

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Social Research and studying social life cannot proceed without a guiding theoretical scaffolding or paradigm (O'Brien, 1993). Paradigms are general frameworks through which to see life; they provide a set of assumptions about the nature of reality. A paradigm is what we think about the world but cannot prove (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). These paradigms or systems of thinking guide a study by defining its nature along the dimensions of ontology, epistemology and methodology. Ontology specifies the nature of the reality to be studied. Epistemology specifies the nature of the relationship between the researcher and what can be known. The methodology defines the practical way in which the researcher goes about doing the research (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). As such a paradigm's strength is that it allows action to take place, its weakness is that the reasons for action are hidden in the unquestioned assumptions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The assumptions underlying the chosen paradigm determines what questions the researcher asks and how these questions are answered (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). Thus they act as a lens that changes the shape of what is seen. It is therefore important to place a study into its theoretical context (O'Brien, 1993). Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999) describe three paradigms: the positivist, interpretive and constructionist. In this chapter these paradigms will now be described so that the current research can be placed into its theoretical context and its guiding framework described. The subsequently arising methodology or how the current research was practically carried out will then be explained. The way in which the data was gathered and analysed will be detailed. A brief description of the three paradigms outlined by Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999) will now follow.

3.1.1 The Positivist Paradigm

The positivist paradigm sees reality as stable, external and governed by laws (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). There is one reality; a truth to be discovered that is independent of human perception (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper & Allen, 1993; Guba & Lincoln, 1988). The epistemology defines the researcher as detached from the subject being studied (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). Objectivity in inquiry is mandatory and inquiry should be value free (Erlandson et al., 1993). The methodology relies on control and manipulation of reality; it is usually quantitative in nature, usually using experimental designs that involve hypothesis testing. This methodology aims at providing an accurate description of the laws that govern reality (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). The aim of science is to arrive at generalisations preferably causal in nature. The truths of these generalisations are dependent upon ability to predict and control (Erlandson et al., 1993).

3.1.2 The Interpretive Paradigm

The interpretive paradigm defines reality as created in that it is based on people's subjective experiences of their internal world. This paradigm treats people as though they are the origin of their thought and feelings. These truths derived from people's subjective experiences are real and to be taken seriously. In short reality is constructed in the minds of individuals (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999; Guba & Lincoln, 1988). Following from this the perspective acknowledges multiple truths and multiple realities (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher's stance towards reality is inter-subjective and empathic. The methodologies used are qualitative in nature and acknowledge this subjective relationship between the researcher and subject (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). Research is not seen as being value-free as a researcher cannot create an objective distance from the topic of inquiry. The researcher's view of reality is therefore considered to affect the study, as is the perspective of those interpreting and reading it. The researcher's point of view, biases, and personal experience that impact on the study must be explored and addressed (Creswell, 1997). Methods rely on first

hand detailed accounts. People's reality can be discovered by interacting with them and listening to them (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). This kind of research aims at discovering how the subject of study understands life (Babbie, 1998). The subjective reasons and meanings that lie behind behaviour are explained (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999).

3.1.3 The Constructionist Paradigm

Finally the constructionist paradigm sees reality as socially constructed. Systems of meaning originate on a social rather than an individual level (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). Facts are created through an interactive process (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). This kind of research looks at how social signs and images have the power to create particular representations of people and objects and these underlie the way people experience them (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). Although people can act to change their social and economic circumstances they are restrained in doing so by forms of social, political and cultural domination (Myers, 1997). The researcher adopts a suspicious and politicised epistemological stance towards reality. Methodologies employed are qualitative and interpretive in nature and concerned with meaning. However the focus is concerned with how these meanings are formed on a wider social level. This kind of research aims to show how different versions of these socially constructed realities of the world are produced in discourse, how language is used to manufacture meanings and other social facts. It shows how constructions of reality make certain actions possible and others not. The methods allow the researcher to deconstruct various versions thereby raising the conscious awareness in people of conditions that restrict behaviour and alienate individuals (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999).

