CHAPTER 3

FINDING MY WAY THROUGH THE RESEARCH

3.1 INTRODUCTION

To position this study, Chapter 2 gave an overview of the history of education in South Africa with an emphasis on the complexity of the system of education - both past and present. The existing literature in the field of school desegregation and integration was highlighted, using international perspectives and trends in school integration as well as by discussing South African trends. The conceptual base of the study was also given in Chapter 2.

The current chapter, Chapter 3, presents a description and discussion of the reasons for the choice of a qualitative research paradigm - together with its theoretical framework. The research design and methodology that were followed during the research process are explained – as are the data collection strategies. The sampling of the school and the selection of participants - and the reasons for these - are elaborated on in this chapter. The sampled learners are evidence of the diversity amongst the learners found at Van Den Berg High School. Amongst the methodological criteria used to evaluate a good qualitative inquiry, the justification of the methodology that I have used in this research is given.

3.2 THE QUALITATIVE RESEARCH PARADIGM

Qualitative researchers believe that there is a range of different ways of making sense of the world (Smit, 2001: 58). The idea that qualitative research is a situated activity - that locates the observer in the world of the participants - implies that the best way to understand the phenomenon in the setting is to become immersed into it. This can be done by moving into the organization that one is studying and by experiencing what it is like to be a part of it. This suggests that the researcher - who is the most important

research instrument in qualitative research - gets ‘immersed’ in the setting as well as in the research process. When I carried out my observations and interviews, I was at Van Den Berg High School. I saw - and even ‘experienced’ - some of the realities that the learners experienced in the school on a day-to-day basis.

I positioned my research in the qualitative research paradigm because of the concept of the ‘emergent design’ in qualitative inquiries (Trochim, 2005). It emphasizes the importance of looking at variables in the natural setting in which they are found. Interaction between variables is important. Detailed data is gathered through open-ended questions that result in direct quotations. The researcher is an integral part of the investigation The person is the primary collection instrument and investigations are conducted under natural conditions. The focus is on design and procedures to gain ‘real’, ‘rich’ and ‘deep’ data.

The ‘emergent design’ of qualitative enquiries - which makes it possible for the researcher to make and change decisions about data collection strategies during the course of the study (Merriam, 1988: 71) - encouraged me to use this approach. The emergent design implies that the researcher does inductive theorising which, further, suggests that one does not have to do research with a previously decided, rigid design or with previous knowledge but, instead, make sense of what one finds out while finding it out and ‘only after finding it out’ (Gillham, 2000:2). This is a grounded theory approach which - according to Henning *et al* (2004: 83) – may, at times be suspect. As the authors correctly claim, the researcher’s previous knowledge and background always influence the research process.

Qualitative researchers construct ‘reality’ in conjunction with their participants (Lincoln and Guba, 1985: 162) - unlike traditional quantitative research where it is believed that reality is beyond the control of the researcher and the researcher is a spectator in the research activity. The epistemological foundations of qualitative research are based on values and value judgements of the researcher - together with his/her participants (Smit, 2001:59). The conclusions that the researcher makes about the research and its findings are ‘constructed’ and are influenced by the background of the researcher (Lincoln and Guba: 1985: 160-186). The researcher must only be

sensitive to the realities created by the participants and the different values that the participants have (Smit, 2001: 59).

3.3 SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM AND INTERPRETIVE PARADIGMS

I position this inquiry in an interpretive paradigm because qualitative research approaches phenomena in an interpretive mode. This implies that phenomena are studied in their natural settings and that the phenomenon and the context cannot be separated. I studied the experiences of learners of desegregation at their school. Another important dimension of studying learners in their respective school - which served as a natural setting in this study - was to interpret diversity in terms of the meanings that the learners, themselves, attached to it. The idea that knowledge is constructed through society's interaction with reality - to which Schumacher (1993: 15) eludes - places my study in the social constructivist paradigm. The social constructivist's idea of the creation of knowledge is that it is 'constructed' by researchers and their participants through observable phenomena and through descriptions of intentions, beliefs, values and reasons, meaning-making and self-understanding (Henning *et al*, 2004:20). The origin of knowledge is, therefore, varied and reality is also seen by different people from different perspectives - making it multiple (Mouton, 1996: 3-4).

I explored the experiences of learners at a specific school in a desegregation context with the aim to understand those experiences. The learners were from different racial backgrounds and, therefore, it was reasonable to expect that they might not have perceived and experienced desegregation in the same manner. I did not assume that there was a single, unitary reality available somewhere - apart from the learners' perceptions. My aim was to understand desegregation and diversity as social phenomena - from the learners' perspective. Since each learner experienced the desegregation process differently from his/her own point of view, he/she experienced and constructed a different reality (Trochim, 2005)

The interpretive approach enabled me to give the voices of the sampled learners' first priority during the data analysis and allowed justice to be done to their perceptions, beliefs and values - in the sense of advocacy for varied realities. Interpretive theory is more accepting of free will and sees human behaviour as the outcome of the subjective interpreting of the environment (openet.ola.bc.ca/socglossary.interp.html), that is why I ended up with different opinions and perceptions on desegregation and diversity. These different opinions agree with the epistemological assumptions within the social constructivism and interpretive paradigms of qualitative research. They imply that the best way to understand any phenomenon is to view it in its context (Schumacher, 1993:15). I believe that human actions are strongly influenced by the settings in which they occur. The role of the researcher is also indispensable because he/she is the primary 'research instrument'. He/she is the one who is actively involved in collection of data. The researcher is a human being - which is why all research is, essentially, biased by each researcher's individual perceptions (Henning *et al.*, 2004:21). Soudien argues that social sciences field is by its nature a constructed field (2004: 89) because the social sciences always depend on the knowledge that the researcher, together with his participants construct Some qualitative researchers go to the extreme of even suggesting that there is no point in trying to establish "validity" in any external or objective sense. All we can hope to do is to interpret our view of the world as researchers (Trochim, 2005).

In social constructivism the world is turned into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings and memos (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003:3-4). In the interpretive paradigm understanding is gained through interpretation - which is influenced by, and also interacts with, the social context (Henning *et al.*, 2004:20). When the learners told me their stories, I could not divorce those stories from their historical and social contexts because 'context' plays an indispensable role in qualitative inquiries. Thando - one of the learners from a township school - was admitted in Van Den Berg High School because she was awarded an engineering bursary by the school. During the interviews she admitted that she felt lost at the school on the first day because the school was "too big" compared to her township primary school - where she came from. As she put it, she

was also scared as she was going to be taught by white educators for the first time in her life.

A learner like Thando had a different understanding of the phenomenon of desegregation compared to a learner like Boipelo who started her first grade at a desegregated school and who had always been taught by white educators. The set-up for Boipelo was a continuation of what happened in her primary school. The two African girls' different backgrounds affected their perceptions of desegregation at this school.

3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

I used a case study - drawing on ethnographic methods to carry out this research project. I combined the data collection strategies used in ethnographic research design with those used in case study research design to, appropriately, answer my research question. I deployed a range of interconnected methods and strategies to have a clearer focus on the desegregation at Van Den Berg High School (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000: 3-4). The purpose of the utilisation of different data collection strategies was to capture the experiences of desegregation within a former Afrikaans-medium, Whites-only school - as experienced and perceived by the learners themselves - by combining ethnographic and case study research data collection methods (Henning *et al*., 2004:34).

