10, Alex & Rick, line 25)

"One of the nice things at school is our teacher..." (Interview 12, Rick, lines 36)

"I like our teacher because she helps us..." (Interview 12, Alex, lines 36)

Grade 2

"I enjoy Grade 2 because the teacher is always nice to me because I am the shortest person in the class." (Interview 21, Alex, line 25)

"My teacher is nice to me because I am the shortest child in the class." (Interview 21, Alex, line 31)

"I am very happy with their individual teachers and I think both of them are in the right teacher's class. Alex's teacher is a loving teacher. She said that when Alex smiles at her, then she knows everything is over." (Interview 24, mother, line 68)

"Alex can talk a lot and he will tell a story with lots of detail. You mustn't rush him while busy telling his story. You must listen to the whole story..." (Interview 29, Alex's Grade 2 teacher, line 77)

"I don't have any problems with Rick in my class." (Interview 29, Rick's Grade 2 teacher, line 80)

The teacher made his day when she asked Rick to choose a winner for today's speeches. (Interview 30, field notes, line 13)

4.3.1.6 Learned life skills

From the data that I collected during our sessions and interviews, it became evident to me that the learned life skills that I taught them may have contributed to the success of Alex and Rick's largely uncomplicated transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2. With reference to their **friendship skills**, it also became clear to me that both of them were able to learn and successfully apply the friendship skills that they had learned in their transitions. I noticed that they were also able to make the right choices and decisions at times, especially with regard to the bullies in their school. Both of them successfully managed to cope successfully with the bully-situation, firstly because they were no longer afraid of the bullies they encountered, and secondly because they were in control of their choices whether to resist or not rather than automatically engaging in counter-bullying activities. It also became evident to

me that both Alex and Rick were comfortable in dealing with and experiencing some of their normal day-to-day emotions. They are also diligent in practising their useful coping skills. The data gathered during the course of this study therefore led me to conclude that the life skills that they had learned from me, possibly played a significant role in their ability to deal with bullies, to form friendships and to cope with some of their emotions in a creative and constructive way. While it is not always easy to ascertain which of these life skills were already available to the individuals within a township prior to the sessions I conducted with them on learned life skills, my data from the study indicates that the learned life skills may have been useful, or at least complementary, in effecting the largely uncomplicated transitions between their various grades.

“The tips you gave us were also part of the good things at school.” (Interview 10, Rick, line 68)

“I made a friend today. We played and then I was friendly towards him, and then we played some more together.” (Interview 12, Rick, line 52)

“We mustn’t be afraid of bullies.” (Interview 12, Alex and Rick, line 131)

“I feel proud and happy when somebody bullies me and I don’t bully him back. Instead of bullying him, I told the teacher.” (Interview 15, Alex, line 69-76)

“You taught us that we are not allowed to bully someone who bullies us.” (Interview 17 Alex, line 74)

“You are allowed to get angry. When you get angry, then all the fire comes out.” (Interview 17, Alex, line 82)

“You helped us with bullies.” (Interview 17, Alex and Rick, line 98)

“The life skills you taught them definitely changed their thinking patterns, especially the positive coping cards you gave them. They would have thought twice before hitting a bully.” (Interview 18, mother, line 63)

“Alex and Rick’s social and emotional skills were definitely intact. I don’t know if somebody worked with them previously to teach such skills. They were never in fights, and they would always be concerned about any new child in class.” (Interview 19, Grade 1 teacher, line 142-149)

“If you are angry, you must scream inside your pillow.” (Interview 22, Alex, line 123)

“The things you taught us helped.” (Interview 22, Rick, line 132)

“If I am angry and I scream inside my pillow, it feels like I have screamed all the anger out.”
(Interview 25, Alex, line 155)

4.3.1.7 Their Grade 1 and Grade 2 expectations

During the course of this study, I came to the conclusion that Alex and Rick’s expectations of Grade 1 and Grade 2 played part in effecting their largely uncomplicated transition from Grade R through to Grade 2. I came to this conclusion because Alex and Rick both demonstrated realistic expectations of Grade 1 and Grade 2 classes. They accurately predicted that they were going to have pleasant friends, friendly teachers, and that they were going to play rugby with their friends. They also accurately predicted that they would be able to do some homework in class, and that they would obtain new information. They also predicted that they expected to be disappointed when other kids were trying to harm them, that they expected to be contented at school and looked forward to taking part in recreational activities. Their last expectation was that they expected that their work in Grade 2 would be more difficult than it had been in Grade 1. Their expectations were in all cases largely realistic, and portrayed their lived experiences of Grade 1 and Grade 2. I further concluded that, because of their accurate expectations, there would be few surprises for them with regard to their lived experiences during their transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2. In this sense they seemed well prepared for what was likely to occur in Grade 1 and Grade 2.

“Our new friends will be pleasant, the teacher will be friendly, and we are going to play rugby with our friends. We are going to do homework in the class. We are going to listen to our teacher and we will go to play with the friends we make in class.” (Interview 2, Alex and Rick, line 3-5)

“I feel happy when I think of Grade 1.” (Interview 2, Rick, line 7)

“There are things in Grade R that we will also find in Grade 1. These are: friends, rugby, and a teacher. We are going to learn, we are going to be sad when other kids hurt us, and we are going to be happy.” (Interview 2, Alex and Rick, 4-10)

“When I see Grade 1 in my mind, I see nice things, friends, tables, a teacher, toys, bottles, naughty children, bicycles and trees.” (Interview 2, Alex, line 20)

“We are going to work and play in Grade 1.” (Interview 2, Alex, line 27)

“Alex and Rick told me that Grade 2 was going to be nice because they were going to have the same friends... They also said that the work would be more difficult than it was in Grade 1.” (Interview 20, researcher, field notes, line 1 & 5)

4.3.1.8 Homework and academics

According to the data gathered from the participants’ annotations on Alex and Rick’s homework and academics, there were some mixed feelings. In the first instance, there were some positive evaluations which I took to be indicators of their largely uncomplicated transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2. These positive indicators were demonstrations of personal confidence, pride and feelings of accomplishment after they had internalised useful new skills and knowledge. These indicators were data for their largely uncomplicated transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2. In addition to this, their unappreciative comments about children who did not want to work in class were likely indicators of the seriousness with which they approached and respected their work, and this may indicate that they did in fact realise the importance and value of succeeding in academic performance at school. I adduce as data of their possible realisation of the value of succeeding in academics Rick’s comment, “Although we don’t like to work, we know it is good for them (i.e. the children who were averse to work).”

On the other hand, I also observed that there were a few obstacles that Alex and Rick had to overcome as they effected their otherwise largely uncomplicated transitions between their grades. First of all was the amount of homework that Alex and Rick had to cope with during their Grade 2 year while also accommodating a fairly strenuous extra-mural schedule. My data confirms that the excessive amount of homework (according to the participants) that they had to attend to after certain school days were a possible cause of stress for both of them. My observations in this regard were confirmed by their mother and by their Grade 2 teachers. This state of affairs was evident to me in their Grade 2 year. The necessity to complete this homework, occasionally resulted in both Alex and Rick becoming emotional and

frustrated at such times. It was at these times that they were given to emotional outbursts.

Academics

“Alex enjoys learning new things that he couldn’t done before, such as, for example, writing.” (Interview 11, researcher, field notes, line 32)

“We had a good day. We played and worked.” (Interview 11, Rick, line 22)

“It was nice in the computer room today because we learned something.” (Interview 13, Alex lines 7)

“One of the things that wasn’t so nice today was when two boys didn’t want to work in class.” (Interview 16, Alex, line 29)

“They bother us because they don’t work, and just want to play in class.” (Interview 16, Rick, line 36)

“Grade 2 is more difficult than Grade 1.I struggle a bit.” (Interview 21, Alex, line 56)

“Grade 2 is nice because it is nice to have all the books and to write is nice.” (Interview 21, Rick, line 142)

“One thing that I’ve noticed is the intensive workload in Grade 2. It is much more than last year.” (Interview 24, mother, line 22)

“The only reason I say the adjustment to Grade 2 was more difficult than Grade 1 is due to the workload, not their separate classes.” (Interview 24, mother, line 105)

“In Grade 2 we write in cursive script of, and that is very nice.” (Interview 26, Rick, line 81)

“I don’t like all the work in Grade 2, but is good for us.” (Interview 26, Rick, line 83)

“The workload is much more in Grade 2 than in Grade 1.” (Interview 29, Rick’s Grade 2 teacher, line 10)

Homework

“I enjoy homework.” (Interview 10, Alex, line 21)

“Rick proudly showed me all his Grade 1 books and Alex sounded all his words.” (Interview 11, researcher, field notes, line 1)

“Rick showed off his homework and was very pleased about his hard work.” (Interview 13, field notes, line 1)

“During our session, I could see that Alex is really intrigued with his school work. He was busy making plus sums the whole time and enjoying it.” (Interview 13, researcher, field notes, line 2)

“The workload was stressful. Because of their hectic extra-mural activities and their homework, both of them would sometimes be emotional.” (Interview 18, mother, line 53)

“One of the things that I can see which was hard for them was the work. Especially the homework. It is a lot more than in Grade 1.” (Interview 24, mother, line 22)

“Everything is the same in Grade 2 as it was in Grade 1 except for the homework. That is much more.” (Interview 26, Alex, line 55)

“It is nice when we are allowed to do our homework in class.” (Interview 26, Alex, line 104)

“The intense amount of homework was tough for Alex, but the work in general was really tough on Rick.” (Phone interview 3 November 2011, mother, line 5).

4.3.1.9 Bullies and perceptions of disobedient children

My observation was the bullies and the disobedient children (as perceived by the individuals within a township) created both positive and negative experiences for the individuals with a township as they effected their transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2. The positive effect of such encounters was that Alex and Rick found that they were able successfully to cope with and deal with the bullies. My observation was therefore that this manifestation of successful coping techniques increased their self-confidence and their self-esteem and possibly so contributed to their largely uncomplicated transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2.

The negative side of these encounters was that both of them were occasionally harmed by bullies. Alex was especially teased about his height. Bullies caused Alex and Rick to experience feelings of sadness, emotional pain, anger and distress. These negative feelings are probably indicators of some of the difficulties they experienced as they coped with their transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2.

“I don’t like it when kids steal things.” (Interview 10, Alex, line 40)

“Bad things at school are bullies.” (Interview 12, Alex, line 11)

“Today there were three bad things at school: one guy kicked me at the rugby poles, another boy lied to our teacher, and another boy said a swear word to our teacher.” (Interview 12, Rick, lines 89, 93, 94 & 99)

“We are not afraid of bullies anymore.” (Interview 12, Alex and Rick, line 133)

“The bully on the rugby field wasn’t nice. He doesn’t bother us in the class, only on the rugby field when we play rugby.” (Interview 13, Alex, line 27)

“I observed that Alex and Rick have gained confidence in their methods of coping with bullies, and that they know how to deal with bully-related challenges.” (Interview 13, Field notes, Researcher, line 47)

“I was very angry and sad at school because some kids made jokes about my height. They called me ‘Shorty Maloty’.” (Interview 27, Alex, line 59)

“Something that wasn’t nice today was that the one boy had to write his name in the monkey manners book, someone stole from the tuck shop, and someone handed in a fake R10 note.” (Interview 28, Alex, lines 11 and 29)

4.3.1.10 Conclusion

My general conclusion by the end of this study was that the following factors played a significant role in enabling the largely uncomplicated transition that the individuals within a twinship were effect from Grade R through to Grade 2:

- The positive and helpful attitudes of the individuals within a twinship
- Their natural, cooperative, kind and agreeable behaviour at home and at school
- Their self-esteem and self-confidence, and their ability to take pleasure in assimilating new experiences
- The supportive presence of their co-individual within a twinship, initially in the same class, but later in the same school
- Their ability to form and maintain successful and healthy friendships
- The emotional, wise and practical support that was provided by their Grade R, Grade 1 and Grade 2 teachers
- The usefulness in practice of the life skills that they learned and practised
- Their ability to largely predict, before their arrival in those classes, the conditions and environments that they would encounter in Grade 1 and Grade 2

- Their conscientiousness in completing their homework and in applying themselves to their academic studies
- Their ability to cope with the challenges presented by bullies and disobedient children without knee-jerk, unconscious reactions

All of these factors probably enabled the individuals within a twinship to make largely uncomplicated transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2.

4.3.2 THEME 2

The transition of the individuals within a twinship to Grade 2 was, to some extent, more stressful than their transition to Grade 1. They nevertheless still experienced Grade 2 as pleasurable.

For the purpose of this study, Theme 2 will be answered in two divisions consisting of part one and part two. The first part of the theme will be answered first (The transition of the individuals within a twinship to Grade 2, was to some extent, more stressful than the transition to Grade 1...). Followed by the answering of the second part of the theme (They nevertheless still experienced Grade 2 as pleasurable).

4.3.2.1 Part one: ‘The transition of the individuals within a twinship to Grade 2, was to some extent, more stressful than the transition to Grade 1’

The following two tables summarise the experiences of the individuals within a twinship, as well as general stressors by other children according to the participating teachers in this study, as they were compelled to deal with both the positive and negative stressors that they encountered during their transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2. Each of the stressors they experienced is illustrated in Tables 4.2 and 4.3, and each of them in turn is discussed and explained in detail in section 4.4.2. The highlighted stressors are those general stressors mentioned by the participating teachers, but not experienced by Alex and Rick.

Table 4.2: Positive (+) stressors experienced by the participants

Grade R	Grade 1	Grade 2
+ Friends	+ Homework	+ Their teacher and friends
+ Playing	+ Their teacher	+ Work (school work)
+ Their teacher	+ Friends	+ Completing homework in class
+ Gaining knowledge	+ Helping others	+ Writing incursive
+ Feeling contented at school	+ Sport	+ Separate classes
+ Their expectations of Grade 1	+ Prefects	+ Sport
+ Their excitements for Grade 1	+ Playing	+ Playing during break
	+ Gaining new knowledge	+ Achievements
	+ The tuck shop	
	+ Their co-individual within a twinship	
	+ Supporting parents	
	+ Life skills	

Table 4.3: Negative (-) stressors experienced by the participants

Grade R	Grade 1	Grade 2
- Bullies	- Disobedient children	- Demanding school work
- Friends harming them	- Prefects	- Bathroom rules
- Time	- Making friends	- Bullies
- School work	- Bullies	- Excessive homework
	- Social skills	- Grade 3's
	- Threats in Grade R	- Disobedient children
	- Not being able to read and write immediately	- Getting teased
	- School work	- A new teacher
		- Friends being separated in classrooms
		- People who are upset

My data shows that the largest number of negative stressors were experienced by the individuals within a twinship during their Grade 2 year (Table 4.3). This enabled me to infer that their Grade 2 year had been more stressful than their Grade 1 and Grade R years. I make this inference with some caution because a mere increase in the number of stressors encountered by an individual does not *necessarily* indicate an increased amount of stress experienced by that individual during the same time period. After an in-depth examination and analysis of the available data, I was,

however, able to conclude that these individuals within a township had indeed experienced greater *amount* of stress in Grade 2 than they had experienced either in Grade 1 or in Grade R.

I was interested to note that, apart from the highest amount of negative stress that the individuals within a township experienced in their Grade 2 year, in comparison to the negative stressors of their Grade 1 year (see Table 4.2 and Table 4.3), the participants also indicated that they enjoy the greatest amount of positive stress during their Grade 1 year. With regard to their Grade 1 year, I had identified twelve positive stressors in comparison to the eight positive stressors that I was able to identify during their Grade 2 year. The only additional positive stressor that was present in their Grade 2 year (that I could not identify as a stressor in their Grade 1 year), was the fact that the individuals within a township were placed in separate classrooms in Grade 2. The positive stressors that were present in their Grade 1 year (but which were not identified during their Grade 2 year) included the establishment of new friendships, the ability to be of assistance to others, the proximity of helpful and kindly prefects, the novel experience of being able to purchase food from the tuck-shop, their proximity for either of them of their co-individual within a township, the support of loving and nurturing parents, and the life skills that they learned.

There were also a number of the identified positive stressors during Grade 1 that might have enabled them to take pleasure in several new experiences in their primary school (see section 4.3.2.2 for more details). These included the novel experience of being able to purchase food from the tuck-shop, taking pleasure in the successful completion of their homework, their success in forming and maintaining new friendships, the practical assistance of kindly and helpful prefects in the school, and the enjoyment they derived from playing on the rugby field during break. Even though my data did not indicate that the individuals within a township had identified any of these “new” experiences during their Grade 2 year as specifically positive stressors, it appeared evident that they derived a great amount of pleasure and satisfaction from these “new” experiences in Grade 2. It is for this reason that I have also included these experiences as positive stressors, with the proviso that they were already familiar with most of these experiences when they arrived in Grade 2.

I mentioned earlier in the text that because of the presence of certain negative stressors in Grade 2, both Alex and Rick regarded Grade 2 as the most stressful year of the three years that are within the scope of this study. Even though Alex and Rick asserted on a number of occasions that the workload was demanding, they were also of the opinion that the focus on demanding academic work and preparation was “necessary”. Although I have already adduced the following supportive data earlier in this text (see section 4.3.1.8), I include some of it again here to illustrate how they experienced their academic work and the apparently large amount of homework that they were given in Grade 2.

“Grade 2 is more difficult than Grade 1. I struggle a bit.” (Interview 21, Alex, line 56)

“One thing that I’ve noticed is the intensive workload in Grade 2. It is much more than last year.” (Interview 24, mother, line 22)

“The only reason I say the adjustment to Grade 2 was more difficult than Grade 1 is because of the workload, not their separate classes.” (Interview 24, mother, line 105)

“The workload is much more in Grade 2 than in Grade 1.” (Interview 29, Rick’s Grade 2 teacher, line 10)

“The workload was stressful. Because of their hectic extra-mural activities and their homework, both of them would sometimes be emotional.” (Interview 18, mother, line 53)

“One of the things that I can see which was hard for them was the work. Especially the homework. It is a lot more than in Grade 1.” (Interview 24, mother, line 22)

“Everything is the same in Grade 2 as it was in Grade 1 except for the homework. That is much more.” (Interview 26, Alex, line 55)

“It is nice when we are allowed to do our homework in class.” (Interview 26, Alex, line 104)

“The intense amount of homework was tough for Alex, but the work in general was really hard on Rick.” (Phone interview 3 November 2011, mother, line 5)

The individuals within a twinship in this study also had to cope with a demanding extra-mural schedule. Even though both of them took great pleasure in these, this was one of the main concerns and challenges in Grade 2. Their mother explained to me that the noticeable increase in the number of extra-mural activities occasionally exhausted the individuals within a twinship. Their exhaustion also sometimes

caused emotional outbursts (in this study, I regarded “emotional outburst” as a euphemism for tears and crying).

It was mainly because of the amount of homework that the individuals within a township received in their Grade 2 classes that the transition from Grade 1 to Grade 2 was experienced by them as more stressful than the transition from Grade R to Grade 1. In my discussion of theme 1, I identified and explained how the participants personally experienced their homework and workload in Grade 2 (see section 4.3.1.8 for further details). I will therefore not repeat the explanation that I gave there, but will rather provide some additional information about the present theme.

“The transition from Grade 1 to Grade 2 was much more difficult than for them than the transition from Grade R to Grade 1. Grade 2 is much more difficult, and it is a bigger adjustment. They are subjected to much more pressure. In Grade 2 they are supposed to be big and brave. On some days, they only get home at 21:00 in the evening, and by then it is too late to do any homework. For me and them it was much more difficult.” (Interview 24, mother, line 55-61)

“Grade 2 was emotionally challenging for both of them. Even though Alex would show his emotions more frequently by, for example, crying for something or someone who was upset or hurt, the Grade 2 experience was equally emotionally challenging for both of them.” (Phone interview 3 November 2011, mother, line 6)

“They participated in more extra-mural activities during their Grade 1 year. In Grade 1, they participated in rugby, gymnastics, swimming lessons, Lego and extra-mathematics lessons. Rick also played cricket during his second term in Grade 1. In Grade 2, I decided that they should stop their swimming lessons because they were already too busy in the afternoons and had too much homework. Rick no longer played cricket in Grade 2. In Grade 2, their extra-mural activities included rugby, gymnastics, Lego and extra-mathematics classes.” (Phone interview 5 July 2012, mother, line 4)

This finding was somewhat unexpected to me. At the commencement of this study, I had identified and read an enormous amount of literature about the transition from preschool to primary school. In spite of that reading, it had never occurred to me that the stress evoked by the transition from Grade 1 to Grade 2 might well be greater than the stress engendered by the transition from Grade R to Grade 1. I also

made the assumption that because parents, teachers and schools often focus strongly on the difficulties inherent in the transition from preschool to Grade 1, the concerns of the Grade 1 children entering primary school for the first time would be taken care of, and that they would probably receive a lot of attention, assistance and care. The assumption was that when they entered Grade 2, they would be responsible, mature and self-efficient. My findings in this study indicate that these assumptions may need to be revisited and revised.

On the other hand, it might well be the case that the far more demanding extra-mural schedule that the individuals within a township experienced in Grade 2 was actually the reason why they experienced the transition to Grade 2 as far more challenging than their transition to Grade 1. It has already been pointed out that the individuals within a township participated in more extra-mural activities during their Grade 1 year than they did in their Grade 2 year. In Grade 1, both the individuals within a township took part in rugby, gymnastics, Lego, extra-mathematics classes and swimming lessons. Rick also played cricket during his second term in Grade 1. In their Grade 2 year, they both participated in rugby, gymnastics, Lego and extra-mathematics classes. It was at that point that their mother decided to withdraw them from swimming lessons in their Grade 2 year because of the demands that were being made upon them by their academic school work. The swimming lessons and Rick's cricket were therefore additional extra-mural activities in their Grade 1 year, that they did not have to cope with in their Grade 2 year.

One may therefore assume that the demands made on them by their extra-mural activities did not constitute the main reason why their transition to Grade 2 was more stressful than their transition to Grade 1. One may also therefore conclude that their more demanding transition to Grade 2 was probably caused by greater demands placed upon them by the increased volume and complexity of their schoolwork and homework when one considers all of the above-mentioned factors. The data that was accumulated for this study (see Table 4.2 and Table 4.3) indicates that there were more positive stressors for the participants in Grade R and Grade 1 than there were negative stressors during these same two years. It was in their Grade 2 year that the individuals within a township experienced the greatest number of negative stressors of all the three years represented in this study. I

nevertheless find it interesting that both Alex and Rick referred to this year, their most challenging year, as enjoyable and interesting (see section 4.3.2.1).

4.3.2.2 Part two: ‘They nevertheless still experienced Grade 2 as pleasurable’

In spite of the fact that, as the data proves, the participants experienced Grade 2 as the most stressful of their three years, they still maintained that their experiences were, on the whole, both pleasurable and exciting. Even though Alex and Rick expressed the opinion on a number of occasions that the workload was intense and demanding, they mitigated the force of this opinion by stating that the academic and other work was “necessary”. They also indicated that it was pleasurable and satisfying for them to be exposed to new knowledge and to learn how to write in cursive script – both of which activities they mastered in Grade 2 (see section 4.3.1.8).

It would therefore be necessary to refrain, within the context of the overall findings of this study, from concluding that the total amount of negative stress experienced by the individuals within a township translated into a negative experience of Grade 2 as a whole. The strain caused by what seems to be an excessive workload for children so young is to be balanced with a large number of positive experiences and the significant amount of satisfaction they both enjoyed in that grade. Few experiences in life are either wholly positive or negative, and the overall experience of Grade 2 was coloured by the number of predominantly positive experiences that they enjoyed in that grade. Even though I have already presented the following extracts from the data in an earlier point in this chapter, I decided to include some of these extracts here again at this point to indicate the extent to which the participants’ overall experiences of Grade 2 were pleasurable, despite the significant number of negative stressors with which they had to cope in that grade.

