CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY:

Participatory into data gathering

3.1 Introduction

Chapter 3 explains the research design and I justify the methods selected for data collection and data capturing to assist the learners of my case study in self-expression about their experiences as citizens in democratic South Africa and to enhance my exploration thereof. I begin by explaining the paradigmatic considerations of this study, introducing it within the interpretive paradigm and confining it as a case study. Next, I present an overview of the probing stages of the research, moving on to the prearranged and structured (formal) phase where I then document observation and interviews employed as methods for data collection. I also explain the data capturing process. The chapter concludes with a description of the strategies and methods used for enhancing the validity of the study and the identification of its limitations and constraints.

3.2 Paradigmatic considerations

3.2.1 Qualitative paradigm

Since experiences of young children, specifically as citizens in the South African democracy and as learners in the classroom situation, and by implication human interaction and social relationships, are the focus of the inquiry I employed qualitative research framed within the interpretivist tradition. A central theory of the qualitative paradigm is to contest the existence of an objective and neutral reality, in accordance with a statement made by Denzin and Lincoln (2000:5): 'Objective reality can never be captured'. The assumption underlying qualitative research, that reality can

never fully be declared or understood, implies that knowledge creation or research can only discover an approximation of the truth, or provide perspective rather than truth (Patton, 2002). This stance of qualitative research together with the difficulty researchers have to agree on any essential definition of this field, provide opportunity for resistances to qualitative studies and the critique of its practice as 'soft scholarship' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:8). Advocates of quantitative research maintain that social science inquiry should be objective; and Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004:14-26) argue for a mixed methods research, which frequently results in what they call 'superior research'. However, it is the multiple perspectives of realities in the social and educational sciences that enable the qualitative researcher to a closer and 'greater depth of understanding' (Berg, 1989:2) of everyday life. These different points of view secure a rich and thick (emphatic) description of its representation as applied by established scholars in the social and educational sciences in the international and national field, e.g. Lankshear and Knobel (2004), De Vos (2002), Babbie and Mouton (2001), Denzin and Lincoln (2000), Silverman (2000), Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999) as well as Berg (1989).

3.2.2   Interpretative paradigm

In the exploration of learners' experiences of citizenship and how their acquired 'democratic' identities can extend the current conceptions of citizenship education, I was confronted by various research and philosophical orientations (Merriam, 1998:3). As citizenship is a social and educational issue, I had to deal with several research approaches for the construction and the development of knowledge from the outset of my research. Carr and Kemmis (in Adendorff, 2004:99) distinguish the positivist, the interpretivist and the critical approaches. In the following paragraph I relate my research project to each of these approaches to justify the choice I made.

Citizenship can be studied from the positivist approach where knowledge gained is objective and quantitative. Since children's experiences are personal and subjective in nature, I decided against this approach. Citizenship can also be studied through the ideological critique of power, privilege and oppression, which frames critical research. I could employ the critical educational theory as my study relates to empowering young children to recreate their world (Thomas & Holdsworth in Johnson, 2004). In addition, I could easily link my research to the ideas of Foucault (1926-1984) (in Mac Naughton, 2005) in seeking social justice and equity for the learners of my case study. Researchers employing the critical research approach often associate the concepts education,

citizenship and social justice against the backdrop of power or racialized discourses or political ideology (SAGE Publications Journal, 2006). However, I chose to focus on interpreting and understanding the learners' voices on their experiences as citizens in the democratic dispensation of South Africa, in and beyond the classroom, as best option to answer my research questions. The reconstruction of the learners' voices as multiple social realities implicates a relativist reality (ontology) (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:21) and I therefore position this research study within the interpretivist framework and justify my stance as follows:

- I perceived the learners as participants in my research endeavours and not as objects of the research project. As interpretivist, I tried to find meaning in the actions and expressions of the participants of my case study by acquiring an 'inside' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:10) understanding. By becoming a participant observer (Mouton, 2001:105) I sought to understand the social world from the point of view of the child living in it (Greig & Taylor, 1999:43).

- I aimed to reconstruct the core of the 'intersubjective communication' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:21) of the learners in their social life-world to deepen my knowledge about their beliefs, practices, understandings and interpretations of their citizenship. I therefore used a personal and interactive mode of data collection. The learners' expressions were collected through an interactive process of talking and listening, reading and writing, interpreting and drawing.

- The study is set in a particular context that relies heavily on the personal insight of the researcher as co-creator of meaning. As researcher, I became an interpreter who aimed to remain unaffected by and external to the interpretive process (Schwandt, 2000:191-194). Therefore, I described the findings systematically and in detail but not in a prescriptive framework. In this process my natural inclination to reflective thinking enabled me to gain an understanding of the interactions and perceptions of the participants of my case study, as reflexivity is a central part of the research process with young children (Punch, 2002:323).

3.2.3   Participatory principles in methodology

This study emphasizes experiences and perspectives of young children who, as learners are part of a wider, though contested, international trend to strengthen children's participatory rights, a view promoted by Hill (1997:172), nearly a decade ago. Scholars in early childhood education such as

Greig and Taylor (1999:81) as well as Mac Naughton, Rolfe and Siraj-Blatchford (2001) also support this research focus in recent publications. I involved children directly as active participants who have the ability and the right to have a voice about their lives through a 'sharing approach' (Flewitt, 2005:11). All children involved in research are vulnerable and therefore I addressed the ethical issues related to their involvement pro-actively and appropriately.

Children as research participants are seen as similar to or different from adults (James *et al.,* in Punch, 2002:324). Researchers within the new sociology of childhood agree that children are special, but can also perform as independent actors (Johnson, 2004:2). These contradictory perspectives are derived from the way in which researchers perceive childhood and the status of children in society (Punch, 2002:321). I therefore agree with Johnson (2004:338) that research with children cannot simplistically be considered either the same as or different from that with adults. It should be seen on a continuum where the way that research with children is perceived moves back and forth along the continuum according to a variety of factors which influence development and behaviour: individual children, their age, the social context, the questions asked, the research context and the attitudes and conduct of the researcher.

The nature of childhood in adult society indicates that children are used to having to please adults for fear of adults' reactions to what they say or because they want to impress (Punch, 2002). To counteract this unequal power relationship between child participants and adult researchers, the adult has to form a relationship with the children and gain their trust (Punch, 2002:328). I attempted to redress the power difference between the learners and myself as adult in several ways. I addressed the learners not as an adult coming to impose ideas on them but to learn from them. I informed them of my belief that they were the experts on their lives and by asking them to assent to participation. In addition, I informed them that there would be no right or wrong answers and that each learner's contribution would be valued. From this stance I tried to gain their trust.