I drew on data collection methods from two research designs to make sense of a desegregated school setting and the behaviour of learners from inside the school - using participant observation which normally could only be used in an ethnographic design which Pole and Morrison (2003) suggest. Participant observation privileged the perspective of the learners involved in the desegregation process. In a case study, alone, it would be problematic for me to participate and observe at the same time - the combination of the two, therefore, became a necessity in this design.

The ability of case study research to take into account the different objective experiences and the subjective perspectives of the participants advocated its use in

this research. Data from school journals had, for instance, given me the 'objective evidence' and the interviews - together with the incidental conversations - gave me the 'subjective perspective' of the learners. I refer to the evidence as subjective because learners related their experiences in terms of how they, themselves, perceived those experiences - which is in line with my theoretical framework of social constructivism.

The focus of ethnographies is the study of culture. In this case study the learners' culture was studied in-depth. The meaning of the concept 'culture' in this instance refers to the way the learners interacted and related to one another; the language they spoke; and how and where they spoke that language - together with what that language meant in their specific context (Geertz: 1973: x). According to (Geertz, 1988: 1), a proper ethnographer ought to be going out to places; coming back with information about how people live there; and making that information available to the professional community in a practical form. I went to a school where learners from different racial groups attend school together and found out how they dealt with the idea of being in close proximity to one another. My choice of a case study with ethnographic characteristics was influenced by the fact that it would be appropriate to give voice to the learners as they were the ones who were directly involved in the results of school desegregation. This idea is compatible with the social constructivist paradigm that I have chosen. The learners in South African schools are, directly, involved in the desegregation process because it happens mainly amongst them and rarely amongst the educators (Hemson, 2005:34). This study shows how learners perceive that desegregation and how they experience it.

A high priority was given to the accounts of the participants and their understanding of desegregation. The voices of the 16 learners in this study were analysed in depth and form the main findings of this research. I focused on the learners' experiences and perceptions of desegregation that served as a particular case rather than on any attempts to generalize the findings, because qualitative researchers develop context-bound generalizations - contrary to the universal context-free generalizations in quantitative research (Smit, 2001: 57). Most studies search for what is common and pervasive. However, in this case study, the focus was not on generalization but on

understanding the particulars of desegregation and its complexity. A case study focuses on a bound system - usually under natural conditions, so that the system can be understood in its own habitat (Stake, 1988:134). For this reason, I did not aim to generalise my findings. I, nevertheless, think that the findings, recommendations and conclusions can be transferable to other settings which are similar to the one where the study was conducted. For example, one can generate hypotheses about other settings for research purposes and, therefore, generalisations in a case study cannot be totally ruled out - depending on the circumstances and the situation.

The other reason I used both the case study and ethnographic data collection methods was the principle difference between case studies and other research designs. It focuses its attention on the individual case and not the whole population. Finch (1986:23-29) maintains that ethnography is uniquely well-suited to gathering data about consequences and “lived realities”. The lived experiences of the learners at Van Den Berg High School - a desegregated school - were suitable for exploration which used ethnographic data collection methods, such as participant observation. This study shows how the local level - involved in the implementation and reception of policy decisions - is indispensable to determine the extent to which policies can either succeed or fail. Insights into the effects of policies - as they are interpreted - could be provided by those involved as they become the subject of varying degrees of resistance, accommodation or acceptance. The decision to desegregate schools involved a change in the way things were done. Jansen (2001:1) rightly observed that the government puts laws and policies into place, but the implementation at grassroots level is suspect. There may be many reasons for the success or failure of policy implementation at local level.

There were good intentions in introducing the desegregation process of schooling. Unfortunately, any policy change ends up with unintended consequences at grassroots level, because the schools reconstruct and reinterpret the policies in a way that suits them (Corbitt, 1997: 175). I embarked on a case study with ethnographic data collection methods to investigate the intended - and the unintended - consequences of desegregating schools in South Africa. Because of the fact that schools are highly complex organizations, it happens that a positive change to one part of the school may

lead to deleterious changes to other parts. Ethnography satisfies the need for rigorous research that does not ignore - but rather addresses - the complexity of the various aspects of schools and schooling (Finch, 1986:32).

Policy change also has positive results, but looking at the positive results of the policy change in isolation may lead to totally incorrect evaluations of its overall effect. For this reason, this case study - with its ethnographic data collection methods - attempted to ensure that the wider context of the school was examined and that the effects of any change were observed within the total environment of the school in terms of national and international trends. This makes Finch's statement (1988:29) that "documenting what happens in practice is not simply a matter of pointing out the strengths and weaknesses of their application; but also makes visible the tensions, contradictions, and incompatible aims which are often encompassed in those policies themselves" valid in this instance.

This research made it particularly appropriate to study the phenomenon of desegregation and its meaning to the learners 'as it happened' to them (Gillham, 2000: 4). The school served as a natural setting for this study because no learners were taken away from the school to be studied elsewhere - they were studied at their school. The ability of case studies to suggest to the reader - after a long time - of what to do and of what not to do "in a similar situation" (Gay, 1996:60) made it appropriate to study desegregation as a phenomenon in this one school. While every situation is different, a case study like this one could be referred to other desegregated schools of the same nature - just as in the case of law where a decided case forms part of a frame of reference and is also regarded as law.

Gay (1996:61) describes a case study as "the in-depth investigation of one 'unit', for example, a school, a classroom, a programme, an individual or a group." The 'one unit' which was studied here is the process of desegregation as it happened at Van Den Berg High School. It could only be studied and understood in its context. It emerged with its context so that precise boundaries were not easy to draw between the case and its context. The phenomenon of desegregation - and how the learners perceived and experienced it in their specific school context - formed the 'case.'

Because a case can also be a group with something in common (Gillham, 2000:1), I studied a group of 16 learners in a desegregated school, most of whom - except for two - started their schooling in desegregated schools. The learners are, essentially, similar. The slight differences which exist are not of serious concern. For example, the learners who did not start their schooling in South Africa - or in desegregated schools - were learners at Van Den Berg High School and I added them to the sample in order to get other perceptions from learners who did not start their schooling in desegregated schools.

In this case, I aimed at obtaining the most complete possible views of learners on desegregation - by regarding it as a holistic entity. I collected multiple forms of evidence - in sufficient detail - to achieve a better understanding of the desegregation process at Van Den Berg High School (Gillham, 2000: 19) by means of evidence from school documents, such as policies, journals, newspapers, minutes of SGB meetings and principal's reports. I, then, observed the purposely sampled learners' interaction with other learners and educators at the school and, finally, conducted in-depth ethnographic interviews with them.

Although I followed the descriptive type of case study - as described by Gillham (2000:21) - my aim was not only to describe the process of desegregation but also to interpret the data. Description is the basis of interpretation. The characteristics of a descriptive case study are - amongst other things -

- to illustrate the complexities of a school situation and the fact that not only one factor but many factors have contributed to the situation - as it is at a school at a particular point in time;
- to look back in history for causes and influences of why things at schools happen the way that they do - its ability to show the influence of personalities on the issue of desegregation;
- to cover many years and describe how preceding decades led to the present situation;
- to spell out the differences of opinions on desegregation and to suggest how these differences have influenced how things happen; and

- to present information from the viewpoints of different race groups (Gillham, 2000:4).

I used an ethnographic case study research because I wanted to examine a contemporary issue - 'a desegregated school in South Africa.' Yin (2003:9) maintains that if a 'how' or a 'why' type of question is being answered about a contemporary event - over which the investigator has little or no control - then case study research is the most appropriate method.

