

Running head: FAMILY CONSTELLATIONS

Clients' Experiences of Family Constellations in Psychological Healing

by

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Abstract

This research seeks to investigate Clients' Experiences of Family Constellations (FC) in Psychological Healing. The qualitative research model of heuristic inquiry is used. The phases of the research model that were utilized are initial engagement, immersion, incubation, illumination, explication, and creative synthesis. The collection of data was done via an interview process to allow for exploration of the meanings and essences of client's experiences of Family Constellations in psychological healing, an increase in the knowledge and possibilities of the approach, and to best serve and support clients and those around them. Co-researchers' experiences are explicated through the following themes in hopes to better understand their lived healing experiences using FC, and increase their awareness of self and relationships with others and the world: (1) *experiences of healing*; (2) *somatic experiences*; (3) *experiences of emotion*; (4) *experiences of connection*; (5) *changes in perception and understanding*; and (6) *impact on relationships and self*. It is anticipated that this study will give a voice to this approach to psychological healing. Clinically, the expectation is that the findings of this study could be used to further understand the essence of the challenges of psychological suffering, its impact on the family system and the individual, the clients who are challenged by it, and to inform future psychological treatments. This study may give the mental health, and maybe other professions, another instrument to use with clients. Since there is also a shortage of research on this topic, it is hoped that this study helps bridge the gaps between studies and experiences, and may further explore the efficacy of Family Constellations in working with individuals.

Keywords: family constellations, group therapy, psychological healing, energy

Dedication

For those that have come before me,

Those here with me now,

And those of future generations.

Acknowledgements

During a personal constellation session, I learned how I was honoring “my people,” my family/ancestors, by earning my doctorate; that I was honoring them and all their gifts and things they taught me. “My people” were and still are all about hard work, integrity, and loyalty. It is my hope this study represented these values. I am eternally grateful to my ancestors as well as those mentioned below.

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I am grateful for all I have seen, experienced, and learned thus far. It has been breath-taking, beautiful, challenging, emotional, and sacred. It is now my hope to carry it all out into the world so others may also see, experience, and learn.

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Chapter I: Meaning of the Research Question

Clients' Experiences of Family Constellations in Psychological Healing

At the beginning of my doctoral program, we were asked to write on a note card the educational and professional goal we would like to accomplish by the end of our program. My goal was “finding my passion within this passion [the profession of psychology] and truly believing in myself and my talents, abilities, and intuition.” Family Constellations (FC) touched me so profoundly that it ignited that passion. Furthermore, FC helped me develop toward this goal, and as I near the end of my educational program, I feel I am prepared to carry this work forward.

I researched clients' experiences of Family Constellations in psychological healing in order to learn all I can on the topic, for my personal and professional growth, and to bring it to my community, clients, family and friends, and the psychology profession. In this chapter, I will report the personal relevance of FC; clinical, professional, and social relevance; and define the terms of my research question, “What is the Clients' Experiences of Family Constellations in Psychological Healing?”

Personal Relevance

When I was 18 months old, my five-week-old brother Jeff died of sudden infant death syndrome. Loss occurred very early in my life and I did not realize the immense impact it had on me until 2008 when I was required to write a paper about the formation of my identity. Jeff had been in the back of my mind for most of my life. This little person who I only knew for a short time so long ago seemed to have left the largest mark on my family and on my identity. A part of me knew an important connection had been

broken and that someone important to me was missing, someone very close to my heart.

With the loss of Jeff came the loss of my parents' ability to open their hearts again as the pain was so vast and profound. The two people I knew love from had emotionally disappeared. This seemed to ignite my fear that loving and feeling loved only meant that person would eventually leave; thus, I developed a need for protection against such pain.

FC was the only form of therapy that broke through that door of protection. It was a key to getting through the misperceptions I developed over the years in order to survive what I thought was the fear of loss, which essentially made me afraid of the power of love. Jeff was not talked about very much after his death and there was only one photograph of him. The pain and grief in our family was palpable. I felt it throughout my childhood and beyond. In a school paper, I made note of it:

When Jeff's name was spoken throughout my life, I could feel the pain in the heart of my parents and the thought of 'tread lightly' sprang through my head. I thought for a long time that if I mentioned him it would awaken that pain, so I kept my questions to myself. (Ruhl, 2008, p. 10)

Jeff was definitely excluded from our conversations and early in my healing journey I was unable to see the power of his exclusion and the impact of this dynamic on my worries and fears. I was very afraid of the emotions attached to the loss of my brother and worried if I acknowledged and embraced him, I would experience the pain and anguish of losing him all over again.

The path illuminated by Family Constellations showed me how a very large loss early in my life fueled my fear of love and my reticence to deeply connect with others. With heightened awareness and FC, I began to lift the veil and shed light on the scared little girl, the unsure-quiet-do-as-I-am-told teenager, and the hidden adult. The following

subsection shows succinct discussion of what the telephone sessions entailed and the initial telephone session will be reported to give the reader a brief idea of my experience of FC via telephone. The next subsection, *Immersion Program*, will report a few of my experiences via the FC immersion training program.

Telephone Sessions. Many of my past therapists had been rooted in modalities that did not seem to work for me and many, it seemed, had not done their own work and could not go as deep as I longed to go in my healing. After telling a good friend of my plight, she gave me a phone number of a person she had worked with and highly respected. His name is Peter Faust, M.Ac. Due to Peter living in Massachusetts, our sessions were done via the telephone.

The telephone calls would begin with suggestions for a couple of things to talk about. Once the topic was decided, representatives for the members of my family would be chosen. Actual family members are not physically present in this process. Use of representatives allows for a visual representation of how I saw my family members' roles and relationships within the topic. The representatives may include nail polish bottles, rocks, acorns, wooden figurines, or anything else that is found within the near vicinity.

After choosing the representatives, they were put into place without thinking to set up the constellation. Without thinking means unconsciously placing them, where I *felt* they should be put as opposed to what I *thought* would be correct. From there feelings were evoked, a short discussion was had, and short statements were said to help resolve the issue.

The initial session, and those following, occurred over the phone from my home. In preparation for the initial FC session, I had a list. It was a long list and I never really

got to it. Instead, “shadows of self” were discussed and such psychological and behavioral issues as judging and punishing my father. Shadows are:

...the "dark side" of the ego, and the evil that we are capable of is often stored there. Actually, the shadow is amoral -- neither good nor bad, ...the shadow becomes something of a garbage can for the parts of ourselves that we can't quite admit to. (Boeree, 2002, The Shadow section, para. 2)

The most powerful and emotional part of that constellation was setting up the representatives for my mother, my father, and me; and waiting to see what feelings emerged. For most of my life, I had been in the middle of their relationship and felt pushed, pulled, confused, angry, and powerless so I shut down from any emotion concerning them. Being able to physically see “my parents” and allow myself to feel just a little was a huge step. I discovered I was angry for being put in that position and I was angry that my parents were not what I had pictured in my mind.

The words that came next sent me deeper into feelings never uncovered and began one of my first journeys to healing. I looked at the representative for my mother and said, “Dear Mom, I want to stop judging Dad. I just want to be his daughter. I miss him. And you and he can work out the rest.” Turning to the representative for my father I said, “Dear Dad, I’ve judged you for a long time. Whatever you did wasn’t good enough for me but I want to let that go now. You’re the right father for me and I am the right daughter for you in this lifetime. I’ll take you as you are, Dad. Please take me as I am.” The flood of shame, sadness, acceptance, and love came rushing into my heart space.

The other topic discussed that day was focused on my brother Jeff. This was something I did not plan and something that awakened me more than I had ever experienced at the time. The constellation with Jeff was powerful. As I held the figurine

representing him in my hand, I felt a deep sadness for things missed and not had. It is as if I remembered what it felt like to have him, his love, and then for him to be gone, to feel a part missing. This constellation consisted of acknowledging him as my brother and silently saying all the things I have wanted to say to him. After that was done, I was instructed to lay the figurine representing my brother down in the death position.

My heart tore and I was so resistant to lay him down. It had felt like I had just found him again and he was pulled away once more. I did not know if I could handle this pain. My heart throbbed and tears streamed down my face at the immense feeling of love and grief. Through this pain, my heart seemed to be more open and it was scary as well as wonderful, and a bit confusing. I felt rushes of love, appreciation, and gratitude along with anger and sadness—emotions I had avoided feeling for a long time and it scared me.

As I continued these phone sessions, I began to develop the courage to investigate the things that scared me the most. I was able to be guided to the parts of me that were not reachable in the past, that I was afraid to explore—conflicts and parts of me that I thought were missing or hurt. It was all very challenging but I was ready and willing for the challenge and most of the time, I was alright with not knowing what to expect. I did wonder many times if torment was a part of healing. Torment to me was the fear I had of experiencing emotions, letting go, getting caught off-guard, and the time between sessions when I processed alone.

As the sessions progressed, I became aware of how much I was holding on for dear life – my dear life and what I thought would protect me. The more I did Family Constellations, the more I realized that what I thought of as protection was, in fact, stopping what I longed for: to feel anything, to immerse myself in something, and to

actually wake up and live a fully-lived life. Through this modality, I was able to work through issues of self-doubt, transition, habitual responses, defenses, and loss.

The more I engaged in constellation work, I wanted even more. I wondered how much deeper I could go, if there was more I could learn and if one day I too could use this approach with my clients. A few months later, I inquired if there was more. There was. It was an immersion program. A volt of electricity ran through my body. This is what I must do, I thought. This is my calling. I had support from my husband, my children, and my mother and it was immeasurable. Knowing and feeling this support helped me to make the decision to enroll and throughout the program, allowed me to totally immerse myself and to have the space I needed to process when I returned home.

After making the decision to enroll in the program, I realized that I would be doing the training while still doing telephone sessions, being a wife, mother, friend, daughter, and doctoral student. I began to get nervous the more I thought about it. Some of my biggest concerns: Was I courageous enough? Will there be a lot of crying? (I was still afraid of emotion.) I really had no idea what it entailed or the impact this program and the people involved would have on my healing and my transformation.

Immersion Program. The immersion program was held at the offices of Peter and his wife Jamy Faust, M.A., who were the facilitators as well. Each training weekend was three days long and each weekend had a theme. The themes, in order, were Family of Origin; Father's Line; Mother's Line; Illness, Disease and Death; Relationships; and War, Immigration, and Religion.

Each program session was designed to begin at the mental level of understanding followed by the emotional level and finally by the soul or spirit level, the deepest level of

psychological healing. Guided visualizations/meditations, experiential exercises on the concepts taught, and individual sharing happened in order to support getting the participants to each level. Friday sessions consisted of educative instruction, exercises and experientials, the sharing of family information from our worksheets, and by the afternoon some personal constellations.

The Saturday sessions took place at a hotel conference room due to the increase of interest in Family Constellations work. Saturdays are open to the public for those who would like to experience constellations along with those participating in the immersion program. The main difference between doing telephone or one-on-one sessions is having the opportunity to experience constellations with people being representatives. Having people being representatives has the client feel on a deeper, energetic and more profound level. The representatives are chosen from those attending.

In being a representative, one must surrender and get past his or her personality and judgments. According to Ulsamer (2005), “. . . the representatives are able to access the feelings and dynamic relationships of the family in question. They spontaneously experience relevant emotional affect” (p. 3). Ulsamer (2005) continues:

The representatives, in their roles, feel attractions and aversions toward the others in the constellation. . . . The roles within the constellation assume independent power and identity to the extent that anyone else, who at another time might represent that particular family member, will spontaneously react in a similar manner. (p. 4)

On Sundays, we would discuss our experiences of the previous day's constellations along with our experiences of being a representative. We would receive feedback from the facilitators on our roles as representatives, any questions would be answered, and the day would continue with personal constellations. The weekend would

end with a meditation/visualization and a round of good-byes. The following subsections includes only a few of my own constellation experiences during the seven-weekend immersion program and the awareness I gained from participating.

Family of Origin Weekend. I arrived a few minutes early and was very nervous. I had no idea what this program or the people would be like. My walk to the door seemed to take forever. I walked up the steps and reached for the door handle, twisted it hoping no one would be on the other side just yet. I took a deep breath and opened it. I meekly walked through and went into the room where the coats and shoes were stored. I wanted to disappear.

A beautiful meditation bell sounded and people began moving up the stairs. I took a deep breath and followed. Walking up the stairs, I heard the creaks and footsteps of everyone and wondered what was I walking into? The carpet was padded and I felt each foot landing softly with each step. With each step, I also felt my breath become shallower. I felt my heart beating throughout my body. As I reached the top and turned the small corner I found a beautifully decorated open space with about 20 chairs shaped in a *U*. I felt safe there.

The class began with introductions and we learned the concept of how groups and other people have influence on us. Foam mats were used to represent each group in the exercise. I volunteered to stand in the middle of the mats, say which color represented whom and then the facilitator instructed classmates to take a place on each mat. I felt claustrophobic and extremely uncomfortable. The energy I felt was inexplicable, mainly because I did not know what I was feeling. If I was not terrified before, I surely was terrified now. My stomach hurt, my heart raced, and I began to sweat. This was my

introduction to constellations with humans as representatives, an entirely different feeling than using figurines or rocks.

Next, we learned about being representatives and to me, being a representative was a huge responsibility. It was also not necessarily easy to do, especially for someone with no energy training and someone not willing to open her heart. This thought was solidified as we were taught what to do in a representative role and even more so as I was chosen to help demonstrate. I wanted no part of this and held my breath. I was not open to learning this at that time and when the demonstration was over, it was all I could do not to run back to my seat.

The next level of learning in the program was the emotional level. The emotional level was not as bad as I thought it sounded. We read our worksheets aloud to the class in order to bring our family of origin into the room and honor them. We were instructed to read right from the sheet. I was a bit relieved. There was not anything too personal in my answers and only a small level of emotion surfaced.

After lunch, the third and final level was explained—the spiritual/soul level, the deepest level of healing. I could not wrap my head around the concept at the time. We began with a beautiful meditation to welcome our ancestors into the room and to ask for their support during this weekend. Then our first round of constellations began and I sat and watched with trepidation.

The next day, I just sat back and observed as others did their constellations. I was trying very hard to figure out what I was seeing and feeling. Energy was moving around the room. The energetic container created was strong and very sacred and safe. It was powerful and I had never experienced anything like that before. As I processed the day

back at the hotel, I decided I had been agonizing and suffering long enough and it was time to do what I came for.

On Sunday, I sat all day in class with my heart beating fast, my solar plexus engaged, and my mind realizing this terror meant it was my turn to go. Finally, I raised my hand and not with tremendous confidence. As I walked to the chair, I counted my steps slowly with my head down, trying to breathe, and my heart pounding so hard I felt it in my head. There would be no more hiding after this.

As I sat down, I felt safe but unsure. I was smiling and was asked why I was smiling. I reported it was a very nervous smile. The constellation had begun. I was asked questions about my family of origin and instructed to ask my fellow classmates to represent my family members and one for myself. I was so very scared.

After I chose the representatives, I went behind each, one by one, announced who they were representing—the full name and which member he or she was, and allowed myself to place them in the constellation wherever it felt “right” for me in relationship to each other. After placing all the representatives, I returned to the chair to observe what I had done. (Note: when writing of members in the constellations, I am using the names of family member references but they are representatives from my class.)

I noticed my father was standing alone across from my mother and brothers who were somewhat clustered. It was brought to my attention that I was standing alone as well. When asked what the representative for me was feeling, she replied, “I feel responsible.” I had felt responsible for my whole family for most of my life: responsible to have everyone get along, be happy, love each other, etc. I was then asked to take the place of my representative. I sat paralyzed at this idea. I was more terrified than before

and felt things I had not ever felt before—the energy and feelings of my family members. I felt confusion and tension like it was blasted out of a cannon.

I was reminded to breathe. When asked what I felt, I just stood there like a marble statue and stated I did not know. In order to complete this particular constellation everyone was put into birth order—my family of origin's right order because from where I initially placed everyone, we were out of order (my experience my entire life). The order was my father, mother, me, Jeff, and my brother Kevin who was born two years after Jeff. I noticed I was smack in the middle—how I always felt.

As we settled in, we were instructed to move closer, shoulder-to-shoulder. I felt the tension, the responsibility, and the aloneness. I felt trapped, cramped, panicked, and uncomfortable. I could not breathe. I did not feel I belonged there. It was so hard to look at my family, especially my parents. As I shifted around, I heard a voice, “What’s going on for you right now, Michaelene?” I was asked. After my description, the representatives were asked to take a step sideways and give me a little room. Instantly I could breathe and relaxed a bit. I felt a touch of emotion, what I had been trying to avoid the entire time.

We were instructed to hold hands. Joining hands, I learned, had the energy of each member of the family connect and travel through the family. I felt okay holding Jeff's hand because it was nice to feel his presence, but to hold my mother's was very difficult. I felt the desire to love my mother and the longing to feel her love in return. I knew there was a constellation there to explore. I just could not seem to let the love and caring in—from anyone at that moment.

As I looked into each person's eyes beginning with my father, I realized there

were, in fact, many constellations to be done. When I got to Kevin, I felt his longing to feel like he belonged to our family. This saddened me and I began to cry. I felt so badly for him. I also felt so much love for him, something I had not let myself feel in a very long time. I then heard, “This is your family. This is the family you chose.” I thought to myself, “Why would I choose this for myself? It is torture.” I was then instructed to say aloud to one of my classmates, “This is my family,” and with this statement I began to own my right place in my family.

At the end of each day, we were instructed not to discuss our constellation with anyone for 72 hours, the Three-Day Rule. The three-day rule consists of waiting 72 hours to discuss and/or share the constellation experiences with anyone. It is a time to let the healing energy process and shift and to allow the client to mentally, emotionally and soulfully process the increasing awareness and what has come to consciousness.

While I processed, I reflected on the discovery of the feeling of confusion in my family and how much tension there was. I felt so much tension I thought I could break, just crack off limb-by-limb and compress into dust. My family seemed to be hiding from it. The constellation helped me to understand for the first time that the confusion and tension could have begun due to Jeff’s death so long ago.

I realized how afraid I was, afraid of feeling the intensity of love and caring, of genuineness. Afraid I did not “read” others right and I would get burned, hurt, or be disappointed. Afraid others would not love me or care for me as much as I cared for them. I just wanted to love and feel loved and not be scared and not have to worry. Having my guard up was so exhausting. I felt I was missing out on so much. While processing all of this at home in between programs, I was supported between weekends

by phone sessions with Peter.

I was scared but no longer terrified. My commitment to the process drove me to fill out the next worksheet for the father's line with due diligence and honesty. This was challenging and I was so excited about what I learned from the family of origin weekend that I vowed I would go first the next weekend—the father's line.

Father's Line Weekend. The weekend, as always, began at the mental level. We discussed the difference between systemic and phenomenological constellations, three phases of a constellation, the process of integration, the acknowledging-accepting-agreeing process, and the levels of healing—mental, emotional, and spiritual/soul.

There were three meditations over the weekend this time and with each one, I fell deeper and deeper into the process. The first was welcoming our ancestors via angel wings. It was beautiful and I felt so supported knowing they were all there with me. The second was one in which we envisioned our father and found which of the “three words that heal” (please, thank you, yes) applied to our own relationships with our fathers. These words were extremely powerful and evoked something deep within my soul. My word was “please.” “Please stop running and hiding.”

The third meditation was accepting and acknowledging the strengths and weaknesses of one's father. This was eye opening in that he and I had many characteristics in common and I realized that some could be both strengths and weaknesses. It was then my compassion for him grew and I realized I had to accept these characteristics about myself as well. I was torn. I was growing angry as my guard came down. My constellation may be more difficult than initially thought after going through the last two meditations and exercises.

As I read my questionnaire aloud, I became aware of what my earlier anger was about, I developed a better understanding of him, a deeper love for him, and I began to soften. I realized that the anger was fueled by my lack of acceptance of him. A better understanding came when I read that a trait I carried from him was the guilt and shame for disappointing my grandmother, his mother, and our need to “fix” things. I had not ever allowed myself to feel the shame and guilt; it was masked by my anger toward my father and my grandmother.

My love for him was apparent as I shared one thing I wanted everyone to know about my father. My voice became soft and as I spoke from my heart, I felt my body become warm and almost melt in the love I had for him. I felt so deeply for him and the struggle he had to endure since a young age. I felt I was more ready than ever to do my constellation.

I began the walk across the room to the chair of which I was once so afraid. This time I walked slowly with determination, hope, and willingness. As I sat down there was no smile of nervousness. I felt somewhat comfortable and as I was being asked questions, I tried to be as precise as possible, avoiding much of the story because the story is not as important as the facts and underlying feelings.

When asked who should be in the constellation, I stated, “My grandparents, my dad, and my dad’s brothers and sisters.” As the representatives were selected, I remember feeling anger toward them, all of them except my grandfather. As I went behind each to place them, I seemed to avoid this feeling of anger, almost disappearing into the task. The earlier excitement of wanting to do this constellation had vanished. After all were placed, I returned to the chair to observe what had been set up.

After a few moments of observing, I was encouraged to enter the constellation. My steps were very deliberate and drawn toward my father. I only took one or two at a time very slowly toward him, remembering a teaching about the vessica pisces. This is the intersection of two people's auras, a meeting of energies and consciousness. I kept thinking, the closer I get the more intense this is going to be, and it is already intense.

I moved closer and closer and my father took a few steps away from his family of origin toward me. There was room for my father and me to do our healing. The closer I became, the more tears ran down my face. I will never forget looking into his eyes, crying, and staying stiffly about one foot away. I was instructed to say, "Please father." As I gained the courage to say, "Please," a well of emotion took over. It felt as if it came from the middle of the earth up through my body. I said this word three times and by the third time was overcome with emotion.

The representative for my father was invited to say, "You are my daughter. I see that it has been very hard for you. Please leave it all with me." I was then instructed to say, "I leave it all with you, father. You will always be my father. It is not my place as your daughter. I am only your daughter." These acknowledgments brought me overwhelming relief and a deep sense of healing.

I placed my head upon my father's chest and I began to cry, as I had never remembered crying. The love and longing was felt with every fiber of my being and all I could do was put my arms around him and melt into him, this was the father I had never seen but knew and felt was there. After what seemed like days, we separated and joined hands completing the circle of connection. We stared in each other's eyes and my role of daughter became clearer. I had actually opened my heart, though it took some time.

Throughout the day, other participants took part in their own family constellations. In this work, it is also possible to gain healing from another person's constellation as well. My healing continued as one of my classmates did his constellation around his father. I was so open I was able to feel his deep longing to connect to his father and feel his love, of course I had this longing as well. I really loved and believed in my classmate at that moment and at the same time marveled at his courage and openness.

While processing the experiences of the day, I awoke in the middle of night thinking of my constellation. I was witnessing it and reliving it at the same time. During this process, I realized that there was now more room in my heart for my husband. I also realized that I have to open my heart in order not to feel alone. I was in awe of how much love I felt between my father and me and that I had never really allowed myself to feel it.

As the weekend ended, my gratitude increased with each moment. I was waiting at the airport for my flight and I became aware of how determined I was this time around. I opened myself much more than the last time and I knew there was room for greater openness and next time will be even more powerful. I also realized that I could appreciate and be grateful for the work I did this weekend. There was so much to feel and learn. I learned that love is powerful and nothing to fear. I learned crying actually feels amazing—it is cleansing and healing. I learned in order to connect I have to receive. I learned when you place people in your heart they are always with you. I learned that I was still scared to be a representative in others' constellations because I have to surrender more and not worry about "right" or "wrong;" that I had to trust myself. I also learned that I am gentler than I thought.

Mother's Line Weekend. Even though I felt like hiding, the walk up the stairs seemed easier and I had a knowing that with each step I was coming closer to spiritually awakening. This was breathtaking and intimidating at the same time. I had begun to grow to love being here with these people and felt the satisfaction it brought.

We began with what I called the safe, mental teachings. An explanation of the differences between traditional psychotherapy and Family Constellations was given. In traditional therapy, the focus is on the "personal wounds of the client" (Faust & Faust, 2009, p. 34). In Family Constellations, the focus is on "the personal wounds of the client and the wounds of others in the family and the effect these wounds have had over the generations on the whole family, not just the client" (p. 34).

The most challenging experience for me this day was learning about the bow. The reason for the bow was explained in our class material as:

The pain of childhood thinking often lies in the disappointment with one's parents' behavior. By coming into deep contact with the parents in a respectful and honoring way, the child (as client) has an opportunity to be released from the feeling of judgment and superiority towards his/her parents. The client can begin to return to her/his 'smaller' position in the orders of love. (Faust & Faust, 2009, p. 35)

I was very resistant to bowing to my mother and when I read, "the client's resistance will be in direct proportion to his/her judgmental and superior feelings," (Faust & Faust, 2009, p. 35) I felt anger and shame. Why was this so difficult for me? I waited as long as possible to take my turn. This was not making things easier. As I stood across from the representative of my mother, approximately 6 feet away, my resistance increased. With some encouragement, I moved a little closer.

I was a few feet closer now to my mother and I could not move anymore. I was frozen, standing in an iceberg of fear. I felt so young and childlike as tears came and I stated, “I want to move toward my mom but I’m not sure she’ll be there. I don’t know if she’ll be there.” The exercise stopped for me at this point. I was also grateful that I finally discovered the fear behind the anger and judgment.

The next day, when it was time to begin the constellations I raised my hand gently, my heart pounding, and brow sweating. I stated, “I want to honor my mother.” I believe this was the very first time in my life that I did not resist before doing work like this. It allowed me to go deeper than I have ever been and to begin to heal a profound wound.

As I was putting the representatives in place, I really paid attention through my heart to where the “right” places were. It took knowing, surrendering, allowing, and trusting what I felt energetically within the constellation field, the “knowing field.” I finally understood and knew how to get myself to that place in order to surrender to the movement of my own soul. I sat down and observed where everyone had been placed.

This time, I was asked to take my place in the constellation right away. The representatives were asked to begin to allow themselves to move as they were pulled to the movements of the soul. For the representatives it requires trust in the “knowing field” and themselves, to move slowly and truthfully in service to the client without “trying to help, take charge, or play a special role in the constellation” (Faust & Faust, 2009, p. 33).

I watched my parents turn away from Jeff and toward each other; they were very far away from each other. Jeff lay down in the position of death, my heart began to ache and I began to cry. The facilitator noticed, “It seems you are the one that has not resolved

the loss of Jeff.” He was correct. I then turned toward my mother who was positioned across the room diagonally from me, so very far away.

I felt alone again, longing for her to love me, to come to me. I felt like the little girl who so desired to have her mother present in her life so long ago. I was instructed to say, “Please, Mom.” I had never asked my mom to love me before, to come to me. “Please, Mom,” I said and with each time she moved a little bit closer. I felt like crumbling to the ground. I felt unloved, not good enough, wrong. What was stopping her from coming closer?

The anticipation was thick and driving a knife through my confidence that this was going to work. With the next few please statements she began to move forward toward me. I was crying and almost pleading, my heart was open. As she grew closer, I began to see the fear, hurt and pain in her eyes. We stared in each other’s eyes for a minute or two and I felt a hand on the back of my head initiating me to bow my head.

This bow felt different from the one during the exercise. I stood with my head bowed and heard, “Go to your knees.” This was going to change everything and I felt that. I went to my knees, head still bowed, and sat back on my heels. My crying had subsided a bit. I felt a touch on my shoulder and took it to mean to go into a full bow with my arms extended and forehead on the floor at the feet of my mother. As I lay there in that position the floodgates opened again and my heart opened farther than it ever had.

I then felt two hands against my arms helping to pull me up. With tears still streaming down my face as I stood, I realized that both of my parents were lifting me, helping me to get up, helping me to see differently. It was so good to let all the pain, insecurity, and anger go and feel love take their places. I felt released from my wanting

things to be different from what it was and was able to acknowledge, accept, and agree to how things really were. I felt so very connected to my mother in this moment.

There was no doubt in my mind I was well cared for and supported during this weekend. This was big for me and I believe it played a huge role in my ability to go deeper and be completely open when in my constellation. Through the work of this weekend, I was able to see and feel my mother's depression, her pain, sorrow, guilt and anger, as well as her caring nature and big heart. I also became aware that a trait I carried from my mother was the fear of letting myself love my children whole-heartedly, of being affectionate, and of feeling the love they gave back to me for fear of losing it. Again, my compassion had grown.

When I got home, after the three-day rule, I called my mother and shared my learnings with her. During this phone call, I felt like the daughter. I felt a new way to be with my mother and I think it empowered both of us. It was a beautiful conversation filled with love, understanding, compassion, and laughter. I was so grateful in that moment to be my mother's daughter. Although this is still a work in progress on my part, I am more aware than ever of her love for me. I am also allowing myself to become closer to my children and husband and it is magnificent.

This was confirmed when I was able to witness my husband do his own constellation the following weekend program on Death, Illness and Disease and its effects on the family system. I was touched by the openness and love he had for his family of origin and his ancestors. I felt the love and comfort and knew that together we could and were creating that for our current family. Much love and gratitude came over

me and I was looking more forward than ever to spending the rest of my life with this man.

Couples Relationship Weekend. In this class, we learned that each person brings their own entanglements and loyalties to a relationship. We also learned about the “orders of love” in a couple’s relationship and true guilt versus guilty feelings. The “orders of love,” according to Faust and Faust (2009) are (1) everything is done out of love and loyalty to the “family soul;” (2) everyone is entitled to their own fate; and (3) everyone has the right to belong to the family.

Love and loyalty to the family apply to a couple’s relationship in that each person believes on an unconscious level that his or her family belief system is better than his or her partner’s and so it effects the decisions and actions of both persons in a relationship (Hellinger, Weber, & Beaumont, 1998). Awareness of this may help navigate the relationship to a healthier place increasing the understanding and where compromise can occur. Realizing that everyone is entitled to their own fate may help the pair recognize that although they love and want to help each other, they cannot control each other.

Concerning true guilt and guilty feelings, it was explained that guilt is unavoidable and actually good when doing constellations. For example, when a child leaves home to move into an apartment, he or she may struggle with the excitement of growing and the guilt of leaving the child’s parents. In order to move forward in his or her life, the child must work through the guilt to get to the next step. Family Constellations can help with relieving or understanding this guilt.

To further explain, true guilt is “when a person stays focused on the person or issues with which he or she has guilt” (Faust & Faust, 2009, p. 17). Guilty feelings occur

when the person “gets caught in the feelings and will stop looking at the person or issue and begin to focus on him or herself. The attention goes to the person’s ego” (p. 17). As far as a relationship goes, Faust and Faust (2009) state, “Opening to true guilt will force you to do whatever is possible in order to restore order to the relationship. Guilty feelings go round and round and do not facilitate one toward action” (p. 17).

Guilty feelings were present for me in my relationship with my brother, Kevin. We fought often while growing up and it became apparent that at a certain point in my relationships, I closed my heart and stopped sharing myself even with family. On Sunday, when it was my turn to share I stated my fear was of those I love leaving me, losing them for whatever reason, having to say good bye and not staying connected. The idea was devastating. I was tearing up as I was speaking. I was fighting the emotions that were dwelling within me. After the round was finished, I was selected to do my constellation.

As soon as I sat, tears welled in my eyes and I felt relieved, like I was no longer alone in my plight. I had never felt so much love or support before. I felt warm, surrounded by love and light. I felt everyone in the room energetically cradling me and I was ready to begin my constellation. I was asked to list those who have died in my family. After selecting the representatives, they were instructed to take a step into the “knowing field.” Then a movement of the soul occurred. They began to move and place themselves where they were “pulled” or “called” to within the constellation.