Participatory principles informed the data collection methodology to enable learners to become active participants in 'speaking' for themselves about their experiences as citizens and to enable me to observe 'live' data from 'live' situations (Cohen *et al*., 2000:305). I employed data collection methods and instruments based on these factors, bearing in mind the perceived competence of the nine-year-old children. The instruments were designed and employed to assist learners in self-expression during the interviews. The children themselves initiated some of the instruments, thus

confirming Eisner's statement (in Leedy & Ormrod, 2001:149), that qualitative research methods are the least prescriptive. It is from this theoretical position that I present an explanation of the methodological process.

3.3   Research design

Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:3), of which I used a case study (Stake, 1995; Stake, 2000; Merriam, 1998). I purposely selected a case as a subset of measurements drawn from a population in which I was interested and *considered* to contain the most characteristic of the population (Strydom & Venter, 2002:198-209). Yin (in Evans, 2005) suggests that a case study is the preferred strategy to answer 'how' and 'why' questions and when the focus of the study is on a contemporary phenomenon of which little is known. I chose the instrumental case study as described by Mark (in Fouché, 2002:275) and Stake (in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000: 237) to illustrate my interest in exploring and understanding citizenship related to young children as a social issue, an issue not as yet explored in depth.

I studied Grade 3 learners (nine years old) of one school in an effort to understand some facet of the population, by implication their experiences as citizens. I chose this case in a specific context and time frame referred to as a 'bounded system' by Creswell (1998:61; 2003:14). The participants of the unit of analysis were born in the first year of the democratic dispensation of South Africa. My intention was therefore not to generalise findings, but to understand. Although there are many role players who could possibly influence the learners' experiences of their citizenship and the shaping of their democratic identities, I focused only on the learners for an in-depth exploration and analysis of their point of view.

3.4   Participants and research site

As already described in Chapter 1.5, the unit of analysis is an inner-city primary school in the City of Pretoria, a capital of the 'new democratic South Africa', where there were 142 Grade 3 (nine-year-old) learners with four class teachers. The school is located in Sunnyside, a central-city neighbourhood consisting mostly of apartments, where the majority of the school's children live. Sunnyside is known for its crime and many homeless children live on the streets. However, in an

interview with the principal of the school, I learned about the significant and positive role of the school in the lives of the learners and the community. The expression of the learners' experiences had to be studied against the background of citizenship education in both the global and the South Africa context, already dealt with in Chapters 1 and 2. In addition, I chose to study their voices against the background of recent curriculum developments (Department of Education, 2002c), which involved citizenship education.

3.5 Research process

In this section I present an account of the informal, explorative phase of my data collection and then describe the formal phase where I employed the data collection strategies (Evans, 2005:51-52). A preliminary literature review on citizenship education indicated that extensive research exists on citizenship as a general body of knowledge (Wringe, 1984; Kerr, 2003; British Council Seminars, 2005). However, the literature review confirmed the existence of minimal research on citizenship and young children. In this regard, I struggled to find evidence on international or national level of research done on citizenship education and nine-year-old children's experiences of the democratic dispensation in their countries. I started to investigate data sources and possible methods suitable for the research project. At first my choice of research design was made on intuitive judgment based only on the developmental stage of the children, but after reading texts on research with children in general (Greig & Taylor, 1999), I was convinced that a qualitative study was an appropriate choice for the reasons already stated.

Although I had previous experience of educating nine-year-old learners, I was still indecisive about the employment of the interviews and the level of difficulty to assist learners in self-expression in providing data to answer my research questions. After consulting literature on citizenship and the young child, I constructed an interview schedule and decided to initiate a pilot study to detect any 'peculiar deficiency' (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:166).

3.5.1 Informal data collection strategies

I performed two pilot investigations on which I shall report, commencing with the first pilot study.

First pilot study

With the first pilot study I decided to do an investigatory data collection activity by interviewing a nine-year-old boy at his home in order to establish if a nine-year-old child could reasonably comment on the abstract notion of 'citizenship'. The reason for choosing this child was that I knew him and his parents very well so I knew I would definitely have rapport with the child and consent from his parents for conducting the interview. I used the planned interview schedule (see **Addendum 7**) in the child's home language, which is Afrikaans. I assumed that the child would be comfortable with responding to my questions in his home language. The duration of the interview was thirty minutes and I documented his responses to each question. Lessons learned from this experience were:

- Tentative ideas resulted, namely that a nine-year-old child could answer the structured questions on citizenship in a more mature level than I anticipated. Although I expected the interview with the boy to be personalised and private as described by Hill (1997:175), the situation was not favourable for authentic data collection in this regard. The parents got involved when I asked a question and they tried to guide the boy when giving answers. In my opinion the boy was eager to participate but became nervous when his parents intervened.

- The method was time-consuming considering the telephone calls made for the appointment and the fact that I had to spend time with the parents after the interview on a social level. After this experience I realised I needed to work with more than one child at a time in another environment and with anonymous participants to gather ample data. I then started to identify other possibilities for the selection of cases.

I needed guidance and interviewed Doctor Liesel Ebersöhn (2004), an educational psychologist and researcher at the University of Pretoria (who later became my supervisor). She facilitated my understandings of classroom-based research, participative processes and appropriate methods or instruments for data collection from young children. With her help we identified a school and task-based methods like drawings. For the first time I felt at ease as our decisions corresponded with literature on research with young children, especially in the field of child interviewing (Candel, Mercklebach, Houben & Vandyck, 2004; Cugmas, 2004; Barlow, Jolley, White, & Galbraith, 2003). Recent research conducted with children on social and medical issues suggests that it is

experience and not age, which is a precondition for children expressing themselves (Alderson in Johnson, 2004). Resulting from experiences and insights gained during the first pilot study, I conducted a second pilot study with two children in my office to implement a task- or activity-based instrument to facilitate an interview.

Second pilot study

I arranged with a colleague to interview her five- and nine-year-old Afrikaans-speaking nieces in my office one afternoon. Since they were visiting my colleague, it was convenient for me to interview them as participants whom I did not know. I received oral consent from their parents to interview them. I provided them with an A3-size sheet of paper and asked them to draw how they felt about living in South Africa as citizens. During the discussion of their drawings, I was amazed at their meaningful expressions of their life-worlds as citizens (see **Addendum 7**). The results from the two pilot sessions (although modest in scope), helped me to identify and shape early assumptions, namely:

- very young children can and want to share their voices on experiences as citizens in a democratic South Africa;
- their voices may be of interest to the adult community;
- I needed to construct and employ data collection methods that would be child-centred or child-friendly; and
- data collection instruments or 'modes' of facilitation were needed to mediate self-expression.