“I enjoy Grade 2.” (Interview 21, Alex, line 23)

“Grade 2 is much nicer than Grade 1.” (Interview 21, Alex, line 61)

“I enjoy Grade 2. It is nice.” (Interview 21, Rick, line 108)

"I enjoy Grade 2 because I am always behaving and so the class captains never write my name on the board. I will be the class captain tomorrow." (Interview 21, Rick, line 110)

"Grade 2 is much nicer than Grade 1." (Interview 21, Rick, line 124)

"I am very happy in Grade 2." (Interview 21, Rick, line 164)

"We play hide and seek in Grade 2. My brother and I play together." (Interview 22, Rick, line 150 and 154)

"Grade 2 is nicer than Grade 1." (Interview 26, Rick, line 71)

"In Grade 2 we write in cursive script, and that is very nice." (Interview 26, Rick, line 81)

"I don't like all the work in Grade 2, but is good for us." (Interview 26, Rick, line 83)

"If I close my eyes and see Grade 2 in front of me, it looks nice!" (Interview 27, Rick, line 105)

"I feel better this week because the kids aren't teasing me as much anymore. The teacher said she is going to give them black stickers for their books if they keep on teasing me." (Interview 28, Alex, line 1-8)

"I could see that Alex and Rick were happy at school." (Interview 28, researcher, research journal, line 1)

"I don't have any problems with Rick in my class." (Interview 29, Rick's Grade 2 teacher, line 80)

"While visiting their classroom for observation, I could see that Alex was participating well in the class activities." (Interview 31, researcher, field notes, line 9)

It is my opinion, that a researcher should never attempt to eliminate or minimise the importance and impact of negative stressors in a study so as to influence the final conclusions. In the case of this study, an elimination or mitigation of the impact of the negative stressors would probably have resulted in a finding that the transitions were more pleasurable and less stressful than in fact they were. This emphasis on the negative stressors reduces the overall effect of indicating that although learners may experience difficulties in a particular year, they may nevertheless make an effective transition through the grades if they are equipped to deal constructively and consciously with negative stressors before and during their transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2. This approach was justified by my conclusion that even though the individuals within a township experienced a greater number of

negative stressors in Grade 2, they still considered their Grade 2 experiences as pleasurable, interesting and challenging.

4.3.3 THEME 3

Although their learned life skills may have eased their transition, the overall support structures of the individuals within a township were probably the most important reasons why their transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2 were largely uncomplicated

To illustrate the conclusions that I reached with regard to this theme, I identified four features of the inherent support structures that existed within the relationship of the individuals within a township as relevant to my conclusions. These features were the life skills that I taught the participants in anticipation of their transitions, the support that the participants received from their parents in their home environment, the support provided by their school(s), and various factors already present in their personalities, that made effective transitions more probable (Table 4.4).

Table 4.4: Relevant support features illustrated by Theme 3

Relevant support features illustrated by Theme 3
Learned life skills
Parents and home environment
School(s) support
Alex and Rick's personalities

4.3.3.1 Learned life skills

Because of the information that I received directly from the participants, I was able to conclude that the learned life skills that I taught them probably played an essential role in the ability of Alex and Rick to specifically deal effectively and successfully with bullies, to value friendship and to utilise their friendship skills, and to make efficient use of positive coping skills to lubricate and control their emotions (see section 4.3.1.6). The selected extracts presented below illustrate the various ways in which the participants made use of their newly learned life skills.

“The advice you gave us [about how to cope with various situations] were also some of the good things at school.” (Interview 10, Rick, line 68)

“You taught us that we were not allowed to bully a person who bullied us.” (Interview 17 Alex, line 74)

“You helped us with bullies.” (Interview 17, Alex and Rick, line 98)

“The life skills you taught them definitely changed their thinking patterns, especially the positive coping cards you gave them. They would have thought twice before hitting a bully.” (Interview 18, mother, line 63)

“The things you taught us helped.” (Interview 22, Rick, line 132)

The presence of bullies was a consistent problem throughout all of the three years during which the individuals within a township made their various transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2. It was one of the negative stressors with which they had to cope continually. While this study did not specifically focus on the problem of the bullies and the ways in which they influenced the children's lives, I very soon realised that the bullies that compelled a response on the part of the participants made it necessary for me to include methods of coping with bullies in their learned life skills sessions. I therefore decided to help them refine their bully-coping skills. It became evident from what subsequently happened that both of them applied these skills successfully during their transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2 (see section 4.3.1.9).

Because Alex and Rick were two out of only seven children from the same pre-school to enrol in their primary school, it was necessary for them to form new friendships in certain phases of their transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2. The friendship skills that I taught them in our life skills sessions were therefore probably essential in facilitating their transitions through the grades. The data that was accumulated for this study shows that Alex and Rick were both extremely successful in forming and maintaining new friendships (see section 4.3.1.4).

During the various phases of their transitions through the grades, Alex and Rick both experienced a range of emotions. These included, for example, feeling excited

about the following school year (see section 4.3.1.7), Alex's feeling of anger and disappointment about being teased about his height (see section 4.2.7), and the negative pressure that both Alex and Rick experienced because of demands of their homework in Grade 2 (see section 4.3.1.8). The bullies with whom they had to cope also elicited negative emotions of anger, hurt and disruption. But these negative emotions were balanced by their pride and their sense of accomplishment (see section 4.3.1.9) when they discover that they were able to deal effectively with these bullies. Their ability to exercise control of their emotions is therefore a skill that probably enabled Alex and Rick to make successful transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2. The way in which the participants personally confirmed to me the way in which their seemingly mastery of their positive coping skills enabled them to gain emotional control and ascendancy is reflected in the data that was accumulated for this study (see section 4.3.1.6). Even though I have already adduced the following data as data in section 4.3.1.6, I include once again to illustrate how the individuals within a township were able to master a number of important life skills during the course of this research.

"I made a friend today. We played and I was friendly towards him. After that, we played together." (Interview 12, Rick, line 52)

"We mustn't be afraid of bullies." (Interview 12, Alex and Rick, line 131)

"I feel proud and happy when somebody bullies me and I don't bully him back. Instead, I told the teacher." (Interview 15, Alex, line 69-76)

"You are allowed to get angry. If you get angry then all the fire comes out." (Interview 17, Alex, line 82)

"You helped us with bullies." (Interview 17, Alex and Rick, line 98)

"Alex and Rick's social and emotional skills were definitely intact. I don't know if somebody worked with them to strengthen these skills before. They were never in fights, and they would always be concerned about new children in their class." (Interview 19, Grade 1 teacher, line 142-149)

"If you are angry, you must scream inside your pillow." (Interview 22, Alex, line 123)

"The things you taught us helped." (Interview 22, Rick, line 132)

"If I am angry and I scream inside my pillow, it feels like I have screamed all the anger out." (Interview 25, Alex, line 155)

4.3.3.2 Parents and home environment

My experiences with the family and my observations during my visits to the home of the individuals within a township provided data for confirming that the following characteristics of the home environment of the participants were present. The atmosphere in their house was characterised by positive attitudes, unconditional love for the participants from both parents, stable and consistent relationships, and supportive values. Alex and Rick's mother taught them how to exercise life skills in various practical situations. I also observed the prevalence of feelings and emotions associated with safety and with satisfaction with oneself in their household, together with joyousness, light-heartedness and laughter. Their parents were parents who protected their children and who demonstrated practical sympathy when the participants needed it (referring to the way in which their mother sympathised with their demanding amount of homework in Grade 2, and then proceeded to help them to complete it in a satisfactory way).

"We have got a very good backup system with all the grandparents also staying on our plot. Sometimes when I have to work, their grandfather will pick them up from school. I make sure I take them to school every morning. We talk about everything. But sometimes it is necessary for me to drag information out of them." (Interview 18, mother, lines 43, 44 & 46)

"I love visiting their house. The positive atmosphere, the light-heartedness and the laughter in the house always lift my spirits. After talking to their mother, I once again experienced the unconditional love, the support, and the safe and protective environment that the parents establish in the house. Alex and Rick are blessed for having parents who accept them just as they are, without pressure and negative criticisms. These parents create a stable home in which good values can be taught and in which children will reach their full potential." (Interview 18, researcher field notes, lines 8-17)

"So I will say that I am strict, but I am strict in a loving manner. I also try to teach them things in a loving manner. I strive to raise them with Christian values." (Interview 24, mother, lines 3, 4 & 10)

"Both my husband and I support one another when it comes to discipline. He will always back me. With regard to values, morals and discipline, we are on the same team." (Interview 24, mother, lines 38-41)

“They will talk about the bullies, and then I will ask them whether they remembered the things you taught them, and they show that they did remember them. I must remind them about it constantly.” (Interview 24, mother, line 123-123)

The data that I accumulated for this study shows that the individuals within a township were given ample opportunities to practise life skills in their home environment from Grade R right through to Grade 2.

4.3.3.3 School(s) support

The data that Alex and Rick gave me in the interviews and their accompanying explanation of their Grade R, Grade 1 and Grade 2 teachers' attitudes, showed that they experienced **support, comfort, safety, interest and acceptance** (see section 4.3.1.5), as some advantages. Their Grade R, Grade 1 and Grade 2 teachers also all used the various opportunities that arose during school time to teach life skills to their children in their classes. Although I have already used some of the data cited below earlier in the text, I include it once more at this stage to support the assertions that I have made above.

“We teach the children about their emotions. We use an emotion poster. We also use the fruits of the spirit in the Bible to teach life skills.” (Interview 9, Grade R teacher, lines 15-17)

“My experience and impression of the Grade R teacher of the individuals within a township was that she demonstrated sincerity, warmth and love. The children appeared to be content and relaxed in her presence. She was in control of her class. According to their Grade R teacher, an emphasis on the transition to Grade 1 was of greatest importance during the last term of the year.” (Interview 10, researcher, field notes, lines 4-8)

“I like our teacher because she helps us.” (Interview 12, Alex, lines 36)

“When we teach them emotional life skills, we use Bible lessons to teach those skills.” (Interview, 19, Grade 1 teacher, Line 51)

“I enjoy Grade 2 because the teacher is always nice to me because I am the tiniest person in class.” (Interview 21, Alex, line 25)

“I am very happy with their individual teachers and I think both of them are in the right teacher's class. Alex's teacher is a loving teacher. She said when Alex smiles at her then everything is over.” (Interview 24, mother, line 68)

“Their teacher helps Rick a lot with his reading. She will sit with him and help him.”(Interview 24, mother, line 137)

“I am very pleased with both their teachers. They get along very well with each of the boys.”
(Interview 24, mother, line 139)

“The life skills that we teach the children normally fit in with a lesson such as, for example, a Bible lesson. Learning life skills is an ongoing process. We therefore have life orientation periods as well.” (Interview 29, Grade 2 teacher (A), line 35)

“The teacher made his day when she asked Rick to choose a winner for today’s speeches.”
(Interview 30, field notes, line 13)

The data obtained from this study indicates that Alex and Rick and their mother all enjoyed positive experiences with the Grade R, Grade 1 and Grade 2 teachers of the participants. Apart from the fact that the participating teachers were all sympathetic characters who supported the individuals within a township, all of them also taught the children in their classes certain life skills when opportunities presented themselves. An in-depth description of the methods that were used by the participating teachers as they taught the children life skills, follows in section 4.4.4. But the data shows that, in addition to this, the individuals within a township enjoyed numerous opportunities for practising life skills in all their grades between Grade R and a Grade 2.

4.3.3.4 Alex and Rick’s personalities

Although I have already cited the following data previously in this chapter, I am citing it once again here to support the assertions I have made in connection with theme 3. Alex and Rick revealed certain positive characteristics throughout this study. Some of these characteristics included **positive attitudes** and appropriate **self-confidence** (see section 4.3.1.2).

“I want to be my own person.” (Interview 20, Alex, line 23)

“I am also clever.” (Interview 20, Rick, line 54)

“I will be class captain tomorrow.” (Interview 21, Rick, line 110)

“I feel proud to wear my glasses.”(Interview 21, Rick, line 148)

"I got a achiever sticker because I cleaned the bathrooms at school." (Interview 23, Rick, line 28)

"You can see that Alex knows he is good in academics, but he is also down to earth. He doesn't have to hear about it the whole day long." (Interview 24, line 100)

"This week is nice because I am class captain." (Interview 27, Alex, line 20)

"It was also nice when I could show off my good work to the principal." (Interview 27, Rick, line 47)

"I could see that Alex and Rick were in control of the events that were happening around them at school." (Interview 28, researcher, research journal, line 1)

"Although he was a bit nervous with his speech, he performed very well and with confidence. He also stood proudly while observing all the other speeches. He was very obedient in class and he enjoyed announcing the winners." (Interview 30, researcher, field notes, line 8-14)

Both Alex and Rick showed that they were **willing** and **brave** when they tackled new challenges (see sections 4.3.1.4, 4.3.1.6 and 4.3.1.9).

"We made some good new friends." (Interview 10, Alex, line 27)

"One of the nice things at school is to make new friends." (Interview 12, Rick, lines 31 & 50)

"What I enjoyed today at school was making friends. I made some new friends." (Interview 12, Rick, lines 110 & 112)

"We have made other friends in this school, but not so many." (Interview 17, Alex, line 60)

"I made a new friend today. We played and I treated him in a friendly way, and then we played together." (Interview 12, Rick, line 52)

"We mustn't be afraid of bullies." (Interview 12, Alex and Rick, line 131)

"I felt proud and happy when somebody bullied me but I didn't bully him back. Instead, I told the teacher." (Interview 15, Alex, line 69-76)

"If I am angry and I scream inside my pillow, it feels like I have screamed all the anger out." (Interview 25, Alex, line 155)

Both Alex and Rick demonstrated sensitivity towards others. They also showed that they were kind and helpful (see section 4.3.1.4), and that they were gentle by nature (see sections 4.2.1 and 4.2.2).

“I listen to my mom when I have to go to bed” (Interview 1, Alex, line 25)

“I always say thank you.” (Interview 1, Alex, line, 31)

“I feel sad when someone is not nice to me.” (Interview 3, Alex, line 12)

“Alex is very relaxed and protective of his younger sister.” (Interview 9, Grade R teacher, line 30)

“I am Rick and you must tell people that I behave well.” (Interview 20, Rick, line 50)

“It is important for me to handle Rick with kindness and sensitivity. One must spend quality time with him... He really enjoyed our individual times alone together.” (Interview 24, mother, line 44-50)

The participants handled their transitions from one grade to another with confidence in themselves. They also demonstrated positive and caring attitudes in their new environments, in spite of the transition’s challenges and unfamiliarity. In addition to this, both of the participants showed courage by being willing to participate fully in the new situations in which they found themselves. Alex and Rick also demonstrated various kinds of desirable behaviour including sensitivity, gentleness, kindness and helpful attitudes towards others, during their various transitions. All of the characteristics and forms of behaviour demonstrated by Alex and Rick (those mentioned here above) seemed to assist them to make largely trouble-free transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2.

4.3.3.5 Conclusion

Some of the factors that enabled Alex and Rick to make largely trouble-free transitions between Grade R and Grade 2 were the consistent and encouraging support that they received from their parents in their home environment, the appropriate support that they received in their school environment, certain personality traits that both of them possessed, and the life skills that they learned in preparation to make these transitions.

The data from this study makes it clear that Alex and Rick received a tremendous amount of support, not only from their parents in their home environment, but also from their teachers during the transitions that they made between Grade R and Grade 2. In addition to their various support systems, Alex and Rick were also familiar with certain life skills that their mother and their Grade R, Grade 1 and Grade 2 teachers had taught them during the period encompassed by this research. It was clear to me that I was not the first person to teach them the life and coping skills that possibly made a difference in their lives during this period.

By the time I had completed this research, I was convinced that the life skills with which the participants were familiar with, had to an extent already been imparted to them by the circumstances of their home environment, with the involvement of their parents in their lives, the ways in which their parents made themselves available to the participants, the impact of the various social norms and values that they had been taught from their earliest years, the support systems that were operative in the schools, and their own unique personalities that gave them a possible advantage in coping with other people and with the challenges in their environment. All of these factors made it easier for me to teach them the necessary life skills when the opportunity to do so presented itself.

It became clear to me when I began explicitly to teach them useful and appropriate life skills that the ground had already been prepared by all of the factors that I have mentioned above. Even so, I decided that the individuals within a township would probably benefit greatly from formal instruction in the life skills that they subsequently used to cope with various challenges. I nevertheless remained aware that the participants had already been made receptive to the kinds of attitudes and states of mind that are reflected in these life skills by the time they were making the transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2.

4.4 SECONDARY RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In the following section, I will answer the secondary research questions that I proposed at the commencement of this study and I will explain my reasons why I answer as I do.

4.4.1 WHICH LIFE SKILLS ARE NECESSARY FOR YOUNG CHILDREN DURING THEIR TRANSITION FROM GRADE R TO GRADE 2?

I answer this research question by adducing some of the research that I presented in the literature study in Chapter 2 in conjunction with some of the findings in this study. The data that I collected from the participants in fact complements and confirms the research from the literature study that I cite below.

Li *et al.* (2012:5) named the following skills as being valuable and helpful to children who were required to make the various transitions from pre-school to primary school: Problem solving skills, interpersonal communication skills, an ability to express emotions in an appropriate way and an ability to understand and practise stress coping techniques.

Hemmeter *et al.* (2006:583) identified certain important skills that helped young children to make smooth transitions between the grades in their school. These skills included the ability to maintain positive social relationships, the ability to communicate one's emotions effectively, and the ability to solve problems as they arise.

Brooker (2008:14) asserts that children who make trouble-free transitions between their grades need to have a strong sense of self-worth and a positive sense of identity. Von Suchodoletz *et al.* (2009:565) argue that behaviour regulation skills are essential for children who make successful transitions between grades and that *early* interventions to provide them with these skills are essential.

Samanci (2010:147) argues in his research that one of the most important aims of primary education should be to help children to acquire those skills that will enable them to enjoy a healthy social life. He regards all of the following abilities as indispensable for children who wish to participate happily with their peers and teachers and who wish to enjoy a satisfying and fulfilling social life: the ability to communicate what one thinks and feels, the ability to understand other people, the ability to harmonise in an appropriate way in one's social environment, the ability to form and maintain satisfying friendships as well as the capacity to display appropriate and acceptable forms of behaviour. Furthermore, the ability to express

oneself in a suitable way on various occasions, the ability to cope satisfactorily with whatever problems arise and the ability to establish good relationships with one's skills were referred to.

Bilmes (2004:4) asserts that there are six important life skills that children need to develop if they are to negotiate successfully with the world around them. These include attachment, affiliation, self-regulation, initiative, problem solving and respect. She also asserts that, through managing one's emotions, a child will come to realize that all actions have consequences, that some forms of behaviour are acceptable while others are not, and that it is they themselves who have the power to control their behaviour for better or for worse. She notes that there are some children who struggle to make successful transitions because they remain unaware of the fluctuations in their feelings and the fact that they do not have to let their emotions control their behaviour (Bilmes, 2004:7). Furthermore, Bilmes (2004:9) also asserts that it is important for children to learn various problem solving skills.

McClelland and Morrison (2003:206) note that the most important social skills include independence, responsibility, self-regulation and cooperation. They assert that all of these social skills can exert a beneficial influence on the academic achievements and school success of pre-primary children. Brackett *et al.* (2012:219) are of the opinion that certain skills are more valuable than others for helping children to adjust to their school challenges. The particular skills that they mention include: the ability to recognise and manage emotions, the ability to display empathy towards others, the ability to enter into, shape and maintain positive relationships, the ability to make responsible decisions as well as the ability to use tried and tested coping techniques to cope with challenges.

Fisher (2003:56) is of the opinion that it is essential to develop a positive self-esteem and confidence in children if they are to be successful in dealing with routine stressors in their daily lives. Saunders and Remsberg (1987:12) are of the opinion that self-confidence is the most valuable quality that the child can have because it is indispensable for dealing with stressful situations and challenging people.

During the course of their research, the participating teachers who were identified by Hanley *et al.* (2007:277) agreed that the most important life skills for early school

success were the ability to communicate effectively, delayed gratification and the ability to form and maintain satisfying friendships. Zins *et al.* (2003:58) refer in their research to the work undertaken by Elias *et al.* (1997) with regard to the functioning of the child brain, in which they identify five different useful skills which, they maintain, give children direction in every facet of their lives. These skills are self-awareness, social awareness, responsible decision making, self-management skills, and relationship building skills (Zins *et al.*, 2003:58).

In the following section I will discuss the various life skills and coping skills that the participants in this study thought were essential for negotiating the obstacles and challenges of early school years. The mother of the individuals within a township and the Grade R, Grade 1 and Grade 2 teachers of the participants identified specific life skills as necessary for making smooth transitions between Grade R through to Grade 2. The table sets out these life skills in reference to the participants in this study. While all of these findings are subjective, they are nevertheless pertinent to this case study.

Table 4.5: A summary of life skills that participants in the research considered to be necessary for making smooth transitions between Grade R through to Grade 2

Necessary life skills identified as essential by participants for making smooth transitions between Grade R and Grade 2	
o Coping skills	o Self-esteem
o A positive sense of identity	o Responsibility
o Emotional skills	o Independency
o Communication skills	o Values
o Emotional control skills	

Please note that some of the following supportive data may make reference to more than one of the life skills that were perceived as being essential by the participants in question.

“Coping skills are necessary skills for children. Because discipline is such a big problem (which is caused largely by absent parents who overcompensate), children will often be labelled as naughty just because they can’t cope with daily demands. I also think it is very important for a child to feel that he or she **belongs somewhere.**” (Interview 9, Grade R teacher, line 3-5)

“I think that **emotional life skills** are very important. When they go through a transition, they enter a new environment and make new friends. Once they had been equipped with the necessary life skills, they will know how to handle these new situations. Other important life skills include **positive self-esteem**. When one possesses positive self-esteem one can deal with a lot. A child should be able to **show their emotions**, as when, for example, they are sad or happy. Or they must be able to cry when they are sad. But they must also be able to **be in control of their emotions**. Even though they are still very young, they need to understand the meaning of life skills, and they must have the necessary knowledge and self-confidence to be able to **speak to a parent or teacher** when there is a problem.” (Interview 18, mother, lines 2-13)

“Their **emotional life skills** should be developed to some extent when they enter Grade 1 if they are to cope successfully with the transition. **Emotional skills** are definitely the most important life skills of all.” (Interview 19, Grade 1 teacher, line 1-6)

“There is **definitely a place for life skills** in the class and school environment.” (Interview 19, Grade 1 teacher, lines 70-80)

“During the transition from Grade 1 to Grade 2, it is important for the children to be able to **adapt socially to life in a group**. An ability to **communicate** with friends who might be very different from oneself, is also very important. Because everyone is different, they need to possess the skills to handle and socialise with those friends who act and think differently from themselves.” (Interview 29, Alex’s Grade 2 teacher, line 3-5)

“The children also need to learn to **take responsibility**. There are still a lot of children who wants to have the kind of ‘babysitter’ they had in Grade 1, where the teacher used to erase their work or cut out their worksheets for them.” (Interview 29, Rick’s Grade 2 teacher, line 6)

“Yes, that is one of the areas in which this transition is a big leap forward for some children. In Grade 2 we expect for them to be a lot **more independent.**” (Interview 29, Alex’s Grade 2 teacher, line 8)

*“There is **definitely a place for life skills**. We are seeing a generation of kids who don’t take any responsibility for their actions. It is their parents who are fighting their battles for them. The children also rush from one activity to another and rush through their homework.”*

(Interview 29, Rick’s Grade 2 teacher, line 22-28)

*“To me it feels like a whole new generation who’s **life skills are not on an standard at all**.”*

(Interview 29, Alex’s Grade 2 teacher, line 29-33)

⌘ **Conclusion**

I shall now categorise these life skills that were perceived as being necessary by the participants in the study and from the annotated research review in Chapter 2 in terms of Ebersöhn and Eloff’s (2006:59) “Fields of Life skills” that I used to orientate my material in Chapter 2. The four themes in terms of which I will categorise the life skills are adaptation skills, interpersonal self-regulation skills, intrapersonal self-regulating skills, and group effectiveness skills. I decided to place all of the skills that are being discussed in these categories because I felt that they would enable me to discuss these skills in a more coherent fashion. During this discussion I will relate the life skills from the literature that I analysed in Chapter 2 of the life skills that were identified as being necessary and indispensable by the mother of the participants and by their teachers in the various grades that were included within the scope of this study. I will conclude that discussions with an in-depth consideration of each of the life skills that I mention.

Table 4.6: Life skills regarded by selected participants as indispensable, and categorised under Ebersöhn and Eloff’s “Fields of Life skills”
(Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2006:59)

Adaptation skills	Interpersonal self-regulation skills	Intrapersonal self-regulating skills	Group effectiveness skills
Problem solving skills	Emotional expressions	Stress coping techniques	Positive social relationships
Interpersonal communication skills	Emotional communication	Initiative	Social skills
Behaviour regulation skills	Self-worth	Respect	Friendship skills
Acceptable behaviour	Positive sense of identity	Independence	Positive environmental relationship skills
	Affiliation	Responsibility	Attachment
	Self-regulating skills	Trust	Cooperation
	Emotion regulation and control	Delayed gratification	Empathy
	Confidence	Responsible decision making	Social awareness
	Self-awareness		Communication skills
	Self management skills		Social differences
	Positive self-esteem		

For the purposes of this study, I chose to categorise the life skills that were identified by the mother of the participants and by all their grade teachers as necessary and indispensable as adaptation skills. Under this category heading I identified the following specific adaptation skills: problem solving skills, interpersonal communication skills, behaviour regulating skills, and the manifestation of various acceptable forms of behaviour. Problem solving skills enabled children to deal with those typical daily problems that they need to solve during their transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2. Children need to be able to solve problems of that kind if they are to adapt successfully to each of the new environments they encounter during their transitions.

