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**BECOMING AND BEING A LAY VOLUNTEER COUNSELLOR:  
AN INTERPRETATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS (IPA) STUDY**

by

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Human respect! There is the touchstone. For as long as the Nazi respects only what resembles him, he respects nothing but himself. In rejecting contradiction he destroys all hope of man's ascent, establishing for a thousand years in its place the robotism of the ant-heap. Order for order's sake castrates man of his essential power, which is to transform both the world and himself. Life creates order, but order does not create life.

It seems to me that our ascent is far from complete, that tomorrow's truth grows out of yesterday's error, and that the contradictions to be overcome are the very compost of growth. We recognise as ours even those who differ from us. But what a strange kinship! One that is based on the future, not on the past. On the end, not on the origins. We are each other's pilgrims, who toil along different roads towards the same meeting place.

But today human respect, the very condition of our ascent, is threatened. The creakings of the modern world have led us into darkness. The problems themselves have no coherence; the solutions contradict each other. Yesterday's truth is dead, tomorrow's still to be constructed. No valid synthesis can be glimpsed, and each of us holds but a fragment of the truth. Lacking the proofs that would make them unassailable, the political religions resort to violence. And so, divided as to the means, we risk forgetting that we are all pursuing the same end.

If the traveller following his star across the mountain becomes too absorbed in pondering ways of reaching the top, he risks forgetting which star it is that guides him. If we act merely for the sake of action, we will get nowhere. The pew attendant in the cathedral, over-zealous about the arrangement of her chairs, risks forgetting that she serves a god. So, by absorbing myself in the passion of party politics, I risk forgetting that politics are meaningless unless they serve a spiritual truth. In rare moments it is given to us to taste a certain quality in human relations: that is where our truth lies.

(De Saint-Exupéry, 1995, pp. 114 – 116)



# *Dedications*

*To my late Grandparents*

*Amod Ismail & Kulsun Hassim*

*Ebrahim Patel & Aminda Patel*

*I treasure your blood running through my veins. Your lives are my epitaph.*



*To my Parents*

*Fazul Hassim & Rashida Hassim*

*Who ceaselessly poured their hearts and souls into fostering my happiness.*



*To my Wife*

*Fatima Bibi Hassim*

*For syndicating my core, and sharing my dreams.*



*To my Son*

*Mikhail Hassim*

*The essence of rapture. My rhapsody.*

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## ABSTRACT

This study embarked on exploring the experience of becoming and being a lay volunteer counsellor from a psychological perspective. Six participants were interviewed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as the research method. Race and gender are divided equally amongst Black, Caucasian, male, and female participants.

Numerous dimensions relating to the lived experience of lay volunteer counsellors are investigated in the present literature, suggesting that the experience of becoming and being a lay volunteer counsellor is multifaceted. The subjective experience of each of the participants was explored, with the optimism that this exploration would expound on the multilateralism of these facets. Although specific experiences remain exclusive to each participant, the intersecting and co-creation of meanings culminated in the cultivation of themes common to the participants.

These themes are examined against the literature, critically appraising supportive and distinct suggestions. As is evident from the results, participants have a profound appreciation of the stimuli which influence their experiences of lay volunteer counselling, but also of the circumstances surrounding the origins of their sense of volunteerism. Even though some of the literature addressed themes relevant to the participants' experiences, a small number of themes could not be juxtaposed against available literature.

Based on the narratives of the participants, as well as data in the literature, volunteers constitute a reasonable component of the service sector and assist a sizeable population. Therefore, the value of the lay volunteer counselling population should be recognised in order to develop further training and support programmes for this subpopulation. As it appears, recognising the essence of this value begins with appreciating the experience of becoming and being a lay volunteer counsellor.



## Key Terms

Lay volunteer counsellor; volunteerism; volunteer motivations; volunteer needs; becoming; being; interpretative phenomenological analysis; qualitative research; postmodern philosophy; intersubjectivity; reflexivity.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### Overview

In this chapter, the researcher is introduced and the research vista is evoked. This is accompanied by the researcher's perspective with regards to the material. Thereafter, the rationale for the study is explored. The research question is expressed, and the research problem is described. Once the research goal is put forward, the structure of the research report is provided, culminating in a summation of this chapter.

#### Background

Human beings are a sensing species, laden with acute emotive intuition. The subjectivity of these sensations cannot be justly captured by phonic or textual symbols such as words. Language, however, makes some attempt at translating the meaning of words into feelings which may be experienced both interpersonally and intrapersonally. This process, too, can only translate that which vocabulary aims to describe or symbolise. The essence of which remain feeling-based as opposed to language-based. How then does one depict the lived experience of becoming and being a lay volunteer counsellor? The process is not simple. Indeed, a subjective and intersubjective exploration of these experiences, relayed via a languaged conduit, may impart a sense of these experiences. Yet, as an audience member, one would undoubtedly find this study particularly valuable should s/he apply, in chorus, both feelings and thoughts whilst reviewing this investigation. Engaging in one's own cognitive and affective process may facilitate the intersubjective experience, lending itself to the appreciation of the lived experience of the participants. This process of relating to research material appears to be similar to the process whereby the lay volunteer counsellors relate to their recipients.

Lay volunteer counselling is a mutually beneficial activity aimed at providing both the counsellor and the recipient with a sense of satisfaction. This is due to the reciprocal nature of the supportive functions suggested within these activities. Symbolically, while the house requires a firm foundation to be built upon, the foundation need not exist without the house. Similarly, lay volunteer counsellors and patients/clients appear to exist in a functional relationship but, more importantly, appear to endow each other with a sense of meaning. Hence, as in various settings, meaning is co-created, shared, and experienced with the self, as well as with others.

Considering that lay volunteer counselling is customarily perceived as an unpaid service provided by an under-qualified population, little consideration is awarded to the value and experiences of these groups and individuals. However active this population appears to be within the service industry, lay volunteer counsellors seem to be marginalised. This appears to be in relation to their coexistence with formally accredited individuals who are often regarded as superior on a hierarchy of service providers.

While research may have focused on the professional-paraprofessional-lay perspectives of volunteerism, this may have limited the scope of the study. Considering that lay volunteer counsellors demand no financial compensation, they may more-readily and more-willingly access the poverty-stricken community – in other words, the larger portion of the South African community. With these participants having access to a sizeable and diverse South African population, and stemming from diverse communities themselves, exploring the overall subjective experiences of these lay volunteer counsellors appeared more desirable.

### **Motivation for the study**

De la Porte, Jordaan & Gravett (2005) suggest that lay volunteer counsellors execute a critical role in care-giving by providing social, spiritual, physical, and emotional support to the general public. In considering the noteworthy services that many of these lay volunteer counsellors provide to the public, it may serve the academic

community well to explore the experiences of becoming and being a lay volunteer counsellor. Performing this research exploration is of great consequence within the South African milieu since limited research into the experience of lay volunteer counsellors has been conducted.

Inquiry with this population is important since lay volunteer counsellors often serve as the initial line of defence from which patients/clients obtain counselling services. They therefore play a pivotal role in containing some of the effects of the recipients' trauma. In so doing, lay volunteer counsellors propagate counselling as a therapeutic service, and may thereafter refer patients/clients to registered counsellors and/or psychotherapists. Since this populace serves as an adjunct to therapeutic services, research in this field may assist referring factions, such as psychologists, in appreciating the individuals who refer patients/clients to them.

This study therefore aimed to contribute to the voluntary counselling sector in South Africa. The outcomes of this contribution may lead to the advancement of programmes aimed at volunteer selection, training, management, and empowerment. This is in response to the limited body of work, specifically research, into the voluntary sector in the South African context and in comparison to the extensive research conducted in the American and European countries (e.g., Hackl, F., Halla, M., & Pruckner, G., 2007; Freeman, 1997; & Thoits & Hewitt, 2001).

The aim of the study, therefore, was to explore the experience of the lay volunteer counsellor in order to develop and encourage further research in the voluntary sector and thereby effect proactive development.

### **Brief description of the research question**

The research question stemmed from an interest in the motivational factors regarding the engagement into, and the experiences of, lay volunteer counselling. However, research participants also intimated situational and subjective dynamics which

colour these experiences. They therefore presented a kaleidoscope of experiences which have had degrees of influence on becoming and being a lay volunteer counsellor. Much of the literature explored these facets and, in so doing, reinforced the value of unrestricting the definition of motivation.

### Research question

What motivates lay volunteer counsellors to initiate and maintain help-giving services?

### **Research problem**

#### **Incredible Career Opportunity:**

- ★ Earn up to an incredible R350 per month (Terms and Conditions apply\*)
- ★ Work for approximately 12 hours per day. Flexible hours if you prefer!
- ★ Deal primarily with anguish, morbidity, and helplessness. Rarely deal with happy clientele.
- ★ Company benefits include:
  - ✓ No annual leave
  - ✓ No annual increase
  - ✓ No bonuses
  - ✓ No PAYE, UIF, or medical aid
  - ✓ No possibility of promotion
- ★ Excellent job satisfaction.

\* Stringent institutional rules apply.

Consider perusing the local newspaper and coming across this advertisement. Reflect, for a moment, on your personal inclination of, or reaction to, this commercial. Would the following expressions suffice: opportunity of a lifetime; career development;

financial sustainability; comfort; and security? Possibly, these terms may appear absurd to a considerable number of people, and it would be presumptuous to assume that this “advert” would be considered in earnest. Yet, the implications suggested in this piece are quite evidently the reality of many lay volunteer counsellors. This, I have come to infer from my experience in counselling, and working with, lay volunteer counsellors. This experience has become the basis for my interest in considering the motivations regarding becoming and being a lay volunteer counsellor.

In deliberating on volunteer motivations, Clary and Snyder (1999) indicate that volunteering is characterised by certain features: the volunteer seeks out the prospect to help after a period of consideration; the volunteer provides help over time; and his/her decision to begin and/or continue to help are influenced by his/her experience of whether the specific endeavour corresponds with the volunteer’s individual needs and goals. Cull and Hardy (1974) also indicate that volunteers are quixotically motivated and want to dedicate some of their time to mankind. These persons may also want to enter the volunteer community without career expectations, although some ultimately do enter a professional sphere, for example nursing and social work. In my view, thirty-four years subsequent to Cull and Hardy’s (1974) statement, the time was ripe to explore whether these authors encapsulate volunteer experiences and motivations in the South African context.

### **Research goal**

The aim of this study is to explore the myriad of reasons for beginning, and continuing, to provide help-giving services.

### **Structure of the research report**

The research will be reported on in the format of a mini-dissertation, silhouetting the process of the study and employing Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as the selected methodology.



### Orientation of this study

Postmodernism as a philosophy is exercised. Here, emotion, intuition, and variation are celebrated (Alvesson, 2002). Truth is subjective. Postmodern philosophy complements phenomenology in that personal experiences and perception are culminated to collect an across-the-board creel of experiences and perceptions. This, undeniably, is what the study aspires to accomplish, and invariably links with IPA as the proposed research methodology. The argument in favour of this is uncomplicated: subjective experience is appreciated (Smith, 2008) while concurrently recognising the value of an empirical method (Willig, 2001).

### Research design

The processes of becoming and being a lay volunteer counsellor are subjective and it therefore becomes germane that this study cascades into the framework of qualitative research. Smith (2008) indicates that a qualitative methodology is commonly employed with exploration, description, and interpretation of the subjective and collective experience of partakers.

### Research method

The research method employed in this study is IPA. Relevant literature was navigated throughout the research process. Individual interviews were conducted to collect data, followed by an analysis and thematic construction phase. These phases and their results were discussed in terms of the research question, and were thereafter juxtaposed against literature. This concluded in recommendations for future research.

### Measures to ensure quality research

An examination of the methods to ensure research quality was conducted. These included considerations of transferability, dependability, conformability, and credibility.

## Ethical considerations

The ethical constitution of the full research process was considered to be a pivotal prerequisite in conducting this study. Participants were afforded anonymity, confidentiality, and autonomy. This was facilitated in an environment of conviction and respect.

## Structure of the dissertation – outline of the chapters

*Chapter 1* serves as the introductory chapter and presents the context of the study.

*Chapter 2* centres on an appraisal of the relevant literature, deliberating on salient aspects pertinent to the study.

*Chapter 3* explores the research methodology, including the rationale for employing the specified methodology.

*Chapter 4* focuses on the results of the study, including an exploration of the superordinate themes in relation to the participant's narratives.

*Chapter 5* merges the results with relevant literature, providing an integrated account of the results obtained in terms of new, dissimilar, and consistent themes.

## **Definition of terminology**

Language, by and large, creates our beliefs and world (Freedman & Combs, 1996). The words and thoughts we use constitute reality. Routh (1972) quotes Socrates as saying “If you would speak with me, first define your terms” (p. 1). In order to elucidate this research project, as well as to make clear my view of who lay volunteer counsellors are, I shall attempt, through language and definition, to provide descriptions of these

individuals (and groups) with the anticipation that the reader shares some perception of these languaged realities with me.

Epigrammatic definitions of specific terms used within this study are provided in order to facilitate intelligibility on the implied usage of the terms:

#### Lay volunteer counsellor

Within the context of this dissertation, the term lay volunteer counsellor is used to refer to a person with no formal counselling training, no specific intent leading to the registration with an accredited organisation, and who engages in counselling activities with little or no monetary compensation for these activities.

#### Biotic community

This term was coined during this investigation and refers to any system which has an influence on a person's life. Examples include familial systems, spiritual systems, and biological systems.

#### Self

The self refers to the central facets of personhood which relate to subjective reality (Reber & Reber, 2001). The self, therefore, is that part of a person which represents personal experience and subjective representation.

### **The reflexive web**

#### The study

Having trained as an intern trauma counsellor allowed me to communicate with lay volunteer counsellors at a grass-roots level. This unfastened an interest in their

subjective experiences. Furthermore, training for a Masters' degree in Clinical Psychology aided in my appreciation of the psychological processes underlying these experiences. The amalgamation of these events led to my interest in exploring this area further. Having conducted a literature review, it became apparent that research regarding the voluntary sector in South Africa was limited – suggesting a need for further literature within the South African context.

### The researcher

At the core of my being, I revere respect. It is a quality which I admire in others and continually aim to cultivate within myself.

I am an individual, and part of many systems. I believe in biology, spirituality, intersubjectivity, individualism, myth, and underlying realities among others. Professionally, I view myself as an integrative individual, finding value in all paradigms and perspectives. I, therefore, prefer to be inclusive as opposed to exclusive.

As epitomised by this study, I am not a static entity. I function multi-dimensionally, and have various states of being. Dialogue, physics, culture, personal identity, and group identity all have a role in my life. It is due to this multidimensionality, I think, that my research may appear to be authored by multiple selves. I do not regard this as a limitation, but more as a reflection of who I am and why my research is the way it is. Some may observe a display of linguistic gymnastics; others may perceive my language as linguistic contortionism. From any subjective perspective, these views may be accurate. From an intersubjective perspective, I hope that my use of language says something about my awareness of my audience – notably academia; but also about the awareness of my self, or selves.

### Intersubjectivity

I have deliberated much on intersubjectivity in this study, and should therefore admit that this dimension has become increasingly important to me – particularly through discourse with my supervisor, but also from literature which has inspired me (McDowell, 2003; Russel, 2005; Stolorow & Atwood, 1996; Stolorow, Atwood & Brandchaft, 1994; Williams, 1999). Towards the end of this study, I had come to the conclusion that subjectively, my objective was to illustrate the intersubjectivity during the research process. I trust that this was evident throughout the research report.

### Reflexivity

Finally, it is important to discuss the reflexive process which I exercised during this study. Reflexivity, for me, is a tentacular transaction whereby thoughts, feelings, internal communication, and external dialogues are exercised. It is for this reason that certain sections in the study are explored under the title *The reflexive web*. This suggests the interlacing nature of these transactions. However, since this process is interlacing in nature, the reflexive process could not, and should not, have been isolated to a specific section in each chapter. Hence, the reflexive process is cordoned off at times, and is intertwined within the general body of work at other times. Since this was a dynamic process, the absence of a reflexive section does not indicate the absence of reflexive material.

### **Summary of chapter 1**

This chapter propositions the need to study the lived experience of becoming and being a lay volunteer counsellor. The context of the research was illustrated in terms of the research problem, rationale, and aims of the investigation. Thereafter, the format of the report was explored. To conclude the chapter, the reflexive web was introduced. This allowed for the researcher to position himself within the context of the research.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Introduction

Volunteerism forms a large part of numerous fields associated with the global service sector. The contribution of volunteers appears to be applicable to most spheres indicative of the professional-client liaison, service provision, awareness edification, and information and research development (Routh, 1972; McSweeney & Alexander, 1996). Furthermore, a great deal of literature delves into the constructive applications rendered by this populace – of which only a few are germane to this study. The objective of this chapter, therefore, is to converge on the pertinent aspects relating to the subjective realities of lay volunteer counsellors. The intention, then, is to incorporate the experiences of becoming and being lay volunteer counsellors. Consequently, this will include literature pertaining to the lived experiences of lay volunteer counsellors. This, by implication, also proposes an inductive process of hypothecation and substantiation in terms of the motivations surrounding the decision to initiate and continue to participate in lay volunteer counselling activities. This process can then be utilised as a contrivance when the experiences of the participants of this study are explored further on in the dissertation – either supporting or transforming the syllogisms posited in earlier literature.

Furthermore, this chapter resolves to converge on the literature regarding maintaining factors, indicating the rationale for continuing to work in the voluntary sector. This is placed in the context of personality traits, internal and peripheral reinforcement, as well as obligation-satisfying circumstances. Accordingly, the processes implied in the experiences of becoming and being a lay volunteer counsellor are investigated in the literature and placed into the milieu of this study's emerging themes such as *working for god*, and *the wounded healer*, as examples.

Within the context of this study, a focus on personal experience was employed. Certainly, subjective experience as observed by an objective party, such as a researcher or academic audience, is continually subject to the quest for analogous data. Therefore, the literature review deliberates on aspects which appear to be common in lay volunteer counsellors in terms of personality traits and environmental factors, to name a few.

The literature review is concluded with themes specific to lay volunteer counselling in the hospital environment, as well as a short exposition on a Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) assessment of volunteers. Thereafter, the objectives of the study are summarised.

In order to supply a comprehensive sketch regarding the context of lay volunteer counsellors, this chapter commences with a review of primordial literature – some of which may be regarded as historiography, others which may be regarded as superannuated. Most of which have merit in the context of this study as is offers one a sense of the temporal understandings of the experience of volunteers.

Furthermore, my personal experience as volunteer intern trauma counsellor at HospiVision has tinted my perceptions in terms of volunteerism. My subjective experience of volunteering, together with my interaction with lay volunteer counsellors, has fostered an interest and appreciation for those who engage in the voluntary sector.

At this point, it seems fitting to introduce HospiVision.

### HospiVision

HospiVision is a non-governmental, faith-based organisation operating at the Steve Biko Academic Hospital. Established in the 1980s, the then nameless organisation consisted entirely of Christian devotees dedicated to providing spiritual support for patients at the, then, H. F. Verwoed Hospital. Prayer was the treatment of choice, but these volunteers often offered a listening ear to patients as a means of reprieve from their

suffering (De la Porte et al., 2005). With the official naming of HospiVision in 1999, the faith-based organisation was structured to provide hospital patients with not only spiritual support, but also psychosocial support (HospiVision, 2008).

At present, HospiVision (named in the late 1990s) is focused on providing patients with emotional support – albeit their focus has been renovated to exclude Christian-exclusive denominations. Volunteers are trained in basic counselling skills and spiritual care. The training sessions are centred primarily on White’s (1995) work in Narrative Therapy. A move away from staffing a Christian-exclusive volunteer base, the organisation now includes volunteers of different religions, spiritual inclinations, race, and culture. Furthermore, psychology students are encouraged to voluntarily join the organisation to gain practical experience. This alliance has facilitated a new double-bind development at the organisation in recent times. In developing their counselling skills at the hospital, many students are propounding the science of psychology, which is atypical to the organisation’s traditional perspective. In my experience with this organisation and these volunteers, a developing awareness of ‘counselling’ is being fostered, in opposition to ‘missionary’ work.

As HospiVision has been introduced, an appreciation of merging my personal experience with my literary survey may be valuable in that merging the two spheres provides the scaffolding for this study.