3.5.2 Formal data collection strategies

The data collected from the pilot endeavours offered me valuable insight into viewer profile. Regardless of the experiences I gained from the pilot study sessions, I was still troubled by uncertainties relating to how learners in a classroom context would be willing or able to express their experiences and concerns to a total stranger. I assumed that children's voices about their experiences as citizens existed but could only be accessed and understood with suitable data collection methods (Mouton, 2001:99). Practical and methodological considerations thus influenced my decision to collect data from observation and interviews to allow for an in-depth understanding

of my research topic (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001:149-150).

I decided to use interviews as the main data collection method and different instruments to mediate self-expression to obtain authentic and extensive primary data that is 'rich in context' from each learner (Fouché in De Vos, 2000:275) during the interview sessions. This approach correlates with Punch (2002:322, 337-338) who suggests that one way of researching a diversity of childhoods is taking into account children's varied social competencies and life experiences. The combination of instruments such as drawings, letters and a drama could enable the data-generating process to be fun and interesting for the learners as well as effective in generating useful and relevant data. In addition, various instruments helped to prevent boredom and sustained interest while enhancing the validity of the data.

As part of the formal data collection strategies, I obtained official clearance to perform the research. The Gauteng Department of Education granted permission as part of the official ethical protocol for working with minors in classroom-based research (Mouton, 2001:100) (see official documentation in **Addendum 4**). I decided that the particular inner-city primary school as my case study would 'offer opportunity to learn', was most accessible and the one I could spend the most time with (Stake in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:446). I went to see the principal and the head of the Foundation Phase Department of the school. They agreed to assist me and approved my letter of consent to the parents of the Grade 3 learners. After a short discussion with the principal, I extended my explanation of my research topic with the head of the Foundation Phase. She suggested that, with the agreement of the principal, I could use the last forty minutes of each day in a Grade 3 class because during that time a few learners went out for special classes like extra reading, and the remaining learners did self-study. I saw this as an ideal opportunity, which would give me time to spend with the Grade 3 learners. During a meeting with the four Grade 3 teachers, chaired by the head of the Foundation Phase, they agreed to this arrangement and the schedule for visiting their classes (see research diary in **Addendum 5**). After this meeting I started with my field notes (see **Addendum 5**) to capture all impressions and observations that could assist me in exploring and understanding my case study.

3.5.3   Personal role in research process

My relationship with the primary school dated back to the beginning of 2003 when I was appointed

as a mentor-lecturer for two fourth-year B.Ed. students who had to do their practice teaching at the school. These visits gave me insight into the learner population and I became acquainted with the Head of the Foundation Phase Department as well as some of the other Foundation Phase teachers. What impressed me was that, in spite of big classes with about 40 learners, I could observe excellent teaching practices where learners participated interactively in learning. Aspects of citizenship education like posters of the national symbols and the South African flag against classroom walls were indicators of the facilitation of citizenship education as prescribed by the national curriculum statement (Department of Education, 2002c). At that time I already knew I had to identify a school for my fieldwork. I decided on this school as my sample on the basis of the diverse composition of the learners in Grade 3 as well as for favourable logistics.

The learners were predominantly black and representative of most of the eleven language groups in South Africa. I learned that there were a few immigrant children from countries in Africa who could not speak one of the local languages or English. There were also a few learners who spoke Portuguese and Afrikaans. Despite this multi-lingual situation the language proficiency of the learners in English was good since it was an additional language for most of the learners, facilitated to them over the past three years. The multicultural composition of the Grade 3 group made me to consider my background as a white female researcher from an Afrikaans-speaking background. However I did not feel uncomfortable with the situation because I have been teaching in multi-cultural and multi-lingual contexts for many years. Therefore, I could establish rapport while facilitating the research process.

During the process of designing the data collection methods and instruments I consulted with my supervisors, especially for guidance on the use of drawings as instrument. I obtained official permission and adhered to ethical research principles although working with young children proved to be challenging concerning ethical principles. For instance, they wanted to write their names on all their drawings despite my instruction not to do so. As part of my data I kept field notes, which primarily documented my observations, comments and reactions from learners throughout the project (see **Addendum 5** for field notes). I analysed the audiotaped recordings of the classroom discussions and conversations as well as the videotaped recording of the drama project. I furthermore analysed all the drawings from the learners manually and in a systematic way.

During the classroom-based research I acted as facilitator and 'participant observer' (Patton,

2002:4). As facilitator I introduced the task-based activities as instruments or facilitation 'modes' in order to accomplish self-reporting by the learners during interviews. The role of participant observer allowed me to become involved in the activities and intervene when learners explained their drawings and writings to me in order to come to an in-depth understanding of their self-expressions as citizens in democratic South Africa. While working with nine-year-old learners, the role of participant observer also allowed me to be sensitive and personally engaged as a facilitator. I was thus emotionally involved, reacting on the learners' comments and reactions. I was critically reflective and constantly questioned my role as researcher and my relationship with the learners. The field notes assisted me in mediating this role. The time spent with each of the Grade 3 classes, although an enormous challenge was the highlight of my research endeavours.

Apart from analyzing the textual data, I comprehensively reviewed current literature and legal and policy documents related to citizenship and the young child. During this time I realized how broad the field of citizenship was and how many perspectives and domains of citizenship existed. Apart from my research report, I included information and data on a compact disc (see **Addenda 1-11**). This format enabled me to include learner's drawings, learner's writings and a video as rich visual data that enable a shared experience with the reader.

3.5.4   Data collection methods and instruments

In this study field notes, personal reflections and observations account for informal data collection (see **Addendum 5**). I observed the learners as a participant observer when they took part in the task-based activities introduced as instruments. During observations I was reflexive and I reflected critically and continuously on my role, on my assumptions, on the choices and application of data collection methods and instruments, on the learners' reactions and on my observations to support later analyses and findings of the data (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999:138).
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3.5.4.1 Observation

I employed observation as an informal data collection method to enhance my exploration and understanding of the research topic (see Table 3.1). I observed the learners in their classroom as the 'natural field setting' (Merriam, 1998:94) without using an observation schedule. Observation assisted me as follows:

- I noticed insights as they occurred to me such as the classroom atmosphere and nonverbal communication of the learners;

- I observed the learners' emotions and reactions first-hand if and when they participated in the conversations and task-based activities, therefore experiencing real life emotions (Merriam, 1998:96) about the abstract notion of citizenship;

- I noticed their language use in expressing their thoughts and experiences verbally and in written format;

- I noticed the interrelationship and interactions between the diverse group of learners as part of social processes;

- I checked my own feelings and behaviour and as the conducting of observations is flexible (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001:158), I could shift focus as new data came to light from the task-based activities; and

- I documented and interpreted my 'observer comments' (Merriam, 1998:98) in the form of descriptions and direct quotations as part of filed notes (see **Addendum 5**). Although I did not employ all variables observed such as the influence of gender in the analysis phase of this study, I used the field notes to explore my research topic and enhance my understanding of the learners' expressions about their citizenship.