Interpersonal communication skills allow children to communicate their ideas, thoughts, and feelings effectively to other people and fellow learners while they engage in the adaptation processes required by the transition. Throughout the study, my assumption has been that it is possible to learn interpersonal communication skills, and that such learned skills can be improved by means of understanding, practice, feedback, and reflection. Children who are effective in

behaviour regulation are able to understand and accept the consequences of their behaviour. This enables them to accept, and take responsibility for their behaviour during transition processes. It is my assumption that children should be able to learn not only from their own behaviour and actions, but from the behaviour and actions of their peers as well. In this way, they familiarise themselves with the consequences of the various forms of behaviour that are typical of their generational group.

Under the heading of the following overall descriptive theme, namely, interpersonal self-regulation skills, the participants identified eleven life skills that they regarded as indispensable for smooth transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2. These eleven life skills are emotional expression skills, emotional communication skills, a sense of self-worth, and a positive sense of identity. They also identified affiliation skills, self-regulating skills, and emotion regulation and control skills. It is significant to note that confidence, self-awareness, self-management skills, and the development of positive self-esteem were also identified by both the data that I accumulated for this study and by the literature which I examined on this topic.

I conducted this research in terms of the assumption that if children are in touch with their feelings and emotions, and are furnished with the correct vocabulary to express their feelings and emotions, such skills may probably relieve the possible stress that arises during transition periods. I also proceeded from the assumption that it is important for a child to be heard by his or her peers and by significant adults. When a child has mastered the correct vocabulary of emotional expression, he or she is probably more likely to be heard and understood. The ability to express one's emotions is important because it enables children's peers and their teachers to become aware of the difficulties and challenges that children may experience during their transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2.

Before a child is able to respect himself or herself, he needs to have an intact sense of self-worth. From the theoretical point of view, I regard an individual's sense of self-worth as closely related to a positive sense of identity and a positive sense of self-esteem. It is by being given opportunities to explore these three concepts in practice when a child may become familiar with his or her strengths and weaknesses, his or her characteristic traits, and uniqueness of his or her individual personality. Even though children in grades between Grade R and Grade 2 may not

possess the intellectual equipment to fully understand such concepts, I believe that they can be given opportunities during these early years to develop their sense of self-worth, their sense of their own identity, and a sense of self-esteem. My own experience as a life skill facilitator made me realise how important it is for children to develop such skills as early as possible.

I also believe that it is important to develop affiliation skills, especially in the context of the whole school experience and the particular conditions that prevail during the first four years of education. It is my premise that if a child is to succeed socially and academically in school, they need to feel that they are part of the larger social unit of the school and that they are accepted and part of that unit. For the purposes of this study, I defined the larger social unit of the individuals within a township as their friends, their class mates, their teachers, and other children in the wider school context.

I also believed in the efficacy of self-regulating skills because these skills enable children to concentrate in class, to participate in group activities, and to restrain themselves from disruptive and impulsive forms of behaviour. Self-regulating skills are therefore valuable during a child's transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2.

The skill of emotion regulation and control enables children to control their actions and behaviour. During the transitions between Grade R and Grade 2, children may experience a wide variety of emotions. Children who are in control of their emotions and actions, may be in a position to benefit themselves, their families, and their schools. Children who are unable to control their emotions, may be prone to manifestations of impulsive behaviour that may be harmful and disruptive to themselves and to those around them.

I also undertook this study by assuming that children who have confidence in themselves, their teachers, and their friends, would be more likely to make largely unproblematic transitions from one grade to another and thus derive satisfaction from their school experiences. I also assumed that it would be valuable for children to be able to approach new experiences with confidence and therefore be willing to participate in new experiences without paralysing fears or inhibitions. I also assumed that an appropriate degree of self-awareness in children would enable

those children to be able to draw the necessary distinctions between themselves and their environments. It is self-awareness that enables a child to experience himself or herself as an autonomous individual who exists independently of the opinions of others. Such self-management skills are necessary for children to make smooth transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2. I also made the assumption that it is important for children to be able to be aware of their own behaviour, to participate in classroom routines and instructional activities, and to make creative use of appropriate social interaction skills at school. It is by making use of such self-management skills that children may achieve their objectives and enjoy successful school careers.

I also designated eight life skills as indispensable and categorise them under the category of intrapersonal self-regulating skills. I identified the first of these skills as stress coping skills because it seems that an ability on the part of a child to make constructive use of stress coping skills will facilitate smooth transitions between grades. By taking the initiative in an appropriate way during transitions, a child may be able to approach new experiences and challenges in such a way that he or she will be able to make smooth transitions and not be overcome by fear or inhibitions. I therefore also made the assumption that the ability to assume the initiative at vital points during transitions enables children to make such transitions without being hampered by any major obstacles. I also worked on the assumption that although it is natural for children to be apprehensive about any new situation or challenge, it is nevertheless advantageous to a child if he or she can take the initiative when challenges arise.

I was also of the opinion that the ability to show respect facilitates a child's transitions between the grades. It seemed to me that children who were able to inspect their school, their teacher and their friends, would be in a better position to display the appropriate forms of obedience when the occasion arose. An ability to act independently of others and of the teacher (where appropriate) is also beneficial for children. Children who are able to behave and complete tasks independently of others may be more likely to strengthen their self-confidence. Although I strongly encourage teachers and parents to provide assistance to children where necessary, it is my belief that children should be able to act more independently as they progress through school.

Children who have the ability to take responsibility for their own actions and make responsible choices may facilitate smoother transitions for themselves from Grade R through to Grade 2. I was also of the opinion that children may only function optimally in safe and secure environments. It is therefore necessary for parents, teachers, the principal, companions and for the child himself or herself to be able to trust others and be trusted by others.

I was also of the opinion that delayed gratification is another indispensable life skill for making largely trouble-free transitions. I deduced that this particular skill was especially important on the basis of remarks made by the Grade 1 teacher when she noted that some Grade 1 children were upset when some of the learners who had only just entered Grade 1 were annoyed because they found they were unable to read and write immediately. These children probably were unable to defer the gratification that they would have felt when they eventually began to master the skills of reading and writing in slow degrees.

I identified the following life skills that the participants perceived as essential under the fourth category, namely group effectiveness skills. The first of these skills that I identified was the skill of entering into and maintaining positive social relationships, which included the ability to make use of appropriate social skills and friendship skills, all of which I regard as being closely related to one another. There will probably be many occasions during the transitions between Grade R and Grade 2 when children will need to be able to enter into and maintain healthy social relationships with their peers and their teachers. In such situations, appropriate communication skills are also indispensable because it seems difficult to develop social relationships without appropriate communication skills.

Another skill that the mother and teachers regarded as indispensable was the ability to maintain a positive relationship with the environment. This ability may be closely related to the ability to show respect, which was mentioned earlier in this chapter. It is valuable to children to be able to develop and maintain respect for and positive relationships with their environment. It is also important for children to play a practical part in maintaining their school environments and those who are committed to developing them. It is my belief that children are able to connect with their

environment by means of attachment. Such positive connections may play an important role in facilitating transitions. The ability to cooperate, especially in group activities and social relationships, are also helpful for effecting largely trouble-free transitions. I also believe that it is important for children to be able to identify the needs and desires of their groups as alternatives to their own needs and desires.

Children may be able to make use of the skill of social awareness in order to understand what constitutes socially acceptable behaviour. This deal also enables them to demonstrate empathy towards others and to respect social differences in others in the school context.

I am of the opinion that all of the above-mentioned life skills exert a reciprocal effect on one another. I also believe that the greater the number of skills that children have developed, the more easily will they be able to develop additional skills because many of these skills are similar in their intention. One may therefore also assert the contrary case: the fewer the life skills that a child has mastered, the more difficulty he or she might have in developing additional skills. But this is a point that is not covered by the scope of this study.

According to the literature that supports this study and the findings of the data, it appears to be the case that children acquire an adequate mastery of numerous life skills for smoother transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2. Each life skill seems to have its own particular rationale. I do not, however, believe that the life skills that I have identified here include all the life skills that are necessary for largely trouble-free transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2. There may well be other vitally important life skills that have not been mentioned in this discussion.

4.4.2 WHAT PERCEIVED STRESSORS WERE EXPERIENCED OR IDENTIFIED BY EACH OF THE PARTICIPANTS DURING THE TRANSITION FROM GRADE R TO GRADE 2?

In order to answer this question, I categorised the perceived positive and negative stressors in terms of grade years (see sections 4.3.3.1 and 4.3.3.2) so that I would be in a position to compare differences and similarities between these stressors during Grade R through to Grade 2. I compiled the above-mentioned stressors from data that I collected from the individuals within a township, their mother, and their

Grade R, Grade 1 and two Grade 2 teachers. As mentioned earlier, the highlighted stressors in Table 4.2 are some general perceived stressors by the participating teachers. However, these stressors weren't experienced stressors by Alex and Rick.

4.4.2.1 Positive stressors in Grade R

The positive stressors that were experienced by the participants in Grade R were inflicted by their friends with whom they played in school, outside the play area, and on the rugby field. It was apparent to me that playing was a significant part of their lives. Even during our sessions, they could hardly wait to get their work done so that they could go outside and play. On some occasions they even try to reduce our sessions into playful activities.

Both Alex and Rick experienced their Grade R teacher as kind and loving. This enabled me to identify her as a positive stressor during Grade R. Both Alex and Rick appreciated her warmth and her caring attitudes. They described her as “friendly”. They also experienced obtaining new knowledge in class and feeling content and comfortable in school as positive stressors. During our sessions together, both Alex and Rick took great pleasure in sharing their newly accomplished skills with me, skills such as being able to write their names or demonstrate their newly learnt numbers.

I therefore identified their expectations and their excitement about Grade 1 as positive stressors. According to their Grade R teacher, some Grade R teachers and parents focus attention strongly on attending Grade 1 in the following year. The children's expectations of Grade 1 therefore received a lot of attention, and they welcome it.

The day of my school visit, I was able to observe that the more active the individuals within a township were allowed to be, the more pleasurable their day was. Even in their own home, the individuals within a township occupy themselves with creating and starting games throughout a number of our sessions. Play was therefore the most significant of all their activities at this stage.

“Today we played outside on the jungle gym, we ran and we played rugby. We played in the sand, we did some work, we ate, and we played again.” (Interview 1, Rick, line 10)

"I enjoyed it most when someone jumped with me on the trampoline at school. That is so nice!" (Interview 1, Alex, line 12)

"Positive stressors in Grade R includes friends, playing rugby, their teacher, learning new things, and feeling happy at school." (Interview 2, researcher, field notes, line 4)

"I am never afraid at school because I know my school." (Interview 5, Rick, line 85)

"Positive stressors with regard to the transition from Grade R to Grade 1 are their expectations. The children can't wait to go up to Grade 1, and the excitement of doing that is evident among them." (Interview 9, Grade R teacher, line 10)

"The boys ran outside, and they also played in the sand and on the jungle gyms. They are very active on the playground outside, and they are really enjoying themselves." (Interview 9, Field notes, researcher, lines 1, 6, 9 and 10)

During my school visit, it was apparent to me that both Alex and Rick valued their teacher. From my point of view, she appeared to be very warm and caring." (Interview 9, field notes, researcher, lines 49-52)

4.4.2.2 Negative stressors in Grade R

Friends who inflicted the physical or verbal harm on Alex and Rick constituted the main negative stressors experienced by the participants in their Grade R year. Every time this stressor appeared, it represented a significant ordeal for both of them. During our sessions, they would explain to me in great detail how they got hurt, the person involved, exactly what happened, and how offended they were in those situations. Some of the children who harmed them were their friends. Whilst most of the incidents were accidental, others were not, and these they described as bullies. Alex and Rick's perceptions of bullies are set out in verbatim quotations below.

They also experienced schoolwork as a negative stressor probably because they preferred to participate in recreational activities outside rather than work in the classroom, even though they asserted that they derived pleasure from obtaining new knowledge. It was the view of their Grade R teacher that insufficient time was a major negative stressor for these children because of their demanding extra-mural activities.

“Negative stressors included feeling sad when friends were hurting them.” (Interview 2, researcher, field notes, line 4)

“I was angry at school when someone said rude things to me. The rude things he said to me were swear words.” (Interview 5, Alex, line 24- 28)

“I was very angry at school when another boy slapped me through my face.” (Interview 5, Rick, line 34)

“I was sad at school because other children hurt me.” (Interview 5, Rick, line 67)

“They bully me.” (Interview 5, Rick, line 71)

“A bully kicked me between my legs.” (Interview 6, Rick, line 30)

“It is nicer to play outside than to work in the classroom.” (Interview 6, Rick, line 70)

“Bullies don't have good manners.” (Interview 6, Alex, line 31)

“Bullies tease you.” (Interview 6, Alex, line 59)

“Bullies tease you and kick you.” (Interview 6, participant Y, line 60)

“Bullies take your things.” (Interview 6, Alex, line 58)

“Bullies hurt you and they swear at you.” (Interview 6, Rick, line 51)

“Bullies tease you and are rude to you and they make you angry.” (Interview 6, Alex, line 54)

“Bullies slap you and they make you sad.” (Interview 6, Alex, line 58)

“Bullies will drag you off your bike.” (Interview 6, Rick, line 60)

“Bullies will throw you down the slide, and that hurts your back.” (Interview 6, Alex, line 61)

“Negative stressors during the transition from Grade R to Grade 1 include insufficient time. Children have to engage in too many activities and they are forced to participate in all these activities.” (Interview 9, Grade R teacher, line 6)

4.4.2.3 Positive stressors in Grade 1

Throughout Grade 1, the participants experienced homework as a positive stressor. I also observed that both of them experienced a sense of accomplishment in this grade. Both of them felt more mature and enjoyed a sense of growth while completing their homework. They also displayed pride in being able to do their homework in my presence, and they would boast about being in the “big school”.

They also regarded themselves as being “clever” because they were attending Grade 1 and receiving homework. Alex and Rick also regarded their kindly teacher as a positive stressor. Even though most of their friends from Grade R had enrolled in another primary school, Alex and Rick still experienced their new friends in class and in the playground as positive stressors. There were times when they admitted that they missed their old friends, but the data from the interviews shows how well they managed to form new friendships and maintain those friendships. They also experienced being able to help others such as children who had got hurt or who were upset, as positive stressors. Both Alex and Rick would take great pride in telling me when they were able to assist someone at school.

Other positive stressors experienced by the individuals within a township were being able to participate in sport socially and competitively during competitions. For Alex and Rick, the more physically they could be engaged, the more energised they would feel. I observed the intense amount of excitement they showed every time they were physically active or involved in sports.

They also experienced the prefects who protected them as positive stressors during Grade 1. I noticed during the course of the interviews how safe Alex and Rick felt with the prefects at school. They experienced prefects as people who would help them if they needed help.

Acquiring new knowledge in class was another positive stressor for them. I observed the same feelings of accomplishment in Alex and Rick as they acquired new knowledge that I observed in them when they successfully completed their homework. I identified these feelings from our sessions in class and from my own observations.

I also identified buying food from the tuck shop as another positive stressor. I observed being able to purchase something from the tuck shop was exciting for Alex and Rick mainly because it was a new experience in Grade 1 which was different from what they experienced in their Grade R year than they used to have completely different things in their daily lunchboxes.

The participants also experienced the presence of their co-individual within a twinship in their class as a positive stressor. I construed this positive reaction as the security derived from being able to rely upon someone familiar in an unfamiliar setting. I observed how each of them felt confident and relaxed in the presence of his co-individual within a twinship in the class.

The individuals within a twinship also confirmed that the life skills that they learned during Grade R, made them better able to cope with school and so they regarded these life skills as positive stressors. They were also eager to discuss the life skills that they had learned with me, and describe to me how they applied them at school. They considered them to be helpful. I observed that these life skills they most valued were the socially orientated life skills that included how to deal with bullies and make friends, although they also valued the emotion-related life skills.

According to their Grade 1 teacher, supportive parents were another positive stressor. Their Grade 1 teacher explained to me how valuable an accommodating parents could be on the development of the child in contrast with parents who were not at all interested in their child's development. In this study, Alex and Ricks' parents showed supportive characteristics.

"It is nice to help other children at school and to get homework." (Interview 10, Alex, line 35)

"We enjoy playing at school, and even though we fell hard a few times, we are not scared."
(Interview 10, Alex, line 89)

"Today we played and work, and we enjoyed it." (Interview 11, Alex and Rick, line 25)

"I like our teacher because she helps us. I like having friends. We are getting smarter at school because we can buy something at the tuck shop and that is nice, and we can learn."
(Interview 12, Alex, lines 36, 39, 41, 42, 44, 46.)

“Today was nice because I played with my friends on the rugby field. We did some work in the class and I liked the teacher in the computer room.” (Interview 12, Alex, lines 104, 111, 117)

“One of the things I enjoyed today at school was making friend. I made new friends, and we played with our friends on the rugby field. I also enjoyed asking our teacher questions.” (Interview 12, Rick, lines 110, 112, 116)

“It was nice in the computer room today because we learned something. On the rugby field it was also nice because we just played.” (Interview 13, Alex, lines 7, 13)

“I was good in class and I got a gold sticker. That was nice.” (Interview 13, Rick, line 22)

“It is nice when my brother plays with me at school.” (Interview 15, Alex, line 92)

“It was nice when we bought something at the tuck shop today.” (Interview 16, Alex, line 50)

“It was nice in the computer room because we can type.” (Interview 16, Rick, line 52)

“Grade 1 is nice. We like our teacher and we have lots of friends.” (Interview 16, Alex and Rick, line 94-106)

“Our teacher is not nice to the naughty boy but she is nice to us.” (Interview 17, Rick, line 39)

“We miss our old friends but we made new ones too.” (Interview 17, Rick, line 62)

“During my classroom observation, both Alex and Rick seemed confident and content in the presence of one another. It also seemed to me that the fact that they were in the same class as their co-individuals within a township, made them relaxed and comfortable”. (Field notes, researcher, Interview 19, line 24-28)

“Supportive parents are a positive stressor. Such are parents who are honest and who accept the fact that their children need help in a specific field. We can solve the problem and help the child if we have the cooperation of the parents. If the parents are in denial, it is hard to help the child. We can’t do it alone. The parents must regard us as their partners for the 6 hours we spend with their child each day and they must trust us and our opinions.” (Interview 19, Grade 1 teacher, line 81-97)

4.4.2.4 Negative stressors in Grade 1

Disobedient children and bullies were some of the negative stressors experienced by Alex and Rick during their Grade 1 year. My accumulated data enabled me to

identify disobedient children as problematic for Alex and Rick, mainly for two reasons. My first reason (and, according to my observations, the most important one) for reaching this conclusion was the fact that disobedient children distress their teacher and this emotional distress becomes visible in her face. The second reason was that disobedient children distract other children in class, including Alex and Rick, from their work. Alex in fact related how disobedient children don't bother him because he covers his ears when these situations arise. I took this as a confirmation of the way in which they disturbed him.

In addition to this, prefects who were very strict, were perceived as a negative stressor by Alex and Rick. Although the same prefects were experienced as a positive stressor (see the discussion about positive stressors in Grade 1), their strictness and rules were also regarded as a negative stressor.

The individuals within a township regarded the workload in Grade 1 as a negative stressor. But this was once again experienced as both a positive and a negative stressor by Alex and Rick. They described how they were able to acquire new knowledge and perform their homework satisfactorily as a positive experience that they identified as a positive stressor. Both of them, however, regarded the workload as challenging and categorised it as a negative stressor.

The following stressors were indicated by their Grade 1 teacher as perceived negative stressors by some children. However, these stressors weren't experienced as negative stressors by Alex and Rick. Their Grade 1 teacher noted that when some Grade 1 children found that they were not able to read or write for the moment they entered Grade 1, they were upset and regarded this, as well as the necessity of making new friends, as negative stressors. Their Grade 1 teacher told me in the interview that some of the Grade R children entered Grade 1 with a number of "ominous" expectations, which some of their Grade R teachers, their parents and their older siblings had stimulated in them before they arrived in Grade 1. Adequate social skills were also mentioned as neglected in some children according to their Grade 1 teacher and thus categorised as another negative stressors during Grade 1.

“The naughty kids are bad in Grade 1. They are bullies. They grab your things and kick you between the legs.” (Interview 10, Alex, line 13)

“Bad things at school are bullies, kicking someone when someone punches you, when a friend hurts you, and sometimes also my teacher when I get into trouble.” (Interview 12, Alex, lines 11, 14, 18, 23)

“Things I don’t like at school are those who punch others or kick others, or when someone steals from you, or when the prefects bothering us because they are too strict.” (Interview 12, Rick, lines 13, 15, 17, 21)

“The bully on the rugby field wasn’t nice. He didn’t bother us in class, but only on the rugby field when we were playing rugby.” (Interview 13, Alex, line 27)

“Things that weren’t nice today was when two boys who didn’t want to work in class didn’t listen to our teacher.” (Interview 16, Alex, line 29)

“They are bothering us because they don’t work. They just play in class and our teacher gets angry with them.” (Interview 16, Rick, line 36)

“It doesn’t bother me. I just put my hands over my ears so that I don’t hear them.” (Interview 16, Alex, line 43)

“Today wasn’t nice because there was a bully who picked me up and threw me on the ground.” (Interview 17, Alex, line 25)

“My view is that the stress that occurs during the transition from Grade R to Grade 1 is caused mainly by parents who tell them all these terrifying stories about primary school and Grade 1. When they arrive in Grade 1, some children will say, ‘Oh, but this isn’t so bad, and you are not so strict as I thought.’” (Interview 19, Grade 1 teacher, line 23-26)

“Another negative stressor is the fact that most of the children think when they start Grade 1, they will be able to read and write. But unfortunately it takes a while before they can. That is quite a disappointment for them.” (Interview 19, Grade 1 teacher, line 27)

“The social skills required to make new friends are very stressful for some children when they lack these skills. We try to help them in these situations by giving them practical advice.” (Interview 19, Grade 1 teacher, line 35)

4.4.2.5 Positive stressors in Grade 2

In Grade 2, the positive stressors experienced by Alex and Rick included having a good teacher and friends. I observed that Alex and Rick were treated with respect

and with a positive and kind attitude by their peers and teachers. This positive experience gave them some form of gratification. Obtaining new knowledge and mastering academic skills were an additional experienced positive stressor, especially when they learned to write in cursive script. Even though this was occasionally challenging, this experience was positive. Their participation in recreation during break was another one of their highlights during the school day. It was during break and during active playing, as well as during their sport-related activities, that most of their social interactions and social activities took place. During these interactions, opportunities arose for Alex and Rick to apply the life skills that they had learned.

Another positive stressor was being able to complete their homework in class. The individuals within a twinship and I observed this activity as a positive stressor because it gave them more recreation time in the afternoon, as did the completion of their homework in the afternoon or late at night after their extra-mural activities. Being class captain and receiving achiever labels were also positive experiences for both Alex and Rick, and the more so for Rick because of his competitive nature. I observed that both Alex and Rick were more aware of their awards and responsibilities in class during their Grade 2 year than in the previous grades.

Being in separate classes was another positive stressor, and it was one of great importance to the participants in the study because their teachers and parents were confident that Alex and Rick were able to work and learn independently of one another. Alex and Rick's separation into different classes in Grade 2 was therefore a positive stressor, and they welcomed being in separate classrooms. I observed that both Alex and Rick adapted well because they promptly made new friends in their classrooms and still managed to spend time with each other during breaks. It appeared that they regarded being separated as temporary because they knew they would see each other during break times.

"Grade 2 is more difficult than Grade 1. I struggle a bit." (Interview 21, Alex, line 57)

"Grade 2 is nice." (Interview 21, Alex, line 23)

"Grade 2 is nice because my teacher doesn't get angry at me but with the others."
(Interview 21, Alex, line 27)

“In Grade 2 it is nice to work, to play games, and to do sums.” (Interview 21, Alex, line 43 and 49)

“I only like Grade 2 and my teacher a little because she gives out work too easily.” (Interview 21, Rick, line 128)

“Grade 2 is nice because it is nice to have all the books and because it is nice to write.” (Interview 21, Rick, line 142)

“A positive stressor was the fact that they were not in the same class anymore. They still play together during break. They can be individuals now.” (Interview 24, mother, line 63)

“Grade 2 is nicer than Grade 1 because we can write in cursive script.” (Interview 26, Rick, line 71)

“It is nice when we are allowed to do our homework in class.” (Interview 26, Alex, line 104)

“One thing I like most about Grade 2 is doing athletics.” (Interview 26, Rick, line 105)

“Today was nice when we played rugby and cricket on the rugby field, and we swapped rugby cards. It was also nice when I could show off my good work to the principal.” (Interview 27, Rick, lines 39 & 47)

“This week is nice because I am class captain.” (Interview 27, Alex, line 20)

“It was also nice because we played ‘opies’, and because the children don’t cheat anymore.” (Interview 27, Alex, line 26)

4.4.2.6 Negative stressors in Grade 2

A negative stressor in Grade 2 included the challenging amount of school and homework. I observed that the children in Grade 1 received an ample amount of assistance from their teacher with regard to their work in class. In Grade 2, the teachers expected the children to work more independently and to do the work on their own with less assistance from their teachers comparing to Grade 1.