To see all those I had loved so deeply and lost astounded me. Another movement of the soul occurred and, one by one, I watched, without blinking, each family member lie down in the position of death. Then I looked to my left to see my father’s mother still standing. I was angry and confused. I had never felt connected to her. I entered the

constellation and stood in front of my grandmother. I felt her love for the first time and realized she had cared all along. I realized how hard it must have been for her. As this healing completed and as I took a deep breath, I heard, “Would someone please represent Michaelene’s brother Kevin?”

My whole reason behind this weekend and the past week was coming to fruition. I only wanted to let myself love him and to truly be his sister. I began to sob. All the guilty feelings washed over me. I felt myself surrender my defenses and drop into the soul level. I felt how much I truly loved him and the desire of wanting to build our relationship. My crying subsided and I felt a calm come over me. The love between us became so real I believed I could touch it, wrap the both of us in it. We were instructed, as we held hands, to turn our backs to those who had died and to look to the future of our relationship together.

On the airplane home the next day, I began thinking about the weekend. I thought about how I have begun to open my heart and what a liberating experience it was. I began to understand what it felt like to have so many people in my heart and how they go everywhere with me—both those whom are alive and those on the other side. My ancestors were definitely there this weekend. To feel all of them there, knowing they were with me, was a sense of safety and love I had not experienced. I was filled with great love, fondness, and gratitude.

On my arrival home, I decided I would call my brother, Kevin. I finally felt what it was to be a sister instead of a “mother” to him. I made sure he knew our relationship was still strong and that I loved him very much. I supported him in more of a loving way than ever and was able to feel his love for me. We talked about him visiting and staying

with me and spending time together. Our bond had never felt this strong and I know he felt it too.

War, Immigration, and Religion Weekend. This was the last weekend in the program series. On Friday, we discussed the meta influences (immigration, war, and religion) and their roots in the family. Immigration, as defined in this work, is defined as when a family becomes separated from its roots. If one feels separated within, this is the place to look for healing. War has its roots in conflict. When there are conflicts within, it is advantageous to explore war's role in the family. Religion is about connection and disconnection from spirit. If there are struggles to connect or one feels disconnected from the divine, one would benefit from looking here.

By the third day, I knew that I had to acknowledge, accept, and agree to the religion of my childhood because it was part of me and always would be. I thought to myself, "You've come a long way. You're not even nervous." In fact, I had a strong desire to do this constellation. Walking to the chair was easy this time and it felt so very sacred to sit there. I felt I was embarking on a journey that in some way would link my past, present, and future. It also was the start of my constellation. It was as if I was in a zone and all the knowledge was easily available.

Next, I was asked who I thought should be in my constellation. Obviously, I thought the sacraments I celebrated throughout my life, the Catholic religion, and my parents. AmericanCatholic.org (2012) describes the sacraments as, "... ceremonies that point to what is sacred, significant and important for Christians. They are special occasions for experiencing God's saving presence" (para. 1). The sacraments I celebrated were Baptism, Holy Communion, Confession, Confirmation, and Marriage.

It was suggested that Poland be there too because it is the homeland of my ancestors. I agreed. It was also suggested that my children be represented. I agreed with hesitation because I knew the impact of having them in the constellation was very big, mostly because our love for each other would be overpowering for me. Those representing my children were told to wait until called in. As I relaxed just a bit thinking that the selection was over, the facilitator came up with one more person to be in the constellation. It was God. My heart seemed to stop beating and I swallowed hard.

As the representatives stood in front of their chairs, they were instructed to begin movements of the soul. I watched from the chair as each sacrament lined up to make almost an aisle to the Catholic religion standing in front of God who was standing on a chair. My mother and Poland were nearest the religion and my father nearest the beginning of the aisle but outside of it. I stepped into the field with a deep breath and took my father's hand. It felt like my wedding when he walked me down the aisle.

When we got to the beginning of the aisle it was time to let go of my father's hand. This was something I had to do on my own I felt. One by one, I approached each sacrament separately. I stood in front of each until I could allow each one into my heart fully. Feeling relieved that I had gone to all of the sacraments and done some healing concerning them, I turned around and faced the aisle. It was a long walk to the next representative, the Catholic religion.

The walk was slow and deliberate. I looked at my mother, father, heritage, and finally, at my childhood religion. I was close now, about 3 feet away, and I began to cry. Religion held his hands out to me. I looked at them, hesitated, placed my hands in his and took a step forward. Still crying I felt the need to place my head upon religion's chest and

began to sob. I felt the guilt. I felt the fear of leaving it behind and at the same time, I felt the strength to silently say, “Thank you for what you have done for me in my childhood.” It was at this point I stopped crying and felt myself drop into the soul level, the deepest level of healing. I lifted my head and looked into religion’s eyes with a new perspective.

Religion let go of one of my hands and I realized there was one more to approach. Religion moved to his left allowing me to reach God. At this point, tears streamed down my face and I was embraced. I had never felt such love, such warmth. It was comfortable, safe, and sacred. I had not experienced God like this before. After a few minutes, I turned around to face where I had been and saw my children standing to the left of me. I began to cry with a love I had never expressed to them before. Silently I sent, “This is your ancestry. This is part of me, your mom. I am sorry I didn’t share it sooner. I love you both so very much.”

As I was sharing with my children, all of my classmates had assembled to complete a large circle. It was one of the most beautiful scenes I had ever witnessed and one of the most loving things I had ever experienced. As I looked at each person they were no longer representatives, but those I had shared moments of fear, growth, gratitude, support and love. This was my opportunity to accept each one into my heart and feel the love we all shared. This as well as the entire constellation was done without a spoken word.

There was much to process after this weekend. Once I was home, I recreated the end of my constellation with my figurines at home in order to solidify my experience, learnings, and healing. I set up the ending of the constellation I had done during the weekend, everyone in a circle with God standing behind me plus my ancestors behind

God and me outside the circle. I did three rounds aloud. A round of fully accepting into my heart the things and people represented in my constellation; a round of fully accepting into my heart the people in my class; and a round of fully accepting into my heart all that had come before me (my ancestors). Lastly, I thanked all beings in the constellation three times. This was a gift to me and I felt quite complete and content at the end.

With each class, I ventured deeper and deeper into my personal soul. As I looked back at the beginning of this journey, I remembered a terrified woman filled with hesitation, uncertainty, and a desire to conquer her fear so she could learn to live and grow. My heart opened more and more each day, allowing me to skyrocket my growth and learning, letting others into my heart, as well as deepening my relationships with my family. I was truly grateful. One of the other gifts received was that I was able to use what I had learned with my clients and was able to support them in healing their wounds, too.

Clinical, Professional, and Social Relevance

Clinically, the findings of this study could be used to further understand the essence of psychological suffering, its impact on the family system and the individual, the clients who are challenged by it, and to inform future psychological treatments. Doing this work may give the gift of compassion for “what is” to participants in Family Constellations. It may allow one to lift the veil of confusion, protection, judgment, and resentment in order to see the big picture of one’s life.

Family Constellations has the capability of allowing the client to go to deeper levels of healing. In my own practice, I have been privileged to facilitate constellations with clients. The healing experienced, the depth of awareness, and the realizations of all

involved in the process have been powerful. I was working with a client with severe chronic pain who had suicidal ideation for six years. She has survived physical, sexual, and emotional abuse. Those who abused her were members of her family of origin. I spent two years learning her story. She would concentrate on the present issues mostly and I was at a loss as to what else to do for her. I sat down with her one day in session, explained FC, and told her I believed it could help. She agreed to try it.

My client's first constellation included her husband, herself, and two sons, as she wanted to tackle some of the challenges at home and how she was being treated in contemporary life. She began with going to each of her current family members and telling them her feelings and then saying, "I leave your responsibilities to you. I cannot take them on anymore." With each statement, she felt a bit of relief. At the end of the constellation, I suggested she choose a second figurine for herself and to place it in front of the figurine she had already selected for herself. This would allow her to speak to her survivor self, the self that had kept her alive through extremely difficult times. She was invited to say, "Thank you for helping me to survive for so long. Thank you." She paused, and the woman that had had a suicide plan for six years stated, "But I want to learn to live, not just to survive. I want to learn to live. I want to get to know who I am."

Since then, this client and I have done a few more constellations together and she has made great strides in her emotional healing. We have tackled a loss as well as the abuse and wounds from her father, who passed away over a year ago. She has come back each session with an increased awareness and a stronger will to live and get to know herself. She has also reported positive results in the relationships of her current family. I am honored to be a witness to such courage and determination and to know that this work

has helped her more than the previous tools I had used—although those tools were necessary to get her to a place to do Family Constellations.

As each individual does his or her healing it is rippled into the family and the community. Duran, Firehammer, & Gonzalez (2008) state, “If the historical soul wounding is not effectively dealt with, each person, as well as her or his descendants, is doomed to experience and perpetuate various forms of psychic and spiritual suffering in the future” (p. 288). FC may allow the individual to heal psychological wounds of the past and therefore possibly end some suffering in the future of the family.

FC is useable and accessible to diverse populations. The present study could be a basis of future research examining several populations who have had experiences with FC; for instance healing trauma, couples therapy, and illness. According to Lynch & Tucker (2005), this work can be and is used in several areas: organizations, support for Eye Movement Desensitization Reprocessing, self-abuse, relating individual work with larger group conflicts, entanglements of all kinds, coaching, athletics, with couples, loss, trauma, chronic pain, and eating disorders, just to name a few. It makes the tool bag of the psychologist that much bigger and more powerful.

Another way to use the information from the study is in the education of psychologists:

It is important to become aware that a clear path toward healing must be undertaken by individual counselors as well as by the mental health professions as a whole if we are to realize new and untapped dimensions of our individual and collective health and psychological liberation. (Duran, Firehammer, & Gonzalez, 2008, p. 288)

Workshops and immersion programs can be done to help clinicians develop skills in FC, as well as personal experience in order to give them another tool to use in their

therapeutic approach. Having the gift of immersion programs and workshops has the potential to allow therapists to go deeper within him or herself and therefore may allow their clients to go deeper in their own healing.

Definition of Terms

In order to be as clear and accurate as possible, it is important to know the definitions of the terms used in the research question: “What is the Clients’ Experiences of Family Constellations in Psychological Healing?” The words *client*, *experience*, *family*, *constellation*, *psychological* and *healing* are defined as well as *Family Constellation* and *psychological healing* as single terms in order to give a more specific definition of both meanings. The challenge was to find more than one definition of each in a scholarly sources, as the research community has neglected this topic. Although it has existed in Europe for over 20 years now, it is relatively new to clinical work in the United States.

Client. According to the McGraw-Hill Concise Dictionary of Modern Medicine (Client, 2002), a *client* in psychology is: “Any person who is voluntarily or involuntarily receiving mental health services or substance abuse services from any mental health service provider.” This definition was common in many reference sources. Building upon this definition, a *client* is deserving of respect and compassion, and someone to teach, to listen to, and to learn from. They are people who may come with great courage and resiliency to explore how to sustain themselves mentally, emotionally, and soulfully, in a way that will aid in healing and relief of their symptoms. They may be those looking for help and support in order to “feel better” or find reasons as to why they are feeling and thinking the way they are.

Experience. Rogers (1961) speaks of what *experience* means to him:

Experience is, for me, the highest authority. The touchstone of validity is my own experience. No other person's ideas, and none of my own ideas, are as authoritative as my experience. It is to experience that I must return again and again, to discover a closer approximation to truth as it is in the process of becoming in me. (p. 23-24)

Moustakas (1977) states, "The experience of any person is real only when it is being lived; when it is talked about or explained something essential is lost" (p. 2).

Experience is dynamic, continuous, and descriptive. It is feelings, emotions, warmth, and enthusiasm. It can also be frustrating, perplexing, and angering, but overall it is unique. Ideas and emotions come from persons, through their experiences and how they see things, feel things, define things, etc. It is also a matter of perspective – how one sees the experience, good, bad, indifferent. It is unique for each individual. It is personally owned. Experience can be an awakening, an appreciation, and an acceptance. It can be a guide to personal growth and change.

Family. *Family* can be considered a type of constellation and this belief is the main tenet in Family Constellations. Dictionary.com, (Family, n.d.), had two dictionary references when searching the definition of family. The first being:

(1) A basic social unit consisting of parents and their children, considered as a group, whether dwelling together or not: *the traditional family*. (2) Any group of persons closely related by blood, as parents, children, uncles, aunts, and cousins: or (3) all those persons considered as descendants of a common progenitor.

The second, the Collins English Dictionary, 10th Edition (Family, 2009) defined family as:

. . . from the Latin *familia* a household, servants of the house, from *famulus*, servant. A primary social group consisting of parents and their offspring, the principal function of which is provision for its members; (1) One's wife or husband and one's children; (2) One's children, as distinguished from one's

husband or wife; (3) Extended family—a group of persons related by blood; a group descended from a common ancestor.

Armstrong (2008) speaks to the essence of families when she states:

Families can be wonderful. The place where we find unconditional love and endless support. Our own personal cheer squad. Our closest friends. Families can also be the most challenging parts of our lives. They can be confusing, frustrating, depleting, and sometimes even cruel. (p. 81)

The definition of *family*, like the entity itself, can be complex. There are the ancestral family, the extended family, and the family of origin, the current family, and the close-knit friends whom we consider family. When taken as a whole a family is many people from many generations, with experiences, personalities, and histories attempting to survive. Family is where we come from, what helps influence what we become and what we believe in. Family, whether we like it or not, is always there even if we do not have contact with the members. It is there through the love and loyalty, conflict and pain, challenges and sadness, joy and fun—and may cause some of each. Family is the place in which we originate and grow. Family is about belonging.

Constellation. According to Merriam-Webster’s Medical Dictionary via Dictionary.com (Constellation, 2007), the word *constellation* means:

A set of ideas, conditions, symptoms, or traits that fall into or appear to fall into a pattern: as a: a group of stimulus conditions or factors affecting personality and behavior development; one way in which family *constellation* and handling of punishment influenced this particular boy — S. B. Sarason; [or] b: a group of behavioral or personality traits or a group or configuration of ideas, feelings, characteristics, objects, etc., that are related in some way. . . .

Dictionary.com Unabridged (Constellation, n.d.) states, *constellation* is from the “Late Latin *constellatio*, from Latin com- together + *stella*, star” (Constellation, n.d.). In Astronomy, it means “any various groups of stars to which definite names have been given, as Ursa Major... and the section of the heavens occupied by such a group”

(Constellation, n.d.). In Astrology, “constellation means the grouping or relative position of the stars as supposed to influence events, especially at a person’s birth” (Constellation, n.d.).

One may argue that the English word *constellation* may be confusing to people or does not accurately describe the process of FC. I contend that, while it is challenging to get an accurate picture because *constellation* is most commonly known as a “grouping of stars” and many may not associate the deeper meaning or the symbolism related to one’s family. A family is a group related in some way with the members having influence on each other, like the traits, beliefs, or patterns we develop in being part of one. Like the constellations in the sky, the constellation of a family could represent the many members (or stars) it takes to create a complete picture (constellation) and without one, the picture would not be complete.

Family Constellation. Combining the terms, *family* and *constellation*, will give a more specific definition to its meaning. The actual use of the phrase *Family Constellations* to describe the process challenges the accuracy of the common understanding of the word constellation, as defined above. Family Constellations began in Germany and the word used to describe it in German is “*systemaufstellung*.” Translated to English, it is “system installation” or “system set up” or “arrangement” (Systemaufstellung, 2012). This generic term can be applied to different systems, as in family systems (Familieaufstellung), depending upon the focus and is specifically defined as:

A procedure in which individuals representing members or entities (parts, aspects) of a (social experience) system. In an existing space such persons are then made as representatives of each other. Depending on the system, a distinction: Family

System – Family Constellations; Organization System – Organization Constellations; abstracted system – structure formation. (Systemaufstellung, 2012)

At first, Familieaufstellung was translated to the English “The Order of Love” and then changed to “The Orders of Love” (Dauskardt, 2013, p. 73). Years later:

...the new term ‘Family Constellations’ emerged and was adopted as the most popular English language term... referring to a complete process according to the insights Bert Hellinger had gained with regard to the essential systemic and phenomenological aspects of the work based on the experience and utilization of a knowing field. (Dauskardt, 2013, p. 73)

To further the definition, Franke (2003) ascertains the methodology of FC works in the following way:

This work quickly and precisely reveals dynamics that bind a person to his or her relationship system in a dysfunctional way, and that constrain coping strategies and personal development, thereby preventing the person from structuring his or her life in a positive way. The methods of constellation work incorporate techniques, procedures and experiences from other psychotherapeutic approaches including hypnotherapy, behavior therapy, gestalt therapy, and systemic therapy. (p. 16)

Constellations allow a view of the dynamics of the family systems which lie beyond the level of biographical experiences: the “systemic entanglements” (Hellinger) or the “invisible bonds” (Boszormenyi-Nagy). This level of archaic order represents a more comprehensive dimension, and is normally at an unconscious level for the client. Nevertheless, the person feels the effects. (p. 21)

The methodology of FC closely relates not only to Boszormenyi-Nagy but other psychological theories as well, which are discussed in detail in the *Influences of Psychological Theories on FC* section of the literature review in the next chapter.

The process of FC includes interviewing the client, being a client, being a representative, placing of the representatives, movements of the soul, and the healing that occurs from the constellation. Much of the process is the same for telephone or individual sessions except that figurines or representations for family members are used instead of

people (Lynch & Lynch, 2005). These can include wooden figurines, rocks, nail polish bottles, or any thing that can be distinguishable from each other.

An important aspect when defining Family Constellations is giving an explanation about the facilitator. This is because the facilitator sets the tone and develops and adds to what has been learned previously. Ulsamer (2008) states: “Doing constellations is very personal work, which is influenced by life experience, personal knowledge and understanding, and therapeutic background. . . . Each leader develops a personal style, bearing his or her own signature. . . .” (p. 12-13). The foundations were consistent throughout the facilitations researched.

The specific branch of Family Constellations in which I was trained, the Constellation Approach, has its foundations in the Family Constellations developed by Bert Hellinger, the consciousness, energy fields and healing, intuition, and direct knowing. According to Faust and Faust (2005):

The constellation approach presents a unique way to understand how systems work together. If we are able to refrain from our usual desire to understand intellectually what is wrong with the client, and allow the complexity to present itself, we can untangle the places where love, energy, or life force has stopped. Like Huna Healing, constellation work can be used to not only become intimately familiar with the entanglements that keep us blocked, but also to unravel how our individual energy system along with that of our family energy system is hindered from allowing life force to flow. (p. 59)

Ulsamer (2005) states:

During a ‘family constellation’ the hidden tensions, conflicts and influential relationships existing within a family become visible. The facilitating therapist works with these dynamics and often solutions can be found. . . . previously hidden relationships come alive and are made visible. (p. 1)

To me, Family Constellations is about finding the places within my family history and my family of origin where love has been interrupted and in that knowledge, having

the opportunity to acknowledge, accept, and agree to what was and what is in a safe and sacred environment. It encompasses the gift of connecting on a level one would seem to never be able to connect to outside of the family constellation experience or with traditional psychotherapy only.

It is a connection to the past, present, and even to the future as a way to begin to heal the family system. It is also a way to help heal the wounds of past generations, present generations, and to reduce the pain and suffering for generations to come by allowing the love, understanding, and compassion that was once hidden to be acknowledged and accepted. It is a true way to connect the mind, body and spirit. In a Freudian sense, it is a way to bring to consciousness the unconscious—that which we are most afraid of, what we most long for, and our truest selves.

Psychological. Definitions for the word *psychological* are very scarce. According to the American Psychological Association (APA):

Psychology is the study of the mind and behavior. The discipline embraces all aspects of the human experience—from the functions of the brain to the actions of nations, from child development to care of the aged. In every conceivable setting from scientific research centers to mental health care services, “the understanding of behavior” is the enterprise of psychologists. (American Psychological Association, 2012)

According to Myers (2010), psychology is defined “as the science of behavior and mental processes” (p. 6). To be as clear as possible, Myers (2010) also defined *behavior* and *mental processes*:

Behavior is anything an organism does—any action we can observe and record. Yelling, smiling, blinking, sweating, talking, and questionnaire marking are all observable behaviors. Mental processes are the internal, subjective experiences we infer from behavior—sensations, perceptions, dreams, thoughts, beliefs, and feelings” (p. 6).

It seems there could be many things that influence the mind, emotions, and behaviors of individuals. Family Constellations may help uncover these influences by giving therapists another tool to explore “the understanding of behavior” and support those looking to understand their emotions or behaviors by shedding some light on their psychological issues.

Healing. There were many variations found for the meaning of the word *healing*, most by philosophers, psychologists, medical doctors, and others from spiritual traditions. Although the term *psychological healing* was not definitively used, one can infer from combining the above definitions of *psychological* with several of the following views that these definitions do contain psychological aspects.

Becker (1992) compares what healing means in the context of Western medicine versus psychology:

Within Western medicine, physically ill people approach medical helpers in a manner much different from the psychologically ill. Physically ill people bring sick bodies to physicians; emotionally ill people bring sick souls to psychotherapists. Differences in these two forms of helping are visible even in the language; the person in need of medical help is always a “patient,” while the person in need of psychotherapy is often a “client.” Each form of helping has a particular way of approaching the person needing help. Medical patients are treated, taken care of, and made better by the doctor. Psychotherapy clients must be actively engaged in their healing. (p. 240)

Healing occurs, according to King (1989), because there is an intense presence of harmony and an absence of distress:

Healing can only occur because there is some harmonious state known to the body (or to the spirit of the body) that it loves so much that it will spontaneously move toward it whenever possible. Distress – caused by resistance, which is caused by fear, which is the absence of love – in its turn causes disharmony, or disrupted energy and relationships. Healing, an act of caring and loving, removes the distress and allows the body to return to the harmonious energy state it loves. (p. 30)

Vaughan (1993) believes that “transpersonal psychology is a healing endeavor that aims at the integration of physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual aspects of well-being” (p. 160). It is ascertained that consciousness is the instructor and the object of change or healing which develops awareness:

Ideally, a transpersonal approach aims at awakening from the consensus trance that perpetuates illusion. Since consciousness is often constricted by egocentric identification, questions of identity and self-concept may also be explored. Finally, the relationship of the person to society and the natural environment is viewed as an integral part of psychological maturation.

Relationships and connection concerning healing are also deemed important to healing by Moss (1989):

It is our capacity to merge, to become at one, however briefly, with ourselves, with each other, and with life in a larger sense. Healing, wherever and however it occurs, bring each person and humanity as a whole toward a more inclusive, more unobstructed relatedness to all that is emerging in this adventure of life. The relatedness is endless: to oneself, to one’s sensations, thoughts, feelings, images, dreams; to other people in how we acknowledge and transcend the sense of separation. And it is relatedness to something more, however we conceptualize it: Self or God. (p. 37)

There are other cultures to consider when defining *healing* as well. In Eastern spiritual traditions, practitioners “generally view their healing function, both mind and body, as incidental to and as a byproduct of their main task: the purification of the mind, the removal of its distortions and illusions – its ignorance – in Buddhist terms” (Kakar, 2003, p. 661). Kakar (2003) further states, “What I have found most striking about the healing encounter in the spiritual traditions is the seeker-patient’s conviction of being profoundly understood by the teacher” (p. 666).

In energy medicine, according to Myss (1996), “All our thoughts, regardless of their content, first enter our systems as energy. Those that carry emotional, mental,

psychological, or spiritual energy produce biological responses that are then stored in our cellular memory” (p. 40). Healing in energy medicine means “health not only . . . in the physical body, but also balance and harmony in all parts of life” (Brennan, 1987, p. 147). The process of healing, according to Brennan (1987), is “. . . a process of remembering—remembering who you are. Within the aura [individual energy system], the process of healing is a process that rebalances the energies in each body. When all the energies in each body are balanced, health occurs” (p. 147).

Gayokla Nichi, Native American traditional healer and member of the Executive Council of the Native American Leadership Alliance was interviewed on The Defining Moment Television Show (2009) in which he spoke about natural healing and the spirit world:

People say healing is a connection of mind and body. I say mind and heart. I use my mind and heart to make a connection to heal the person. I ask the Creator why is this person feeling this and what way can I help heal this person. Many times, it is about the ancestral situations.

The responsibility of the therapist/healer in the healing process was also found in the research. In an interview (Baldwin, 2000), Carl Rogers spoke of how his state of consciousness as therapist affects the levels of healing experienced while in session with clients and how it transcends the relationship and both become a part of something larger:

I find that when I am the closest to my inner, intuitive self --when perhaps I am somehow in touch with the unknown in me--when perhaps I am in a slightly altered state of consciousness in the relationship, then whatever I do seems to be full of healing. Then simply my presence is releasing and helpful. At those moments, it seems that my inner spirit has reached out and touched the inner spirit of the other. Our relationship transcends itself, and has become part of something larger. (p. 36)

It is through this feeling of being part of something larger, Rogers believes, that “profound growth and healing are present” (Baldwin, 2000, p. 36).

Along the same lines as Rogers, Prather (1989) states that for wholeness or healing to be achieved, love must exist as healer/therapist:

If our highest duty is to follow wholeness, peace, and the kindness of our being, to treat others fairly, and to help where we can help, then the condition of the body is only meaningful as it makes concentration on love easier or more difficult. Healing is therefore accomplished through love and is love. And love is the uniting principle in all healing approaches—insofar as they truly heal. Healing’s opposite is judgment, and any system (or practitioner) of healing loses effectiveness when it becomes judgment.

When a healer truly sees that he or she is not separate from the patient—and only love holds this vision—healing is already accomplished. The mind that no longer struggles to contrast itself with another, but looks happily upon its oneness with all living things, has moved into that level of reality where healing is a constant. (pp. 13-14)

Connection, absence of distress, consciousness, shifts in energy, and wholeness are all words to describe healing, and love is the “uniting principle.” In the approaches of healing, without love, there is distress and judgment, which create struggle and an inability to move forward where one may remain unaware or feel incomplete. Love helps to create the connection of mental, physical, emotional, and a spiritual aspect of being human occurs within the self, between family members, and between the client and therapist encouraging psychological healing. Whether we, as therapists, like to admit it or not, our compassion, understanding, patience, and willingness to be in service to others in their psychological healing process is underwritten by love (Prather, 1989).

Psychological Healing. It was very challenging to find definitions of *psychological healing* as a phrase. Jackson (1999) refers to *psychological healing* as “the variety of efforts taken to minister to a person’s ailments by psychological means or

psychological interventions – whether or not they have been accompanied by medicinal or other physical interventions” (p. 4). More specifically, he states:

Psychological healing is used here as a generic term that includes processes and practices that have served, often in in-articulated ways, to resolve or ease psychological burdens that were to be found in many forms in different eras. With the increase in cultural and individual self-consciousness about such matters, these processes and practices come to be referred to as the cure of souls, pastoral care, mental healing, mind healing, mind cure, psychotherapeia [*sic*], psychotherapeutics, and psychotherapy. (p. 4)

The healing of the mind, body, and spirit–wholeness, human experiences, behaviors, families, and development on different planes of consciousness, connection, and emotion as seen in the *psychological* and *healing* sections, seem to make most healing have a psychological aspect as Jackson (1999) confirms. It is because of these aspects, FC may be another tool for psychological healing.

In this chapter, I discussed the meaning of my research question, “What is the Clients’ Experiences of Family Constellations in Psychological Healing,” the clinical, professional, and social relevance, and defined the terms related. In the next chapter, I will review the recent literature found on related subjects and discuss the relevance of this study as well as how it compares and positions itself into the existing literature.

Chapter II: Literature Review

In this chapter, a discussion of the position of this study among the literature on the topic “What is the Clients’ Experiences of Family Constellations in Psychological Healing?” will occur. This literature review contributes to establishing the researcher as an expert on this topic. It communicates to the reader the background knowledge and ideas that have been discovered as well as the strengths and weaknesses related to the topic. All this is done within the context of psychological theory and application.

Search of the Literature

In the search for reference sources, the challenge of finding studies on this specific subject of the Clients’ Experiences of Family Constellations in Psychological Healing was very evident. Due to this complication, I had to think of all that Family Constellations entailed and the words or clusters of words that could be searched and written down. From there, a search for articles and books took place. Then themes in the literature were noted.

The first theme, *Foundations of Family Constellations (FC)*, looks at the history of the approach including its founder, Bert Hellinger, and his experiences that influenced FC’s development as well as the cornerstone theories of FC. The second theme, *Processes of Family Constellations*, discusses the processes/steps of FC, how psychological healing occurs and client experiences. The third theme, *Influences of Psychological Theories on Family Constellations*, discusses the experiential psychological theories with brief comparisons to FC. Finally, the fourth theme *Integration of Family Constellations in Current Practice*, discusses how practitioners are using FC in different arenas.

Foundations of Family Constellations

Bert Hellinger is the developer of FC. His unique life experiences have helped to develop this approach. A brief background on Hellinger will be presented and the foundations within the approach discussed: existential-phenomenology, acknowledging “what is,” personal and collective conscience, “orders of love,” consciousness, the “family soul,” the “knowing field,” and energy.

Hellinger’s extensive knowledge in psychology, spirituality, the effects of ancestry on the individual and family, and his experience with group work all played a role in the development of FC. He is an educator, psychoanalyst, body therapist, group dynamic therapist, and family therapist who has authored over 60 books. The foundations, according to the Bert Hellinger Website (2011), were first influenced by his parents “because their particular form of faith immunized the family against believing in the distortions of National Socialism” (Biological Sketch, para. 3).

The second influence was his years in the priesthood:

At the age of 20, he entered a Catholic religious order and began the long process of purification of body, mind and spirit in silence, study, contemplation and meditation. He spent 16 years in South Africa as a missionary to the Zulu. Hellinger’s participation in an interracial, ecumenical training in-group dynamics led by Anglican clergy was also tremendously influential. These groups valued dialogue, phenomenology, and individual human experience. He left the religious order after 25 years with the realization that being a priest no longer was an appropriate expression of his inner growth. (Hellinger, 2011, Biological Sketch, para. 4).

The third influence was his study of the psychological models:

Psychoanalysis and psychotherapy were the next major influence. He trained in family therapy . . . and integrated all of the diverse elements of which he learned and refined his skill of listening to the authority of one’s own soul. He also learned that seeing what is as opposed to blindly accepting what is being said – no matter by whom – is the linchpin of this often difficult work of healing for

individuals and communities.
(Hellinger, 2011, Biological Sketch, para. 6).

Psychotherapeutic schools of thought that influenced Hellinger include body-based experiences in the therapeutic process, phenomenological/dialogical orientations of group dynamics, Gestalt therapy, hypnotherapy, neuro-linguist programming, transactional analysis, and family systems to name a few (Hellinger, Weber, & Beaumont, 1998). His family systems training came in the form of Virginia Satir's Family Sculpting through the tutelage of Ruth McClendon, Leslie Kadis, and Thea Schoenfelder, a German child psychiatrist (Cohen, 2006). "These techniques were aligned with the third force of existential-humanistic psychology. They were not designed for behavior modification but instead sought to expand the resources available to clients to deal more constructively with their circumstances" (Cohen, 2006, p. 229).

Hellinger integrated these unique and diverse elements with what he had learned of group dynamics and began to develop Family Constellations (Hellinger et al., 1998): "He has made no claim that he has discovered something new, but there's no question that he has made a new integration" (p. 330). His combined learnings and the influences of his experiences were essential in the development of FC. It allowed and taught him to observe the systemic entanglements and resolutions of those entanglements within a family, thus creating the technique known today as Family Constellations.

Existential-Phenomenology. Existential-phenomenology is a cornerstone of the foundation of FC. The idea of phenomenology was born from philosophy. Edmund Husserl is considered the father of phenomenology. He believed that the truest form of knowledge comes through what we experience and that which is beyond immediate awareness or consciousness.