Disadvantages of observation related to my study were my closeness as researcher to the learners since I realized that my observation could lead to subjectivity that could jeopardise the reliability and factualness of the data (Merriam, 1998:95). I undertook corrective measures to counteract these disadvantages such as my declaration of my bias noted in the field notes (see **Addendum 5**) and my references to the data collected from the learners (drawings, letters) as an audit trail to corroborate the reliability of the data (Adendorff, 2004:115).

In addition, I employed interviews as the formal data collection method, although there is often no distinct line between informal and formal data collection methods. Merriam (1998:94) states that informal interviews and conversations are often interwoven with observation.

3.5.4.2 Interviews

I employed interviews as a formal data collection method and instrument to assist in gathering data,

each informing the research questions in a particular way (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:4). I used focused interviews as the ground method for data collection (Adendorff, 2004:122). The focused interviews comprised group interviews and focus group interviews where I facilitated various modes or instruments to enable the learners to participate in discussions and to self-express during interviews. In Table 3.1 I give an overview of the data collection methods and data collection instruments and in the following text I shall explain each of the aspects.

Table 3.1: Summary of data collection and data capturing methods

Method of data collection	Type	Instruments assisting data collection	Prompt	Data capturing method: textual data
Observation	Participant observer	Researcher observations	None. Used 'natural field setting'	Informal field notes
Focused interviews	Group interview	*'What I like and don't like about South Africa'*	Discussion about living in SA and their experiences as child citizens	A4 sheet divided in the centre (vertical) with the two sets of sentences and drawings in a comparison format
		The SA Flag	Display of the SA flag	Sentences and drawings on a template of the flag
		If I were Mr. Mbeki …	Discussion on role-playing Mr. Mbeki, the president of SA	The completed sentence and drawings
		If I were the president …	Discussion on role-playing the president of SA	The completed sentence and drawings
		Drama technique	Mask of Mr. Mandela and mediator	Audiovisual data in the form of a video and transcriptions thereof
		Slogans for posters meant for peers	Questions posed to learners on what were their messages for peers	Posters with slogans and drawings on A3 sheet
		Letters to Madiba	Discussion on what learners wanted to tell Mr. Mandela (Madiba)	Letters addressed to Madiba, commencing with *Dear Madiba*
		Children's rights and responsibilities	Class discussion on learners' rights and responsibilities	Transcriptions of discussion and sentences on topic in *Letters to Madiba* (class discussion)

Method of data collection	Type	Instruments assisting data collection	Prompt	Data capturing method: textual data
		Class discussions	Discussion on citizenship	Transcriptions of the interviews (class discussion)
	Focus group interviews	All of the above, a book made by the learners on SA, discussion on their homes, messages to fellow citizens	All of the above and *Let's make a book on SA*	All of the above, transcriptions of the interviews and the book on SA with sentences and drawings

I chose to employ focused interviews where participants were interviewed for a short period of time through data collection instruments aimed at collecting purposeful responses (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001:159-160). As I was working with the learners in their different class groups, I focused on group interviews as well as focus group interviews (Adendorff, 2004:122). The group interviews involved interviewing the learners of a class for a short period of time (30 minutes), focusing on questions and responses between the participants and me. Pertinent to my research study, the questions and responses included 'child-centred activities' in the form of task-based activities, which I facilitated to mediate self-expression or 'situated talk' (Hydén & Bülow, 2003:305-320). I refer to these activities as instruments. Reasons for choosing focused interviews were to address the whole class group in one session. Most of the instruments were structured, although a few instruments were employed as a result of learners' comments and reactions to a certain instrument. Therefore, in some instances the focus group interviews became more semi-structured or open-ended as I reacted on the learners' responses and used cues from their responses to design some of the instruments.

The focused interviews were employed to confirm data collected from other sources like observations and as exploratory discussions to understand the 'what' and the 'how' of the research topic (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2000:247-248). Data from the focused interviews was comparable in some way, which revealed in-depth insights into the learners' experiences and understandings of their citizenship. Disadvantages of the group interviews were the differences in responses, which made the analysis of the data time-consuming.

The focus group interviews, on the other hand, relied on insight and data produced by the interaction within the small group (Gibbs in Adendorff, 2004:123). The interaction was based on questions and task-based activities or data collection instruments supplied by the research assistant

who acted as facilitator and moderator. In the case of the focus group, five learners of one class were involved as the teacher of the class selected four girls and one boy. The time spent with this group was a period of thirty minutes during each day of the week. Similar instruments were employed in the focus group interviews as in the group interviews, although some of the instruments were adapted according to the responses of the participants during some focus group interviews. Additional instruments used were for example a book made on South Africa, a discussion on the learners' homes and the construction of a message to fellow citizens. The reason for employing the focus group interviews was to gain additional informative data (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001:159) and to verify information gained through the group interviews.

Seemingly, as a result of the learners' young age, the focus group interviews did not reveal the interaction among the participants that was hoped for. Instead, the focus group interviews at times became more of a face-to-face interview with the facilitator addressing each individual learner in order to receive a response. Advantages of the face-to-face interview as a data collection method for this study were the rich data gathered through the words of the interviewee and new understandings were obtained as a result of the relationship the participants developed with the moderator. In a way the close relationship between the young interviewee and the moderator could become a disadvantage for using the face-to-face interviews. The facilitator's tone of voice or non-verbal behaviour could create bias in the sense that the interviewee could respond to the questions or activities in a way to please the moderator. To correct the possible bias of the 'face-to-face' interviews, information from these interviews was verified with the group interviews. In the subsequent section I describe the instruments and their employment (see Table 3.1).