3.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodological implications in the interpretive paradigm called for the use of document analysis, participant observations, informal conversations, field notes and, finally, interviews with purposely-sampled learners. The reason for using this variety was to adhere to the principle that the sources of data in the interpretive paradigm are 'varied'. Reality is assumed to exist, but it is "imperfectly grasped because no one scientist can claim to objectively capture reality. Human beings approach phenomena with their biases and prior knowledge" (Henning *et al.*, 2004:21). The different methods of data collection were used in order to find out if all of them create similar data, i.e., valid data.

I wanted to get an insider perspective of desegregation from the learners in Van Den Berg High School while - at the same time - I did not want to get too involved. I wanted to be careful so that in the process of 'researching hobos', I did not 'become a hobo' myself (Pansters: 2004). I used both case study and ethnographic methods of data collection to capture the experiences of learners of desegregation. The process which was followed in this inquiry is explained in detail below in terms of site selection, sampling of participants and other considerations about the sample.

3.5.1 Site selection

A former Afrikaans Whites–only school was purposively sampled for this research. I lived in the same neighbourhood of the school. Learners from this school passed by my street and I usually exchanged a few words with them. Sometimes I would, from

inside the house, watch them play and listen to their conversations as they passed by my house before and after school. From a distance, the learners of this school, from different racial groups, seemed to get along well as they walked together to and from school. From an outsider, it seemed strange especially because I had already ruled the school out as a research site for integration, because of the name of the school. When I asked for permission to carry out my research at this school, it was granted. Although I was sceptical, I decided to make an appointment to meet the principal.

On my first day, I was shown to a seat by the secretaries in the reception area of the school. As I sat on the couch, the statue of Van Den Berg, the statesman whose name the school bears, painted black, in a rockery of colourful flowers was right in front of me. Questions ran through my mind; black statue, colourful flowers, rainbow nation, integration, is that not what I am here for…? At that moment, the school principal greeted me with a smile. The principal, a big but friendly man, whom the teachers and the learners, together with the parents of the school seemed to like so much, looked calm as he signalled me into his office. I later learned that in 2003, he received an award from the former National Minister of Education, Kader Asmal, as the best 'Diversity Manager' in his area. I paid a visit to the school to find out if I would be able to do research there.

The community 'around' the school and the community 'inside' the school are very different. Van Den Berg High School is classified as a Section 21 school, which means that it is able to financially cope with the demands of running a school and can also manage itself. Contrary to this fact, though, is that the community around the school is reasonably able to cope financially, while presently 33% of the parents of the learners in this school are not able to afford school fees[18]. The total number of learners at the time of this research was 795 - 334 Whites, 261 Africans, 189 Coloured and 11 Indians. There were 34 teachers – all of whom were white men and women. The school provides tuition in both English and Afrikaans in different classes - English and Afrikaans streams.

18. Compulsory fees that the school governing body may levy in terms of the *South African Schools Act, Act No 84 of 1994*.

The school was previously housed in a nearby primary school where it catered for the education of most of the learners in the area. The school journals show an exodus of learners - whose parents did not belong to a certain political party - from this school to a nearby Afrikaans-medium school. The reason for this movement was that the principal of the time used to invite a minister from his church to assemblies in the school where the minister openly criticised other political parties in favour of his own - which was also the principal's. Document review and interviews revealed that the minister canvassed support for his party at the school.

Some parents reported the principal to the Department and a disciplinary hearing was held where he was warned never to repeat what he had done. However, he – then - put up the flag of his political party at the school. He had very strong support from his party. The party started holding rallies on the premises of the school with the permission of the principal and most parents were unhappy about this practice because "the school was being turned into a political field." As a result of the unhappiness, many parents took their children out of the school. Most of the learners left the school around the years 1992-1993. In 1994 the present principal - who was once a teacher at this school - took over as the new principal.

3.5.2 Sampling of participants

The choice of data collection methods was affected by the sample that was studied. Some methods, such as surveys, are well-suited to collecting data from all participants, while others, such as focus groups, are better suited to a smaller group that represents the population. According to Trochim (2005), sampling is the basis for conclusions that will be reached and for the degree to which a study will be useful (Trochim, 2005). With this idea in mind, I used purposive sampling - where only the 'critical cases' were selected. Only learners who could answer my research question - were sampled for the research (Morrison, 1993: 112-117). Critical cases-purposive sampling is a way of sampling, where participants are selected on the grounds of existing knowledge of the research population by the researcher. This type of sampling is used, specifically, when the researcher wants to select specific unique cases that can provide special information (Cohen *et al*, 2004: 92). The choice of the learners for this study was done with the concept of desegregation and diversity in mind. Soudien refers to these diverse

entities as 'scapes' (ways of seeing). According to him, researchers in race should develop an approach that tries to work with the notion of multiplicity and brings together, as far as possible, the range of factors that can be identified within a given context (Soudien, 2004: 92). The following table reflects the 'scapes'/ diversity within the sample and, also, shows the combination of diversity within each participant. A detailed description of each participant is available in Appendix 1 at the end of this thesis. Pseudonyms are used for the participants.

Table 3.5 Diversity within the sample of learners

Participant	*Grade*	*Age*	*Language*	*Social Class*	*Academic Achievement*	*Behaviour*	*Disability*	*Gender*	*Race*
Vernon	*11*	*17*	*English.*	*Middle class*	*good*	*good*	*none*	*male*	*w*
Kobus	*11*	*17*	*Afrikaans.*	*Middle class*	*good*	*good*	*none*	*male*	*w*
Suzan	*10*	*17*	*English*	*Working class*	*good*	*good*	*yes*	*female*	*w*
Karen	*11*	*17*	*Afrikaans*	*Middle class*	*average*	*bad*	*none*	*female*	*w*
Sipho	*11*	*17*	*IsiXhosa*	*Middle class*	*good*	*good*	*none*	*male*	*b*
Thando	*11*	*18*	*IsiZulu*	*Working class*	*good*	*good*	*none*	*female*	*b*
Malose	*10*	*17*	*Sepedi*	*Working class*	*average*	*bad*	*yes*	*male*	*b*
Boipelo	*11*	*17*	*Tswana*	*Middle class*	*good*	*good*	*none*	*female*	*b*
Saloosha	*11*	*17*	*English*	*Middle class*	*good*	*good*	*none*	*female*	*I*
Vally	*11*	*18*	*English*	*Middle class*	*average*	*good*	*none*	*male*	*I*
Snail	*11*	*18*	*Afrikaans*	*Working class*	*average*	*good*	*none*	*male*	*c*
Samantha	*11*	*17*	*Afrikaans*	*Working class*	*average*	*good*	*none*	*female*	*c*
Koos	*11*	*17*	*IsiNdebele*	*Middle class*	*average*	*bad*	*none*	*male*	*b*
Yang Chuang	*10*	*15*	*Chinese*	*Middle class*	*average*	*good*	*none*	*male*	*ch*
Abuja	*11*	*18*	*Swahili*	*Middle class*	*good*	*good*	*none*	*female*	*b*
Marie	*11*	*18*	*Afrikaans*	*Working class*	*average*	*good*	*none*	*female*	*w*

The composition of the critical cases of purposely sampled learners reflects the profile of the population of learners at Van Den Berg High School during the time that this research was carried out (Cohen *et al*, 2004: 95) - it was, also, a heterogeneous sample (Borg & Gall, 1979: 195). The learners – who were chosen from different 'races', language groups, social class, academic achievement, gender and ethnic groups in the specific school - were first observed and later interviewed with an aim to understand their experiences.

3.5.3 Other considerations about the sample

The first criterion that I used to sample the learners for my study was that the learners should have started school at desegregated schools. However, because the school also admitted learners from townships who did not start their schooling at desegregated schools, I decided to include two such learners - a boy and a girl - in order to capture the experiences of that group of learners as well. The other criterion that I added was that of learners who came from countries outside South Africa - so that I would get yet another layer of perceptions.