3.2 THE PARADIGM GUIDING THE CURRENT STUDY

The task of the current study is to discover the personal experiences of individual volunteers and the subjective meanings that this role has for them. The aim is to understand the experience of the role from the participant's point of view, an

interpretive paradigm is therefore chosen. The epistemology chosen is a combination of ethnography and case study research, which falls under the interpretive paradigm and uses qualitative methodology. Ethnography results in a description of shared beliefs and behaviours of a particular group of people. The approach is interested in how the participants theorise about their own behaviour (Uzzell, 1998). Creswell (1997) states that in using qualitative methodologies for inquiry into a social or human problem the researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyses words, reports detailed views of participants, and conducts the study in a natural setting. This methodological approach addresses the stated aims of this study in that it can supply a framework for providing a holistic picture of the hospice volunteers' experience. It also addresses the current need to look at the human dimensions of the role as it examines the phenomenon under study from the point of view of the research participants, allowing them to explore their own subjective experience. It attempts to make sense of or interpret their experience in terms of the meanings that they bring to it (Creswell, 1997). Ethnography will now be discussed in further detail.

3.2.1 Ethnography

Ethnographic research originated in studies of cultural anthropology with 20th century anthropologists such as Boas, Malinowski, Radcliff-Brown and Mead. The approach was utilised in their studies of comparative cultures. They tried to follow the natural sciences as a model for research but they differed in that they engaged in first hand collection of data by interviewing members of the different cultures (Creswell, 1997). Recently the scientific approach to ethnography has expanded to include other subtypes of ethnography with different and varying theoretical aims. As such there is a lack of orthodoxy in the approach to ethnography (Creswell, 1997).

According to Van Maanen (1995), ethnography is no longer "ordered and organised principally by geographic region, society and community, or social

group. Adjectival ethnographies have become quite common, and libraries are now well stocked with works in medical ethnography, school ethnography, occupational ethnography, organisational ethnography and many more” (Van Maanen, 1995, p.10). Micro ethnography, also called focused or specific ethnography, emphasises particular behaviours in specific settings rather than explaining entire cultural systems. The focus is narrowed and the cases highly contextualised. This trend has led to an expansion of ethnographic interest, method and styles. Just what is required of ethnography is by no means clear (Van Maanen, 1995).

“Ethnography claims and is granted by many if not most of its readers a kind of documentary status on the basis that someone goes ‘out there’, draws close to people and events, and then writes about what is learnt *in situ*. It is, by and large, the ethnographer’s direct personal contact with others that is honoured by readers as providing a particularly sound basis for reliable knowledge” (Van Maanen, 1995, p.3). The researcher interacts closely with participants and the distance between the two is minimised. The researcher’s goal is to experience directly the phenomenon under study, to enter into the life and language of the participant. Data is collected in an unstructured manner over long periods of time (Creswell, 1997). The researcher usually works with a few key informants (Van Maanen, 1995 & Fetterman, 1988) and participates in everyday routines that are engaged in by those who are being studied. Ethnographers remain linked to the people that they study in the field within their particular context. The connection that exists between the author and the authored is based on the faith that what is learnt within the field will outweigh the anticipation from theory and preconceptions (Van Maanen, 1995).

Ethnography places emphasis on the meanings that behaviours and experiences have for the people being studied. Human behaviour has meaning to those who engage in it. Ordinary people are used to build description out of their common experience. Ethnography reveals the details of people in specific situations. The

description is built up out of a series of interviews, repeated explanations and special questions (Spradley, 1979). The format is a descriptive one involving analysis and interpretation (Creswell, 1997). "Culture refers to the acquired knowledge that people use to interpret experience and generate social behaviour" (Spradley, 1979, p.5). The examination of culture includes looking at people's behaviour; what they do; the nature of their language and content of what they say; the tension that exists between what they do and what they ought to do; as well as what they make use of, i.e. artefacts (Creswell, 1997). Spradley (1979) shifts the emphasis of culture from behaviour; customs, objects and emotions to the meaning of these phenomena by defining culture as shared knowledge. Spradley (1979) believes that ethnographers should not only record emotional states and behaviour but that they should go beyond these states to discover the meaning behind them. The meanings are learnt in the context of society in interaction with others. Meanings are handled via an interpretive process and used by individuals to handle what they encounter. Ethnography is a tool for seeing things through the eyes of those who experience them, thereby discovering the insider's view (Spradley, 1979).