3.5.4.3 Instruments

Employing the data collection instruments was a challenge, as I needed creative prompts to introduce the instrument to the young learners (see Table 3.1). Creative prompts motivated the learners to participate without 'putting words in their mouths' (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001:160; Punch, 2002). Thus, learners were treated in the same way as adults in displaying their competencies (Punch, 2002:337). As a result, the open-ended questions and cues, which I used as prompts, yielded in-depth responses about the learners' perceptions, understandings, knowledge, and life-world experiences as child citizens. The instruments were 'child-friendly' since children tend to lack experience of communicating directly with unfamiliar adults (Punch, 2002:330). Most of the instruments required writings and drawings from the learners when self-expressing (see examples of completed activities in **Addendum 8**).

The learners' feelings and expressions about citizenship were visually presented through drawings. Sampson *et al*. (2003:21) state, 'writing is one of the key avenues to self-expression of the young child'. Through their writing, learners preserved their thoughts about citizenship. Children's drawings are believed to reveal the child's inner mind (Greig & Taylor, 1999:79) and according to Haney, Russell and Bebell (2004), are used to inform and change education and learning. In this research project, drawing was used in an exploratory manner to discover what learners considered important aspects of their citizenship, avoiding the imposing of 'adult-centred' concerns (Sapkota & Sharma in Punch, 2002:331). Most of the learners, even those who lacked the artistic ability to draw, participated eagerly. It should be stated that drawing should not be assumed a simple, 'natural' method to use with children. Particularly older children are more inhibited by a lack of artistic competence and may not consider drawing to be a fun method (Punch, 2002:331). Using their own drawings, as visual text, the children were nevertheless able to represent ideas, conveyed their understandings and feelings, shared experiences and provided insights in their everyday lives (Johnson, 2004:4-5) – viz. their lives as citizens. Other advantages of using drawings were that drawings were creative, fun and encouraged learners to be more actively involved in the research. The use of drawings gives learners time to think about what they wish to portray, change and add to their images, thus having more control over their own expression (Punch, 2002:331).

I further employed a drama as another form of instrument, which was a challenge relating the anonymity principle of ethical research done with young children. I addressed this challenge by

videotaping the learners from the back of the group in order to prevent their identity on the visual images (Flewitt, 2005:6). Sampson, Rasinski and Sampson (2003:7980) see dramatisation as a natural activity of children in the classroom. Educational drama or creative drama is practiced when facilitating social issues like citizenship to young children (Mc Naughton, 2006). According to Mc Naughton (2006), drama is a form of shared experiences, values, traditions and cultural activities through the story medium. All cultures are engaged in storytelling as a way of teaching, passing on information and enabling understanding of important events and issues. Because of the democratic nature of teaching in drama, the drama classroom may often model a well-balanced democratic society (McCaslin, 2006). In addition, 'drama implies self-expression, hence the necessity of the participants' involvement beyond merely imitating an action' (McCaslin, 2006:28). McCaslin was inspired by John Dewey whose theories, such as the use of the child's own experiences for learning, also informed my study. As creative drama offers unique characteristics, which I could align with my research topic, I employed a drama technique, called the Hot chair (Fletcher in Van Wyk, 2005; McCaslin, 2006:106-107). This technique assisted me in mediating the learners to reveal their understandings and experiences of citizenship through role-play. This drama technique assisted the learners to participate in simulated social situations to enable them to throw light upon their real-life experiences as citizens (Cohen *et al.,* 2000:370-379).

Instruments were designed in advance like Letters to Madiba (Mr. Nelson Mandela) as the former president, the completion of the two sentences where the learners role-played the position of the president through 'If I were Mr. Mbeki…' and 'If I were the president I…', and the hot chair drama technique. Other instruments were designed while discussing citizenship issues with the learners in the group interviews, thus resulting from the learners' reactions. The instruments were: Slogans for posters meant for peers; the activity on the South African Flag; the discussion on children's rights and responsibilities; and the activity on 'What I like and don't like about South Africa'.

The instruments provided nine opportunities for learners to self-express (see Table 4.2), which was captured in the format of transcriptions, audiovisual material, drawings, written texts such as letters and sentences. I report on this data in the following section as textual data (Mouton, 2001:108) also termed researcher-generated documents (Merriam, 1998:118).

3.5.4.4 Textual data

Data captured in this research project is presented as textual data (see Table 3.1). The different role players in this study constructed substantial and comprehensive textual data (352 individual texts), which offered 'multiple meanings' (Mouton, 2001:108). I captured my observations as field notes (see **Addendum 5**), being aware that seemingly unimportant events could turn out to be very important. I used verbatim quotations with sufficient context to be interpretable. The transcriptions of the focus interviews (group and focus group) were useful in assisting my unfolding analysis and reflections. The construction of the textual data was significant in the social world of the learners because the texts were self-expression means of communication (Mason, 2002:106-111). I interpreted the meaningful textual data in the context of how and why they were constructed by the learners in my attempt to understand the research questions. In the interest of triangulation, the different textual data served to corroborate evidence from different sources (Adendorff, 2004:115). Examples of the textual data are presented in **Addendum 8**.

The following textual data formed the basis of this research project:

- A comparison of what the learners liked and did not like about South Africa, expressed through sentences and drawings.
- Sentences and drawings by using a template of the South African flag.
- The completed sentence on the learners role-playing Mr. Mbeki as the president of South Africa. Sentences were illustrated by drawings.
- The completed sentence and drawings on role-playing the president of South Africa.
- Audiovisual data in the form of a video of the drama technique and transcriptions thereof.
- Posters with slogans and drawings on A3 and A4 sheets of paper.
- Transcriptions of the class discussion on children's rights and responsibilities as well as sentences on the topic in Letters to Madiba.
- Transcriptions of the group interviews (class discussions).
- Transcriptions of the focus group interviews.
- A book on South Africa with sentences and drawings, discussion on their homes and the construction of a message to other citizens.

Textual data is difficult to capture in a short time (Mouton, 2001:108). However, with the help of

the research assistant, I completed the task in a period of four weeks. I managed to capture the textual data in a structured way by coding each text and by classifying the textual data in categories. I also transcribed and categorized the different interviews. The continuation of capturing the textual data in a structured way helped me to retrieve specific texts later when I needed to confirm my interpretations, understandings and findings. Although the textual data was restricted to my case study (Merriam, 1998:116), I did not perceive this aspect as a disadvantage, for my research intention was to explore and understand the learners' personal experiences and understandings of their citizenship. In the next section I report on the data gathering process, which extended over a period of four weeks, in a narrative description.