Since desegregation and diversity were key words used to sample learners, the following is a summary of the diverse criteria which were used to sample learners:

- The learners had to have started their schooling at desegregated schools.
- The gender composition was considered.
- The racial composition of the sample was in proportion to the number of learners according to race at the school.
- The African learners were chosen from different ethnic backgrounds.
- Different languages were represented.
- The religion is predominantly Christian, but the Muslim and Hindu religions were also represented.
- Two learners who started their schooling in township schools but started Grade 8 at this desegregated school were included.
- I had two learners from outside South Africa - who had recently been admitted to the school.
- Learners were from middle class families; from the working class; and from those who survive on social grants. This was done from across the colour line to address the social class issue of desegregation. I got information from the school on the class issue. Careful considerations were followed in order not to make unfounded assumptions about people's livelihoods. Confidential information about families was given to me by the school where needed.
- Some learners lived nearer to the school and some were bussed into the

school every morning - proximity to the school.

- Learners with disabilities were also included in the sample.
- Learners who did well academically and in sport.
- Learners who were amongst the 'not so well-behaved' group were also in the sample.

Most participants sampled for this research were in Grade 11. As the year had already progressed, I would have difficulties finding - or tracking - the Grade 12 learners in the next year - if any follow-up were to be necessary. I could not include the Grade 12 learners because the Grade 12 year in the South African education system is a hectic one, during which the learners prepare for the first national examination of their school career.

3.6 DATA COLLECTION AND RATIONALE FOR CHOICE OF METHODS

A variety of data collection methods was used in this ethnographic case study, including documentary analysis, incidental conversations, participant observation and interviews. Observation sheets and interview schedules, respectively, are added as appendices to this thesis. The data collection methods were used in the same sequence in which they are mentioned above. School records of incidents related to racial desegregation were perused and the principal was available to clarify questions arising from the documents in quick interviews which were, mostly, not recorded. He provided me with information which was either missing from the documents or which may not have been clear. I embarked on the use of multiple methods – thus, the construction of diverse foci of data for triangulation purposes. At the same time I was directly involved with the participants - for what I thought was possibly a long term engagement which assisted me to know them better, two school terms to be exact- from the second and third term of 2004.

I studied the history of Van Den Berg High School from the time the school started enrolling black learners in 1997. Amongst the documents I was privileged to peruse were different school policies that provided me with a better understanding of the school. A brief case history of each sampled learner was taken during the interviews -

available at the beginning of each interview transcript - after I obtained the consent of the learners' parents. These histories provided me with a clearer understanding of my 'participants' (Babbie & Mouton 2001:37). The biographies assisted me in being alert during the interviews to pick up on the relationship between what the learners were saying and their specific historical background (Cohen *et al*., 2004:183). Each data collection strategy is discussed in detail below.

3.6.1 Document analysis

Document analysis happens when the researcher studies the records and other documents which are not gathered - or developed - specifically for the study which is being undertaken. Those documents should shed more light on the study being undertaken. Examples include recruitment and attendance records, the budget, staff records, and annual reports (Trochim, 2005). The documents are particularly useful for recording the processes that took place prior to the study in question. I studied the minutes of the School Governing Body meetings; the minutes of staff meetings; and the school records in the form of policies and school journals which recorded the events which took place at the school. I wanted to establish the characteristics of the school before and after the process of the admission of black learners, including academic achievement, school attendance, English proficiency status, sports participation, awards received by the school, functions held at the school, achievements by the principal and the educators and newspaper reports on the events at the school. A content analysis of the documents relevant to my study was carried out.

The advantage of collecting data from documents is that they elicit a high degree of accuracy because they were not kept with the knowledge that they would - one day - be scrutinised for research purposes. In my case, the challenge was that most documents were not available, or applicable, to my research and many of which could have been relevant were incomplete. Part of this process involved reviewing the school records on the number of learners - according to race and language. In giving the full profile of the school, the documents were very useful. Although obtaining learners' records of academic performance involved special permission from parents

and school officials, it was not a significant problem in this study because the parents gave their consent.

There is no single data collection method which is ideal for every situation. For this reason, I preferred to use multiple methods - which are explained below in conjunction with document analysis. Using multiple methods to assess the same outcomes provided me with a rich, detailed picture of what was happening at Van Den Berg High School. It also illuminated inconsistencies between methods and reduced the chance of bias that could have been caused by the use of a particular method.

I studied the documents of the school in order to get information that could position the school within the context of my research on desegregation. This situating of the school helped me to understand and to determine my next data collection method. The data from the documents shaped my observation and interview protocols as well as the type of questions I asked - afterwards - during the interviews.

3.6.2 Direct observations

Observation is not looking at things - but looking through things. Behaviour, interaction, conversations and sign language - used by learners - were observed. The reason for using observation as the second data collection method was that - through it - I could obtain detailed information about aspects of school life which I could not have obtained from documents, such as a detailed record of the language used; non-verbal communication used by learners in interaction with others; and what they did and how they did what they did on the playground (Foster, 1996: 12). The observation method was useful in a variety of ways. It provided me with ways of looking for non-verbal expressions of feelings; of determining who interacts with whom; and grasping how participants communicate with each other (Schmuck, 1997: 79).

During observation, the observer records what he/she feels, hears, sees, experiences and smells. During the observation process there is also gut feeling. It is not scientific, but it needs to be recorded. The interpretation of observation data before full scrutiny of an incident has taken place is not advisable. Because observation is systematic, I

went into the school with an observation schedule on which I noted down what I would observe, on which dates and also the focus of each of the observations. I did not just go in there and observe. I observed learners' interaction with other learners from a race group different from their own. The following is an example of what appeared in my note book as an empty observation schedule which would be full of field notes at the end of the observation. The observation schedule is adopted from Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000: 307), but contextualised for qualitative research.

Date	
Site (Where)	
Time	
Specifics (Who)	
Length	
Observer role	
Descriptive Notes (I recorded everything that happened on this section)	
Reflective notes (I recorded my thoughts and feelings about what happened on this section)	

Observation is special in the sense that - as a researcher - you become immersed in what is going on in the setting. I first observed from a distance and, then, slowly observed - and participated in - the school's events. The weeks that I spent observing the sampled learners in different educators' classes led me to participate while I was observing and to observe as I was participating - what Merriam (1998:22) calls participant observation.

3.6.3 Participant observation

Participant observation refers to the researcher being involved in a variety of research activities over an extended period of time that enable him/her to observe the cultural members in their daily lives and that allow him/her to participate in their activities to facilitate a better understanding of those behaviours and activities. The process of conducting this type of field work involves gaining entry into the community; selecting gatekeepers and key informants; participating in as many different activities as are allowed by the community members; clarifying one's findings through member checks, formal interviews, and informal conversations; and keeping organised, structured field notes to facilitate the development of a narrative that explains various cultural aspects to the reader. Participant observation is used as a mainstay in field work in a variety of disciplines and, as such, has proven to be a beneficial tool for producing studies that provide accurate representation of a culture (Trochim, 2005).

Participant observation is considered the most appropriate data collection method in anthropological studies - especially in ethnographic studies - and it has been used as a data collection method over a long period of time (De Walt and De Walt, 2002:223). I could not carry out an ethnographic case study without using participant observation as one of the ways of collecting data. I used participant observation, specifically, because it allowed me to check the definitions of terms that participants used during my subsequent interviews with them. I also used participant observation to observe events that the learners were unable - or unwilling - to share. Observation further allowed me to draw the attention of the learners to

distortions or inaccuracies in their own descriptions (Marshall & Rossman, 1995:68).