In keeping with the interpretive paradigm, ethnography sees reality as having multiple perspectives - no one absolute truth exists. Objective distance is not maintained between researcher and participant as it is thought to be impossible for the researcher not to influence the data. The researcher's view of reality is therefore considered to affect the study, as is the perspective of those interpreting and reading it. These influences are then not denied or controlled but rather exposed and addressed. The researcher needs to report these differing perspectives and consider these realities. Ethnography therefore challenges the empirical positive approach in that it claims all knowledge is relative and not independent of the investigator (Creswell, 1997).

Another characteristic of ethnography is "thick description" and depth (Denzin, 1989, p. 83; Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 94). As the researcher seeks description

of the phenomenon, a high level of detail is given. As the goal is to describe the participant's world, strong theoretical formulations are not necessary in the beginning of the research (Yin, 1993). The story is told informally in the style of a storyteller (Creswell 1997). The final aim of the product is a holistic, cultural portrait of the group that incorporates the views of the participant's and the researcher's interpretation of the views about human social life presented in a social science perspective (Creswell 1997).

3.2.2 Case Study Research

Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials - case-study, personal experience, introspective life story, interview, observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts - that describe routine and problematic moments and meaning in individuals' lives. More than one strategy can be used in a study at any given time. So it can be seen that various strategies are not mutually exclusive (Yin, 1988). The case study is one method of investigating a particular topic and is chosen as an appropriate research method when it is difficult to separate the phenomenon under study from the context. The phenomenon under study is therefore examined within its context (Yin, 1988).

The multiple case study design is seen to be more compelling than single case study designs and are considered more robust. In multiple case study designs replication is achieved via developing a theoretical framework. The framework states the conditions under which the phenomenon is likely to be found or not found (Yin, 1988).

The case study investigator's aim is to re-tell the story from the participant's point of view (Yin, 1988). Evidence in terms of specific interviews and observations are used to draw conclusions. As the research seeks description of the phenomenon, a high level of detail is given. This is compatible with ethnography's requirement for "thick description" (Denzin, 1989, p. 83; Erlandson

et al., 1993, p. 94). The case study method is further in keeping with the ethnographic epistemology as the goal is to describe the participant's world and therefore strong theoretical formulations are not necessary in the beginning of the research (Yin, 1993).

3.2.3 Ethnographic Case Studies: application to the current study

In this study a combination of the ethnographic framework and case study research methodology is used to explore the behaviours and emotions attached to volunteer work and the meanings that this work has for the volunteers. The ethnographic framework is used to see the experience of volunteering through the eyes of the volunteer thereby gaining an insider's view (Spradley, 1979). The focus of the study is narrowed specifically to exploring the experience of the hospice volunteer as opposed to an entire culture and it therefore constitutes a micro ethnography (Van Maanen, 1995). Three hospice volunteers are used as key informants (Van Maanen, 1995 & Fetterman, 1988). The distance between the informants and myself is minimised as I engage in volunteer work alongside them (Van Maanen, 1995).

Within this study it is difficult to determine where the influence and effects of the role of volunteerism begin and end. The volunteer experience needs to be explored but the variables involved can not be either easily identified or separated. The rewards and difficulties of this role are cited as being intertwined (Uffman, 1993). Ethnographic case studies are therefore felt to be an appropriate method for this study. Theories to envelop an integrated picture of the impact of the role of volunteer do not yet exist (Uffman, 1993). Both ethnography and case study research methodology seek to explore the phenomenon from the participants' point of view via detailed description and therefore strong theoretical formulations about the phenomena are not necessary at the outset of the study (Yin, 1993). The case study, although it can also be used in quantitative investigation, is in keeping with the qualitative methods and ethnographic epistemology as it retains a holistic approach to the investigation of

the phenomenon. To gain a holistic picture of the volunteer is stated as an aim at the outset of this study. As case studies examine the phenomenon within its context (Yin, 1993) a detailed description of the hospice setting is given in chapter one.

Multiple ethnographic case studies, three in all, are used as the chosen design for this study (Creswell, 1997). The unit of analysis is single case studies comprising volunteers that have counselled at the hospice for at least twelve months. They are therefore felt to be knowledgeable about the experience of the role of hospice volunteer (Creswell, 1997; Yin, 1993).

Each case study describes the details of the experience of the role of hospice volunteer and incorporates edited quotes from the volunteers. The final product of this study is a holistic, cultural portrait of hospice volunteers. Case study and ethnography strive for understanding that comes from visiting personally with the informants by asking participants themselves to reflect on the questions posed. Interviews are used as a method of data collection for these ethnographic case studies (Yin, 1988). Information is gathered from semi-structured interviews and participant observation.