### The literary context

Exploring early literature is not unfounded. It creates the framework which serves as an underpinning for the current investigation. Certainly, an alternative researcher may have constructed a dissimilar literature review, yet this has some significance in terms of this particular study. The literature review is a personal interpretation of existing literature. As it says something about the topic at hand, it also suggests something about the researcher. Hence, this chapter is a reflection of the interplay between the literature, the researcher, and the participants’ lived experiences. Accordingly, and subjectively,



imagery may be utilised to depict the function of this particular literature review in order to facilitate the audience's insight into the researcher's standpoint.

The literature review forms the exoskeleton of the current investigation. Should one consider the research process, including its associated stakeholders, as the organism of the study, then the literature review provides the support for such an organism. Hence, it protects the integrity of the research by providing it with a structure, or context, within which the current investigation may be positioned. With time, any exoskeleton develops a greater degree of strength. This, too, appears to be valid in terms of research since later literature appears to be appended by former studies. To then explore existing literature, as researcher, becomes a natural process, although the limitations as to how far back one should explore becomes a matter of opinion, as well as a matter of preference. It is therefore proposed that a diachronic analysis of literature be conveyed in order to provide the tracing of the context of lived experiences and volunteerism from historical perspectives to current perspectives. Consequently, the subsequent segment is entitled *quondam* perspectives. This is supplied in order to satisfy the position of tracking the progression of becoming and being a lay volunteer counsellor.

### **Quondam perspectives**

In resolving a point of departure, the question of which research to include arose. From its depths, issues surrounding an analysis of contemporary literature versus classic literature evolved. Any researcher may have come to a decision as which sphere to centre on. Yet, some may have settled on combining the two spheres – as is evident in this chapter. Nonetheless, even in selecting which spheres to address, each researcher opts for that which s/he deems appropriate. Thus, this literature review may deviate significantly from another researcher's literature review based on availability of literature, personal preference, and the context of subjective and intersubjective experiences thereof. Furthermore, this process suggests a trajectory of the researcher's frame of reference, having an influence on what this literature review is, and on what it could be. From a personal perspective, commencing from historical perspectives, merged with related

constituents of the lived experience of volunteerism, appeared to be a valuable exercise in contextualising the researcher's subjective perception of the study at hand. A quondam perspective, therefore, moves from past to present and suggests ideas from which current data stems.

The attempt to understand experiences and human relatedness can be traced to studies on the philosophy of the mind. McLeish (1999) is of the view that Aristotle's ideas regarding dualism suggested that the connection between the body and mind implied the connection between behaviours, for example, and thoughts or feelings. These ideas then developed with 17<sup>th</sup> century rationalist philosophy presupposing the interplay in connectedness of both the body and mind. Garret (1995) indicates that Baruch Spinoza's notion on the operation of necessity illustrates the possibility of humans appreciating their modes of functioning, specifically in terms of behaviours. Thus, a significant emphasis had begun to be placed on personal discernment. Contemporary sources (Assiter, 1984; Barry, 2002; Holyoak & Morrison, 2005) are of the view that the philosophical and empirical advances in areas such as structuralism and inductive reasoning, including developing methods of statistical syllogisms, fostered a process whereby subjects were investigated as objects. At this juncture, one may query whether objective analysis fleeces subjective experience. This does not appear to have been the occurrence as subsequent literature (Jaspers, 1969; Keen, 1970) evidences an embryonic literary focus on subjective experience – stemming from objective investigation. This caenogenesis from a philosophical system to a scientific system has promoted a phenomenon whereby researchers may investigate subjective experiences such as becoming and being a lay volunteer counsellor – traits of which can be retraced to Aristotelian philosophy.

In modern times, the supply of voluntary employment has been appreciated as a noble facility, proffered to people, by persons who have a fundamental sensitivity and conviction regarding the needs of people. As such, volunteers are disposed to discharge duties in order to gratify these needs. Nonetheless, the validation and acknowledgement often required by volunteers led some to enquire the core function of voluntary work.

Early researchers often marvelled at speculating whether the ambition of volunteer workers was to satisfy the needs of the clients, or the needs of the volunteers (Routh, 1972). Subsequently, numerous hypotheses surfaced regarding the basis of volunteering (Lauffer & Gorodezky, 1977). It seems appropriate to introduce some of the early hypotheses posited. The architects of these hypotheses are termed hypothetists, the literary proper for the customary term *hypothesist*.

Early hypothetists, including Cull & Hardy (1974), posited that volunteers are quixotically stimulated and are paid in psychogenic revenue, with the knowledge that s/he is trading an ethereal service which cannot be financially remunerated. One ought to observe, however, that the majority of literary opuses focused on the public reward of the voluntary sector, with little attention being paid to the volunteer as a subject. For example, Holme & Maizels (1978) concentrated on volunteers as suppliers of practical tasks, who befriended clients, and counselled people. Lauffer & Gorodezky (1977) observed that volunteers impart undeviating support to clients, they execute clerical duties, are engaged in community interactions, raise funds, and assist with policy making and advising. Murgatroyd (1985) composed extensive writings regarding counselling as helping, focussing a great deal on counselling skills – as he intended. At length, he begins to explore areas which focus on the helper which he aptly terms *helping the helper*. Here, one may anticipate the needs of helpers, their experiences, and so forth – yet, he merely suggests devices such as training and supervision. Hence, he too, concentrates on counselling as a subject, as opposed to the volunteer as a subject. Certainly, this is not a review of Murgatroyd's work, yet it is essential in appreciating the subject material relevant at the time. None of these writers essentially pored over the volunteer, but focused instead on volunteer services. The applicable literature thus far provides a rudimentary impression of relevant writings at the time – focusing more so on volunteers in general, and an absence of literature regarding lay volunteer counsellors. Nevertheless, subsequent literature evidences an increase in interest in lay volunteer counsellors, as subjects and as a field of study (Sundararaman, 2007; Haines et al., 2007; Kaufman, Mirsky, Avgar et al., 2005; Freeman, 1997). Specific, contemporary literature will be addressed comprehensively shortly.

Early notions on the subject of volunteers indicated that these individuals were often seen as socially-inclined. In earlier periods, women generally comprised the voluntary sector and were baptised *grey ladies*. Of late, this term has become archaic due to the influx of males in the voluntary sector. The terms and labels applied to identify volunteer workers then included phrases such as candy strippers; community workers; indigenous workers; and aides (Cull & Hardy, 1974). These terms benefit one's knowledge in terms of the possibilities regarding society's view on volunteers in earlier periods, namely being society-focused (Shibutani, 1955); helpers (De Boer & Coady, 2007); and possibly limited in their expertise, but willing to learn more (Clary & Snyder, 1999). As a result, one may wonder whether these views continue to function at present. Literature appears to indicate that this remains to be the current position (Claassens, 2004; Sundararaman, 2007; Schneider, Hlope, & van Rensburg, 2008; Malchodi et al., 2003). This suggests that the sociological view of volunteers, on the whole, continues to be an enduring view in the fullness of time.

According to Heron (1990), a volunteer may be regarded as a practitioner since s/he offers a skilled service to the client/patient. Furthermore, volunteers conduct interventions in order to assist patients/clients. Since many interpersonal settings in the volunteer's personal sphere are similar to experiences in the client/patient's personal sphere, the volunteer feels adept to relate to the client/patient. However, certain features foster the conditions which construct every interpersonal situation unique. Hence, comparable interventions may be applied to similar interactions, but each intervention requires an idiosyncratic choice of articulation, syntax, scheduling, and manner of speech. This indicates the variable infrastructure which the volunteer needs to adapt to which does not ordinarily become a matter of mere instruction, but more of a developmental process. A phenomenon which appears to remain stable temporally.

### **Topical perspectives**

This section of the chapter aims to centre on specific aspects relating to lay volunteer counsellors. While it may have been respectable to simply supply aspects

relating to lay volunteer counsellors, it appeared valuable to focus on the dynamic relating to these aspects. As such, a differentiation is made between typical perspectives as opposed to topical perspectives. Typical perspectives would certainly provide one with the qualities necessary to contextualise the research. However, topical perspectives indicate the localisation of those qualities in terms of context. This is necessary especially in consideration of converging on an explorative subject such as the lived experience of lay volunteer counsellors. As a result, delving into the etymology of both topical and typical became appropriate to selecting the title for this section.

According to the United Nations Development Programme (2003), more than 300 million volunteers supplied their communities with labour in excess of US\$15 billion. In countries where empirical research was conducted, the supply of voluntary labour was estimated to be between 8 and 14% of the Gross Domestic Product. This indicates a significant economic influence on a fiscal level, but additionally adds to capacity building on an individual level. Hence, a volunteer cultivates marketable skills and boosts his/her self confidence. On a social level, volunteers have assisted in fortifying a sense of civic reliability and membership; they have associated distinct interest groups; and they have promoted understanding and increased forbearance of diversity. This, then, has some significance which influences governments and communities, ordinarily anticipated to be beneficial to governance and society at large. However, in the microcosm of volunteer significance lies the vision of empowerment. Since volunteers stem from within communities, “empowerment begins with a rediscovery that the seeds of a solution lie within” (Lewin et al., 2008, p. 3). Consequently, volunteers within a community act as a catalyst for communities to reconcile their specific injuries. These findings are greatly supported by no less than forty other research studies (Lewin et al., 2008).

Heretofore, one may query the rational motive as why some volunteers empanel counselling above other voluntary pursuits such as fund raising. For research purposes, there appears to be limited literature apropos counselling as a volunteer preference.

An interesting study (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992) focusing on themes in therapist and counsellor maturity highlighted a worthy subject which strikes one as being pertinent to lay volunteer counsellors. Skovholt & Ronnestad (1992) established that persons who were engaged in counsellor activities, before specialised education, often operated in what they term *the conventional mode*. Evidently, during this phase, the individual functions as an aide and helps other individuals or groups in accordance with the lay counsellor's established and accepted tenets which dominate the lay counsellor's behaviour in typical relations. Here, the 'counsellor' sphere and the 'everyday' sphere are analogous in terms of the lay counsellor's performance as counsellor. The aforesaid research therefore implies that the lay volunteer counsellor invests a large component of his/her personal identity into his/her counsellor identity. It is consequently perceptible, in respect of inductive reasoning (Holyoak & Morrison, 2005), that an exploration into becoming and being a lay volunteer counsellor would invariably suggest an exploration of the subjective experience-as-individual. Furthermore, the preference to counsel may suggest the volunteer's need to relate to, and interact with, other individuals (Bond, 1993).

Clarkson (1994) indicates that counselling-orientated individuals are predominantly the progeny descended from a somewhat maladaptive familial unit. Early exposure to unbalanced or disconcerting environments may fashion an inclination to nurture injury, albeit something of an emotional excoriation. This process indicates that the individual develops into a visceral rescuer, placing him/her in a superlative position to be of assistance to others. However, this observation cannot be generalised and is contested by the work of Ferenczi (1980) who believed that children, in general, covet the notion of nursing their families. Clarkson (1994) devotes a large portion of her views on the idea of the wounded healer. This concept will be further explored later in this chapter, in the section entitled *convergent perspectives*. However, ideas proximate to the wounded healer, the innate curative facets of children, and the equilibrium or disequilibrium of early systemic functioning should be borne in mind during the interpretative/analysis phase of this particular study.

Comparing the motivations to counsel (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992) with the motivations to volunteer by and large (Clary & Snyder, 1999), it appears that the helping, service-providing functions (De Boer & Coady, 2007) do not vary in terms of volunteerism (Cull & Hardy, 1974). Therefore, a distinction between the motivations to be a lay volunteer counsellor and the motivations to volunteer in general have little bearing on exploring the experience of becoming and being a lay volunteer counsellor.

Volunteers are frequently engaged in an assortment of activities, all of which have help-providing actions as a substrate. Many volunteers spend an average of three hours per week on their endeavours, and the persons most likely to volunteer are non-retired individuals who are currently employed in the open market (McSweeney & Alexander, 1996). These statistics are British-specific cultivations which may, or may not, relate to the South African voluntary labour force. As an annotation, the United Nations Development Programme (2003) indicates that volunteers constitute 47% of the non-profit labour force; therefore further investigation regarding this subject may well inform convoluted studies in the future.

In spite of this, McSweeney & Alexander (1996) provide a constructive view of the motives to volunteer – all of which may possibly pertain to the South African volunteers. The motives include a desire for companionship; governmental reasons, such as confronting a social concern; employment redundancy, and a desire to utilise time proactively; religious and sacred grounds; a need to gain experience in order to acquire remunerated employment; having the skills and/or ability to provide specific help; a longing for communal contact; an inclination to be of assistance; and/or having time available. These findings seem to be consistent, and therefore suggest dependability, with other literature (Clary & Snyder, 1999) regarding the needs of volunteers.

The reasons discussed formerly will be considered in terms of the research participants of this study during the interpretative process. In addition, it may be useful to consider a suggestion formulated by Martin Knapp (in McSweeney & Alexander, 1996), who is of the view that volunteers may be attempting to satisfy a certain social

anticipation of conduct in order to obtain esteem or societal endorsement for involvement in the conduct (i.e. volunteering). He further indicates that volunteering may be a restorative/remedial process whereby the volunteer generates an atmosphere to aid in the management of internal anxiety and insecurity regarding self-esteem (i.e. a need to be needed).

Auxiliary literature supporting the work of McSweeney & Alexander (1996) and Clary & Snyder (1999) includes the investigations by Richard B. Freeman. Freeman (1997) indicates that even though some might consider the voluntary workforce to encompass a bevy of matured ladies, the voluntary sector essentially comprises persons who are employed, with a towering efficiency rate, and who have been significantly educated. The research conducted by Freeman (1997) indicates that volunteers receive utility superior than can be ordinarily quantified in terms of financial remuneration. A further observation includes the phenomenon that not all persons are willing to volunteer if requested to do so. Accordingly, he too questions the essence underpinning volunteerism.

Hackl, Halla & Pruckner (2007) view volunteering as either a consumption or an investment. Within the consumption approach, certain constraints (such as lack of income) serve as an impetus to volunteer. Therefore, the lack of recompensed employment permits certain individuals to volunteer their time. Conversely, the investment hypothesis suggests that engagement in the voluntary sector serves as an investment conducive to augmenting financial revenue in the salaried labour market. Hence, participation in voluntary activity (e.g., serving in a soup kitchen) allows one to increase his/her financial income in the paid sector (e.g., investors purchase commodities from the 'volunteer's' company).

There appear to be subcomponents regarding the motivational reasons underlying volunteering. These are specifically based on intrinsic motivators, and include: the volunteer's concern for the beneficiary's gain; there is a simultaneous pleasure in volunteering and an intrinsic gratification in performing voluntary behaviours; and the act



of helping activates warm-glow benefits such as the knowledge that the effort expended supplicates a worthy cause. These intrinsic motivations extend into the consumption approach. Although these ideas may suggest an either-or tactic in terms of motivational reasons (i.e. either the consumption approach, or the investment hypothesis), existing empirical findings appear to be indistinct. These outcomes indicate two prospects: quantitatively, the present research does not indicate lucid numerical validity; and/or qualitatively, motivations to volunteer transform in due course thus indicating an overlapping between consumption and investment motives (Hackl et al., 2007). Having considered a small number of motivational theories may not appear to converge on the core features of the experience of lay volunteer counsellors, but as Clary et al. (1998) indicate, stimulus dynamics, subjective reality, and experiences often intersect and cannot, in the main, be explored as discrete concepts. Hence, it may be crucial to deliberate on these motivations as the research process progresses. This is reflected particularly in consideration of the dearth of literature as regards the lived experiences of lay volunteer counsellors (Rath, 2008).

To adumbrate that relevant literature amounts to aught would be fallacious. Rath (2008), for example, indicates that five themes egressed in her research of women's experiences of becoming volunteer rape crisis counsellors. These themes include: a motivation to be involved, such as training; the interaction between complexity and change, such as particular actions centring on individual variation; modification in personal kinship, including the effect on carnal relationships; personal transformation, including a pullulated feeling of self-worth and personal regard; and feminism, although the hindmost theme does not accurately classify rape crisis counsellors as polygyny partisans, but rather as venerating of the participants' clients. Considering the results in the research conducted by Rath (2008), in addition to the scope of the current research study, it is the researcher's proposition that a gender-neutral idiom, such as humanitarianism, replace the rubric *feminism*.

The experiences of developing into and inhabiting the existence of a lay volunteer counsellor cannot be appreciated without comprehending the motivational functions

pertaining to volunteers. Clary et al. (1998) have identified six motivational functions which characterise and explicate the functions of volunteerism. First, the volunteer's value system appears to impact his/her experience. These values may be structured from personal and/or political philosophies. Second, volunteers often have a need to understand. There is an attempt on the volunteer's part to discover – this sense of discovery appears to indicate a curiosity into organisational functioning, as well as the subjective experiences of clients. An additional function includes the desire to enhance his/her personal development, and this may vary amongst volunteers in terms of psychological and sociological development. Fourth, some volunteers engage in voluntary labour in order to acquire and/or augment his/her career-related skills. Furthermore, s/he opts to engage in voluntary work in order to facilitate the development, maintenance, and reinforcement of social complexes. Finally, several volunteers experience their voluntary endeavours as a hegira from either attending to, or circumventing, personal obstructions. Thus, volunteering serves a protective function. With these motivational functions in mind, it seems pertinent to introduce the factors culminating in therapeutic commitment.

Hunot & Rosenbach (1998) anticipate that a comity between the dynamics regarding role requirements and role security may culminate in the therapeutic commitment of volunteer counsellors. Guidance and education appear to be the underpinning of such a constitution. Accordingly, in being trained, volunteer counsellors necessitate the following in order to execute the phase of role requirements: information, support, practice, and self-esteem. Furthermore, the phase of role security is obliged by defining and exploring the adequacy and legitimacy of the volunteer's role. These dynamics facilitate the recrudescence of therapeutic commitment characterised by enthusiasm, fulfilment, and task-specific self-esteem. Although Schneider et al. (2008) focus on the contributions of lay volunteer counsellors in South Africa, they allude to the potentiality that the dynamics proposed by Hunot & Rosenbach (1998) are relatively comparable in terms of South African lay volunteer counsellors.

Schneider et al. (2008) deliberate on the incalculable role of volunteer workers contained by the public care domain in South Africa. They confer the utility of the volunteer worker as contributing new services, in preference to performing the role of paraprofessional. The outcomes of this research signifies that volunteer workers and lay counsellors have been principally focused on sanctioning the public, are community-oriented rather than community-based, and have fulfilled identity-related needs. Furthermore, volunteer workers function as a conduit for information between the health care system and patients/communities. The indication of this research is that volunteers serve a functional role in the health care system which may often be discounted, hence the limited data based on volunteer activity. Interesting research, then, would be to explore the views of key players, such as doctors and the public, in order to investigate their perceptions of volunteers. However, this research proposes an investigation further than the norm. In exploring the experience of the lay volunteer counsellor, the objective then becomes a focus on the volunteer. This suggests delving into the core in which one may begin to observe the world of volunteerism from a transposed (inside out) perspective, rather than from the outside in.

Bellamy (2001) indicates that many volunteers cannot financially afford to contribute as many working hours as they would prefer. In her research, Bellamy (2001) articulates that volunteers would contribute more working hours to the voluntary section if they were paid. However, financial incentive does not appear to be the foremost attribute leading to volunteerism. Mutchler, Burr & Caro (2003) address motivational themes in terms of mature adults entering in the volunteer sector. Older persons who engage in formal volunteer work often do so to sustain social engagement, and/or to substitute the excessive free time they experience subsequent to retirement. Additionally, an older volunteer's augmented aptitude to volunteer informally, such as assisting neighbours, is counterbalanced by the limited volume of requests they obtain due to a diminishing social system. It is interesting to note that the research conducted by Mutchler, Burr & Caro (2003) is consistent with the research conducted by McSweeney & Alexander (1996). Both sets of authors indicate that individuals in their midlife are more likely to participate in volunteer work. Furthermore, Mutchler et al. (2003) concur with

the results contextualised in continuity theory, in that persons with previous experience in volunteering are more inclined to participate in voluntary work later in life.

According to Bellamy (2001), volunteering increases as a holiday season *Zeitgeist*, resulting in many volunteer organisations campaigning for members during this period. During a phase where charity and benevolence are valued, it appears that many persons opt to participate in voluntary activities. However, the tendency to volunteer does not appear to be a decision based entirely on seasonal patterns, it appears to be based on a *gestalt* of habitude based on context and personality.