The role of observer *as participant* stance enabled me to participate in the group activities - as and when I desired. Yet, I did not forget that my role as a researcher was to collect data and that the group that was being studied was aware of my observation activities. In this stance, I was an observer who was not a member of the group but who was interested in participating as a means of conducting better observation and, hence, generating a more complete understanding of the learners' activities. Merriam (1998:56) points out that while the researcher may have access to many different people in this situation from whom she may obtain information, the group members control the level of information given. They may either decide to tell you what you want to hear, or they may select the information they want to give to you. In terms of this concern, Adler and Adler (1994: 380) advise that this "peripheral membership role" enables the researcher to "observe and interact closely enough and is able to establish an insider's identity without participating in those activities constituting the core of group membership."

Merriam (1998: 103) calls this stance of participant observer a "schizophrenic activity" because the researcher participates in the setting studied, but not to the extent that he/she becomes too absorbed to observe and analyse what is happening. The learners were told who I was; what my business at the school was; and what I wanted from them. They became interested in the research and everyone wanted to participate. This observer role is said to be the most ethical approach to observation because the researcher's observation activities are known to the group being studied, while the emphasis for the researcher is on collecting data - rather than on participating in the activity being observed.

I observed learners in their respective classrooms. While I was given permission to have conversations with the learners in the school, only the learners who were sampled for interviews were observed and, therefore, a variety of classes were visited. I followed the four learners who were said to be amongst the 'trouble makers' in the

school during the first week of observations. The second week I followed the ones who were said to be amongst the 'angels' in the school. During the third week I observed the 'average' ones. I would observe two learners a day - in different classes. The 'trouble makers' - in this instance - would be the learners with many demerits in the school discipline register. The demerits would range between offences like homework not done or not completed to smoking on the school premises. The 'angels' would be the opposite of the troublemakers and the 'average' ones would be learners with a reasonable number of demerits acceptable at the school and behaving like most of the learners at the school.

Another advantage of observation is that - as an observer - I was able to 'see' what participants could not. As I observed the learners, important patterns and regularities in behaviour were revealed (Foster, 1996: 13). I observed the interaction of the learners with their educators and of the learners amongst themselves - both inside and outside the classrooms. The observation furnished me with the opportunity to witness behaviour patterns related to the way learners speak to one another and the way they relate to one another - as recorded in the following observation notes:

> **13/10/04 In Ms Smarties' (pseudonymn) class. Observing Vernon.**
> This is a Grade 11 English class. 6 African boys, 8 African girls, 3 Indian girls, 4 coloured girls, 3 coloured boys, 5 white girls, and 9 white boys. The teacher is sitting at her desk. The learners come into the classroom. They sit in groups. There are five groups - mixed according to race and gender. The class has to complete a group project that they started two days ago. One African girl tries to reach the top of the cupboard in front of the class but she is too short. She jumps up and down. The class is noisy because of the group work. Suddenly, a tall white boy goes to the front, picks up a rolled paper from the top of the cupboard and gives it to the African girl who had been trying to reach for it. The girl says 'thank you'. The boy goes back to his group. No one has noticed this incident, probably because it is not important for them, but it is for my research. The boy did not belong to the same group as the girl, but he went to help her because he noticed her struggling. This girl did not ask for his help. Later, I asked the boy why he did what he did. He seemed to have forgotten about the incident. My own reflection was "Wow. If this is how they relate everyday, it is amazing!"

I spent a week on observing each group of learners. The reason I conducted my observations before the interviews was so that I would have a chance to get the learners to clarify some of the issues I may have misunderstood during the observations when I conducted the interviews. The aim of the class observations was to observe the learners who were involved in my research and not the educators *per se*. Therefore, my report does not include the educators anywhere - except where I would be following up on an issue that was of interest about a learner in a particular educator's lesson. Observations can be done in a variety of ways, but I used ethnographic participant observation which is explained below.

Merriam (1998:78) alerts qualitative researchers - using participant observation - to the fact that they should not be concerned about their role of participant observer affecting the situation, but rather to worry about how they would account for those effects when explaining the data. Participant observation is more difficult than simply observing without participation in the activity of the setting since it usually requires field notes to be jotted down later - after the activity has been concluded. Yet, there are situations in which participation is required for understanding. I was aware of the fact that simply observing - without participating in the actions of the learners - may prevent me from completely understanding those activities.

> **At the netball field during break. 15/10/04. Observing Thando.**
>
> The girls were eating their lunch. I was sitting at the edge of the stands at the netball field. Lina, an African girl, came and challenged some girls to play netball. There were 4 white girls and two coloured girls and there were 6 more African girls who wanted to join the team. The two teams needed one more player and one of the girls invited me to play with them - which I did. The bell rang and they challenged me for the next day. It was a very nice game, but too physical. During the game Lina kept on cheering her team mates in her language, saying something like "come girls, let's show the suburban girls how we rural girls play the game of netball!"

According to Schensul, Schensul, and LeCompte (1999: 67), participant observation is the first step in ethnographic studies. It was because of their reasons for using participant observation in research (1999: 91) that I embarked on it. I wanted to

- identify and guide relationships between the learners;
- get a feel of how the learners organise and prioritise things;
- determine how the learners interact and interrelate;
- learn what the learners deem important in manners, politics and social interaction; and
- let them get to know me as well - thereby easing the facilitation of the research process.

Another main reason for using participant observation was to increase the study's validity - as Bernard (1994:76) suggests. It made it possible for me to collect different types of data. Being on site over a period of time allowed me to become familiar with the Van Den Berg community and it facilitated my involvement in activities to which I would, generally, not be invited to, such as the bicycle race which was organised to raise funds for the school where groups of learners and educators would cycle for the whole night to reach a destination measured in kilometres. This method reduced the incidence of ‘reactivity’ which was evident on the part of the learners at the beginning of the study. It helped me to develop questions that would make sense in the language relevant to the context. I also developed a better understanding of what was happening in the school and that ‘reduced’ my subjective interpretation of the observation. Participant observation was used to collect the ‘right data’ for my study (Bernard, 1994: 142-3).

The degree to which I involved myself in participating in the daily lives of the learners who were studied made a difference to the quality - and the amount - of data that I collected. De Walt and De Walt (2002: 92) believe that “the goal for design of research using participant observation as a method is to develop a holistic understanding of the phenomenon being studied that is as objective and accurate as possible given the limitations of the method.” I acknowledge the limitations of

participant observation and that is why I used it in conjunction with other data collection methods, such as interviewing and document analysis, to increase the validity of the study. I used participant observation to answer a descriptive research question (De Walt & De Walt, 2002: 56), namely, "How do learners in desegregated schools deal with their diversity?"

3.6.4 Limitations of participant observation

One limitation involved in conducting participant observations is noted by De Walt, De Walt, and Wayland (1998: 45) when they allude to the fact that "the researcher must determine to what extent he/she will participate in the lives of the participants and whether to intervene in a situation." Another potential limitation they mention is that of researcher bias. They note that unless ethnographers use methods other than just participant observation, there is a likelihood that they will fail to report the negative aspects of the participants. To reduce this bias they encourage novice researchers to practice reflexivity. This implies the keeping of a reflexive diary to record one's feelings at any particular point in time. My reflective diary assisted me to understand the biases I might have had that could interfere with the true and correct interpretation of what I observed.