To further expand the idea, Moustakas (1994) defines phenomenology as:

What appears in consciousness is the phenomenon. The word phenomenon comes from the Greek *phaenesthai*, to flare up, to show itself, to appear. Constructed from *phaino*, phenomenon means to bring to light, to place in brightness, to show itself in itself, the totality of what lies before us in the light of day. Phenomena are the building blocks of human science and the basis for all knowledge. (p. 26)

The foundation of phenomenology is grounded in being-in-the-world. This includes the self, others, spirituality and the world as a whole. The dashes in being-in-the-world seem to denote a relational quality, that an individual is contextually linked to the world in his or her relationship to it. Husserl (1982) expands on the world studied:

It is then to this world, the world in which I find myself and which is also my world-about-me, that the complex forms of my manifold and shifting spontaneities of consciousness stand related: observing in the interest of research the bringing of meaning into conceptual form through description; comparing and distinguishing, collecting and counting, presupposing and inferring, the theorizing activity of consciousness, in short, in its different forms and stages. (p. 93)

Hellinger (1999) discusses a few aspects that exist within the phenomenological realm when working with constellations: the whole, watching without intention, love, effects, opposites, and freedom. The inner movements that lead to insight, to the awareness of the whole and Hellinger's explanation of phenomenology:

One reaches out, wanting to understand and control the unknown. This is scientific inquiry. . . . The second movement happens when we pause in our efforts to grasp the unknown, allowing our attention to rest, not on the particulars, which we can define, but on the greater whole. . . . We pause in the movement of reaching out, pull back a bit, until we arrive at the inner stillness that is competent to deal with the vastness and complexity of the greater whole. This inquiry, which first orients itself in inwardness and restraint, I call phenomenological. (Cohen, 2006, p. 228)

With regard to watching without intention Hellinger (1999) states:

Phenomenology is a philosophical method. For me it means subjecting myself to larger contexts and connections, without needing to understand them. I accept them without any intention of helping or proving anything. I submit without fear of what might arise I face everything, exactly the way it is. (p. 22)

For the therapist this may be challenging and may require an adjustment to most of what he or she has learned about psychotherapy:

Anyone who is accustomed to asking questions, working through things, and attempting to pinpoint exactly how things stand—which is what is demanded of many therapists in their training—has to be willing to put this aside in order to work phenomenologically. (Ulsamer, 2008, p. 39)

The therapist helps the client bring to consciousness the full range and meaning of his or her lived world, his or her truth. Ulsamer (2008) quotes Hellinger as saying, “A therapist is not someone who is going to step in and make things better, but rather, one who is in harmony with what is” (p. 47). In order to be in harmony with “what is,” the therapist “must accept the [client’s] world as it is. He must have no urge to change the [client’s] world. . . . He accepts the client’s sickness as it is” (Hellinger, 2006, p. 24). A larger context is created, “without any aim in mind and without fear” (p. 23).

Love plays a large role when attempting to become aware of the whole and accepting “what is.” According to Hellinger (1999), “. . . awareness of others requires love. I must accept them with their fate, their families, and their problems. The second is that there must be a certain distance. If you jump in . . . you can’t maintain awareness” (pp. 23-24). This awareness then allows the therapist to deal with the client easier:

When I am dealing with people I don’t know, it’s easiest to look at them with love. Love doesn’t mean I want anything from them, only that I accept them as they are, without judgment. . . . Love is recognizing and acknowledging that what is, is beautiful and good. (Hellinger 1999, p. 25)

Hellinger (2006) contends that if the therapist is totally committed to being open to the situation and what will occur, he or she can become more aware of what is vital and this “goes beyond the visible phenomena” (p. 24). This is the key to discovering the solution to the client’s issue:

It is relatively simple to set up a family constellation but when it comes to where the solution lies, it is only possible if one is in tune. Then it will suddenly light up. [And] that's phenomenological awareness. . . . awareness with love. That is essential because then it can be relied upon. (Hellinger, 2006, p. 24)

A challenge that may occur is the client or another therapist believing there must be a converse idea or an uncovering of a deficit to the phenomenon instead thereby reducing the possibility of seeing what is there (Hellinger, 1999).

An antithesis gives me the illusion that it's in my power to think whatever I wish. . . . If I proceed phenomenologically, and report reality as it presents itself, then I relinquish the freedom to think or hope for something different. I bow to reality, and in doing so I gain the freedom to act. (Hellinger, 1999, p. 26)

Hellinger (1999) states that our freedom is limited, that we only choose from various paths and those paths are already laid out for us. So, "freedom in this sense, means acknowledging that I must face the consequences of my actions. If I can do that, I am capable of acting" (p. 27). There is no need to suffer, just move on. Additionally, if one proceeds phenomenologically and identifies the essentials, much less energy will be used leaving more energy for taking action (Hellinger, 1999). This gives us freedom.

The acknowledgement of "what is," which seems to be the synthesis of what is written above, is the power from which Family Constellations is derived. Payne (2005) stated that ". . . the basic principle of acknowledging what is, [is] devoid of pretenses, stories and judgments we have created" (p. 41). The lived experience of the client, not the belief in the stories of the client and family are important in FC so that "the truth of the natural love between family members can be revealed" (p. 43). The challenge for the client thus becomes being "willing to surrender our stories and face the deeper question: do we want peace, or do we want to be right?" (p. 43). It is an acknowledgment and acceptance of one's lived experience, as it is, based in facts with no judgments, no

motives that eventually may lead the client to a place of willingness to agree to all that happened; thus giving him or her the opportunity of freedom, psychological healing, and the choice to move forward in his or her life.

Personal and Collective Conscience and the “Orders of Love”. The personal and collective consciences both play a role in the “Orders of Love” (Hellinger, 2006). The personal conscience requirements include the right to belong, a balance of giving and taking, and the need for order, and are interpreted by the individual in the following way:

- Conscience watches over the right to belong. If I am doing something that endangers my right to belong, then I will have a bad conscience that prevails upon me to change my behavior so that I re-establish my right to belong.
- The second requirement is the balance of giving and taking. This requirement makes the exchange between members of a system possible. It is bound up with the need to have the right to belong and consequently it usually manifests itself in the following way: ‘If I received something good then I feel the urge to balance this out. Because I feel a sense of belonging and I feel good, I give a little more than I was given.’ . . . If someone harms me, I will have the urge to harm him or her in return too. However, because I feel I am right, I will do a little more harm to them than they did to me. . . . This drive towards justice and revenge is so strong that the need to belong is often sacrificed to it.
- The third requirement is the need for order, which engenders certain rules of play that must be adhered to: If a person adheres to them he feels conscientious, if not then he feels as though he must pay a penalty. (Hellinger, 2006, p. 60-61)

The personal conscience requirements can be felt by the individual in the context of drives and instinctual reactions that insert the power that compliance and control are what one needs (Hellinger et al., 1998). The effects of these needs, according to Hellinger et al.:

. . . limit our choices and commit us, whether we like it or not, to objectives that conflict with our personal wishes and pleasures. [They] constrain our relationships, and also make them possible, because they both reflect and enable our fundamental human need to relate intimately to others. Our relationships

succeed when we are able to fill these needs and to balance them with one another, and they become dysfunctional and destructive when we can't. (p. 5)

When actions damage or endanger relationships, we feel guilt or innocence and this limits the conscience. In the limits of conscience, defining and differentiating between guilt and innocence can be a challenge. Hellinger et al. (1998) state that the individual's needs listed previously are often in conflict with each other and have their own goals, which have their own feelings of guilt and innocence:

- Guilt feels like exclusion and alienation when our belonging is endangered. When it is well served, we feel innocence as intimate inclusion and closeness.
- Guilt feels like indebtedness and obligation when our giving and taking are not balanced. When they are well served, we feel innocence as entitlement and freedom.
- Guilt feels like transgression and as fear of consequences or punishment when we deviate from a social order. We feel innocence with respect to social order as conscientiousness and loyalty. (p. 6)

Collective Conscience. When writing of the collective conscience, Hellinger (2006) theorizes that this collective or shared conscience can bind the family together to ensure that no one gets lost and that all members participate equally in the family. He ascertains that the bond then guides the family conscience toward a family goal of survival, which is the reason that the family conscience does not allow someone to be excluded. This bond is also a connection between the living and the dead.

Hellinger (2006) asserts:

The collective conscience concerns itself as much with the dead as with the living. Through this conscience, the realms of the living and the dead become unified. Because of it, the dead have an effect on the living. And it avenges any transgression, such as when a family member is excluded or forgotten. (p. 45)

According to Hellinger (2006), there are also certain requirements that rule the collective conscience:

- The collective conscience has a need for all participants to have an equal right to belong. This is not an individual need. It is a collective. That means if a family or group member is excluded, this conscience attempts to reinstate that person in that it allows him or her to be represented by another member...
- The conscience also has a need for balance. For the attempt to reinstate the excluded member is engendered by the urge for balance. But this conscience has no sympathy for those later members that are chosen to reinstate the right to belong or to balance out again. They are sacrificed by the collective conscience.
- The third requirement for order. . . demands that those who came earlier in the system has precedence over those who come later. So parents have precedence over children, first born over the second, etc. If this order is transgressed, for example, if a child interferes in the issues of his or her parents by trying to atone for their guilt for instance, the collective conscience will frustrate the attempt as a punishment. (p. 61)

The family or collective conscience often remains hidden until work is done to bring this into consciousness. Hellinger (2006) contends this is because the tie between the living and dead family members' fates are passed down from generation to generation. "The movements of this collective conscience only lead to a repetition of the fate of someone from a previous generation. Yet one is only able to overcome the limits of this conscience when one understands its movements" (p. 45). FC is a tool to better understand the movements of the collective conscience of the family. Using this tool, one can begin to look at where the needs or requirements of the personal and collective conscience are found using the "orders of love" as a template.

"Orders of Love". The "orders of love" are developed from the three needs or requirements found in the personal and collective conscience and are the basic themes to be aware of when working with a client. Hellinger et al. (1998) describe the "orders of

love” as “dynamic, systemic forces blowing and whirling in our families and intimate relationships. We know the disorder caused by their turbulence. . . in our suffering and illness. Conversely we know their harmonious flow as a sense of well-being in the world” (p. xi).

These “orders of love,” according to Ulsamer (2008) are:

- Every member of a family belongs equally to the family and is respected in the same way, regardless of any personal qualities or particular fate. This belonging is independent of whether they are talented, feeble-minded or ‘normal’, whether they are handicapped or mentally ill, whether they have died at an early age or committed suicide. Every person belongs equally.
- Whoever comes first is in first place, and the others follow in order: An older brother comes before his younger siblings. A first wife comes before a second. In a constellation, the rank is exhibited in a clockwise direction. Each person is respected equally.
- Each member of the family has their own fate, regardless of how difficult or terrible it may be in some cases. Each person has to carry his or her fate completely, with all its burdens, with every turn of events, and with all the feelings that accompany it. In addition to their individual fate, each person also has to carry personal responsibility for everything they have done in their life.
- The ones who come later in a family are the children, and they are the ones who take over these energies and feel and behave like their ancestors. They are ‘entangled’ in that they take on attitudes, feelings, and fates that belonged to others. (pp. 49-50)

The disruptions of the “orders of love” happen when any member of the family is entangled with another, excluded from the membership in some way, or when there is a violation of the order of precedence as in the parentification of a child. According to Payne (2005):

The most common disruptions are caused by the early death of a parent or grandparent, the death of a child, miscarriages, abortions, an individual being ousted from a family in the role of ‘black sheep’, or if a murder or other injustice takes place. (pp. 1-2)

Hellinger (2006) summarizes how disruptions or violations of the “orders of love” happen:

We often violate the Orders of Love when we follow our personal conscience. Tragedies in families and in intimate relationships ... are often associated with conflicts between the conscience guarding bonding, giving and taking, and social convention and the hidden conscience guarding the family system. But love flourishes when personal conscience and social convention submit to the orders and hidden symmetry of love.
(p. 28)

When an individual becomes aware of the family conscience through the constellation, it comes into consciousness and the person can begin to acknowledge the disruptions in the “orders of love.” Once those are acknowledged, as through a constellation, the person becomes more conscious, issues can be resolved, and psychological healing can occur.

Consciousness. Defining consciousness is a difficult task. This section briefly discusses two main schools of thought found about consciousness, descriptions of the personal and collective consciousness—more extensively the collective consciousness and its role in FC via the representative and “family soul,” and how these are tapped into through the “knowing field.”

Defining Consciousness. Currently, there is no proven theory of consciousness that exists and much of the literature found about consciousness stated that it was difficult to research in a psychological and scientific context:

Despite substantial efforts by many researchers, we still have no scientific theory of how brain activity can create, or be, conscious experience. This is troubling, since we have a large body of correlations between brain activity and consciousness, correlations normally assumed to entail that brain activity creates conscious experience.
(Hoffman, 2008, abstract)

Frager and Fadiman (2005) agree:

The growing interest in consciousness research across a host of disciplines has not yet yielded any definitive answers. ... Even after almost a century we cannot yet answer the question of what consciousness is – because it may not be answerable within our usual ways of explanation – but we are learning more about the contents of consciousness and the forms that it takes. ... Ornstein (1972) argues... that consciousness can never be understood using an objective approach alone. (pp. 223-224)

Two Schools of Thought

The two main schools of thought found throughout the research are: (1) consciousness is created by the brain/mind as Searle (1997) would call “biological naturalism” (p. xiv), and (2) consciousness as a “fundamental universal property” (Kermanshahi, 2013) accessed by the mind.

Under the first school of thought, Searle (1997) contends, “Consciousness is a natural biological phenomenon that does not fit comfortably into either of the traditional categories of mental and physical. It is caused by lower-level micro-processes in the brain at the higher macro-levels” (p. xiv). To be more specific:

Consciousness consists of inner, qualitative, subjective states of sentience or awareness. Consciousness so defined, begins when we wake in the morning from a dreamless sleep and continues until we fall asleep again, die, go into a coma, or otherwise become “unconscious.” (Searle, 2000, p. 559)

Damasio (2010) is of the same ilk:

Consciousness is a state of mind – if there is no mind there is no consciousness; consciousness is a particular state of mind, enriched by a sense of the particular organism in which a mind is operating; and the state of mind includes knowledge to the effect that the said existence is situated, that there are objects and event surrounding it. (p. 157)

There are scientists, psychologists, and researchers that disagree with this view and lean more toward the second school of thought. For example, Hoffman (2008) believes that “consciousness creates brain activity, and indeed creates all objects and

properties of the physical world” (abstract). Chalmers (1995) is of the belief that “when we think and perceive, there is a whirl of information-processing but there is also a subjective aspect” as well. This subjective aspect is experience:

When we see, for example, we *experience* visual sensations: the felt quality of redness, the experience of dark and light, the quality of depth in a visual field. Other experiences go along with perception in different modalities: the sound of a clarinet, the smell of mothballs. Then there are bodily sensations, from pains to orgasms; mental images that are conjured up internally; the felt quality of emotion, and the experience of a stream of conscious thought. What unites all of these states is that there is something it is like to be in them. All of them are states of experience. (p. 201)

The idea of the second school of thought seems to be the best fit for explaining what occurs for the client, representatives and facilitators when setting up a constellation as well as during a constellation. This will be discussed more fully in the sub-section below entitled Consciousness and the Representative and “Family Soul” Experiences.

Individual Consciousness. According to Elgin (1997), “We humans have the distinct capacity to know what we know” (p. 4). The capacity of humans for self-observation “has given a supercharged boost to the evolutionary process” (Elgin, 1997, p. 4) and this allows the individual to see, reflect and raise him or her self to a new level of growth and understanding. Family Constellations may give us the opportunity to physically set up and see what is present, internally and subjectively, for us in how we view our families and our place in them.

An interesting piece found was the systems approach to consciousness. This approach contends that consciousness can be seen as a collection of patterns that form a system (Tart, 1993). The patterns contain psychological characteristics, human potentials, and experiential potentials. Tart (1993) states:

Each of us is born into a particular culture that selects and develops a small number of these potentials, rejects others, and is ignorant of many. The small number of experiential potentials selected by our culture, plus some random factors, constitute the structural elements from which our ordinary state of consciousness is constructed. (p. 35)

It seems that Family Constellations may be able to show us these different potentials in a way that increases our attention and awareness, thus allowing for the formation of new patterns. It may give us the opportunity to present our unconscious views and make them conscious so that we then may be able to see the historic familial patterns.

Individual Unconscious

The unconscious may contain our shadows, personal beliefs, and how our families may influence us. These are parts of us that may still be “asleep” and even parts of which we are not aware. Jung (1964) believes that there are aspects of our perceptions of reality that are unknown to us:

The first is the fact that even when our senses react to real phenomena, sights, and sounds, they are somehow translated from the realm of reality into that of the mind. Within the mind they become psychic events whose ultimate nature is unknowable (for the psyche cannot know its own psychical substance). Thus every experience contains an indefinite number of unknown factors. . . . (p. 4)

It was also believed by Jung (1964) that there are events of which we do not take in consciously and that those events remain below the level of consciousness, in the unconscious, and may come out with intuition, deep thought, or possibly a trigger:

They have happened but they have been absorbed subliminally, without our conscious knowledge. We can become aware of such happenings only in a moment of intuition or by a process of profound thought that leads to a later realization that they must have happened: and though we may have originally ignored their emotional and vital importance, it later wells up from the unconscious as a sort of after-thought. (p. 4)

FC seems to support the client in beginning to become aware of the shadow(s)—those pieces of self and family that may be hidden or yet unknown—in order to acknowledge and start the process of acceptance and integration in a safe and sacred environment.

Collective Consciousness. Elgin (1997) posits, “The collective and personal go hand in hand. They arise and develop together” (p. 4). He continues:

Roger Walsh believes the global problems ranging from ecological destruction to overpopulation and resource depletion are actually symptomatic of wounds in our individual and collective minds. If this is so, and I believe it is, then humanity’s evolutionary success depends not only on awakening our collective consciousness but also on promoting its health and healing. Acknowledging and healing the psychic wounds that divide us is as vital to our future as recognizing the ties that bind us. (p. 4)

Collective Unconscious

The concept of the unconscious is also thought of in a collective sense as well. According to Hannah (1981), it was determined by Jung that through his visions or dreams, he had become aware of the collective unconscious. “This inner world is just as real as the outside world, with which we are familiar; in fact, it is more real, for it is infinite and everlasting and does not change and decay. . . .” Concerning the unconscious, Hannah wrote it most concisely: “. . . what we know of ourselves is *not* all that we are” (p. 3). This may also be applied to the family when the not-yet-aware-of-patterns and disruptions of the “orders of love” are considered.

Jung stated, as cited in Hannah (1981):

The first figure we usually meet in the confrontation with the unconscious is the personal shadow. Since she (or he) mainly consists of what we have rejected in ourselves. . . . If we are hostile to the unconscious, however, it will become more

and more unbearable, but if we are friendly—realizing its right to be as it is—the unconscious will change in a remarkable way. (p. 7)

It is through the unconscious that one is able to unite the opposites, the thing humans do not want to acknowledge but must in order for harmony and wholeness to exist.

Seeing and, at all events, accepting to some extent our own shadow is really a *conditio sine qua non* of experiencing the unconscious, for if we are still indulging ourselves with illusions about who and what we are, we have no chance whatsoever of being real enough to see the images of the unconscious or to hear its voice. Nature and the unconscious always go straight to the point, which is usually very different from what we expect. We need a very unbiased mind, which has learned to value the truth above everything, in order to register and value what we see and hear. (Hannah, 1981, p. 13)

The FC foundation of acknowledging, accepting, and agreeing to what is, may help to reach the unconscious and to aid in seeing what is actually there, as opposed to the illusions, as well as bring the client and family system back into balance. It is, perhaps, a way to become conscious, encounter the individual and collective or “family soul” (explained in the following section) and to psychologically heal.

Consciousness and the Representative and “Family Soul” Experiences. The phenomenon of representative perception and “family soul” in Family Constellations seems to challenge the train of thought of “biological naturalism” and coincides with the school of thought that consciousness is a “universal fundamental property.” The personal and family consciences discussed in the Personal and Collective Conscience section, seem to be able to be accessed through the collective consciousness via the “knowing field” where the “family soul” and systemic entanglements are held.

The “Family Soul”

The “family soul” in FC contains the collective/family conscience and

consciousness, the individual/personal conscience and consciousness, the systemic entanglements, and the “orders of love.” Through the review of literature, information and various definitions of the soul were found. Some believed the soul had a body and others believed the body had a soul. Still others believed the soul and the unconscious were intertwined or one in the same. No matter the definition or conviction, the soul was honored, cherished, and believed to exist.

Hellinger (2006), describes the role of the soul in Family Constellations:

[Family constellations] shows that we partake in a greater soul, that is, we do not *have* a soul, we are *in* a soul. This greater soul manifests itself in two ways. Firstly, it provides a sense of wholeness. It connects all that belongs to our body to a unity. To this extent, the soul does belong to the body – as the unifying principle. Secondly, the soul guides us. It guides our body and our life. How, we do not know. Soul is thus the guiding principle, something that unifies and dictates. (p. 44)

In a more general sense, Malchiodi (2002) states:

Soul is, in a sense, the summation of the self, reflecting body and mind, ideas and perceptions, spirit and the world. It is the essence that signals us when we are not true to ourselves or when we have forgotten life’s purpose because of trauma, emotional loss, physical illness, or unsatisfying relationships. . . . it helps us feel alive, reach down to the bones, and awaken ourselves to the goodness and gift within each of us. (p. 2)

Malchiodi (2002) continues on the history of the soul and what it means when the soul is out of alignment with the body, mind, and spirit:

The idea of soul has permeated our lives for centuries, from shamanic soul retrieval to religious practices offering purification of the soul. Wisdom traditions around the world tell of soul illness, in which body, mind, and spirit are out of alignment with each other. We speak of loss of soul, a time when we lose touch with our true selves and our directions, intention, and meaning, or when we are not fulfilling our life purpose. The person who has experienced a loss of soul is unable to connect with others or make an inner connection to the self. Without the soul, one loses one’s *raison d’être* and is profoundly alone. (p. 2)

The soul can also be extended to mean the community or social soul, and the universal soul. This follows the assertion that we are all connected and supports the idea of the family soul:

. . . soul is our life energy and acts as a part of a greater life force. It not only is at the center of being but is also that which connects us to other individuals, communities, nature, and the divine. We can share soul because its essence has no boundaries. Soul includes family, friends, the environment, and spirit. It opens up a dimension to experiencing life and self with depth, heart, and fellowship. (Malchiodi, 2002, p. 2)

To be more specific of the community or social soul's role in FC, Faust and Faust (2009) define the "family soul" as having

. . . an outer boundary, which defines the soul group. Those within this boundary are directed by the shared conscience: parents, children, siblings, grandparents, great-grandparents, and occasionally an ancestor further back that had a particular, difficult fate. Cousins do not belong to the family soul. The family soul can also encompass non-relatives who make room for new members either by dying, leaving, being abandoned, or being excluded. . . . The family soul holds everyone's personal histories, different fates, important events, etc. (p. 19)

Within these guiding principles and essences of the soul are the conscience of the family and the individual. Payne (2005) supports three levels of conscience within the individual:

. . . firstly, the conscience we have as individuals which dictates to us what is right and wrong, our responsibilities, and our reactions to certain conditions; additionally, we belong to the collective conscience of our biological family, the connections and influence of which can span many generations; and lastly, we participate in the conscience of our ethnic and national groups. . . . (p. 1)

As Payne specifies, conscience is what is considered right or wrong and each family and individual has its own conscience. In FC, the personal conscience experiences feelings of guilt and innocence and is made up of certain requirements; the family conscience is the belief system of the family, the way in which the family acts and thinks

toward others and other systems, and the importance of belonging to it. It is this belief system that is explored during a constellation. The representatives and facilitator are able to explore this familial information via the “knowing field” in order to support the client in his or her psychological healing.

The “Knowing Field”

Albrecht Mahr first introduced the “knowing field,” sometimes referred to as the “soul field,” in 1997 at the first International Conference of Family Constellations (Payne, 2005). The facilitator, client, and representatives of the family members of a constellation as an informing instrument use the “knowing field.” For the representative, the “knowing field” allows “access to knowledge or feelings of the person in the family whom they represent” (Ulsamer, 2005, p. 105). It allows the representative to “come in contact with a deeper level of truth. . . . [they] become a channel for the truth in the respective family and their system. . . .” (Ulsamer, 2005, p. 105).

The expression of the “knowing field” happens in two ways, according to Ulsamer (2005):

In the first way, family constellations are a type of revelation of the underlying energies present in the family. This is shown by the position of the representatives relative to one another, both in distance and in the direction in which they face. The representatives feel these energies and communicate them to the group.

At the same time, the “Knowing Field” contains an energy which strives towards healing. The representatives feel “pulled” in a certain direction, sometimes strongly, sometimes weakly. This pull may move in the direction of either the problem or the solution.
(p. 109)

The facilitator uses the “knowing field” as a guide or informant to determine where the energy of the constellation is going and in which direction the constellation

should go next. Due to this level of contact, it is important for the therapist to trust the “knowing field” and the representatives because it allows them to “‘hear’ its messages and let himself be guided by it” during facilitation of constellations (Ulsamer, 2005, p. 110).

Ulsamer (2005) also maintains that the “knowing field” can be found in other forms of therapy:

The psychodrama specialist Grete Leutz remarked on the appearance of this phenomena in psychodramas: “The completely spontaneous psychodramatic acting in the role of an unknown other is so true to the actual life circumstances, states of mind and reactions of that person, that it is hard to believe that the psychodrama ‘actor’ has no knowledge of the person they are playing.” (p. 108)

The “knowing field” has been supported by Rupert Sheldrake’s field of morphic resonance and was referred to in much of the literature on the “knowing field.” Within the concept of these fields is morphenogenic resonance. “Morphenogenic resonance takes place only from the past, that only morphic units that have already actually existed are able to exert a morphic influence in the present” (Sheldrake, 2009, p. 86). Looking into the past is one of the main foundations of constellations. Some other foundations are how the family is affected energetically, how the constellations work, and how the healing starts. “Through morphic resonance, the patterns of activity in self-organizing systems are influenced by similar patterns in the past, giving each species and each kind of self-organizing system a collective memory” (Sheldrake, 2005, Memory of nature section, para. 3). This would have one assume the morphenogenic, “knowing field,” has a memory.

“The morphic fields of social groups connect together members of the group even when they are many miles apart, and provide channels of communication through which

organisms can stay in touch at a distance” (Sheldrake, 2005, Fields of the mind section, para. 3). This supports FC’s concept of the “knowing/soul field,” representative experiences, and/or family entanglements in constellations as well as the “fundamental universal property” idea of consciousness. In a constellation, the family members—a social group—connect through the “knowing field” even though the members may not be present.

Energy. When speaking of energy fields, Faust and Faust (2005) state the following, “We, along with everything in our world, are made up of vibrating energy and in fact, the entire universe is a network of interconnecting energy frequencies. . . . These frequencies create energy fields and most importantly, these fields contain consciousness” (p. 60). It is through these fields that “we tune into. . . to help sense and interpret what we perceive” (Faust & Faust, 2005, p. 60). This information is not new:

The Einsteinian [*sic*] viewpoint of matter as particularized energy shows us that we are all constructed from the same subatomic building blocks. At a microcosmic level, we are each complex yet uniquely arranged aggregates of the same particularized universal energy. (Gerber, 1988, p. 417)

According to Brennan (1987), Dr. Wilhelm Reich, a psychiatrist and colleague of Freud in the early 20th century, was interested in a universal energy he named “orgone.” Reich’s studies consisted of “the relationship of disturbances of the orgone flow in the human body to physical and psychological illness” (Brennan, 1987, p. 31). Reich even “developed a psychotherapeutic modality in which Freudian analytic techniques for uncovering the unconscious are integrated with physical techniques for releasing blockages to the natural flow of orgone energy in the body. . . clearing negative mental and emotional states” (Brennan, 1987, p. 31).

Judith (1996) believes that understanding the flow of energy is pertinent to understanding the person and describes it as “excitement, charge, attention, awareness, or simply the life force. (Some spiritual systems describe it as *chi*, *ki*, or *prana*.)” (p. 12).

In FC, there are four energy fields present at all times: the individual energy field; the family energy field; the constellation energy field which includes non-family members; family members; and the spiritual energy field that surrounds and holds the constellation energy field. These can be imagined as concentric circles each one slightly larger than the next (Faust & Faust, 2005).

The individual energy field, defined as “a type of organizing field that guides the molecules and atoms of our physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual bodies into place... and contains our consciousness” (Faust & Faust, 2005, p. 62), includes intuition and the chakra system.

According to Faust and Faust (2005):

Intuition comes as a 6th sense, a gut feeling, or a warning. Sometimes it is a deep inner voice, as in words or guidance, heard in an important dream. Many experience intuition as a physical sensation or emotion. And last but certainly not least, a symbol or sign manifests just when we need it. (p. 63)

This information may be gained through the expansion of awareness:

When we learn to expand our awareness in all directions, the wave frequencies of our Individual Energy Field travels outward and information can be received, much like an antenna. This expansion allows us to find solutions because all information already exists in the Universal Consciousness. (Faust & Faust, 2005, p. 62).

In FC, participants may become aware of how they process their own Individual Energy Field and how they “learned to intuit their home environment, or Family Energy Field, for this is where our intuitional abilities began” (Faust & Faust, 2005, p. 63).

The chakra system contains “vortices of energy that correspond to major nerve plexuses of the body, located in the pelvis, the solar plexus, the heart, the throat, and the head” (Faust & Faust, 2005, p. 64). The understanding of this system, according to Judith (1996) “comes from a pattern analysis of energy flowing through a person’s body, behavior, and environment” (p. 12). The chakra system is active during a constellation when the participants’ intuition or urges to move and reactions happen. It also occurs when the participants’ energy fields interact and connect.

The family energy field is another way to describe Sheldrake’s morphic resonance field. According to Faust and Faust (2005):

The family energy field resonates, is felt and sensed by the others within it, mostly on an unconscious level that exists chiefly beyond the scope of the rational or conscious mind. It exists as a magnetic pull. It draws in as well as retracts outward. This energetic force is how one may experience the pull of loyalty and love that happens in family systems. An individual can feel a deep sense of belonging or a feeling of being excluded. (p. 61)

A final pertinent energetic perspective that should be mentioned is referred to as “circles of energy” (Faust & Faust, 2005, p. 71) or the constellation energy field:

The constellation energy field has a distinct boundary. It includes all those within the constellation and extends a few feet outward from the outside edge of the representatives. The constellation Energy Field and what is happening energetically between the representatives can be observed by the participants, client, and facilitator. (Faust & Faust, 2005, p. 72)

The circle, according to Faust and Faust (2005), is based in a concept born from Eastern philosophy and Chinese medicine:

The “force,” [Qi] in its primordial form, was considered to be pure potential symbolized by a single point. This point evolves into a completed circle. The entire circle symbolizes the force’s fundamental characteristics of unity (harmony), continuity (no beginning and no end), strength and dynamic fluidity, centeredness, intuition, expansion, and contraction. (Hammer, 1990, p. 36)

This circle is akin to the “knowing field” or the Family Energy Field in Family Constellations. This energy force or circle, according to Hammer (1990), “becomes kinetic through an event that divides the circle into two parts and creates polarity necessary for the movement of life” (p. 36). Individuals live within their own circles: self, family of origin, current family, the city they live in, the state, the country, etc., each concentric and encompassing.