Three case studies are used to explore the subjective experience of hospice volunteers, what their role entails how this experience impacts their lives and what it means to them. As the volunteers were known to me and worked alongside me as colleagues they were willing to be open and explore their experience with me. The volunteers chosen were not well known to me outside of the hospice setting. They were chosen as I experienced them to be open, approachable people with an ability to express their views and experiences eloquently. As they had all been involved with the hospice for at least twelve months they were considered to be knowledgeable enough to answer questions on the experience of the effects of volunteer role on hospice workers. Spradley, (1979) claims that one way of estimating how thoroughly a person has learned

the cultural scene depends on the length of time spent in the culture and if they have current, first hand involvement. The sample is small; to facilitate achieving the depth that is required by ethnographic inquiry.

Although the qualitative methodologies utilised by the interpretive paradigm accommodates multiple perspectives on reality the sample chosen is homogenous in order to facilitate the possibility of generalisation to other situations. The three volunteers are in the same age range (40-50 years), all were raised in South Africa, all were from a similar socio-economic status (middle class), and all are from the same racial group (white). Two were male and one female. The responsibility of proving transferability of findings however rests in the hands of the researcher who wants to transfer. The only responsibility for this study is to provide a rich description so that others have enough information to make transferability judgements possible (Guba & Lincoln, 1999).

3.3 DATA COLLECTION

Although the main aim of this study is to gain the volunteers' experience of their role before imposing theoretical interpretations, theory did influence the data collection to an extent. In this study literature was used initially to identify the need to examine the role of the hospice volunteer in an integrated fashion and to look at the impact of this role on individuals' lives (Uffman, 1993). During data collection literature, specifically Spradley (1979), also gave rise to some of the initial questions asked in the interviews. Strauss and Corbin (1990) claim that theory can be used as a means of stimulating questions and guiding initial observations.

3.3.1 Participant Observation

Fieldwork in the form of participant observation is a key element of ethnographic inquiry (Fetterman, 1988). In the broadest sense it involves conducting scientific inquiry where the observer maintains face-to-face involvement with the members of a particular social setting for the purpose of carrying out the investigation

(Johnson, 1975). In participant observation the researcher is not merely a passive observer. He/she may take on a variety of roles in the duration of the study and may even participate in the event under study (Yin, 1988). This allows the investigator to gain access to events that are otherwise inaccessible to scientific investigation. As the researcher shares in the life and activities of those under study he/she gains an understanding of the roles and the language of the participants (Denzin, 1989). Being in the field that you are studying is a powerful technique for gaining insights into the nature of human behaviour. It allows the researcher to tap a depth of meaning in concepts unavailable to other methods (Babbie 1998). The conclusions and interpretations are made in terms of the total experience as participant observer (Bryman & Burgess, 1994). As it entails an immersion in the culture the researcher may cease to think like a sociologist and adopt the perspectives of those under study. This problem is dealt with by awareness on the part of the researcher and keeping field notes where a record of reactions and changes in perception are kept (Denzin, 1989).

As a hospice volunteer myself, I was exposed through first hand experience to the role and its impact. I have been involved as a volunteer for three years and therefore know the culture well. My experiences and observations of this role were documented in a journal. These journals are available on request. The role of hospice counsellor involves writing a detailed report after every counselling session, which is given to the hospice social workers for the purpose of supervision. The report requires that a section is given over to introspection in which the counsellor is required to assess his or her own personal response to and experience of the counselling session. This part of the report was also useful to me, as a participant observer, to monitor my own changing reactions and experiences in the field. My interpretations of the case studies were made in terms of my whole experience and observations as a participant observer (Bryman & Burgess, 1994).

The interviews were also conducted against the background of submersion in the hospice volunteer culture, which allowed me to relate to the experience of the volunteers that I interviewed. The interviewer is by necessity also a participant observer in that he/she observes the persons report of themselves during the conversation and is therefore participating in the life experiences of a given participant (Denzin, 1989). Although my role of researcher has never been covert, my primary task at hospice was and still is that of volunteer.