Bullies, disobedient children and getting teased were additional negative stressors for the participants. It appeared that Alex was teased mainly because he was the shortest person in his class. When Alex was teased, he realised that this was an ideal opportunity for him to practise and apply some of the life skills that they had learned. Another negative stressor in their lives occurred when various Grade 3 children began to “bother” the Grade 2 children.

Alex and Rick also experienced a challenging amount of homework then given in Grade 2 as a negative stressor – an observation made initially by their mother and subsequently confirmed by themselves. According to the testimony presented both by Alex and Rick and by their mother, the participants received far more homework in Grade 2 when they had received in Grade 1. Furthermore, since the individuals within a township had by that time been placed in separate classes, homework was very often dissimilar in quantity and detail. This situation placed a great burden on their mother because she then had to assist them individually with their homework instead of being able to provide the same assistance for both of them as she had done when they were in Grade 1. The sheer amount of homework they were given in Grade 2, together with their more demanding extra-mural schedule, consumed much more of their time and resulted in them having less recreation time after school. This occasionally increased the amount of strain on both of them. Strict bathroom rules by their teachers in class, together with certain individuals who appeared upset at times, were both experienced as negative stressors by Alex and Rick.

According to their Grade 2 teachers, the necessity of having to adapt to new teachers at the beginning of the year and their separation from the friends they had previously made, were both negative stressors for some children, although not for Alex and Rick. The appearance of a new teacher is an ordinary experience for children promoted to a new grade. Their Grade 2 teachers mentioned that most of the children in their care adapted quite easily to having to cope with their new teachers. For some children, separation from their best friends of the previous year, is sometimes stressful. It appeared to me that Alex and Rick both adjusted well to their new Grade 2 teachers. My own observations together with what they themselves told me led me to believe that both Alex and Rick adjusted well to their new classes even though they were thus effectively separated from their co-individual within a township.

“Grade 2 is more difficult than Grade 1. I struggle a bit.” (Interview 21, Alex, line 57)

“One of the things that is not nice in Grade 2 is that we are not allowed to go to the bathroom between first and second break.” (Interview 21, Alex, line 79)

“There are still bullies in Grade 2.” (Interview 21, Alex, line 90)

“There are bullies in my class. They pinch and kick me.” (Interview 21, Rick, line 154)

“One of the things that wasn’t nice in Grade 2 was that we didn’t play ‘opies’ anymore because some of the children cheated and swore.” (Interview 22, Alex and Rick, lines 140 and 142)

“One of the things that I could see was hard for them was the work. Especially the homework. They got a lot more homework than they got in Grade 1.” (Interview 24, mother, line 22)

“Grade 2 is much more difficult for them, and it is also a bigger adjustment than it was for them in Grade 1. They also have to cope with much more pressure. In Grade 2 they are supposed to be big and brave. On some days they only came home at 21:00 in the evening, and then it was too late to do homework. For me and them it was much more difficult.” (Interview 24, mother, line 55-61)

“The only reason I say the adjustment to Grade 2 was more difficult for them than it was in Grade 1 was because of the workload, and not because of their separate classes.” (Interview 24, mother, line 105)

“One of the boys pushed and hurt me today. It wasn’t nice.” (Interview 25, Alex, line 127)

“The Grade 3s also hurts us.” (Interview 25, Alex, line 141)

“The naughty boy is still in my class and he is still naughty.” (Interview 25, Rick, line 13)

“All the work in Grade 2 isn’t so nice....” (Interview 26, Rick, line 83)

“Today somebody punched me in the face. It didn’t feel nice.” (Interview 27, Rick, line 18)

“It wasn’t nice today when our teacher cried. I felt sorry for her.” (Interview 27, Alex, line 4)

“On the rugby field it wasn’t nice when a boy fell and cried. I felt sorry for him and I helped him.” (Interview 27, Alex, line 112)

“Something that wasn’t nice today was when one boy had to write his name in the monkey manners book, and when someone stole from the tuck shop because they gave a fake R10 note.” (Interview 28, Alex, lines 11 and 29)

“The workload was stressful. Because of their hectic after extra-mural activities and their homework, both of them would sometimes be emotional. At such tough times, I just let them go to bed to sleep. Sometimes they weren’t able to cope with all the demands.” (Interview 28, mother, line 53-56)

“It appeared that both Alex and Rick adjusted well without the presence of their co-individual within a township, but with their Grade 2 teachers.” (Interview 29, Field notes, researcher, Line 87-90)

“I would say that the stressors which the children experienced in Grade 2 were the new teacher at the beginning of the year, and the new and unfamiliar setting. They had become used to their Grade 1 teacher for a year. But as the year progressed, it became easier for them.” (Interview 29, Alex’s Grade 2 teacher, line 13)

“Another thing that I perceived as a stressor was when best friends were placed into different classes in Grade 2. Sometimes that was also stressful for the parents as well. But we stick to our decisions, and some children need to be separated and placed in different classes.” (Interview 29, Rick’s Grade 2 teacher, line 17)

“Grade 2 was academically tougher for Rick than it was for Alex. The extensive amount of homework was also tough for Alex, but the work in general were really tough on Rick. Emotionally Grade 2 was challenging for both of them, even though Alex would show his emotions more readily by, for example, start crying about something or when someone was upset or hurt. The Grade 2 experience was equally emotionally challenging for both of them.” (Phone Interview, 3 November 2011, mother, line 5).

In the following two tables, I set out the four positive stressors that the participants experienced from Grade R through to Grade 2, followed by the two negative stressors that they experienced from Grade R through to Grade 2.

Table 4.7: Positive stressors that were present in all three years

Positive stressors that were present in Grade 0, Grade 1 and Grade 2
○ Friendships
○ Recreation outside the classroom and participation in sport
○ The supportive teacher
○ Acquiring and mastering of new knowledge

Table 4.8: Negative stressors that were present in all three years

Negative stressors that were present in Grade 0, Grade 1 and Grade 2	
○	Bullies
○	Disobedient children

There were four positive stressors that were present in all the three years from Grade R through to Grade 2. These positive stressors were the friendships they made, there are opportunities for outdoor recreation and participation in sport, their supportive teachers, and opportunities for acquiring and mastering of new knowledge. During these years, there were two negative stressors that were present from Grade R through to Grade 2. They were the presence and activities of disobedient children who disobeyed their teacher, friends who sometimes harmed them, and bullies.

4.4.3 WHICH COPING STRATEGIES WERE USED BY THE INDIVIDUALS WITHIN A TWINSHIP TO COPE WITH CERTAIN IDENTIFIED STRESSORS BEFORE AND AFTER LIFE SKILL FACILITATION TOOK PLACE?

During the data analysis process, I identified four categories of events that stimulated the individuals within a twinship to practise their life skills. Their practice of these life skills enabled me to explore and explain how the individuals within a twinship made use of life skills and methods before and after life skill facilitation had taken place. These categories included their emotion-coping skills, bully-related skills, friendship skills and skills associated with coping with their demanding school-related work.

Table 4.9: Categories of events on which the participants practised their coping skills

Coping before and after life skill facilitation	
○	Emotions
○	Bullies
○	Friendships
○	School-related work

Before they were trained in life skills, it appeared in our sessions that Alex and Rick both thought that it was wrong to express feelings associated with anger. There had been some occasions, according to Alex and Rick, when they had shown signs of unacceptable social behaviour towards some of their friends, or to children they did not regard as their friends, because these children had harmed them, either intentionally or by accident. The data that I obtained from the interviews informed me that when the individuals within a township were angry with someone, or when someone behaved in a delinquent way towards them, they would on most of these occasions have demonstrated some unacceptable forms of social behaviour. Although Rick recalled during our interviews that he would retaliate against someone if he “wanted to”, such actions did not, as far as I could perceive, occur very frequently or on a daily basis.

“Both of the individuals within a township said that one is not allowed to get angry.”
(Interview 3, researcher, field notes, line 6)

“Sometimes when I get angry, I will hurt my friends. But then I will apologise.” (Interview 3, Alex, line 18)

“When I get angry with my friends at school, I won’t hit them. I will rather tell my teacher.”
(Interview 5, Alex, line 37)

“When I am angry with people at home or school, I kick them.” (Interview 5, Rick, line 51)

“When my friends at school hurt me, I kick them between the legs.” (Interview 5, Rick, line 74)

“I kick and slap the children at school because I want to.” (Interview 5, Rick, line 113)

Both Alex and Rick expressed an aversion to bullies. They also indicated that they had acted aggressively before they received life skill training. In both cases, they justified their aggressive behaviour in those cases where they were bullied first.

“Rick is a bully because he bent another boy’s finger.” (Interview 6, Alex, line 44)

“I have kicked bullies.” (Interview 6, Rick, line 101)

“You are allowed to hit a bully if he hits you.” (Interview 6, Rick, line 114)

During one of our role-play sessions, Alex and Rick revealed that they were not confident about how to develop new friendships. Because they were part of a secure twinship and appeared popular among their friends, it might not have been necessary for them to form *new* friendships in the past.

“Rick and Alex didn’t know how or what to say during our role play the theme of a making a new friend. They actually found it amusing.” (Interview 8, researcher, field notes, line 38-42)

Because they had never received any homework during their Grade R year (which was the year before they received life skill training), I was in no position to explore and explain their experiences of coping with homework before life skills facilitation took place. My only observation, which I made while observing events at their home and school, was that they preferred to engage in recreational activities outdoors rather than doing work in class. After they had been trained in life skills, Alex and Rick expressed the opinion that “one is allowed to get angry”. In my opinion, they acquired a good understanding of the concept that “dealing with anger in a positive manner” is healthy. According to the annotations set out below, Alex and Rick deliberately began to practise the positive coping strategies that they had learned. They seemed to have a good understanding of these concepts and were able to put them into practice.

“If you are angry or sad, you must tell your teacher.” (Interview 7, Alex, line 34)

“You are allowed to get angry. If you become angry, then all the fire comes out.” (Interview 17, Alex, line 82)

“Alex and Rick’s social and emotional skills were definitely intact. I don’t know if someone worked with them in connection with these skills before. They were never in fights, and they would always be concerned about any new child in class.” (Interview 19, Grade 1 teacher, line 142-149)

“If you become angry, you must throw the bean bag against the wall.” (Interview 22, Rick, line 126)

“I also feel less angry after I have kicked or punched my pillow.” (Interview 25, Rick, line 157)

“When I get angry at school, I kick the wall, and then I feel better.” (Interview 27, Rick, line 70)

“When I get angry at home, I throw my bean bag and I use the cards you gave me.”
(Interview 27, Alex, line 82)

“When I am sad at home, I cry in the bathroom with the door closed.” (Interview 27, Alex,
line 94)

Although Alex and Rick were “good friends” with one another before life skill facilitation took place (according to accounts of their previous behaviour and various clarifications), I detected a more positive attitude to the formation of new friendships after life skill facilitation had taken place. Their Grade 1 teachers noted how both Alex and Rick were at times concerned about new children in their class. This was also evident in their practical behaviour towards their friends and their applied friendship skills.

“If there is a friend who is upset, you must tell your teacher.” (Interview 7, Alex, line 27)

“I am a good friend because I help others and I give them sandwiches and I help them if they struggle with something.” (Interview 27, Rick, line 92-96)

“I am a good friend because I help others. I tell the prefects if someone has been hurt and I give food to kids who don’t have food.” (Interview 27, Alex, line 106)

The activities of bullies constituted a significant and definite stressor during Alex and Rick’s transition from Grade R through to Grade 2. According to my data, they encountered bullies on an almost daily basis at school. After they had been trained in skills, it seemed to me as though Alex and Rick were more confident about dealing with bullies, and they no longer displayed any fear of bullies. I observed their new perceptions of a bully as someone with whom they had to deal. This gave them permission to act in a more assertive and confident manner, rather than regarding any bully as a threat or source of disruption. Both of them were confident with the techniques they had been taught for dealing with bullies.

“You mustn’t hurt a bully. You must rather tell your teacher.” (Interview 7, Rick, line 32)

“We mustn’t hurt bullies.” (Interview 12, Alex and Rick, line 143)

“We mustn’t swear at someone if they swear at us. We should rather tell the teacher.”
(Interview 12, Alex and Rick, line 145)

"I felt proud and happy when somebody bullied me and instead of bullying him in return, I told the teacher." (Interview 15, Alex, line 69-76)

"When somebody bullies me, I don't bully them back. I tell my teacher." (Interview 15, Rick, line 124)

"I don't hit or tease children who are rude to me." (Interview 15, Rick, line 162-164)

"Sometimes I fight back if I get bullied." (Interview 15, Rick, line 178)

"This one boy slapped me in the face. I told my teacher. I didn't hurt him back." (Interview 17, Alex, line 7)

"I don't get bullied anymore by this one boy because I told my teacher and she punished him. I feel happy and proud." (Interview 21, Alex, line 96)

"There are three bullies in the class who pinched me and kicked me. I told the teacher and she sent them to the principal's office. I didn't hit them back." (Interview 21, Rick, line 156)

"I think they remember the life skills you taught them. They would talk about bullies and I would ask them if they remembered the things you taught them, and they would remember them. I think they used those skills but they also forget to use them at times. I must remind them about them constantly." (Interview 24, mother, line 121-123)

"When someone hits you, you must say to them: 'You've hurt me, but I forgive you.'" (Interview 26, Alex, line 20)

"When the naughtiest boy kicked me, I just told the teacher. I didn't kick him back." (Interview 27, Rick, line 12)

"I didn't kick him back because that isn't nice." (Interview 27, Rick, line 22)

"I feel 'fantastico' if I don't bully someone back." (Interview 27, Rick, line 68)

"I don't bully someone. It is not nice. I just tell my teacher." (Interview 27, Alex, line 45)

"When I get teased, I start crying and then I tell my teacher." (Interview 27, Alex, line 70)

"When others tease me, I cry at my table." (Interview 27, Alex, line 92)

It is my opinion that one can reduce preparation time to a minimum when coping with demanding school work and homework if one devotes time to preparation and time planning. I also believe, however, that one can never be completely prepared for coping with a demanding amount of school work and homework. The life skill training that I offered the participants during the course of this study, did not include

techniques for time planning and for preparing oneself to cope with demanding school work. Alex and Rick’s experiences of the heavy load of school work and homework they received, occasionally resulted in emotional outbursts. When I asked their mother about these emotional outbursts, she confirmed that they occurred mostly when the boys were very tired and exhausted after a busy day, and then they came home and still had to do their homework. Their emotional behaviour included bursting into tears and expressing feelings of helplessness in the face of the seemingly challenging amount of work they had to accomplish.

“If Rick struggles, he will become very frustrated and very angry.” (Interview 24, mother of the twins, line 28)

“Rick is also clever, but he sometimes doesn’t get things right in the same time as his brother Alex. Rick may take a little longer. He understands it and he is okay with it, but when he is feeling tired, it becomes an issue. He will become frustrated and impatient and will start crying.” (Interview 24, mother of the twins, line 79-89)

“The workload was stressful. Because of their hectic extra-mural activities and their homework, both of them would sometimes become emotional.” (Interview 28, mother, line 53)

The following table summarises the data that I captured on the topic of this theme.

Table 4.10: Comparative results that show differences in coping before and after life skill facilitation took place

	Before life skill facilitation	After life skill facilitation
Emotions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Not allowed to feel angry or sad ○ More frequently let negative emotions predominate by hurting someone back 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Allowed to feel angry or sad ○ Important to deal with emotions in a positive manner ○ Practised coping skills
Bullies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Justified physical behaviour when they got bullied first ○ Uncertainty in dealing with a bully 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Not scared of bullies ○ More assertive towards them ○ Choosing to tell someone when they were bullied rather than being a bully too
Homework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Received no homework in Grade R 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The amount of homework was overwhelming and tiring and this made them emotional

	Before life skill facilitation	After life skill facilitation
Friends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Pleasant towards others ○ Unclear about how to form new friendships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Concerned about others, and empathetic ○ Assisting friends in need ○ Effortlessly forming new friendships

⌘ Conclusion

Alex and Rick successfully used some of the important life skills they learned during their Grade R year. However, their mother confirmed (and my own observations bore this out) that they needed continuous motivation and encouragement to apply some of the skills they had learned. They began to use certain life skills at school, mostly after the encouragement and motivation they received during our sessions from myself and from their mother at home.

I was able to observe that the structured life skills facilitation sessions constituted an important supportive function for both Alex and Rick. I observed that they felt more relaxed and confident after they had been equipped with certain life coping skills such as bully-related skills. They received detailed practical advice from me, and were able to implement these skills during their interactions.

Another important principle that they understood was that they were allowed to feel angry or sad because the coping strategies they had been taught would enable them to deal confidently and constructively with these emotions. Because social skills were an important topic in this study, I assumed that the skills that they practised most frequently during their transitions from Grade R to Grade 2, were social skills.

If one examines the four main categories that I identified in this chapter, it can be seen that three out of the four categories dealt with social skills. The participants needed social skills to deal with their emotions, their friendships, and bullies. Their school-related work was the only category that did not require the practice of social skills. For the purpose of this study, one may therefore say that social skills were the main coping skill that were practised by the individuals within a township during their transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2.

4.4.4 WHICH LIFE SKILL FACILITATING STRATEGIES WERE USED BY THE GRADE R, GRADE 1 AND GRADE 2 TEACHERS TO THE CHILDREN IN THEIR CLASSROOMS?

During their stay in Grade R, Grade 1 and Grade 2, all of the participating teachers in this study taught life skills mainly through the medium of Bible lessons. All of these teachers used the Bible as their main tool. They did this by illustrating various life skills by relating to stories and anecdotes from the Bible. The “fruits of the Spirit” was the most common lesson that their teachers used from the Bible to teach appropriate life skills. In addition to these Bible stories and teachings, their teachers made use of evocative posters, drawings and conversations about different emotions to teach the children about different emotions. Self-esteem and problem solving were some of the life skills they said they had taught to their children, and they also taught friendship skills when these were needed in practical situations. For most of the life skill lessons incorporated as part of Bible-based lessons, they also mentioned that opportunities for teaching life skills sometimes occurred at random times during various lessons that were unrelated to life skills. Only the Grade 2 teachers explained that there were dedicated life orientation periods which were designed for teaching life skills to the children. Although all of the teacher participants agreed that life skills were very important and necessary, they also noted that they were frequently neglected.

Table 4.11: Life skills facilitating strategies used by participating teachers

Life skill facilitating strategies used by participating teachers
○ The use of the Christian Bible as main textual source
○ Emotion-related skills
○ Self-esteem skills
○ Problem solving skills
○ Friendship skills
○ “Fruits of the Spirit” skills

“We teach the children about their emotions. We shall ask them how they feel, and we ask them to draw how they feel by using an emotion poster. We also use the ‘Fruits of the Spirit’ passage from the Bible to teach skills. We pay attention to their self-esteem and we teach them problem solving skills by asking them to open their own packet of chips, for example,

Our rule is that 'If you can, then you must do it yourself.' Tears don't help you to solve your problems." (Interview 9, Grade R teacher, lines 15-20)

"The social skills required for making new friends are very stressful for some children, and many children lack these skills. We try to help them in these situations by giving them practical advice." (Interview 19, Grade 1 teacher, line 35)

"When we teach them emotional life skills, and we will use Bible lessons to teach them these skills. We also talk about different emotional expressions, and then we have discussions about these specific emotions. You can't teach life skills without the Bible." (Interview, 19, Grade 1 teacher, line 51-56)

"The life skills that we teach the children, normally fit in with a lesson such as, for example, a Bible lesson. Because the learning of life skills is an ongoing process, we also have life orientation periods. It is definitely an ongoing process." (Interview 29, Alex's Grade 2 teacher, line 35 & 36)

"It is really rewarding when you teach them a certain skill and later on you see how the children observe one another. We use the 'Fruits of the Spirit' theme, and it worked really well. Every day one had to live out that specific fruit in practice. When a child doesn't act in accordance with the specific 'fruit' of the day, another child will tell him that he is not acting out his 'fruit'." (Interview 29, Rick's Grade 2 teacher, line 37)

"Yes, the 'Fruits of the Spirit' theme worked very well, and they still remember it." (Interview 29, Alex's Grade 2 teacher, line 43)

"There are definitely barriers in teaching life skills. I would say the obstacles are the different circumstances and life situations in which everyone lives in practice. Children receive various things and toys too easily." (Interview 29, Alex's Grade 2 teacher, line 46)

"We are planning a big moral and value action plan for the school. Each grade will get a responsibility. We also had a day on which everyone had to wear sunglasses, and when you spoke to someone, you had to take off your glasses and look at that person in the eyes. Children can't look people in the eyes anymore. We are also going to put all our plans on our website so that the learned skills can start at home with the parents and extend their influence straight through to school. We are also going to use 'manners for minors'. It is sad that we have to pay people to teach the children manners, but they need it. So next year we are very serious about the values and the programmes we are going to use." (Interview 29, Rick's Grade 2 teacher, line 48-55)

⌘ **Conclusion**

From the data I was able to collect, it became clear to me that the participating teachers did in fact apply various methods for teaching certain life skills to the children within their classes. I made the observation during my interviews with the participating teachers that they regarded life skills as valuable for the children. They noted that practical situations emerged for the facilitation of life skills, mostly in the middle of a Bible lesson or when a teacher saw an opportunity to assist someone with these skills during other lessons unrelated to the Bible. Even though the diversity of children and their families in a school environment presented valuable opportunities to facilitate life skills, these factors were often perceived to be barriers in the way of facilitating life skills. The Grade 2 teachers also emphasised the schools' current focus on life skill facilitation by means of programmes that involved the entire school. A private facilitation company was also used as a means to prepare children to learn basic manners in school.

4.4.5 WHAT WERE THE EXPECTATIONS OF THE INDIVIDUALS WITHIN A TOWNSHIP'S REGARD TO GRADE 1 AND GRADE 2?

4.4.5.1 Expectations of Grade 1

The positive expectations of the participants regard to Grade 1 included the new friends that they would make. It also included rugby participation and a supportive teacher to whom they would listen. An expectation that they would be contented with their pleasurable Grade 1 experiences were additional expectations that they had regard to Grade 1. They also expected that they would be participating in recreational activities, although less, because of the demanding work that awaited them in Grade 1, together with additional and possibly burdensome homework requirements and responsibilities. Their negative expectations included the expectation of having friends who may harm them and disobedient children who could cause problems for them and their teacher.

Table 4.12: An illustration of expectations of the individuals within a township with regard to Grade 1 while they were still in their Grade R year

The individuals within a township's expectations of Grade 1	
o Contented during Grade 1	o We are going to listen to our teacher.
o Rugby	o Homework
o A supportive teacher	o Recreational activities
o New friendships	o Children are going to harm us
o We are going to work harder.	o Disobedient children
o Play less	

In Grade 1 there are also going to be friends, rugby, and a teacher. They are going to learn, and they are going to be sad when children hurt them. They are also going to be happy. They once again mentioned that other children would hurt them. Things that are going to be different from what they were in Grade R. They would have new friends. They would have to the work harder and play less . They would also have more homework.” (Interview 2, researcher, field notes, lines 4-15)

“Grade 1 is going to be nice.” (Interview 2, Alex and Rick, line 2)

“The friends are going to be friendly, the teacher is going to be friendly, and we are going to play rugby with our friends. We are going to do homework in the class, we are going to listen to our teacher, and we are going to play with our friends in class.” (Interview 2, Alex and Rick, lines the 3-5)

“I feel happy when I think of Grade 1.” (Interview 2, Rick, line 7)

“When I see Grade 1, I see nice friends, and I see a class and toys.” (Interview 2, Rick, line 9)

“Grade 1 is going to be nice. We are going to play, ride our bicycles, and there is going to be toys and homework.” (Interview 2, Alex, line 15)

“I feel good when I think of Grade 1.” (Interview 2, Alex, line 18)

“When I see Grade 1, I see nice things such as friends, tables, a teacher, toys, bottles, naughty children, bicycles and trees.” (Interview 2, Alex, line 20)

“At Grade 1 I see adults, lots of children, and lots of parents.” (Interview 2, Alex, line 25)

“We are going to work and play in Grade 1.” (Interview 2, Alex, line 27)

“Things that are not going to be nice in Grade 1 will be when other children throw sand in our eyes, when other children take our bikes, and when there is a splinter in my foot.” (Interview 2, Alex, line 54 and 56)

“When other children hurt you: that won’t be nice.” (Interview 2, Rick, line 55)

“We are not afraid of Grade 1. We are also going to work there.”(Interview 5, Alex and Rick, line 87)

4.4.5.2 Expectations of Grade 2

Alex and Rick’s positive expectations with regard to Grade 2 were as follows: They had high expectations that their existing friendships from Grade 1 would continue during Grade 2. They felt excited about attending Grade 2 instead of feelings of anxiety. They were excited of the fact that they would be climbing stairs in Grade 2 because of their classrooms being situated on the second floor. Both of them expected that writing in cursive script would be exciting as well as challenging. Negative expectations on the part of Alex and Rick included having to face more challenging work in Grade 2 than in Grade 1.