Within these circles and during a constellation, the movement of energy allows one to measure the strengths and weaknesses of the flow, the connections, and the responses of the participants. The goal is to bring the feelings of harmony and strength to the representatives and client. This flow and movement supports psychological healing for the client, representatives, and witnesses (Faust & Faust, 2005).

In Family Constellations, energy and intuition are applied through visual, kinesthetic, and auditory intuition; facial emotions; body language; lines of energy; sensing the chakras; direct knowing; and energy shift awareness (Faust & Faust, 2005). These applications of energy support the client, representative, and witness during the constellation process in knowing when to move, if and what to say, and sensing when healing has occurred.

Trauma, abuses, lack of consciousness, blind spots of culture all serve to shut down or alter the energetic flow (Judith, 1996). However, each time work is done on the past, the original pattern is returned. “Each piece we reclaim unfolds the petal of a chakra. Each piece allows us to live a fuller and richer life – bringing us deeper meaning about ourselves and the world in which we are embedded” (p. 456). Family Constellations seems to support one in working through the past, through the traumas and

abuses to reopen and straighten paths of connections so love can flow more easily.

Processes of Family Constellations

Described in this section are constellations done in a group or workshop setting. Most participants attend workshops to explore their own or another family member's issues or problems. The client's family members need not be present. "However, siblings, couples or a parent and child sometimes come and participate together and this can be an especially enriching experience for everyone involved" (Ulsamer, 2005, p. 2). A workshop may occur for one to five days with each constellation taking between 20 to 45 minutes; this allows each participant to do a constellation (Ulsamer, 2008).

Selection of the Client. In order to determine which client is ready to do his or her family constellation, every person in the room shares what issue they would like to explore or what has appeared for them. This is called a round. Hellinger (2006) explains:

In a round each participant has a chance or turn to say what moves him or her and what his or her heart's desire is. No one is allowed to comment on what is said, either by agreeing or disagreeing or in any other way. (p. 242)

Each facilitator or therapist (these terms will be interchanged throughout) may conduct this initial action in different ways. For example, another therapist may have the participants who feel they are ready to do their constellation raise their hands and then those interested share one at a time. For the client, the advice given by Faust and Faust (2008) is "work only when there is a burning desire. Curiosity alone is not enough to carry a constellation" (p. 9).

A person is then chosen based upon how clear he or she is about the present issue. "Only someone who is collected and focused by a compelling issue has the necessary

degree of seriousness. This is identifiable when an issue is clear, concrete, and can probably be expressed in one sentence” (Ulsamer, 2008, p. 83).

After the selection, the constellation has begun. Much of the role of the client then resides in surrendering to the process and being observant of what is and how he or she is feeling as the constellation proceeds.

Interviewing the Client. After determining who would like to set up his or her family constellation, the issue is discussed. When beginning the interview, according to Ulsamer (2005), “the therapist or facilitator asks the client about important events which have occurred in the family in the last two generations” (p. 2). It is important to ask for specifics.

According to Faust and Faust (2008) some questions that can be asked are:

- When the issue is not clear: What is the issue? Why did you choose to come and work today? What is your main concern today? How would you like me to try to help you? What have you come here to heal? What do you see as a good solution?
- When the issue is clear: Did this happen in your family of origin? Did a similar situation happen to someone else in your family? What were the major events? Who was involved or currently involved? (p. 10-11)

Once the facilitator is clear, he or she can then begin the client’s process of choosing and placing the representatives.

Choosing and Placing the Representatives. Once the issue is expressed, the client chooses representatives from the participant pool to represent family members pertinent to the constellation and one for him or herself (Ulsamer, 2008). It is the client’s responsibility, when placing the representatives, “to pay attention to his inner feelings, placing the representatives according to how he feels at that moment, without thinking

about it, as the placement of the representatives is of great significance” (Ulsamer, 2005, p. 3). The client, “without any prior plan, and without speaking or explaining, places the representatives in a spatial relationship to one another, showing them which direction to face, but nothing more” (Ulsamer, 2008, p. 19).

The client stands behind the representative and places hands upon the shoulders of the representative. As the client does so, he or she states the family member’s name aloud to bring the consciousness of that person into the room. After this, the client places the representative with no intention, where it “feels” energetically correct to place him or her.

Now, according to Ulsamer (2005), the client sits down where he or she can see everyone in the constellation. The therapist begins to ask the representatives how they are feeling in their positions. At times, other family members from past generations or other phenomena (like alcoholism, country of origin, disease, etc.) are added.

Representative’s Role and Responsibility. Ultimately, the representatives are there in service to the client. In order to do so, they do their best “to allow the energy of their position to have an effect on them, and to report what they experience” (Ulsamer, 2008, p. 90). The representatives do this by accessing the feelings and awareness of the relationships in the family of the constellation. “They spontaneously experience relevant emotional affect. . . .The representatives, in their respective roles, feel attractions and aversions toward the others in the constellation” (Ulsamer, 2005, p. 3-4). For example, a representative for the father may be asked, “How is the father feeling?”

They also serve the constellation by speaking sentences suggested by the therapist, even those they may not agree with initially, and by giving accurate feedback

about their awareness. “This is a valuable contribution towards resolution” (Ulsamer, 2008, p. 90). Resolution sentences will be discussed further in this section.

Guidelines for the representatives according to Faust and Faust, (2008) include:

- Focus your attention on yourself, what you are feeling and sensing in relation to those around you in the constellation. Notice where you are looking, where you are drawn to be, and whether or not you want to move or stay in place.
- Avoid coming to conclusions about what is needed for the constellation.
- Try to separate “is this my reaction to something triggered in my life” or “is this just about the constellation at hand?”
- Say what you actually feel; be as honest as possible.
- Don’t worry about hurting people’s feelings.
- Don’t try to help anyone, facilitator or client.
- Avoid what I feel coming from the other representatives. (p. 10)

The representatives, as well as all involved in the constellation process, are affected by the “knowing field” as stated previously. This field supports the representatives when asked to allow the “movements of the soul” to affect them.

Movements of the Soul. While facilitating Family Constellations, Hellinger (2011), became aware of how the representatives were moved within, “by another power.” He called these experiences movements of the soul. Hellinger (2011) further describes that the movements of the soul are limited in both scope and depth, “Very often they refer to our family and to what happens within the family. They also have to do with feelings. These are the movements of the soul” (Movements of the soul, Movements of the spirit section, para. 1).

In traditional constellations, or classic constellations, the facilitator directs it from beginning to end. In the movements of the soul via Faust and Faust (2009), the facilitator trusts and allows the representatives to feel the energies of the “knowing field” and move where they feel called in order to have the constellation progress:

Movements of the soul require that the representatives really understand the constellation process. They have witnessed and participated in several constellations and understand the importance of moving slowly and truthfully. It requires a degree of trust on the part of the representatives to be of service without trying to help, take charge, or play a special role in the constellation. (p. 33)

After the client chooses and places the representatives, according to Ulsamer (2005), “. . . the therapist simply instructs them to feel their way into their parts and notice any impulses towards movement. They are to follow these movements without speaking. . . . When it seems appropriate, the therapist stops the constellation” (p. 31).

The client is not usually in the constellation while the movements of the soul are occurring. This is so the client can observe as closely as possible while sitting next to the facilitator (Faust & Faust, 2009). “The facilitator is energetically connected to and observing the constellation field. At the same time, the facilitator is holding the client and observing him or her for signs of energetic shifts in awareness” (Faust & Faust, 2009, p. 33).

Resolution. Resolutions and the healing process begin once a constellation is set up and is driven from the past to the present. According to Ulsamer (2008), “There are three forms of resolution possible: confusions of the natural orders and entanglements come to light clearly; steps can be taken in the direction of a ‘good’ order; and a ‘good’

order can be established” (p. 50). He also contends, the resolution has to move through various levels/layers and there are no short cuts. The following are those layers/levels:

- The level which shows on the surface is a feeling of separateness, often accompanied by a rejection of the parents and/or the family.
- The next layer encompasses the discovery and experience of the love which lies beneath and behind the rejection.
- Love puts us firmly in the grip of the pain. When we are in touch with the basic foundation of love, it is possible to look directly at those to whom we are bound. When we look, we discover a person with a life and fate of their own.
- A respect blossoms for the other person and burdens they carry. The best expression of this respect in a constellation is a slight bow of the head.
- Releas[ing] a blind transference of the misery. Taking one step back allows the person to break the blind connection. At the same time, the new respect and regard maintains a bond at a higher level.
- The final image in a constellation . . . is the person standing, as a child, together with his or her siblings, facing the parents and any other important family members who had been excluded. (Ulsamer, 2008, p. 51)

Resolution or Healing Statements. The use of the “knowing field” and healing sentences differentiate FC from traditional psychotherapy. In FC, “healing sentences are the language of the Soul” (Payne, 2005, p. 7). “When chosen carefully, words linger after a constellation like tiny points of light. They have the power to evoke the deepest feeling, the broadest knowledge, the simplest truths” (Tucker, 2005, p. 7). Payne (2006) also believes that there is energy behind words as seen in the “knowing field.” “As we experience within the field of a Family Constellation set up, healing sentences create a perceptible shift in the energy of the entire constellation” (p. 21). Faust and Faust (2005) describe this shift, “When a solution sentence hits the mark, everyone who is in tune with the constellation can energetically feel the rightness of it” (p. 70). This takes “being in

harmony with the knowing field” (Faust & Faust, 2005, p. 70).

These sentences, according to Payne (2006), “need to be a direct, distilled articulation of a deeper truth—in other words, the sentences need to emanate from the level of the Soul in order to be effective” (p. 21). For Tucker (2005):

The words used by the facilitator are meant to convey rather than to analyze, to be succinct and yet resonate, to open the heart more than soothe the mind. The words come up through the work, rather than being superimposed on it. (p. 19)

The effects of the sentences, witnessed by all, are the only way to determine if the sentence was accurate, “Such sentences strengthen, resolve, and reconcile. The representatives straighten up, exhale in relief, or are able to face someone with love and good will” (Ulsamer, 2008, p. 141).

According to Ulsamer (2008), “These sentences embody the natural orders and express honour and respect. They indicate who has responsibility to carry and who can be reconciled. They are sentences that no client would be likely to think of on their own” (p. 142). It is important to note that the therapist is the person that provides these sentences to the constellation. Some examples of healing sentences are:

From a child to mother and/or father—“I honour you.” “Thank you.” “What goes on between the two of you has nothing to do with me.”

From a father and/or mother to a child—“Here, I am the big one and you are the small one.” “What is between the two of us has nothing to do with you.”

From the living to the dead—“I honour you and your death.” “I give you a place in my heart.” “Please, look at me in a friendly way if I remain here.” (Ulsamer, 2008, p. 142)

Integration Process. After the completion of a constellation, the integration process begins. The integration process is important as it allows the client to process the new awareness and the experience of the constellation. Strümpfel and Goldman (2002)

support this concept as well, “The therapist discourages the client from making on the spot interpretations, as well as thinking and rationalizing that prevent awareness of emotions and sensory experience” (p. 206).

The three-day rule in FC entails not talking about the experiences for three days—72 hours from the end of the constellation. This rule applies to the client, the representative and the participants in the workshop. Faust and Faust (2009) state, “This [talking about the experience] only narrows the soul. It is best to just allow and give as much space to let the effects grow” (p. 24).

Client Experiences. Throughout the literature search, it was very difficult to find specific articles on a client’s experience of FC. There were case studies in various books and articles, however, what was scarce among these case studies was the specifics of how the client felt during and afterward and how doing a constellation had affected them and their family members. In this section, some of what was found will be reported.

An empirically based master’s thesis pilot study was done by Thomas (2010) that had the proposed hypothesis “Family Constellations approach is highly effective in solving certain emotional problems in a very limited amount of time” (p. 3). The study was a retrospective post-treatment survey that had nine questions, two for demographics and the rest data on previous therapeutic experience and experiences with constellations. Thomas (2010) made the assumption “that if the participants reported that the presenting problem they came with to Family Constellations was solved, it indicated a positive outcome” (p. 3).

There were 223 participants: 69.5% had previous therapeutic experience and an average individual experienced constellations 2-5 times although there were some who

had over 30 times, which for 33.6% occurred anywhere from 1-3 months ago and about 15% longer than that (Thomas, 2010). The presenting problems were relationship problems, health concerns, mental health issues, problems with children, professional/financial difficulties, existential problems, and no presenting problem, just general constellations.

Thomas (2010) stated, the results showed the main presenting problem to be issues with relationships at 54% had the problem solve rate of 86.6%. The next area was mental health issues, which had a positive response of 90.3%. This included cases of depression (17) of which only one was reported not solved. There was one report of physical issues being resolved, neurodermatitis, an issue the participant had since 10 years of age. Thomas (2010) listed the limitations and flaws as having no “objective measurements and comparison of pre- and post-treatment conditions, but relied instead on self-reported results” (p. 16). Other limitations were that the participants were not random and no control group was used. Thomas (2010) came to the conclusion:

The pilot study conducted for this purpose indicated that the effectiveness of the Family Constellations in solving the presenting problem was 86% and the average depth of transformation after constellation as reported by participants was 7.2 on a scale from 1 to 10. (p. 17)

In a phenomenological study conducted by Cohen (2009), Family Constellations were used with prisoners serving long-term sentences for murder or rape. “The research combines theoretical and case description methods to present a broad introduction to systemic Family Constellations. Case research employs retrospective exploratory narrative case descriptions of the process . . .” (abstract). There were nine male participants, ages 40-60, incarcerated for different lengths of time, although not all nine

experiences will be reported in the current study. All nine appeared to have positive experiences and some degree of healing around their issues (Cohen, 2009).

The experience for each was reported by personal recall via a questionnaire. This questionnaire asked for background information about each participant's life and his or her experience of the constellations. The constellations were about the prisoners' crimes or guilt, dealing with the impending death of a close long-term friend, relationships with parents, unresolved relationships, and family heritage.

The following are excerpts from Cohen's (2009) questionnaire results on the participants' experiences, beginning with James. James had been in prison for 45 years. In his second constellation, James brought the issue of dealing with a friend's imminent death:

I was carrying all this weight. I hated my father for abandoning me, my stepfather for the beatings, my brother for disappearing, and myself for all the harm I have done, especially being involved in a murder. Because of the Constellations I have been able to feel like I am somebody, be open-hearted, be patient, be forgiven. Now I walk a spiritual path, with wisdom, compassion, and truth in my life.

When I came to prison, I felt alone, like a bird unable to fly because my wings were broken. For many years I was in darkness. These Constellations gave me a portion of my life that was missing. The wings mended. (p. 103)

The next constellation is that of Ted. It is a constellation around the death of a woman Ted was afraid to have a relationship with:

I am always amazed at how the process works. When you sit and watch the representatives, it is like being a ghost watching your life. You can see the healing take place. Sitting outside you feel distant and cold, but when you placed me in with my representative I could actually feel what was taking place. I got to feel the strength and healing from within. (Cohen, 2009, p. 114)

Ted also reported that on the anniversary of the woman's death he sat and told her all the things he did not have the courage to say when she was alive. He reported the

results:

I have never been able to forgive myself for the way I acted and treated Jane, and for the way I treated myself. I have a firm resolve to give myself the chance to care about and love someone. I will make the other person feel deserving of their feelings and emotions. (Cohen, 2009, p. 114)

Colin had stopped coming to the constellation group and stayed away for about one and half years because of the intensity of emotional content: “his feelings toward his father, the urge to violent behavior, the shame he felt toward his victim and wife, the sorrow for his two decades of incarceration, the concern for his sons” (Cohen, 2009, p. 133). Upon his return, Colin set up a constellation around his challenge of “connecting emotionally in love relationships with women” (Cohen, 2009, p. 130) and spoke of his experience about his absence:

At the time, the whole situation seemed overwhelming and I did not want to deal with it. What I have come to realize is that I am a better person for having these experiences. Even though the emotions were intense I feel I have come away richer for having experienced them. I can say for certain that there was a definite shift in certain aspects of my relationships, though perhaps not so for other aspects. Since I have been attending Constellations again, the strong emotions are still there, but I know better what to expect now. Even though they scare the hell out of me sometimes, when I feel them, I know I’m better for it. They make me feel alive! (p. 133)

The last constellation participant, Russ, did a constellation around his anger and sadness, which lead to his German, Irish, and Native American heritage:

The reason for the Constellation was to gain more clarity of my ancestral history in Europe and the United States, as well as my anger and sadness. I received understanding about who I really am, as well as who my people are and just how much they mean to me. It gave me a feeling of being more attached, and a sense of belonging to my family. (Cohen, 2009, p. 143)

Influence of Psychological Theory on Family Constellations

It seems important, in the context of this study, to connect the experiential psychological models and/or theories that have influenced FC. The previous themes described the foundations and techniques/processes of FC and it is the hope that this theme will show the influences of some established psychological experiential therapy theories and the similarities and differences between FC.

In experiential therapy the concept of experiencing and role affect are central (Watson, Goldman, & Greenberg, 2011). “Although all proponents emphasize the importance of the therapeutic relationship, their interventions are also directed toward evoking and facilitating client’s access to their inner experience within the session, to evoke alternative experiential states” (Watson et al., 2011, p.148). In this theme, the following experiential psychotherapy models are discussed: family and systems theory, family sculpting, psychodrama, structural family therapy, group therapy including encounter groups, Gestalt, and the transpersonal psychology of Psychosynthesis.

Family Systems Theory. When defining systems theory, Medina (2010) states, “Systems theory focuses on the complexity of relationships and views systems as being composed of interdependent parts that interact through feedback mechanisms and form an emergent whole” (p. 265). Medina also states that family systems theory is based upon cybernetics, which “refers to the theoretical study of communication and control processes in biological and mechanical entities” (Medina, 2010, p. 264). He goes on to assert:

Cybernetics allowed theorists such as Bateson, Jackson, Haley, Bowen, Satir and Minuchin to view as complementary the relation between change and stability within the family system. Hence, when defined as a cybernetic system, a family is

seen as a social organism whose whole pattern of organization is stabilized through the change of its component parts (Medina, 2010, p. 265)

Satir “believed that to understand the meaning of a symptom it is necessary to see how it fits into the family and that every piece of behaviour in a family is logical to that system” (as cited in Medina, 2010, p. 265). Medina (2010) therefore asserts:

It would seem more helpful for an individual client’s personal formulation of their family, the meaning they attach to it, how it works for them and how they view themselves within it, to be given ultimate credence and authenticity in psychotherapy precisely because this is never going to be the same for each family member and what is right for one will almost certainly not be right for all. (p. 266)

According to Innes (2002), “A systems perspective acknowledges the inherent self-organizing principle of organisms. . . . the family is viewed as a system within itself and, at the same time, a system in relationship with other systems” (p. 40). It is because of this perspective, Innes continues, “The principles governing the family system are evident in habitual patterns, rules of behaviour, and communication styles that different family members use in their relationships with each other” (Innes, 2002, p. 40). It is these principles that a therapist must understand, as opposed to the subject matter brought about, in order to understand the family system (Innes, 2002).

Conscious/Unconscious Role in Family Systems Theory. Satir’s therapy is an integrated humanistic approach, “She was an integrative humanist who included body, mind, emotional, and spiritual processes to transform systems ranging from the molecular to the cosmic” (Haber, 2002, abstract). This was demonstrated in Satir’s belief “that the elevation of internal and external consciousness is a necessary ingredient for developing healthy individuals, families, and communities” (Haber, 2002, p. 23).

According to Haber (2002), Satir defined the births of consciousness, “the first birth described as the connection of sperm and egg, the second birth as when the child emerges from the womb, and the third birth as the evolution to becoming a decision-maker. . . . She encouraged individuals ‘to become more fully human’ by accepting and taking responsibility for all of their parts” (p. 25). This is similar to FC’s methodology of acknowledging, accepting, and agreeing to what is in order to take responsibility for oneself.

As Satir continued her work around consciousness, she included a fourth birth, spirituality. Satir states, “The fourth birth comes when one recognizes that all life is one—then one comes to the state where one joins all consciousness” (as cited in Haber, 2002, p. 26).

Satir believed that each individual is unique and that one must value and respect the individual as well as the belief that each individual is an instrument of change whether therapist or client. This is why she emphasized experiential growth (Haber, 2002). In order to elevate the internal and external consciousness of the client and increase the experiential aspect of growth, Satir developed a technique called Family Reconstruction:

[. . .this technique] enacted a psychodrama journey through nodal, transgenerational moments. This process promoted differentiation by identifying limiting scripts emanating from familial and external stressors, increasing understanding and empathy for one’s parents, and reworking negative experiences of the past in order to be able to live more fully in the present. (Haber, 2002, p. 29)

Technique: Family Reconstruction

“A family reconstruction works best when conducted by someone who believes in and reflects the sacredness of life, who recognizes our ‘universal journey,’ who leads with heart and soul as well as logic” (Beaudry, 2002, p. 89).

Instead of being preoccupied with pathology, illness, or pain, the family reconstruction process helps the body and mind move beyond stress, survival, and coping to a more positive way of expressing and experiencing life. New eyes see old situations in a new framework, especially in relation to the Self. It is a way to regain and own our wholeness. (Beaudry, 2002, p. 90)

“It provides a way for a person to see himself or herself and their parents with new eyes, seeing the present and the future with a new perspective and new possibilities” (Beaudry, 2002, p. 82).

In the Family Reconstruction technique, the model sets four meta-goals that are positively directional in a focus for change: “(1) Raising self-esteem of the clients; (2) helping clients to be their own choice makers; (3) helping clients be more responsible; and (4) helping clients become congruent” (Beaudry, 2002, p. 11). Once these areas are revealed, focus on the interactive area of the client’s life can begin.

The interactive area includes the client’s relationships and how problems are often stated as conflicts. Satir’s model sees relationships as sameness and differences: “sameness attracts and differences help us grow” (Beaudry, 2002, p. 12). In resolving differences, this model comes “from a congruent place of interacting” (Beaudry, 2002, p. 12). According to Beaudry (2002), “there are five ways people might use to handle these differences:”

1. Conflict as a solution.
2. Denial as a solution.

3. Compromise as a solution.
4. Resolution as an answer.
5. Growth as an outcome. (pp. 12-13)

Knowing the ways in which a client may handle differences, the therapist can move into exploring the family-of-origin of the client. The therapist begins with a genogram, a map of the family. This is “a way of connecting with one’s parents as adult peers to resolving the negative impact of one’s internal experience in the family-of-origin and reclaiming the resources one has received from one’s family-of-origin” (Banmen, 2002, p. 13).

In the genogram process, the client begins with the facts of the family. According to Banmen (2002) this includes:

1. Father and mother’s name.
2. Their birthdates and birthplaces.
3. Their current ages or age at death.
4. The date of their marriage and of their separation/divorce, if applicable.
5. Their religious affiliation, if any.
6. Their occupations.
7. Their education.
8. Their ethnic background.
9. Their hobbies and interests.
10. Any illnesses, infirmaries, or disabilities that are applicable to either. (p. 14)

After this is done, this same information is added for each child/sibling including the client. Also added are any deaths of siblings, miscarriages, and abortions. After the facts are added to the genogram, it is time to explore how the family members behaved in

relationship to each other (Banmen, 2002). A code is used on the genogram to indicate four relationship possibilities: (1) an enmeshed relationship between two people in the family; (2) a stormy, turbulent, or hostile relationship under stress; (3) a normal, accepting relationship, even under stress; and (4) a distant, negative, or indifferent relationship under stress (Appendix A) (Banmen, 2002).

In individual therapy, these relationship possibilities are utilized to aid the client and therapist in discovering:

. . . some emotional experiences which do not make sense in the client's present circumstances and which have not yet been resolved from childhood experiences. They are also helpful to assist clients to go inside themselves or when we suspect that some impacts of the past are interfering with present living. (Banmen, 2002, p. 17).

FC gathers this information in a different way. Often it is through interview and sometimes a questionnaire. It is important in FC to know the facts of the family-of-origin. This is the basis of where each individual comes from and what influences the individual's thoughts, behaviors, beliefs, and feelings. Knowing these facts helps to avoid "the story" the client tells him or her self about the situation.

The process of Family Reconstruction in a group setting does have some similarities to FC's process. According to Taylor (2002), there are 12 steps in the Family Reconstruction process. As the steps are discussed, comparisons to FC will be related to the research shared in the *Foundations of FC* and/or the *Processes of FC* sections of this chapter. The first step is to bring the participants into the present moment in order to cultivate an openness, curiosity, and support around the process and the participants. "Meditations, as Satir used them, connect the intellect to the intuitive and affective parts of us. They highlight our capacity to relate within and without . . ." (p. 133). FC often

begins with a guided meditation, poem or story in order to bring the client or participants into the present moment and to feel the presence of the ancestors.

Step two, has the facilitator engage the client, which can be asking about the prior week's reconstruction or what a current issue is for the client. "This step allows the star to share new insights and awareness one week following his or her reconstruction. Role players also may add new perspectives gained during the week" (Taylor, 2002, p. 133). In FC, often the constellation is not spoken about within the group again in order to allow the client to process on his or her own to see what surfaces for him or her.

The third step entails the client sharing a new issue and its details as well as some goals for change that will result in doing a reconstruction.

Beginning to set the atmosphere for all the participants at this stage creates a kind of working trance. As the new context begins to unfold, all the people in the room are gathering pertinent information that will be required for role-playing. (Taylor, 2002, p. 133)

Step four, includes creating a family map on a board by one of the members of the group or a facilitator's assistant. Included on this map are "three or four descriptive adjectives as well as primary coping mechanisms for each member. This process provides the role players with easy access to relevant surface details about the family throughout the reconstruction" (Taylor, 2002, p. 133). The map also helps give a sense of the experiential responses of the client during the enactment of family events (Taylor, 2002). This is not done in FC. As described in the *Processes of FC* section, the client shares facts about the family around the client's issue and it is not important for the representatives to have too much background due to the representatives using the energies present and "movements of the soul."

In step five, the client then chooses role players from the participant group to represent family members. He or she also selects “an alter ego to play the part of the star when needed” (Taylor, 2002, p. 134). Something done in Family Reconstruction that is not done in FC is the application of nametags to the representatives. Taylor (2002) states, “The time spent during this name tagging process allows the role players as well as the star [client] to sink into the new ‘reality’ of this family in the present time and space” (p. 134). FC uses the “knowing field” and the process of calling the family member’s soul into the room via the representative’s body in order to bring the family members’ energies as part of the process of emerging into the constellation.

Step six, involves using all relevant space of the room to recreate the scene of the story in order for it to unfold. “This mapping of the new context is another means of creating the new space/time context and deepening the trance for all the participants” (Taylor, 2002, p. 134). The seventh step has the client place the role players into postures and sculptures allowing the scene to unfold with movement and some dialogue. The role players have some leeway here but not enough to take over. This is also part of the seventh step where the facilitator may choose to put the client in the place of the alter ego (Taylor, 2002).

The eighth step involves staying aware of time to not run over the allotted time given for the reconstruction (Taylor, 2002). In the ninth and 10th step, “role players are debriefed at the conclusion of the reconstruction. They are to share their observations, feelings, insights, and feelings from the point of view of their role,” (p. 134) with the alter ego role player sharing last. “Feedback from the alter ego may underline the star’s own thoughts and feelings, provide additional depth to the story, and often, offer a wider range

of choices for the star” (p. 135). This is not done in FC, as the belief is that the client should process on his or her own without the influence of others’ perceptions. What is similar between the two processes is that any insights by the role players/representatives can be applied to their own lives and families (Taylor, 2002).

In step 11, the star is given a chance to share but also has the chance to process the experience internally. “This anchors the entire experience for the Star, allowing her or him to explore the new depth and intricacies of herself or himself (below the water line of his or her iceberg)” (Taylor, 2002, p. 135). In the final step, step 12, any observers who were not role players are allowed to speak in order to comment on what they saw and felt and how it applies to their own situations (Taylor, 2002). Again, this is not done in FC in order to let the client process and not be influenced by other’s perceptions. Similar to the end of a constellation in FC, at the conclusion of the reconstruction technique:

. . . all are invited to close their eyes, to hold on to all parts of the experience that are relevant to themselves, leaving the remainder to the star. They recall their own names and identities, open their eyes, give their name tag to the star, while saying in a clear voice, ‘My name is. . .’ This step assures that roles are divested of their power and that no confusion of identities will remain outside their power and that no confusion of identities will remain outside the context of this particular construction. (Taylor, 2002, p. 135)

In conclusion, Beaudry (2002) makes an important point: “The reconstruction model is both structural and continually changing, forever evolving and integrating new ideas and styles to grow with the ideas and styles of individuals who act as guides” (p. 91). This is much like FC in that it is continually developing and growing with each facilitator, client, and awareness of the potentials of the approach.

Family Sculpting. Much like Satir’s family reconstruction technique, family sculpting involves recreating the family according to how the members of the family

relate to each other. According to Slapinski and Leibowitz (2011), the family sculpting technique, developed by Duhl, Duhl and Kantor in 1973, is where:

Family members are asked in the therapy session to physically recreate the family into positions, which symbolize how they relate to one another. This sculpting process not only allows family members to perceive and test out how past events and attitudes may affect the present, but also suggests new meanings and a new picture of family relations, which could not be produced by using only verbal cues.

The “sculpture” involves representing family relationship dynamics by placing the members together in terms of posture, spatial relations, and behaviors, which represent action and feeling. Individual family members may choose to represent themselves in the family sculpture, or may choose someone else to play their part. Their choice mainly depends upon if they feel emotionally prepared to play themselves, or perhaps not if they feel this might be too overwhelming. (para 2)

Costa (1991) confirms:

Family sculpting is a visual, spatial metaphorical representation that reveals a person’s perceptual map of their family of origin. . . . Family sculpting consists of creating an arrangement, portrait, or tableau of family members placed in various physical positions that represent their relation to each other at a particular moment in time.
(p. 3).

Family sculpting is flexible and can be used at any time during the therapeutic process. “Due to its flexibility of implementation,” Costa (1991) writes, “sculpting forces a process focus, ownership and responsibility for feelings, and new choices and options for change and personal growth” (p. 3). Like FC, family sculpting is done on a volunteer basis and confidentiality is secured. The classes or groups for family sculpting are often held to 8 to 10 members “because the experience often elicits powerful emotional intensity” (p. 3). Although FC also elicits powerful emotional intensity, the number of participants is dependent upon the facilitator’s discretion and experience level.

Technique: Family Sculpting

According to the guidelines researched by Costa (1991), there are four roles and four steps in the technique of family sculpting. The four roles include:

- (a) The sculptor (often called the director) of the family portrait, the trainee or client, or the individual who volunteers to sculpt his or her family of origin;
- (b) The facilitator, therapist, or professor, who guides the sculptor, thus providing clarity and protection during the unfolding process;
- (c) The actors or role-players who are chosen by the sculptor to portray members of the family of origin; and
- (d) The audience or remaining class members who observe and comment on the process in the feedback stage. If the class is relatively small and the family sculpted is large... inanimate objects such as chairs, pillows, or stuffed animals may be used to serve as players. (Costa, 1991, p. 4)

The four steps, monitored by the facilitator, include: setting the scene, choosing the role-players, creating the sculpture, and processing the sculpture (Costa, 1991).

Setting the scene includes:

The facilitator helping the sculptor establish a particular situation he or she wishes to explore, a particular point in time that arouses intense feelings. Visualization may be used by the sculptor in order to visualize the scene. The information needed may include the size and shape of the room, house, or context; the coloring, atmosphere, light and darkness, warmth, texture of floor, and walls; and any significant objects in the room. (Costa, 1991, p. 4)

FC does not set up a scene as far as external scenery; it only recreates the family members in relationship to each other.