Based on the needs of society, volunteers mobilise themselves in order to assuage these needs. The endowment of time, currency, and resources often permits volunteers to experience a sense of service. However, the spin-off of these service-providing behaviours affords volunteers the opportunity to gain knowledge of the experiences, requirements, and attitudes of others. This facilitates an operation whereby volunteering infixes a sense of connection between families and society. To recognise each volunteer's efforts, and challenges they confront in their voluntary pursuits, is pivotal. Viewing these efforts as an axis, many volunteers indicate that their efforts are merited by the gains they earn. These gains are continuously encountered, particularly in terms of the volunteer's altruistic behaviours. Moreover, benefits comprise constructing a sense of community, rupturing difficulties between people, and improving quality of life. The overall acuity, established from subjective accounts from volunteers, is that most volunteers bristle the attitude of compassion (Bellamy, 2001).

Research conducted by Wilson & Musick (2000) prognosticates that the outcome of volunteering generates specific benefits to each individual, the scope of which exceeds voluntary act itself. These rewards might overtly be objectified as extrinsic variables such as help-catering behaviours, yet are essentially experienced as intrinsic incentives. In effect, the act of volunteering is a manifestation of the volunteer's distinctiveness and/or his/her morals. As an adjunct to these findings, one should note that the advantages of

volunteering often prompt other individuals to volunteer, creating something of an accretion phenomenon. This appears to be remarkably relevant to the older population.

Research into the utilisation of mature volunteers (Erlinghagen & Hank, 2005) indicates that mature Northern European volunteers participate with less restraint when compared to mature Mediterranean volunteers. It would be appealing, and in fact indispensable, to conduct similar studies in South Africa, especially in terms of the diverse demographics available. An investigation for such studies in South Africa has been fruitless. Such research may have supplemented one's knowledge in terms of voluntary engagement in mature adults in South Africa. Erlinghagen & Hank (2005) have established, for example, that expansive systemic, organisational, and cultural conditions have an immense effect on one's intention to volunteer. These findings have not been supported by research outside of Europe and therefore cannot be generalised. Nevertheless, a consideration of these ideas within the scope of the present study may prove to be constructive. However, do the affairs of state also play a part?

Holsopple (2001) conducted research based on the influence of political and natural perspectives on the decision to engage in volunteer pursuits. Her research indicates that individuals who have an interest in the political arena have a positive and considerable relationship to volunteering. She elucidates that political ennui may escort individuals into the direction of desiring to become more riveted in realpolitik. The outcome of her research, however, is suggestive that individuals who feel dispensed with by national government, often feel phlegmatic and select not to engage in practical politics. Holsopple (2001) therefore assumes that a sense of assiduousness from government mechanically indicates a sense of consideration in the local matrix. These results cannot be accepted as legitimate in all contexts and should therefore be researched within the South African perspective. Although ostensibly inconsequential, Holsopple (2001) provides the volunteer body of knowledge with a handful of amusing findings. These include findings suggesting that time spent watching television does not enhance one's proclivity to volunteer. These findings are not derisory in terms of volunteer interest in the political arena. Additionally, they do not illuminate the overall experience

of becoming and being a lay volunteer counsellor. There does, however, appear to be some research on pastoral counselling which appears to be relevant to the participant populace of this study.

O’Kane & Millar (2001) observed that ecclesiastics, particularly within the Catholic basilica, performed counselling work in order to meet the needs of their congregants. Where parishioners were often referred for specific difficulties, clerics often felt adept to transact the problem independently. No data is made available regarding the cleric’s response to situations such as, for example, a pons asinorum. Thus, issues such as angst versus amity; traumatic stress versus pliability; and a sense of ineptitude versus a sense of competency may have transpired. O’Kane & Millar (2001) state that clerics experience a sense of obligation to persevere with this type of work as they are of the opinion that the work is of great consequence. Further exploration may have suggested themes such as altruism (Clohesy, 2000) and egoism (McConnell, 1978), both of which were subtly implied in O’Kane & Millar’s (2001) study. This links soundly with the theme of spirituality.

It is anticipated that cogitating exercises, often associated with religion and spirituality, promote spiritual intensification. This process serves as an instrument of engaging in the common psychological method of reallocating one’s fixation with self to a sense of unity with others. This is a circumlocutory process resulting in either an iconoclastic form of individual development, or developing a disposition to amorous connectedness. Diverse spiritual and religious praxes, for example Buddhist and Judeo-Christian traditions, each approach this matter as a unique modus vivendi (Kristeller & Johnson, 2005).

### **Convergent perspectives**

Some of the literature hitherto has centred its attention on what may be termed psychologism, as much of the discussion has been grounded in non-psychological ideas within the domain of psychological understanding (Bustamante, 2002). Nonetheless, one

may argue that seceding logical psychologism (Le Bon, 2001), epistemological psychologism (Wood, 1999) and psychology as a discipline is superfluous, if not impossible. Therefore, demotic literature buttressed by substantial psychological protagonisms may provide a copious body of knowledge. A demotic term most commonly used to illustrate the function of a lay volunteer counsellor is *helping*.

The operations indicated in the helping process appear to be a pseudopodium of lay volunteer counselling. Reber & Reber (2001) indicate that helping behaviour is the provision of distinct support to another person or persons. These voluntary activities are expected to assist others with some form of incentive, although this latter may or may not be excogitated. This prosocial behaviour (Bringle & Duffy, 1998) is aimed at profiting another person or group by helping, consoling, or liberating the other party (Siegler, 2006). Furthermore, helping behaviours are differentiated from altruism in that altruism is a prosocial behaviour without the deliberate anticipation of a psychic or peripheral incentive, such as a material, societal, or personal reward (Hinde & Groebel, 1991). It therefore appears to be essential to consider this philanthropic quality that underlies helping behaviour.

### Altruism

Churchill & Street (2002) are of the view that a volunteer's altruistic acts are indicative of an underlying altruistic personality. One of the foremost attributes of this personality-type includes clemency, customarily associated with volunteers. The ideas which then ascend are a consideration of the experiences of altruism. This is not to suggest that "altruism" will be designedly explored, but an awareness of the possibility that this trait emerges, or does not emerge, should be colligated if and when necessary as it is a construct that is closely related to volunteerism. Reber & Reber (2001) define altruism as "the elevation of the welfare, happiness, interests or even the survival of others above one's own" (p. 25). This is a general designation, essentially employed in the social services fraternity. However, altruism may also be defined as "behaving so as

to increase the safety, interests or life of others while simultaneously jeopardising one's own" (Reber & Reber, 2001, p. 25).

Reber & Reber (2001) indicate that altruism may be understood as the amplification of the wellbeing, pleasure, or endurance of others in lieu of one's individual needs; or it may be understood as actions intended to augment the protection or existence of others whilst endangering one's own protection and/or existence. Although the former vindication is used more freely, the latter account delicately introduces an ethological consideration indicating evolutionary and genetic tendencies evident in many species. This, then, permits one to explore altruism in terms of *kin-selection altruism* and *reciprocal altruism*. This is not intended to craft an out-of-the-ordinary supposition – it is intended to explore the profundity of altruistic behaviours, specifically in lay volunteer counsellors.

Madsen et al. (2007) indicate that the developmental perspective of altruism is marked by a process whereby genera are unselected due to the probability that they may possibly not subsist in an arduous ecosystem. This is due to the notion that the continued existence relies on exceptional genetic material to warrant the survival of upcoming generations. The altruist, whether genetically fortified with superior genes or not, then executes specific behaviours in order to amplify the 'merit' of a person with a substandard genetic constitution. Research (Madsen et al., 2007; Kitcher, 1993) also indicates that perceived similarities in individuals fosters a process whereby individuals with similar attributes are willing to perform altruistic behaviours for their analogous counterparts regardless of incommode exerted on the altruist. These outcomes were corresponding across both gender and culture. In spite of these observations, the question regarding subjective recompense remains unanswered. Certainly, kin-selection may explicate the purpose of altruism to some extent, however, it fails to investigate the complexities of the affects, and its relative impetuses, constellated within the altruist – in this context, the lay volunteer counsellor. One means of exploring this concept further may be a concept termed reciprocal altruism.



Reber & Reber (2001) define reciprocal altruism as a term which “is best summed up by the golden rule ‘Do unto others as you would have them do unto you’” (p. 25). Trivers (1971) indicates that an individual is enticed to help others since s/he has the expectation that s/he may take delivery of a possible receipt in the future. Thus, the opportunity of a possible reward serves as an incentive to help others. However, the person opts to assist specifically when the profit outweighs the sacrifice of the action. Accordingly, the action serves somewhat of an investment. Trivers (1971) further indicates a process in operation regarding reciprocal altruism. This process entails reinforcement to and from the altruist in order to maintain the reciprocal process. At this juncture, it may be valuable to contrast reciprocal altruism from generalised reciprocity. Miller (2002) defines generalised reciprocity as having an impression that humanity, in its totality, will profit in some or many respects should people assist each other in particular ways. This conjecture, as defined and explicated by Miller (2002), appears to concern a would-be process focusing on broad-spectrum human relating, in preference to a focus on subjective experience. It therefore appears to be more appropriate to deliberate on reciprocal altruism in terms of the individual perception of becoming and being a lay volunteer counsellor – although the concept of generalised reciprocity could be attached to applicable experiences.

Kitcher (1993) indicates that there are critical distinctions in examining altruism from an evolutionary perspective in preference to a universal perspective. Dispensing with *human* altruism may detract one’s attention from the moral implications, as well as those characteristics which define humanness. This notion is in line with Rogers (1957) view that man’s aggregate moral fibre aims to defend him-/herself and his/her genus. It would therefore be obligatory to bear in mind that altruism is an integrative concept (Hackl, Halla & Pruckner, 2007), encompassing universal, biological, psychological, and sociological attributes – subsequently, one may delve into the implications of altruism in term of lay volunteer counsellors.

Clary, Snyder & Stukas (1998) argue that prosocial ideals and viewpoints are correlated with egocentrism and personal involvement. As follows, volunteering is a

reciprocative covenant advantageous to both volunteer and recipient. Nevertheless, prosocial timology are most efficacious if instituted subsequent to achievement. This finding is best understood at the level of the service-learning principle of action-reflection, serving the function of positive reinforcement. It is therefore plausible to deduce that the observation of altruistic behaviours, the participation in volunteering, and the experience of altruistic and intrinsically rewarded activities, produce an affirmative stimulant within the individual thereby initiating the momentum to continue with voluntary activities. It is interesting that Fultz, Schaller & Cialdini (1988) are of the view that helping behaviours are a product of egoism. For this reasons, people assist others in order to moderate subjective anguish which cannot be alleviated in any other fashion.

Churchill & Street (2002) contend that there is an ambiguous division regarding abnegation and self-interest since concern for others may support individuation. Subsequently, the notion that there exists an isomorphic link between sovereignty and extensivity is a fallacy. An increase in ethical egoism, defined as the amplification of the self (McConnell, 1978), does not necessitate an adulteration of the volunteer's agency or individualism (Churchill & Street, 2002). It should be noted that egoism has not been the chief hypothesis in literature – empathy has also been linked to altruism.

Dovidio (1991) suggests that altruistic tendencies are activated when a person experiences a sense of empathy for another person. Sober (1991) indicates that altruistic action is executed upon the successful deliberation and resolution of the experience of empathy in conjunction with an analysis of the expenditure and incentive for providing a service.

Thus far, a focus has been placed on individuality. Many authors have also set store by the systemic construction of volunteer behaviour.

Research conducted by Moultrie (2004) suggests that the inclination to assist others is often bordered by a collectivist culture, where communal attachment is of great consequence. This systemic preference, or individualistic antipathy, increases one's

resilience with regards to the demands of others. Thus, the volunteer exhibits increased tolerance in terms of the stressors imposed by patients/clients. Furthermore, Hinde & Groebel (1991) indicate that individuals stemming from collective cultures are more service-inclined to society than individuals from individualistic cultures. Levine, Norenzayan & Philbrick (2001) add that economically-deprived countries often yield a corpulent supply of altruists.

With these ideas at hand, it seems vital to consider the idea of caring for the volunteer.

With the intention of providing recipients with altruistic care, lay volunteer counsellors are subject to containing the burdens of experiences outside of themselves. Primo (2007) is of the view that lay volunteer counsellors are arrantly positioned to be the beneficiaries of secondary traumatic stress.

Considering the experiences of lay volunteer counsellors, one should take into consideration particular experiences which often emerge in lay volunteer counsellors' daily encounters.

Therefore, at this promontory, specific themes related to the experiences of lay volunteer counsellors should be addressed. Certainly, these themes do not encapsulate the global experiences in becoming and being a lay volunteer counsellor. Yet, according to the literature (De la Porte, Jordaan & Gravett, 2005), as well as in my experience as an intern trauma counsellor, these themes appear to be quite relevant to lay volunteer counsellors.

### Traumatic Stress

The experience of lay volunteer counsellors is defined by the environment within which the counsellor operates. Ortlepp & Friedman's research (2002) focused on secondary traumatic stress and role satisfaction in non-professional trauma counsellors.

Dunn (in Ortlepp & Friedman, 2002) indicates that these non-professional trauma counsellors experienced isolation, anger, powerlessness, hopelessness, anxiety, and burnout. Due to the high turnover rate of patients in a government hospital, the ratio of lay counsellors to patients is inversely proportional. This observation is drawn from my own experience as a trauma counsellor at a public hospital. If this statement is fair, then the research results by Ortlepp & Friedman (2002) become significant. Accordingly, they indicate that an increase in involvement in trauma counselling cases will indicate an increase in posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms in lay volunteer counsellors.

Moultrie (2004) indicates that many volunteers prepossess traumatic stress, thus granting the volunteer the prospect of relating to clients/patients. The denouement of which can be either beneficial or detrimental to both the client/patient and the volunteer. A further outcome of the study indicated that a volunteer's participation in a training regimen often dissipated the effects of primary and secondary traumatic stress. This outcome is also supported by other research conducted by Wilkins (1997) and Fisher & Cole (1993), both authors indicate equivalent findings. In terms of subjective experience, all the participants in the abovementioned studies plainly believed that they were benefactors to society. This belief was reinforced by their religious associations. Compassion fulfilment ranked high in the experiences of these volunteers and therefore suggested an elevated constituent of self-efficacy which, in turn, serves as a defensive operation against compassion fatigue. It is theorised that the participants of this study will possibly share similar experiences as, although one must be aware of any dissimilarities which may, or may not, transpire. As an annotation, one may acknowledge compassion fatigue as the steady minimisation of empathy over a period of time, often, but not exclusively, amid victims of trauma or persons who may encounter secondary traumatic stress (Figley, 1995).

Converse to the above-mentioned literature, research by Kassam-Adams (1995) and Schauben & Frazier (1995) explores the lay counsellors' experiences of positive consequences. These include personal growth, spiritual connection, hope, and respect for human resiliency. A personal vindication for including positive characteristics is

palpable: where subjective truth is fundamental, bona fide research does not necessarily have to focus on the negative in order to be constructive since the negative aspects only have meaning because of the existence of the opposite, the positive.

### Resilience

Resilience is defined as the capacity to recuperate, be buoyant, or to return to its original shape (Farlex Inc., 2008). Considering the possibility of direct and/or secondary traumatic stress in lay volunteer counsellors (Ortlepp & Friedman, 2002), it may also be important to explore the idea of resiliency as lay volunteer counsellors often continue with their work regardless of their direct and secondary exposure to traumatic experiences. According to Edward (2005), resilience has become a “valued quality” in the present climate, but specifically to individuals engaged in crisis care. As a coping tool, resilience indicates the development of counsellor confidence in efficiently coping with change, as well as the possibility of reframing negative experiences into positive experiences.

In a study in South Africa (Moultrie, 2004), burnout appeared to be minimal amongst many volunteers. The researcher’s rationalisation for this finding was that low levels of burnout were a product of volunteer autonomy (rather than the limitations of employee) and this aspect appears to shelter the volunteer from engaging in surplus tasks. In addition, their sustainability as helpers has allowed these volunteers to cultivate apposite defensive stratagems. Although this latter feature was insufficiently researched in the study, it would be valuable to consider this aspect in the current investigation.

### Social Identity

Baron & Byrne (2003) suggest that social identity is that which defines and guides the self both in self-conceptualisation, as well as self-evaluation. This indicates that a person (in this case, the lay volunteer counsellor) may identify him-/herself by his/her perception of personal and shared attributes, such as age, race, and religion.

Within this framework of self identity, it may be useful to explore the participants' perceptions of their self-concepts. This seems pivotal to the study purely because actions and experiences are based on how one perceives him-/herself. This is evident in Baron & Byrne's (2003) definition of self-concept as "one's self-identity, a basic schema consisting of an organised collection of beliefs and attitudes about oneself" (p. 162).

### The wounded healer

According to Sedgwick (1994), Carl Jung described the wounded healer as an analyst, in this case the volunteer, with conscious or unconscious personal wounds which may be activated due to his/her identification with the patient's wounds. Jung was of the view that the engagement in this type of interface could be potentially perilous as this interaction may allow the counsellor to be vulnerable of contamination by the patient's wounds, and/or having the counsellor's wounds revived.

This is significant in the experience of the lay volunteer counsellors as some volunteers may engage in the voluntary counselling process as a means of compensating for his/her subjective grievances. Indeed, my experience with members of the research population bears testimony to this process. Whether this theme does, or does not, transpire during the research process will become apparent during the interpretative/analysis phase and should therefore be kept in mind during the research process.

### Personality Assessment

To conclude this section of the appraisal, it is worthy to consider assessments which were utilised to explore specific personality traits of volunteers.

Literature regarding personality assessment of lay volunteer counsellors appears to be limited. Mitchell & Schuff (1995) administered the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator on 99 Hospice volunteers and found the following results. In most cases, Hospice volunteers

favoured extraversion more than introversion, intuition in preference to sensing, and feeling instead of thinking. These findings suggest that Hospice volunteers deem attention to larger society as being a key element in assisting people. Furthermore, there appears to be a tendency to appreciate suffering beyond physical characteristics. Finally, the participants exhibited an elevated requisite for human consideration. Similar research would be valuable in the South African context, and may prove to be interesting in the analysis of a qualitative study such as the current project. Due to the heterogeneity of the South African population, this type of research may augment one's appreciation for the lived experiences of South African lay volunteer counsellors.

### **Objectives**

Diminutive research regarding the lived experiences of becoming and being a lay volunteer counsellor was unearthed. Most of which necessitated a jerry-rigged approach to procuring relevant literature. It is, however, a subject which is imperative to explore since the voluntary sector contributes significantly to the mainstream South African economic sector. This, paralleled to my experience as an intern trauma counsellor, incited an interest and enthrallment into the field – above all being closely related to psychology as a discipline. I am, consequently, of the view that this topic merits further investigation.

Becoming and being a lay volunteer counsellor indicates two distinct, but interconnected areas. Psychological constructs such as altruism, social identity, and so forth, appear to relate to both areas, and thereby the overall experience of this populace.

The theories and studies explored in this body of work stem from a broad-spectrum discernment to a scientific appreciation of the effects of universal understanding.

The scientific value indicated in this study is a derivative of the data acquired in terms of psychological themes obtained via the analysis of themes related to the lived experience of volunteers. This will undoubtedly encourage an appreciation of the

connection between the volunteer's experiences and psychological operations which define these experiences. As such, this study may provide premises and direction for further studies – both qualitatively, as well as quantitatively.

The objective of the study is therefore to gain insight into the lived experiences of becoming and being a lay volunteer counsellor, using an interpretative phenomenological analysis.

### **Structure of the dissertation**

The research will be conveyed in the form of a mini-dissertation. The results are expounded as recommended in terms of the chosen methodology, as illustrated in the following chapter.

### **Summary of Chapter 2**

This chapter pivoted on placing existing literature within the context of this investigation. An exoskeleton was used as imagery to define the literature review as the supporting structure of the research process.

Furthermore, personal experience and the operation of HospiVision were introduced in order to facilitate an appreciation of the content of the literature review. The content was further supplemented by a review of historical perspectives regarding lived experience. This related durably with the process of becoming and being a lay volunteer counsellor.

Thereafter, topical perspectives were explored. The topics therein focused on the value of volunteers, as well as the modes of operation within which counsellors operate. These modes were then juxtaposed on the character structure of counselling-orientated individuals.



A critical inquiry of research in Britain and South Africa ensued, effecting a discussion on the probable motivations to counsel. Thereafter, research regarding various approaches to volunteering we explored in terms of the subcomponents of the motivations to volunteer. The interplay between motivations and experience became apparent, suggesting the dynamics which appear to operate with regards to South African lay volunteer counsellors. However, these dynamics do not appear to be exclusive to the South African volunteer populace and a recommendation for further research within the South African volunteer domain was suggested.