Table 4.13: An illustration of the individuals within a township’s expectations of Grade 2 (these impressions were obtained in their Grade 1 year)

The individuals within a township’s expectations of Grade 2	
o Existing friends	o Writing in cursive script
o Climbing stairs	o Absence of anxiety
o More challenging work	o Excitement

“The individuals within a township told me that Grade 2 would be nice and exciting because they would have the same friends. They are also going to climb the stairs because their classes were situated on the first floor. They would also be able to write in cursive script in Grade 2, and they are expected that that would be difficult. They also expected the work to be more difficult than it was in Grade 1. We are going to get homework again” (Interview 20, researcher, field notes, line 1)

⌘ **Conclusion**

During the course of this study, it seemed that the individuals within a township's expectations with regard to what they would find in Grade 1 and Grade 2 were largely accurate and realistic. Most of the expectations that the individuals within a township had of their future grades included elements of their lived experiences during their Grade 1 and Grade 2 years respectively. Even though their expectations were largely realistic and accurate, they did not include the entire repertoire of their lived experiences during their transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2. When I reflected on the data that I accumulated, it appeared to me that their expectations were mostly positive.

4.5 FINAL REMARKS

In this chapter, I presented a rich and in-depth exploration of the context of this study. I answered the primary research question by presenting the accumulated findings in terms of three illustrative themes. I then answered the five secondary research questions for this study. In the following chapter, I will locate the findings of this study within the existing literature on this topic. I will focus in that chapter on the correlations and contradictions as well as silences between the findings of this study and in the current literature itself. It will conclude by relating the findings of this study to the conceptual framework underlying this study.



Chapter 5

Conclusions and recommendations

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This study dealt with the transitions made by two individuals within a twinship from Grade R through to Grade 2. The present chapter provides a synthesis of the research project, firstly, in the form of a synopsis of all the chapters that comprise this study, and, secondly, by answering the primary and secondary research questions that guided this research. After that, I will adduce from the data that offer insight into the transitions of these particular individuals within a twinship from Grade R through to Grade 2. I shall then position my findings within the existing literature that I reviewed in Chapter 2. I shall then re-examine the theoretical assumptions that underlie this study. Thereafter I shall locate my findings within the conceptual framework of this study. After I have described the results of the findings and their implications, I shall set out what I take to be the contribution that this study makes to existing knowledge on this theme as well as the limitations of this study. I shall conclude this chapter by making various recommendations for future research and practice in the particular theme that I chose for this field.

5.2 SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS

Chapter 1 contains a general overview of the study, together with an introduction and rationale. It also sets out the research problem and the primary and secondary research questions. This chapter includes paradigmatic perspectives and a discussion of the various conceptualisations that were necessary for this research. The most part of Chapter 1 is concerned with the research design and the methodology that I used in this study.

Chapter 2 contains an exposition of the conceptual framework of this study, together with an in-depth examination and analysis of the literature about the transitions of individuals within a twinship and especially, where available, transitions from Grade R to Grade 2. I also included the themes of stress, coping and life skills in my literature exploration as additional themes that are related to this study.

Chapter 3 consists of the research design. It describes an intrinsic case study design with a qualitative paradigm. It also describes the research participants, the methods of data collection, data analysis and interpretation that I used. This chapter also describes in detail the ethical considerations that guided all the processes in this study. This chapter concludes with a description of the researcher's role in this study.

Chapter 4 describes how the data was presented and analysed, and also describes how the resultant findings were presented. The chapter commences with a description of the context of the study as well as a description of the research participants, and their Grade R, Grade 1 and Grade 2 environments. This is followed by an exposition of the three main themes that emerged from the accumulated data of this study. This chapter concluded with findings about the primary and secondary research questions.

5.3 ANSWERING OF PRIMARY RESEARCH QUESTION IN TERMS OF THREE MAJOR THEMES

How do individuals within a township transition from Grade R through to Grade 2?

5.3.1 THEME 1

The transition of the individuals within a township from Grade R through to Grade 2 was largely uncomplicated

White and Sharp (2007:88) undertook a study in which they explored the significance of transitions from Grade R to Grade 1 from the children's point of view. They interviewed a total of 66 children and 46 parents during the children's Grade R year and in their Grade 1 year. Even though the White and Sharp study (2007) did not include any transition to Grade 2, some of their findings correlated with those in this study. Thus, for example, in the research conducted by White and Sharpe (2007:88), a majority of the children coped well with the transition from Grade R to Grade 1. In this research, the transition of the individuals within a township from Grade R to Grade 2 was also predominantly uncomplicated. I concluded from this that they had coped well with that particular transition.

I identified various factors (see Table 4.1) during the data analysis process that seemed to indicate the reasons why the individuals within a township were able to effect largely uncomplicated transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2. These factors included their positive attitudes and behaviour (section 4.3.1.1), their self-confidence and the pleasure they obtained from new experiences (section 4.3.1.2), the support they received from one another as co-individuals within a township (section 4.3.1.3), their individual and mutual friendships (section 4.3.1.4), the support, understanding and encouragement of their Grade R, Grade 1 and Grade 2 teachers (section 4.3.1.5), the learned life skills that I taught them during our sessions (section 4.3.1.6), their largely accurate expectations about Grade 1 and Grade 2 before they arrived there (section 4.3.1.7), the ways in which they were able to complete their homework and manage their academic work (section 4.3.1.8), and the methods that I taught them for coping with bullies and disobedient children (section 4.1.3.9). I have included in the following section an examination and discussion of more recent studies and research into these factors, that emerged since the commencement of this study. White and Sharpe (2007:100) indicated in their research that most of the participating children also entertained realistic assessments and expectations of possible changes that might occur during the transition from Grade R to Grade 1. These researchers also identified the difficulties that children experienced with mastering the challenges presented by the more difficult work they encountered in Grade 1.

5.3.1.1 Positive attitudes and behaviour

Since the individuals within this township seemed to be aware that their habitually positive attitudes facilitated their transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2, they probably unconsciously entertained the expectation that they would continue to benefit from such attitudes by merely replicating them in their new Grade 1 and Grade 2 environments. This finding correlates with that of Bilmes (2004:4), who identified six important skills that children need to develop in order to negotiate their worlds successfully. These skills include attachment, affiliation, self-regulation, initiative, problem solving, and respect. Bilmes (2004:4) asserted that these skills develop out of a positive attitude to one's environment. Even though the consideration of these skills are not within the scope of this study, it became more and more evident to me during the course of the research that maintaining positive

attitudes towards the possibilities of adapting to the environment were crucial in the success of the participants as they made their various transitions between the grades. This finding was also confirmed by that of Docket and Perry (2003:30) when they concluded that the attitude of children towards school in general is an important factor for predicting the success or otherwise of a transition to school.

Both the individuals within a township were notable for their positive (good) behaviour in both Grade 1 and Grade 2. I was able to define what this kind of acceptable behaviour was by observing the participants within their various environments and by deconstructing their remarks about various situations and challenges. I came to the conclusion that good behaviour, in their case, refers to the following actions and states of mind: being relaxed and optimistic, enthusiastic participation in class activities, listening attentively to the teacher and being obedient and good-natured with individuals whom one encounters. I therefore concluded that all these factors were indicators of their largely uncomplicated transitions between grades because they were data of the enjoyment and delight that the participants experienced during the transition processes. This finding is confirmed in the research undertaken by Samanci (2010:147), who categorically asserts that the ability to behave acceptably is a necessary skill in children that is essential for adapting successfully to social life. In line with findings of these researchers, I also assert that the positive attitudes of the individuals within a township and their acceptable behaviour during their transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2 played an important part in effecting largely uncomplicated and successful transitions between their grades.

In White and Sharp (2007:96), the majority of the children resembled positive feelings about their transition from Grade R to Grade 1. This finding correlates with findings in this study. The individuals within a township portrayed an overall positive attitude towards Grade 1 and Grade 2, before and during the transition process. Their general expressions reflected positive school and home experiences which may be a possible indication of their successful and predominantly uncomplicated transition from Grade R through to Grade 2.

5.3.1.2 Their self-confidence and pleasurable new experiences

The individuals within a township demonstrated a healthy and realistic self-confidence, as well as noticeable degrees of healthy pride and a sense of self-worth, in coping with the challenges that they encountered. This was evident, for example, in their use of the life skills that they had learned to cope effectively with difficulties and obstacles to happiness and learning, such as the activities of bullying and disobedient children. I have therefore made the assumption that self-confidence, personal pride and sense of self-worth are all important indicators of the success of transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2. This finding is supported by a number of other studies that I examined in the literature. Brooker (2008:12) was of the opinion that children were able to make successful transitions when they were able to handle new experiences with confidence. Fisher (2003:56) emphasised the importance of developing healthy self-esteem and confidence in children so that they would be able to cope successfully with the inevitable stressors of their daily existence. Saunders and Remsberg (1987:12) found that those children with the greatest self-confidence were those who were able to deal most successfully with stress. Glossop and Mitchell (2005:5) also identified self-confidence and children as one of the most significant indicators of success at school.

I frequently observed during the course of this study that both of the individuals within a township took great pleasure in embracing new opportunities and situations. This was especially evident to me from their attitude towards events on the rugby field and the tuck shop, and from their expectations when they were given opportunities of acquiring new knowledge. I therefore reached the conclusion that these two factors, namely, being able to take pleasure in encountering new experiences and embracing new opportunities, were probably significant indicators of the largely uncomplicated and smooth transitions that the individuals within a township were able to make from Grade R through to Grade 2. This finding is supported by that of Dockett and Perry (2003:9), who found that the more positive children's responses were to the idea of "starting school", the more able they were to acquire new skills and knowledge (they were referring particularly to the skills of being able to read and write). I further concluded that "new experiences" within the context of the situations in which the individuals within a township found themselves referred particularly to physical issues, such as their enjoyment of the new and

larger playground and their ability to make good use of their academic potential by acquiring the various skills to which they were introduced in their different grades (skills such as reading and writing as well as writing in cursive script). It can be seen in the accumulated data that the individuals within a twinship made constant reference to the pleasures that they obtained from their activities on the rugby field (such activities consumed most of their free time during school breaks).

5.3.1.3 Their co-individual within a twinship

The individuals within a twinship gave numerous indications of supporting one another within their twinship and of valuing the relationship that they enjoyed with one another. This observantly powerful bond of trust between these two participants, both within and outside their classrooms, which was evident to me throughout the course of this study, probably played a central role in enabling them to make successful and uncomplicated transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2. It was evident to both me and to other participants that the bond between them was an important defining influence in their lives. This finding is in agreement with the findings of Cooper (2004:204) regarding the advantages of being part of a twinship. The various advantages that Cooper enumerates are cooperation, encouragement, affection, sympathy, empathy, understanding, and mutual support. For the purposes of this study, the most positive effects of being individuals within a twinship that I was able to observe, included mutual sympathy and empathy, instinctive and implicit understanding of one another, and their readiness to support one another in circumstances whenever such support was needed.

Even though I was unable to locate any research that focused on how the positive connections between individuals within a twinship influenced *transitions* from Grade R through to Grade 2, I was nevertheless able to find support in the findings of Fisher (2009:142). In her study of the feelings that children experienced during their transition from Grade R to Grade 1, Fisher observed that a number of the participating children were relieved to see their older siblings on the playground. Fisher's (2009:148) extensive observations of these children led her to conclude that older siblings regarded themselves as providing safety and protection on the playground for their younger siblings because these younger siblings in Grade 1

presented with various signs of fear, anxiety and stress in the new and unfamiliar environments of the playground.

It was also evident to me throughout the course of this study that the individuals within a township were happy and contented in the company of one another. I found data to show how strongly the individuals within a township supported and protected one another at school. Each of them seemingly felt safe and secure in the company of his co-individual within a township, and they valued and enjoyed one another's friendship both within the classroom and during breaks. Although the individuals within a township were of the same age and were both equally unfamiliar with their new environments, they both seemed to adopt (on a basis of equality and equal responsibility) the same security and protective roles towards one another as did the older siblings whom Fisher (2009:148) identified in her study. For the purposes of this study, the security that the participants felt as co-individuals within a township possibly contributed to some extent towards enabling them to make successful transitions from Grade R to Grade 2. The security and safety that they felt in one another's company was strengthened and fortified by their mutual cooperation, encouragement, affection, sympathy, empathy and understanding towards one another as they provided measures of safety, security and protection for one another, which they would not have had had they been individuals outside of a township. These qualities and attitudes were evident to me throughout the long course of the study and confirmed Fisher's finding about the value for children of being in the presence of a sympathetic and mutually supportive sibling-relationship.

5.3.1.4 Friendships

The seemingly effortless ability of the individuals within a township to initiate and cultivate new friendships, as well as the mutual friendship they felt towards one another, was also a possible factor that contributed towards their successful and largely untroubled transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2. These conclusions are supported by findings from studies undertaken by Tomada, Schneider, de Domini, Greenman and Fonzi (2005:314) which indicate that the ability to initiate and maintain satisfying friendships contribute to the successful adjustment of learners during periods of transition. These researchers noted that meaningful friendships were also able to mitigate the pain of possible stressful life experiences

for school-going children. The research undertaken by August and Akos (2009:7) also confirms the importance of friendships for making successful transitions. They assert that meaningful relationships are crucial for effecting successful transition and that they play an even more important role in the lives of learners later in their school careers.

Danby, Thompson, Theobald and Thorpe (2012:69) conducted research in which they examined the strategies that children use to establish friendship during the beginning of their school careers. They found that the ways in which children perceive their initial school experiences are significantly dependent upon whether or not they have trusted friends with whom they can play. Fisher (2009:142) confirms that being a friend and being party to a friendship is the most important determining factor in whether or not children have positive feelings about their transition to Grade 1. The studies also support my conclusion that the ability of the individuals within a township to create and maintain positive friendships because of their friendship skills contributed to their largely uncomplicated transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2. Even though it is impossible to establish whether or not their friendship with one another and their friendships with other children was indeed the most important factor in effecting their positive attitudes towards their transitions, the data accumulated in the study suggests that it was probably an important contributory factor.

The accumulated data confirms that the individuals within a township found it relatively easy to initiate and maintain new friendships with their peers during their transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2. In spite of meaningful friendships with outsiders, they regarded one another as best friends. The data shows that there was a strong and supportive bond of friendship between them. They remained siblings and friends in the classrooms and on the playground. The importance of this bond is confirmed in the research undertaken by Peters (2003:47), who examined the various ways in which 23 children experienced friendship during their transitions to primary school. Her conclusion was that friendships were important because of the support which they provided, both within and outside of the classroom. Margetts (2000:26) also came to the conclusion in her research that friendship and sibling support may assist children during the transition to primary school.

5.3.1.5 Their Grade R, Grade 1 and Grade 2 teachers

Even though an examination of the characteristics of the teachers involved in this study were beyond the scope of this research, it seemed evident to me that the attitudes, personalities, and methods of the teachers who were involved with the participants exerted a strong and favourable influence on the way in which they experienced transitions between their grades. These particular characteristics of the participating teachers I assumed to be significant were their sincerity, friendliness, their ability to comfort and help their learners, as well as their sensitivity and empathy towards the individuals within a township in particular. It is also evident to me that their appreciation, patience and understanding of the individuals within a township (as experienced by the participants) contributed to a significant degree to their largely uncomplicated transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2. In her research, Hallinan (2008:271) came to similar conclusions. Hallinan (2008:271) was of the opinion that the influence of teachers was a deciding factor when it came to whether or not children experienced school as pleasurable or otherwise. She reached the conclusion that the social interactions between the child and the teacher, as well as the degree of social and emotional support from the teacher, exerted a strong influence on children's beliefs about school. There was also the opinion that whether or not teachers care¹¹ for their children is a deciding factor in their happiness during their school careers.

Buyse, Verschueren, Verachtert and Van Damme (2009:131) undertook research in which they studied how the teacher-child relationship affected children's adjustment to primary school. They came to the conclusion that the closer the relationship between children and their teacher in their first grade, the more successful is their psychosocial¹² adjustment in the classroom. In their opinion, closeness between teacher and children includes warmth and openness and sincerity of communication between children and the teacher, the degree of confidence children feel when they talk about their feelings. The research of Buyse *et al.* (2009) focused more specifically on whether or not children are able to rely on teachers as a source of support and comfort when they are upset (Buyse *et al.*, 2009:120).

¹¹ Teachers demonstrate care through listening to the children, encouraging their efforts, and providing a warm atmosphere, for them feeling secure and safe (Hallinan, 2008:273)

¹² "Psychosocial adjustment" refers to greater popularity with peers and more feelings of well-being at school (Buyse *et al.*, 2009:131).

Even though the relationship between the individuals within a township and their teachers was not the primary objective of this study, I paid close attention to the way in which the participants relating to their teachers affected their general well-being, their attitudes, and their ability to deal with specific problems. In particular, I took note of the degrees of warmth, and comfort and support, that prevailed between the individuals within a township and their teachers. My findings with regard to the participants in this study were supported by the findings in the research undertaken by Buyse *et al.* (2009), which suggests that positive teacher-child relationships may lubricate the adjustments that children are able to make between Grade R and Grade 2.

Davis (2003:211) found that interactions with teachers in primary school play an important role in the ability of children to develop satisfactorily and adjust to the new conditions they encounter in school. She found that teachers who were affectionate, supportive and emotionally involved with their children tended to produce circumstances in which children were able to develop more satisfactorily and adjust to their schools. She also found that, by contrast, teachers who were rejecting, neglectful or punitive towards children created conditions in which development was difficult and adjustments problematic. The bulk of the data from this research shows that the teachers in this study were both supportive and affectionate towards the individuals within a township. I therefore assumed that these characteristics, that were evident in the Grade R, Grade 1 and Grade 2 teachers of the participants, probably contributed to the individuals within a township being able to make largely uncomplicated transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2.

5.3.1.6 Learned life skills

I also concluded that the participants' friendship skills, their ability to control emotions, and their ability to solve problems constructively (with particular reference to their ability to cope with bullies), all of which were skills that the participants learned during Grade R, probably contributed to their successful and largely uncomplicated transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2. The study conducted by Hemmeter *et al.* (2006:583) used the "Teaching Pyramid" model to promote social and emotional development among children by focusing on the issues generated by challenging or troublesome behaviour. One of the components of the Teaching

Pyramid method was the teaching of social and emotional skills to the children in the sample. What these researchers found was that challenging and troublesome behaviour decreased in proportion to the number of social and emotional skills that the children mastered.

My experience in this research was similar to that of Hemmeter *et al.* (2006:583). Although the individuals within a township were seemingly not in a significant way troublesome or challenging in their behaviour, they probably gained insight into the learned life skills which may have helped them to cope with necessities and behavioural problems such as how to handle bullies, how to maintain friendships, and how to control emotions. The success of this method was confirmed by Webster-Stratton and Reid (2004:96), in their descriptions of their “The Dina-Dinosaur”-Social Skills and Problem-Solving Child Training Program generated from “The incredible Years Training Series”. In this programme which they devised, they taught emotional literacy, empathy, friendship skills, communication skills, anger management, interpersonal problem solving skills, in order to be successful in school. They also used their programme as a prevention curriculum intervention to increase social, emotional and academic aptitude and to decrease problem behaviours on the part of the children in their classrooms. Margetts (2000:27) reached similar conclusions because she demonstrated how social skills can assist children during their transition to primary school. The ability of the individuals within a township to use the variety of social skills that were learned, including their aptitude for making friends and their ability to cope with bullies, probably helped them to make largely uncomplicated transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2.

Monopoli and Kingston (2012:7) observed that the Grade 2 students in their study who possessed a mastery of social skills were better prepared for school. They also demonstrated that there are good reasons to suppose that there is a positive correlation between the ability of children to control their emotions and their ability to show competence in adaptive behaviour. The researchers Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor and Schellinger (2011:406), point out that one of the skills that social and emotional learning promotes is an ability to adjust successfully to school. The findings of Monopoli and Kingston (2012) as well as those of Durlak *et al.* (2011) are similar to the conclusions that I reached in this study, namely that the

social and emotional skills that I taught to Alex and Rick, probably contributed to their ability to effect positive adjustments to Grade 1 and Grade 2.

5.3.1.7 Their Grade 1 and Grade 2 expectations

One of my conclusions was also that the expectations that the individuals within a twinship entertained with regard to Grade 1 and Grade 2 probably played a role in their ability to effect a successful and largely uncomplicated transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2. Their expectations were that they would develop enjoyable friendships, that their teachers would be supportive and to whom they would listen to, that they would be able to play rugby with their friends, that they would work hard in Grade 1 and in Grade 2, that they would receive homework and thus have less recreational time, and that there would be many opportunities of acquiring new knowledge. They were also realistic in that they expected that there would be occasions when other children might attempt to harm them as well as the presence of disobedient children in class.

On the whole, they expected to be contented with their situation at school and revealed excitement for attending Grade 1 and Grade 2. They also displayed realism in expectation that Grade 2 would be more difficult than Grade 1 and that they would climb stairs in Grade 2. Their expectations were thus largely realistic because they were based on their lived experiences of Grade 1 and Grade 2. It is my conclusion that because of their expectations being mostly accurate, they were probably better prepared for the actual experiences they encountered during Grade 1 and Grade 2. Findings similar to these were reached by White and Sharp (2007:96), who observed that the descriptions of life offered by children in Grade 1 mirrored their expectations in Grade R. But these mirrored expectations were not related to any possible easing of transitions, as is the case in this study. I shall discuss more recent research into the specific expectations of children with regard to their school work in section 5.4.5.

5.3.1.8 Homework and academics

It was evident to me during the course of the research that the individuals within a twinship showed signs of confidence, as well as a great deal of pride that was

associated with their accomplishments and their opportunities to acquire new knowledge from their activities in school. These observations are similar to those which were made by White and Sharp (2007:93). What they noted in their study was that the participants regarded “getting bigger” as a positive element during their school transitions. Although the individuals within a township did not use the actual words “getting bigger” to describe their interactions, it was nevertheless clear that they took pride and pleasure in activities associated with “getting bigger”. These included their various accomplishments and the ability to cope with challenging school work such as learning to read and write in Grade 1 and learning to write in cursive script in Grade 2. This was also observed by White and Sharp (2007:99), who found that the children in their sample appeared to adapt well to curriculum challenges because they were delighted to be given opportunities to demonstrate their mastery of “hard work” (i.e. difficult work). There was a great deal of data for this in the accumulated data from remarks such as, “I like doing hard word and lots of work”.

White and Sharp (2007:94) also observed the children in their study expected to work harder in Grade 1 than in Grade R, and expected to have fewer opportunities to engage in recreational activities at school. Because of the additional time that they were compelled to spend on their homework, the children in that study had less disposable time to play at home. Similarly, in this study, the individuals within a township showed signs of exhaustion as they attempted to cope with the challenges inherent in having a large amount of homework, in accordance to the main participants. The increase in the amount of homework they were given curtailed the amount of time that they were able to spend on recreational activities at home, especially during their Grade 2 year.

August and Akos (2009:3) state that many unsuccessful transitions are caused by children being unable to cope with the academic challenges that they encounter in school. Although the participants in this study were occasionally driven to emotional outbursts by the demands of the extra homework they were given in Grade 2, they managed to cope on the whole and to make successful transitions to Grade 1 and Grade 2 in this study. Although I noted that the individuals within a township were often daunted by the challenges presented by the seemingly large amounts of homework they were given in Grade 2, these were not daily occurrences, and they

were, on the whole, able to cope with assistance from the mother and their other caregivers. I did not therefore, in the case of the individuals within a township, reach the same conclusions as August and Akos (2009:3), when they stated that many unsuccessful transitions are caused by children being unable to cope with the academic challenges that they encounter in higher grades.

