

## Chapter 5

### Conclusions and recommendations

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#### 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 twinship were happy and contented in the company of one another. I found data to show how strongly the individuals within a twinship supported and protected one another at school. Each of them seemingly felt safe and secure in the company of his co-individual within a twinship, and they valued and enjoyed one another's friendship both within the classroom and during breaks. Although the individuals within a twinship 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 twinship 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 twinship. 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 twinship 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 care<sup>11</sup> 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 psychosocial<sup>12</sup> 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).

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<sup>11</sup> 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)

<sup>12</sup> "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 twinship 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 twinship, 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 twinship, 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 twinship 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 twinship 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 twinship 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 learning<sup>13</sup>. 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.

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<sup>13</sup> 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 Disobedient<sup>1</sup> 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 challenges 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 challenges 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"> <li>+ Homework</li> <li>+Discipline in the classroom</li> <li>+ Their teacher</li> <li>+ Friends</li> <li>+ Helping others</li> <li>+ Sport</li> <li>+ Prefects</li> <li>+ Playing</li> <li>+ Gaining new knowledge</li> <li>+ The tuck shop</li> <li>+ Their co-individual within a township</li> <li>+ Supporting parents</li> <li>+ Life skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Disobedient children</li> <li>- Prefects</li> <li>- Making friends</li> <li>- Bullies</li> <li>- Social skills</li> <li>- Threats in Grade R</li> <li>- Not being able to read and write immediately</li> <li>- School work</li> <li>- Older children in the school</li> <li>- Fear of physical pain or injury</li> </ul>

#### 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 twinship.

### **5.8.2 THE SOCIAL SUPPORT STRUCTURE OF THE INDIVIDUALS WITHIN A TWINSHIP**

The social support structures of the individuals within a twinship 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 twinship. The findings of this study cannot be extrapolated to generalise about the experience of individuals within a twinship, who have different or more limited kinds of social and personal support.

### **5.8.3 THE SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE INDIVIDUALS WITHIN A TWINSHIP**

The socio-demographic background of the individuals within a twinship 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 twinship 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 twinship 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 twinship 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.