Other topical factors such as age, gender, and politics we examined in terms of volunteerism. This section of the review then unearthed the role of religion and spirituality in the lives of volunteers.

These ideas then converged on helping behaviour. This resulted in a discussion of the idea of an altruistic personality. The discussion of altruism then focussed on the various types of altruism and placed this within the context of humanness. The altruism-egoism hypothesis was examined and united with the empathy-altruism hypothesis. Subsequently, important issues such as culture and collectivism were considered in terms of the experience and motivation of lay volunteer counsellors.

To conclude the section on convergent perspectives, discussions surrounding ideas about traumatic stress; resilience; social identity; the wounded healer; and personality assessment were investigated. This led to a review of the researcher's objectives. To conclude the literature review, the structure of the dissertation was proposed.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

This chapter supplies a synopsis of the paradigmatic point of departure elected for the research approach and the process of its operation in this study. The ratification of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as research method is placed within a theoretical context where an exposition of the method is presented. Significant features with regards to the techniques of sample selection, data gathering, and data analysis are reviewed. In addition, an explication of the modes to ensure research quality, as well as ethical standards, is provided. Conclusively, the execution of the research study is sketched.

#### Research design

The subjective nature of becoming and being a lay volunteer counsellor is one which cannot be genuinely appreciated if defined exclusively by quantifiable constructs. This is not to suggest that quantitative data is unavailing, but merely incongruous within the context of the present study. The range of this study necessitates a comprehensive approach to appreciating the lived experiences of lay volunteer counsellors. It is by way of profound respect for humanness, synchronised by a psychologic linchpin, that one may procure a scientific basis of seemingly customary phenomena. Barbour (2000) indicates that it is important, within the ambit of qualitative research, that the routine and mundane be investigated as the significance thereof is often hidden from view due to society's familiarity with the subject. Hence, one should be impervious to the debacle of the qualitative-quantitative dispute in terms of this study, but appreciate the merits of a qualitative study as being an accrual of data which may append quantitative studies by either constructing or investigating plausible hypotheses. With reference to subjective experience, an unassuming and explorative stance to social science (Alvesson, 2002) is

notably encapsulated in the postmodern infrastructure. The postmodern infrastructure is scenically exemplified by Derrida & Venuti (2001).

This idea is particularly useful when engaging in a pragmatic project and associates very well with postmodernism as a philosophy. Within the hypostasis of the postmodern aesthetic, emotional conviction, perception, and diversification are merited (Alvesson, 2002). Surpassing metempiricism, postmodernism holds truth as subjective. A model appropriate to addressing the appraisal of subjectivity appears to fall within the qualitative lattice.

Perhaps prior to embarking on an exposition of qualitative research, an exploration based on the reflexive process may consolidate an understanding of the researcher's frame of reference. The interpersonal process is evocative of the intrapersonal experience of each party within an encounter, irrespective of whether this is a personified or a cognitive process. The subjective experience of each individual is multilayered, based on biographical constitutions and influenced by various factions. Consequently, the intrapersonal experience has an effect on the interpersonal experience, fostering a process whereby subjective environments intersect to educe an intersubjective arena. This privy outlook is crystallised by the ideas suggested by Husserl (Bell, 1990), yet forms part of the gestalt of the researcher's subjectivity. Considering the intersubjective processes in operation during the interpersonal research encounter, it seems fitting that a qualitative approach be applied to the research methodology.

### **Qualitative research**

Fundamentally, qualitative research is exploratory in nature and intends to illustrate, appreciate, and elucidate frameworks and contingencies. It addresses and investigates syllogisms and justifications; indications and contraindications; and incorporates a process of navigating and intercommunicating. It is not positioned to supply a quantisation of statistical data, or to authenticate integers suggesting the rate of

recurrence. Qualitative research endeavours to engender data, and implies that the researcher follow an assiduous investigatory process (Barbour, 2000).

Polkinghorne (2005) indicates that this qualitative investigatory process foregathers linguistic communication and responds to diverse research questions as indicated by the specified field of study. The mobilisation of languaged data provides one with an abundance of information which is not necessarily subject to unidimensional manipulation. It is due to this multidimensional quality that Terre Blanche & Durrheim (2004) justify qualitative research as an iterative process as it is flexible, fluid, more open, non-sequential, and prismatic. These characteristics typify human experience and tessellate within the qualitative sphere. As Schwandt (2001) indicates, qualitative inquiry addresses the lived experiences of human beings. The life-world which is experienced, cognised, rationalized, and consummated, both internally and externally, is the objective of investigating human process from a qualitative perspective.

Centering on becoming and being a lay volunteer counsellor, this study cannot feasibly commit itself to cause-and-effect analyses without misplacing valuable information. It is on these grounds that Willig (2001) promotes the use of qualitative methodologies, overtly indicating that these approaches lend themselves to the accumulation of illustrative and complex experiences. In view of every study, as with the current investigation, one should be conscious of the possible divergence which may transpire based on contrasting epistemological inclinations (Willig, 2001). This is due to the contingent probability that intersubjective agreement (Kvale, 1996) within the academic world, may deviate and/or conciliate based on subjective appreciation of the research material.

This objective-subjective continuum of perception appears to indicate that the subjective view of the lay volunteer counsellor is subjected to analyses via the subjective epistemology of the researcher, which is then subjected to appraisal by a wider community. This intersubjective process does not necessarily indicate a domino effect on each other, but appears to indicate a mutual reverberation amongst the independent

stakeholders. While this concept may be similar to a systemic view of recursion (Becvar & Becvar, 1996), it further implies the reverberating process of intra-individual processes such as intrapsychic dynamics, and psychobiological operations. It is therefore proposed that this process, which may be termed interdependent reverberation, be acknowledged within this research study, and veritably in any transaction where the communicative function is in operation. This is especially significant should one consider an interesting view of communication and information processing (Becvar & Becvar, 1996), suggesting the impossibility of not communicating. Ultimately, this generally implies the subjective and intersubjective interplay between epistemological and interpretative processes, all of which appear to be interminable in nature. Similar to Becvar & Becvar's (1996) suggestion that we cannot not communicate, dialogue in my supervisory process proposed that we cannot not interpret. This is a view which I wish to advocate – as much as we are sensing, communicative beings, so too are we interpreting beings. Interpretation, too, appears to be subjective and/or intersubjective experiences.

This considered, it appears that an interpretive frame of reference should come into view. Terre Blanche & Kelly (in Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2004), authenticate this illation by intimating that within the interpretive approach, subjective experiences are authentic and should be regarded as such. In terms of philosophical dynamics, this consideration for subjective experiencing then suggests the ontological perspective of this study. Additionally, the intended discernment of human experience indicates the epistemology of the research. Thus, as Terre Blanche & Durrheim (2004) indicate, a qualitative methodology is best equipped to convoke these incumbencies.

Smith, Jarmin & Osborn (1999) advocate that any qualitative investigation typify the interposition between a participant's report and a researcher's interpretative methodological schema. In IPA, the methodological schema is both phenomenological, as well as interpretative. As the former discussions have justified the employment of an interpretative framework within the current investigation, one may further inquire around the phenomenological prospect.

Bryman (2001) indicates that an essential feature of qualitative research is to acknowledge that people possess the aptitude to ascribe meaning to their experiences and environments. Consequently, qualitative researchers propose to dovetail within personal interaction, as well as to attempt to reconcile experiences from another's perspective. This inclination is evident in reference to an empathetic stance. Bryman (2001) indicates that assuming an empathetic stance proves well the epistemological connection with phenomenology.

Although Bryman (2001) observes the connection to phenomenology, little effort is exerted to accentuate this factor. He therefore suggests that ethnography/participant observation, qualitative interviewing, focus groups, and discourse and conversation analysis remain the foremost methods of qualitative research. Smith (2008) accords this view, although appends the inventory of methods to incorporate phenomenology, interpretative phenomenological analysis, grounded theory, narrative psychology, and co-operative inquiry.

### **Phenomenological inquiry**

Phenomenology holds a prepossessing quality in that it is comprehensive. Stemming from the view of consciousness, phenomenology sanctions communication as anything that presents itself *as itself* as a tenable point of origin. Concrete and abstract materials are both regarded as significant. *Context* is distinct in that subjective experience cannot be imitated nor can it be replicated, and all relational styles may materialise (e.g., casual, meaningful, and intentional). Furthermore, the impartiality of phenomenological reduction is employed to excavate the subjective values of participants (Giorgi, 1994). This considered, people are not purposely objectified and presumed to be conceptualised in terms of mystical phenomena. People are *people* and subsist in context. This context exists relative to the person and to others. Accordingly, people are complex and multifaceted, embodying his/her particular perceptions and biases (Giorgi, 1997). Therefore, to ideate the researcher as altogether equitable would be a counterfeit premise.

As researcher, the celebration of this deconstructionist rationale concluded in nominating IPA as the research methodology for this particular study. Where distinct methods, such as ethnography (Alvesson, 2003) and ethnomethodology (Atkinson, 1988), may have been utilised exclusively during this investigation, an adjudicatory process culminated in electing IPA as a superordinate technique in exploring the dynamics of becoming and being a lay volunteer counsellor. Conroy (2003) indicates that this exploration of influences is expressly critical in IPA as it intends to comprehensively examine the applied dynamics of a person construing his/her macrocosm.

The recognition that IPA does not indicate the fragmentation of the scientific method is of great consequence. The incorporation of postmodern philosophy complements phenomenology in the sense that personal experiences and perception are culminated to collect an across-the-board creel of experiences and perceptions. This philosophy invariably forges a nexus with IPA due to the argument that subjective experience is appreciated (Smith, 2008) while the synchronal acknowledgment of the merits of an empirical method are in operation (Willig, 2001). Simultaneously, any study grounded in the discipline of psychology should take cognisance of notion that psychology is differentiated from the natural sciences as a human science (Giorgi, 2000) and should therefore be investigated as such.

IPA is phenomenological as it associates with personal perceptions in a dynamic research application process. The employment of IPA, in this study, is indicative of the exploration of the participants' personal perceptions. Moreover, as IPA is attentive to cognitions and makes use of researched material (e.g., interview transcripts) in an analytic process, the expectation then is that this process is adept to construct a statement about thinking (Smith, Jarman & Osborn, 1999). Unlike discourse analysis (Gee, 2005), IPA acknowledges the proposal of mapping verbal accounts, but mediates the accounts against underlying cognitions (Smith, 1995). Consequently, IPA includes the engagement in an analytic process to expectantly declare 'something' about thinking (Smith, Jarman & Osborn, 1999).

In terms of this study, IPA is apt due to its focus on the experiences of the participants. Further, the intentional interpretation overtly suggests an inclusion of the unveiling themes addressed by participants, as well as translating a chain of analytic codes. These themes and codes are indicative of the features of the participants' experiences which consequently supply answers to the research question (Shaw, 2001).

It appears constructive to further indicate that IPA has a conjectural dedication to the individual as a “cognitive, linguistic, affective and physical being” (Smith, 2008, p. 54) and presupposes that language, cognition, and affect are syndicated experiences. However, the approach is not assumptive in presuming that human beings are not multifaceted. There may be a myriad of reasons indicating a person's difficulty in expressing thoughts and feelings, often resulting in a participant experiencing the situation as exacting and consequently unable to disclose certain experiences. For these reasons, the interpretation of psychological states, as indicated in the narratives which participants offer, should be addressed (Smith, 2008).

Having explored the cardinal prescripts regarding IPA, one may begin to inform the characteristic methodological percepts as regards the present investigation.

### **A pragmatic characterisation**

#### Sample

Determining a sample is an acutely crucial phase of the research process (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2004). Within the context of this study, it is elemental to deliberate on the salient factors pertinent to selecting participants. The participants would have to be lay persons, suggesting that they are not professionally and extensively trained (Reber & Reber, 2001) in the field of counselling. Each participant should also be engaged in voluntary counseling. The emphasis is on *voluntary* and the participant should receive little or no monetary income for their services (Freeman, 1997). Little monetary income, in the context of the organization where the voluntary counselling operates, indicates that



they participants may receive a minimal stipend, amounting to no more than R250 per month. Finally, the participant needs to be involved in counseling services such as interviewing, advising, or guiding others in order to help recipients in problem-solving or planning for the future (Reber & Reber, 2001). Within the context of this dissertation, the term lay volunteer counsellor is employed to refer to a person with no formal training in counselling, no specific intent leading to the registration with an accredited organisation, and who engages in counselling activities with little or no monetary compensation for the aforesaid activities.

Bryman (2001) indicates that the determination of sample magnitude is not uncomplicated, and practical and reasonable considerations must be called into account. The need to explore the experiences of becoming and being a lay volunteer counsellor indicates in-depth analyses. For this reason, purposeful sampling seems fitting. This is due to the accessibility of a sample appropriate to the research, as well as the accommodating stance proposed by HospiVision.

Purposeful sampling appears to be utile in selecting information-loaded cases. Terre Blanche & Durrheim (2004) enunciate that the research allow a focus on exploring rich details from a small phenomenon, instead of a large topic with an insufficient sample. Sadala & Adorno (2001) asseverate that since qualitative research does not propose to generalize, a large sample seems superfluous. Smith & Osborn (in Smith, 2008) indicate that IPA research is carried out with six to ten respondents, in order to obtain a comprehensive picture of experiences.

Although the sampled participants operate at various hospitals in Gauteng (e.g., Milpark Hospital – Johannesburg), the participants of this study were selected from HospiVision, serving patients at the Steve Biko Academic Hospital.

In the realm of practicality and convenience, it transpired that selecting participants from HospiVision at the Steve Biko Academic Hospital was the best approach. This was due to the accommodating stance of HospiVision which is due to

their alliance with tertiary institutions, such as UNISA. The indication, then, was convenience and purposeful sampling (Bryman, 2001; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2004). Attention was also paid to subsume a diverse population in terms of age, gender, and culture.

To surmise, the sample included individuals with the following attributes:

- Adults (early adulthood up to late adulthood, i.e. age 21 and above);
- Males and females;
- No formal interest in psychology (i.e. having no intention to register as a counsellor or psychologist with a professional board);
- Not registered with the HPCSA;
- Little or no financial income from their voluntary activities;
- Involved in providing the public with counseling services; and
- Proficient, or relatively adept, in English to ensure that the data is ‘reliable’ and ‘richer’ due to the researcher’s proficiency in English.

### Data collection

An empirical phenomenological approach was employed in terms of data collection. Within this demesne, the investigatory process allows for the canalisation of information based on the need to educe impromptu feedback on the topic at hand (Von Echartsberg, 1998). An interview schedule is used as a beacon, aiming to guide, but not to manipulate, the data. The semi-structured interview seems apposite to this function.

Semi-structured interview questions are used to guide the respondents toward the research problem (Bryman, 2001). As Chapman & Smith (2002) indicate, using a semi-structured interview in an IPA study allows the researcher and participant to partake in a discourse whereby original questions are adapted with regards to the participant’s responses. This indicates an open-ended approach to interviewing. Here, the researcher has the opportunity to explore noteworthy ideas which emerge. Furthermore, a semi-structured interview schedule proposes maps of potential directions in which the

interview may ensue, and is employed in an adaptable fashion. In application, the interview may deviate significantly from what was initially imagined. Interviews are audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

In effect, a private interview is conducted, where specific questions are asked. However, questions relating to the content of the material shape subsequent questions albeit the interviewer re-focuses the process occasionally (Chapman & Smith, 2002). Kvale (1996) distinguishes this process of semi-structured interviewing from asking leading questions in that leading the participant often influences the material obtained during the interview. It was therefore decided to relate spontaneous material during the semi-structured interview.

Questions for the unstructured interview were shaped by propositions based on the literature review, discussions with the head of HospiVision, and ideas which were addressed during the supervision process. Furthermore, personal experience within the voluntary sector enabled a system whereby thoughts regarding volunteerism could be considered. These antecedents were applied in concert with the research methodology, thereby effecting the development of pertinent questions. The questions included:

1. Describe how you have become involved in volunteer work

*Consideration 1a: What prompted involvement*

*Consideration 1b: Intrinsic reward*

*Consideration 1c: Life experience*

*Consideration 1d: Other factors / persons*

2. Describe your experience of being a lay volunteer counsellor

*Consideration 2a: Content and process*

*Consideration 2b: Link above events with emotions*

*Consideration 2c: Include perceptions and reactions of other people*

3. Have your motivations for becoming a lay volunteer counsellor changed over the course of time?

*Consideration 3a: Temporal aspects relating to past, present, possible future*

*Consideration 3b: Dynamic and process aspects*

The data is the fundamental material which researchers work with and generally takes the form of language in qualitative studies (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2004). It is therefore essential to collect the data in the best possible way. The interviews were audio-recorded to ensure that no information was lost. The data was then transcribed meticulously, indicating both verbal and nonverbal communication.

Analysis

Smith, Jarman & Osborn (1999) indicate that the purpose of an IPA study is to scrupulously explore the participant's view of the topic – in this case, becoming and being a lay volunteer counsellor. The suggestion by these authors indicate that, in describing and exploring their experiences, lay volunteer counsellors essentially share some primary experiences. These shared ideas are then coded into themes and connections are made regarding these themes. Conroy (2003) indicates that these themes are then analysed in terms of the lived experiences of lay volunteer counsellors.

In this regard, Smith's (1995) data analysis method appears to be applicable. Smith, Jarman & Osborn (1999) indicate that becoming intimate with each transcript is advantageous, irrespective of which technique is employed. Chapman & Smith (2002) suggest two techniques of data analysis in IPA. These include either 1) conducting a comprehensive, methodical qualitative analysis for each transcript; or 2) selecting a comprehensive transcript which serves as a template where all other transcripts are contrasted for similarities and differences. Both techniques allow for extensive analysis. Within this study, the latter of the two techniques was selected. Smith, Jarman & Osborn (1999) provide a clear illustration of the process of data analysis in IPA. First, one reads through one of the more information-rich transcripts, noting observations and summarizing as s/he progresses with the appraisal. The researcher also constructs associations and connections which may emerge and later serve as a prelude to his/her interpretations. Emerging themes, identified as key phrases, are documented. From the

pilot notes constructed, a process of thematic abstraction begins. This process indicates a reflection of connections signifying similarities and differences within the participant's narratives. No attempt to pay particular attention to specific passages is made at this point. Emergent themes which are documented are clustered together based on possible connections. These connections are regarded as superordinate models and are analysed by reflecting on which other themes have either magnetic or nonmagnetic effects on the said theme.

As new-fangled clusters emerge, these are cross-checked against the original transcript. This close association between the material and the researcher culminates in a tabulation of themes based on the participant's account, as well as the researcher's interpretative resources. A master list of themes excludes those themes which do not fit into the structure of themes and sub-themes evidenced by the transcript. Identifiers are attached to these applicable themes in order to assist the final interpretative process. This template transcript is then used to identify themes which are similar or dissimilar to the remaining transcripts. The similarities of which are noted, and the differences are explored in the same fashion as the analysis of the template transcript. This allows the researcher to construct a new master list of superordinate themes (Smith, Jarman & Osborn, 1999).

These superordinate themes are then linked to underlying themes which are subsequently linked to the original annotations and extracts from the research partaker. Ultimately, the record of superordinate themes is transmuted into a descriptive account where the themes are sketched out, illustrated, and typified with word-perfect extracts from the participants. The reflexive process throughout the analysis process indicates that interpretations become rich and informative (Smith, Jarman & Osborn, 1999).

### Research quality

Terre Blanche & Durrheim (2004) suggest ideas to supply high-quality research. *Transferability* facilitates in allowing other researchers to transfer the findings into

related fields. This may be facilitated by providing a comprehensive account of the full research process and framework. The participants and their contexts were depicted with as much detail as possible, relative to the confines of the ethical considerations. *Dependability* indicates proving that the findings occurred as the researcher indicates they did. This is accomplished by providing a thorough description of how actions and opinions are based on, and arise out of, appropriate communications. This is done by elucidating on the methodology, data collection, and data analysis which suggests the coding-recoding method. This is further necessitated by utilising the stepwise replication and coding-recoding approach suggested in the aforementioned section titled Analysis. *Credibility* was achieved by permitting participants to evaluate the analysed themes in a follow-up interview in order to acknowledge and/or validate the information. This follow-up interview was arranged with participants during the research process. None of the information was adjusted, augmented, or invalidated by any participants. One participant requested that two ad-lib remarks be removed from the primary transcript. This request was duly obliged in order to conform to the ethical considerations of this study. *Conformability* indicates engaging in a supervisory environment in which another researcher (i.e. the supervising psychologist) concedes with the analysis and suggests congruent or alternate views to the analysis. Thus, working with the participants, a supervisor, and the self encourages a reflective and psychologically sound framework to ensure quality research. As such, the full research process was subjected to the scrutiny and supervision of the research promoter, while additional clarifications were conducted with participants during the follow-up interview.