There is accumulated data to show that although the academic challenges presented by increased amounts of homework required special exertion on the part of the individuals within a township, they nevertheless managed to make largely satisfactory and uncomplicated transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2. Both Leung and He (2010:396), and Leung, Yeung and Wong (2010:91), found data in their research that excessive amounts of homework and assignments can cause undesirable amounts of stress in students, there is no conclusive data in this study to show that the individuals within a township fell into this category. It should also be noted that the studies undertaken by Leung and He (2010:396), and Leung *et al.* (2010:91) focused on selected samples from Grades 5 and 6, and not on children in Grades 1 and 2, as in this study. I was nevertheless able to confirm from the data that I collected that seemingly large amounts of homework, on rare occasions, caused academic stress, which manifested as “emotional outbursts” in the individuals within a township.

I was also able to conclude from the data that there was a positive connection between the way in which the individuals within a township coped with their academic work and the success of the transitions they were able to make from Grade R through to Grade 2. The participants displayed feelings of accomplishment and pride because of their evident ability to master new work they were given and their ability to enjoy their opportunities for acquiring new knowledge and skills. The data shows that the individuals within a township were from time to time distressed by the seemingly demanding amounts of academic work and homework they were given. They were consciously aware of the fact that they were able to devote less time to recreational activities in Grade 2, and they associated this curtailment of their recreation time at home with feelings of exhaustion.

5.3.1.9 Bullies and disobedient children

There is data to show that the way in which the individuals within a township experienced bullies also consisted of both positive and negative effects on the transition processes which are the main theme of investigation in this study. On the positive side, there is data to show that the success which the individuals within a township enjoyed when they had learned to cope successfully with the bullies they encountered, increased their self-confidence and their sense of self-mastery, and so contributed to the success of their transitions between the grades. This conclusion is supported by the self-reported data that I accumulated during the course of this study.

The findings show how the individuals within a township were able to deal effectively with the challenges presented by bullies once they have mastered the various techniques that they've learned during our sessions together. This self-mastery resulted in greater degrees of self-confidence and was effective in banishing the occasional feelings of confusion and fear that they initially felt when they were first confronted by bullies in their school. I was therefore able to conclude that these particular coping abilities, which they learned during the course of this study, probably played a part in ensuring their successful and relatively uncomplicated transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2.

In contrast to the success which they enjoyed in the later attempts to cope with bullying, they initially experienced feelings of sadness, hurt, anger and upset when they were physically harmed and teased by the bullies concerned. All this took place before they had learned the techniques that enabled them to cope successfully with bullies. It is important therefore to note that the physical pain, humiliation, and negative feelings induced by bullying during their early encounters with bullies, contributed to the challenges with which they had to cope during their transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2.

Bowes, Maughan, Caspi, Moffit and Arseneault (2010:810) are of the opinion that the presence of siblings may act as an important buffer to shield children from the possible painful and unpleasant consequences of bullying, and that proximity of protective siblings may be a prophylactic measure in preventing pain and distress in

an environment in which bullying is tolerated or unable to be prevented by the school authorities. One of the findings in this study was that the individuals within a township were constantly able to shield one another from threatening individuals and circumstances because of the supportive and protective relationship that they enjoyed with one another. I therefore agree with the conclusions reached by Bowes *et al.* (2010:810) that siblings, or, as is the case in this study, the co-individuals within a township, were able to serve a vital function in preventing one another from being harmed by threatening circumstances and individuals such as bullies.

Although these bullies may have occasionally induced feelings of sadness and upset in the individuals within a township, the participants also experienced feelings of self-esteem, pride, confidence, and self-mastery once they had learned the techniques and methods for dealing effectively with bullies. I therefore concluded that the coping skills that the individuals within a township learned in this regard, probably contributed towards their relatively uncomplicated and successful transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2.

5.3.1.10 Conclusion of Theme 1

Hirst *et al.* (2011:14) came to the conclusion that children who were engaged in a smooth and uncomplicated transition displayed the following forms of behaviour and the states of mind: feelings of security, relaxed behaviour within the new school environment, an enjoyment of the school environment (finding school pleasurable), a mastery of academic and social skills, an eager motivation to participate in school activities, a network of supportive social relationships with peers and teachers, enthusiastic feelings towards their school as well as an eagerness to acquire new knowledge and skills.

The accumulated data from this study show that the individuals within a township manifest all of these forms of behaviour and states of mind during their transitions between the grades that were covered in the scope of this study. Even though Hirst *et al.* (2011:14) used the term “smooth” to describe the transitions of the children in their sample, it is my opinion that the terms “uncomplicated” and “relatively uncomplicated” represent more precisely the kinds of transitions that the individuals within a township were able to make between their grades.

During their transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2, the individuals within a twinship displayed the following forms of behaviour, states of mind, attitudes, skills, and predispositions, all of which probably contributed to their relatively uncomplicated transitions: An enjoyment of their school and the activities and people whom they encountered during the transitions that were investigated in this study. Good behaviour on the part of the individuals within a twinship (behaviour that was appropriate to their status as individuals and learners in the school and in their family context). Self-confidence in themselves and in the way in which they were able to apply appropriate coping skills to cope with challenging events inside school boundaries (such as the possible physical and emotional pain that bullies tried to inflict upon them). The mutual support that the individuals within a twinship showed to one another, and the seemingly significant degree of safety and protection that the bond of the twinship conferred on both of them.

Furthermore, the increased confidence that the co-individuals within a twinship felt as a result of their commitment to mutual support of one another. The friendly, supportive, kind and practical attitudes displayed by all their teachers in Grade R, Grade 1 and Grade 2, as well as the seemingly secure and trusting relationships that the individuals within a twinship were able to form with their teachers. Enhanced friendship skills, skills of emotional control, problem solving skills (with particular reference to their ability to cope with bullies in the school environment). Feelings of confidence and pride as a result of their academic accomplishments and their opportunities to acquire new knowledge and skills during their transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2. The largely accurate expectations and predictions on the part of the individuals within a twinship in Grade R and Grade 1 about what they could expect to happen in Grade 1 and Grade 2 respectively and an increased confidence on the part of the individuals within a twinship as a result of their personal success in coping with bullies (their success in this area enabled them to let go the feelings overwhelming fear, anxiety and uncertainty that were engendered by bullies).

5.3.2 THEME 2

The transition of the individuals within a township to Grade 2 was, to some extent, more stressful than their transition to Grade 1. They nevertheless still experienced Grade 2 as pleasurable

Even though the transition of the individuals within a township to Grade 2 was more stressful than their transition to Grade 1 had been, and although this was one of the most important findings in this study, I was unable to locate any academic research on this theme that confirmed my specific findings in this regard. Interestingly, the individuals within a township' extramural schedule was more demanding in Grade 1 than Grade 2. Even though they both enjoyed the challenges presented by their school work and their recreational activities, both of them were placed under a certain degree of stress by the amount of homework that they were given in Grade 2. Their mother explained that the increase in the amount of homework they were given in Grade 2, together with a time-consuming extramural schedule, frequently exhausted the participants, and that this exhaustion resulted in "emotional outbursts" (crying).

The data from this study shows that while there were more positive stressors in Grade R and Grade 1, the number of negative stressors increased significantly in their Grade 2 year. In spite of this, as I have already observed above, the individuals within a township still found their Grade 2 experiences pleasurable (see section 4.3.1.1). Regardless of the fact that Grade 2 appeared to be the most stressful of all the three years covered by this study, they still maintained that it was a pleasurable and exciting year.

The study undertaken by August and Akos (2009:3) identifies two critical transition periods for school-going children: the transition from pre-school to Grade 1, and the transition from Grade 2 to Grade 3. They are of the opinion that the transition from Grade 2 to Grade 3 encompasses the first dramatic academic and developmental shift in primary school because of the standardized tests in which children in that year are submitted and the more demanding academic expectations. They also refer to Grade 2 as the year in which children "learn to read", and to Grade 3 as the year in which "children read to learn". August and Akos (2009:18) also incidentally note that a very limited amount of research has been undertaken in this particular

field of influence. August and Akos (2009:18) did not examine the transition between Grade 1 and Grade 2, which were seemingly stressful for the participants in this study. My data shows that the academic demands made on the participants were particularly demanding in Grade 2, mainly because of the vast amounts of homework they were given. This is a finding that is not yet been mentioned in the transition literature I explained.

Because of the seemingly limited amount of literature about the experiences of children in Grade 2, it is challenging to relate the finding connected with Theme 2 with research in this field, according to my knowledge. Caldarella, Christensen, Kramer and Kronmiller (2009:52) have also noted the absence of research into the experience of Grade 2 children.

5.3.3 THEME 3

Although the learned life skills may have eased their transition, the overall support structures of the individuals within a township were probably the most important reasons why their transition from Grade R through to Grade 2 were largely uncomplicated

The life skills that they learned, the support they received from their parents in their home environment, the support they obtained from school, and special advantages inherent in their own personalities, were possibly fundamental in their effecting successful transitions. The data also showed that the life skills that they learned were decisive in their ability to cope successfully with bullies, to make new and sustaining friendships, and to control their emotions (see section 4.3.1.6). Their supportive, stable and safe home environment, together with the sustaining and nourishing relationships they had with their parents and siblings, were a central feature of their lives. The support, comfort, safety, stimulation and acceptance (see section 4.3.1.5) offered by their Grade R, Grade 1 and Grade 2 teachers confirmed the soundness of their social support structure.

The individuals within a township revealed certain desirable and helpful personality traits throughout this study. These characteristics included confidence (see section 4.3.1.2), being willing and eager to try new things (see sections 4.3.1.4, 4.3.1.6 and 4.3.1.9), being sensitive to others, being kind and helpful (see section 4.3.1.4), and

their self-portrayal as gentle and helpful individuals (see sections 4.2.1 and 4.2.2). It is my opinion that these characteristics helped to ease their transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2. I also concluded that the support that the individuals within a twinship received from their parents in their home environment, the support that was a feature of their school environment, and that the personality traits and the life skills that they learned, were indicators of the smooth and relatively uncomplicated transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2.

Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta (2000) found data to indicate that supportive relationships between children and their families, teachers and peers, were reliable indicators of desirable transition outcomes. The research undertaken by Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta (2000) offers conclusions that are similar to those in this study. Hirst *et al.* (2011:22) were of the opinion that successful transitions to school depend on various identifiable personal, background and environmental factors such as supportive parents and teachers during the transition periods (2011:31). Giovanna, Schneider, de Domini, Greenman & Fonza (2005:315) also confirm that supportive interpersonal relationships eased the stress associated with such transitions.

Bowes *et al.* (2010:809) concluded that warm family relationships in a “happy home” environment, might protect children from the unhappiness and misery associated with being victims of bullying in schools. The individuals within a twinship seemingly enjoyed strong and supported relationships with one another, with their family, with their teachers, and with their peers. All the data points to the fact that they were the beneficiaries of warm and caring family relationships and a “happy home” environment, together with supportive social relationships outside their family environment. All these factors probably contributed to their successful and largely uncomplicated transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2.

The conclusions that I reached in this study agree with the findings of the study undertaken by Hallinan (2008:282), in which she examined the ways in which a teacher’s social and emotional support influenced whether or not a child was able to develop a positive attachment to school. Their Grade R, Grade 1 and Grade 2 teachers appeared to give strong social and emotional support to the individuals within a twinship throughout this study. This fact alone may account for their

fondness for their school and for other desirable attitudes that they displayed during their relatively uncomplicated transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2.

Samanci (2010:153), together with Rosier and McDonald (2011:7), also found data to support the view that the characteristics and attitudes of children's parents and teachers, as well as the children's personal characteristics, are indispensable for the development of their social skills and their positive adaptations to school. Such characteristics and attitudes include their ability to use appropriate language and communication skills, self-confidence, as well as their ability as individuals to deal with teasing and bullying in primary school. The accumulated data from this study indicates that both the individuals within a township were able to use appropriate language and communication skills as well as confidence and aplomb, that both of them possessed the necessary self-confidence. Alex was particularly successful in dealing with teasing. This indicates that the individuals within a township had been successful in developing some of the necessary social skills with the support and assistance of their parents, teachers and the researcher.

Booyesen and Grosser (2008:381) assert that because the development of appropriate social skills necessitates intensive social involvement, parents, teachers and peers are all indispensable for the success of this process. A valuable catalyst for delivering social skills is cooperative learning¹³. My own involvement with the individuals within a township confirms the findings of Booyesen and Grosser (2008:381) in this regard. It is, however, probable that the life skills that they learned might have exerted a more favourable impact on the transitions made by the participants if they had been able to engage in more intense and continuous social involvement. It is also my opinion that life skills that are learned in a class environment, with larger focus groups and the involvement of the entire class (teacher and children), may create more favourable conditions for transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2. Separate and additional research would, however, need to prove this point.

¹³ A teaching and learning strategy where learners work in small groups on structured tasks to achieve a certain goal (Booyesen & Grosser, 2008:381).

Figure 5.1: Visual summary of main findings

How do individuals within a township transition from Grade R through to Grade 2?

THEME 1: *The transitions of the individuals within a township from Grade R through to Grade 2 were largely uncomplicated*

Possible reasons why the transitions of the participants from Grade R through to Grade 2 were largely uncomplicated

- + Their positive attitudes and behaviour
- + Their self-confidence and pleasurable new experiences
- + Their position as co-individuals within a township
- + Friendships
- + Their Grade R, Grade 1 and Grade 2 teachers
- + Learned life skills
- + Their Grade 1 and Grade 2 expectations
- + & - Homework and academics
- + & - Bullies and Disobedient¹ children

THEME 2: *The transition of the individuals within a township to Grade 2 was, to some extent, more stressful than their transition to Grade 1. They nevertheless still experienced Grade 2 as pleasurable.*

Positive (+) stressors experienced by the participants

Grade R	Grade 1	Grade 2
+ Friends	+ Homework	+ Their teacher and friends
+ Playing	+ Their teacher	+ Work (school work)
+ Their teacher	+ Friends	+ Completing homework in class
+ Gaining knowledge	+ Helping others	+ Writing incursive
+ Feeling contented at school	+ Sport	+ Separate classes
+ Their expectations of Grade 1	+ Prefects	+ Sport
+ Their excitements for Grade 1	+ Playing	+ Playing during break
	+ Gaining new knowledge	+ Achievements
	+ The tuck shop	
	+ Their co-individual within a township	
	+ Supporting parents	
	+ Life skills	

Negative (-) stressors experienced by the participants

Grade R	Grade 1	Grade 2
- Bullies	- Disobedient children	- Demanding school work
- Friends harming them	- Prefects	- Bathroom rules
- Time	- Making friends	- Bullies
- School work	- Bullies	- Excessive homework
	- Social skills	- Grade 3's
	- Threats in Grade R	- Disobedient children
	- Not being able to read and write immediately	- Getting teased
	- School work	- A new teacher
		- Friends being separated in classrooms
		- People who are upset

THEME 3: *Although their learned life skills may have eased their transition, the overall support structures of the individuals within a township were probably the most important reasons why their transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2 were largely uncomplicated*

Relevant support features illustrated by Theme 3

Relevant support features illustrated by Theme 3

- Learned life skills
- Parents and home environment
- School(s) support
- Alex and Rick's personalities

5.4 ANSWERING OF SECONDARY RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In the following section, I shall answer the secondary research questions upon which this study is based, and explain my reasons for answering in the way that I do.

5.4.1 FIRST SECONDARY RESEARCH QUESTION

Which life skills are necessary for young children during their transitions from Grade R to Grade 2?

Since the findings related mostly to friendship skills, skills for dealing with bullies, and skills of emotional control in this study, I regarded life skills relating to social and emotional control as the most important factors for easing the transitions of individuals within a township from Grade R through to Grade 2. Additional skills and states of mind that are probably necessary for young children if they were to make effective transitions from Grade R to Grade 2 include various other coping skills, gross motor skills, and adequate degree of self-esteem, emotional control, communication skills (particularly those between children and their parents and teachers), and a variety of other intellectual and physical abilities and skills. It is also clear to me that children should be able to adapt socially in groups and take responsibility for their actions. In addition to this, I regarded appropriate personal independence, ethical values, and self-discipline as core life skills.

The life skills that I suggested were necessary in this study for successful transitions were self-knowledge, identity skills, a healthy self-esteem, coping strategies for effecting emotional control, and being prepared to cope effectively with stressors such as bullying. In addition to these I also posited that self-respect and coping skills for use in threatening situations, life skills that enhance a sense of belonging, self-confidence, the ability to exercise emotional control, and self-respect, are probably necessary to effect successful transitions between the grades.

The findings about which skills are necessary for successful transitions, in the study undertaken by Li *et al.* (2012:14), are very similar to the findings in this study. The skills identified by Li *et al.* (2012:14) were the ability to solve problems, skills in maintaining effective interpersonal relationships, communication skills, and the

ability to minimise personal stress and emotions. The teachers who participated in this study, as well as the mother of the individuals within a twinship, confirmed the importance of the above-mentioned skills for successful transitions. Hanley *et al.* (2007:277) also identified communication, friendship and delayed gratification skills as important for early school success. Sanders, White, Burge, Sharp, Eames, McEune and Grayson (2005:9) referred to independence (the ability to carry tasks without adult assistance), appropriate behaviour (especially with regard to listening skills), and certain social skills and personality traits such as self-confidence and the ability to concentrate, as skills that are necessary for children if they are to make successful transitions from Grade R to Grade 1.

Chan (2011:658) also found data in her study to suggest that many children struggle to form new friendships in primary school. She therefore recommended that teachers should be active in teaching children the skills they need to become properly socialized. During the course of study, the participating teachers informed me that many of their children found it difficult to make new friends and maintain friendships – although this was not the case of the individuals within a twinship. Their teachers informed me that the participants found it easy to make and keep new friends, especially in the context of their recreational and play activities.

5.4.2 SECOND SECONDARY RESEARCH QUESTION

What perceived stressors were experienced or identified by each of the participants during the transitions from Grade R to Grade 2?

The positive stressors (see section 4.3.3) that the participants themselves experienced and identified in Grade R included friendships, participation in recreation, certain pleasant, supportive, and uplifting qualities in their teachers, opportunities to acquire new knowledge, feeling excited about and contented in Grade 1 as well as their largely accurate expectations and predictions with regard to what they would find in Grade 1.

The positive stressors that the participants experienced and identified in Grade 1 were receiving homework, their positive perceptions of their teacher, the optimistic quality of their friendships, opportunities for helping other children and for being of assistance to them, and their personal participation in sport and recreational

activities. Other positive stressors were assisting prefects, opportunities to acquire new knowledge and skills, enjoyable new experiences such as making use of the tuck shop, their individual sense of support and protection are derived from being co-individuals within a township, their supportive parents, and the various life skills that they learned in Grade R.

The positive stressors that the participants experienced and identified in Grade 2 were pleasant and supportive teachers and friends, opportunities to acquire new knowledge and skills, the ability to master new skills such as writing in cursive script. All these were perceived by the participants as being positive stressors, together with the fact that the individuals within a township were able to attend separate classes for the first time in the same standards, but they were able to participate in sporting activities, to enjoy various kinds of recreation, and that they could point to various personal achievements. Completing their homework in class was another perceived positive stressor in Grade 2.

The negative stressors that the individuals within a township experienced in Grade R included activities of bullies who tried to hurt them and humiliate them, friends who harmed them advertently or inadvertently and less time for recreational activities on the outside playground, due to ordinary class 'work'.

The negative stressors that the individuals within a township experienced in Grade 1 were the activities and attitudes of disobedient children, perceptions about the strictness of their school prefects, the activities and challengers presented by bullies, and the demanding amount of schoolwork and homework with which they had to cope. The teachers referred to inadequate social skills, threats regarding Grade 1 during Grade R by Grade R teachers, parents and older siblings as well as disappointment by some children when they realise during the beginning of Grade 1 that they are not able to read and write immediately. However, the above mentioned negative stressors referred to by their Grade 1 teacher, were not applicable to Alex and Rick.

The negative stressors that the individuals within a township experienced in Grade 2 were increasingly demanding school work, what they perceived to be rigid bathroom rules, the challenges and threats presented by bullies, and excessive amounts of

homework. Other negative stressors that the individuals within a township experienced in Grade 2 were the activities and attitudes of disobedient children in class and being teased. Some annoying Grade 3 children and upset people were also included. Although a new teacher and being separated from one's friends due to different classrooms were perceived negative stressors for some children by their Grade 2 teachers, Alex and Rick did not experience these two as negative stressors during Grade 2.

The findings in the research of Loizou (2011:43) were similar to the findings in the study. The most important positive stressor identified by Loizou (2011:43) was that Grade 1 children found that being able to cope with new experiences was *empowering*. This is very similar to what I observed with regard to the individuals within a township in the study: they appeared to find new experiences enjoyable and pleasurable, and eagerly embraced them. Loizou (2011:43) also found that the children in her study felt empowered by the challengers with which they were presented and opportunities for working hard. This is similar to what I observed with the individuals within a township in this study. They were proud of what they were achieving and new and challenging work with which they were able to cope reinforced their sense of pride and accomplishment. Both Loizou (2011) and I noted that: the participants cherished the independence that the spacious school grounds (and especially the rugby field) gave them. They also enjoyed the responsibility and pleasures inherent in having access to the tuck shop. In both studies, the participants also enjoyed having opportunities to make new friends.

The negative stressors were the same in both my study and that of Loizou (2011). These consisted of the fact that school days were more rigidly structured and that there were more rules to obey, the necessity for continuous hard work, and the fewer opportunities for enjoyment and "fun", the fact that they were occasionally overwhelmed by demanding quantities of homework, and the fact that they had less time for recreational activities in their new grade (Loizou, 2011:43).

The stressors that I identified in my master's dissertation (Prozesky, 2005:74) were similar to those that I have identified in this study. Some similarities were evident in the positive stressors such as the pleasant and caring attitude of teachers, the pleasures inherent in new friendships, and opportunities to gain new knowledge.

The similarities with regard to the negative stressors were the activities and the challenges presented by bullies, the unpleasant situations created by disobedient children in the classroom, and the proximity of a few older children in the school, who they thought might harm them. Giovanna *et al.* (2005:314) also identified “healthy friendships” as a positive stressor during a transition, which can contribute to successful adjustment to new school situations.

Samanci (2010:153) asserts that primary school children are at that age when the teasing of one another in social crowds is “ordinary” and to be expected. I also found it to be the case in my own study, especially when Alex complained that other children teased him about his height (he was the shortest boy in his class). I therefore identified teasing as a negative stressors for the participants in Grade 2, just as Samanci (2010:153) did with regard to his participating sample.

Although DiLalla and Mullineaux (2008:124) found that the separation of the individuals within a twinship from one another into different classes, resulted, in their study, in more complaints about problems with peers, I was not able to draw the same conclusion from the data I accumulated in this study. Although the individuals within a twinship were separated into different classes for the whole of Grade 2, this separation seemed to produce nothing about the beneficial effects. I was also able to identify the fact that the individuals within a twinship each regarded each other as “beneficial” to themselves as a positive stressor throughout all the transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2, whether the participants were together or apart.

5.4.3 THIRD SECONDARY RESEARCH QUESTION

Which coping strategies were used by the individuals within a twinship to regarding certain identified stressors, before and after life skill facilitation had taken place?

The main skills that the individuals within a twinship used throughout the period described by this study were skills used for emotional control, skills that were effective for coping with the challenges that were presented by bullies, skills for contracting and maintaining new friendships. It was evident to me that the individuals within a twinship were successful in using many of the life skills that they had already learned in their Grade R year. It was my observation that their mother

continuously motivated and encouraged them in various practical ways, and that she taught them during these activities many of the life skills they were able to put into practice right from the beginning of their school careers.

A possible relief for the individuals within a township was the realisation that it was *permissible* to feel anger and sadness, and that positive coping strategies would enable them to deal constructively and successfully with these and other negative emotions. Since the participants and I were mostly active during our life skills facilitation sessions with learning and mastering a variety of social skills such as those mentioned above, I made the assumption that they were engaged in applying social skills during the transitions from Grade R to Grade 2. The data shows that we devoted most of our time practising these social skills because I had positively identified the importance of such social skills for the participants in the situations in which they found themselves.

I noticed that the individuals within a township had been able to acquire the life skills that are mentioned by Ebersöhn and Eloff (2006:54) during the phases of life skills acquisition in which they and I participated together. It was evident to me that the participants in this study were aware that they would be able to improve upon the way in which they exercised these skills in practice. I also noticed that they were eager to gain the advantages that were possible from acquiring and mastering these skills. I therefore probably helped them to analyse the components parts and purposes of having such skills in the first place. I then left it up to them to decide when, where and how to begin acquiring these new skills. In later role-play sessions, I obtained feedback from them about the way in which they implemented these skills in practice and any perceived progress, obstacles, or challenges. They eventually reached a stage when they were able to apply these life skills with impressive degrees of mastery in real-life situations in school.