Breuer and Roth (2003:45) use a variety of methods for knowledge production, including the positioning of various points of view; different frames of reference, such as special or temporal relativity; perceptual schemata based on experience; and an interaction with the social context. The two authors argue that a researcher needs to understand that any interaction changes the observed object. Noting this limitation of participant observation, I used other data collection strategies as well - which led to a richer understanding of the social context, the school context and the learners.

Another challenge was "the ability to keep an open mind" (Gillham, 2000: 18) where the problem of pre-knowledge and assumptions is addressed. Even if you 'know' what is going on in the setting, you have to act as if you did not - because you actually do not know. I had to keep an open mind all the time I was at the school which - I agree - was difficult because of the fact that as human beings we usually feel that we are

compelled to understand and to make sense of what we are investigating. This makes us interpret new knowledge in terms of what we already know (Gillham, 2000: 18).

However, I tried to avoid an interpretation of new knowledge in terms of what I already knew (Gillham 2000:18; Stenhouse, 1985: 211) by focusing rigorously on the desegregation process. The aim of the research was to find out how learners understood themselves or their context; to find out what lay behind the 'objective' evidence; to find out the reasons for the research results, for example, the learners' feelings, perceptions and experiences of what was going on in the school.

A further limitation is the effect of racial, language and gender differences which were evident at the setting. I am an African female and my participants were learners from all four major South African racial groups. The influence of language, race and gender emerged very strongly during the interviews. My previous experience as a teacher at a former white-only English medium primary school enhanced the trust that the participants, the parents, the teachers together with the principal gained for me. The school culture in terms of protocol and how the learners related to the environment was in a way not new to me. This fact may have influenced the data collection in the sense that important data may have been ignored as normal or maybe as a researcher I may have only observed behaviour that I expected. The teachers treated me like I was one of them, because some of them were parents at the primary school where I used to work before I undertook this research. I also taught some of the learners who were in this school at the primary school. This helped to ease the tension that could otherwise have been a problem.

3.6.5 Interviews

Interviews have been used extensively for data collection across all the disciplines of the social sciences and in educational research. There are many types of interviews - as suggested in the literature below. However, I did not attempt to use all of them. Instead, I used only in-depth interviewing. In interviewing it is generally agreed that there is a questioner and one or more interviewees (Trochim, 2005) and, also, that it is a key method of data collection. Hitchcock (1989:79) lists nine types: structured interview, survey interview, counselling interview, diary interview, life history

interview, ethnographic interview, informal/unstructured interview, and conversations. Cohen and Manion (1994:273), however, prefer to group interviews into four kinds, namely, the structured interview, the unstructured interview, the non-directive interview, and the focused interview. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000: 271) also explain different types of interviews as: informal conversational, guided, standardised open-ended and closed quantitative interviews. My in-depth interviewing had some informal conversational characteristics which assisted me to probe further in order to get more information on issues related to desegregation in the school.

The type of interview one chooses increases the relevance of questions to context; it builds on observational data; and it can be matched to the participant being interviewed - in the sense that the interviewer chooses which question to ask and when to ask that particular question, depending on which participant you are interviewing at that particular moment. That is why I used the interviews at the end of the data collection process - to build on information from documents and also from conversations and observations. I used in-depth interviewing which assisted in eliciting information in order to achieve a holistic understanding of the learners' points of view of their situation. It was also used to explore interesting areas of desegregation for further investigation. I asked the learners open-ended questions, and probed whenever necessary to obtain information that I deemed useful. In-depth interviewing involves qualitative data - that is why some authors refer to it as qualitative interviewing (Patton, 1987:113).

This is an extract from one of the interviews where I gave the participant time to flow in his talk without interrupting. While probing is necessary, it should however, not disrupt the flow.

> **Researcher**: Where do you see this school in five years from now?
>
> **Vernon**: I actually see this school in a very big, much better position than it is now. Because when I first arrived at this school it was just beginning to get a good name, when I was still in primary school in standard five and I had to choose a high school, my mother said you know I can go to any high school

except Van Den Berg, so which is very very strange to me because a lot of my friends were coming to Van Den Berg and I just had to go to Gladys because both my sisters are there, but then Gladys was not such a good school and my mom was just gonna let me come here. Then our school actually started getting a very good name, from round about that period which was kind of strange to me because initially my mom said you can't go to Van Den Berg I think it is because of the Afrikaans and the English.

A lot of the English-speaking people did not want to send their kids here because they were scared of this culture of Afrikaans but because of the fact that our school showed the public that we are both English and Afrikaans and now we are more English than Afrikaans actually we have more English people than Afrikaans, and ever since I came into the school in grade 9, we started to grow, and we really really grew to think that we were nominated as the best school of the year, I mean really, we have now the Teacher in South Africa teaching at our school. I mean you know, with the sports we are doing a lot of things, I think we are really really growing up and I think we shall continue to grow up. In five years time we should see a lot less negativity amongst the pupils because a lot of pupils are still a little bit negative about the school you know You usually hear pupils saying "this is not right, I do not like this etc, It is actually a few people so, I think a lot of people in the school are pretty positive it is only those few people, but I think in about five years time, we will see more of the rainbow nation coming about and more sense of unity among the students themselves , a bigger sense of pride in the school itself. Like I said a lot of the students not a whole lot but a few are still a lot negative they do not feel part of the school so I think in a few years about five years probably, we will feel a lot more proud of our school, yes, time will tell.

3.6.6 Dynamics of the interviews

I conducted interviews after I had observed the learners. The aim was to conduct the interviews at the end of the data collection process so that I would have a chance to let the learners clarify whatever information I solicited during the observation and during the document review process. I interviewed four learners each day for 3 days and two learners each day for the remaining two days of the school week - a total of sixteen learners over the course of five days.

I scheduled the interviews for 30 minutes each, but each interview had its own dynamics and, as a result, the interviews ranged from between 15 and 30 minutes each. Sometimes the participant would ask me to switch off the tape and continued providing information which he/she then allowed me to use in my report - but not to record it. In circumstances like this, I would write copious field notes before I called the next interviewee. The learners were called from their respective classes by the school secretaries who used the intercom - which was only audible in the specific participant's class. I had class time-tables of all my participants. The learners knew that they could be called any day that week for an interview and they were, therefore, present at school. The interview schedule was used as a guideline to direct the interview but not, necessarily, exactly as it was - depending on the dynamics of each interview.

The black learners – especially, the African and coloured learners - were open to most of the questions. Although the female Indian learner was very reserved, she responded to many questions. The male Indian learner was very confident and tended to try to dominate the interview by asking me questions instead.

Most of the English and Afrikaans-speaking white learners were also very open - except for one Afrikaans-speaking boy. English was used for all the interviews except this one interview which was the only one where I realised that language was a barrier, so we switched over to Afrikaans. In general, the learners responded to all the questions. I anticipated a negative reaction to some of the questions, but did not get any. In fact, instead of the negativity that I expected, the learners were eager to talk about desegregation which - together with race – I had, originally, thought were 'sensitive' issues.