3.3.2 Semi- structured interviews

I conducted interviews with the volunteers myself and each lasted approximately 90 minutes. Two interviews were carried out with each volunteer. They were semi-structured with the participant seen as an expert informant of their own experience. Semi- structured interviews are another tool used in ethnographic inquiry (Fetterman, 1988). These interviews took the form of a dialogue or interaction. They constituted a conversation with a purpose. The semi-structured interviews were guided by a set of basic questions and issues to be explored, but neither the exact wording nor the order of the questions was predetermined (Erlandson et al., 1993). A list of some of the questions can be found in appendix 2.

The questions were open-ended to allow volunteers to respond in any way they felt was appropriate. It was assumed that there is no fixed set of questions suitable for all individuals (Fielding, 1993b) and thus the volunteer was allowed to bring up considerations not thought of by the interviewer. As the interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis, they assisted in the exploration of any ambiguity elicited by the open-ended nature of the questions (Fielding, 1993b). The dialogue was encouraged by using clarifying, probing and confirming questions and statements. The answers were developed in this way during the first interview, second interview or via email. Probing statements such as, "Please elaborate on that", and prompting questions such as, "What other effects does this experience have on your life?" were used in order to gain fuller

answers. In this way the depth of information necessary to explore the topic was attained. The interviewer's part in the process and interpretation of the information was included and acknowledged. Listening to the participant and exploring the meanings were of utmost importance. The interviews were, with the permission of the participants, audio-taped and then transcribed in full after the interview (Fielding, 1993, b).

Transcriptions were done verbatim as I did not know which were going to be the most significant points (Fielding, 1993, b). The original transcripts have been kept on record and are available on request. The primary method of data analysis used in this study is the examination of transcripts from these in-depth interviews, with the aim of providing a detailed description of the case. The story of the volunteers is scripted from these original transcripts.

3.3.3 The Researcher as the Research Instrument

In the interview the researcher is the main instrument of data collection. This is demanding on the researcher's intellect, ego and emotions. He/she has to have the ability to ask appropriate questions and interpret the answers, be a good listener, be flexible, have a firm grasp of the things under study, and be open to contradictory evidence. Listening skills involve more than just the auditory modality - they include observing and sensing as well (Yin, 1988). The researcher has to show verbal and non-verbal interest, taking a passive, as opposed to an active, role (Spradley, 1979).

In ethnographic inquiry specific demands are made on the researcher. Engaging in participant observation means that an appropriate site has to be chosen and the researcher then has to gain access to this site. In ethnographic inquiry the person who controls entry into the site is called the gatekeeper (Neuman, 1997). In this study I chose the hospice described in chapter one as the site. The head social worker is the gatekeeper and I gained access through undertaking the appropriate training course. In ethnography the researcher has to decide how

much to reveal about him/herself and the nature of the project (Neuman, 1997). In this study the full nature of the project was revealed to the gatekeeper. Due to the nature of this kind of research the ethnographer also has to establish rapport with members of the culture under study. Being a hospice volunteer for three years facilitated this process.

3.4 DATA ANALYSIS

No consensus exists for the analysis of qualitative data (Creswell, 1997). Methods of analysis are least developed in this particular form of research strategy (Creswell, 1997; Firestone & Dawson, 1988). There are few fixed formulas or recipes to guide the researcher. Data analysis is “custom built” as qualitative researchers “learn by doing” (Creswell, 1997 p. 142). Much depends on the investigator’s rigorous thinking with the presentation of sufficient evidence and careful consideration of alternative interpretations (Yin, 1998). The aim of analysis is to treat the evidence fairly producing compelling analytical conclusions (Creswell, 1997). The data concerned appear in words rather than in numbers (Miles & Huberman, 1988). It involves the systematic examination of something in order to determine its parts, the relationship amongst these parts and their relation to the whole. It is possible to achieve this end in more than one way (Spradley, 1979).

Although there is no consensus for the analysis of qualitative data, most authors follow common features. A general overview of all information is recommended. Detailed description is initially gleaned from the participants, and the words used by the participants are analysed. The material is reduced by classifying it into themes or dimensions by using coding (Creswell, 1997). A characteristic of qualitative data analysis is that it moves in analytical circles rather than in a linear progression. It cannot be reduced to particular stages or set techniques, it is rather a dynamic process. There is a constant interplay between data gathering and analysis (Bryman & Burgess, 1994). Themes provide interpretation of the experience in light of the participant’s own views or views in literature (Creswell,

1997). A qualitative researcher works inductively developing categories from participants rather than specifying them in advance (Creswell, 1997).