### Ethical considerations

With careful consideration of designing an ethical study, the rights and welfare of research participants are protected. Three principles were adhered to, namely (1) the principle of respect for autonomy of participants including issues such as voluntary participation, informed consent, the right to withdraw at any time, and the participant's right to anonymity in the current and possible publications which may develop as a result of the research – anonymity was warranted by using pseudonyms; (2) the principle of

nonmaleficence in that participants (or other persons) will not be harmed – here, potential risks and benefits were weighed in collaboration with the participants; and (3) the principle of beneficence which operates as the primary ambition of the study in that researchers, society at large, and the participants (albeit vicariously or in the future) benefit from the study with possible developments in the psychology field (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2004).

Specific attention was paid to obtaining consent from both HospiVision and each participant. Confidentiality had also been addressed and participants' details are treated with the strictest confidence. Another aspect that was addressed was to ensure that all work was conducted on the notion that researcher-competence could be demonstrated (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2004). These aspects were addressed in writing by means of a consent form.

Each participant was informed of their rights in terms of participating in the study, and comprehension of these rights was verified by requesting that participants describe these rights back to the researcher. This process was instituted by the researcher before the interviewing process began.

All of the material resulting from the research process (i.e. transcripts) is being stored in a safe and secure environment.

#### Dissemination of research results

Research findings are reported on in the form of a mini-dissertation, which is also made available in electronic format.

#### **The reflexive web**

In composing this segment of the dissertation, the integration of theory and practice manifested. With a robust desire to cater for an academic audience, the need to

justify method and pragmatism also became apparent. Concurrently, it became obvious that the intention to justify the subjective experiences of lay volunteer counsellors was pivotal to the process. This implied an aspiration to motivate the values of the participants. Reflecting on this process, an awareness of my own values began to transpire. This is echoed within the chapter where I explore the theory and nature of values, which some would term axiology and timology. The exposition I provide overtly suggests that an exploration of the participant's values is important. Covertly, this suggests something relating to my own values in relation to the participants, as well as the academic audience. This appears to be based on a dual function: one of which is to demonstrate academic aptitude, and thereby develop credibility; the other is to maintain a sense of respect to those who are directly, or indirectly, connected to this study.

To facilitate this, I exposed a trait which I believe with conviction. I characterise this trait as a deep respect for humanity, and have privately labelled the term *cogent veneration*. This respect is a trait which I wish to offer to the participants, the academic audience, my supervisor, and to myself. I therefore compiled this chapter with these thoughts in mind. Furthermore, I was vastly aware of the need to convey this process in terms of the psychological domain, especially since this chapter focuses on methodology, but more so since my intention was to make available the scientific process of research and respect.

I therefore considered aspects of humanity in relation to aspects of physical science. Contemplating this idea, I became aware of the intertwined psychological processes on everyday occurrences. This appeared to be best described by a linchpin – a pin-like apparatus which connects two or more elements which may continue to move freely. To then utilise this scientific tool as a metaphor for a psychological process, seemed to be a natural means of depicting the two processes. This led me to consider my need to justify science in terms of human behaviour.

My subjective view of this need appears to stem from a long-standing, generally widespread, view of the argument questioning psychology as a science. True to my belief



that psychology is a science, I sometimes feel compelled to justify this point. This becomes more concentrated with regards to justifying the scientific rationale to peers (e.g., other psychologists) who then compartmentalise the merits of quantitative versus qualitative research – in my view, a debacle which need not exist since each approach is contextually relevant. I therefore considered the similarities and differences of each method in terms of this study, and contrasted these with aspects relating to the natural sciences, psychology, quantitative methods, and qualitative methods. The intention was not to facilitate the ongoing dispute, or the *logomachy* if you prefer, but to justify the means and techniques appropriate to this study.

These considerations were an epexegetical, or exploration, of the reasons to use, or not to use, certain methods. The need to convey the study's capacity to augment knowledge, not to test correlates, became important. This was especially attributable to my desire to explain the significance of fostering data for further research. Again, this was related to the science of psychology and I explored why using this method would not indicate the atomisation of the scientific approach.

In exploring qualitative research, I intentionally used the word *prismatic*. This is due to my regard for qualitative methodologies as being adept at portraying the mosaic of subjectivity. This is particularly valuable when one considers the intersubjective process. In actuality, the intersubjective process suggests that subjective reality differs from intersubjective reality – awareness and reflection of which would undoubtedly resonate with the process of cogent veneration. This, too, allows for the audience to earn an appreciation, or perspicacity, for the research material. Consequently, the private interview becomes something of an esoteric interview between the researcher and research participant. This is not to say that a process of exclusion is initiated during the interview process. This is understandable due to the participant's, as well as my, awareness that the investigation is aimed at addressing a wider community. Hence, the intersubjective experience is an inclusive process, embracing participant, researcher, supervisor, organisation, academic community, and audience.

### Summary of chapter 3

This chapter characterised the constitution of the study's research methodology. In and of itself, the research design was outlined. This focused on a reconnaissance of qualitative and quantitative methods, as well as a consideration of postmodern philosophy's view of subjectivity and intersubjectivity

The justification for using a qualitative approach was substantiated. This indicated the merits of navigating the lived experiences of lay volunteer counsellors. Furthermore, support for employing qualitative research was obtained by considering the objective-subjective continuum, interdependent reverberation, ontological and epistemological mentation, and the value of using an empathic stance. This, then, led to the selection of IPA due to its disposition to being both interpretive, as well as phenomenological.

IPA was further validated in terms of its phenomenological properties. These included the appreciation for both concrete and abstract material, as well as the aspiration to understand people as people within context. Having explored these areas, the process of selecting IPA was mapped out, followed by an exploration of IPA as method. The appreciation of subjective experience in connection with an empirical method was central to this discussion. Thereafter, IPA was justified as a significant method due to the analytic and dynamic process of the research and its ability to make a statement about thinking.

Once the foundation of IPA was drafted, a pragmatic characterisation of the study was presented. This included practical aspects such as sample selection; data collection; analysis; methods to ensure research quality; ethical consideration; and the dissemination of research results.

To conclude the chapter, discourse regarding the research methodology was offered. This section was titled *the reflexive web*.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

#### Introduction

This study embarked on the subjective experiences of becoming and being a lay volunteer counsellor. This chapter supplies an overview of the research process. Participants are introduced and a summary regarding each participant's context is provided. Themes which transpired during the analysis process are then extrapolated.

Since the topic suggests two aspects of lay volunteer counselling, namely becoming and being, it appears that it may be possible to separate themes according to these subject areas. This appeared to be impractical, as becoming and being appear to exist on a continuum and could, therefore, not be divided. Themes which are presented thus relate to the global experiences of becoming and being. Furthermore, as the themes appeared to be interrelated, they are presented without sequential significance.

To attempt to encapsulate the true essence of an individual is without solution. Snippets of the participants' accounts are used to introduce the participant and to describe his/her context. Admittedly, an external frame of reference is employed to construct an academic chapter. However, the content of each segment is based on the participant's narratives so as to epitomise his/her lived experience. In a sense, I attempted to allow the participants to introduce themselves. This had some influence on the style of authorship, culminating in an unadulterated chapter.

More formal axioms were used to name the themes. The intention was to foster a process whereby these themes may be more comfortably juxtaposed against themes in the existing literature. Having explored the aforementioned considerations, it seems fitting to introduce an overview of the research process.

## Overview

Six lay volunteer counsellors participated in this study. The number of participants falls within the prescribed range. All of the interviews were conducted within a one month span, and feedback sessions were held approximately three months thereafter. All of the participants met the criteria stipulated in chapter 3 and none of the participants withdrew from the study.

The interviews were informal and appeared to be comfortable for both interviewer and participant. The study, as well as the interviewer's interest, was placed into context prior to the interviewing process and participants were afforded the opportunity to voice their concerns, or to clarify specific details.

All of the methods to ensure research quality were adhered to, as were the ethical considerations. Overall, participants were spontaneous in their sharing of information. Requests from participants to add, detract, augment, or edit information during the feedback process were obliged. Communicating with the participants during the interviews, as well as during the feedback sessions, allowed for clarification and correspondence between the interviewer and the participants. All participants concurred with the process, as well as the themes which were constructed.

As this investigation is not a case-study analysis, the narratives of participants are presented as extracts from the participants. These narratives signify the lived experiences of becoming and being a lay volunteer counsellor. Pseudonyms were used to guard the identities of participants, and probable identifying details were amended where necessary.

## Research participants

Senior members of HospiVision discussed this study with volunteers whom they deemed appropriate to participate. Lay volunteer counsellors from HospiVision, who met the sample criteria, were contacted regarding the study. The scope, motivation, and

context of the study were discussed with each participant telephonically. With mutual negotiation and clarification, six potential participants were willing to contribute to the study.

Without deliberate intent, three Caucasian volunteers and three Black volunteers obliged to be participants. Additionally, no deliberate attempt was made at selecting specific genders. Yet, unintentionally, the sample consisted of three males and three females.

All participants were bilingual, although one participant was less fluent in English. His account, however, was both rich and understandable, and therefore included within the sample.

Participants' ages ranged between 27-years-old and 74-years-old, with a mean age of 54 years. For all participants, the average number of years in the voluntary sector was 19.8 years; and the average number of years in lay volunteer counselling was 5.7 years.

The ratio for males to females was 3:3. The ratio for Blacks to Whites was 3:3. Furthermore, fifty percent of the participants currently participate in paid employment outside and separate to the voluntary sector; and fifty percent of participants receive a pension and/or governmental grant while engaging in the voluntary sector. Only one participant satisfies all three sections, namely lay volunteer counselling; concurrent paid employment; and is the recipient of a pension, albeit an income from a private pension fund.

The abovementioned characteristics are tabularised hereafter. Subsequently, each participant is introduced.



<b>Participant</b>	<b>Age (years)</b>	<b>Male / Female</b>	<b>No. of years as lay volunteer counsellor</b>	<b>No. of years as volunteer</b>	<b>Concurrent paid employment at present</b>	<b>Pension / Government grant</b>
Louwna	69	Female	+/- 10	+/- 50	No	Yes
Tim	70	Male	+/- 2	+/- 2	Yes	Yes
Zanele	27	Female	+/- 6	+/- 15	Yes	No
Frans	44	Male	+/- 5	+/- 22	Yes	No
Anne	74	Female	+/- 1	+/- 10	No	Yes
Richard	40	Male	+/- 10	+/- 20	No	No
<b>Review</b>						
No. of participants						6
<b>Ranges</b>						
Age range					27 years to 74 years	
Mean age					54 years	
<b>Averages</b>						
No. of years in volunteer work						19.8
No. of years in lay volunteer counselling						5.7
<b>Ratios</b>						
Male : Female					3 : 3	
Black : White : Coloured : Indian : Other					3 : 3 : 0 : 0 : 0	
<b>Percentages</b>						
Concurrent paid employment at present						50%
Pension / Government grant at present						50%

**Table:** A birds-eye view of the features of the sample

## Louwna

Louwna is a 69-year-old, Caucasian female of Christian faith. Although Louwna had been sporadically involved in volunteering activities for approximately fifty years, she has been consistently involved in lay volunteer counselling for approximately ten years.

Louwna has a tertiary qualification, and worked as a librarian for a substantial period. Prior to, as well as for the duration of her service as a librarian, she engaged in voluntary activities such as visiting ill patients. Louwna also provided voluntary services to communities and charities, with skills as well as labour.

Even though Louwna had been engaged in the voluntary sector for the greater part of her life, she did not subjectively identify herself as a volunteer. In terms of vocation, she saw herself as a librarian. It was only after retirement that she had begun to truly consolidate volunteerism into her self-identity. For Louwna, the concluding chapter of self-as-librarian indicated an introductory chapter of self-as-volunteer. While this may appear to be a fluid move from formal employment to volunteering, a clear delineation cannot be reasonably justified as her sporadic engagement in volunteer activities suggests a long-standing sense of volunteerism, stemming from adolescence.

Fable has also played a part in fostering her volunteerism. Louwna reports being deeply affected by legends concerning heroes and liberators, qualities which she has come to admire in others, but which she has also integrated into her self-identity.

Louwna describes herself as a religious individual, with “a motherly instinct to want to sort of comfort” others.

## Tim

Tim is a 70-year-old, Caucasian male of Christian faith. He has been a lay volunteer counsellor for approximately two years and has not engaged in other volunteer activities prior to being a lay volunteer counsellor.

Tim's highest level of education is a grade 10 and he laments not having obtained a grade 12. He completed certified courses over the years, and consequently became an officer in the fire department, an assistant general manager of a company, and a motivational speaker. Not obtaining a formal degree has become a matter of contention for Tim as he views himself as an extremely capable individual, devoid of opportunities due to society's focus on qualifications as opposed to competence and practical experience.

Although Tim is a deeply religious individual, he views himself as a person who is interested in other people. He indicates that a patient's needs should come before his own, and that as a lay volunteer counsellor, he sees himself as one person relating to another person. He therefore aims to provide patients with humanness and practical assistance, instead of endeavouring to propagate religious views. As Tim says, "You know, when I look at that person there, I see more than spirituality. I see more than that. And I know I shouldn't say this, but I think spiritual help should come second... should come afterwards. Because that guy is lying there... his family haven't contacted him... he's quite isolated, he hasn't got reading material... they'll listen to you anyhow. So, he's got all these things and here you're reading him a verse... and he needs physical help. So my idea is... you go in, you say to the guy: 'Is there anything you need? Can I get you a newspaper? Can I phone somebody for you?'"

In addition to Tim being both humane and practical as a lay volunteer counsellor, he has a high regard for ethical behaviour. He attributes this to a cross-generational trait which has been reinforced by his, as well as his wife's, family. In his definition of his personal ethics, Tim has the following to say: "I have a reputation. I do a lot of business



where people come to me and they just say: ‘So-and-so said I must do business with you because you won’t cheat me.’ I have that kind of reputation in the business. So, but that’s just... it’s how I grew up.” This ethical behaviour is not unique to Tim’s business dealings, but also colours his outlook on lay volunteer counselling. As such, he often advises patients using his personal ethical guidelines as a backdrop.

### Zanele

Zanele is a 27-year-old, Black female with a traditional African worldview. She has been part of the volunteer milieu for roughly fifteen years, but has been a lay volunteer counsellor for approximately six years.

Zanele views the world, its inhabitants, and its elements as part of an interdependent cosmos. By helping others, she hopes to secure a complementary relationship with the universe, whereby she will benefit because of her actions.

Volunteering has been part and parcel of her systemic functioning, and volunteering therefore seems to be a natural process to her. Of her family, Zanele has this to say: “... many of my family are volunteers. There’s so many of them... and in different groups. I think that I’m a lot like them because we care about those around us. They don’t really do counselling... I think I’m the only one. They do charity work and help with looking after kids... my cousin goes to the elderly neighbours to see that they’re ok.”

Although this suggests the importance of the members of Zanele’s family, this sentiment is augmented by Zanele’s view that the people she helps often remind her of her late grandparents. Indeed, a documentary regarding the struggles of inhabitants of an impoverished country seems to have had some influence on Zanele’s motivation to enter into lay volunteer counselling. This also seems to have triggered memories of her grandparents: “And the looks in their eyes, the lines on their faces... it reminded me of my grandparents... and I felt this ball burning in my throat. Every person that they

interviewed reminded me of an older person that I knew. And some of their stories were so similar to the ones I heard from the older people that I couldn't help but feel for them. That programme... it touched a nerve. I couldn't really sleep that night. I just kept thinking about doing something for these people. I couldn't stop seeing their faces, and my heart was sore. I think I felt like... 'If I help these people, it will be like helping my grandparents.' It was just a short while after that and I came here." It therefore appears that Zanele's attempt to relate to others in need may be an attempt to connect with her grandparents or other revered elders.

Moreover, having been raised with limited financial resources has allowed Zanele to identify with some of the patient's, but also to appreciate a poor person's struggle. She appears to be motivated by a need to express love rather than receive monetary recompense. She explains it as thus: "I didn't grow up with a lot of money. We used to deal with the basics and that was enough" [sic] "money bought us food, so it kept us alive. But it didn't *keep us alive*" [sic] "... I really felt that this was something they [the recipients of her voluntary services] couldn't buy. I mean, they didn't really have money, but they needed help... and nowadays, help costs a lot. I didn't want money; I just wanted them to feel loved. Money isn't everything."

### Frans

Frans is a 44-year-old, Black male of Christian faith. He has been a volunteer for twenty-two years, and a lay volunteer counsellor for five years.

Frans sees himself primarily as a Christian clergyman, aiming to propagate the word of God. His induction into the voluntary sector was initiated with, and by, the church. Having experienced a difficult childhood and adolescence, Frans turned toward religion with the hope that God would rescue him. As an adolescent, he often repented for the hardships he experienced. He believes that he was being punished for unidentifiable sins. He adopts this view in relation to the patients he works with, and implores each patient to turn to God for support and enlightenment.

Frans appears to portray a highfalutin alliance with God. This allows him to be in a one-up position with patients: "... If you come [down] to that level, they will talk with you." This is further maintained by his divine unction: "Before the people is going to preach the word of God, you have the anointing." Not in possession of formal accreditation to counsel patients, Frans considers his religious vantage as spiritual accreditation to "heal" people. He therefore declaims the following entreaty ahead of each encounter: "Please God, give me a power and experience to handle this trouble for this guy."

Lay volunteer counselling does not appear to have been an intentional or conscious decision made by Frans. He was introduced to the field by a pastor who insisted that he approach the hospital in order to help others. Considering his subjective view of his ability to heal others, as well as the patients' reasons for being at the hospital (i.e. to be healed), one may cotton on that this appears to be a complementary relationship. It may be important to consider, however, that an amalgamation of physical and religious healing is not often anticipated by patients in a public hospital setting. The preceding inference is made from my personal experience as an intern trauma counsellor at the same hospital.

In describing himself as a lay volunteer counsellor, Frans compares his behaviour to Jesus' behaviour. This further affirms the one-up position, but also indicates Frans' attempt to display humility to the hospital patients. For example, he says: "...the lord of Jesus... if he's coming... he was not supposed to go to the rich man. He was supposed to go to the poor man. Then, if Jesus is coming there... he comes like a child to go underground... to take up <hand gesture: up> our people. That's why he was very simple to sit alongside our people. Because all these people, they think like a child. So me as a volunteer counsellor, all the time I pray: 'please God, help us.' Me, I need to go down <hand gesture: down> and the people listen to me if I'm talking because I go down [to their level] and the people is getting much encouragement to talk with me – because I'm not on top... up there... I go right down. God gave me a very good message and the

power to talk with these people. Because, in my mind, I've got nothing to do but to help that person. Because lots of people have lots of qualification[s], but if you can't meet that person [at their level], you can't talk to them." In view of Frans' nonverbal communication in this extract, it appears that Frans aims to use gestures as an expressive transmission to clarify his narratives. Furthermore, these gestures imply his representational ascent and descent in terms of his spiritual journey as lay volunteer counsellor.

### Anne

Anne is a 74-year-old, Caucasian female of Christian faith. She has been a volunteer for approximately ten years, and has been a lay volunteer counsellor for more than one year.

Anne indicates that she has always been inclined to engage in the welfare sector, but did not formally commit herself to a volunteer organisation. This was due to her involvement in paid employment, and thereafter taking care of her ill husband. The support she received from friends and family after her husband's death appears to have been the impetus for becoming a lay volunteer counsellor.

Subjectively, and to her family, Anne is defined as a helper. She attempts to strike a balance in providing others with practical, emotional, and spiritual support. This quality was shared with her father, and is currently shared with her children. For these reasons, Anne is of the view that her propensity to help others is a genetic predisposition spanning across generations. Furthermore, she internalised the caring nature modelled by her father. It is therefore reasonable to appreciate Anne's view that volunteering is a denouement of a genesis based on both heredity and history.

Moreover, it is interesting that Anne was spontaneously inspired to become a lay volunteer counsellor without external prompting. As such, Anne is of the view that God placed this thought in her mind. He then manipulated the circumstances whereby Anne

shared her thoughts with a neighbour who happened to be familiar with an organisation that accommodated lay volunteer counsellors. Anne, accompanied by her neighbour, visited the organisation and registered for the introductory course. Soon thereafter, Anne was allowed to visit and counsel patients. She experiences herself as inexperienced and is therefore attempting to gain as much knowledge and experience as possible to be a better lay volunteer counsellor.