The life histories of the learners - which I wrote down during the interviews - assisted me to understand the dynamics of the interviews. Most of the learners from the English medium primary schools were accustomed to being taught by black educators as the English primary schools in the area employed African, Indian and coloured teachers long before 1996. In turn, they related to me with ease. The principal played a very important role in the interview dynamics and in the reactions of the learners to this research. When he introduced me to the learners, he encouraged them to feel free

to give as much honest information about the school as possible - which made the process of data collection easier than I had anticipated

3.6.7 Data management

Data from the documents and observations was written down and kept in files on computer as field notes. On a daily basis I wrote them out in full when I got to the office. The participants gave me permission to audio-record the interviews. I transcribed the interviews and imported them into ATLAS.Ti qualitative computer data analysis software to organise this data. The audio tapes, the transcripts and the observations schedules - together with the notes from school documents - are safely kept for record purposes

3.6.8 Data analysis

The first step in qualitative data analysis is to develop a thorough and comprehensive description of the phenomenon which was studied. Geertz (1973: 11) and Denzin (1978) call this a 'thick' description. If a 'thin' description merely states 'facts', a 'thick' description includes information about the context of an act, the intentions and the meanings that organise action and its subsequent evolution (Denzin, 1978: 20). Thus, description encompasses the *contexts* of action, the *intentions* of the actor, and the *process* in which action is embedded.

The second step, then, would be the classification of the data. Without classifying the data, I would have had no way of knowing what it was that I would be analysing or of making meaningful comparisons between different bits of data. Classifying the data is an integral part of the analysis process. Moreover, the conceptual foundations upon which interpretation and explanation are based are laid on my classification of the data. I exported all my interview data from Microsoft Word into ATLAS.Ti. Many qualitative researchers have utilised this software to assist them in organising their data. ATLAS.Ti organises the data and makes it easy for further analysis. The interviews were coded in ATLAS-Ti, using an inductive approach referred to as open coding where the coding is done from the data - line by line. This open coding in ATLAS.Ti enabled me to – simultaneously - create new codes and attach text to them

in the form of exact words/quotations from participants (Babbie, 2001: 511). It, then, became easier to import original segments of texts as quotations from ATLAS.Ti during the discussion of the data in Chapter 4.

The codes were developed, directly, from the data and themes were identified - using quotations and codes. The following is an example of how I worked with the data. The following is an example of what the data looks like in ATLAS.Ti - with the meaning of the different terminology given at the end (adopted from Smit, 2001: 73).

HU: Diversity
File: [c:\diversity\atlas hu\Diversity]
Edited by: Super
Date/Time: 06/04/11 04:31:36 PM

Codes-quotations list
Code-Filter: Code Family Social relations

Code: Attitude: learners {6-0}

P 3: Respondent 10.Vally.txt - 3:64 (71:72) (Super)
Codes: [A sense of responsibility towards each other] [Attitude: learners] [Caring attitude: learners] [School rules]

but then I think of the children who do not have many jeans, it would be a pity.

P 5: Respondent 12 Samantha.txt - 5:44 (132:133) (Super)
Codes: [A sense of responsibility towards each other] [Attitude: learners] [Caring attitude: learners] [I feel at home here]

1. HU stands for *Hermeneutic Unit* - the complete project.
2. The *File* reference indicates the location where the project is saved on the computer.

3. The word *Super* refers to the person who actually did the analysis – me.
4. The time and date when the analysis was done are also available for further reference.
5. Codes-quotations list means that this particular information shows a particular code with the relevant quotation, i.e., the original words - as said by the participant.
6. Code filter: Code family refers to the fact that this code was filtered by using all the primary texts, i.e., all interviews.
7. P3 refers to the 3rd interview.
8. Vally is a pseudonym used for the participating learner.
9. 3: 64 stands for the 3rd interview 64th code.
10. 71: 72 is the line where the quotation can be found in the complete project.

In this study I have put an emphasis on documenting and portraying the everyday experiences of individual learners by observing and interviewing them (Frenkel & Wallen, 1993:92). The shared patterns of behaviour, beliefs and language that seemed to have developed over time amongst the learners were also recorded (Creswell, 2002:37).

While I bore in mind that for a researcher to do justice to ethnographic data he/she has to deal with the stories as told by the participants, I aspired to move beyond that and to find the discourse that the data portrays. After all, the 'truth' is 'constructed' by the participants and interpreted by the researcher. Studying desegregation qualitatively assisted me to get to know the learners, personally, and to have a 'feel' of what they experienced in their daily activities at their school and in society - an advantage that other researchers, using different research approaches, could miss out on (Bogdan, 1992: 7).

The data was transcribed for content. The learners' experiences of desegregation – particularly, in terms of handling *racial* desegregation as one form of identity

formation as it happened at their specific school - was studied in-depth. The language that emanated from the data was analysed and interpreted from a social constructivist point of view.

3.6.9 Content analysis

When one starts with analysis, one reads through the data and then proceeds with content analysis. My understanding is that analysing the content of the data means making sense of what the data tells you at face value. After that, when one starts asking questions about what may be hidden behind the spoken word, one moves to a higher level of analysis. I focused on the ability of language to be social and, also, to be interactive in nature. Using this point of view/standpoint, I moved beyond the statements - as put across by the learners. I interpreted the statements beyond what they seemed to mean in general language use. Language usage is a situated performance. The same concept may mean different things to different people in the same context or in a different context.

The limitation of qualitative data analysis as seen by Dey (1993: 83) is that a researcher can only describe, interpret and explain, but cannot hope to reproduce the full richness of the original data. The pre- requisite of qualitative data analysis is familiarity with the data. There is no one kind of qualitative data analysis, but rather a variety of approaches related to the different perspectives and purposes of the research. I was more interested in describing the social and cultural aspects of the process of desegregation as it unfolded in Van den Berg high school.

3.7 METHODOLOGICAL NORMS

The worth of any research endeavour is assessed by a variety of audiences, including editorial reviews, publishers, grant reviewers and dissertation committees (Anfara Junior *et al*, 2002: 28). In traditional quantitative research, the authors refer to the validity and reliability of the study. There is confusion about how to best think about standards for qualitative research. Validity and reliability in qualitative research is

seen as the truth and correctness of a statement (Kvale, 1996:236) and conducting the research in an ethical manner so that the findings are a true reflection of the perspectives of the participants - as interpreted by the researcher (Merriam, 1998: 198).

There are many different standards mentioned by authors, such as Le Compte (1993:17); Smith and Glass (1987); and Denzin and Lincoln (2000:12). Eisenhart and Howe (1992:iv) proposed the following five criteria that can be used to evaluate a good qualitative inquiry:

1. ensuring a fit between research questions, data collection procedures and analytic techniques;
2. ensuring the effective application of the data collection procedures and techniques;
3. being alert to - and cognisant of - prior knowledge;
4. being cognisant of internal and external value constraints; and
5. assessing a study's comprehensiveness.

Anfara Junior *et al* (2002:12) maintain that validity and reliability in qualitative studies will not go away. Similarly, Creswell (1998: 216-217) suggests that it is "impossible to reach consensus on the evolving perspective of qualitative validity" and further suggests that rather than thinking of qualitative validity as rigid, we should look at it from different perspectives because qualitative research, itself, carries out data collection within a variety of traditions. All research should be subjected to methodological norms which are used to evaluate whether it is credible or not. Creswell and Miller (2000:34) propose eight different ways to verify that a study is credible – namely, prolonged engagement and persistent observation; triangulation; peer review or debriefing; negative case analysis; clarifying researcher bias; member checks; thick description/rigor; and external audits. While they refer to the eight criteria, they recommend that qualitative researchers engage in at least two of the eight criteria in any given study. I have, in this particular study done persistent

observation and therefore prolonged my stay in the field. I have embarked on member checks and also triangulation of data collection methods.

When conducting qualitative research, the investigator seeks to gain a total - or complete - picture of the phenomenon in its context and not to find out what is, generally, true (Merriam, 1998:208). According to Stainback and Stainback (1988:120), a holistic description of events, procedures, and philosophies occurring in a natural setting is often needed to make accurate situational decisions.