This study used the procedure of interpretive analysis as set out by Terre Blanche and Kelly (1999). The principle of this analysis is to stay close to the data and interpret it from an empathic understanding. The purpose is to attain a thick description of the phenomenon under study by describing its characteristics, transactions, processes and contexts. It involves a backward and forwards movement between description and interpretation, foreground and background, part and whole (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 1999).

The following steps were generally followed although in reality the process did not progress in an orderly step-wise fashion (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 1999):

1. Familiarisation and immersion. The information from the interviews was taped and written down. These transcriptions formed the basis for the analysis. The data was read and re-read to gain a sense of the whole database. The process of data analysis involved the development of ideas and theories about the phenomenon, in this case the volunteers' experience of their role. At the end of this stage the data base was well known in terms of where things could be found and what sorts of interpretations were likely to be supported and which not (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 1999).

At this point feedback on initial summaries was obtained by giving information back to the participants. This is a way of obtaining verification in that the participant states whether information has been accurately recorded. As the phenomenon is to be described from the participant's point of view this is an important form of attaining verification in qualitative research (Creswell, 1997).

2. Introducing themes. This process is inductive in that general rules are inferred from specific instances. The organising principles that naturally underlie the material were identified (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 1999). I tried to move beyond summarising by thinking in terms of processes, functions, tensions and contradictions. The themes chosen reflect the interest and focus of the study (Rubin & Rubin, 1995) such as the meaning behind the volunteer role and the impact that the volunteer role has on the volunteers' relationships outside of the hospice.
- 3 Coding. This phase happens concurrently with introducing themes. Different sections of the data were marked off, using coloured pens, as relating to one or more of the themes (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 1999). In this process, the participant's responses were sorted into the different themes bringing together ideas or concepts that had been discovered (Rubin, 1995). The coded material was analysed as a cluster and in relation to other clusters (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 1999).
4. Evaluation. During this stage, the material was examined and re-examined until a good account of the volunteer's experience had been given. This process was continued in light of the themes that emerged until different sub-issues came to light (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 1999). As data was reviewed and re-reviewed new themes developed. Each time new themes were added I went back to the interviews to mark off these concepts, themes and ideas by again coding the material (Creswell, 1997; Rubin & Rubin, 1995). After the interviews were marked into the different coding categories all the material for the same codes were put together. These themes were then reduced again in order to write a final narrative (Creswell, 1997; Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

Creswell (1997) states that given this perspective the analytical process can be best described as fitting a spiral contour. This process is termed

data analysis spiral. Spradley (1979) echoes this by claiming that qualitative research does not provide sequential steps to analyse data, rather it requires constant feedback from one stage to another. Although steps can be identified they all go on at the same time. In this non-linear process it is not always clear as to which stage of the research process we are in.

5. The researcher, when finished with the process, emerges with an account or story (Creswell, 1997). The story is told using the themes (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 1999).

With multiple case designs such as the one chosen for this study, a within-case analysis is done following the process described above for each individual case. This is then followed by a thematic analysis across all cases (Lincoln & Guba cited in Creswell, 1997). To begin the final data analysis all the material from all the interviews that speak of one theme or concept is put into one category. The material within the categories is compared to examine it for various nuances and meanings. The different case studies provide different perspectives illuminating each theme. Comparisons are made across the categories to discover connections between themes (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). The meanings and interpretations are made in light of established theories in the field of study. Generalisations about cases in terms of patterns are made and how these compare or contrast to published literature on volunteers. This process is documented in chapter seven. A problem encountered during the analysis was that of the answers to the interview questions being wide in range and therefore difficult to categorise (Fielding, 1993 a).

3.5 DATA INTERPRETATION: CONFRONTING THE DATA WITH THEORY

Social science theories provide an explanation, a prediction and a generalisation about how the world operates (Creswell, 1997). Without theory it is difficult to see similarities or differences amongst different cases and it would be difficult to

interpret these aspects (Yin, 1988). After data analysis literature can be used to validate the accuracy of findings in a study or it can be used to point out differences and similarities to current findings (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In this way theory also guides the strategies for interpreting the data (Yin, 1988). Lists of concepts that repeatedly appear in literature may be significant, and it can be seen from these lists whether or not these categories apply to the current data. Literature in qualitative studies enables the researcher to identify previous research in the area, discover where the relevant categories of interest are and suggest relationships amongst them so that categories can be put together in new rather than standard ways (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). However, seemingly relevant elements found in literature are incorporated only as they prove themselves to be pertinent to the gathered data. Theory can thereby provide ways of approaching and interpreting the data. Literature can also be used as secondary sources of data such as quotations or descriptions.

