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 twinship, 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 twinship, 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 twinship 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 twinship 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 twinship 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 twinship 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 twinships' 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 twinship made from Grade R to Grade 2. Finally, it was also evident that the transitions of the individuals within a twinship 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 twinship 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 twinship 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 twinship 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 twinship'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 twinship did not sit alongside one another. One of the individuals within a twinship 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 twinship during their school time in their classroom.

While the individuals within a twinship 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's[6] 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's[7] 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.

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[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 twinship 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 twinship, 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 twinship, whom I had selected as the main participants in my study. When I met the individuals within a twinship, 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 twinship in September 2009 when they were already in Grade R. As my sessions with the individuals within a twinship 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 twinship 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 twinship – ten sessions with the individuals within a twinship in their home and one session with their Grade R teacher at their pre-school. The sessions with the individuals within a twinship 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 twinship 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 twinship 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 twinship 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 twinship in the real-time context of their Grade 1 classroom. These sessions with the individuals within a twinship 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 twinship 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 twinship 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	Friendliness Who am I? Feeling proud
Activities	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
Instruments / materials	Clay Coloured paper Storybook Crayons, a recorder and camera

Session 2: 28 September 2009	
Theme	The opinions of the individuals within a twinship about the differences and similarities between Grade R and Grade 1
Activities	One bag with differences and one bag with similarities Game with beanbag Individual interviews Informal questioning together Feeling drawing
Instruments	4 Paper bags Coloured paper 2 Beanbags Questionnaires Crayons, a recorder and camera

Session 3: 30 September 2009	
Theme	What is a feeling? Coping with angry and sad feelings
Activities	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
Instruments	2 Pillows Animal game Coloured paper Stickers Crayons, a recorder & camera

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 twinship' 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 twinship 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 twinship 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 twinship' 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 twinship experienced Grade 1
Activities	Individual, in-depth semi-structured interview with each of the individuals within a twinship 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 twinship 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 twinship 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 twinship
Activities	Individual semi-structured interviews on the topic of their twinship
	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 twinship
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 twinship
Instruments	Notebook and pens
	Semi-structured interview
	Recorder and camera

Session 26: 28 June 2011	
Theme	Revising positive coping strategies

	Grade 2
Activities	Semi-structured interview with the individuals within a twinship 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 twinship 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 twinship
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 twinship 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 twinship 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 twinship 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 twinship 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 twinship 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 twinship made between Grade R and Grade 2. They also allowed me to examine and explore how the individuals within a twinship 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 twinship 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 twinship 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 twinship 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 twinship (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 twinship. 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 twinship 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 twinship 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 twinship progress from Grade R though 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 twinship 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 twinship'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 twinship, voluntarily offered me the chance to enrol her individuals within a twinship (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 twinship 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 twinship 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 twinship 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 twinship 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 twinship 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 constructer 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.