3.7.1 Trustworthiness, dependability, transferability and credibility

Associating the quantitative paradigm of 'validity and reliability' with the qualitative research paradigm has always been problematic. Validity and reliability originate in the quantitative paradigm - where the authenticity of a study can be established. These two concepts do not sit well with the establishment of authenticity for a qualitative inquiry. Qualitative researchers have tried to find ways to verify the authenticity of their studies in a 'qualitative way'. Researchers need alternative models - appropriate to qualitative designs - to ensure rigour without sacrificing the relevance of qualitative research. In summary, then, what the different authors are emphasizing are four general criteria for the evaluation of qualitative research - to enable other researchers to be able to determine the truth value/credibility of the research; the applicability/transferability; the consistency/dependability; and - as far as possible - the neutrality/conformability of the research process in order to accept it as empirical research (Trochim, 2005).

Qualitative research is a generic term for investigative methodologies which are described as ethnographic, naturalistic, anthropological, field or participant observer research. The purpose is to understand people's interpretations of reality. The process is dynamic because as reality changes, people's perceptions change as well. The aim is to get an insider perspective of the topic being studied. The participants' values will have an impact; should be understood; and should be taken into account when conducting - and reporting on - qualitative research. The focus is a total or complete

picture of what is going on. The ultimate goal is to discover reality and not to predict it. Theories and hypotheses are evolved from data as it is collected. The data is subjective because it consists of the perceptions of the people in the environment.

As I was writing my report, I tested the trustworthiness of my research by presenting my work in progress at colloquia and seminars which dealt, specifically, with school integration. I asked respondents to verify the accuracy of my records. One of the processes that I used is triangulation. Denzin (1978:145) has identified several types of triangulation. One type involves the convergence of multiple data sources (Creswell & Miller, 2000: 126). Another type is methodological triangulation - involving the convergence of data from multiple data collection sources - which I have attempted to satisfy in this instance, namely, document analysis, observations and interviews. A third triangulation procedure is investigator triangulation in which multiple researchers are involved in an investigation. I was the only researcher in this project. However, related to investigator triangulation is researcher-participant corroboration - which I have used. This type of triangulation procedure has been referred to as cross-examination. I triangulated various kinds of information from documents, from interviews and from observations - and I have verified my data with my participants.

In order to maintain validity in this research, during the research process I kept accurate records of events. The process at the University of Pretoria is such that a proposal for research is presented in the department where a student wants to register for a doctoral degree. Upon approval at departmental level, the proposal is then presented at faculty level with a wider educational research audience. After my proposal was approved at both levels, I presented it at a University of Pretoria Postgraduate Research Indaba - a conference organised for postgraduate learners to showcase their research-in-progress every year. These forums assisted me with inputs from experts and it contributed to shaping and refining my research process.

The research-in-progress and the methodology used during the research were also presented at the South Africa and the Netherlands Programme for Alternatives in

Development (SANPAD). This is a forum where each year the South African Government - in collaboration with the Netherlands Government - sponsors twenty-six doctoral students from South Africa to develop their research skills. The programme is called the Research Capacity Initiative (RCI) which is a year long programme consisting of four meetings of two weeks each during that year. In the workshops, the cohorts go through rigorous hands-on training in research methodology. Presenters at workshops are experts in their research methodology fields - from both countries. These experts serve as member checks, providing inputs which assist with the development of the research process.

The cohorts in the RCI present their proposals; work-in-progress; and have a chance to share ideas and concerns with research methodology experts from the two countries. My research proposal and work-in-progress were presented at that forum. I received feedback that I used to further shape my study. By doing this I allowed others to critique the research manuscript - following the developmental process. I included professional colleagues and research participants in this process to ensure that information was reported accurately and completely. I feel that the steps that I have followed make my study credible and dependable. I have also explained - in detail - the data collection and data analysis processes. The findings of this study can be transferable to similar situations.

3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Research at schools in Gauteng Province is regulated by the Department of Education's *District Memorandum 70 of 2002*. This circular outlines the procedures that have to be followed to obtain permission from the department to do research at schools under the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE). I followed that process and was granted permission to proceed with my research. After permission had been given by the GDE and after I was convinced that I would be able to do research at the school, I requested permission from the School Governing Body to continue. I also sought permission from the parents of the learners who were directly involved in my study - scanned copies of signed consent forms are archived as a folder on my computer. However, in terms of anonymity, I cannot make the signed consent forms public. A blank example of the form that I used is provided as Appendix 2.

In granting permission to conduct research, the school community asked me to use the school's real name in the final report. This is an ethically controversial issue - and after discussions with the ethics committee at my institution and careful deliberations with my study leader - I decided not to use the school's real name. If, however, in the process, someone is able to deduce which school I studied, it goes without saying that no researcher can guarantee total anonymity. I was very careful not to jeopardise my relationship with the school.

I made an appointment to meet the principal. On the first morning I waited in the reception area for my turn to see him. I was given my first voluntary one-hour interview on the same day. This interview was an eye-opener because it helped me understand information that I later found in the documents. During the first interview, the principal gave an overview of the history of the school from before he was principal until the day I met him. The aim of this interview was to get an overview of the events at the school; to ask questions about the procedure of my research; and what procedures and dates would best suit the school. The principal highlighted the history of the school – especially in relation to the desegregation process - which became very helpful as the research progressed.

He then offered me a quiet space in the school library and an office in the administration building which I could use if I needed to. This was the end of the second term in 2004 when the Grade 12s were busy with their term tests. The school was reasonably quiet because the other learners were also busy with their term tests. I decided to start with the study of documents while the learners were writing their term tests.

I explained my research to the school principal - especially the process and purpose. The learners were made aware that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at anytime - but I encouraged them not to do so. The principle of privacy - which means that the information they would give would be treated in the strictest confidence and that they would remain anonymous throughout - was adhered to. The school would receive a copy of the research report when it was completed.

I promised to stick to the principle of trust. This meant that I would not betray or deceive the school or the learners in any way during - and after - the research process. If the results of the research were to be published, the school would be informed first and it would receive a copy of the draft of the publication that may emanate from this research. The University of Pretoria has a committee responsible for ethics in research and I met all the requirements set by that committee before I started with my fieldwork.

3.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter has dealt with the research paradigm, the research design, and the methodology which were embarked on during the research. The research design was explained - together with the strategies used in the data collection process - and reasons were given each time. The sampling of the school and the participants - together with the reasons for their selection - were also given in this chapter. The learners represented the majority of the learners in this school and are evidence of the diversity of learners one would find at Van Den Berg High School during the time of this research. The next chapter describes the data gathered.

According to Merriam (1998:24), Dey (1993), and Brewer *et al* (2000: 62), there is no standard format for reporting qualitative research - there is a diversity of styles to do that. The next two chapters consist, mainly, of stories from the learners as they shared their experiences with me - as well as information I gathered from the school documents and from my observations. Experiences are always what have already happened, so most of the experiences are in the form of stories. These were open coded in ATLAS.ti. As the main themes emerged, an intriguing story unfolded as a result of the data linked together in terms of the themes.

Chapter 4 relates the story of how Van Den Berg High School changed from a previous Afrikaans Whites-only school to a desegregated one, focusing on diversity. The process is highlighted by the documents of the school. The story shows that Van Den Berg High School was prompted to change by policy and law changes. It did not

find change easy – even though most people at the school were committed to the changes that were taking place at that particular moment. Some learners had been in the school for quite some time and, therefore, they had witnessed its metamorphosis. Some of the information in the school documents is supported by what the learners talked about during the interviews.