When two or more case studies support the same theory, replication can be said to have occurred. As opposed to generalising to the universal population, case study research is used rather to expand our understanding of theoretical propositions where context cannot be easily separated from the phenomenon and in situations where events cannot be manipulated. This is called analytic generalisation (Yin, 1993). Analytic generalisation is to be contrasted with statistical generalisation. Statistical generalisation is where inferences are made about the population from the information gathered from a particular sample (Yin, 1988). In this study no statistical generalisations will be made. The descriptive case study makes no causal links and analysis is minimal, so less theory is required in the initial phases (Yin, 1988). The aim is to define the world in the way the volunteer sees it, before imposing theories.

In this study the data interpretation section of each of the three ethnographic case studies (chapters five, six and seven), as well as the integration in chapter eight, uses previously developed theory and research findings (found in chapter

two) as a template with which to compare the results. The findings are confronted by literature in order to establish where each ethnographic case study differs or supports previous research findings and theory. In this study however, I try to challenge our assumptions, delve beneath our experience and look beyond the literature, as immersion in the literature may have coloured expectations (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Therefore the literature reviewed in chapter two is used in the above fashion to confront the data only after it has been analysed.

3.6 OBJECTIVITY, RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

Within the qualitative research framework there are no statistical techniques to rely on to establish the validity of results (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 1999). The conventional way in which internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity are used to establish the trustworthiness of research findings are inconsistent with the assumptions of interpretive paradigm of multiple realities (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The establishing of the trustworthiness of findings in a qualitative research dissertation is based on the premise of multiple constructions of reality. To demonstrate trustworthiness the researcher has to show that the multiple constructions have been represented adequately. The re-constructions that have been arrived at must be credible to the original constructors of reality. This credibility is achieved by conducting the inquiry to improve the probability that the findings will be seen to be credible and by having them approved by the original constructors of these realities (Guba & Lincoln, 1999). In this study the following methods were used.

3.6.1 Prolonged Engagement in the Field

One technique used to create credible findings and interpretations is prolonged engagement in the field. In this way the context of the study can be sufficiently understood by the researcher so that misconceptions about the culture under study can be avoided (Guba & Lincoln, 1999). I have spent approximately three years as a volunteer in the service of hospice and so have had prolonged

engagement with both the participants and the hospice culture. I therefore feel that this criterion has been sufficiently met.

3.6.2 Thick Description

Measuring a study's value by the ability to generalise results to a population is replaced with the concept of transferability in qualitative research. According to Guba and Lincoln (1999), transferability of results in a qualitative study depends upon the similarity of the original context within which the study was carried out and the context to which the results are being transferred. The responsibility of proving transferability however rests in the hands of the researcher who wants to transfer. The only responsibility for a qualitative study is to provide a rich description in which the widest possible range of information is provided so that others have enough information to make transferability judgements possible (Guba & Lincoln, 1999; Smaling, 1992). In this study a small sample of three was utilised in order to provide this depth and richness of description. The theoretical framework of ethnography, case study research methodology and grounded theory analysis all facilitate thick description.

3.6.3 Multiple Sources

Using multiple sources of evidence addresses problems of construct validity because these sources provide varying measures of the same phenomenon (Yin, 1988). In this study interviews and participant observation are used. During participant observation I wrote journal notes, which were also consulted for the study.

3.6.4 Peer Debriefing

To look at the interpretation of the data with others is cited as an important corrective in qualitative research (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 1999; Smaling, 1992). In this way content validity is established (Smaling, 1992). This process is called peer debriefing and is carried out by other researchers or supervisors. It allows the findings to be reviewed by other professionals who are outside of the context

under study. They must have enough general understanding of the nature of the study to debrief the researcher and provide feedback that refines and frequently redirects the inquiry process (Erlandson et al., 1993). In this study both my supervisor and co-supervisor acted in this capacity.