3.5.4.5 The data gathering process

First week of October 2004

It was my first day at the primary school in a Grade 3 class. I felt excited and prepared. I took media like a map of South Africa and pictures of the national symbols to use as introduction. I also took a flipchart stand and flipchart paper to document learners' comments as well as A3 sheets of paper for learners to write on and koki's for them to share. The plan was to ask each of them to write a letter to the president about his/her experiences as a citizen in democratic South Africa. The teacher asked them to gather on the carpet and introduced me. While looking at all the unfamiliar faces I realized that I would have to implement all my facilitation strategies and skills to keep the 38 learners' attention since I am an outsider to them and do not know their names. Fortunately they were well behaved; being introduced as 'a teacher from the university' granted me authority and I could prompt them with questions about South Africa. The learners were eager to answer questions and when one learner said 'Mam, I don't like things in South Africa', I saw his comment as an opportunity to obtain data from the learners. I deliberated on this aspect by asking the learners what they liked and disliked about South Africa and identified many aspects. I then asked them to fold the A3 sheet in half and write or draw 'things' that they liked about South Africa on the one side and on the other side 'things' about South Africa they disliked.

A few learners wanted to copy pictures from their textbooks but struggled to do so. I requested them to make their own drawings and write their own sentences, and they became engaged in the activity. I went around the class and assisted learners who asked for guidance in terms of the spelling of words or who wanted to show me their drawings. They did not finish in the given time period

First week of October 2004

allocated to me. I collected their work with the promise that they could complete the task during the following days. A few learners asked me for paper to make a book about South Africa at home. I was attentive to use only the learners' contribution done during class time and not work done at home since parents do contribute to learners' work. During this week I did not record the discussions but realised that it could have been valuable data. After the first week I was excited about the data collected but needed confirmation from my supervisors. I consulted my supervisors who agreed that the data seemed to be true and honest reflections and was of value for my topic.

Second week of October 2004

I reflected on the day and the data and because these learners also talked about the president of South Africa I decided to introduce a role-play activity. The creation of images is a powerful strategy for enhancing comprehension (Gunning, 2005:301). I asked the learners to close their eyes and think of themselves as the president of South Africa and to think about things that they would do or change in South Africa. I handed out paper with an incomplete sentence: 'If I were Mr. Mbeki I would …' (see **Addendum 8**). This seemed to capture their attention and I got excellent data. I decided to do something similar with the next class but as an improvement drew lines on the paper for the learners because it was time- consuming for the previous class to draw lines when completing the sentence. The learners completed the activity in one session and I had to think about another activity for the following day. I decided to talk about the flag of South Africa. Since learners referred to it in their sentences. I used a real flag for my introduction and could see that the learners were knowledgeable about the flag. I asked them to write about the flag on a pre-prepared page with a photocopy of a small drawing of the South African flag (see **Addendum 8**).

Third week of October 2004

At this stage a colleague, also in the Department of Early Childhood Education, assisted me. We planned a drama technique as a way of introducing the topic of citizenship to the learners of Class 3. We asked two students who were familiar with using drama as a teaching and learning technique to assist us. Beforehand I briefed the students on the research topic and on the outcomes I wanted to accomplish. My role as observer was to videotape the proceedings and the role of my colleague was to transcribe all questions, answers and comments made. Imagining a situation as part of drama, relating to their pre-knowledge, helped the learners to activate their imagination in making

Third week of October 2004

connections to create meaning about citizenship and their understandings thereof (Sampson *et al.*, 2003:133-135).

We took this class to the school hall and did an adaptation of the hot chair drama technique (Fletcher in van Wyk, 2005) (see the video in **Addendum 8**). To be in the hot chair means putting oneself in the shoes of the main character, explaining actions and decisions taken, in other words being verbally accountable. Instead of putting each learner in the hot chair we decided to put Mr. Nelson Mandela in that position. The idea was that learners were to ask questions to Mr. Nelson Mandela being in the hot chair about issues on citizenship. When I interacted with the previous classes I observed that the learners could without doubt, relate to Mr. Nelson Mandela (they all wanted to meet him and it was as if they knew him personally).

The male student, Jaco, who was dressed in black and with a rubber mask of Mr. Mandela's face, was introduced to the learners as 'Mister Mandela, our former president' by the female student, Retha, who facilitated the session. At first the learners laughed at 'Mandela' but once he was seated and made eye contact the atmosphere changed and they started to interact in a meaningful way. This 'child-centred' method allowed for active participation and provided opportunities for thinking aloud. It proved to be a powerful tool for facilitating instructional conversation. The transcription gave good insight into the learners' critical thinking skills on citizenship issues and what they felt was important (see chapter 4.3.3.2). The videotaping as a means of collecting data as visual material appeared to be a challenge to the anonymity principle of research with minors. I tried to videotape them from behind or from the side but the learners kept looking into the camera.

We decided to conduct small focus group interviews with the learners of this class for the remaining days of the week. I discussed this method on the outset with the head of the Foundation Phase Department but had to ask the class teacher to assist in selecting the participants. We asked her to choose any five learners and she immediately reacted by calling learners' names. When we observed that they were all girls we had to ask her to choose a few boys. The selection process caused excitement and learners came eagerly to the front as volunteers. The teacher selected four girls and one boy. I informed them that they would go with my colleague and meet with her every day of the week in a meeting room close by their class. I stayed with the rest of the class. The learners in the

Third week of October 2004

focus group as well as those in the classroom had the same introduction on citizenship and we decided to employ similar instruments with both groups for confirmation purposes. My colleague undertook to have more in-depth discussions with her group on each activity (instrument) and to be open to unpredicted opportunities for data collection. She tape-recorded and transcribed all conversations. These transcriptions proved to convey valuable information.

- **Class activities to elicit self-expression**

The next day I asked the learners of Class 3 to write a letter to Mr. Nelson Mandela. I provided each learner with a letter frame starting with Dear Mr. Mandela and no lines on the paper. However, the learners wanted to draw lines since they felt comfortable to write on lines; this took up valuable time. The learners seemed to be stimulated by the previous day's activity and eagerly participated in writing sentences and illustrating them with drawings. Some learners completed their letters quickly and to keep learners actively involved I had to think of another activity. I discussed characteristics of a president with them. I then asked them to complete the sentence 'If I were the president I will be…'. This activity elicited high-quality insights of their perspectives on the characteristics of a good president. As a result of a comment of one learner 'to tell other children about citizenship', I asked volunteers to make posters for their peers with a slogan about an aspect of citizenship, resulting in 36 posters.