Choosing the role-players includes:

The sculptor chooses other individuals in the class to portray family members in the family of origin. Often the sculptor chooses people whose personal or physical characteristics are similar to the original members. Anyone living in the house may be included as well as deceased members. (Costa, 1991, p. 5)

The choosing of representatives in FC is very similar to family sculpting and does include those that live in the home or have significant meaning to the family or client and the deceased members as well. It is important to state that FC is also used for more than just family-of-origin issues, as explained in more detail in the *Processes of FC* section.

Creating the sculpture includes:

The facilitator instructs the sculptor to tell each player what they need to know to play a certain person, and then places them in a specific spatial metaphorical position, gesture, or pattern of movement in relation to self and other family members. Distance, closeness, touching, facial expression, and positioning of arms and legs are significant indicators of the sculptor's perception of the family. The sculptor is encouraged to position the role players as he or she had seen in the visualization. (Costa, 1991, p. 5)

As the therapist has the sculptor/client enter the scene, Costa (1991) recommends:

. . . Satir's technique of anchoring the sculptor kinesthetically by using one hand on the small of the back and occasionally encouraging the sculptor to breathe deeply throughout the process, as well as using a soothing tone of voice, provides ongoing support, safety and sensitivity. The facilitator keenly observes the sculptor for any signs of increasing affect and gently fosters the process, continually protecting the sculptor from possible overload. . . (p. 5-6)

In FC, the client positions the representatives by going behind them, placing his or her hands upon the shoulders, stating the name of the family member, and guiding them into position through feeling and intuition guided by the unconscious, in relation to self and other but does not tell the representatives anything. The only time the representatives speak is when the facilitator asks what they are feeling in relation to self and to others in the constellation and/or when resolution sentences are instructed to be said.

Satir's anchoring technique is also used by some FC facilitators along with the reminders to breathe, and soothing voice. This atmosphere of an FC workshop/program is

a much protected, safe, and sacred environment created by the facilitators, clients, and class/group members.

When processing the sculpture Costa (1991) states:

The facilitator develops the meaning of the sculpture from the sculptor's perspective during this step. The sculptor and other participants are debriefed and deroled [*sic*] in order to bring them back to the current reality. ... new insights may increase the sculptor's perceptions, interpretations, and reactions of what has occurred in the particular family of origin. Patterns of relationships, boundaries, triangles, alliances, and coalitions can be clearly shown. Feedback is given by the surrogates, group members, and facilitator thus providing support and validation for the sculptor's experience. Alternatives are generated for the sculptor to reencounter the family of origin with his or her new learning.

(p. 6)

The feedback for the sculptor from the role-players and observers consists of "verbalizing how it felt to be in the role and position assigned by the sculptor. Observers describe the verbal or nonverbal behavior of the players and the sculptor and check out inner experiences revealed in action" (Costa, 1991, p. 7).

Feedback is not given by anyone in FC after a constellation. The client is allowed to sit with what he or she has witnessed and experienced in order to fertilize insight and awareness. It is recommended not to ask anyone for feedback or their perceptions for at least 72 hours in order for the energetic changes and new awareness to settle.

Interpretations from the facilitator in family sculpting are warned against and are not done in FC:

Facilitators should refrain from giving an interpretation as a means of reframing the sculptor's reality because insight is more powerful if achieved by the sculptor alone rather than the facilitator intruding or imposing meaning from the outside. The sculptor should be given complete freedom, respect, and validation of his or her own perception with appropriate guidance and support. (Costa, 1991, p. 6)

Psychodrama. According to Tauvon (2001), the history of psychodrama begins

with the existential philosophers from Kierkegaard on as well as Bergson's and Buber's teachings on "*elan vital*" and "I-Thou." It was also stated that Moreno, the developer of psychodrama, was not necessarily concerned about natural sciences, but rather on society's and other groups' interpersonal relations in the here and now (Tauvon, 2001).

Moreno developed psychodrama to help the patient express how he or she feels in the present moment with not only words but with gestures and movements as well (Moreno, 1946). "He [the patient] has to live through situations which are painful and undesirable, to present roles which are obnoxious to him. He has to act with partners whom he loves and admires or whom he fears and rejects" (Moreno, 1946, p. 178).

It is Moreno's (1946), belief that, "One of the greatest problems in mental therapeutics is how to get a patient started. To start the patient expressing himself is a crucial problem even when he comes with a *physical* disease" (p. 177). Psychodrama helps to open the mind with such experimental techniques as "auxiliary ego, spontaneous improvisation, self-presentation, soliloquy, and the interpolation of resistance" (Moreno, 1946, p. 177).

Moreno (1946) states:

Psychodrama puts the patient on a stage where he can work out his problems with the aid of a few therapeutic actors. It is a method of diagnosis as well as a method of treatment. . . . It can be adapted to every type of problem, personal or group, of children or adults.
. . . Psychodrama is human society in miniature." (p. 177)

Tauvon (2001) contends:

Psychodrama is an interpersonal theory and the method implies interaction and role reversal with other persons. It investigates what goes on in the interplay between persons, tele [attraction or repulsion of individuals with each other], roles and counterroles. . . . The focus is on inter-personal relations in the here and now and on the multiplicity of roles. The individual may be regarded as more

polycentric and changeable. The self is thus described as a function of the actual situation and is ascribed great potential for change. The basic difficulty for the individual is lack of spontaneity and an insufficient role-repertoire. The goal is to increase spontaneity and develop adequate roles through warming up and psychodramatic action. (p. 337).

Two basic concepts of psychodrama, according to Tauvon (2001), are spontaneity and creativity: “. . . one could describe spontaneity as the momentary freedom to make new choices and to free ones creativity to find new solutions” (p. 334). Tauvon goes on to state, “Moreno describes creativity as something existing everywhere, needing spontaneity as a catalyst to express itself” (p. 334).

Another of the basic concepts of psychodrama is the theory of roles as mentioned previously. According to Moreno, the definition of role is “. . . the functioning form the individual assumes in the specific moment he reacts to a specific situation in which other persons or objects are involved” (as cited in Tauvon, 2001, p. 62). To further explicate Moreno’s theory, Tauvon (2001) writes:

Moreno distinguishes between three different kinds of roles expressing the physiologic, psychological and social dimensions of the self, the psychosomatic, the psychodramatic and the social roles. Every role has a cognitive, and emotional and a behavioural component. Past experience and the cultural patterns of society form the role, which has a private and collective side. . . . psychodramatic roles may be modeled after parents and other important persons in early life. . . or counter roles against [those persons]. . .
(p. 336)

For Moreno, “The function of the role is to enter the unconscious from the social world and bring shape and order to it” (as cited by Tauvon, 2001, p. 63).

In psychodrama, the therapist has the freedom to be him or her self, to be transparent and to “possibly function as a realistic model. . . . According to Moreno, the director has three functions, as producer, as therapist and analyst” (Tauvon, 2001, p. 338). This view supports the research of the effectiveness of the empathic therapist. The

theories of psychodrama consist of the role of therapist, the setting, tele, catharsis, the time concept, the individual and group, and the body. Many of these are similar to FC as the constellation begins to unfold.

The setting consists of anywhere clients are. Unfortunately, most psychodramatists have to settle for what is available and may have to use different props in order to give the client the best experience under the limited conditions. Tauvon (2001) cites Moreno when writing about the stage and its function:

The stage space is an extension of life beyond the reality tests of itself. Reality and fantasy are not in conflict, but both are functions within a wider sphere – the psychodramatic world of objects, persons and events. In its logic the ghost of Hamlet’s father is just as real and permitted to exist as Hamlet himself. Delusions and hallucinations are given flesh – embodiment on the stage – and an equality of status with normal sensory perceptions. (p. 340)

The next theory, tele, according to Moreno, as cited in Tauvon (2001), is:

... The process which attracts individuals to one another or which repels them, that flow of feeling of which the social atom and the networks are apparently composed. This process may be conceived as tele. Tele is two-way empathy, like a telephone it has two ends. (p. 342)

Tele is usually based in the reality of “inter-perception between two human beings. . . [it] assumes in this context the significance of an I-Thou relation. . . [it is] a mutual flow, occurring between two beings. . . probably based mainly on unconscious reciprocal non-verbal communication” (Tauvon, 2001, p. 342). This is similar to the energetic flow experienced between two representatives or the client and a representative in FC.

Catharsis, according to Tauvon (2001), “means purification” (p. 343) and comes from the idea of Aristotle who described catharsis as the “emotional release resulting

from watching a drama” (p. 343). It is a main objective of psychodrama. Moreno (1946) states:

Catharsis is generated by the vision of a new universe and the capability of new growth (abreaction and release of emotion are only surface manifestations). Catharsis begins in the actor as he enacts his own drama, scene after scene, and climaxes at the moment when its peripetie [*sic*] is reached. (p. 16)

There are four methods of catharsis according to Moreno (1946): somatic, mental, individual, and group. By experiencing each method of catharsis, it treats the person as a whole being. Somatic catharsis happens with a cleansing or purging through the body, the physical sensations. For instance, “in the psychodramatic action all senses are used including those which register the body sensations. There is a freedom of expression using movement, music, art, etc.” (Tauvon, 2001, p. 16).

Moreno (1946) describes mental catharsis as something that takes place in the actor, the one who is suffering, the actor who lives it out, and those experiencing it in the audience. This is how the catharsis method from individual to group takes place. In FC, it is often stated that everyone in the room has the potential to experience their own healing around each constellation. The catharsis (or healing) induces “liberation from the tragic conflicts, from the emotions in which they are caught” (Moreno, 1946, p. 179).

In order to experience the catharsis, Moreno (1946) explains:

The actor-patients should have no given product to start with. They should develop their drama on the spur of the moment. . . . shaped as they emerge spontaneously. The possibilities of insight into and mental catharsis of the patients are then practically unlimited. (p. 179)

Moreno (1946) also stressed, “The catharsis in one person is dependent upon the catharsis in another person. *The catharsis has to be inter-personal*” (p. 180). It is the spontaneous interaction between the two persons that has the maladjustment become

visible and increases the attainment of mental catharsis (Moreno, 1946). In FC, a client often reaches such a catharsis through the interaction with the representatives, music that may be played in the background, and the spontaneity of the movements of the soul and the guidance of the “knowing field”; hence, the potential healing process of FC.

The theory of time, for psychodrama, consists of the past, present, and future.

The focus is on exploring the problems of a group member in the context of the group. Nowadays psychodrama is usually performed in the frame of an ongoing psychotherapeutic group. A special feature of the stage is the freedom to move in time from the present to the past or the future. (Taufon, 2001, p. 345)

In FC, the past generations of a client are often explored to find the source of the issue. Psychodrama now has a concept developed by Goldman and Morrison (Taufon, 2001) of what is called “the therapeutic spiral. This model outlines the proceeding of a psychodrama from a scene in present time to earlier ones to explore the roots of the presenting problem and to integrate the experiences” (p. 345).

The theory containing the individual and the group have to do with the importance of roles mentioned earlier in this subsection. Per Taufon (2001): “Moreno saw the individual as defined through the roles he developed in relation to other individuals’ counter-roles. Moreno regarded this ‘nucleus of relations’ the smallest social structure and named it ‘the social atom’” (p. 347).

Social atoms are again parts of a still larger pattern, the psychological networks... Psychological networks are parts of a still larger unit, the psychological geography of a community. A community is again part of the largest configuration, the psychological totality of human society itself. (Moreno, as cited in Taufon, 2001, p. 347)

The social atom can be used in FC programs to explain the concept of influences upon the individual, his or her issues, and sometimes how one chooses who to have in the

constellation.

The theory of body emerges in the action and movement of psychodrama and in FC in the same ways:

Stepping from the chair is the normal first step when beginning a psychodrama. The muscular activity involved triggers thoughts, memories and feelings. Unrestrained breathing and a good sense of grounding should also be encouraged. The body is involved in both conscious and . . . unconscious communication. Watching the body of the protagonist or using a 'physical double' gives the director important clues often revealing subconscious parts of his ongoing process. Maximization of movements, as well as focusing on specific areas through touch, strengthens the warm up. The bodily components of emotions, body sensations and symptoms can be concretised and put on stage as roles. Finally, movement is a necessary feature of catharsis and action insight. (p. 349)

To solidify the similarities and how psychodrama is now the basis for many group psychotherapy modalities, Tauvon (2001) states: "Group psychotherapy has developed and spread over the world, sociometry and many of the techniques he [Moreno] invented have diffused outside psychodrama, psychodrama itself has developed in many countries" (p. 352). This certainly appears to be true in the development of the model of FC and other authentic group encounters.

Technique: Psychodrama

In psychodrama, according to Moreno (1946), there are quite a few techniques: the technique of self-presentation, the technique of soliloquy (two types), psychodrama on the spot as self-therapy, with dreams, and spontaneous improvisation. Each technique uses the basics of choosing an issue or situation, choosing those in the psychodrama if necessary, the enactments, and analysis of the enactments.

According to Moreno (1946), the simplest technique to begin with is the technique of self-presentation:

[The client begins with him or her self and begins with] situations which are a part of his daily life, and especially to live through crucial conflicts in which he is involved. He must also enact and represent as concretely and thoroughly as possible every person near him, near to his problems, his father, his mother, his wife, or any other person in his social "atom." (p. 184)

During this enactment, there is an auxiliary ego (representative in FC) for the client and the director watches the client as he or she acts. The director encourages and makes comments and at times, the client stops and explains his or her actions (Moreno, 1946). In FC, the facilitator checks in with the client to see what is coming up for him or her emotionally during the process and rarely does the client speak without being addressed.

The client may relate to past, present or future situations and must replicate them fully with as much detail as possible and perhaps with a partner (Moreno, 1946). If a true family member or a person he wishes to work with is not available, the client asks one of the participants present (Moreno, 1946). Once this is done, the client is asked to portray him or her self in a recent situation that seems significant. The client then begins the gestures and movements with dialogue to commence the psychodrama. This has to happen slowly as to allow the spontaneous state to happen; without the spontaneous state any realizations or true catharses cannot occur (Moreno, 1946).

A request for a portrayal may happen as follows:

A member of the staff tells the client, "Portray your own father. Feel yourself into him and show us what your father is like. Portray him in any situation which seems to you to be crucial and characteristic of him. Choose a situation which really happened and which occurred as recently as possible. Show him as he acts towards your mother, your sister, your wife, yourself, or any other significant person." (Moreno, 1946, p. 187)

Enacting the different roles in the family, according to Moreno (1946), helps the client to discover how he or she feels about that person and those affected by that person.

It also helps the client to realize both how his or her actions may be similar and the impact of those actions on others.

The first technique of soliloquy:

. . . is used by the patient to duplicate hidden feelings and thoughts which he actually had in a situation with a partner in life or which he has now, in the moment of performance. Its value lies in its truthfulness. Its aim is catharsis. (Moreno, 1946, p. 190)

Moreno (1946) goes on to state:

The soliloquy part enacts the bodily and mental processes of the person at that time which he did not reveal to his partner. It is an enlargement of the self through a psychodramatic technique, and these secret mental processes flow to the person to whom they should have been communicated originally. It is here that the therapeutic effect comes in. (p. 207)

First, a situation is chosen and the other(s) involved. The therapist remains outside the situation but is there to prepare the client and others and to analyze what occurred afterward. Second, the setting is created, “The insistence not only upon the temporal but also upon the spatial duplication of the home scene is significant” (Moreno, 1946, p. 194). Then the client and the other(s) are told:

Portray the scene exactly as it happened, but in addition also the feelings and thoughts which you had at that time but which you did not express. Express them now in movement and gesture. Speak them out now in a lower voice – in soliloquy. (p. 191)

Through this technique, “the experience of the whole situation was far more clear than at the time of its occurrence; [The client and other] became acquainted with their inner selves in a most intimate way” (Moreno, 1946, p. 191). Using soliloquy seems to allow the unconscious of the client to surface, if only for a moment, and become conscious. There is much less talk in FC however, the idea of soliloquy happens inside

the client's mind. Emotions and physical sensations tend to surface and a catharsis more often than not does occur.

In the second type of soliloquy, the "official act and the soliloquy are on different levels. The official act portrays a fictitious situation, for instance God in Heaven or Mephistopheles in Hell" (Moreno, 1946, p. 207). This is more like FC's phenomenological constellations where representatives are chosen for disease, death, companies, etc., anything with an underlying significance to the family.

The second soliloquy technique puts the client into fictional situations in order to support him or her in their resistances and perhaps teach a different way to react. In this process, "The soliloquies are not enlargements but resistances to a full development of the role" (Moreno, 1946, p. 207). It uncovers insecurities and, when the client is in the process, may bring resistance to the surface. A way resistance shows is the distraction of the ego, a falling in and out of the role due to fear or other feelings the client does not want to acknowledge:

A spontaneous subject who is entirely absorbed in the role is unable to soliloquize either in regard to himself or in regard to the role. It is with that part of the ego which is not swept into it, hypnotized by the role, that he can soliloquize. (p. 210)

It seems the client essentially has to lose him or her self in the role and surrender to the process whatever may come up. This is also essential in FC in order for healing to occur and for one to be a competent representative and facilitator in order to serve the client.

Moreno (1946) believes, "Psychodramatics and soliloquy should be restricted as much as possible to the therapeutic theatre. The theatre is an objective setting where this extremely delicate process can be carried out under guidance" (p. 197). If done outside of

the therapeutic stage, psychodrama can be an important extension of the therapy (Moreno, 1946) in that it can support the work done with the therapist and use what the client has learned to sustain a healthy relationship with the partner or in situations that the client once found threatening.

In FC, it seems to be more about fostering awareness and what the client does with that awareness is up to him or her. Perspectives do change and so then do reactions to situations. A client may decide to talk with a loved one or just allow the energies of the constellation to work through the family being more aware of changes in the family dynamic.

The dream interpretation technique has the client portray his or her dream on the stage, “warming up to the act of dreaming instead of telling the dream” (Moreno, 1946, p. 199). This enactment is done in present time. According to Moreno (1946):

The dreamer is his own playwright and his own actor. He has to reach by means of auto-suggestion, a near-dream state, a posture of the body and a level of feeling which may help him to duplicate the dream hallucinations. (p. 200)

The client then acts out his dream on stage, remembering as much detail as possible and describing the scene as he progresses in the process. During the process, a release of emotional tensions may occur (Moreno, 1946). This is different from free association or retelling due to the nature of the movement and descriptions.

The last technique is spontaneous improvisation:

Spontaneous improvisation is a technique in which the patient does not enact events from his own life, but acts in fictitious, imagined roles. . . . The patient warms up to various roles which he may have wished to represent in life but which had been frustrated. (Moreno, 1946, p. 201)

Moreno (1946) describes how the procedure challenges the client:

The procedure becomes a significant test of the patient's behavior in his various inter-personal relationships however much he may try to avoid it. Many elements of his private personality enter continuously into his fictitious roles. They offer an open target for analysis. (p. 201)

As part of the process, a member of the staff prepares the client and partner by telling them "not to portray themselves but to improvise spontaneously roles which are suggested to them" (Moreno, 1946, p. 201). In the analysis phase, the task of the client is to prevent his private character from interfering with the fictitious one (Moreno, 1946). "The struggle, competition, and eventual collaboration of the two, the private and the fictitious character, is visible in every portrayal. The ambiguity of presentation is full of clues for the study of a person" (p. 201).

It is also important to note, that for the client to prevent the interference, the client has to again forgo his or her ego. "When a person is entirely absorbed by a role, no part of his ego is free to watch it, and so to record it in his memory. He is as if in a dream" (Moreno, 1946, p. 204). According to Moreno (1946), it is possible to train "the ego to do a double task, to think and act simultaneously . . ." (p. 205). This generally has to happen in the role of the representative in FC as well. He or she has to surrender part of the self in order to allow the spontaneity of movements and feelings of who is being represented as well as maintain an awareness of what is present for the representative personally and not let it interfere with the process.

Many of the processes in the techniques mentioned as well as some of what the client may experience are present in FC. It seems that the experiential and bodily movement along with some spoken word can have a huge impact on defenses and resistance. To be able to see and feel the partner seems to give FC, psychodrama and the other techniques mentioned an advantage in breaking through to the underlying

soliloquies and unconscious issues and transforming the client.

Structural Family Therapy. Structural family therapy (SFT) was developed by Minuchin in 1974 (Medina, 2010) while Minuchin was at the Wiltwyck School for Boys, a place where “traditional psychotherapeutic techniques did not appear to have a significant impact” (Colapinto, 1982). SFT is based in systems theory. According to Medina (2010), Minuchin:

. . . used a functional analysis, based on change theory to map out a model of optimal family functioning and ideal family structure. He defined family structure as the invisible set of functional demands that organizes the way in which family members interact and saw it as a main source of symptomatic behaviour and therefore the logical target of therapy. (p. 267)

The doctrines of the model are threefold: the family, the presenting problem, and the process of change. In SFT the family is thought of as a living open system:

As an open system the family is subjected to and impinges on the surrounding environment. This implies that family members are not the only architects of their family shape; relevant rules may be imposed by the immediate group of reference or by the culture

As a living system the family is in constant transformation: transactional rules evolve over time as each family group negotiates the particular arrangements that are more economical and effective for any given period in its life as a system. (Colapinto, 1982, p. 421)

This living open system is regulated by the interaction of maintaining stability and change, homeostasis. “Homeostasis designates the patterns of transactions that assure that stability of the system, the maintenance of its basic characteristics as they can be described at a certain point in time” (Colapinto, 1982, p. 421). The idea of homeostasis is in line with FC’s family conscience theory explained in the *Foundations of FC* section.

Change in SFT, according to Colapinto (1982), “is the recommendation that the

living system undergoes in order to adjust to a different set of environmental circumstances or to an intrinsic developmental need” (p. 422). Examples of changes given were marriage, births, adolescence onset, leaving home, a sudden death, etc. Other changes mentioned were exclusions and when the order of precedence in the family becomes skewed—as in the parentification of a child. These examples of change are all included in FC as common disruptions to the “orders of love,” the underlying issues of many constellations, and are often apparent after a constellation is set up. The “orders of love,” the basic principles in FC, are that everyone belongs, there exists an order of precedence within the family, and everyone has their own fate.

Changes or disruptions will challenge the family stability/homeostasis and cause the family to either resist or go with the change:

. . . homeostasis and change are a matter of perspective. . . . moments of crisis in which the status quo is questioned and rules are challenged are a relative exception in the life of the system, and when crises become the rule, they may be playing a role in the maintenance of homeostasis. (Colapinto, 1982, p. 422)

When the family resists, the conscience or homeostasis feels threatened and turns back to trying to create the familiar generational stability:

Intergenerational coalitions that subvert natural hierarchies (for example, mother and son against father), triangular patterns where parents use a child as a battleground, and other dysfunctional arrangements serve the purpose of avoiding the onset of open conflict within the system. Conflict avoidance, then, guarantees a certain set of equilibrium but at the same time prevents growth and differentiation, which are the offspring of conflict resolution.

. . . to keep precarious balance, family members stick to myths that are very narrow definitions of themselves as a whole and as individuals. . . . which leave most of the system’s potentials unused. When these families come to therapy they typically present themselves as a poor version of what they really are. (Colapinto, 1982, p. 423)

As one has read in previous themes, FC includes these concepts about the family

system. These concepts are apparent as the facilitator asks, when conducting a constellation, for the facts about the client's family. Attempts to maintain what the family considers balance sometimes fuels the unhealthy relationships and skewed perceptions therefore causing resistance to change. FC, like SFT, is a tool to help the client see the family and its relationships as they are and to support maintaining true balance according to these tenets of SFT and the orders of love in FC.

The second doctrine involves the presenting problem. "Structural family therapy conceptualizes the problem behavior as a partial aspect of the family structure of transactions. The complaint... needs to be put in perspective by relating it to the context of [the client's] family" (Colapinto, 1982, p. 423). To do so, "The therapist has to find out the position and function of the problem behavior . . . and diagnose the structure of the system's perceptions in connection with the presenting problem" (p. 424). The origination of the problem is irrelevant in SFT; it has already happened and is not able to be changed. Therefore, maintenance of the problem is stressed:

The emphasis is on maintenance rather than on causation. . . we are dealing with current transactions and current memories, as they are organized now, after the problem has crystallized. Thus instead of a simplistic, one-way causal connection the model postulates an ongoing process of mutual accommodation between the system's rules and the individual's predispositions and vulnerabilities. (Colapinto, 1982, p. 424)

The third doctrine involves the process of change. "Therapeutic change is . . . the process of helping the family to outgrow its stereotyped patterns—of which the presenting problem is a part" (Colapinto, 1982, p. 425). The process of change occurs within the therapeutic system. This system "offers a unique chance to challenge the rules of the family. The privileged position of the therapist allows him to request from the family

members different behaviors and to invite different perceptions thus altering their interaction and perspective” (p. 425).

During the process, Colapinto (1982) explains that the family system’s “limits are probed and pushed, its narrow self-definitions are questioned; in the process the family’s capacity to tolerate and handle stress or conflict increases, and its perceived reality becomes richer, more complex” (p. 425). These limits are drawn from the family itself and its reality.

SFT theory maintains that in the family system there exists untapped potential of which SFT is able to help uncover:

The model contends that beyond the systemic constraints that keep the family functioning at an adequate level there exists an as yet underutilized pool of potential resources. Releasing these resources so that the system can change, and changing the system so that the resources can be released, are simultaneous processes that require the restructuring input of the therapist. (Colapinto, 1982, p. 425)

In summary, when applying the SFT model to therapy, it is important to know:

The model is not just a cluster of techniques with specific indications, but rather a consistent way of thinking and operating—derived from the basic tenet that human problems can only be understood and treated in context. As such, the model is in principle applicable to any human system in need of change. (Colapinto, 1982, p. 425)

Examples of human problems tackled by SFT include school related problems, drug abuse, mental handicaps, symptoms like elective mutism, and encopresis (Colapinto, 1982). The statement above, “being applicable to any human system in need of change,” is true of FC as well, which is described in the *Applications of FC in Contemporary Culture* section of this chapter.

Before discussing the techniques of SFT, the goals and function of therapy and

the role of therapist will be explicated. “The basic goal of structural family therapy is the restructuralization of the family’s system of transactional rules” (Colapinto, 1982, p. 427). Accomplishing this goal allows the interactional reality of the family to become more flexible and to find alternative ways of dealing with each other. “By releasing family members from their stereotyped positions and functions, this restructuralization enables the system to mobilize its underutilized resources and to improve its ability to cope with stress and conflict” (p. 427).

Restructuring occurs in FC concerning the client’s perception of his or her family and the client’s place within it, the place where love became disconnected and where the “orders of love” are challenged by the family homeostasis affecting the family and its relationships. It is there that the constellation begins.

The function of the therapist in SFT is:

. . . To assist the family in achieving the necessary restructuralization. The position prescribed for him by the model is similar to that of a midwife helping in a difficult birth. Once change is born and thriving the therapist must withdraw and resist the temptation to ‘overwork’ his temporary association with the family... (Colapinto, 1982, p. 427)

Since an ultimate cure is not thinkable in SFT, as it emphasizes growth and change as an essential feature, the therapist is encouraged to have limited participation doing only what is necessary to set the family’s natural healing resources in motion (Colapinto, 1982). The therapist essentially surrenders and trusts the process. This is also pertinent in FC as it is not for the therapist to judge or set an agenda for the client. Belief is placed in the client knowing his or her own answers to healing.

According to Colapinto (1982):

The role of the therapist is to move around within the system, blocking existing stereotyped patterns of transactions and fostering the development of more flexible ones. While constantly negotiating the immunology mechanisms of the family organism in order to accepted, he behaves as a strange body to which the organism has to accommodate by changing and growing. (p. 429)

Colapinto (1982) details the tasks that the therapist needs to perform while in the role. The therapist is supportive while being challenging, attacking while being encouraging, and sustaining while being undermining. He or she first establishes a working relationship with the client by entering the system. The therapist has to find the “right equation of accommodation/challenge for each particular family through a process of probing, advancing, and withdrawing that guides his entrance and at the same time gives him clues about the family structure” (p. 428). In FC, the facilitator does the same dance of listening and feeling the “knowing field” as well as observing the participants in the constellation in order to know when to enter and leave the field.

Next, the therapist approaches the family with hypotheses gathered from minimal intake information, tests them, expands them, and corrects them all the while being oriented by process and not by context (Colapinto, 1982). During the process, the therapist listens for words and content and the way the family is communicating. He or she begins to become aware of themes and starts to decipher which are useful and which are not (Colapinto, 1982). This is where, according to Colapinto (1982), “A map of the family begins to emerge. . . a map depicting positions, alliances, hierarchies, complementary patterns” (p. 428).

The next task is to explore and highlight the symptom in the family transactions. “Family members are invited to talk to each other, or are excluded from participation. Distances and positions are prescribed, alternative arrangements are tried” (Colapinto,

1982, p. 428). The therapist is looking to

create situations that will uncover hidden resources or confirm suggested limitations. . . . specific ways in which this system is keeping its homeostasis so that he can disrupt them and force a new equilibrium. . . [as well as] searching for the system's strengths. (Colapinto, 1982, p. 428)

In the final task, the therapist is to “organize a scenario and start the action, but then to sit back as a spectator for a while” (Colapinto, 1982, p. 429). The facilitator in FC does something related. He or she enters and exits the “knowing field” in order to view the big picture, zoom in on the interactions, and move back out so as to grasp the scenario as a whole and to see where to go next in the constellation. In SFT, according to Colapinto (1982), the therapist must:

. . . remain mobile, to constantly redefine his position, displacing himself from one role to another, from one alliance to another, from one challenge to the next – while at the same time maintaining a focus, a thread, a relevant theme connecting all of his moves together and to the presenting problem. (p. 429)

The role of the therapist in SFT seems challenging yet practical and attainable. In the following subsection, two techniques of SFT will be discussed in order to gain a better understanding of the model and how it compares to FC.

Techniques: Structural Family Therapy

SFT contains two primary techniques, joining and disequilibrium, and within those techniques are more techniques. Joining techniques consist of maintenance, tracking, and mimesis. Colapinto (1982) defines the technique of joining as “the process of ‘coupling’ that occurs between the therapist and the family . . . which leads to the formation of the therapeutic system” (p. 429). Maintenance, according to Colapinto, is where “the therapist lets himself be organized by the basic rules that regulate the transactional process in the specific family system” (p. 430). For example, if a family

presents a rigid hierarchy, the therapist may approach those in previous generations and proceed from there, respecting the rules of the system. FC's approach is similar when past generations are involved in a constellation; the oldest generation is worked with first to begin the healing of the system.

Tracking has to do with the content of the spoken word during the technique. This is so the therapist can "become acquainted with the idiosyncratic idioms and metaphors that he will later use to endow his directive statements with additional power" (Colapinto, 1982, p. 430). In doing so, the therapist will phrase his or her statements in the family language that has special meaning to the family. Through the technique of mimesis, the therapist uses nonverbal responses to adopt the family member's mood, tone of voice or posture, or imitates his or her behavior (Colapinto, 1982).

The techniques for disequilibrium endeavor to change the system or create a different perception of reality (Hershman, 2011). They consist of the two main techniques of reframing and enactment. According to Hershman (2011), "Reframing is a process in which a perception is changed by explaining the situation in terms of a different context" (Structural Family Therapeutic Techniques section, para. 9). This allows the family members to change their attitudes toward the client. Colapinto (1982) adds that reframing also shifts the problem from one person to reveal how the family as a whole or to certain member(s) who are affecting the problem.