### Richard

Richard is a 40-year-old, Black male of Christian faith. Although he has volunteered for twenty years, he has been a lay volunteer counsellor for ten years.

In early adulthood, Richard became a born-again Christian. Shortly thereafter, he received a ‘calling’ from God. While sitting alone in his room, he heard God say: “Now you are called!” Having experienced this auditory epiphany, Richard approached various clerics in order to determine the meaning of God’s words. All of the clerics whom he approached questioned the authenticity of this calling and concluded that Richard had been dreaming.

Ten months subsequent to this event, Richard had visited a patient in a hospital. That evening, he had a dream that he was preaching via a loudspeaker. A few days later, a foreign missionary had requested that Richard assist him in various matters. One of his tasks was to collect and deliver a loudspeaker. In transit of this delivery, Richard heard God speak again. God said: “... I want you to go and preach now... I want you to go in the street there and preach for the people there.” Richard indicates that he obeyed this command and verily witnessed some of his audience dedicate themselves to God. He was then compelled to shoulder the “burden” of possessing the passion to preach.

His passion to preach was marked with a need to reach people. He then became a volunteer chairman of a Christian movement in order to accomplish this goal. Later, he decided to approach various hospitals in order to help people on a micro level. Not

willing to succumb to the intricate demands of each hospital, he turned to God and asked him to facilitate his aims. God obliged and allowed Richard to meet a hospital coordinator who introduced him to the organisation where he currently volunteers.

Richard is of the view that all of his experiences, both internally and externally, are directed by God. Having been fortified by God's force, he sees himself as more capable than others in dealing with people. In receiving validation from the recipients of his services, Richard says that he "feels joy" because he has "accomplished what the Lord wants."

Richard sees himself as spiritually blessed. Since he is an instrument of God, he does not see himself as a lay volunteer counsellor. As an alternative, he defines himself as a spiritual caregiver.

### **The reflexive web**

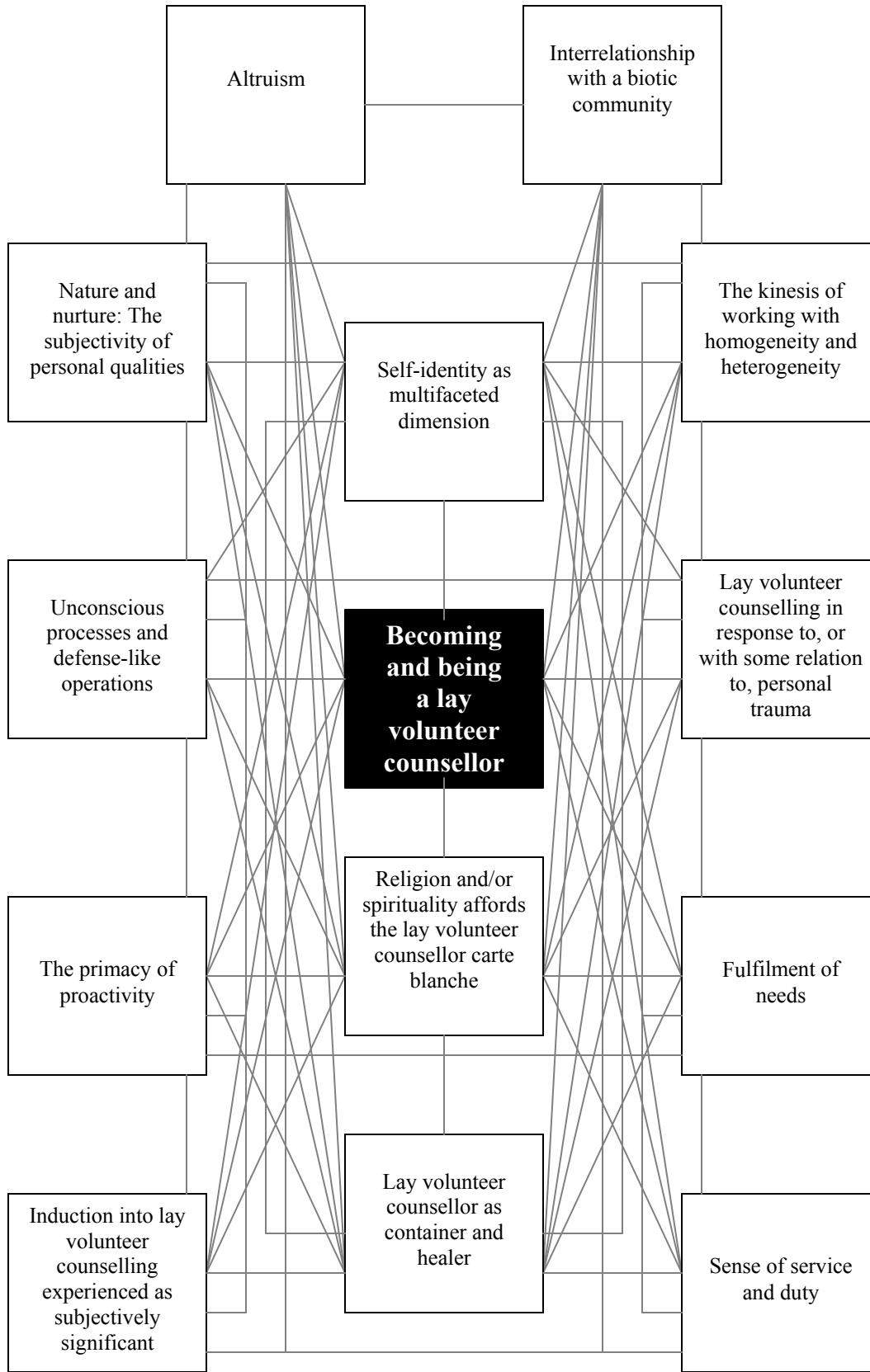
Discovering each participant's narrative resulted in my appreciation for miscellany and correspondence. While some of the narratives appear to have common themes which affect each participant, each of these themes are shaded by each participant's subjective experience thereof. Hence, a cyclical pattern of similarities and variance appears to manifest thematically.

### **Thematic extrapolation**

A number of superordinate themes transpired in terms of becoming and being a lay volunteer counsellor. Based on the frequency of narrated themes, superordinate themes were constructed. The superordinate themes were illustrated by the majority, and at times all, of the participants. Subordinate themes which appeared less frequently, yet have some liaison with superordinate themes, have also been included in order to invigorate the data and inform the context of the superordinate themes. Furthermore, as

Smith, Jarman & Osborn (1999) indicate, word-perfect extracts from the participants' transcripts are used to illustrate the theme being explored.

The diagram henceforth provides an abridgment of the superordinate themes derived. The reticulum of lines within the diagram are not aimed at mystifying the illustration, but more so to depict the interconnected and overlapping nature of each theme on the other, as it transpired within this investigation.



**Diagram:** Superordinate themes derived from participants



## Altruism

All six participants demonstrated altruistic views and behaviours. This was not exclusively apparent in their participation in voluntary activities, but also in their narratives regarding their subjective needs to help, provide comfort, and to serve society. Altruism is therefore acknowledged as a lifestyle.

Consider Louwna's view on the motherly sense of concern she offers patients at the hospital: "I suppose it is in a sense, a kind of motherly instinct. Because, for example, there was a patient yesterday... that was sitting up in bed... they'd given her the oxygen mask, and I realised I couldn't have a conversation with her, but I still went up to her and she said she couldn't really talk... and I just put my arm around her... or my hand around her back, like this <gesture>, and I said: "you know, the oxygen will help you." And I spoke to her for a few minutes... maybe even a minute... and... then she said to me, through the oxygen mask: "I'm beginning to feel better." So... obviously the oxygen was helping her and maybe my little pat on her back, you know, was just a touch of encouragement." In providing encouragement, Louwna attempts to comfort some of the patients. This sense of comforting is reinforced by the nonverbal transactions which she negotiates during counselling sessions. A pat on the back, for example, appears to be her means of communicating the tangible sense of relatedness which she appears to prize. From an intersubjective perspective, referring to these nonverbal behaviours within the interviewing process seemed to be an indication of her need to illustrate her caring nature as a lay volunteer counsellor. Furthermore, this may also have been a sign of her attempt to satisfy the researcher by physically displaying her dedication to the patients she visits. This latter account ties in with her altruistic need to satisfy others. Anne relates her need to help as being long-standing – a need which relates to various areas in her life: "...well, I've always been inclined because I regard myself as a fairly balanced person. And I often see people who are troubled, you know. And even my children... grandchildren... if they have a problem, I try my best... my utmost, or I pray for wisdom to sort of help them, you know. I've always tried to."

Zanele, like four of the participants, also discusses a long-standing desire to help others. However, it appears that she is of the view that her physical strength may be distributed in order to benefit society at large. She explains this as follows: “You know, I had hands and legs. I could manage to do a lot of things physically... so why not? I decided to use my own strength to help others who were not strong.” As Zanele’s interview progressed, it became apparent that she aspires to share both physical and emotional resources with others. Zanele’s narrative on the distribution of physical resources links well with providing patients with practical services. This, then, bodes with Tim’s approach to lay volunteer counselling, suggesting that practical needs should be satisfied before spiritual and emotional issues are addressed. Tim relates an encounter he had experienced with a patient recently: “That’s what I did to this guy... he was lying there and I said: ‘Is there anything I can do for you?’ So next to there was water, so I said: ‘do you want water?’ He says: ‘<Blinks>’. I say: ‘Do you want something else with water?’ ‘<Blinks>’. Then I said: ‘Orange juice?’ ‘<Blinks> Yes!’ So it cost me what... seven rand... its no big deal. I bought him orange juice. Right, that made a difference. Then we could speak a little bit, he said to me: ‘I can’t eat their porridge. Can you get me some Pronutro?’ I said: ‘Can I phone your family?’ and then what I did was... I usually... he couldn’t speak... I used to walk in there and then what I make a point of... I’d buy a newspaper. Then I’d sit... he can hear me. Then I’d say: ‘Okay, headlines is this... can you believe it!’ Then I’d go to the next page. ‘You know, this guy... this bloody Zuma... look what he’s getting up to.’ And I read the newspaper to him. And then when it’s finished, I held his hand ... he couldn’t feel it of course, and I prayed for him.” Tim’s nonverbal action in this extract appears to be an attempt at illustrating a vignette of one of his counselling encounters. It suggests Tim’s capacity to communicate with patients when communication appears to be limited. Additionally, exploring this nonverbal communication within the interview suggest Tim’s need to graphically impart his strengths as lay volunteer counsellor. This indicates his need to be understood, and possibly to be valued for his interpersonal skills and sensitivity.

While all participants expressed their desire to persevere with lay volunteer counselling for as long as is physically possible, Richard had an interesting slant regarding the length of time that he will continue providing help-giving services. To this he replies: “For until God takes me... or Jesus comes.”

#### Interrelationship with a biotic community

None of the participants expressed an extreme focus on personal independence. All of them related anecdotes of themselves in relation to others. Certainly, familial systems resonated clearly within five of the participants’ accounts. However, all of the participants expressed a profound interrelationship with a suprasystem, namely the spiritual ecosystem. It should be borne in mind that each participant’s relationship with a biotic community includes influences from various faculties, containing other lay volunteer counsellors; mentors; and social groups.

Zanele’s system entails a traditionally African worldview. Of this she says: “I do believe that we all work in harmony... you know, people, plants, animals, spirits.” She also expresses an enjoyable and comfortable experience of operating in a collective unit: “My sister, and cousins... neighbours. We all used to meet and work together. But it wasn’t like work... it was more like playing... my family is like my air. I think I can go for a few days without food, but without my family... <long pause>.” The extended pause in this extract nonverbally conveys Zanele’s difficulty in thinking about life without her family. As her family constitutes an enormous part of her life, she inhibits considering their absence in her life as this could suggest the demise of a part of herself. Zanele has also found comfort in the lay volunteer counsellor system: “we have a lot in common. I’ve made a lot of friends and we support each other.” This latter sentiment is also shared by Anne. Frans, in contrast, speaks of other people as a subsystem and touches on his need to attend to them: “... before you eat, you must know your friend is eating.”

Of the suprasystem, Anne narrates: “I always believed in a God, but then it struck me... I always believed, but now I know. I know He’s there and He answered my prayers.” Louwna, on the other hand, describes an interrelationship between the subsystems: “He [husband] supported me during this time. He was still working at that stage and he is a Presbyterian minister, so I’ve always been involved in the church, from the time I got married... well, even before then I was involved in a church, but [at this organisation] I met people from many churches who had different viewpoints and I felt, maybe that is what heaven is like <laughs>... Christians with different viewpoints and approaches, you know.” Louwna’s laugh in this narrative suggests some form of mischievous amusement at, to use an untailed phrase, enjoying a little piece of heaven on earth. Richard intimates an adjacent relationship with God. Sharing these chronicles with others often reinforces his relationship with strangers: “... [Then] the Lord spoke with me and said: ‘I want you to be involved here.’ Then after my friend got married, he introduced me to [another organisation]... Then they [members of the organisation] called me afterwards and they asked me a few questions... and they asked me to give the testimony. So I gave them the testimony and they were very excited.”

#### Nature and nurture: The subjectivity of personal qualities

Four of the participants were overtly aware of the probable origins of their sense of volunteering. Anne is of the view that her father imbued a sense of volunteering in her: “My father was, I think, the origin of this. He was really a... an advisor. He was a very religious man, but he never... it’s funny to say... but he never overdid... you know, he never thrust it down people’s throats. He realised he was very religious. He did everything with love and people came to him for advice, young and old... even ministers from the church came to ask his advice.” Anne believes that she then passed this quality to her children, and she therefore queries whether this is a genetic trait, or a quality which is relationally modelled to each generation.

Tim indicates that his early childhood played a significant role in his life, as well as his volunteerism: “In the olden days on the farms, you had somebody who lived on

your farm... a white person who lives on your farm. But he's like a labourer. My mother picked cotton with all the black staff. I mean... she got the same wages they got. So we were very poor and I must say, that had an enormous effect on me, you know, on helping people. Because I know what it was like."

Louwina also suggests that experiences in her childhood played some part in her desire to help others, which she then relates to as a sense of idealism which she developed. This idealism becomes a pattern which she relates to later in life. She explains this process as follows: "And then I went to boarding school... I don't know whether I grew up... I developed a sense of idealism maybe... because I've always been a great reader... and very affected by books. And for me, the characters in the books were almost real. You know, I'm a farmer, it's quite a lonely childhood because you only get to see your friends at school, you know," "King Arthur and the knights on the round table. Those knights were my heroes. And they were always going around rescuing damsels in distress, you know <giggles>. And... I'm sure I must have imbibed a sense of idealism. So, when I got married, the man I chose was somebody who was fighting for a better country," "and he was involved in working towards a free South Africa... my husband... and so I obviously had a sense of idealism – here was a man that was not just setting out to make money, but he was actually trying to, you know, bring about a new order in South Africa," "Either that's my own analysis of myself... or I'm not sure... it's how I analyse it. Now, when I was getting near to retirement, I read a novel which had a great effect on me, a Norwegian novel... a life story of a woman. And, at the end of her life, when she had become a widow and her children had taken over the farm, she joined a religious order. In those days, there was only the Catholic Church, you know, and she helped to nurse the plague victims... because there was a plague, you know... the demonic plague was rife in Europe... this is a novel of the 1300's. And this sort of... I don't know why... this sort of influenced me... maybe with the last section of my life, I should do something worthwhile... that would make difference, perhaps, to some people. So maybe that's also the sense of idealism coming out <laughs>." Louwina's nonverbal indicators in this extract, suggest that she revels in the process of the effects of fable on her sense of idealism. In a sense, it appears that she has come to live the legends which

she glamorises. This links with her view that her “life has come full circle,” and thereby implies a personal sense of satisfaction.

Zanele indicates that her sense of helping is part and parcel of her belief system. However, on a more personal level, Zanele aims to nurture others as a disbursement for the nurturance she received as a child. To explain this, she says: “The older people, my grandparents, the neighbours, they all helped to look after me when I couldn’t walk, or talk, or help myself. I just feel like I want to return the favour.”

Frans experienced a difficult childhood and does not overtly suggest influences which fostered his volunteerism. Covertly, his anguish throughout his childhood was marked with appeals to God: “In my heart I say, ‘I’m suffering, but God will come and help me because I’m growing without my mother.’” It therefore appears that a perceived nurturance from God became Frans’ recourse to dealing with personal difficulties – he therefore aims to share this coping style with other individuals. In effect, God was his nurturer and can nurture others as well.

Richard provided no overt or covert reckoning of his personal qualities, perpetually implying that he is the contrivance through which God acts.

#### Self-identity as multifaceted dimension

None of the participants narrated a static sense of self. Each illustrated a dynamic, intricate sense of self.

Four of the participants clearly define themselves as lay volunteer counsellors, but each operates with a diverse backdrop. Tim sees himself as “a hospital counsellor” operating within the Christian framework, where “Christianity must be practical.” He therefore takes a more active stance in his counselling endeavours. This overlaps with his approach to life in general: “You often hear, ‘God is love,’ ‘Jesus is love,’ ‘Jesus loves me,’ you know, ‘he’ll look after me.’ What they [other Christians] don’t understand is

love is not a feeling; it's something that you do. And Jesus did something two thousand years ago. He walked with the cross for you.”

Zanele's self-identity appears to be fused with her systemic identity. Where her independent activities as lay volunteer counsellor focuses on 'I,' she generally relates to her personal and familial views as a single entity, as 'we.' Zanele's self-identity therefore appears to be analogous to her systemic identity, characterised by humility, selflessness, altruism, and optimism.

Louwna views herself as persevering (“I don't give up easily”) and caring. She describes the latter quality as a “maternal instinct.” Like Tim, Louwna operates with a Christian backdrop. This is true, too, for Frans and Richard albeit religion appears to be nearer to the forefront than as a backdrop. Although Anne also narrates the incorporation of Christian values into her self-identity, she portrays a more humanistic approach to dealing with others as opposed to a more religious approach. Anne says: “It's like a wall where you can... what do they call it... a sound wall or something. My son says to me: 'It's not like a wailing wall, is it?' So my daughter told me that she also does the same thing...”

#### The kinesis of working with homogeneity and heterogeneity

Based on the accounts of the participant's experiences, all of the participants introduced the occurrence of working with diverse individuals. Their responses to such diversification were somewhat varied. When asked how Richard deals with individuals who do not share the same beliefs as he does, he responds: “You know, people who are like that, they don't even want to see some [of the] signs... things that are happening... it's like they don't want to see the 'wonders'. They just want to see things that they can hold or point to.” Richard then communicates with God to change the person's mind. Alternatively, when his religious 'calling' is questioned, he refers these sceptics to a scriptural passage. In his interview, Richard verbalised the following: “When people question me... and they do question me... I refer them to the book of Jeremiah... when

the Lord called Jeremiah... when you read Jeremiah Chapter One, the Lord says: ‘No, Jeremiah. I know you before you were born and I’ve chosen you to be the leader.’ So it’s a calling from God <laughs>. Richard, therefore, reverts to religion as his aegis against diverse beliefs. His nonverbal correspondence implies the elation he experiences with regards to being privileged to have received God’s calling.

Anne appears to embrace diversity, and becomes more motivated to volunteer as a result of working with a diverse population. She is of the view that obtaining more knowledge will enable her to appreciate diverse views better: “I’m even more motivated to help people than I was in the beginning... I want to read... unfortunately I don’t have the internet... I have a computer... I really want to have access to more information.”

Louwna attempts to strike a balance between religious views and humanistic perspectives. In dealing with diversity, it appears that she endeavours to understate religion when possible, and accentuate communication instead. This is connoted in a vignette relating to a counselling session that Louwna recently engaged in: “... yesterday, for example, I had a lady... she looked like an Indian lady... she looked very sick, I think it was a heart failure. And when I sat down next to her... and we had a bit of a conversation... she said to me: ‘I’d like you to pray for me please.’ So I noticed she wasn’t wearing a head scarf, but she had a scarf around her neck. So I said: ‘Are you Christian?’ And she said: ‘No, I’m a Muslim... but I accept all faiths, I would be happy if you would pray for me,’ so, she actually requested it. So I said a prayer for her...”