Folkman (2011:421) refers to “positive affect intervention”, by which she means that individuals should look for new opportunities of practising coping within stressful situations by “positive affect interventions”. Such interventions will serve to increase the coping capacity of individuals. When individuals have mastered these skills, they will be in a position to neutralise the harmful effects of stress. The data from my study also confirmed that once the individuals within a township had mastered the

necessary life skill coping strategies, they were able to demonstrate an affect that was similar to that described by Folkman (2011:421), when she talks about working on stress-and-coping through positive affect interventions. After they had been properly trained in life skills, the individuals within a township appeared both to be better equipped to adjust the challenges they encountered during their transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2. These challengers refer mainly to their ability to cope with bullies, their ability to contract and maintain new friendships, and the management of their personal emotions.

It was evident to me during our sessions that the individuals within a township took pride in being able to deal effectively with bullies. They were also both proud of the fact that they were seemingly successful in making and maintaining new friendships. The fact that they were also able to control their emotions at times by applying the particular life skills they had been taught for controlling personal emotions, was also a source of pride for them. But even though the life skills that they had learned probably helped them to cope with some challenges which arose during their transitions, the support structures that they encountered in their broader social context seemed to be more important to their ability to effect smooth transitions than any particular life skill.

The data from the study shows that the social skills that the participants learned (particularly those that enabled them to cope with bullying, friendships, and emotional control) were beneficial to the individuals within a township during their transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2. This finding is similar to the conclusion reached by Anderson and Swiatowy (2008:iii), who also found that being able to cope with bullying was the most beneficial social skill that children were able to learn in primary school.

Caldarella *et al.* (2009:51) focused in their research on an evaluation of the effects of the social and emotional curriculum that was called “Strong Start”. Their purpose was to evaluate the effects of this curriculum on the social and emotional competence of second-grade students. The treatment group consisted of 24 students (13 of them were male), and the control group consisted of 25 students (16 of whom were male). They used a quasi-experimental, non-equivalent control group research design for the purposes of this study. Their conclusion was that after the

social-emotional learning intervention had been applied, the peer-related social behaviours of the treatment group showed the greatest degrees of improvement. Their results showed that empathy, sharing and cooperation were important for the development of friendships and that such friendships served as a protective factor (Caldarella *et al.*, 2009:55). In my study, the individuals within a township also applied specific friendship skills for contracting, developing, and maintaining new friendships during their transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2. My findings were therefore similar to those of Caldarella *et al.* (2009:55).

McCabe and Altamura (2011:513) also found that children who were socially and emotionally competent, showed increased abilities to socialise with peers, make more friends, enjoy more rewarding relationships with their parents and teachers, and achieve greater academic and social successes. The findings of McCabe and Altamura (2011:513) were similar to those of the individuals within a township. They demonstrated an ability to contract and maintain rewarding friendships, they enjoyed healthy and happy relationships with their parents and teachers, they achieve notable social successes, and, even though they experienced academic challenges, they still embraced opportunities they could find for acquiring new knowledge and mastering new academic skills.

5.4.4 FOURTH SECONDARY RESEARCH QUESTION

Which life skills facilitating strategies were used by the Grade R, Grade 1 and Grade 2 teachers to the children in their classrooms?

Even though the life skills which were taught by the participant teachers were not the primary focus of this study, I nevertheless felt that it was important to look at this aspect of their school life because it had very definite effect upon the transitions that the individuals within a township made between the different grades. While the participants were in Grade R, Grade 1 and Grade 2, all of the participating teachers in this study explicitly taught life skills by making use of Bible stories or lessons and by using the Bible as their main source of reference for finding examples of desirable human personality traits and life skills. In these cases, the participating teachers associated life skills with particular lessons from the Bible. I observed that the “Fruits of the Spirit” trope, as enunciated by St. Paul in the book of Corinthians, was the most common biblical starting point for the teaching of life skills.

The teachers also invited the children to use “emotion posters” and drawings that illustrated these desirable human personality traits, and they also engaged the children in conversations that expanded upon these themes and that illustrated the differences between various human emotions, both positive and negative. Self-esteem and problem solving were some of the life skills that these teachers identified for the benefit of their pupils. They also taught them the skills of making and maintaining friendship in the practical situations of everyday school, home and community life. Although they strove to incorporate these skills and qualities in their scheduled Bible lessons, they also noted that random and unscheduled opportunities for teaching life skills frequently occurred in an unplanned way during the course of the school day. They would then use these opportunities to diverge briefly from the scheduled lesson, and use the opportunity that arose in order to teach or reinforce the children's understanding of a particular life skill or life skills. It was only in Grade 2 that teachers were given specific life orientation periods in their timetable, in which they were expected to teach life skills to their children. All of the participating teachers agreed that life skills were important for children, although they observed that they were frequently neglected.

Yan, Evans and Harvey (2011:82) focused in their study on identifying and describing the emotional content of spontaneous teacher-student interactions. Their sixty hours of observation in the classrooms which they selected for observation, revealed that the classroom environments he studied were extraordinary positive on the whole. They classified their observations under the headings of the following four themes: the fostering of classroom relationships, the setting and managing of emotional guidelines, emotional warmth, and the management of emotional situations. The findings of Yan *et al.* (2011:95) are similar to those that I observed in this study because the teachers in both studies made use of emotionally difficult situations as spontaneous opportunities to take advantage of what they called “teachable moments”. The teachers in both their study and mine used children’s experiences to teach positive problem-solving techniques so that their children would be able to transform negative conditions into positive situations. This was particularly necessary, according to the participating teachers, in order to be able to help children to apply friendships skills when the opportunities arose. I was unable to trace any other recent research that was relevant to this research question, and so I was not able to relate my own findings to those of any other study.

5.4.5 FIFTH SECONDARY RESEARCH QUESTION

What were the expectations of the individuals within a township with regard to Grade 1 and Grade 2?

The individuals within a township expected contentedness during Grade 1 and they were also excited about the possibility of playing rugby. They looked forward to being able to participate in recreational activities, as they had done in Grade R. They also expected to encounter friendly and well-intentioned teachers to whom they would listen to, to develop new friendships, to have less time for recreational purposes, and to work harder. They also expected to have more homework in Grade 1, to find children who wanted to harm them, and to have disobedient children in their class and would upset both them and their teacher.

The individuals within a township also expected to be able to keep existing friendships during Grade 2, to write in cursive script, they would enjoy the climbing of the stairway to their Grade 2 classrooms, for anxiety to be absent when thinking about Grade 2 and to be expected to deal with more challenging work, and to enjoy feelings of excitement.

Mirkhil (2010:134) undertook a study in which she examined the multidimensional nature of children's transition to primary school. Her study focused on children in their kindergarten year – which is equivalent to Grade R or the year before children are promoted to Grade 1. A number of her findings are in agreement with the conclusions in my own study. In both studies, the children were excited about starting primary school. Certain conclusions from her and my studies were, however, different, and these differences related firstly to the children's reactions to academic work. Mirkhil (2010:135) found that the children in her sample did not identify an “academic” aspect of school life, but only thought of whatever they did as “fun”. But in my study, both of the individuals within a township thought of academic work as an identifiable factor in both Grade 1 and Grade 2.

Another way in which the findings in these two studies were different relate to the children's consciousness of the physical aspects of their primary school life. Mirkhil (2010:135) found that the children in her sample appeared to be more conscious of how their primary school would appear to be physically. They were able to describe,

for example, a wide variety of classrooms and outdoor play areas. In my study, by contrast, the individuals within a township only recalled very limited physical aspects when they enumerated their expectations of Grade 1. This may be explained by the fact that, at the time of my Grade R sessions with them, the individuals within a township had not yet had any opportunity of visiting the premises of their future primary school. They were therefore in no position to visualise their school physically. Some of the children in Mirkhil's (2010) study had already visited their primary school before she interviewed them.

In my questions about their future expectations of Grade 1, I also tended to focus less on the physical environment and concentrated more on the life skills that I expected would be useful to them. The individuals within a township did, however, recall certain physical aspects of their transition expectations from Grade 1 to Grade 2, such as the fact that they would have to climb stairs in Grade 2 because all the Grade 2 classes were held on the second floor, and not on the ground floor, as they had been in Grade 1.

Other similarities between the conclusions reached by Mirkhil (2010:136) and those in this study, were the participants' expectations of the additional amount of recreational activities ("playing") that they would have in Grade 1, opportunities to develop new friendships, and further opportunities to play rugby (or football in the schools in which Mirkhil's study took place). The researchers in both studies found that the participants *expected* that there would be additional opportunities for enjoyable and fulfilling activities. I should also make reference to the expectation of the individuals within a township that their toys and bicycles would be present (but these were not present in their Grade 1 classroom, as they expected them to be).

The optimism of the individuals within a township with regard to their transition to Grade 1, together with their expectation that their friends from Grade R would still be with them in Grade 1, was also found among the participants in the study conducted by Dockett and Perry (2004:186). Dockett and Perry also observed that the children in their sample expected to be able to make friends when they started school. In both their study and in mine, the participants were excited about the prospect of attending Grade 1 in the following year.

Some of the findings of Docket and Perry (2004:186) were different from what was indicated by my data. The participants in their sample expected that they would have to work all day long, and that there would be no time for any play activities at all. This is quite different from what I was able to observe about the participants who, although they expected to work harder, they nevertheless also expected to be able to enjoy some recreational activities in Grade 1. I also observed another difference between the findings of my own study and in some of the observations of White and Sharp (2007:96). While, in their study, the children rarely mentioned their future teachers, the individuals within a township frequently reiterated that they expected to find supportive and good-natured teachers in Grade 1 and Grade 2, even though they had never met any of these future teachers at the time when the data was gathered.

5.5 FINDINGS IN TERMS OF CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

I shall now discuss the nature of the coping process described by Moos and Schaefer (1993), as it is explained in Zeidner and Endler (1996:27), because it constitutes the general conceptual framework of this study. I shall also discuss how it relates to the major findings of this study.

Any environmental system in which human beings are involved in is characterised by the continuous appearance of both positive and negative life stressors in the environment under consideration. Throughout the study, the individuals within a township identified the positive and negative stressors that arose during their transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2. Their social resources consisted of their parents, their teachers, a close supportive and protective relationship between the co-individuals within a township, and their seemingly satisfying peer relationships. All of these positive stressors formed an integral part of their part of the environmental system.

Their personal system was composed of the participants' socio-demographic characteristics as well as their personal coping resources. The individuals within a township were a pair of Afrikaans boys who were five years old at the commencement of the study, and were also monozygotic individuals within a township boys. Their home as well as their pre-primary and primary schools were

located in a seemingly upmarket socio-economic area in what appeared to be a safe environment. The individuals within a township grew up within a dual-income family because both of their parents were practising professionals (their mother was a general medical practitioner and their father was a quantity surveyor). The primary school which the individuals within a township attended was a seemingly popular and growing school in their community and beyond, and it was also located in an upmarket, prestigious area.

Through the life skills that they learned and because of a supportive social structure that consisted primarily of their parents and teachers, the individuals within a township were successful in mastering personal skills for the control of their emotions, skills for neutralising the challenges from bullies they met in school, and skills for making new friendships and maintaining them. In addition to this, both of the individuals within a township possessed healthy but realistic self-concepts.

The data that I accumulated in the study confirmed my belief that for the purpose of this study, it appeared that the social support structures, their socio-demographic background as well as their repertoire of personal coping enabled the individuals within a township to make successful and relatively uncomplicated transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2.

Both of the individuals within a township experienced and regarded the transitions they made from Grade R through to Grade 2 as positive, enjoyable, and, on the whole, exciting. It appeared that their cognitive appraisal of their situation as well as coping skills that they were able to learn and apply, probably shaped their health and well-being in a predominantly positive way during the time that they were making transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2.

Throughout the course of this study, I constantly reminded the individuals within a township and motivated them to reflect on the practical applications of their coping with life skills, on what they had learned in the past, on which resources were helpful in practice, and on what they would be able to achieve and accomplished in similar situations in the future (Zeidner & Endler, 1996:27).

5.6 REVISITING THE THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS

In Chapter 1 I formulated the initial theoretical assumptions that support this study. In the following next section, I shall interrogate these initial assumptions in the light of the findings from this study.

5.6.1 THEORETICAL ASSUMPTION 1

Grade R, Grade 1 and Grade 2 learners are able to use acquired life skills as coping strategies to deal with the stressors that they experienced during their transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2.

From the data that I obtained during the course of this study, I was able to empirically confirm my theoretical assumption that Grade R, Grade 1 and Grade 2 learners (such as the participants in this study) were able to use acquired life skills as coping strategies to deal with some of the stressors that they experienced during their transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2. I therefore concluded that the life skills that they learned, probably played a part in enabling the individuals within a township to deal successfully with bullies, to make and maintain satisfying friendships, and to deal successfully with their personal emotions (see section 4.3.1.6) which were all identified as specific stressors (see section 4.3.1) present in the transition from Grade R through to Grade 2.

5.6.2 THEORETICAL ASSUMPTION 2

While these life skills may assist Grade 1 and Grade 2 learners to cope with certain stressors, they may not necessarily alleviate the fears engendered by the transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2.

The data from this study reveals that the individuals within a township coped with certain stressors by some of the life skills that they learned. There was also data in the data to confirm that the life skills that the individuals within a township learned also serve to allay their fear of bullies (see section 4.4.3.2). While they were still anxious and fearful about the academic challenges that they would encounter in their Grade 2 year, they indicated that they apparently weren't anxious about the challenges that would confront them in Grade 2 (see section 4.4.5.2). The data accumulated for this study revealed that while they entertained a few or no fears,

they were realistic about the way in which they would be able to cope with both their positive and negative expectations as they arose.

5.6.3 THEORETICAL ASSUMPTION 3

The stressors identified in my master's dissertation (the attitudes of the teachers, friendships, the need for acquiring education, the possibility of suffering physical pain and injuries, difficulties with older children, bullying and teasing, and noise and general chaos in the classroom) referred to some but not all of the stressors that are experienced by Grade 1 learners.

I was able to confirm this theoretical assumption empirically from the data in my study. The assumption that the stressors experienced by Grade 1 learners account for some but not all of the stressors experienced by Grade 1 learners. Table 5.1 (below) sets out the positive and negative stressors that were experienced by the participants in this study, and reveals that they experienced similar as well as additional stressors in Grade 1. The additional positive stressors that were experienced by the individuals within a township in this study included opportunities for helping others, new opportunities for participating in and enjoying sport, good relations with school prefects, opportunities to participate in different kinds of recreational activities, enjoyment of the tuck shop facilities, the protection and security enjoyed by both the co-individuals within a township, the support and love by their parents, and opportunities for learning useful and practical life skills. Gaining new knowledge, positive friendships, a supportive teacher and homework were perceived positive stressors in both studies.

Additional negative stressors that I was able to identify in this study by all of the participants and not only by the individuals within a township, were strict rules by the prefects, the need to develop new friendships, the need to develop and master a whole range of social skills, unpleasant expectations about Grade 1 when they were still in Grade R, their irritation at not being able to master the skills of reading and writing without prolonged application, and the demanding amount of school work that they were expected to cope with. One of the stressors that I identified in my master's dissertation that was not a challenge for the individuals within a township or the remaining participants in this study, was a fear of suffering physical pain and

injury at the hands of other children. Table 5.1 summarises all of the above-mentioned stressors. The stressors that are highlighted stressors in purple are those that I identified in a my master's study and which I encountered once again during this research. The stressors highlighted in green are stressors that were only identified from the data accumulated for this study. The stressors that are not highlighted at all are those stressors that I identified in my master's study but that I did not observe during the course of this study.

Table 5.1: Positive and negative stressors in Grade 1

Positive stressors present in Grade 1	Negative stressors present in Grade 1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Homework +Discipline in the classroom + Their teacher + Friends + Helping others + Sport + Prefects + Playing + Gaining new knowledge + The tuck shop + Their co-individual within a township + Supporting parents + Life skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Disobedient children - Prefects - Making friends - Bullies - Social skills - Threats in Grade R - Not being able to read and write immediately - School work - Older children in the school - Fear of physical pain or injury

5.6.4 THEORETICAL ASSUMPTION 4

Being a co-individual within a township may be beneficial for one or both of the individuals during their transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2.

My findings in this study confirmed that being a co-individual within a township seemed beneficial for both of the individuals within a township during their transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2 (see section 4.2.3). The main benefit that accrued to the individuals within a township was derived from the fact that both of them knew that they were able to rely upon an intimate, familiar, and unconditionally supportive friend in unfamiliar settings and conditions. When the individuals within a township were in the same classes in Grade R and Grade 1, they seemed to me to appreciate

and value the presence of their co-individual within a twinship in their class. When they were separated in Grade 2, they were both able to function in a constructive and independent manner without the immediate support and presence of their co-individual within a twinship. Both of them nevertheless continued in their Grade 2 year to value and appreciate their co-individual within a twinship during break-times because they would immediately seek out and enjoy one another's company.

5.7 THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

I have already mentioned that the experiences of school-going children in Grade 2 has been neglected in research and that the transitions of children between Grade 1 and Grade 2 have been equally neglected in terms of scientific investigation. This study therefore contributes to seemingly needed knowledge about children's experiences in Grade 2, and it also specifically highlights the fact that the transitions from Grade 1 to Grade 2 may be more stressful and demanding than transitions from Grade R to Grade 1. There appear to be limited amounts of research about the reasons why the transitions from Grade 1 to Grade 2 may be more stressful than the transitions from Grade R to Grade 1. It is therefore clear that the possible positive and negative stressors that children experience during their transition into *Grade 2* require more research.

It also seems clear that the stressful academic challenges, such as the perceiving demanding amount of homework that children are given in Grade 2 in comparison to the amount of homework they receive in Grade 1, is a theme that requires more detailed research. The expectations of children regarding Grade 1 and Grade 2 about their future grades also need intensive research and greater in-depth analysis. The relatively unstructured way in which teachers impart life skills strategies in class also need to be examined and explored in depth. This study offers empirical data that extends all available knowledge bases about the transitions of individuals within a twinship from Grade 1 to Grade 2. This statement will be further elaborated upon in the sections that follow.

5.7.1 THE TRANSITION OF INDIVIDUALS WITHIN A TWINSHIP FROM GRADE 1 TO GRADE 2

The study contributes to the seemingly limited existing knowledge base about the transition of individuals within a township from Grade 1 to Grade 2. The findings indicate how individuals within a township experienced the transitions from Grade 1 to Grade 2 in a successful and predominantly uncomplicated way. The findings also indicate how individuals within a township experienced their transition from Grade 1 to Grade 2 as *more* stressful than their transition from Grade R to Grade 1. The contribution of this study therefore resides in the notion that the transition from Grade 1 to Grade 2 may indeed be more stressful than the transition from Grade R to Grade 1.

In addition to this, this study describes how the individuals within a township experienced more negative stressors in Grade 2 than they did in Grade 1, although they still characterised their overall experience of Grade 2 as pleasurable and enjoyable. Despite the number of negative stressors were almost equal to the number of positive stressors that they experienced in Grade 2, in comparison to the number of negative stressors they experienced in Grade 1, the individuals within a township still describe their transition from Grade 1 to Grade 2 as enjoyable and pleasurable. The contribution of this study can therefore be located in the finding that despite the high number of existing negative stressors that were experienced by the individuals within a township in Grade 2, the transition of individuals within a township from Grade 1 to Grade the 2 may still be pleasurable and enjoyable on the whole.

5.7.2 THE EXPECTATIONS THAT THE INDIVIDUALS WITHIN THE TWINSHIP HAD WITH REGARD TO GRADE 1 AND GRADE 2

The present study also contributes to the existing knowledge base about the expectations of individuals within a township with regard to Grade 1 and Grade 2. The findings in the study suggest that the expectations of the individuals within a township with regard to Grade 1 and Grade 2 are mostly accurate and realistic, and that this may have been the result of the very few unexpected occurrences in their experiences of Grade 1 and Grade 2. The contribution of this study therefore resides in the notion that accurate and realistic expectations of Grade 1 and Grade

2 on the part of individuals within a township may be an indicator of their successful and predominately uncomplicated transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2 because of the minimal adjustments that they needed to make to their expectations and their lived experiences of Grade 1 and Grade 2.

5.7.3 UNSTRUCTURED STRATEGIES THAT TEACHERS USE TO TEACH LIFE SKILLS IN THEIR CLASSROOMS FROM GRADE R THROUGH TO GRADE 2

The current study contributes to the existing knowledge base about unstructured strategies that teachers use to teach life skills in their classrooms. The findings from this study indicate that the participating Grade R, Grade 1 and Grade 2 teachers taught life skills mainly by means of Bible lessons and that they used the Bible as their main source of reference. They also got the children to use emotion posters and other drawings, and they engaged in conversations with the children about different emotions, the meaning of self-esteem, techniques for problem solving and making friends, and, in this way, taught the necessary life skills to their children by placing them in the context of predominantly practical situations as and when opportunities arose. Another contribution of this study therefore resides in an explanation of how Grade R, Grade 1 and Grade 2 teachers mainly use the Bible as their main source of reference, and how they teach life skills by locating them in practical situations as opportunities arise in their classes.

5.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The limitations of this study will be discussed in the following section. The main limitations of this study include the individuals within a township as primary participants, the limited nature of their social support structure, the limitations of their socio-demographic background, the extensive duration of the fieldwork, and my role as researcher within the context of this study.

5.8.1 THE INDIVIDUALS WITHIN A TOWNSHIP AS PRIMARY PARTICIPANTS

A limitation of this study includes the fact that, for the purposes of my case study, I included only seven people as primary and secondary participants. Out of these seven participants, the individuals within a township (two boys) were the main participants. The fact that the main participants were individuals within a township

also limited me as a researcher from generalising my findings to children who are not individuals within a township.

5.8.2 THE SOCIAL SUPPORT STRUCTURE OF THE INDIVIDUALS WITHIN A TOWNSHIP

The social support structures of the individuals within a township consisted of seemingly unconditional love and support, not only from their parents, but also from their Grade R, Grade 1 and Grade 2 school teachers, in addition to the protection and security that both of them enjoyed as co-individuals within a township. The findings of this study cannot be extrapolated to generalise about the experience of individuals within a township, who have different or more limited kinds of social and personal support.

5.8.3 THE SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE INDIVIDUALS WITHIN A TOWNSHIP

The socio-demographic background of the individuals within a township were that they were born into a highly privileged social stratum of society to affluent and well-educated professional parents who lived in an upmarket area in seemingly safe conditions. The individuals within a township also grew up in a dual-income family because both parents were qualified professionals engaged in practising their specialities. The primary school which the individuals within a township attended was also a popular and rapidly growing school that was located in a similarly prestigious and affluent area. The findings of this study cannot therefore be generalised to the experience of individuals within a township who live in or who have grown up in different socio-demographic conditions.

5.8.4 THE EXTENSIVE DURATION OF THE FIELDWORK

Another limitation of this study is that the duration of the fieldwork last for three years. Because of this, there was always the possibility that I might have lost the participants because of unanticipated circumstances as well as the possibility that some form of trauma or other unexpected life conditions, incidents and events may have influenced the findings. I was fortunate indeed that throughout the course of this study, all the participants were able to contribute to this study from its beginning to its conclusion. I was also fortunate because no disruptive or traumatic events that

could have possibly influenced the findings, occurred in the lives of any of the participants during the three-year period.

5.8.5 MY ROLE AS RESEARCHER

Another limitation of this study was the possibility that I might have over-involved myself as a researcher because of the close and familiar relationship that I inevitably developed with the participants over this extended period of time. I therefore relentlessly strove to remain as unbiased and objective as possible in resorting to my own personal values, views and ideas in my attempt to understand and explore the participants' values, views, experiences and background history as they emerged from the data. During the course of this study, I attempted to remain professional throughout, even though I allowed myself to be flexible and sensitive to the nuances of the occasions as I interacted with the participants during the sessions.

5.8.6 THE DESIGN OF THE CASE STUDY

The fact that I decided to use a case study design for this study may also be regarded as a possible limitation for this study. I nevertheless gained significant and valuable insights and a great deal of in-depth understanding from utilising a case study design. But since it is not permissible to generalise from the findings of this study, my selection of a case study design may be regarded as a potential limitation. Although this study was conducted within a "bounded system", it may nevertheless still resonate with other studies even though none of these findings can be generalised in the usual meaning of that word.