Defining the technique of enactment, Colapinto (1982) states:

Enactment is the actualization of transactional patterns under the control of the therapist. This technique allows the therapist to observe how family members mutually regulate their behaviors, and to determine the place of the problem behavior within the sequence of transactions. . . . the vehicle through which the therapist introduces disruption in the existent patterns, probing the system's

ability to accommodate to different rules and ultimately forcing the experimentation of alternative more functional rules. Change is expected to occur as a result of dealing with the problems, rather than talking about them. (p. 432)

Enactment is the family being set up spatially and relationally for an observational representation, much like in Satir's family reconstruction technique. There are also underlying techniques that take place under enactment: boundary making, punctuation, intensity, and unbalancing (Colapinto, 1982; Hershman, 2011). Boundary making is where the therapist defines the boundaries that are open or closed to each member of the family during the enactment (Colapinto, 1982). "Boundary making is a restructuring maneuver . . . it changes the rules of the game. Detouring mechanisms and other conflict avoidance patterns are disrupted by this intervention; underutilized skills are allowed and even forced to manifest themselves" (p. 433).

Punctuation, Hershman (2011) states, "is verbalizing appropriate behavior when it happens" (Structural Family Therapeutic Techniques section, para. 10) within the process. Another more in-depth perspective of punctuation comes from Colapinto (1982), "Punctuation is a universal characteristic of human perception. No transactional event can be described in the same terms by different participants, because their perspectives and emotional involvements are different" (p. 433). Colapinto (1982) also stresses that because of this, the therapist must be listening and aware at all times in order to see the pattern and the different emphases each member may put on it.

Intensity, according to Hershman (2011), "is the structural method of changing maladaptive transactions by using strong affect, repeated intervention, or prolonged pressure. Intensity works best if done in a direct, unapologetic manner that is goal specific" (Structural Family Therapeutic Techniques section, para. 16). Colapinto (1982)

adds, “Intensity is a technique that consists of emphasizing the importance of a given event in the session or a given message from the therapist, with the purpose of focusing the family’s attention and energy on a designated area” (p. 434). Intensity is often used as a variation of punctuation.

Unbalancing has the main objective to create disequilibrium. For Colapinto (1982), unbalancing is a technique in which the therapist can use his or her authority to move the family from a “stuck” place by supporting one of the issues in the conflict or one of the members often in opposition to the rest of the family. In doing so, Hershman (2011) contends, “a chance for change within the total hierarchical relationship is fostered” (Structural Family Therapeutic Techniques section, para. 11).

SFT does not include psychodrama or the setting up of scenes in order to restructure the family dynamics. It is done in the therapist’s office with the family in its entirety and with any other significant members in the family circle who are not blood related. Many of the techniques and theories are found in FC: the goal of structural change, some roles of the therapist, the views of the family being an open living system, homeostasis, intergenerational effects, as well as boundaries within the subsystem.

Transformation in Family Systems Theory. Some of the articles about family systems mentioned transformation. Transformation is parallel to using the word healing in FC as well as change and growth in other realms. According to Taylor (2002), transformation comes in many forms:

. . . including a move from coping strategies to congruence, from blaming others to understanding their behavior, from triangulation to one-on-one contact, from self-judgment to affirmation and possibly acceptance, from resentment to compassion, from criticism to curiosity, from hostility to honesty, from analysis of others to self-discovery, and from diagnosis to ownership. (p. 131-132)

“Growth comes as we realize that the only way to run our life is to give up fighting for complete control and to let our life unfold” (Beaudry, 2002, p. 84).

According to Satir et al. (1991) as cited by Beaudry (2002), family reconstruction “. . . usually transforms an automatic survival pattern or it may address a traumatic experience that needs healing at a level of the self. Becoming more fully human includes expressing and transforming the pain we felt, and still feel, from what happened in the past” (p. 84).

Beaudry (2002) continues:

The family reconstruction gives people a chance to see themselves and family members in a way that exposes their beliefs, ignorance, unawareness, and misunderstandings. The process also lets people experience each other’s real intents of acceptance and caring. (p. 90)

Our observation is that the reconstruction helps to heal current pain, reawaken old dreams, and to give the Star permission to develop new dreams. . . . to heal and to grow requires two processes that have to be accomplished: one is learning, and the other is unlearning. (p. 84)

According to Sayles (2002):

Using this process provides the therapist with the opportunity to be present with a person in the midst of his or her deepest pain and despair, empathically connected in a way that moves beyond simply feeling to a deeper level of feeling the feelings as the person moves inside. It is an internal shift in our belief that results in an external change (Satir et al., 1991). This shift in belief happens as the person becomes more trusting of the process, acknowledges his or her own resources, and feels like change is possible. (pp. 94-95)

Psychodrama also had some examples of transformations and issues that were helped to resolve. The first was in dealing with grief and addiction-related loss. Dayton (2005) states, “Psychodrama, with its unique ability to concretize virtually any moment along the developmental continuum of a client’s life offers a unique approach to working with the mental, emotional, and behavioral aspects of loss” (p. 16). It allows the client to view a situation as it was and become aware of the meaning he or she gave to the

situation. Using psychodrama, the client can

integrate their split-off affect and develop new insights as their adult mind witnesses their child, adolescent, or young adult world in its concrete form. They may then reshape their role configuration and practice new, emerging, or desired role behaviors in the here and now (Dayton, 2005, p. 16)

Psychodrama also allows the client to encounter in the here and now, the “deep, psychic yearning” that keeps the mind and heart unsettled and continuing to search for an object to mourn (Dayton, 2005). By experiencing his or her loss and relieving the yearning, the client mourns physically, emotionally, and mentally and is then guided toward transformation and healing.

It appears that for what is known about FC, as stated throughout this section of the *Influences of Psychological Theory on Family Constellations*, there is definitely opportunity for transformation and healing. Perhaps Sayles (2002) summarizes transformation best for all family systems models mentioned as well as FC when he writes:

Transformation is a situation in which a person experiences, at the core of herself or himself, the possibility of being in charge of what is felt, believed, and experienced. The old body memories that brought this person back to re-experience the pain can be felt, changed, and integrated. What emerges in this transformational process is a person who believes, not only in himself or herself – which raises self-esteem – but also that change is possible, because it has been experienced. Transformational change happens as people embrace the pain of the past in the present and feel the difference in the core of their being. The process of transformation begins with a person, full of possibility, taking the risk “to be more fully human.” (p. 109)

Group Therapy. An entire literature review could be dedicated to group therapy, however, for the purposes of this study, the discussion will be on the following: general definitions and characteristics and types of group therapy with an intricate look at experiential groups, specifically encounter groups.

Group therapy, according to MedicineNet.com (2011), is:

- 1) A type of psychiatric care in which several patients meet with one or more therapists at the same time. The patients form a support group for each other as well as receiving expert care and advice. The group therapy model is particularly appropriate for psychiatric illnesses that are support-intensive, such as anxiety disorders, but is not well suited for treatment of some other psychiatric disorders.
- 2) A type of psychoanalysis in which patients analyze each other with the assistance of one or more psychotherapists, as in an "encounter group."

Yalom (1975) insists that "the essence of the therapy group is interaction, each member must continually communicate and interact with the other members" (p. 180). It is through this communication and interaction of the group that Folkers and Steefel (1991) believe "group members can see themselves, their behaviors, and the behaviors of others within the group context and can receive support from others in their efforts toward change" (p. 47). Yalom states that there are eleven major factors supporting this change within a group:

1. Instillation of hope
2. Universality
3. Imparting information
4. Altruism
5. The corrective recapitulation of the primary family group
6. Development of socializing techniques
7. Imitative behavior
8. Interpersonal learning
9. Group cohesiveness
10. Catharsis
11. Existential factors. (pp. 3-4)

Rogers (1970) supports the information above when stating there are certain commonalities in therapeutic groups:

- A facilitator can develop, in a group which meets intensely, a psychological climate of safety in which freedom of expression and reduction of defensiveness gradually occur.
- In such a psychological climate many of the immediate feeling reactions of each member towards other, and of each member toward himself, tend to be

expressed.

- A climate of mutual trust develops out of this mutual freedom to express real feelings, positive and negative. Each member moves toward greater acceptance of his total being—emotional, intellectual and physical—as it is, including potential.
- With individuals less inhibited by defensive rigidity, the possibility of change in personal attitudes and behavior, in professional methods, in administrative procedures and relationships, becomes less threatening.
- With the reduction of defensive rigidity, individuals can hear each other; can learn from each other to a greater extent.
- There is a development of feedback from one person to another; such that each individual learns how he appears to others and what impact he has in interpersonal relationships.
- These learnings in the group experience tend to carry over, temporarily or more permanently, into the relationships with spouse, children, students, peers and even superiors following the group experience. (pp. 7-8)

In this freedom to communicate real feelings, there may be a vivid experience of emotions and an external expression of them.

[These emotions in groups can be] from the depths of anger, rejection, and animosity, from the revealing of personal guilt and torture, out of the combined forces of group life, individuals meet honestly and confront one another with conflict and resentment as well as with tenderness and love. A way of life is created that makes other kinds of interaction pale, thin, and superficial. (Moustakas, 1968, p. 53)

In a world where expressing one's emotions may be frowned upon, "a group may allow a person to experience and express this real part of himself [true emotions] with more freedom than he ordinarily has" (Kiesler, 1973, p. 29). This may allow him or her to learn how to communicate better, increase self-worth and esteem, and discover how to form healthier relationships (Kiesler, 1973).

Kiesler (1973) also states that the emotions felt throughout the group, whether positive or negative, "will be felt about the group, the group members, or oneself, rather

than about outside experiences, the setting, one's history, etc." (p. 26). In FC, this appears to be true as well. Through the process of the constellation, more than just the client may be emotionally touched by the experience.

In summary, Corey and Corey (2006) give a most concise description:

Groups provide a natural laboratory that demonstrates to people that they are not alone and that there is hope for creating a different life. Groups provide a sense of community, which can be an antidote to the impersonal culture in which many clients live. . . . groups are powerful in part because they allow participants to play out their long-term problems in the group sessions with opportunities to try something different from what they have been doing. (p. 5)

As one can see, group work can provide a sense of safety, community, support and honesty. Therapeutic groups can be a place to express emotions not otherwise accepted by society in general and gives the opportunity to learn how to create healthy relationships and the potential to change. The next subsection will discuss the types of group therapy found in the research today.

Types of Group Therapy. There are many different types of groups with differing theoretical orientations. They have many purposes and may help in the emotional and problem solving areas of growth by offering the use of multiple relationships (Sternberg, n.d.). These multiple relationships can provide a vehicle for change and psychological healing. For the purpose of this study, experiential groups will be discussed in detail, as they seem to be the most relatable to FC. Corey and Corey (2006) cite that the Association for Specialists in Group Work identified four areas of specialization in group work: "(a) task groups, (b) psychoeducational groups, (c) counseling groups, and (d) psychotherapy groups" (p. 9).

Task Groups

Task groups are often found in organizations and agencies as in the community, businesses, and education. "... They include task forces, committees, planning groups, staff development groups, discussion groups, study circles, learning groups, and other similar groups" (Corey & Corey, 2006, p. 10). This type of group's focal point is applying "group dynamics principles and processes to improve practice and to foster accomplishment of identified work goals" (p. 10). These groups want to meet the client's needs as well as the organizational and community needs.

Psycho-educational Groups

Psycho-educational groups are keyed on "developing members' cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills through a structured set of procedures within and across group meetings" (Corey & Corey, 2006, p. 11). They focus on a particular theme with its main purpose to educate the participants in order "to increase awareness of some life problem and the tools to better cope with it" (Corey & Corey, 2006, p. 11). Some examples would be "managing stress, learning assertion training, overcoming eating disorders (bulimia and anorexia), supporting women in transition, dealing with an alcoholic parent, learning anger management skills, managing relationships and ending relationships, overcoming perfectionism, and supporting survivors of physical and sexual abuse" (p. 11).

Psychotherapy and Counseling Groups

Psychotherapy groups came to be due to a shortage of trained personnel to provide individual therapy during World War II. These groups could offer possibilities that individual therapy could not, like a higher level of support, caring, and confrontation

(Corey & Corey, 2006). According to Yalom (1985), “The psychotherapy group, provided its development is unhampered by severe structural restrictions evolves into a social microcosm, a miniature-sized representation of each patient’s social universe” (p. 44).

“The task of psychotherapy is to help the patient learn how to develop distortion-free, gratifying interpersonal relationships” (Yalom, 1985, p. 44). Members of psychotherapy and counseling groups usually “have acute or chronic mental or emotional disorders that evidence marked distress, impairment in functioning, or both” (Corey & Corey, 2006, p. 14). Due to the significant depth and extent of the psychological challenges, “This kind of group explores antecedents to current behavior and connects historical material to the present using intrapersonal assessment, diagnosis, and interpretation” (Corey & Corey, 2006, p. 14).

In doing so, several processes are used to work through the blocks that originated in experiences. “The group members, through consensual validation and self-observation, become aware of significant aspects of their interpersonal behavior: their strengths, their limitations, their parataxic [*sic*] distortions, and their maladaptive behavior which elicits unwanted responses from other people” (Yalom, 1985, p. 44). This could involve “exploring dreams, interpreting resistance, dealing with transference that occurs, and helping members develop a new perspective on ‘unfinished business’ with significant others” (Corey & Corey, 2006, p. 14).

Counseling groups are defined by Corey and Corey (2006) as a group that “deals with conscious problems, is not aimed at major personality changes, is generally oriented toward the resolution of specific short-term issues, and is not concerned with treatment of

the more severe psychological and behavioral disorders” (p. 12). Using interactive feedback and a here-and-now timeframe, counseling groups “aim at helping participants resolve problems in living or dealing with developmental concerns” (Corey & Corey, 2006, p. 12).

The goals of counseling groups include helping people develop more positive attitudes and better interpersonal skills; using the group process to facilitate behavior change; and helping members transfer newly acquired skills and behavior learned in the group to every day life (Yalom, 1985; Corey & Corey, 2006). The method of this group is to provide an illustration of what occurs in daily life including differences. This illustration is possible because the counseling group is representative of society in that its membership can be diverse and can also share common problems (Yalom, 1985; Corey & Corey, 2006). It is through this awareness that respect for each other is developed.

Experiential Groups

Experiential group therapy is important to mention because Family Constellations are experiential and can occur in a group setting such as workshops and immersion programs. An explication of experiential groups, in particular encounter and marathon groups will follow.

It has been found that experiential groups, like any other therapeutic group, can provide alternatives to conventional psychotherapy. These alternatives can include self-actualization, growth toward one’s full potential, gestalt, encounter, yoga, sensitivity training, body therapy, spirituality and a sense of purpose and community (Finkelstein, Wenegrat & Yalom, 1982). Rogers (1970) also created his own list of 10 types of experiential groups:

T-group. This originally intended to emphasize human relation skills but has become much broader in its approach.

Encounter group (or basic encounter group). This tends to emphasize personal growth and the development and improvement of interpersonal communication and relationships through an experiential process.

Sensitivity training group. May resemble either of the above.

Task-oriented group. Widely used in industry. Focuses on the task of the group in its interpersonal context.

Sensory awareness groups, body awareness groups, body movement groups. These tend to emphasize physical awareness and expression through movement, spontaneous dance and the like.

Creativity workshops. Here creative expression through various art media often forms the focus with individual spontaneity and freedom of expression the aim.

Organizational development group. The primary aim is growth in skill as a leader of persons.

Team building groups. Used in industry to develop more closely knit and effective working teams.

Gestalt group. Emphasis on a Gestalt therapeutic approach where an expert therapist focuses on one individual at a time but from a diagnostic and therapeutic point of view.

Synanon group or 'game.' Developed in the treatment of drug addicts by the Synanon organization. Tends to emphasize almost violent attack on the defense of the participants. (p. 5)

Barrett-Lennard (1974) developed guidelines for prospective group members to “reflect value choices among possible goals in human living. One overarching value principle is that individuals should have the opportunity to be a principal architect of their own being and becoming” (p. 71). The guidelines are as follows:

1. Once a group begins, all persons belong because they are there.
2. A first purpose is to gain a sense of one another as inwardly active, feeling, thinking persons.
3. Each group member endeavors to be personal, direct and specific in communications.
4. Each of us listens to the other ... with concern to know what the other is experiencing.

5. We let our inner feelings of relatedness show as these feelings arise in us.
6. The group is a place for honesty and realism.
7. Group members are not seeking to sit in judgment on each other.
8. People in the group are responsible for themselves and to others.
9. We often provide each other with personal feedback.
10. What we express can be expected to call forth varied responses in different others.
11. Decisions involving some new or altered plan for the whole group are shared in by all members.
12. The group leader is a member of the group, with purposes and needs and “uniqueness,” like everyone else. (pp. 71-74)

Encounter and Marathon Groups

It seems the most relevant experiential groups to this study are the encounter and marathon groups although currently they are renamed as workshops, social skills training groups, psycho-educational groups, religious retreats for couples, adolescents, families, loss, and self-exploration (Yalom, 1995).

Encounter groups began with the Human Potential Movement (HPM) of the 1960s and 1970s. HPM was “a period of cultural revolution during which free expression was encouraged . . . where concepts based on the principles of Maslow, May, Rogers, Perls, Schutz, and others were being implemented in a variety of workshops” (Weigel, 2002, p. 188). It was in these workshops that encounter groups were formed. According to Weigel (2002), “The encounter emerged as perhaps the most influential and studied. It is a small group experience with an emphasis on personal growth through expanding awareness, exploration of intra-psychic as well as interpersonal issues, and the release of dysfunctional inhibitions” (p. 188).

Rachman (1975) stated, “The purpose of an encounter experience and the eventual aim of psychotherapy is to heighten emotional experiencing, and to develop greater insight and personal understanding, thereby promoting self-actualization” (p.

250). Rachman (1975) also states that the goal of the encounter experience is not for people to be “frightened out of their defenses and facades” (p. 250). Therefore, there are many processes and methods than can be used to enhance the learning about oneself as well as others, which enables personal growth.

Solomon and Berzon (1972) discussed the characteristics of their own encounter groups, “Our encounter groups anticipate, and usually obtain, emotional openness, self-disclosure, risk-taking, feedback, trust, intimacy, behavioral enactment, willingness to engage and confront others and perhaps to change” (p. 85). These shifts may also occur during Family Constellations.

A group movement that grew from the encounter group, and seems more fitting toward the FC immersion programs or two or three-day workshops is the marathon group. Weigel (2002) defined the marathon group as “a therapy or encounter group that extends beyond the typical 80 or 90-minute session for an extended, continuous period of time” (p. 187). Marathon groups are experiential groups held away from distractions, with a small number of people that are in continual contact with each other. “Most interactions are devoted to members uncovering and expressing their feelings and giving and receiving direct, interpersonal feedback. They focus on the experiences in the present—the here and now” (p. 187).

FC has some similarities to these groups as they can be done via weekend workshops and immersion programs and are very experiential. One difference is that participants in FC may not give direct feedback after a constellation is completed. It is believed that one must contemplate his or her own experience and perspective for a period before getting feedback from another person to have a better possibility of a

deeper healing. In addition, a constellation may begin with the here and now issue of the client but can and will often go back generations to see where and how it began.

The challenge with including group therapy in this literature review was the lack of studies that have been done specifically on experiential groups. Finkelstein, Wenegrat and Yalom (1982), state that studies in group work may provide positive and helpful uses in therapy like effective techniques, and it may show the fact that there are a lot people whose needs are not being met by society or traditional psychotherapy. It is the hope of this researcher that this study will show that FC has some similarities to therapeutic groups and will further demonstrate the effectiveness of group work when working with what could be complicated and challenging issues. It is also the hope of this researcher that FC will not be categorized in one method or another.

Gestalt. Perls (1973), the founder of Gestalt states, “The main idea of Gestalt is that a gestalt is a whole, a complete, in itself, resting whole. As soon as we cut up a gestalt, we have bits and pieces and not a whole anymore” (p. 119). Gestalt psychology has a set of premises at its core: (1) “that human nature is organized in patterns or wholes, that it is experienced by the individual in these terms, and that it can only be understood as a function of these patterns or wholes of which it is made” (pp. 3-4); and (2) “that all life and all behavior are governed by the process which scientists call homeostasis, and which the layman calls adaptation” (p. 4).

The Gestalt approach, as defined by Greenberg (2002), is “a unique form of therapy. This involves increasing awareness of experience by focusing attention on feelings, sensations, and motoric processes” (p. 489). Strümpfel and Goldman (2002) define Gestalt therapy as “the process of human contact” (p. 189) and state that its

“tradition emphasizes growth and the self, although its concept of self is distinct from other humanistic psychotherapies” (p. 189).

Gestalt works within a phenomenological framework and feelings are an inherent part of interpersonal contact where “lively awareness of impulses, feelings, and needs facilitate the client’s attaining satisfaction” (Strümpfel & Goldman, 2002, p. 190). The object is to maintain balance or homeostasis within the client by supporting him or her in becoming more aware of unconscious needs not being fulfilled (Perls, 1973; Truscott, 2010).

Concepts of Self. According to Strümpfel and Goldman (2002), one of the fundamental tenets of Gestalt is the concept of the field theory developed by Lewin in 1917:

Field theory posits an interdependence of phenomena and a constant shifting of boundaries; the field is always in motion According to field theory, the subject, referred to as the organism, recognizes itself as part of the field, contacting the environment at its boundaries. Emerging wishes and needs are as much a part of the field as actual options for attaining satisfaction. (Strümpfel & Goldman, 2002, p. 190)

Field theory gave rise to other concepts known as figure/ground:

The figure is whatever is the focus of attention for an individual within the entire *field*. The field encompasses other people, the environment, and the individual as a whole (i.e., mind, body, and emotions). The ground is everything else in the field except the figure. Whatever need is most disturbing an individual’s homeostasis becomes figural for that person. With the need satisfied, it merges back into the ground to make way for the next figure to emerge and so on. (Truscott, 2010, p. 86)

Integrating the aspects of Lewis’ field theory and Gestalt’s figure/ground, Strümpfel and Goldman (2002) contend that the integration “views human activity as being constantly affected by the whole field” (p. 190). This is known as the “contact

cycle” or “need cycle.”

FC maintains the field theory belief as well. The concepts of the “knowing field,” intergenerational affects on the family, the way the constellation representatives can energetically experience thoughts and feelings of those represented, and the movements of the soul show this.

Continuing with the focus on human contact with the all-encompassing field, Strümpfel and Goldman (2002) write about the stages of self within the contact cycle and the disturbances that can occur. The authors list four stages:

- (a) *Fore contact* is the emergence of initial impulses and their transformation into emotions—impulses gain intention and guide further action;
- (b) *Contacting* refers to the selection, decision making, and transformation of motoric energy into movement;
- (c) *Final contact* is the consummation of contact and ensuing gratification; and
- (d) *Post contact* is the assimilation by the personality of all experiences that have entered awareness. (p. 191)

FC seems to progress in similar stages. During a constellation, after the initial set up, the client is asked to observe and as the process continues, emotions may begin to surface. Then, the client may be inserted into his or her constellation causing the first movement and shift of energy. Like the third stage of the contact cycle, through the process of FC, the client may contact the others in the constellation on a “soul level” and experience the healing he or she needs, bringing gratification. The final stage in FC, similar to above, is the integration of all the awareness that was experienced during the process. In FC, the “three day rule” consists of 72 hours of not sharing any awareness of experience or any insights. This is so integration can take place throughout the body,

mind, and soul of the client.

Strümpfel and Goldman (2002) also tell of the disturbances that can occur during the contact cycle. They are described as “the basis of pathology” and “become the focus of therapy” (p. 191). These include introjection, projection, and retroflection. Introjection is the “uncritical acceptance of principles, dogmas, or taboos (such as “you must not be angry”) that result in the inhibition of experience” (Strümpfel & Goldman, 2002, p. 191). This is known as the family rules in SFT or family conscience in FC.

Projection is described as “the process by which people find aspects of the self to be unacceptable and disown them by attributing them to people in the environment, experiencing their feelings as those of another” (Strümpfel & Goldman, 2002, p. 191). Finally, retroflection refers to when the client turns his or her “emotions intended for someone in the environment back against oneself. It may be more acceptable to hurt oneself than express anger or dissatisfaction with another” (Strümpfel & Goldman, 2002, p. 192).

What seems to be key in Gestalt therapy is that “therapists stay in contact with clients as they make contact with themselves, supporting them to explore their impulses, wishes, and needs in the background that are pressing to become figural” (Strümpfel & Goldman, 2002, p. 192). Awareness of such things seems pertinent in this process and FC as well, and seems to provide a window to the functioning self. Strümpfel and Goldman (2002) make the observation:

“In the therapeutic process, the client becomes more fully conscious through both awareness work and experiments that therapists construct and propose in the session.

Experiments aim to bring awareness and better integrate different aspects of the

personality” (p. 192). Thus, perhaps FC could be used as one way to elucidate awareness.

Awareness. Through exploring the disruptions of the needs cycle, being conscious of the stages of self through the cycle, the therapist can support the client in increasing awareness of the whole field. When the client becomes aware of the affects of the whole field and the needs cycle, including wants, desires, wishes, and needs, he or she can then begin to make changes and heal:

Awareness of the contact between our physical bodies, our environment, and our selves. Ideally, this awareness progresses to deeper levels as therapy proceeds and becomes a state that clients can experience more often in their lives. This deepened awareness allows greater capacity for self-regulation and more opportunity for self-determination. Awareness allows clients to better accept responsibility for their actions and reactions, and to freely choose how to live their lives. Awareness also facilitates personal growth. . . . Awareness is a means for them to find their own solutions.

Change then occurs spontaneously and without effort through awareness of what and how we are thinking feeling and doing – through awareness of the field of our present moment. The ensuing process leads to changes in the entire field that is the client’s existence. (Truscott, 2010, p. 88)

Therefore, according to Truscott (2010), “healthy functioning results from contact with our experience in the present. . . . [and] growth takes place as we let go of distractions that prevent personal growth from taking place” (p. 87). In doing so, the client’s awareness becomes uncluttered and concentration deepens leading to sincere functioning in turn affecting the field in a healthy way. “Through contact with our present experience, we are able to take responsibility for our actions and find the excitement, energy, and courage to live life fully and with intention” (Truscott, 2010, p. 87). This may also be a result of participating in FC, fostering awareness through present moment experiences of taking responsibility of one’s actions and acknowledging emotions that

have been locked away for years.

Techniques. There are several exercises or techniques that Gestalt therapists use to nurture client awareness. Most are very different from constellations in FC but, as seen throughout this section, there exists similar fundamental concepts. Because of this reason, Gestalt techniques will be mentioned briefly to show how experiential exercises can be used to foster awareness and to gain a view into the exercises of Gestalt therapy.

In this theory, as in FC, resistance is seen as something to work with and seen as “an opportunity for learning” (Truscott, 2010, p. 88). With regard to the aim of Gestalt therapy and its exercises/techniques, which can be similar to FC’s aims, Truscott (2010) states

The aim of gestalt exercises is to help clients learn about themselves from immediate experience—not from the therapist’s conceptualizations. The exercises aim to heighten the individual’s awareness of deadened feelings and sensations, reawakening knowledge of personal agency in shaping what is taken for granted as a fixed reality. (p. 88)

Truscott (2010) lists the following as some of the techniques used by Gestalt therapists in session:

1. *Internal dialogue*—intended to address internal conflicts caused by uncritical acceptance of others’ opinions and promote an integration of all aspects of self. The client plays each role and engages in a dialogue by moving back and forth between two chairs. From each chair, the client speaks directly to the imagined person-entity in the empty chair. Also known as Two-Chair exercise.
2. *Making the rounds*—a group-based task that involves asking the client to speak to or do something with the other members of a group. Group members take turns giving the client feedback about what they have observed. This allows the client to take interpersonal risks, present newly owned aspects of the self, and confirm or disconfirm assumptions in relation to others.
3. *Reversal exercises*—invite the client to behave in a manner opposite of his or her usual presentation . . . This is helpful for denial of latent aspects of

the self. The client is thrust into experiencing what at first feels strange and alien but eventually whole and authentic.

4. *Rehearsal exercises*—the client says aloud the inner thinking we all rehearse in preparation for behaving in expected ways. Our internal rehearsals tend to result in inhibitions of spontaneity and genuineness. By saying them aloud, the client can take ownership . . .
5. *Exaggeration exercises*—used when the client appears to be unaware of some aspect of his or her experience. The client is invited to amplify a subtle behavior . . . to heighten awareness. This allows the client to experience something that he or she had been avoiding, thereby facilitating integration.
6. *Dream analysis*—all parts of a dream are considered parts of the dreamer and are seen as the most spontaneous and uninhibited expression a person can make. The client retells the dream as though experiencing it here and now. The therapist then uses what is revealed by the dream to raise the client's awareness of self. This may mean the client acts out the dream's different elements Alternatively, dream analysis might involve finishing the dream in a different manner, or the therapist might ask the client to do an internal dialogue exercise with the dream to determine what it has to tell the person.
7. *Language of responsibility*—involves encouraging clients to say what they mean and mean what they say. This language injects real feeling into their words. It has three important aspects: (a) directness; (b) checking things out; and (c) first person, active speech. (pp. 89-90)

An exercise found in Strümpfel and Goldman (2002) that is often practiced in a group, is based in psychodrama, and called *representing* or *dramatizing* and has similar processes to FC. The clients are asked to assume roles of those that influence their lives by staging a family scene. “This is often practiced in groups in which different roles may be adopted by different people. . . .” (Strümpfel & Goldman, 2002, p. 207). One of the advantages in doing dramatization is that the possibilities are limitless. Other advantages include activating the emotional processes of the client and making the client more aware of his or her habitual patterns in order to break those habits (Strümpfel & Goldman, 2002). The client can see something tangible and living, something observable which can

have a powerful impact on health and well being.

“Within the field of humanistic psychotherapy, research and development in Gestalt therapy have shown how powerful and effective therapy can be in helping people lead healthier and more fulfilling lives” (Strümpfel & Goldman, 2002, p. 212). It is the hope that this study will show how powerful and effective FC can be in supporting a client to become aware of his or her perspectives, the reality that exists, and to acknowledge and accept what is there so the love that was once disconnected can begin to flow again in order to heal.

Transpersonal Psychology. Transpersonal psychology is defined as “extending or going beyond the personal or individual” and “of, relating to, or being psychology or psychotherapy concerned especially with esoteric mental experience (as mysticism and altered states of consciousness) beyond the usual limits of ego and personality” (Transpersonal, n.d.). “Efforts within transpersonal psychology are intended to help people explore levels of energy and awareness beyond or on the other side of the masks and patterns of the personality” (Brown, 2001, Transpersonal Psychology section, para. 1).

According to Brown (2001), transpersonal was coined by Maslow in a letter to Anthony Sutich:

The main reason I am writing is that, in the course of our conversations, we thought of using the word ‘transpersonal’ instead of the clumsier word “transhumanistic” or “transhuman.” The more I think of it, the more this word says what we are all trying to say, that is, beyond individuality, beyond development of the individual person into something that is more reclusive than the individual person or which is bigger than he is. (as cited by Brown, 2001, Transpersonal Psychology section, para. 2).

A transpersonal psychotherapy offers the framework and the techniques for

following a spiritual path, where the search of self-knowledge and the search for meaning are the same thing (Hardy, 1987, p. 33). Brown (2001) suggests that “it is likely that a dynamic, experiential, transpersonal approach to counseling will ensure positive outcomes from the use of techniques that alter, focus, shatter, or expand normal consciousness” (Transpersonal Psychology section, para. 8). He also suggests:

Three steps, however, must be followed: preparation, exploration, and integration. By purposefully separating from . . . ordinary life activities, preparation is made to enter unusual or altered states of consciousness. Exploration occurs through the use of explicit and often unfamiliar methods and techniques that drive awareness either more deeply inward or more expansively outward. Integration comes when the resulting visions, inspiration, and energy are grounded in specific action in daily life.