Tim finds it quite difficult to work with people of diverse languages and cultures. When asked how he responds to these encounters, he reports: “I feel that I... I feel like I wasted their time and mine. You know, I feel [like] I didn’t achieve anything. And I don’t mind doing it again and again...because it’s only by keeping on doing it that you get better. But, I find for me, the language barrier... the culture barrier... is extremely difficult to get out of... I can’t get out of it.” Tim also says: “... because of the difficulty I have communicating with Black people... the difficulty I have sometimes communicating with Afrikaners... I don’t particularly like what I’m doing.” Frans, on the



other hand, persistently attempts to be au fait with as many cultures as possible: “So it’s a lot of people. Another one is talking Chinese. Another one is talking another tongue. And he needs ample... fortunately I need all the people who are sick. I know all the language[s]. So another one is coming here... it’s an Englishman... another one is Afrikaans... Deutsche... Greek... so you must try [to communicate].”

### Unconscious processes and defense-like operations

Most of the participants demonstrated defense-like operations, the most prominent of which appears to be affiliation with God. Three of the participants overtly illustrate an affiliation with God. For example, Richard indicates that he once saw a patient “crying, crying, crying.” He then communicated with God: “... ‘God, how does this person feel?’ So he showed that the problem was not the sickness of the flesh... it was the spirit.” Other participants employ affiliation when exploring their relationship with God. Louwna often says to God: “Well, here I am... take me to the person that needs some... [of] your help!” Frans says: “It [God] guides me... what I must do.” Richard, by way of alternative, shares his difficulties with God but also places the responsibility of outcomes on God. Of this he says: “I said: ‘God, if you still want me to be involved in the hospital, please make a way for me.’” It therefore appears to be somewhat of a projective process for Richard, although his desires are not afforded to God due to unacceptable feelings – but probably merely to cushion the impact of coping with possible rejection.

When patients cannot recognise the value of the services which Louwna aims to offer, she seems to divorce the emotions subjectively perceived as rejection of the self, and thereby foster what appears to be similar to isolation of affect. Hence: “once I was rejected when I was visiting a patient. It was still in the old Tshwane Hospital, which was still HF Verwoed... I was speaking to a patient and there was a young lady in the bed next to her crying and crying. And this lady was dressed in black and she had these black fingernails... and you know, people then jump to conclusions... that’s gothic or could that be satanic, you know. But she was crying so, and I interrupted my conversation, my visit... and I went to her bed and I said: ‘I see that you are really very upset... would

you like to talk to me?’ and she said: ‘You know, where are you from?’ And I said: ‘We’re from pastoral services,’ or whatever name I gave, I can’t remember. And she said: ‘No, I can’t talk to you,’ and that was that. So well, then you just accept that... some people are not open. But it doesn’t affect me... I don’t feel rejected... you know, because I understand that other people have different viewpoints. I feel disappointed that maybe, it would have helped her to have just talked.”

Another defense-like process which appears to be in operation is a process which may be comparable to reaction formation, albeit a practical version of the coping style. Therefore, the participant deals with an internal stressor by substituting behaviour that is inversely proportional to his/her own thoughts or feelings. This was noticeable in the aforementioned narrative which Louwna provided: “And this lady was dressed in black and she had these black fingernails... and you know, people then jump to conclusions... that’s gothic or could that be satanistic, you know... But it doesn’t affect me... I don’t feel rejected... you know, because I understand that other people have different viewpoints. I feel disappointed that maybe, it would have helped her to have just talked.” Finally, all participants appear to facilitate the introjection of God and/or the participant’s parents. For example, Anne says: “My father was, I think, the origin of this,” relating to incorporating the characteristics of her father. As for Richard, he suggests that his needs and God’s needs are symmetrical. Hence, the introjection of God appears to be an unconscious process. To illustrate this, Richard says:” I wanted to reach people with the gospel and to even help people” [sic] “I think... [I] have accomplished what the Lord wants.”

To view these defense-like processes as a refutation of the participants’ subjective truth would be to misconstrue the thematic significance of the data. One should factor in the notion that these themes have a connection with all of the other themes, thereby fostering and characterising the process of becoming and being a lay volunteer counsellor.

Lay volunteer counselling in response to, or with some relation to, personal trauma

Some of the participants suggested that there is a profound link between difficult life events that they had experienced and their sense of volunteering. While Anne's experience of caring for her husband reinforced her subjective ability to care for others, the external support that she received subsequent to his death served as her momentum to enter into lay volunteer counselling. To explain this, Anne says: "... well, I think that really drove me to... I was all by myself. I'm still staying in the house by myself. And I thought I'd like to do something back... you know, to give this growth that I've received... to give it back to... pass it on to somebody else... in whatever means there was." It is interesting that this narrative suggests that, as part of the momentum, entering into lay volunteer counselling may also be a reaction to perceived loneliness. Anne therefore says: "I couldn't just sit there and... you know, all by myself. I had to go out and give something."

Frans' experience of his parents' divorce was wrought with difficulty. He was of the view that he was severed because of this experience. God then became a parental figure, whom Frans had hoped would be able to unite these fractured parts. Frans says: "No, because this man [father] has a child but [he] doesn't have a wife. He can't grow the child. You see, in my heart I say: 'I'm, suffering, but God will come and help me because I'm growing without my mother,'" "In my mind since I'm growing [up], I see the child that was staying with father and [no] mother was divided. And me, because I didn't have my mother, I've got only my father, so I'm divided. It's so hard" [sic] "if you see the other children... they've got a mother and a father... its different [compared] to me" [sic] "... that's why in my mind, if I repent and I tell God: 'God, please help us. Have mercy please. Rub all that things (sins). I make you my creator. Create for me.' Because that time with my father, I was not okay. Because I'm growing [up] like a child whose just sleeping in the bush." It is, therefore, apprehensible that Frans' lived experience may foster a process where he identifies with patients who are "divided" based on personal trauma, and thereby feels adept to helping these individuals.

Tim's history was also blotted with his parent's divorce and he therefore spent a great deal of his childhood with his revered mother, and part of his adolescence with his recalcitrant father. At age fifteen, Tim escaped his father's home. He found somewhere to live, found a job, and made a success of most of his careers. He regards these events with both pride and anger, as it suggests overcoming difficult circumstances, but also having to operate within the confines of limited educational resources. Tim explains some of these events: "I was very unhappy. I was living with my father and my stepmother. She was good to me, don't get me wrong. My father was the problem. But uhm... <pause>, I learnt to look after myself, okay. And I only had a standard eight (grade ten). And I went out, I became an officer in the fire department... I was the youngest officer they ever had... I'm bragging now <laughs>. A hundred and thirty two people worldwide wrote the exam... only two people passed. One in England, and me. Then I left that because promotion was my seniority. So guys that didn't have the qualifications I had, who didn't have the experience that I had... he was promoted because he was there one day before me... that's how it worked! Not anymore though. And then I left to do the insurance business. I became an assistant general manager of a very large company. I had four hundred reps under me. I had a budget of ten million rand. This was in the 1980's... and yet, when I left and I decided to do... re-administer funeral benefits... you've got to get a financial service provider certificate... they wouldn't give it to me..." "I haven't got a matric (grade twelve)." As with Frans, it appears that Tim utilises his experience of personal difficulties to identify with, and help rectify, patients' difficulties. In terms of Tim's nonverbal communication in this narrative, he appears to struggle with verbalising the difficulties with his father for two possible reasons. The first reason appears to relate to the distress he experiences regarding his relationship with his father. The second reason being the difficulty Tim experiences in sharing these experiences with a stranger. Furthermore, his laugh during the account of one of his achievements suggests subjective pride in his accomplishments – particularly in the face of adversity.

### The primacy of proactivity

Most of the participants view lay volunteer counselling as a means of being active, but also as a means of being proactive. The engagement in lay volunteer counselling appears to be a means of placing cognitive intent into practical execution.

Zanele could not tolerate her disconcerting reaction to the suffering of others. She says: “It’s just not right when people suffer. I can’t help but to cry sometimes. If I could, I would do whatever [possible] to ease their pain... you see, I really couldn’t take it when I saw people suffer. I was always thinking that I have the strength... so I should do something.” Anne has a similar view: “Well, I just felt that I had to do something. You’ve got to do something!” For Tim, he needed to do something practical in terms of serving society, so as to satisfy his religious stance: “You know, for quite some time I was getting involved... learning about Christianity... and uhm... I always thought I need to do something but you know... I didn’t know what. And uhm... I’m trying to think how I actually came... I don’t know <agitated>, one day I was just thinking and you know... what about seeing people in hospital? But it was just a thought. And it became quite persistent after that... I thought that I needed to do something practical... in terms of serving society... because Christianity must be practical.” Tim’s agitation in this extract seems to relate to his sense of not knowing. Subjectively, Tim experiences himself as well-informed and not knowing, therefore, appears to be a complex process for him to assimilate.

Louwna’s shares a similar view to Tim, except that she is coming to terms with this being the final stage of her life. She says: “I realised, now that I was in the last stage of my life... I mean retirement... there is no more job interviews and stuff to look forward to, and new avenues... so I thought I would look out for a new avenue... and now I don’t have to earn my bread anymore because I now get a pension. So I could look at doing something for God that... didn’t require a salary...” It appears that, for both Louwna and Tim, activity may be an automatism to perceived passivity.

### Religion and/or spirituality affords the lay volunteer counsellor carte blanche

While all of the participants appear to operate within the confines of societal norms, most of the participants indicate that they operate as lay volunteer counsellors under the authority of religion, as opposed to institutional or formal regulations. Five of the six participants saw lay volunteer counselling as a calling from God.

To validate this view, Richard says: “You know, to me, doing volunteer work... actually to volunteer in the work of God... to me, I don’t take it as volunteering because that is all God’s calling... it’s a service to God.” One may therefore view this in contrast to volunteering being a service to man. By definition, Richard implies that religion is the institution within which he operates: “... well, to be a lay volunteer counsellor is... actually, this word of ‘volunteering,’ is not the word of the Lord... to work for the Lord is a calling.” Hence, he prefers not to brand himself based on the hospital’s definition of his activities, but rather under the auspices of God’s description of him.

Frans shares these sentiments. While discussing his role as a volunteer, he says: “... the anointing and the holy spirit is that what’s giving the people a way in what you must do.” Louwna’s prayer, before each session, suggests her personal perception of the magnitude of God’s presence for both her and the patient. She reports: “... I often pray that I must be able to bring the love of God to this patient in some way... or else the presence of God... the comforting presence of God. That is what I’m actually hoping to achieve. So, I’m not really very often in the... uhm... a true counsellor in the sense of being distanced and talking... just discoursing.”

For her counselling sessions, Anne’s requests to God also suggest God’s influence on managing complex cases. To affirm this, she narrates: “I just prayed: ‘please God, give me good wisdom and strength to handle this situation.’”

### Fulfilment of needs

All of the participants suggest that lay volunteer counselling serves as a channel to fulfilling needs.

In being practical, Tim aims to demonstrate his own, and thereby share God's, love with others. He suggests: "love... is an act. When you do things for people, that is love. 'Can I help you? Can I give you a lift?' That is love."

Anne describes her delight, and thus her need, for external validation: "... they make me feel quite good about it... they say they admire me. They think it's a wonderful thing to do. I think some of my other women friends have also even thought of doing the same thing because they're impressed."

In discussing others' needs, Zanele appears to communicate some of her own needs. For example, Zanele appears to have a need to connect with others. She says: "... I was thinking that I would just go into the hospital and see if anyone wanted someone to speak to <laughs>... I didn't want to do anything grand... but just to see if they needed a friend." Zanele's reflection on her initial attempt to volunteer at the hospital is coupled with a sense of discomfiture. This appears to be based on her experience within the organisation which seems to have fostered structure and a social standard in terms of volunteering. She therefore views her early attempt to volunteer with a sense of jest, somewhat diminishing her subjective sense of wanting to help others.

Louwna has a need for gratification. She says: "Sometimes, you don't feel as if you've reached anyone, not like every time you go..." Louwna's need for gratification appears to be coupled with her need to connect with others – a need she shares with most of the other participants. In exploring her experiences, she narrates the following: "It's sort of in me... I'm one of those people that like to take somebody's hand when I pray for them, or maybe just touch their arm... I have that kind of physical... I suppose it's kind

of a motherly instinct to want to sort of comfort, because mothers always touch when they comfort.” This narrative further suggests her need to nurture.

Frans’ need to be needed manifests somewhat covertly. Satisfying God’s needs suggests that Frans takes pleasure in being needed by God to fulfil God’s needs. To illustrate this, one of the narratives in Frans’ transcript reads as follows: “... me, I’m flesh... but if you’re talking with our people, you must know... God is pleased. He’s helping us do anything he need[s].”

Richard’s account of becoming and being a lay volunteer counsellor suggests a need for esteem. Continuously communicating God’s word to others; sharing spiritual visions with others; and delivering the testimony indicates that Richard calls for esteem. Considering himself a spiritual caregiver, Richard states the following: “... to be the spiritual caregiver, you are like the messenger of God.”

#### Induction into lay volunteer counselling experienced as subjectively significant

Some of the participants experienced the preamble to lay volunteer counselling as being especially significant. For Louwna, the commencement of her voluntary career as lay volunteer counsellor indicated coming to terms with her retirement, but also finding a “new avenue” in which she could be engaged in “something meaningful.”

For Frans, his inauguration into lay volunteer counselling subjectively seemed to be a natural process. Another pastor recognised his capabilities and requested that he extend his potential by volunteering at a hospital. Frans says of this: “... because he [the pastor] sees me... how I preach and talk to other people. Then he told me... ‘why [are] you not coming to the hospital to work (do) the work of God?’”



### Lay volunteer counsellor as container and healer

All of the participants experience themselves as being containers and/or healers of others' suffering.

Zanele indicates that she “would do whatever [it takes] just to ease their pain.” Richard also has a desire to heal others, and often requests that God assist him in this process. He validates this in the following account: “I always want to give something... like when the person is very sick, I have that thing: ‘If God, it’s possible... please make me take that sickness... out from that person.’” He aims to have “compassion for them” and to put himself “in their shoes.”

Frans also communicates with God, often requesting that God provide him with the “power and experience to handle this trouble” for the other person. Louwna shares in the other person’s suffering. It appears that, at times, she internalises the other person’s suffering as a means of dissipating the effect of the patient’s distress. She says: “... really, it’s just to be able... you get a feeling that you are sharing in somebody’s suffering and their worries...”

### Sense of service and duty

All of the participants expressed an overt sense of duty and/or service. While four of the participants indicated that their volunteering activities are performed as a service to God, two participants indicated that their aims were to service mankind. In reflecting on those who are suffering, Zanele says: “It serves no-one. It really doesn’t.” She therefore endeavours to “do anything” to serve the suffering. Louwna, on the other hand, indicates that her sense of duty stems from her “commitment to the Lord.”

## **The reflexive web**

The discovery and brainstorming of themes resulted in an intricate process aiming at clustering information in order to make it readily available to an audience. These themes constellated many affects and cognitions within me, and I anticipate that they may have a similar effect on others. This appears to be due to the humane component attached to most of the themes. As human beings, each of us has needs, desires, and a sense of service and/or duty. Each of us operates within a biotic community and define ourselves according to these themes – be it to a lesser or a greater degree.

Working with these themes indicated working with the participants. Internal conversations developed between myself and the participants; between my personal self and my academic self; between myself and the academic community; between myself and the recipients of the volunteers; between the participants and the patients; and often between participants with each other. The multidimensionality of these internal processes assisted me in questioning and justifying themes.

The analysis of participants' nonverbal behaviours suggested thinking processes which were not verbalised for various reasons. Additionally, many of these nonverbal transactions indicated the participants' needs to express themselves, as well as to communicate effectively. This implied a need to be heard. Often, as recipient to these nonverbal gestures, I felt very much like a congregant at a sermon. This process was embraced. Essentially, my role as researcher in this study indicated myself as disciple of each participant's narrative. It is also interesting that participants' nonverbal communication allowed me to visualise their experiences, which offered a gestalt of an image, as apposed to constructing images structured via words. One should bear in mind that nonverbal communication during the interviews was not linear. The equal flow of nonverbal communication from participants to myself, and vice versa was apparent. Intersubjectively, the nonverbal gestures which were transacted served as paralinguistic communication, since the use of these gestures served to communicate particular

meanings and to support verbal communication. Moreover, these gestures translated covert affect and cognition.

I also employed my interpretive resources by consulting academic resources. I decided to present the academic justifications in the following chapter, entitled *Discussion*, so as to maintain the authenticity of the participants' accounts within this chapter. In short, as many of the participants were searching for, and even creating, meaning in their lives, I began a search for meaning in their themes – aiming to present in this chapter what these participants experience in their lives. Undoubtedly, one cannot deny that this search for meaning also forms part of an academic exercise, yet I sincerely question whether any human-related study can remain purely academic, devoid of the human experience which each of us endures – researcher, participants, supervisors, evaluators, and bookworms alike.

I also came to realise that none of these themes are static in nature. Placing them into sections and subsections is merely a means of organising information into what may seem like a coherent whole. I, therefore, sketched a diagram of the themes and the interrelated nature of each of these themes. In my opinion, none should be viewed in isolation lest we depreciate the value of the context of each theme. Sub-themes interface, minor themes support superordinate themes, and major themes may continue to remain hidden. The inquiry into the thematic process therefore remains intersubjective; vulnerable to adaptation, maturation, and interpretation – and within this vulnerability lies the elegance of the qualitative approach: this body of work is not my property, it is ours.

### **Responding to the research question**

What motivates lay volunteer counsellors to initiate and maintain help-giving services?

This study provided an abundance of data from six participants regarding their lived experiences of becoming and being lay volunteer counsellors. Thirteen superordinate themes relating to these experiences were identified. Intrapersonal communication, as well as dialoguing with other volunteers and the researcher, allowed the participants the dais to express their experiences.

#### **Summary of chapter 4**

This chapter focused on providing the results of the research process. Having presented word-perfect accounts from the participants, the chapter developed a personality indicative of the experiences of lay volunteer counsellors. The presented themes focused on the global experience of becoming and being a lay volunteer counsellor. Since the themes appeared to be interrelated, they were not presented in any chronological or sequential order. Furthermore, a diagrammatic representation of the interrelationship of the superordinate themes was provided.

#### **Conclusive commentary**

As these participants attempt to bring meaning to the lives of the patients they interact with, it is hoped that this chapter brings these participants to life for the audience.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

#### Introduction

This chapter is designed to clarify and refine the results harvested by this research investigation. Consequently, the objective is to weight these findings by way of research within existing literature. A critical appraisal of the current themes, in relation to the literature, is provided. With this chapter, as has been exercised throughout this body of work, both reflexive processes and intersubjective experiences are explored. Penultimately, recommendations for potential research are made, followed by an investigation of the strengths and limitations observed during the study. As a point of departure, it may be illuminating to explore the researcher's deliberation on the research process.

#### The reflexive web

##### The research process

Smith (2008) indicates that IPA works with currency. The currency desired in IPA includes meanings that participants embrace with regards to experiences, states, and events. Personal perceptions are pivotal, and the researcher aims to be sensitive to the participant's private experience. Kvale (1996) suggests that the interviewer acquire a profound familiarity with the research question so as to contrive interview questions. The interview process should then be guided towards the research question, steering away from leading the participant and thereby compromising the validity of the research. Equilibrium should be maintained in terms of employing neutral impressions during the interview process, facilitating spontaneous interaction, and sustaining the fluidity of personal accounts from participants.

With these guidelines in mind, I set forth in preparing pertinent interview questions. Introspection, supervision, and consultation with literature resulted in my having to work, and re-work, all of them. Often engaging in intrapersonal interviews prior to the actual interview process, I had conducted many interviews with myself-as-participant and myself-as-researcher. Undoubtedly, due to the facilitation of my research supervisor, I had developed an internal supervisor who formed a coalition with my superego. This relates consistently with my cogent veneration for self and others, and in doing so buttressed my respect for the interviewing process. Maintaining the equilibrium which Kvale (1996) speaks of; pursuing the guidelines suggested by Smith (2008); and striving towards the ethical considerations which I aspired to fulfill, resulted in a vigilant approach towards the interviewing process. It was therefore comprehensible that I had conducted a substantial amount of intrapersonal interviews prior to conducting any interpersonal interviews.

The interview process appeared to be a platform which afforded the participants an opportunity to share their experiences with the researcher as an acknowledging audience. Although these participants communicate with a large number of individuals continuously, many reflected that this process allowed them to feel “heard.” In a sense, volunteering to participate in the study was similar to volunteering as a lay counsellor: all of the participants were elated that they were providing a larger audience (academia) with a service that had the potential to benefit the voluntary sector in the future, regardless of the notion that this study would probably not benefit them personally. In effect, the participants appeared to receive the unanticipated benefit of satisfaction.