- **Focus group interviews**

The interviews from the focus group revealed significant data on the group members' experiences as citizens and served as verification of the data collected from the group interviews. The learners of the focus group completed all designed instruments as well as additional activities (instruments), which my colleague (as co-fieldworker and researcher) carefully documented and tape-recorded. As a result of these activities 30 individual contributions with accompanying discussions were produced. She transcribed every day's interviews to inform me on about the content of their contributions. She also interacted with each of the learners and transcribed their interpretations of their own writings and drawings. They made drawings of their homes and family members living with them. These drawings revealed information about their community. Five of the learners lived in flats in Sunnyside where it is 'not safe outside', where 'street kids and hoboes bother them, especially in the afternoons', where 'prostitutes live next door' and where 'people are moving in

Third week of October 2004

and out of the flats because of the crime'. They also wrote letters to Mr. Mandela and as a result of this activity my colleague engaged in an interactive writing process with the learners. They collaboratively composed a letter to Mr. Mandela. Each of them compiled a book on South Africa with writing on how they would make South Africa a better place. They also made posters with slogans on citizenship to their peers. They intended to place the posters against the traffic lights in Sunnyside. They discussed aspects of citizenship like voting, the role of government and our leaders. An insightful activity proved to be their reconstruction of the hot chair drama technique, with each one becoming Mandela by putting on the mask and answering the questions of my colleague and their peers (see **Addendum 8**).

Fourth week of October 2004

The final week in the fourth Grade 3 class proved to be a highlight. The children were eager to have their 'turn' since they have been hearing about my project from their peers for the past three weeks. I decided to ask them to write a letter to Mr. Nelson Mandela since the letters written to Mandela by the previous group contributed excellent and useful data. This time I made lines for them to write on. I introduced citizenship to them by prompting them about the leadership of the country and how it influenced all of its citizens by showing them an enlarged photo of Mr. Mandela against the background of the South African flag with the topic MADIBA. The learners contributed to this discussion by talking in the microphone of the tape recorder and aired their views about Madiba. In a natural diversion they started to talk about children's responsibilities, including the rights and responsibilities of each of them as citizens. When asked to write the letter they wanted to know if they could illustrate it and if I was going to send the letters to Madiba. I promised them to look into the matter, which motivated them to write one-page letters, which is a long letter for a Grade 3 learner. One girl came and whispered in my ear that I must please give Madiba this message: 'My auntie has a baby but no work and she doesn't have the money to buy Purity.' Her body language confirmed that she was serious. On another occasion during a post-data collection visit to the school she again came to me with the same request, which made me realize how involved she was with this matter. When I analyzed the letters from this class the 'rights and responsibilities' issue emerged as a prominent theme.

- **Corroboration or verification of initial findings**

As the fourth class was my final opportunity to work with the Grade 3 learners, I decided to

Fourth week of October 2004

corroborate my initial findings (from them as well as from the other classes) with them on the last day of my visit. I consulted with my supervisors, identified ten themes and then selected pictures to illustrate each theme, since nine-year-old learners understood visual images better than abstract explanations (Merriam, 1998:204). I explained the purpose of the activity to them and asked them to assist me in confirming what I had learned about citizenship from them. I used the role-play technique of an 'imaginary-performed' situation (Hamilton in Cohen *et al.*, 2000:370) when asking them to be the teacher helping me, acting as the learner, to understand their experiences as citizens. Then I introduced each of the ten themes with a picture, which I put on the chalkboard (see **Addendum 9**).

I prompted them on each theme by asking questions and noted every comment made by the learners, judging it against my identified themes. For me this was a bold activity, for I had never done it before and I was not sure if the pictures I chose to represent each theme would be interpreted as such by the learners. The activity turned out to be reasonably successful in the sense that the learners mostly approved of my explanation of each theme and concentrated throughout. For example when I showed them a picture of different cultures singing together and linked it with their expressions of the 'rainbow nation' they said that the picture was showing 'Black and white people now become friends'. From the activities in the four classes, the learners made 352 individual contributions.

3.5   Data analysis

Data analysis proceeded simultaneously and in progression of the data collection and data capturing processes. Analysis commenced from the first observation and after each set of data was collected to inform the construction of additional innovative data collection instruments to mediate the self-expressions of the nine-year-old participants of my case study.

In Chapter 4 I describe the employment of the constructivist grounded theory as my method of analysis and interpretation of the data generated and captured in this study. From an interpretivist paradigm, I constantly compared my findings with guiding ideas and expectations. I checked the correlation between the research findings and the textual data. I presented the findings of each instrument in relation to the research questions. With my final analysis and interpretation I

presented the case study in a rational and coherent order and in an impressionistic style. In Chapter 5 I integrated these findings with the literature review in order to provide substantiation for evidence in answering the research questions. I consciously monitored my personal bias by using field notes (see **Addendum 5**) as I was emotionally and subjectively involved, in an attempt to report my research results as scientifically and accurately as possible. In this chapter I addressed negative implications of my research choices as well as the corrective measures I employed to ensure optimum validity of this research project. In the subsequent section I present a detailed description of trustworthy and authenticity issues to enhance the validity of this study.

3.6 Strategies for enhancing the validity of this study

In this section I address issues of validity as a standardised component of the process of qualitative research (Merriam, 1998:198-219). I employed two pilot studies to confirm my assumption that data collected from nine-year-old learners would be valuable and to inform me on possible instruments to assist learners in self-expression during the interviews. I used purposeful sampling resulting in the choice of an instrumental case study, which enabled an in-depth understanding of nine-year-old learners' experiences of the democratic dispensation in South Africa as citizens. I described the social context of the sample since the learners' voices are historically and socially embedded (Banks, 2001:179). With this sample I addressed my concerns about the acknowledgement and authenticity of children's voices as citizens during the collection, capturing and analysing stages.

Since I would be working with young children, I addressed the power relationship between the children and me, as the adult researcher. I initially admitted the fact that I was an outsider who did not know their names as a limitation but it proved to be more of strength since the learners were excited to work with me, being a 'new face'. Some learners even contributed more products (drawings and writings) than asked for. I anticipated my whiteness as a limitation since most of the learners were African. It is my contention, however, that the 'natural' setting of their classrooms created a safe environment, supported by the fact that they were used to white teachers – they had three in Grade 3. The learners gave me their full support and interacted spontaneously, which aided me to develop sufficient rapport to enhance active involvement of all learners, creating multiple texts, which enhanced chances of construct validity.

Children are a 'vulnerable' population group (Mouton, 2001:101; Lankshear & Knobel, 2004:101-113). Thus, while ensuring validity and reliability, I conducted this research project in an ethical manner by:

- involving the learners in the research processes and asking for their approval before engaging in the instruments; thus acknowledging their democratic rights (Farrell, 2006);
- applying for permission through the official channels, obtaining informed consent of all role players like the parents;
- offering access to my interview transcriptions to parents and the teachers who wanted to see them; and
- offering confidentiality when analysing and interpreting each learner's contribution, coded and not by name.