(Transpersonal Psychology section, para. 8)

These three steps seem to be followed throughout the process of FC. The separation can occur through filling out the paperwork/homework for the programs, at the workshops and inside the workshops, and through meditation. Exploration seems to occur through the filling out of the questionnaire and reading it aloud, learning new processes within FC, and doing a constellation. Integration comes in the form of the three-day rule of not talking about the process and the awareness that follows.

There appear to be many techniques in transpersonal psychology: some in creativity, some come from experiential techniques mentioned above, some from rituals, and even others rooted in spirituality. Brown (2001) gives a list, although not all-encompassing (an explanation of each is outside the scope of this study), it gives the therapist a good understanding and quite a few choices: creating mandalas, yoga, meditation, breath work, prayer, solitude, sweat lodge, etc.

One model of transpersonal psychology that will be discussed is psychosynthesis.

This model was chosen because its theory about consciousness, the unconscious, and the Higher Self or soul resonates with FC topics discussed in the “*Family Soul*” subsection of *FC Foundations* earlier in this chapter. Some psychosynthesis techniques will also be explored.

Psychosynthesis. According to Hardy (1987), Assagioli’s development of psychosynthesis sprang from Jungian thought:

Jung and Assagioli held that the unconscious is potential as well as problem, and that the two are related: it is in working through the past, the defenses that are no longer useful, and the Shadow, that the potential can be reached: creativity springs from these areas beyond the rational and the everyday mind. (Introduction)

Where Assagioli differs from Jung, Hardy (1987) states, is “its specific and explicit techniques to put the ‘repressed fragments’ back together again” (Introduction).

Hardy (1987) also states:

[Assagioli’s] purpose was to create a scientific psychology which encompassed the whole of man – creativity and will, joy and wisdom, as well as the impulses and drives. Moreover, he wanted psychology to be practical – not merely an understanding of how we live, but an aid to helping us live better, more fully, according to the best which is within us. (p. 13)

Psychosynthesis has the belief that a person has a personality with drives, defenses, roles, learned adaptations and consciousness and is a soul (Hardy, 1987). According to Hardy (1987), learning that the soul “can only be coped with by a strong and growing personality . . . the strength of the ‘I’” (p. 28) brings a knowledge and awareness that will aid in coming to terms with the lower unconscious.

According to Brown (2001), the client has an inner guide that can give him or her the answers searched for:

Psychosynthesis theory suggests that there is a principle of growth within the human psyche, an inner guide—the Higher Self—that can provide the inspiration

and wisdom that is necessary to understand more deeply, work more creatively, love more authentically, and meet the challenges of each stage in life successfully. (Psychosynthesis Model section, para.1)

Hardy (1987) states Assagioli described three levels of consciousness pertaining to his theory: the lower unconscious, the middle unconscious, and higher unconscious.

For a simple description of each, Brown (2001) states:

The lower unconscious might include energies and awareness that are associated with primitive instincts and passions, difficult dynamics, or traumas that have not been understood or integrated from the past, and the fears, resistances, and defenses that keep all of this out of sight. The middle unconscious might include energies and awareness that are associated with challenges, motivations, and activities of the present time. The higher unconscious could include energies and awareness that are associated with talents, abilities, potentials, and resources that can be developed in the future. (Psychosynthesis Model section, para.1)

As in FC, the client can use the inspiration of the Higher Self to push through those unconscious levels in order to yield healing and change:

When guided by the inspiration of the Higher Self, growth whether it is personal, professional, spiritual, organizational, or societal, seems to follow a spiraling and ever expanding progression through the lower, middle, and higher unconscious. Crisis catalyzes the process of change and heralds the need for healing, growth or transformation. It shatters the comfortable, often automatic patterns of thinking or behaving and forces awareness to become focused to the present. (Brown, 2001, Psychosynthesis Model section, para.12)

Sue Partman has a more simplistic explanation: “What is, is consciousness; what was, is the lower unconscious; what could be, is the superconscious. The aim of synthesis is to reduce this trinity back to a fully conscious oneness” (as cited by Hardy, 1987, p. 26).

Finally, the last important concept in the psychosynthesis model is “only therapists at peace with their own unconscious material should work with that of others” (Hardy, 1987, p. 81). This is also the belief of FC as seen in the trainings of facilitators

and practitioners.

Techniques: Psychosynthesis

There are many techniques within psychosynthesis. Hardy (1987) lists the following: word and free association, visualization, dreams, projective tests, free drawing and writing, and visualization. Also incorporated by psychosynthesis therapists are the dis-identification exercise, which brings recognition of the “I,” and Gestalt insights and methods. All of which seem to be able to tap into the unconscious levels.

Word and free association techniques “helped to buildup a picture of the client’s unconscious processes of thought, the linking of concepts and feelings at a deep level” (Hardy, 1987, p. 76). Dreams were chosen as a technique “because of the passive nature of the dream experience, and because dreams tend to give access to only one part of the unconscious – the lower unconscious” (p. 77).

Free drawing and writing can be used for assessment and as therapeutic tools according to Hardy (1987). “[The] client is asked to draw whatever comes to mind, either a particular theme or more open-endedly” (p. 78). When interpreting drawing techniques, “[Assagioli] emphasizes the use of insight rather than intellect when interpreting the drawing, and the assumption is that the person making the drawing will be most familiar with the meaning in interpreting it” (p. 78). It is the same for the interpretation of a constellation and the client’s experience. Neither the therapist/facilitator nor the participants interpret the constellation for the client because it is believed that the client will have the clearest and best perspective of meaning for him or her.

Visualization as seen in psychosynthesis is a conscious tool that is used. It uses all of the senses to get in touch with the unconscious and possible creative material. It is

done in the form of guided imagery, guided daydreams, and the use of myths and stories (Hardy, 1987). FC employ guided imagery, myths, and stories in its teachings as well. It is often used to support the participants to become present in the moment and prepare them for the constellation process to come.

Interest in the aforementioned theories seems to be growing and this has caused an evolution in experiential and transpersonal therapies, including emotion-focused or process-experiential therapy, body-oriented therapy, and mindfulness-based psychotherapies.

Integration of Family Constellations with Current Practice

Some of the research discovered discussed ways in which FC is utilized within the current practice of psychology and other disciplines. As shown in the discussions throughout this chapter, FC is often done in a group setting. The literature review findings in this section briefly discuss FC with individual therapy. In some instances, it is used to support or seal what was healed through a group experience. In other instances, it is utilized as a tool for individual or couple therapy. Various techniques can be used for the representatives: figurines, chairs, pieces of paper, and guided imagery to name a few. A few of the topics and areas in which FC are used include: chronic pain, organizational consultation, couples, trauma, use with EMDR, and self-abuse.

Chronic Pain. Gurevich (2005) discusses using FC with applied psychoneurobiology when working with medical conditions and pain patients. In relation to the ease of adapting it to his practice, Gurevich (2005) states, “Doing constellation work in my office with individuals has been fairly easy to adapt to my practice” (p. 23). When working with chronic pain patients, he begins with guided imagery so the patient can get

in touch with the pain using as many senses as possible. Personifying the pain, even giving it a name, helps the patient. “The patient can look at it, express his or her feelings and engage in conversation” (Gurevich, 2005, p. 33) during a constellation.

During the process of FC used by Gurevich (2005), the patient can express the felt emotions toward the pain, which is often anger. After the expression, Gurevich (2005) would have the patient ask the pain if there was any message and who may be behind the pain in the family system. According to Gurevich (2005), “This is usually a person with whom he or she has a significant conflict” (p. 34).

In a case study done by Gurevich (2005), he reports on a 50-year-old retired businessman with chronic pain. He was a closeted homosexual, married with children, who had not experienced relief of his chronic pain symptoms for over 10 years. For this constellation, Gurevich used chairs as representatives since this was not in a group format. What was worked on was healing the relationship between the patient and his father, as that is where most of the patient’s anger was directed. Gurevich (2005) reported, “There was significant relief after he [the patient] spent several minutes bowing deeply to his father, who had been dead for several years” (p. 24).

Organizationally. Peterson (2005) utilizes FC when working with and consulting business organizations. She mentions two roles of the facilitator, coach and consultant (Peterson, 2005). These roles depend upon whom she is assisting at the time: the manager or executive (coach) or the management of the organization (consultant).

Utilizing FC when working with organizations “. . . the consultant’s field of perception is the organization, the perspective is systemic, and the measure of success is the effect of the consultant’s input on the organization’s performance relative to its goals”

(Peterson, 2005, p. 143). It is important that an organizational constellation facilitator understands that the behavior of the system/organization “is not an arithmetic or mechanical sum of its parts. . . . You need a sense of the system as a whole since you will be asked to make changes in that living organism” (Peterson, 2005, p. 144). This is where FC may help.

According to Peterson (2005), there are five strategies or ways of working within organizations:

1. Spontaneous tabletop constellation, which allows the members to see where their perspectives on the organization may be out of synch. This very simple form of constellation shows the power of assuming and your client will know what to do when you act “as if” his or her business partner, the project or issue, and the team can be represented by an object taken from the table.
2. Standing in the other person’s shoes, which is a way of inviting members of a team to learn more about their fellow members’ experiences.
3. Show me what’s happening here, which shows the facts of an underlying situation clearly so that the group can move through a difficult situation together and take appropriate actions. This happens when a team can sense something is going on and they lack the courage to name it and get stuck in the issue.
4. Blind constellation, in which only the person setting up the constellation actually knows who is representing whom. This aids in less bias by the representatives and information or issues can be brought up confidentially.
5. Working covertly with family issues, which may surface in organizational constellations about 30-50% of the time. Neutral language is used in this strategy. For example, when a participant has a need for support from a father, “Imagine you have a resource behind you that will give you some backing to do what you need to do.” (pp. 145-149)

Peterson (2005) contends that organizational constellations are powerful due to the following reasons:

- They allow the manager to get a different perspective on issues and to observe the structure of the organization or the effects of the behaviors of

team members on the whole;

- Constellations . . . put this “felt sense” information into the preferred format for manipulating data in organizations;
- The manager can finally see what has been eluding his or her attempts to a solution;
- The constellation promotes “buy-in” from managers and ownership on the part of the client;
- They facilitate collective learning in work groups and quickly reveal the weakness or structural issues of leadership; and
- Constellations offer a direct route into shared, nonverbal conflict resolution in work teams and organizations. (pp. 149-151)

Couples. When working with couples, according to Lynch & Lynch (2005) there are six components of the couple system: attraction, commitment, intimacy and distance, equality, relationship purpose, and decision-making. In identifying the problems, the therapist can work with an individual from the couple or work directly with the couple. “The purpose of working with an individual while the partner witnesses is to remove a block to intimate relating. Such blocks include abortions or miscarriages that remain un-integrated into the current relationship. . . . others may include murders, suicides, or abuse” (p. 171). Working with a couple often entails the death of a child that has not been resolved. According to Lynch & Lynch (2005):

The death of a child is an event that has devastating effects on the couple system. . . . it leads to deep wounds in the relationship. . . . The resulting collateral damage is not receptive to healing through traditional talk therapies, even those that attempt to work with both members of the couple system. In general, there is an undercurrent of blame for this death that can either be directed at the self or the partner. (p. 177)

Lynch & Lynch (2005) state that there are general presenting problems in choosing to do a constellation with a couple:

- The couple speaks of pervasive unhappiness in the relationship;

- One of the partners is excessively jealous;
- The role of parent has overtaken the function as intimate partner in one or both individuals;
- The partners have fallen out of love;
- They experience unproductive arguments about finances, living arrangements, work, or other issues;
- One treats the other as a child rather than an equal. (p. 178)

As stated in previous sections, the influence of this work is felt beyond the individual or couple participating in the constellation. “Through the rendering of family constellations with the goal of freeing the couple system so the ‘orders of love’ can flow freely to children, kinship group, and beyond, this small system can have far-reaching and powerful effects” (Lynch & Lynch, 2005, p. 180).

With Eye Movement Desensitization Reprocessing. Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) works with FC by using the “orders of love” and resolution sentences, also known as healing sentences and according to Stuck (2005), “releasing statements” (p. 227). “EMDR therapy works directly with the cognitive, affective, and somatic components of the stored memories. It reprocesses the old stored experiences and helps to facilitate the forging of new associative experiences and more adaptive information” (p. 230). The processes of EMDR are used to “relieve present-moment negative cognitions and emotional distress. It presents possible alternative ways of feeling and thinking about one’s self once a trauma has obliterated, prevented, or distorted positive beliefs and feelings” (p. 231).

According to Stuck (2005), when EMDR and FC are paired together in a therapy session, they quickly generate significant results. Stuck (2005) states:

The real power of combining constellations and EMDR emanates from using “releasing statements” as formulated by Bert Hellinger as cognitive interweaves within EMDR. Reframing or cognitive interweaving depends on the data, the phenomenology of the client during EMDR, as realigning and releasing statements depend upon the phenomenology of the representatives in constellations. (p. 232)

The releasing statements, or statements of power, are used in the reframing step of the EMDR process and have a precise purpose, “The purpose of statements of power is to name the truth in a very concise and clear form, piercing the soul of the client” (Stuck, 2005, p. 235). This piercing of the soul during this step of the EMDR process illuminates new options for the clients, which “allows clients the new choice of living more fully and lovingly with the support of all who have gone before them” (p. 235).

Self-Abuse. In this instance, Wolynn (2005) discusses the case of a 24-year-old woman who cuts herself as a coping mechanism in order not to feel guilty. One of the first questions Wolynn (2005) asks himself is, “To which family member was she being loyal when she mutilated herself like this?” (p. 243). According to Levenkron, as cited in Wolynn (2005):

Individuals who harm themselves have often suffered sexual, emotional, or physical abuse from someone with whom there had been significant connection, such as a parent or sibling. Such abuse often results in a perceived loss or disruption of that relationship. The behavior of self-mutilation is then experienced as an attempt to escape from intolerable or painful feelings. (p. 244)

Through the process of investigation, Wolynn (2005) found out that the client’s father, when he was 8 years old, experienced the devastating trauma of his father being killed by a drunk driver. “The sudden and violent death of her grandfather left a wound in the family that rendered the grandfather ‘missing’ from the system. Missing, as well, was the driver who caused the accident” (Wolynn, 2005, p. 245). In order to come to a place of healing, the grandfather must be brought back into the family system as well as the

driver—as victims and perpetrators are linked.

The client was carrying what the father could not, the immense grief and hurt around the loss of his father. Another perspective would be that the client was attempting to help her father acknowledge his father again by cutting herself and appearing “dead.”

According to Wolynn (2005):

The solution, of course, is to be able to love the father without being sick. In constellation work, we bring the client into contact with her father, so that the client can see that the father wants his child to continue with life and to be healthy. The client then has a chance to move on in a different way, by honoring the fate of the father, and by taking life from him fully, exactly as it was given, with all of the consequences of that particular fate.
(p. 247)

The process began with the client’s eyes closed and picturing her father and grandfather in an embrace. The goal of this constellation was to acknowledge the grandfather and the driver in order for her father to see and acknowledge them (Wolynn, 2005). In doing so, she is allowed to take her rightful place in the family as the daughter, the child. When the client reported for the next session, Wolynn (2005) states the client reported the constellation having a profound effect on her, “I think about my grandfather now. Before he was just a picture. The whole made his existence more real.” Concerning the driver, Wolynn (2005) stated the client “told me when the two men had embraced in her inner image, each was at peace with what had happened. This put her into a deep peace she couldn’t explain” (p. 249).

This chapter discussed the research found that applies and relates to Family Constellations. It is but a small glimpse into the vast universe of FC when working with psychological issues and in conjunction with other psychotherapy techniques. The chapter explicated the foundations and processes of FC, discussed its relationship to

psychological theories, as well as its position in current psychological practice. This study may give the mental health profession another approach. Since there is also a shortage of research on this topic, this study may also help bridge the gaps between studies and experiences, and may increase and demonstrate the efficacy of the family constellation work.

In the next chapter, the research model of heuristic inquiry will be discussed in detail as well as its basis in qualitative research and the reasoning for selecting it.

Chapter III: Research Model

In this chapter the basis of selection of the research model of heuristic inquiry, qualitative research, and the philosophy, concepts, phases, and design of the research model is discussed. Using this research modality allows for exploration of the meanings and essences of the Clients' Experiences of Family Constellations in Psychological Healing, to increase the knowledge and possibilities of FC, and to best serve and support clients and those around them. My interest in this study comes from my own experience using Family Constellations in healing my life. The interest in using this research model is three-fold:

- (1) To explore and explicate the essence of the experience for the participant, as there is minimal research presently;
- (2) The heuristic inquiry concepts and process are very similar to the process of Family Constellations; and
- (3) I am extremely passionate about this work and passion for the topic is very important when doing research as Douglass and Moustakas (1985) support, "When passionate, disciplined commitment is brought in the search to illuminate a question or discover a solution to a problem, heuristic research has fulfilled the vital first step" (p. 41).

My goal is to delve into the lives of the participants to find out what they felt, what they thought, and perhaps shed some light in order to better understand their lived experience, and increase their awareness of self, relationships with others and the world. I also hope that this study will give a voice to FC and spread the word about this tool of healing. I am anticipating that the participant's awareness along with my own will be

illuminated during the process and that efforts of others to understand the psychological and emotional implications of this approach will emerge. To begin, it is essential to explain the essence of qualitative research and its purpose.

Heuristic Inquiry Research Model

The meaning of the word heuristic was born “from the Greek word *heuriskein*, meaning to discover or find. It refers to a process of internal search through which one discovers the nature and meaning of experience and develops methods and procedures for further investigation and analysis” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 9). During this process, the researcher will come across moments of “eureka” or “aha” not only about the human phenomenon studied but also about awareness significant to his or her personal experiences, relationships, and life.

The basis of heuristics, Moustakas (1990) states:

. . . is not one that can be hurried or timed by the clock or calendar. It demands the total presence, honesty, maturity, and integrity of a researcher who not only strongly desires to know and understand but is willing to commit endless hours of sustained immersion and focused concentration on one central question, to risk the opening of wounds and passionate concerns, and to undergo the personal transformation that exists as a possibility in every heuristic journey. (p. 14)

Furthermore, Douglass and Moustakas (1985) state:

Heuristic research is a search for the discovery of meaning and essence in significant human experience. It requires a subjective process of reflecting, exploring, sifting, and elucidating the nature of the phenomenon under investigation. Its ultimate purpose is to cast light on a focused problem, question, or theme. (p. 40)

Concepts of Heuristic Inquiry. The concepts of the heuristic inquiry model include indwelling, tacit knowing, intuition, self-dialogue/self-exploration, focusing, and internal frame of reference.

Indwelling. The reflective part of the inquiry begins with indwelling, “the heuristic process of turning inward to seek a deeper, more extended comprehension of the nature of meaning of a quality or theme of human experience” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 24). Indwelling occurs when the researcher intentionally turns inward to gain a greater understanding of the meaning of a particular quality or theme of experience (Bach, 2002). This is not a linear process.

It takes concentration and unwavering consideration of a human experience so one can understand its fundamental traits as well as the experience as a whole. This process occurs throughout the research experience, especially in the explication phases of the inquiry. Moustakas (1990) further explains:

Indwelling is a painstaking, deliberate process. Patience and incremental understanding are the guidelines. Through indwelling, the heuristic investigator finally turns the corner and moves toward the ultimate creative synthesis that portrays the essential qualities and meanings of an experience. (p. 25)

Indwelling is the taking of the knowledge acquired and making it a part of one’s personal structure and foundation. In doing so the researcher begins to use it as an addition to one’s self. It becomes a felt meaning, which allows the knowledge to become relevant and personally meaningful (Bach, 2002), thus adding to our internal frame of reference.

Self-Dialogue. In the process, a more definitive awareness is formed and one’s frame of reference deepens thus beginning the process of self-dialogue:

Self-dialogue is the critical beginning; the recognition that if one is going to be able to discover the constituents and qualities that make up an experience, one must begin with oneself. One’s own self-discoveries, awarenesses, and understandings are the initial steps of the process. (Moustakas, 1994, p. 16)

At this point, the researcher must be honest with her or him self about the experiences that are relevant to the topic as well as trust one's self-awareness and understanding. This process of self-dialogue "is guided by a conception that knowledge grows out of direct human experience and can be discovered and explicated initially through self-inquiry" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 17). It is in this process that the researcher faces all experiences pertinent to the topic and an important part of the research is self-disclosure of those experiences. "At the heart of heuristics lies an emphasis on disclosing the self as a way of facilitative disclosure from others—a response to the tacit dimension within oneself sparks a similar call from others" (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985, p. 50).

Tacit Knowledge. A by-product of the immersion process is tacit knowledge, "the base of all heuristic discovery, . . . the power of revelation. . ." (Moustakas, 1990, p. 20). Tacit knowledge "allows one to sense the unity or wholeness of something from an understanding of the individual qualities or parts" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 20). Douglass and Moustakas (1985) explicate the importance of tacit knowledge in the heuristic process:

Knowing more than can be articulated shrouds discovery in mystery, lending intrigue to immersion in the theme or question. In actually obtaining data, the tacit dimension is the forerunner of inference and intuition, guiding the person to untapped aspects of awareness in nonlinear ways that elude analysis or explanation. In this sense, the tacit is visionary; it incorporates the aesthetic and artistic aspects of consciousness without neglecting the clue of cognition. Once a certain facet of experience has been identified, it is no longer tacit – it can be described, illustrated, it takes its position in our awareness of new reality. Tacit knowing operates behind the scenes, giving birth to the hunches and vague, formless insights that characterize heuristic discovery. (p. 49)

Tacit knowledge is what the heuristic process seeks to reveal because often we know things without understanding how we know them (Bach, 2002). This is where our

intuition becomes illuminated.

Intuition. “Intuition makes immediate knowledge possible without the intervening steps of logic and reasoning” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 23). According to Douglass and Moustakas (1985), “Through intuition I reach beyond the scope of usual perceptual abilities and discover knowledge and meaning unexpectedly and implicitly” (p. 50). Bach (2002) contends that intuition “involves tentative awareness, a hunch. It bridges the tacit and the explicit” (p. 94). Intuition allows the researcher to gain clues from his or her observations and build upon those clues and previous knowledge about the topic (Bach, 2002).

It seems the immersion of the researcher into the topic allows for a deeper connection with others who have had similar experiences, mainly the co-researchers. It is part of the intuitive-reflective process of the study. This process plays a large role for the researcher when interviewing as well as interpreting the data and putting the methods, core processes, methodology, and procedures into action.

Focusing. The meaning that is at the center of this process is self-focus. One begins by questioning and acknowledging the reactions of the body, really listening to what those reactions create or say, followed by speaking with the feelings attached, shifting physically in some way, and finally growth, insight, and understanding of self, an experience, and the research develops (Gendlin, 1981). As Cornell (1996) writes, “Focusing allows all the parts of our self to be heard” (p. 21). This results in the discovery of the themes and qualities of the phenomenon studied.

For Moustakas (1990), “Focusing is an inner attention, a staying with, a sustained, process of systematically contacting the more central meanings of an experience” (p. 25).

It enables the researcher to see things as they are and have the ability to shift things by cleaning up the confusion in order to make aware the insights of one's experiences (Moustakas, 1990).

The steps to focusing in heuristic research include:

. . . the clearing of an inward space to enable one to tap into thoughts and feelings that are essential to clarifying a question; getting a handle on the question; elucidating its constituents; making contact with core themes; and explicating the themes. (Moustakas, 1990, p. 25)

Focusing allows the researcher to determine what is important or significant to the essence of the theme or research. Douglass and Moustakas (1985) explain:

Focusing and differentiating are not used to judge, to categorize, or to exclude; rather, they supplement the powers of perception, permitting the person to move with the flow of experience more freely toward inclusion of all that will reveal the phenomenon effectively. (p. 51)

With curiosity peaked, focusing aids in the illumination of thoughts and feelings of the researcher, allowing clarity to form about the topic and themes, in order to explicate them; this process takes place without judgment in order to move forward in the experience of the subject matter.

Internal Frame of Reference. All of the processes mentioned previously relate back to the researcher's internal frame of reference and knowledge gained through the processes. "Whether the knowledge derived is attained through tacit, intuitive, or observed phenomena—whether the knowledge is deepened and extended through indwelling, focusing, self-searching, or dialogue with others—its medium or base is the internal frame of reference" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 26). The researcher's internal frame of reference enables him or her to begin to know and understand another's experience. This gives the researcher a foundation and an empathic understanding with which to approach

the inquiry of another.

Only the experiencing persons—by looking at their own experiences in perceptions, thoughts, feelings, and sense—can validly provide portrayals of the experience.

Our most significant awarenesses are developed from our own internal searches and from our attunement and empathic understandings of others. (Moustakas, 1990, p. 26)

The internal frame of reference is the researcher's foundation for the inquiry and experience. It is a beginning point and has the potential by the end of the process to expand the researcher's internal frame of reference and increase his or her growth and knowledge.

Phases of Heuristic Inquiry. The concepts explained previously can be found throughout the phases of heuristic inquiry as well as being found throughout the design, method and procedures. The phases consist of the initial engagement, immersion into the question/topic and data, incubation, illumination, explication, and the pinnacle of the research in the form of a creative synthesis.

Initial Engagement. In this phase, the researcher uses self-dialogue, intuition, and tacit knowledge to (1) form a question, (2) identify an area of passionate interest or concern, and (3) begins the process of finding personal connections to the topic (Bach, 2002). "During the initial engagement, the investigator reaches inward for tacit awareness and knowledge, permits intuition to run freely, and elucidates the context from which the question takes form and significance" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 27).

In formulating the question, a topic is chosen that has social meaning and personal significance. The question must be clear and distinct, and the key words defined and clarified. There must be a curiosity and excitement about the topic in order to carry the

researcher through to the end of the study. Moustakas (1990) lists the characteristics a question/topic should have:

- It seeks to reveal more fully the essence or meaning of a phenomenon of human experience;
- It seeks to discover the qualitative aspects, rather than the quantitative dimensions of the phenomenon;
- It engages one's total self and evokes a personal and passionate involvement and active participation in the process;
- It does not seek to predict or to determine causal relationships;
- It is illuminated through careful descriptions, illustrations, metaphors, poetry, dialogue, and other creative renderings rather than by measurements, ratings or scores. (p. 42)

Immersion. Immersion is like diving into a body of water to see what is underneath, and being aware of one's surroundings and feelings when swimming, holding one's breath, discovering what one sees and experiences with awe and wonderment.

Immersion involves search from the internal frame of reference. Because it is my experience that is most germane in heuristic inquiry, I must stay in touch with the innumerable perceptions and awarenesses that are purely my own, without the interference of restrictions or judgments, with total disregard for conformity or congruence. (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985, p. 47)

After the question is found, the immersion process allows the researcher to become intimate with the question in order to gain knowledge and understanding. This also occurs during transcription and analysis of the data. "Virtually anything connected with the question becomes raw material for immersion, for staying with, and for maintaining a sustained focus and concentration" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 28).

To assist in immersing, the concepts of spontaneous self-dialogue and self-searching, engaging with intuitive messages and allowing the sources of energy fueling

tacit knowledge to form are imperative. It is in this phase that the “depth and breadth of knowledge is obtained” (Bach, 2002, p. 95). One dives in, exploring the topic through his or her self-experience and that of the co-researchers. It is intense and sometimes overwhelming. In this phase, it feels as though the researcher eats, breathes, sleeps, and sometimes dreams the topic.

Incubation. The APA Dictionary of Psychology (incubation, 2007) defines incubation as “the gradual generation of a solution to a problem at an unconscious or semiconscious level, often after an attempt at a conscious, deliberate solution has failed” (p. 474).

Incubation, in heuristic research, is a way to step away from the research and allow one’s intuition and tacit knowledge to simmer, bubble, and finally come to the surface. The incubation process “gives birth to a new understanding or perspective that reveals additional qualities of the phenomenon, or a vision of its unity” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 29). The incubation period is a way to allow for enlightenment or clarifications related to the topic to be revealed.

The process of incubation may include working on something that is unrelated to the topic, exercising, spending time with family, doing artwork, etc. It consists of spending time away from the research for various periods until the researcher deems he or she is ready to jump into the topic again. The researcher determines if he or she is ready by the level of awareness gained in this phase. Incubation happens throughout the research process in various stages.

Illumination. The enlightenment related to the research topic is known as illumination. It happens when the researcher is open to receiving and becomes aware of

the information gained in the incubation phase. “Illumination opens the door to a new awareness, a modification of an old understanding, a synthesis of fragmented knowledge, or an altogether new discovery of something that has been present for some time yet beyond immediate awareness” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 30).

Illumination is “a moment of insight, for example into the nature and processes of an interpersonal relationship, the solutions to a problem, or understanding of an event” (Illumination, 2007, p. 466). Bach (2002) further explains illumination “typically awakens new knowledge, such as awareness of various qualities and themes of the topic or corrections to misunderstood information” (p. 95). It requires patience and openness from the researcher as illumination cannot be rushed or structured (Bach, 2002).

Illumination is the “aha” moment, the “Eureka” moment when the information and/or data begin to make sense and a renewed passion continues to occur. The feeling of being overwhelmed may turn to excitement and curiosity fueling the researcher forward in his or her desire to begin to explain what was found or illuminated.

Explication. The explication phase uses the new awarenesses and knowledge revealed through illumination to understand and then explain the underlying meanings. “The purpose of the explication phase is to fully examine what has awakened in consciousness, in order to understand its various layers of meaning” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 31). In this phase, the researcher utilizes many of the concepts discussed previously: focusing, indwelling, self-searching, and self-disclosure. It is also recognized that “the meanings are unique and distinctive to an experience and depend upon internal frame of references” (p. 31).

It is imperative that the researcher pays attention to awarenesses, feelings,

thoughts, beliefs, and judgments in order to understand what comes from speaking with others as participants in the research (Moustakas, 1990). In doing so, focusing and indwelling can be the most important concepts in this phase. These concepts allow for “creating an inward space and discovering nuances, textures, and constituents of the phenomenon” (p. 31).

In this phase, “the researcher examines all knowledge obtained from self, co-researchers, and any other sources to understand the various facets of meaning” (Bach, 2002, p. 96). This can induce understandings and illuminate changes; corrections are made and new aspects discovered and reported. Through the core themes, changes and understandings in this phase an organized, complete description of the essence of the experience arises painting as complete a picture as possible.

Creative Synthesis. This is the final stage and happens when, according to Moustakas (1990), the researcher “is thoroughly familiar with all the data in its major constituents, qualities, and themes and in the explication of the meanings and details of the experience as a whole” (p. 31). Once this occurs one uses tacit knowledge and intuition to create and express all that was learned in a creative way. It can be through music, poetry, art, a story, etc.

It is important to note “a period of solitude and meditation focusing on the topic and question are the essential preparatory steps for the inspiration that eventually enable a creative synthesis” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 32) thus utilizing the tacit dimension, intuition, and self-searching. “The creative synthesis can only be achieved through tacit and intuitive powers” (p. 31).

Design of Heuristic Inquiry Research. After the formulation of a question, the

next step is to define the terms of the question and immerse into the topic. This begins by developing the methods of preparation.

Preparation. The methods of preparation include, the immersion, illumination and explication phases while the researcher's experience of the phenomenon, the clinical, social, and professional implications and the terms of the research question are developed and explicated.

The literature review is conducted to place the study within the most recent literature and studies presently published. According to Moustakas (1990), the researcher includes an introduction of the topic and its significance and an overview of the methodological challenges. The literature review also includes a description of the how the researcher determined what literature to include and how choices were made, a cluster of themes and patterns of the findings, and a summary of conclusions that distinguish the proposed study from the literature review according to the knowledge sought.