5.8.7 THE PROBLEM OF EVIDENCE

Altheide (2009:65) mentioned that what is intended by 'evidence' can be analysed as information that is filtered by a range of symbolic filters and nuanced meanings compatible with membership. Furthermore, Altheide and Johnson (2011:589) argued that various insights in qualitative research instigate in a researcher's personal experience. Therefore the problem of evidence may be regarded as another possible limitation for this study as I was the only researcher, with my own

personal experiences, symbolic filters and nuanced meanings which were compatible with my own strong views regarding the main focus for this study. However, as mentioned earlier, I strived to be as objective as possible from the start of this study, by entering this study without pre-conceptualised ideas for the duration and for the outcomes of this study.

5.9 RECOMMENDATIONS

In this section I make various recommendations for future research and practice together with recommendations for training and development.

5.9.1 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

On the basis of the current study's findings, I recommend the following themes as potentially fruitful areas for future research:

- This study reported that there was a very limited amount of research into the experiences of children in Grade 2 and the effect of their transitions. Future studies might therefore profitably explore the transition experiences of children who are not members of a township, as they make transitions from Grade 1 to Grade 2.
- Other fruitful areas of research would be the ways in which the experiences of individuals within a township who have different social support structures and that come from different socio-demographic backgrounds, make transitions from Grade 1 to Grade 2, and how the experiences of such individuals within a township are different from the individuals within a township in this study.
- The participants in this study reported a demanding increase in the amount of homework between Grade 1 to Grade 2. This seemingly demanding increase in the amount of homework in Grade 2 was the root cause of one of the main negative stressors that afflicted the individuals within a township in Grade 2. Future studies might profitably explore the changes in the amount of homework given in such circumstances, and how they affect the

transition from Grade 1 to Grade 2. Future studies might also include an in-depth exploration of indicators that predict how the transition from Grade 1 to Grade 2 is probably more stressful than the transition from Grade R to Grade 1.

- During my examination and exploration of the literature for this study, I noticed that many of the research studies focus on transitions from preschool to primary school, from primary school to high school, from high school to university, and from university to the formal working environment. However, since this study was able to confirm that the transition from Grade 1 to Grade 2 was more stressful than the transition from Grade R to Grade 1 (a focal transition), future studies might well carry out research into these focal transitions within the context of broader phases.
- The participating teachers in this study appeared to value and agree on the need for the teaching of life skills in classrooms. Their own relatively unstructured life skill interventions appeared to be based on fairly restricted resources and suffer from the limited amount of time that the official timetable allocated to the teaching of life skills to the children in their class. Future studies might therefore examine the issue of whether or not teachers might benefit from learning and applying additional strategies while teaching life skills in their classrooms.

5.9.2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE

On the basis of the outcomes of this current study, I maintain that there is a great need for carefully researched and detailed information about the focal transitions from Grade R through to Grade 12, and that such information would be beneficial to future children, parents and teachers. There is also a need for improved communication with practical advice for role-players we need to offer social, emotional and academic support on a broader scale. These factors include relevant information about what may be expected between focal transitions, how to deal with stressors between the focal transitions, and indications of the factors that result in largely successful and uncomplicated transitions between focal transitions.

5.9.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

On the basis of these findings, I recommend the development of enhanced and practical communication strategies between children, parents, teachers and schools, that include content about non-focal transitional factors. Such communication strategies might profitably include coping skills, and descriptions of fundamental teacher and parent supportive roles during these transitions, as well as the use of positive emotions as coping mechanisms.

In addition to this, in-service child and teacher training programmes may prove to be beneficial for these role-players because they would be able to empower them with skills to cope with future challenges. Such programmes could make children and teachers better prepared for future transitions so that they will be better able to cope with surprises during non-focal transitional processes.

5.10 FINAL REFLECTION

Against a background of the many challenges, variables and sometimes restricted knowledge that individuals within a township, their parents and their teachers face during the transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2, this study attempted to demonstrate a new understanding of coping strategies such role-players could usefully employ. The study also generated new knowledge about non-focal transitions. It also made the value of appropriate, broadly based social support structures as well as the significance and value of inner fulfilment for generating positive attitudes during challenging life experiences, more than evident.



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ADDENDA

Addendum A: Documents related to research methodology and strategy

- A-1* Grade R sessions 2009
- A-2* Grade 1 sessions 2010
- A-3* Grade 2 sessions 2011
- A-4 Example of a questionnaire for a semi-structured interview with the mother of the individuals within a township
- A-5 Example of a questionnaire for a semi-structured interview with the Grade R, Grade 1 and Grade 2 teachers of the individuals within a township

Addendum B: Official documentation

- B-1 Ethical clearance certificate
- B-2 Example of an informed consent form (child participants)
- B-3 Example of informed consent forms (adult participants)
- B-4 Consent letter from Gauteng Department of Education 2009
- B-5 Consent letter from Gauteng Department of Education 2010

Addenda * – see compact disc



Addenda *: See compact disc

- A-1* Grade R sessions 2009
- A-2* Grade 1 sessions 2010
- A-3* Grade 2 sessions 2011

Questionnaire for semi-structured interview with the mother of the individuals within a township

1. What is your opinion regarding life skills in general?
2. What would you point out as the most important life skills for your children's transition and why?
3. Name most common excitements / concerns according to your children regarding the transitions from Grade R through to Grade 2.
4. How do they individually handle the above mentioned stressors?
5. Please give a detailed description of each of the individuals within a townships' individual personalities as well as their strengths and weaknesses.
6. Do you think the twins have an impact on each other? If yes, please elaborate.
7. As parent, what is your experience of the transition period?
8. How do you handle the above mentioned?
9. Please describe your family in general?
10. Which life skills do you think are necessary for young children during their transition from Grade R through to Grade 2?
11. What are the perceived stressors experienced or identified by each of your children during the transition from Grade R through to Grade 2?
12. Which coping strategies are currently being used by the individuals within a township regarding certain identified stressors, before life skill facilitation took place?
13. Which coping strategies are being used by the individuals within a township regarding certain identified stressors, after life skill facilitation took place?
14. How do their Grade R, Grade 1 and Grade 2 teachers facilitate and mediate life skills to each one of the individuals within a township?

Questionnaire for semi-structured interview with teachers

1. From your experience, what do you view as important life skills necessary for the transition from Grade R through to Grade 2 and why?

2. What would you name as the most common stressors (positive and negative) for learners during the transition from Grade R through to Grade 2?

3. Please give me your opinion regarding life skills during the transition period in general?

4. What methods are currently being used by teachers for the teaching of life skills for the learners?

5. Do you think there are barriers for (a) teaching and (b) learning life skills? If yes, what are they?

6. As a teacher, is it easy for you to teach life skills? Do you feel there is a place for life skills during the transition from Grade R through to Grade 2 or not and why?

7. If you think about the transition from Grade R through to Grade 2, please give 5 words to describe this specific period.

Ethical clearance certificate



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA
Faculty of Education

RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

CLEARANCE NUMBER :

EP 09/05/03

DEGREE AND PROJECT

PhD

The transition of individuals within a township from Grade R through to Grade 2

INVESTIGATOR(S)

Elaney Nieuwenhuizen

DEPARTMENT

Educational Psychology

DATE CONSIDERED

17 July 2012

DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE

APPROVED

Please note:

For Masters applications, ethical clearance is valid for 2 years

For PhD applications, ethical clearance is valid for 3 years.

**CHAIRPERSON OF ETHICS
COMMITTEE**

Prof L Ebersohn



DATE

17 July 2012

CC

Jeannie Beukes
Prof. Irma Eloff

This ethical clearance certificate is issued subject to the following conditions:

1. A signed personal declaration of responsibility
2. If the research question changes significantly so as to alter the nature of the study, a new application for ethical clearance must be submitted
3. It remains the students' responsibility to ensure that all the necessary forms for informed consent are kept for future queries.

Please quote the clearance number in all enquiries.

LETTER OF INFORMED CONSENT TO A MINOR CHILD

A research project of the University of Pretoria

**The transition of individuals within a twinship from Grade R
through to Grade 2**

To be read to children under the age of 18 years

Wat maak ons hier?

Partykeer wil mense sekere dinge uitvind. Dit word 'n projek genoem. Om dit te kan doen, het hulle sekere mense of kinders nodig om hulle te help. Ek is besig met 'n projek en wil vir julle vra of julle my wil help en wil deelneem aan hierdie projek. As julle besluit om deel te neem aan hierdie projek, gaan ons lekker saam gesels, ons gaan speletjies speel en 'n hele dagboek maak vir elkeen waarin ons alles gaan bêre wat ons gemaak het sodat julle oor en oor daarna kan kyk en kan gebruik. Hierdie projek gaan oor kinders soos julle wat nou in Graad R is en wat in die volgende twee jaar Graad 1 en Graad 2 toe gaan. Ons gaan gesels oor wat julle opgewonde maak oor Graad 1 en Graad 2, oor sekere dinge wat julle wil uitvind oor Graad 1 en Graad 2 en hoe julle voel om na Graad 1 en Graad 2 toe te gaan.

Ek gaan ook vir julle juffrouens en vir mamma en pappa vra om ons ook te help met die projek. Ek wil ook vir julle sekere dinge leer wat julle miskien kan gebruik in Graad 1 en in Graad 2 om vir julle te help en wat dalk Graad 1 en Graad 2 net nog lekkerder kan maak. Ek gaan vir julle ook meer vertel van Graad 1 en Graad 2 en hoe dit anders gaan wees as Graad R waarin julle nou is. Mamma en pappa het gesê julle mag deelneem aan die projek, nou moet julle net besluit of julle wil deelneem of nie?

Wat gaan met ons gebeur?

As julle gaan besluit om deel te neem aan hierdie projek, gaan ek een dag, elke tweede week na julle huis toe kom as julle terug is van die skool. Dan gaan ons by julle huis gesels en speel. Ek gaan ook nou en dan na julle skool toe gaan waar ek gaan kyk hoe dit daar lyk en wat julle alles daar doen. Ek gaan ook met julle juffrouens gesels. In hierdie projek gaan daar nie regte of verkeerde antwoorde wees nie. Alles wat julle gaan doen en vir my gaan vertel gaan reg wees. Net soos wat julle pappa 'n gereedskapboks het waarin hy alles bêre om dinge by julle huis reg te maak en beter te maak, gaan ons saam vir julle 'n Graad 1 en Graad 2 gereedskapboks maak wat vir julle dalk kan help om Graad 1 en Graad 2 makliker en lekkerder te maak.

Die ander kinders by die skool gaan nie weet dat julle my help nie. Ek gaan nie vir hulle vertel van julle nie. Ek gaan ook niks vir julle juffrouens of maats vertel wat julle vir my vertel nie. As julle sê ek mag, dan gaan ek elke keer as ons gesels dit op 'n band opneem sodat ek weer daarna kan luister. Ek wil ook by julle hoor of ek mag fotos neem oor alles wat ons gaan maak. Ek sal nie julle gesigte afneem nie. Ek gaan ook vir niemand sê wat julle name is nie.

Gaan ons seerkry?

Nee, glad nie. As julle moeg raak terwyl ons besig is, dan sê julle net vir my julle is moeg dan rus ons bietjie, of dan kom ek op 'n ander dag weer terug as julle weer lus het om aan te gaan. Julle hoef ook nie al die vrae wat ek vir julle gaan vra te beantwoord nie, net die wat julle wil antwoord. As ons iets gaan speel en julle wil nie aan die speletjie deelneem nie, dan sê julle net vir my dan hoef julle nie daaraan deel te neem nie. Ek gaan nooit kwaad raak vir julle as julle nie aan iets wil deelneem nie. Ek gaan ook nie met julle raas nie.

Gaan hierdie projek vir ons help?

Ek hoop dat hierdie projek vir julle sal help in Graad 1 en in Graad 2. Ek hoop dat dit wat ek vir julle wil leer en wil wys vir julle sal help in Graad 1 en Graad 2 sodat dit lekker jare sal wees, en al is daar minder lekker dae, dat julle dit wat ons gaan leer kan gebruik om vir julle te help. Ek hoop ook dat hierdie projek vir julle sal help om julleself te help en dat julle nuwe dinge sal leer wat vir julle kan help in sekere situasies.

Wat as ons vrae het?

Julle mag enige tyd vir my vrae vra oor hierdie projek. As julle nie nou aan enige vrae kan dink wat julle wil vra nie, kan julle vir my later bel by 082 822 5394 of vir die tannie wat vir my help. Haar naam is Professor Irma Eloff en haar nommer is 012 420 5721. Julle kan ook vir my julle vragies vrae as julle my weer sien of julle kan vir mamma en pappa vra om vir my te vrae as julle nie self wil nie.

Weet ons ouers van hierdie projek?

Ja, ek het al vir mamma en pappa vertel van hierdie projek en vir hulle verduidelik wat ons gaan doen as julle besluit om ook deel te neem. Julle hoef nie nou dadelik te besluit of julle wil deelneem nie. As ek huis toe gaan kan julle eers met mamma en pappa gesels daarvoor en later vir my sê.

Moet ons deelneem?

Nee, julle hoof nie. Niemand sal kwaad wees vir julle as julle nie wil deelneem nie. Julle moet sê of julle wil deel wees of nie. As julle nou ja sê en later besluit maar eintlik wil julle nie, dan mag julle ophou. Dit is julle besluit.

- a) As julle julle name op hierdie papier skryf, dan beteken dit dat julle ja sê om deel te neem aan hierdie projek en dat julle weet waaroor hierdie projek gaan en wat met julle gaan gebeur. As julle later wil ophou, dan moet julle net vir my sê dan hou ons dadelik op.

Handtekening van leerder _____ Datum _____
Handtekening van navorser _____ Datum _____

- b) As julle nou weer julle name hier gaan skryf, beteken dit dat julle ja sê dat ek ons gesprekke op 'n band mag opneem asook fotos mag neem van die werk wat ons gaan doen. Ek gaan nie julle name vir enige iemand gee nie. As julle nie wil hê ek mag ons gesprekke op 'n band opneem of fotos neem nie, dan moet julle vir my sê dan doen ek dit nie.

Handtekening van leerder _____ Datum _____
Handtekening van navorser _____ Datum _____

As julle enige verdere vrae oor hierdie projek het dan kan julle vir my skakel by 082 822 5394 of vir Prof Irma Eloff by 012 420 5721. As julle enige verdere vrae het oor wat jou regte as deelnemer is dan kan julle die Etiese Komitee van die Universiteit van Pretoria se Opvoedkunde Fakulteit skakel by 012 420 3751.

Baie dankie

Elan y Nieuwenhuizen

Declaration Form For Learners

Dear Parent(s)

Your twin boys are invited to participate in a study. The following information regarding the study is provided so that you can decide if you would like your children to take part. You must be aware that your children's participation is voluntary and that they may withdraw from the study at any time.

The study is being undertaken by Elaney Nieuwenhuizen. I am currently busy with my PhD Learning support, Guidance and Counselling in Educational Psychology at the University of Pretoria. My supervisor for the study is Prof. Irma Eloff, Dean of the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria. My research involves an in-depth look at the transition of individuals within a twinship from Grade R through to Grade 2.

This research process includes the intervention of certain life skills to the children through informal play and worksheets during bi-weekly visits to their home. Observation of the children at their school environment will also be part of the study as well as interviews with the teachers and the parents of the children involved. All activities that your children participate in, will remain confidential, as well as anonymous. No human rights may be violated during the study. At the end of the study I undertake to discuss the initial findings with all participants.

If you have any queries, before, during or after the study, you are welcome to contact me or Prof. Eloff.

Thank you in advance

Elaney Nieuwenhuizen
082 822 5394

Professor Irma Eloff
(012) 420 5721

DECLARATION

I/We have read the above and understand what the goal of the study is. I/We understand what activities my/our child will be involved in. I/We understand that his/her participation is voluntary and that he/she may withdraw at any time. I/We understand that all information will be handled confidentially and that his/her identity will remain anonymous. I/We hereby confirm that our child will participate in the study. I/we undertake to direct any queries to the researcher or the supervisor.

Signature of Parent(s)

Date

Signature of Researcher

Date

DECLARATION FORM FOR TEACHERS

Dear teacher

You are invited to participate in a study. The following information regarding the study is provided so that you can decide whether you would like you to take part. You must be aware that your participation is voluntary and that you may withdraw from the study at any time.

The study is being undertaken by Elaney Nieuwenhuizen. I am currently busy with my PhD Learning support, Guidance and Counselling in Educational Psychology at the University of Pretoria. My supervisor for the study is Prof. Irma Eloff, Dean of the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria. My research involves an in-depth look at the transition of individuals within a township from Grade R through to Grade 2.

This research process includes the intervention of certain life skills to the children through informal play and worksheets during bi-weekly visits to their home. Observation of the children at their school environment will also be part of the study as well as interviews with the teachers and the parents of the children involved. All activities that you participate in, will remain confidential, as well as anonymous. No human rights may be violated during the study. At the end of the study I undertake to discuss the initial findings with all participants. I would also appreciate your input, before the findings are finalised.

If you have any queries, before, during or after the study, you are welcome to contact me or Prof. Eloff.

Thank you in advance

Elaney Nieuwenhuizen
082 822 5394

Professor Irma Eloff.
(012) 420 5721

DECLARATION

I have read the above and understand what the goal of the study is. I understand what activities I will be involved in. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time. I understand that all information will be handled confidentially and that my identity will remain anonymous. I hereby confirm that I will participate in the study. I undertake to direct any queries to the researcher or the supervisor.

Signature of Teacher

Date

Signature of Researcher

Date

DECLARATION FORM FOR PARENTS

Dear parent(s)

You are invited to participate in a study. The following information regarding the study is provided so that you can decide whether you would like you to take part. You must be aware that your participation is voluntary and that you may withdraw from the study at any time.

The study is being undertaken by Elaney Nieuwenhuizen. I am currently busy with my PhD Learning support, Guidance and Counselling in Educational Psychology at the University of Pretoria. My supervisor for the study is Prof. Irma Eloff, Dean of the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria. My research involves an in-depth look at the transition of individuals within a township from Grade R through to Grade 2.

This research process includes the intervention of certain life skills to the children through informal play and worksheets during bi-weekly visits to their home. Observation of the children at their school environment will also be part of the study as well as interviews with the teachers and the parents of the children involved. All activities that you participate in, will remain confidential, as well as anonymous. No human rights may be violated during the study. At the end of the study I undertake to discuss the initial findings with all participants. I would also appreciate your input, before the findings are finalised.

If you have any queries, before, during or after the study, you are welcome to contact me or Prof. Eloff.

Thank you in advance

Elaney Nieuwenhuizen
082 822 5394

Professor Irma Eloff.
(012) 420 5721

DECLARATION

I have read the above and understand what the goal of the study is. I understand what activities I will be involved in. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time. I understand that all information will be handled confidentially and that my identity will remain anonymous. I hereby confirm that I will participate in the study. I undertake to direct any queries to the researcher or the supervisor.

Signature of Parent

Date

Signature of Researcher

Date

dated 17 November 2009



UMnyango WezeMfundo
Department of Education

Lefapha la Thuto
Departement van Onderwys

Enquiries: Nomvula Ubisi (011)3550488

Date:	17 November 2009
Name of Researcher:	Nieuwenhuizen Elaney
Address of Researcher:	13A Dartmoorroad
	Florida Hills
	1716
Telephone Number:	0828225394
Fax Number:	N/A
Research Topic:	The Mediating Effect of Life Skills on Possible Stressors of Twins in their Transition from Pre-School to Grade 1
Number and type of schools:	1 Primary School and 1 ECD Site
District/s/HO	Johannesburg West

Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved to conduct the research. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to both the School (both Principal and SGB) and the District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted.

Permission has been granted to proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met, and may be withdrawn should any of these conditions be flouted:

1. *The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s concerned must be presented with a copy of this letter that would indicate that the said researcher/s has/have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.*
2. *The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s must be approached separately, and in writing, for permission to involve District/Head Office Officials in the project.*
3. *A copy of this letter must be forwarded to the school principal and the chairperson of the School Governing Body (SGB) that would indicate that the researcher/s have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.*

Office of the Chief Director: Information and Knowledge Management

Room 501, 111 Commissioner Street, Johannesburg, 2000 P.O.Box 7710, Johannesburg, 2000

Tel: (011) 355-0809 Fax: (011) 355-0734

4. ***A letter / document that outlines the purpose of the research and the anticipated outcomes of such research must be made available to the principals, SGBs and District/Head Office Senior Managers of the schools and districts/offices concerned, respectively.***
5. ***The Researcher will make every effort obtain the goodwill and co-operation of all the GDE officials, principals, and chairpersons of the SGBs, teachers and learners involved. Persons who offer their co-operation will not receive additional remuneration from the Department while those that opt not to participate will not be penalised in any way.***
6. ***Research may only be conducted after school hours so that the normal school programme is not interrupted. The Principal (if at a school) and/or Director (if at a district/head office) must be consulted about an appropriate time when the researcher/s may carry out their research at the sites that they manage.***
7. ***Research may only commence from the second week of February and must be concluded before the beginning of the last quarter of the academic year.***
8. ***Items 6 and 7 will not apply to any research effort being undertaken on behalf of the GDE. Such research will have been commissioned and be paid for by the Gauteng Department of Education.***
9. ***It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain written parental consent of all learners that are expected to participate in the study.***
10. ***The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.***
11. ***The names of the GDE officials, schools, principals, parents, teachers and learners that participate in the study may not appear in the research report without the written consent of each of these individuals and/or organisations.***
12. ***On completion of the study the researcher must supply the Director: Knowledge Management & Research with one Hard Cover bound and one Ring bound copy of the final, approved research report. The researcher would also provide the said manager with an electronic copy of the research abstract/summary and/or annotation.***
13. ***The researcher may be expected to provide short presentations on the purpose, findings and recommendations of his/her research to both GDE officials and the schools concerned.***
14. ***Should the researcher have been involved with research at a school and/or a district/head office level, the Director concerned must also be supplied with a brief summary of the purpose, findings and recommendations of the research study.***

The Gauteng Department of Education wishes you well in this important undertaking and looks forward to examining the findings of your research study.

Kind regards

Pp Nomvula Ubisi
 Martha Mashego
 ACTING DIRECTOR: KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT & RESEARCH

The contents of this letter has been read and understood by the researcher.

Signature of Researcher:

Date:



dated 20 January 2010

UMnyango WezeMfundo
Department of Education

Lefapha la Thuto
Departement van Onderwys

Enquiries: Nomvula Ubisi (011)3550488

Date:	20 January 2010
Name of Researcher:	Nieuwenhuizen Elaney
Address of Researcher:	13A Dartmoorroad
	Florida Hills
	1716
Telephone Number:	0828225394
Fax Number:	N/A
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4. ***A letter / document that outlines the purpose of the research and the anticipated outcomes of such research must be made available to the principals, SGBs and District/Head Office Senior Managers of the schools and districts/offices concerned, respectively.***
5. ***The Researcher will make every effort obtain the goodwill and co-operation of all the GDE officials, principals, and chairpersons of the SGBs, teachers and learners involved. Persons who offer their co-operation will not receive additional remuneration from the Department while those that opt not to participate will not be penalised in any way.***
6. ***Research may only be conducted after school hours so that the normal school programme is not interrupted. The Principal (if at a school) and/or Director (if at a district/head office) must be consulted about an appropriate time when the researcher/s may carry out their research at the sites that they manage.***
7. ***Research may only commence from the second week of February and must be concluded before the beginning of the last quarter of the academic year.***
8. ***Items 6 and 7 will not apply to any research effort being undertaken on behalf of the GDE. Such research will have been commissioned and be paid for by the Gauteng Department of Education.***
9. ***It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain written parental consent of all learners that are expected to participate in the study.***
10. ***The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.***
11. ***The names of the GDE officials, schools, principals, parents, teachers and learners that participate in the study may not appear in the research report without the written consent of each of these individuals and/or organisations.***
12. ***On completion of the study the researcher must supply the Director: Knowledge Management & Research with one Hard Cover bound and one Ring bound copy of the final, approved research report. The researcher would also provide the said manager with an electronic copy of the research abstract/summary and/or annotation.***
13. ***The researcher may be expected to provide short presentations on the purpose, findings and recommendations of his/her research to both GDE officials and the schools concerned.***
14. ***Should the researcher have been involved with research at a school and/or a district/head office level, the Director concerned must also be supplied with a brief summary of the purpose, findings and recommendations of the research study.***

The Gauteng Department of Education wishes you well in this important undertaking and looks forward to examining the findings of your research study.

Kind regards

Pp Nomvula Ubisi
 Martha Mashego
 ACTING DIRECTOR: KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT & RESEARCH

The contents of this letter has been read and understood by the researcher.	
Signature of Researcher:	
Date:	