Child-centred interviews provided the opportunity to collect data with the assistance of data collection instruments. In order to design data collection instruments that would provide authentic text, I relied on my pre-knowledge, the literature review and on my observations of the learners. I worked for a period of 3 hours and 33 minutes in each of the classes, which result in 13 hours and 33 minutes for the four classes. This period of contact time validated the observations that informed me in designing the instruments. In addition, I relied on the class teacher for member checking and peer review. Most of the time the class teacher was present, so I could 'member check' the content of my discussions with the learners, as well as the level of difficulty of the instruments. The teachers' insights were valuable since they already dealt with citizenship as part of the theme 'My country' and since they knew the learners very well. Given the relativism of the postmodern world with the difference of interpretation when it comes to educational practice and research conducted about it (Henning, Gravett & Van Rensburg, 2002:x), I employed an additional peer review. I showed some of the learners' writings and drawings to specialists in the Foundation Phase, who confirmed my initial evaluation of the viability of interpreting the learners' expressions.

To enable learners to self-express and reveal their lived experience as child citizens, I offered them 'child friendly' task-based activities as data collection instruments (Punch, 2002:330). In addition, I informed them that all their contributions were valuable. I offered the instruments in English. Although, for most of them English was their first additional language I realized it could be a limitation for some learners in expressing their experiences. To enhance the authenticity of

expressions from the learners who struggled with English I motivated them to make drawings and to interpret their drawings verbally to me, which I captured on their drawings.

To ensure trustworthiness of the findings I employed different procedures during the analysis and interpretation phases of this study. I analysed all writing and drawing products of each learner to try and acquire a clear interpretation of their expressions and perceptions in an attempt to maximise authenticity. I enhanced my interpretation by looking at aspects such as the use of colour, and the technique and approach in which writings and drawings were created (Olivier, 1994). I was sensitive to the interactive process of data collection and analysis to strengthen my actions and interpretations. In addition, I compared the findings of certain instruments by requesting participant corroboration. Since children's drawings are susceptible to false interpretations (Greig & Taylor, 1999:79), I correlated drawings with a variety of other sources of information and operated in an open, exploratory manner with the learners on their drawings. Another procedure I used was triangulation (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001:150; Flick in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:5). I employed investigator triangulation when I shared findings with the research assistant. I used multiple data collection instruments to provide data in order to strengthen a crystallization process (Richardson in Adendorff, 2004:133). Data from the different sources assisted me in corroborating and validating evidence and findings. The rich textual data enhanced the crystallisation of meaning and interpretation resulting in the construction of a thick description of the learners' real-life experiences as citizens.

As the instruments assisted in the data collection process, provided the textual data, which was at the core of my research, I report on the limitations and constraints of the instruments and my corrective efforts to enrich validity in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2: Instruments, limitations and enrichment of validity

Instruments assisting data collection	Limitation	Enrichment of validity
Prompts used to motivate learners to participate	Imposing the researcher's own views and to hinder the learners' free expression of their perceptions.	*I built up a relationship of trust with the learners. *I aimed for clarity of language by using language they understood and by constantly rephrasing my instructions.
Drawings	*The ambiguity of the visual images and the possible 'multi interpretations' (Banks, 2001). *Time constraints in the sense that I could not spend as much time as necessary with each of the learners in interpreting their products.	*I acknowledged the fact that learners had different competencies. *Most learners were actively involved in analyzing and interpreting their own data. *I acted with integrity and acknowledged my limitations in processing the learners' experiences through my own view of the world.
Writings	*The imbalance of the power relationship influenced the learners not to reflect honestly but rather to impress the researcher. *Incorrect spelling blurred interpretation and time constraints hindered me to go back to the learner for confirmation as to the intended meaning. *Learners brought work, which seemed to be done by a parent, from home.	*I tried to build a relationship with the learners and gained their trust. *I did not use data if the meaning was unclear. An abundance of data was gathered, which assisted in the emerging of themes. *I distinguished the handwriting as well as the sentence formulation of the parent from that of the learner and disregarded these contributions.
Drama technique: Hot chair	*Learners are inhibited by adult researchers to 'act naturally'.	*The acting out of 'Madiba' was effective in creating an interactive scenario and the learners started to act 'natural'.
Role-play	*Learners are inhibited to participate.	*I gained their trust and they felt free and empowered in the roles they played.
Focus group interviews	*Unequal power relationship can inhibit learners to 'act' 'natural'. *Learners can be scared or too shy to participate. *The most verbal learner can take over the conversation.	*The co-field worker built a relationship of trust with the learners. *Learners were assured that they could make a special contribution. *Special attention was paid to each of the learners for their contributions, which were documented in their presence.

Although the lack of generalizability of results is a limitation of my research design (Mouton, 2001:151; Huberman & Miles, 2002:309) I gained an in-depth understanding of the participants'

experiences as child citizens of the democratic dispensation in South Africa and how their understandings of democratic practices shaped their 'democratic' identities and their citizenship. However, some data collection instruments can be replicated. The reader may also gain certain insights into the experiences of the learners as citizens, even while being aware of the a-typicality of the case in the sense of the primary school being situated in an inner-city environment with its uniqueness (Stake in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:439).

3.7 Conclusion

In reflection, the process of data collection proved to be time-consuming and challenging concerning the management of the process. I had to be on time and well organized in coding the data from each learner in the different classes in preparation for a systematic data analysis procedure. I also had to be well prepared but flexible in the designing of data collection strategies. However, the best part of this research study was the rapport I established with the learners. I enjoyed their spontaneous reactions to my questions and their honesty in expressing their feelings on their experiences as citizens. After the first session in each class, I could observe their excitement when I entered the class for they immediately packed away their books in order to be ready for my activity. I provided them with new koki pens and as many sheets of paper as they wanted, which enhanced their participation. At the end of each session a few of them would accompany me to the car and make small talk, which I enjoyed.

Participant observation allowed me to involve the learners as research participants as an integral part of my research design. I used instruments to collect data, which allowed for the interpretive paradigm on which this study is based. Through interpretation, I was able to understand the learners' experiences of the democratic dispensation in South Africa. This methodology allowed for an inductive approach to conceptualisation since I did not impose any pre-set theory or explanation as to how the nine-year-old learners' understandings of democratic practices shaped their 'democratic' identities and citizenship. In this chapter I have summarized and described the methods, instruments and texts used in my inquiry. Chapter 4 presents an integrated discussion of the data analysis and results.