

CHAPTER 4

INTRODUCTION TO THE THREE CASE STUDIES

In the following three chapters the data from each of the individual case studies will be presented. In chapter eight, an integrated view of all three cases is then given. The data was obtained from transcripts derived from individual interviews held with each of the three volunteers. Four main themes have been used to explore the experience of the role of hospice volunteer. These themes are briefly explained below and then addressed in greater detail the following four chapters.

4.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE ROLE: This theme comprises descriptions of the volunteer's motives for bringing them to their role of hospice volunteer, a description of the practical aspects of the volunteer role and the volunteer's individual perception of that role. 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. There are several ethnographic components in this theme. In describing their role, the volunteers cover the behaviours that they engage in through their hospice work. The subjective perception of the role for each volunteer brings an ethnographic element to the case studies as it leads to an exploration of some of the meanings behind their role. Describing perceptions leads to an exploration of the hospice's influence on the volunteer's view of the role, which demonstrates how some of these meanings are learnt within the hospice context.

4.2 THE EXPERIENCE OF BEING A VOLUNTEER: This theme covers the subjective meaning of the volunteer role for each individual volunteer and how they experience different aspects of the role. As stated ethnography places emphasis on the meanings that behaviours and experiences have for the people being studied (Spradley, 1979). This theme therefore also comprises an ethnographic element. Furthermore it contains a description of the

different aspects of the volunteer's life affected by their role. This theme produces the most differentiation in terms of sub-themes due to the individual nature of each volunteer's experience. Some of the sub-themes that emerge are: confronting mortality, relating to clients, negative experience, personal growth, and effect of the volunteer role on relationships outside of hospice.

4.3 A WAY OF COPING: This theme consists of a description of the coping mechanisms that each volunteer uses to deal with their role and experiences as described in the above two themes.

4.4 THE INFLUENCE OF THE HOSPICE CULTURE: This theme consists of a description of how the volunteer experiences the hospice environment/culture. It explores how the hospice programme ethos/ ideologies, training, supervisory support and groups impact on both the experience and role of the volunteer as described in the first two themes. The individual volunteer's sense of compatibility or identification with the hospice programme's ethos or ideologies is also explored.

As stated, within these main themes, sub-themes emerged and are described. The sub-themes differ within each case study according to each volunteer's individual experience. Some of the sub-themes are common to all three volunteers as becomes evident in the following chapters.