### Truths

As a qualitative study, centered on lived experiences, subjective truth is altogether sufficient. However, the traversing of subjectivity which transpires during an investigation such as this, indicates that a co-creation of truth may manifest. Foucault (1972) terms these discourses of truths as unisubjective and intersubjective truths. Unisubjective truth is exclusively personal, while intersubjective truth requires

negotiation between subjects who jointly claim truth or falsehood. As this study embraced interpersonal interaction, Kvale (1996) suggests that the researcher rope in his/her experiences of the interview process. This may facilitate an appreciation of the intersubjective truth within the interview.

My role in the interview process did not subscribe to the confines of transsubjective observer (Foucault, 1972), or in positivist terms, objective observer. My presence in the interview process may have had some influence on the information provided by participants, as did their narratives in terms of my line of questioning. This, however, appeared to have been a mutually beneficial process whereby trust in, and the appreciation of, subjectivity could be fostered. As such, I acknowledged each account as authentic, exploring discrepancies rather than confronting them. In an environment of mutual respect, I had come to appreciate each participant as personal and social beings. The intersubjective dedication to supplying the study with rich experiences was evident throughout the process, culminating in my subjective sense of contentment subsequent to each interview.

### **Critical appraisal of themes**

Considering the research question, the aim of the study was to explore factors relating to the initiation and maintenance of engagement in lay volunteer counselling. Aspects relating to affect, conation, and cognition were explored. Furthermore, the interpretative process drew on resources relating to both practical and theoretical convictions available within the domain of psychology. Applying a postmodern philosophy suggested an inclusive approach to analysing existential, dynamic, phenomenological, and systemic perceptions. Themes relating to these dimensions were included in the results, but particularisms regarding specific approaches will be centred on henceforth under each theme.

## Altruism

Altruism appeared to be endemic within this investigation. Compassion was a common denominator amongst these lay volunteer counsellors (Churchill & Street, 2002). As these traits appeared to be long-standing, it appeared that the participants are endowed with an altruistic personality (Carlo et al., 1991; Churchill & Street, 2002).

The foremost theme which defined the nature of altruism amongst all participants was a pendulum-like service offering, resulting in the lay volunteer counsellor's subjective sense of joy or satisfaction. Kitcher (1993) terms this reciprocal altruism. However, an added dimension appears to be present amid the participants. In using the pendulum image as a means of describing the reciprocal process of these participants' altruistic behaviours, a linearly-based tit-for-tat relationship may be suggested. This does not appear to be the case for these participants as the direction of service-giving behaviours, and satisfaction-receiving affects appears to be both reciprocal and circular. Consider that most of the participants believe that their services allowed others to help, and be helped, vicariously. Therefore, a more appropriate image would be the Foucault pendulum (Hart, Miller & Mills, 1987), albeit a bidirectional version thereof would appear to be more suitable.

In concordance with the literature (Piliavin & Charng, 1990; Sober, 1991; Dovidio, 1991; Eisenberg, 1991), the participants' prosocial behaviours appear to be coupled with empathy. Irrespective of the diversity displayed in their altruistic motivations (Hoffman, 1975), participants were motivated to empathise with patients and illustrated a concerted effort in expressing their concern for these patients. This suggested that their interest in helping others is not exclusively based on self-interest, but more so to benefit others (Grant, 1997). Most participants viewed this as an interlinking between biological and psychological processes. However, this sense of serving others also seemed to suggest an interrelationship with systems. Of note would be a sense of service to a suprasystem. The suggestion, then, is that these participants conceptualise their



altruistic behaviours in terms of a sociological and psychobiospiritual outlook (Morrison & Severino, 2007).

Furthermore, it was clear that the participants subjectively experienced their altruistic activities as a consistent effort to distribute goodwill and to perform positive actions so as to benefit others (Clohesy, 2000). Related to these subjective experiences of altruism, these participants conformed to a recent investigation (Van Emmerik, Jawahar & Stone, 2005) indicating that altruists rarely demonstrated evidence of burnout. Compassion fulfilment appears to be proportional to the participants' sense of self-efficacy and appears to support resilience in terms of developing compassion fatigue (Fisher & Cole, 1993).

#### Interrelationship with a biotic community

Operating within interdependent systems, participants appear to receive external validation and reinforcement with regards to their volunteerism. This appears to foster a sense of collective efficacy in attaining both interpersonal and intrapersonal objectives (Goddard, Hoy & Hoy, 2004).

Participants' identification with groups, such as religious clusters and other volunteers, supports the notion of a collective efficacy (Polletta & Jasper, 2001). In the context of this study, however, it is proposed that this notion include a sense of collective identity. The participants appear to suggest that this identity exists, to a greater extent, in the mind.

Furthermore, systemic identity related to cultural identity. Participants saw themselves in terms of culturally-differentiated fragments defined by race, language, religion, and gender. A robust theme which emerged in relation to this suggested that cultural distinction plays a part in each participant's dynamic formation of self-as-volunteer (Hong et al., 2001). The organisation within which the lay volunteer counsellors operate recommends that male volunteers counsel male patients, while

female volunteers should preferably counsel female patients. Participants evidenced following these recommendations, which appears to have some bearing on their perceptions of the hospital system's functioning. This appears to be in relation to each participant's subjective perception of his/her primary system, but also of his/her awareness of the self according to gender. Gender representation therefore appeared to be an underlying theme apparent in participants' narratives (Norris & Inglehart, 2001).

Participants also illustrated behavioural and attitudinal consistency between subsystems, suggesting a merge between social identity and self-identity. This further indicated the reciprocal nature of the individual and his/her reference group (Shibutani, 1955). Hence, the lay volunteer counsellor and his/her reference groups have a mutual effect on shaping both social and personal identities. This experience is along the lines of the theory of optimal distinctiveness which suggests that social identity is a merge of contrasting needs regarding both the integration of, and separation from, others (Brewer, 1991). Thus, a person may be similar and diverse simultaneously.

#### Nature and nurture: The subjectivity of personal qualities

Discussants often wrestled with the origin of their volunteerism. The majority of participants, however, appeared to apportion their volunteerism to conditioned familial traits. Having observed family members perform altruistic behaviours appears to have had some influence on the participants becoming volunteers. The majority of their counselling endeavours are received well by patients, which then serves to reinforce volunteer activity. Furthermore, external validation and modelling from friends and significant others, serves to support the volunteer's process of performing prosocial behaviours.

In relation to reinforcement of these prosocial behaviours, participants intimate that repeated disappointment or rejection would allow them to re-evaluate their subjective sense of usefulness (Staddon & Cerutti, 2003; Kirsch et al., 2004).

### Self-identity as multifaceted dimension

Participants appeared to experience complexity in contemplating their self-identities. As it transpired, self-identity appeared to be a multifaceted dimension (Edelheim & Parker, 2008). Often, pride in the participant's identification of self was coupled with humility. This appeared to be an attempt to evade the expression of acute self-pride, which participant's implied was a quality unaligned to religious and spiritual decrees.

This evasion of acute self-pride implied the elusion of excessive personal love. This, then, appears to be inversely proportional to the love the participants aim to offer their recipients. In exploring their self-identities, participants indicated an underlying sense of moderated love for self and others (Campbell, 1984). This suggested a permutation of attachment and detachment in terms of self and others in order to unite personal, social, and spiritual values.

Humility, as a buffer to vanity, was apparent with most of the participants. This was a feature which the lay volunteer counsellors seemed proud of, and is a quality which they admire in others. God appears to be the only entity from which participants may accept an absence of humility (Meroff, 2004). An interesting dynamic in the interpretation of the participants' narratives was that some participants appear to unconsciously view God as part of the self. This may suggest a repressed, or suppressed, part of the self which acts as a container for unacceptable pride in the self. This, too, suggests an alliance between the participant's superego and an omnipotent entity. Perceptibly, this has some influence on the participant's subjective views on the positive influence they have on some of the patients' lives.

In terms of archetypal psychology, the benevolent deeds performed by lay volunteer counsellors, as well as the subjective views that the volunteers are an instrument of God, suggests that these participants may subscribe to the archetype Beowulf. This is due to the subjective appraisal of the self as selfless (Helterman, 1968).

The Beowulf archetype therefore implies the subjective experience of being able to cope with a great burden, but also of being “more than a man, yet no more than a man” (Helterman, 1968, p. 2). Hence, in a sense, the individual goes beyond the restrictions of humanity although s/he ultimately remains human.

Other archetypes also appear to be applicable to this populace. The mother archetype suggests the participants’ needs to be mothered, and to mother. This also links with the child archetype, representing potential; becoming; renewal; and salvation. The complexities experienced in exploring self-identities; and the meanings ascribed to falling within the role of volunteer as defined by religion and society, points toward the persona archetype (Jung, 1970). Certainly, other archetypes may be considered in terms of the lay volunteer counsellors’ lived experiences, however, the above-mentioned archetypes appeared most notably within the context of this investigation.

#### The kinesis of working with homogeneity and heterogeneity

Diversity manifested considerably within the participants’ narratives. Most of the participants overtly indicated comfort in dealing with diverse populations. A focus on the process of these narratives, however, suggested an awareness of dissimilarities, without the appreciation thereof. This fostered processes whereby us-them relationships are coined. Difficulty in relating to diverse racial groups, gender, age groups, religion, and culture was evident. Intersubjectively, this process appeared to indicate biases which form part of religious dogma (Altemeyer, 2003; Gross, 1991), as well as divisions facilitated by the apartheid process.

#### Unconscious processes and defense-like operations

A principal defense-like operation amongst the participants was that of affiliation, particularly religious affiliation. This appears to be a process fostered by systemic influences which form part of the participant’s culture (D’Onofrio et al., 1999).

A contextual review of the defense-like operations in terms of the participants' accounts indicates that these operations serve as coping styles when participants are confronted with negative perceptions.

On reflection, the title of this theme may appear to be dubious to some in that it may appear to suggest wholly unconscious processes. However, some of these processes appear to be voluntary strategies which the participants make use of in order to buffer the impact of possibly challenging experiences. The most apparent example of a voluntary strategy evidenced in this study appears to include the participants' affiliation with God.

#### Lay volunteer counselling in response to, or with some relation to, personal trauma

Participants conveyed several chronicles of personal trauma. These chronicles were subjectively experienced as devastating. Often, volunteering appeared to be a response to these events. Additionally, traumatic events appeared to allow the lay volunteer counsellors to identify, and thereby empathise, with patients. It was interesting to observe that participants who experienced attachment difficulties with parental figures exhibited fragile self-esteem and/or compensatory inflated self-esteem (Kernis, Brown & Brody, 2000). Moreover, fused messages by parents indicated that the volunteer counterbalances these messages by experiencing erratic affects toward parents, and by turning towards God as a parental figure (Assor, Roth & Deci, 2004).

The effects of trauma appear to have had an influence on each participant's view of self-as-volunteer and self-in-relation-to-patients, manifesting as positive and/or negative countertransference depending on the context (Horvath, 2000). Furthermore, the countertransference suggested in the participants' accounts indicates his/her subjective experience of being the wounded healer (Sedgwick, 1994). In many ways, the lay volunteer counselling process assisted these participants in managing their own impediments (Schwartz & Sendor, 1999).

### The primacy of proactivity

Activity is viewed as pivotal to the participants and indicates facilitating change, development, and agency. On a personal level, participants preferred activity to passivity in order to feel useful and to satisfy a need to be needed.

In doing so, participants also appeared to illustrate a preference for Generativity in order to deflect Stagnation. This appeared to merge with the stage-wise connection of fostering Integrity to protect against Despair (Erikson, 1984). This appeared to indicate a lacking of care and wisdom. The intersubjective experience during the interviewing processes erupted with sentiments of sharing anecdotes of helping behaviours and methods with which future lay volunteer counsellors could benefit, yet again suggesting Generativity (Bradley, 1997; Slater, 2003). The terms Generativity, Stagnation, Integrity, and Despair are concepts loaned from Erikson's (1984) model, and are not used to justify the developmental stages proposed by the model. The terms are therefore employed both qualitatively and descriptively to depict the proactivity suggested by participants, and also to explicate their lived worlds. It is along these lines that one may conceptualise each participant's focus on, and for, care and wisdom.

### Religion and/or spirituality affords the lay volunteer counsellor carte blanche

Religion and/or spirituality occupy an immense role in the subjective experiences of the participants. Indeed, without prompting, most participants found it demanding to explore their lived experiences in isolation of religion and/or spirituality.

Association with a greater entity, and subjectively being a member of a sacred workforce, suggested that the participants' experiences of becoming and being lay volunteer counsellors fall within the auspices of a spiritual decree. Hence, God and/or the ancestors define the rules and regulations within which the lay volunteer counsellors operate (Hall, Edwards & Hall, 2006). Participants apportion this process to their love for God and/or the ancestors (Santmire, 2003). Furthermore, this process appears to dovetail

with beliefs in reciprocity and karma (Davidson, Connor & Lee, 2005), as well as subjective paranormal beliefs (Peltzer, 2003).

Participants' adherence to the rules and regulations of a higher order suggested an external locus of control (Spector et al., 2002; Twenge, Zhang & Im, 2004) which appears to have a disinclined effect on self esteem (Judge & Bono, 2001).

### Fulfilment of needs

Participants illustrated a multitude of needs. The foremost needs included the need to connect with, or relate to, others; the need for acceptance; a need to share God's love with others; the need to avoid predictability; and a need to be heard. Clearly, these needs imbricate the other themes and are suggested therein. These needs relate to a need for belonging, as well as a need for love (Maslow & Lowery, 1998). The participants' need for love is embodied by a need to care, and a need to be cared for (Ventegodt, Merrick & Andersen, 2003).

### Other themes

No literature associated to the remaining themes, within this context, could be located.

## **Recommendations**

This study aimed at exploring the lived experience of becoming and being a lay volunteer counsellor. Participants highlighted numerous areas associated to this experience, suggesting that becoming and being is not an invariable process. Dimensions such as spirituality, systemic influences, motivation, needs, and identity were broached. These dimensions appear to fall within the coffer of the creation of meaning (Saari, 1991), thereby articulating much about the participants' experiences, but also suggesting possible areas to be investigated by future research.

Research projects aiming to examine these experiences further may provide the voluntary sector, as well as academia, with illuminating data so as to aid comprehension of the experiences of lay volunteer counsellors. Qualitative studies may explore these dimensions further, while quantitative studies may analyse the interrelated elements of these experiences. Regarding the latter, an example of a study may consist of analysing which needs are perceived as most significant to South African lay volunteer counsellors. Regarding qualitative studies, an example may incorporate the exploration of the South African lay volunteer counsellor's need to avoid predictability.

As is observable in the abovementioned recommendations for further studies, a need to cultivate data based on the South African populace is crucial. Limited data exists, affording both the lay and academic community a restricted awareness of a population which contributes significantly to the GDP (see literature review).

In terms of amplifying the range of this study, it would be worthy to consider participants' transformations of needs, motivations, and experiences across time. Unlike a retrospective study such as this, other methodological designs may be employed to acquire different facets of information relating to the experience of becoming and being a lay volunteer counsellor.

Lay volunteer counsellors operate in various sectors, often administered by non-governmental organisations (NGOs), faith-based organisations (FBOs), and community-based organisations (CBOs). These organisations would undoubtedly benefit from any information pertaining to the experiences of the volunteers who operate within their domains. This may aid in the management and supervision of lay volunteer counsellors. It is therefore recommended that this information be made available to NGOs, FBOs, and CBOs as an opportunity to further develop their volunteer supervisory and management programmes.



## **Strengths and limitations of the study**

### Methodology

The exploratory nature of IPA focuses on discovering a myriad of subjective experiences, often voyaging around the nature of meaning. This permits little room for providing experimental evidences, or for testing relationships among constructs. While a quantitative study may have determined correlations, a qualitative study allowed for the navigation of lived experiences.

### Participants

A limited number of participants were involved in this study. Additional information may be procured should a larger sample be researched. Although an equal ratio of male to female lay volunteer counsellors was available in this study, this does not appear to be representative of the population at the organisation. From communication with senior members of the organisation, as well as from my personal observation, female lay volunteer counsellors outnumber male lay volunteer counsellors – unfortunately, this ratio is unknown. Future research may, therefore, focus on determining the ratio, as well as the rationale regarding this ratio.

### Culture

The majority of participants in this study were mainly Christian in faith, and equally distributed in terms of two racial groups. Including a wider range of religion and race may yield altered results. This may also be the case should participants of dissimilar age groups be included, for example more participants below the age of forty-years-old.

## **Conclusion**

The themes obtained from this study suggest ideas which were illustrated in the literature review. The present themes magnified the reviewed data in terms of the lived experiences of the participants. This process embellished anterior literature by highlighting new-fangled facets regarding the experience of becoming and being a lay volunteer counsellor.

These themes responded to the research question by supplying rich portrayals of the influences affecting the experience of initiating and maintaining help-giving services.

## **Summary of chapter 5**

It is clear from the results that participants' experiences are subjective. Each of the participants' narratives appears to be restricted to his/her personal process of becoming and being a lay volunteer counsellor. Yet, this process is not so distinctive to each individual that s/he does not share several dimensions with other lay volunteer counsellors. Most notably, these dimensions appear to be the participant's attempt to ascribe meaning to his/her life.

While some may view this populace as cogs in the service industry, others may view them as paraprofessionals. I aim not to contest or defend these or other perceptions, but merely to invite the wider community to appreciate the lay volunteer counsellor's quest to create meaning in his/her life.

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## APPENDIX



**Faculty of Humanities  
Department of Psychology**

### **Informed Consent**

Research conducted by: Junaid Hassim

Dear Participant,

The following information has been compiled to enable you to be fully informed about the research study in which you have been asked to take part. It is important that you feel comfortable about your contribution and that the process takes place in an atmosphere of trust and transparency. If any aspect of it seems unclear, or should any matter of concern arise, please feel free to discuss it at all times.

This document consists of 3 pages.

The following information pertains to the following study:

#### **Title:**

Becoming and being a lay volunteer counsellor: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) study.

#### **Purpose of the study:**

The study aims to explore the individual experiences of becoming and being a lay volunteer counsellor. This study aims to contribute to the voluntary sector in South Africa where further research may be developed in structuring volunteer programmes, training, management, and empowerment.

#### **Procedures:**

The process will consist of an interview. The researcher will interview each participant, separately and privately. You will be asked to reflect on your experience of becoming a lay volunteer counsellor, as well as your experience of being a lay volunteer counsellor. You may talk about anything that comes to mind when you reflect on these experiences. You will be free to talk about these experiences in a way that is comfortable for you, and not to talk about anything that you do not feel comfortable with.

- The interview will be audio-recorded.
- The time required for the interview may vary, but will by estimate take 60 minutes
- Individual interviews will be scheduled according to each participant's preference.
- Individual interviews will be analysed and themes will be extracted from each set of information.

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- You will be presented with a summary of the interview and the themes derived from your interview. You will be given the opportunity to comment (agree, disagree and elaborate) on the researcher's preliminary analysis.
- The aim is to complete the study within the year of 2009.
- The results of the study will be reported on in the form of a dissertation.
- The data gathered will be safely stored for the duration of 15 years should the need for further research arise.

**Risks:**

No risks or discomforts are foreseen.

**Benefits:**

No specific benefits for participants are foreseen. No remuneration is given for participating.

**Participants' rights:**

Participation is voluntary. You may withdraw from the study at any time and without fearing negative consequences. You may feel free to ask about any aspect of which you are uncertain and need further clarification.

**Confidentiality:**

Be assured that all information that you provide will be treated with the utmost of respect and confidentiality at all times. Fictitious names (pseudonyms) will be used and your identity will not be revealed. This will be done from the outset so that the pseudonym is used from the very first word that is written about your experience.

Documents in electronic format will password protected and stored on external media (CD or DVD) and kept in a secure code-protected safe. Original documents will be also placed in a code-protected safe.

The supervising promoter of this research will not have access to your identity, and neither will any other person involved in the research process.

You have the right not to participate in this study. Furthermore, should you wish to withdraw at any stage, you may do so without consequence.

Thank you for being available for this research process.



**Consent:**

I .....fully understand the nature of the research project and I am willing to take part in the process.

Signed at .....on this .....day of.....year.....

.....  
Participant

.....  
Researcher :Junaid Hassim  
MA (Clinical Psychology) student