3.6.5 Member Checks

Another method of attaining construct validity in qualitative research is achieved by handing over the rough draft of the interviews for the participants to examine and to see if they agree with the way the researcher has presented the information (Yin, 1988; Smaling, 1992). This method, called re-negotiation, was utilised in this study. The transcripts were given to the participants for their approval. As the aim of the study is to gain the participants' perspectives of how they experience the role of volunteer, this is the most important test of construct validity (Erlandson et al., 1993).

Checking whether or not the participants agree with the way in which their realities are being represented can also be achieved during and at the end of each interview. During the interview the participant can verify interpretations and data gathered in earlier interviews. At the end of the interview the data can be summarised and the participant can be allowed to correct errors of fact or challenge interpretations (Erlandson et al., 1993). This practise was carried out during the data gathering in this study.

3.7 ETHICS

The following codes and ethical guidelines provided a framework for how this study was conducted:

3.7.1 Informed Consent

The Nuremberg Code No. 1 (cited in Walters, 1997, p. 201) states..." The person involved... should be so situated as to be able to exercise free power of choice... and should have sufficient knowledge and comprehension of the subject matter

involved as to enable him to make an understanding and enlightened decision." Informed consent means knowing consent or that the individual or his legally authorised representative is able to exercise freedom of choice. It is essential that the human subject be able to give voluntary consent (Walters, 1997).

To attain these ends a full explanation of the study must be given to the subject in a language that is understandable to him (Leaning, 2001). Point 9.11.1 of the draft for the ethical code of professional conduct as set out by the Professional Board of Psychology (1999, p. 38) states, "Psychologists use language that is reasonably understandable to research participants in obtaining their appropriate informed consent. Such informed consent is appropriately documented". I was personally responsible for attaining consent from each participant. A full explanation of the study, what it entails, what would be done with information and what would be expected of the participant, was provided before consent was attained. The participants were also given a consent form to sign.

In light of the personal nature of the information being gathered, participants were not pressurised into giving information that they were not comfortable to part with. The interviews were structured around open-ended questions so that the participants could control the flow of information. The information to be presented in the final document was given to the participants for approval before being submitted. Participants were also told that they could withdraw from the study at any time, and in such a case, any information gained from interviews would be returned to them.

3.7.2 Consequential Justification

When writing of research involving human subjects the Nuremberg Code, 1947, rule 2 (cited in Walters 1997, p. 194) states, "The experiment should be such as to yield fruitful results for the good of society, unprocurable by other methods or means of study, not random or unnecessary in nature." In other words the social benefits accruing from research involving human subjects should be made

explicit. The anticipated results should justify the performance of the experiment (Walters, 1997).

According to Uffman (1993), relatively little attention has been paid in literature to the role of hospice volunteer and its effects on the lives of individuals. This research approach has the potential to provide valuable information to both hospice and the volunteers about the experience of counselling the dying and bereaved and the effect that this has on the lives of volunteers. The information could assist in understanding the type of support required by these volunteers and could help in providing a better service to the dying and bereaved.

3.7.3 Making Information Available to Participants

The results reported in this study are freely available. The research has been made available in the form of a masters dissertation and a separate form of feedback will be made available to hospice depending on their requirements.

3.7.4 Confidentiality

Participants should be able remain anonymous and should be afforded pseudonyms (Spradley, 1979).

The privacy of the subject and his/her family must be protected in all aspects of the study's design and implementation. All information relating to a traceable individual and their family must be kept confidential at all levels of research implementation, extending through the process of data analysis, preparation of reports and publication. The possible risk of exposure must be addressed by describing the methods in place to ensure that no harm can come to the subjects due to having participated in the study (Leaning, 2001). Any limitations with regard to confidentiality must be fully discussed (Professional Board of Psychology, 1999).

Confidentiality has been observed in this study by providing pseudonyms for the participants. It is possible, however, that due to the detailed nature of the stories the participants may still be recognised. This was explained to the participants at the beginning of the research so that the decision to participate was made with this knowledge.

3.8 CONCLUSION

The aim of the ethnographic case study is to gain a close-up detailed description of the phenomenon under study as seen from the perspective of the participants (Yin, 1993). The perspective of the participants therefore creates reality (Yin, 1993). In the following chapters the three ethnographic case studies are described using the above methodology to interpret and describe the experience of the hospice volunteer. The findings are then interpreted by confronting them with the theories and findings explored in chapter two.