Once the preceding steps are taken, the researcher is ready to develop methods of preparation:

- (1) Developing a set of instructions that will inform potential co-researchers of the nature of the research design, its purpose and process, and what is expected of them.
- (2) Locating and acquiring research participants, developing a set of criteria for selection of participants—for example, age, sex, socioeconomic and education factors, ability to articulate the experience, cooperation, interest, willingness to make the commitment, enthusiasm, and degree of involvement.
- (3) Developing a contract, which includes time commitments, place, confidentiality, informed consent, opportunities for feedback, permission to tape record, permission to use material in a thesis, dissertation, and/or other publications, and verification of findings.
- (4) Considering ways of creating an atmosphere or climate that will encourage trust, openness, and self-disclosure.

- (5) Using relaxation/meditation activities to facilitate a sense of comfort, relaxation, and at-homeness [*sic*].
- (6) Constructing a way of apprising co-researchers during the “collection of research data” phase of the importance of immersion and intervals of concentration and respite. (Moustakas, 1990, p. 46)

Collecting Data. The collection of the data consists of recording, observing, and taking notes during a personal interview. Kvale and Brinkman (2009) state:

An interview is a conversation that has a structure and a purpose. It goes beyond the spontaneous exchange of views in every day conversations, and becomes a careful questioning and listening approach with the purpose of obtaining thoroughly tested knowledge. (p. 3)

Knowledge is neither inside a person nor outside in the world, but exists in the relationship between persons and the world. (p. 53)

Like psychotherapy, the atmosphere between the researcher and interviewee is important as well as the aspect of feeling safe. A self-disclosing and personal encounter requires a sacredness and respect. Before the interview begins, the researcher may begin with the process of meditation or visualization in order to create a safe and conducive interview atmosphere for the co-researcher.

The process of the interview is not rushed or held to a time constraint. Qualitative interviews are where, according to Moustakas (1990):

. . . one is encouraged to permit ideas, thoughts, feelings, and images to unfold and be expressed naturally. The inquiry is complete only when the individual has had an opportunity to tell his or her story to a point of natural closing. (p. 46)

Interviewing is not only about obtaining the facts and data, characteristics of the interview are important to know in order to attain as much from the experience as possible. Kvale and Brinkman (2009) list 12 aspects of qualitative research interviews that describe the interview characteristics:

- Life world: the everyday world with which the interviewee has relation (much

like internal frame of reference).

- Meaning: the interview seeks to interpret the meaning of central themes in the life world of the interviewee.
- Qualitative: seeks the quality and not the quantity of the knowledge.
- Descriptive: the interview attempts to obtain open degrees of descriptions from the interviewee's life world.
- Specificity: the interviewee describing specific situations and actions related to the topic.
- Deliberate naiveté: the interviewer embraces naiveté in order to be open to new and unexpected data.
- Focus: the interviewer becomes focused on particular themes or topics.
- Ambiguity: occurs as contradictions in the life world of the interviewee.
- Change: the process of being interviewed may change the interviewee by providing new insights and awareness and therefore change his or her descriptions and meanings of the topic.
- Sensitivity: the interviewer's levels of sensitivity can effect the statements of the interviewee.
- Interpersonal Situation: knowledge is obtained via this aspect.
- Positive Experience: if the interview is well carried out, it can be an enriching experience for all involved as new insights may be illuminated throughout the process. (p. 28)

Keeping these aspects in mind, the researcher decides the approach to take for the interview. There are three types of approaches when collecting data for heuristic inquiry

research, as stated by Moustakas (1990):

- (1) The informal conversational interview that relies on a spontaneous generation of questions and conversations in which the co-researcher participates in a natural, unfolding dialogue with the primary investigator.
- (2) The general interview guide that outlines a set of issues or topics to be explored that might be shared with co-researchers as the interview unfolds, thus focusing on common information to be sought from all co-researchers.
- (3) The standardized open-ended interview that consists of carefully worded questions that all research participants will be asked. (p. 47)

After the interview is conducted, the researcher uses the entire process with the next interviewee until all interviews are completed. Once all are completed, the researcher begins to organize, analyze, and synthesize the data.

Organizing, Analyzing, and Synthesizing Data. Organizing, analyzing, and synthesizing the data begins when the researcher has transcriptions of the interviews and is ready to immerse in them. As the researcher studies the transcription information, he or she travels through the phases of initial engagement, immersion, incubation, illumination, and explication.

Initial engagement, immersion, and incubation are the key phases for getting to know thoroughly the data collected. The initial engagement begins at the interview and through the transcribing. This is the first time the researcher will hear about the experience and be able to see the interview in writing. The researcher then immerses herself or himself in the data collected by listening to the interviews and reading the transcripts and notes repeatedly until the researcher is satisfied he or she understands every inch of the data (Moustakas, 1990). After the immersion phase, the researcher incubates or steps away from the data collected so elucidation of the data can become

known (Moustakas, 1990). This begins the phase of illumination.

At the phase of illumination, the researcher begins to see core themes and patterns appear. With these developments, the researcher begins to explicate what is noticed and observed creating individual depictions from each co-researcher's transcript. The individual depictions may include descriptions, sequences of events, and quotes taken from the interview, as well as creative modalities like poetry or art (Moustakas, 1990). Once the individual depictions are complete, each interviewee is given the opportunity to read, edit, and provide feedback on his or her depiction to ensure validation.

Once the individual depictions are deemed valid, the researcher combines all of the knowledge and experiences illuminated from the individual depictions into a composite depiction:

The composite depiction (a group depiction reflecting the experience of individual participants) includes exemplary narratives, descriptive accounts, conversations, illustrations, and verbatim excerpts that accentuate the flow, spirit, and life inherent in the experience. It should be vivid, accurate, alive, and clear, and encompass the core qualities and themes inherent in the experience. The composite depiction includes all of the core meanings of the phenomenon as experienced by the individual participants and by the group as whole. (Moustakas, 1990, p. 52)

Next, the researcher returns one more time to the transcriptions and individual depictions and selects two or three that "clearly exemplify the group as a whole" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 52). Then individual portraits of those chosen are completed by utilizing participant transcriptions, individual depictions, autobiographical information and material from earlier contacts and meetings as well as from personal documents that were shared during the interview (Moustakas, 1990). Important to note, according to Moustakas (1990), is that "the individual portraits should be presented in such a way that

both the phenomenon investigated and the individual persons emerge in a vital and unified manner” (p. 52).

Finally, a creative synthesis is produced. Moustakas (1990) best describes and sums up the creative synthesis and its process:

The researcher as scientist-artist develops an aesthetic rendition of the themes and essential meanings of the phenomenon. The researcher taps into imaginative and contemplative sources of knowledge and insight in synthesizing the experience, in presenting the discovery of essences – peaks and valleys, highlights and horizons.

In the creative synthesis, there is free reign of thought and feeling that supports the researcher’s knowledge, passion, and presence; this infuses the work with a personal, professional, and literary value that can be expressed through a narrative, story, poem, work of art, metaphor, analogy, or tale. (p. 52)

It is hoped that this creative synthesis will capture the full essence of the proposed study and integrate the work, dedication, knowledge, and wisdom gained from researching this topic. This may include the artistic rendering of the process itself, the thoughts, feelings, and experiences encountered, and the passion for and the soul within Family Constellations.

Explored in this chapter were the reasons for choosing the qualitative research model of heuristic inquiry and how it will enhance the study; the concepts, processes, and phases of the model as well as the research design. In the next chapter, a report on the methods and procedures that were used to conduct the study are explicated.

Chapter IV: Methods and Procedures

In this chapter, I discuss the methods of preparing for data collection; collecting the data; and organizing, analyzing, and synthesizing the data.

Methods and Procedures Used in Preparation to Collect Data

The methods and procedures of preparation include the formulation of the research question, conducting a literature review, choosing criteria for selecting participants, obtaining informed consent, developing questions for interviewing, choosing a location, and ethical responsibilities regarding research.

Formulation of the Question: A Self-Dialogue. Initially, the research question was very different from the one of this study. It was related to sport psychology, a topic that was very familiar but one that became dull. Many years were spent identifying as an athlete. Being involved with sport by playing, coaching, and consulting for over 30 years combined had the passion lessen about the topic of the first proposal and a strong avoidance began to occur. Motivation and interest was waning and the first study began to be like just another paper to write and, at times, torturous. There was a deep desire to be told what to do and what was wanted by the committee. The study was no longer motivated by personal curiosity or passion. What it came down to was continuing on that course in order not to disappoint anyone.

People began asking if a change in topic was going to occur. The above-mentioned feelings were not shared and after four occurrences of being asked, serious consideration about changing the topic began. How did those people know? Why were they asking? It would be so much work; so much would have to change. Fear had a stranglehold.

After months of deliberation and avoidance, and having an amazing conversation at 2:00 a.m. one night with a very good friend, the true calling to explore the core tenants of Family Constellations (FC) came to fruition. This passion was missing from the first study. Sports had served its purpose. There was a realization that it was time to do something of present personal interest, really for the first time ever. An awareness of the work that had to be done to start over and the changes that had to be made to the committee were becoming illuminated. The aspect of disapproval was scary, but the dedication to this topic/path in life/calling far outweighed the fear. The life and career changes were exciting so the push forward began.

Motivation in forming the new question was that the dissertation had to have deep meaning and possibly touch those that would be reading it. Advice to begin writing the first chapter before worrying about the specifics of the question was given from the chairperson. As the immersion into the process began, a realization was illuminated: this work and personal experience was about psychological healing and the immensity of the words was not only in meaning but also in emotion. Thus the formulation of client's experiences of Family Constellations in psychological healing was born.

Literature Review. In the literature review, it is the job of the researcher to place his or her study within the most recent literature and studies presently published. The study used the thematic review of the literature. For this option, over 50 materials including scholarly articles and books as well as mainstream and modern literature were used and organized into themes. A detailed explanation of the process is found in Chapter II.

Criteria, Method and Recruitment of Co-Researchers. When selecting the

participants, one must take into consideration the age, race, religion, ethnic and culture, gender, political beliefs, and socio-economic factors as relevant to the topic. The criteria for the selection of co-researchers/participants for this study were as follows:

- Men or women 25 years old and older;
- Personal experience with Family Constellations as a client, representative, or witness with a trained facilitator via telephone sessions, individual sessions, and/or workshops or training programs at least once.

From this criteria, a list of possible co-researchers was compiled, a letter with contact information (Appendix B) was distributed to explain what the study was about, the criteria, and what was expected from the co-researcher. This was done via email with a follow-up phone call or email after two weeks. The researcher was available for questions by means of email or cell phone to further explain the study.

The following co-researchers, using pseudonyms, were chosen according to the criteria mentioned above:

1. Paul is a retired business executive and Marine. He is 69 years old. He has participated in Family Constellations work since 2003 by attending several weekend seminars in various cities and states and a student of the Family Constellations immersion program for two years.
2. Colleen is a 47-year-old woman, former nurse, and currently an energy therapist. She has been involved with Family Constellations for three years via telephone sessions, workshops, the immersion program and uses the modality with her own clients.

3. Roark is a 48-year-old male, musician, healer, and former engineer. He first participated in a workshop in 2009 and was a student in the immersion program for two years. He currently facilitates workshops.
4. Max is a 52-year-old male. He works in the science field and has been experiencing Family Constellations for one year through the immersion program.
5. Esmeralda is a business manager. She is 54 years old. Her first experience with Family Constellations was in 2004 and she has participated in many workshops, one-on-one sessions, and telephone sessions.
6. Ruby is a 40-year-old female. She is an educator and has been involved with Family Constellations since 2010 through telephone sessions, workshops, and the immersion program.
7. Teresa is a 37-year-old woman who works in the medical field. She has been doing Family Constellations via telephone sessions for one-and-a-half years.
8. Trixie is a 45 year-old businesswoman. Her Family Constellations experience consists of one year with telephone sessions and the immersion program.
9. Jack is a life coach. He is 62 years old. He has been involved with Family Constellations through the immersion program for one year.
10. Walter is a social worker who is 70 years old. He has been involved with Family Constellations for four years as a client, student, and facilitator of constellations in his private practice.

11. Amy is a 53-year-old woman who is a therapist. She began doing individual constellations in 2010. She attended the immersion program and volunteers at a constellation program in the prison system.
12. Alma is a holistic energy healer and Alexander Technique teacher. She is 40 years old and has been a student of Family Constellations for three years. She has also been using Family Constellations with her clients for two years.
13. Laura is a 26-year-old woman and practicing clinical psychologist. She has been involved with Family Constellations for over a year via telephone sessions.
14. Jules, 54 years old, is a counselor and energy/body worker. She began working with Family Constellations in the immersion program in 2011.
15. Dianna Lynn is a 57-year-old woman who is an “alternative health professional.” She began as a student of Family Constellations in 2004. She became an apprentice in 2005 and a co-teacher in 2007. She has participated in workshops taught by Bert Hellinger. Currently she is in private practice using Family Constellations with her clients.

Instructions and Informed Consent Forms to Co-Researchers. The next step is the obtainment of two necessary forms: the Instruction to Research Participants (Appendix C) and the Informed Consent (Appendix D). The Informed Consent follows APA ethical guidelines for research. Each co-researcher signed an informed consent form before his or her interview. This form contains the nature and purpose of the study as well as the interviewing and taping processes, time commitment, publishing consent, the

right to withdraw or back out, confidentiality, instructions, expectations, referral options, and explanation of the study. After the forms were in the researcher's possession, there was communication with the participants via email and/or telephone to set up interview dates, locations, and times. This communication asked the co-researcher to begin to think about his or her experiences of Family Constellations in psychological healing. This was intended to stimulate their thoughts and feelings for the interview.

Developing Interview Questions. When the interview questions were developed, it was pertinent that the questions would not guide or lead the participant in any way. I made sure the co-researchers ran with their thoughts and experiences about Family Constellations and understood there were no restrictions or rules. The importance of open-ended questions and being in the moment with co-researchers was pertinent (Appendix E). A combination of the standardized open-ended interview, which uses "carefully worded questions that all research participants will be asked" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 47) and the informal conversational interview, which "relies on a spontaneous generation of questions and conversations in which the co-researcher participates in a natural unfolding dialogue," (p. 47) were used.

The questions developed from the discussion in Chapter I and with input from the chairperson. A demographic questionnaire for background and contact information was also included (Appendix F).

Choosing the Location of the Interview. The locations chosen for the interviews were varied, as the co-researchers were from different cities and states. Two co-researchers were interviewed in their homes. The rest of the interviews were done via telephone while in their homes or offices. I was in a quiet and private room to ensure

confidentiality.

Ethical Responsibilities Regarding Research. Ethics are very important when doing research for the protection of the co-researchers. The American Psychological Association has a very specific outline of ethics concerning research in their ethics code, and those applicable codes were followed closely (Appendix G).

Methods and Procedures Used in Collecting the Data

The collection of the data consisted of the personal interviews with 15 co-researchers. The following materials were at the face-to-face interviews: an iPod and/or iPhone recording device with a power cord, a microphone, a notebook and pens, a watch, and list of questions.

For recording telephone interviews, RecordiaPro (www.RecordiaPro.com) was obtained. It is a confidential web-based telephone conversation recording company that “employs strict security using extensive data encryption measures and SSL to ensure your privacy” (RecordiaPro.com, RecordiaPro Gold page, para. 18).

I used my cell phone, had a notebook and pen available, as well as sat in a private, quiet room of my home or office. Before each of the 15 interviews, I meditated and cleared my mind. Next, I greeted the co-researcher, hoping to make him or her as comfortable as possible. The co-researcher was asked to take a few deep breaths to help with relaxation and clarity. Afterward, the first question was asked. During the interview, clarifying questions were asked when necessary as well as questions that pertained to going deeper into the experience.

After the interview was finished, I focused on the affect of the co-researcher and checked in with him or her. Appreciation was expressed to the co-researcher by thanking

him or her for the time given. There was a prompt about possible future contact in order to ask clarifying questions. Co-researchers were reminded about my contact information, the referral option, and that a copy of the individual depiction would be sent to check for accuracy.

Methods and Procedures Used in Organization, Analysis, and Synthesis of Data

Organizing, analyzing, and synthesizing the data began with hiring the web-based company ADA Transcriptions to transcribe the interviews. The transcriptionist signed a confidentiality agreement before the audio files were sent (Appendix H). The audio files were emailed to the transcriber and labeled with the participants' aliases. The transcriptionist sent her completed transcriptions in a Microsoft Word document. The audio and written files were deleted once the research process was completed. The hard copies were kept in a locked file box in folders labeled with the participants' aliases until end of May 2013.

The immersion and incubation process is timeless, there is no definitive time to be used or taken. Immersion included reviewing the interview transcriptions and any notes taken during the interview, and listening to the recordings several times while reading the transcripts in order to understand as fully as possible the experiences in detail and as a whole. Incubation included spending time with family, being alone in nature or in a favorite room, listening to music, sipping a favorite tea, and/or spending time with friends. The incubation phase brought about rest and recharge for the next go around of immersion in the data.

When I felt fully engaged and learned all I could through the immersion and incubation process, the illumination phase began. This phase had me begin to see the core

themes, patterns, and qualities from the transcripts and the notes taken during the interview. The gathering of quotations, awarenenses, and information to use in the explication phase was done as well.

Individual and Composite Depictions. The explication phase is utilized in heuristic inquiry via the data organization and analysis when constructing the individual and composite depictions. To begin, the data collected was used as well as the knowledge gained from the illumination phase to create an individual representation of the co-researchers' experiences.

Once the individual depiction was completed for each co-researcher, a validation of the data was done. In order to validate the data, a copy of his or her individual depiction was sent to each of the co-researchers to check for accuracy. The co-researcher was instructed to make any corrections or additions necessary by a certain date and email them to or call me. The previous steps, including this one, continued for each co-researcher. Then, four individual depictions were chosen to be included in the study based upon how well the themes were represented.

The formation of the composite depiction began once the individual depictions were completed and validated. In order to become aware of the main themes, essences, and qualities, an immersion into the individual depictions commenced until I felt all possible was acquired from the representations. Then a period of incubation followed to allow for illumination. After illumination was complete, clarification of the knowledge acquired began via the explication phase. In order to complete the composite depiction, all 15 of the individual co-researchers' experiences were developed into one illustration including core themes, qualities, and experiences that took place.

Individual Portraits. In order to best illustrate the group completely, four individual portraits were produced. These portraits unified the individual and the phenomenon and its themes, qualities, and experiences. They were the best examples of aspects brought to consciousness and best represented the essence of the experiences. The transcriptions were reread one more time, along with any notes, autobiographical information, and individual depictions. The four that best exemplified the group's experiences as a whole were chosen and the portraits were written one at a time utilizing the immersion, incubation, illumination, and explication phases.

Creative Synthesis. The creative synthesis was unknown until after the explications of findings were finished. For this study, it was created based on my experience of the research process, the co-researchers' experiences, the dissertation process, and what was learned. Meditation occurred in order to be open to any tacit-intuitive awareness that had been illuminated throughout the research process and to tap into my feelings and creative abilities. Imagination, knowledge gained, essences revealed, and meanings and themes that came into consciousness were used. I chose to create a watercolor piece of art.

In this chapter, details of the methods and procedures used to prepare data collection, collect data, and organize, analyze, and synthesize the data were explicated. The next chapter will explain the presentation of findings via the heuristic inquiry model.

Chapter V: Presentation of Findings

This chapter presents the research findings on the topic of the Clients' Experiences of Family Constellations in Psychological Healing. The themes and sub-themes found throughout the co-researcher's and primary researcher's data are shared and discussed. A presentation of individual depictions, a composite depiction, exemplary portraits, and a creative synthesis are included as well. The depictions, four individual and one composite, will capture the themes, qualities, and essences of all of the co-researchers' experiences individually and combined. The individual portraits will be the three co-researchers that best represent all themes presented in the interviews. Finally, a creative synthesis will be presented to artistically depict the findings, understandings, and experiences of the co-researchers, the principal researcher, and the processes of the dissertation and Family Constellations.

Underlying the heuristic inquiry model's steps of presenting the research findings, are the essential heuristic concepts of indwelling, tacit knowing, intuition, self-dialogue/self-exploration, focusing, and internal frame of reference. These concepts move the researcher through the various phases of heuristic inquiry including the methods and procedures used in the organization and analysis of data.

Indwelling is the taking of knowledge gained and making it a part of the structure and foundation of the researcher's lens. Tacit knowing is a by-product of immersion and where the researcher's intuition becomes illuminated. Self-dialogue consists of deepening the researcher's frame of reference with complete honesty and awareness about the topic. Focusing allows the researcher to determine what is important to the essence of the topic and aids in the illumination of thoughts and feelings of the researcher, allowing clarity to

form about the topic and themes, in order to explicate them. The internal frame of reference is a culmination of all concepts as the researcher travels from step to step, evolving and increasing the researcher's growth and knowledge.

Methods and Procedures Used for the Organization and Analysis of Data

As described in Chapter IV, the steps in the heuristic model were used to organize and analyze the raw data: initial engagement, immersion, incubation, illumination, explication, and creative synthesis. The initial engagement began with the interview. Once the interviews were transcribed, I began assembling the recorded interviews, transcriptions, co-researcher demographics, and personal notes. I was ready to begin the immersion process, which meant diving into and "being with" the depth of the material. At first, I was a bit overwhelmed with all the information I had gathered. There were piles of paper and stacks of colored sticky notes everywhere. There was also self-doubt and a lack of confidence in my ability to make sense of all I had compiled.

After going through the materials three or four times, mental fatigue began to set in and I became frustrated and overwhelmed with all of the information. I knew it was time for incubation and yet there was a pull to organize themes and get an understanding of what the individual depictions might look like. A sense of panic and suffocation came over me. I felt doomed. I worried I would not finish in order to make the deadline I had set. I could no longer think coherently and decided to put all of it away for a while until I was renewed and motivated again. I finally succumbed and realized this was part of the process and to trust what was here for me. It was a time to stop thinking and analyzing to allow my unconscious to take over. It was time to wait and trust that something would become known. It was time to incubate.

“Incubation is the process in which the researcher retreats from the intense, concentrated focus...” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 28). My period of incubation consisted of various things: going camping with my family, meditation in nature and my favorite spot at home, cooking, taking walks, and going out with family and friends. Music was my savior in this phase as it is during all the phases. It could take my mind off my dissertation, change my mood, and comfort me.

I gained some momentum and insight after a month or so which began the illumination phase for me. “The illumination as such is a breakthrough into conscious awareness of qualities and a clustering of qualities into themes inherent in the question” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 29). I would have bursts of ideas on how to organize the data, what themes were there, and I became excited about the research again.

During these bursts, I would take note by leaving sticky notes all over my desk or I would jot things down in a notebook bullet-style or my own shorthand – which sometimes made it difficult to decipher. I would look over the information from time to time and return to incubate when I felt I was trying too hard. The cycle between incubation and illumination lasted about a month.

At last, the explication phase transpired. This consisted of writing about what was found throughout the illumination phase concerning themes, depictions, portraits, and the creative synthesis. The creative synthesis is the expression of what I learned, experienced, and integrated throughout the research process and was developed using intuition and tacit knowledge. There were periods of incubation within this phase as well although they were much shorter than previously explained. According to Moustakas (1990), explication happens when, “The researcher explicates the major components of

the phenomenon, in detail, and is now ready to put them together into a whole experience” (p. 31). At this point, that is exactly what I was ready to do. The following is what was found throughout these methods and procedures, beginning with the themes.

Major Themes and Sub-Themes. After immersing in the data, several themes were illuminated. These themes were reviewed many times to condense and best support the data. The themes found throughout the data were

1. *Experiences of Healing:* reflects the co-researchers’ definitions, understandings, and meanings of healing through the Family Constellations experience.
2. *Somatic Experiences:* demonstrates the physical sensations experienced by co-researchers including energy flow, catharsis, and bodily experiences during the constellation processes of (1) doing a constellation (client), (2) being a representative, (3) being a witness, and (4) the energetic experiences.
3. *Experiences of Emotion:* refers to the co-researchers’ description of feelings and emotions that occur during the constellation experience with the sub-themes of (1) emotional experiences in general, (2) as a client, (3) as a representative, (4) as a witness, and (5) during the interview process.
4. *Experiences of Connection:* refers to co-researchers’ experiences of feeling connected with others in the room, family, and ancestors and suggests how it may have created the safety and sacredness that allowed them to go deeper into their processes and increase their ability and desire to be of service to others. The sub-themes consist of (1) connection via

group, (2) family connections, (3) connections to the energy of the “knowing field,” and (4) connection with the world/being in service.

5. *Changes in Perception and Understanding*: reports the co-researchers’ observations during the constellations and how their experiences changed their perception and understanding of the self, their family, others, and situations as well as specific examples of constellations undertaken by the co-researcher.
6. *Impact on Relationships and Self*: addresses the impact of the co-researchers’ constellation experience on the self and relationships including the sub-themes of (1) with self, (2) with partner/spouse/significant other, (3) with family and ancestors, and (4) with the world.

Experiences of Healing. Found throughout the interviews were the co-researchers’ uses of the word healing in sharing their experiences of Family Constellations. This section addresses the co-researchers’ own understandings, definitions, and meanings of healings.

Jules’s description of healing consisted of a physical awareness. Her experience of healing was an increase in conscious awareness and a felt sense in the body where her energy was held around the experience. Then a release, deeper than a mental awareness, of the wounding or pain occurred:

. . . it has been seen and remembered, felt, experienced and then released through – energetically and that can be through tears. It could be through a trembling process. It could be through speaking words that have never been spoken before. It could be all the levels at which constellation creates a deep presence of resonance in the body, mind, spirit.

For Ruby, healing was about acknowledgment and acceptance of her past. She was able to accept and agree to what is present rather than fighting and hating it.

It becomes more like a neutral event or an event that I can learn from and see how I contributed to it and how other people contributed to it rather than being something that just happened to me. So it's really being able to learn and grow from those events rather than just reacting to them. It also helps me move forward and be more open in my current relationship than I would have otherwise. So there's a sense of peace that I didn't have before doing the constellation work.

Two co-researchers, Paul and Roark, defined healing as becoming more comfortable with and within one's self. Paul explained that our own internal conflict, the worries and judgments of self and questioning, plays a large role and is always there so "healing simply means to become more comfortable within yourself." Roark supports this notion of "becoming more comfortable in your own skin." He states that from the place of true acceptance of self comes from a knowing:

. . . it's a deep knowing that you're more than your thoughts, you're more than what you think about yourself or others, and you're more than your history. It's also feeling safe and empowered that you can create a fulfilling life for yourself.

There was also mention of healing being a change in perspective and energy.

Dianna Lynn stated that for her healing means "being able to see an experience in a different way" and to be in healing is like being in a state of grace and surrender:

. . . it's like life looks so different. So anything that was either needing healing or whatever, it's almost taken care of. And I've just had to bow to, surrender, you know, whatever word you want to use, it's just that allowing being that curious observer. It's like there might not be a thing that's changed, but everything is changed in me, and so that's the healing.

Colleen's perspective on healing included looking at the cause and effect of something that has not worked for her or a pain or wounding that she carries in order "to clear some of the energy . . . and lighten the load around it so . . . it doesn't weigh so

heavy on me.” It is then, she stated, that “the charge lessens, . . . and they are no longer in the driver’s seat of your life.” Colleen also believes that if there is a healing to be experienced, it will find you and come to you when you are ready no matter where you are:

. . . so if I’m in the midst of a constellation and there’s something there for healing for me, I will get it as a representative or whether it’s my own constellation and I’m working it as a client, or whether I’m sitting on the outer circle just holding the container for the work. I will get what I need and I have seen that over and over and over again in Family Constellation work so I have learned to really trust that piece.

Reclamation of true self and empowerment came through in the definitions and understandings of healing and Jack noticed from his experience that once we can acknowledge where the love has stopped in our family lineage, we are able to heal it and become closer to our authentic self.

So healing is just cleaning up the past from the day you were born until the day you die. . . . So the more you can heal, the closer you get to your authentic self. . . . Healing is the process of achieving wholeness and getting to your authentic self. And then you know what your purpose is

Amy described healing as reclaiming the true self and including more of the self in order to become more whole, which meant including aspects of the self – the physical self, psychological self and spiritual self.

It’s a reclaiming of something that we already are, but there have been woundings and distortions and imperfections that make use lose connection and lose awareness of who we are. So it’s really a regaining of that. But in the process you also become somebody more adult, more whole, more mature.

Amy also stated how Family Constellations have given her healing a more soulful and spiritual experience making it very personal, which is different than she has experienced in other types of psychotherapy.

You know, it's easy to think that sort of the foundation of what's true in healing is purely psychological, and it isn't. . . . it just goes deeper than what we think of the psychological healing. It's really soul healing, the way that I experience it. And that's part of what healing is to me. It's developing more and more and more integrity, becoming more and more integrated.

Trixie shared that healing for her was more about the energy of the constellation and how being in the energy field empowers those in the constellation. She believes that it is through this energy and the power of words that the strength is felt and allows healing to begin.

. . . it gives you strength and empowerment, tremendous strength and empowerment and a kind of objectivity to look at the situation, to look at the event between yourself and the other human being or the disease or look at your own emotion, reflect on your own emotions or your own behavior or on your own words that were spoken. And it gives the kick, the swift kick in the rear to look at it from a different perspective and gather yourself and have the strength to make a change.

Trixie continued to talk about how she is able to handle her emotions better around her issues because she understood the root cause, the history of the situation. She began to comprehend that these feelings went back generations and stated that this comprehension empowered her to make better decisions about her future.

It's a way of looking within yourself and within all the family members throughout the generations, their fate, their destinies. . . . And that lets you make better decisions for the future, including your emotions.

Alma spoke of healing as a way of finding and making peace in your heart and soul and how this nurtures finding peace in life. To her it is an on going path to answer questions like, "What am I meant to do with my life? What is my purpose? Why am I here?" It is an ongoing path that is never "fixed" but on the way we discover things about ourselves and find the things we are meant to do if we are open. She stated that Family Constellations could aid in this healing by "making peace with our past, making peace

with our families, making peace with our ancestors, and making peace with life events so we can move forward. So we're not trapped in the past or stuck in non-movement.”

The exploration of the definitions and meanings of healing according to the co-researchers allowed for a deeper understanding of their experiences. Many reported becoming more aware of their issues or challenges deep within their physical bodies, which helped them to acknowledge and accept what was there. In doing so, they were able to describe their psychological healing as a letting go of former beliefs and reclaiming a sense of self not felt before. They grew to understand their emotions better and became empowered and closer to their authentic self, illuminating their spirituality and making peace within their hearts.

Somatic Experiences. Many of the co-researchers reported having somatic reactions while being a client, representative, and/or witness in a constellation. The somatic reactions were reported through sight, physical and energetic movement, and the emotional awareness gained. The following data depicted these somatic experiences.

Somatic Experiences as the Client

Co-researchers while experiencing their own constellations expressed the following somatic reactions. Ruby stated the time she experienced bowing to her mother was the most cathartic experience she had ever had not only because she felt it physically, emotionally, and spiritually but that it gave her the gift of seeing the growth areas that still existed.

I've always talked and honored my mother and respected my mother but when we were walked through the bow and bowing to our mothers, my first reaction was “Hell, no.” And I wouldn't—there was this definitely huge difference between what I thought I was feeling for my mother and then when I was asked or offered a physical experience of honoring my mother, there was such a huge difference

between where I was actually at and where I thought I was at.

In the end, she completed the bow and had allowed her body to experience the emotions that had been repressed or unacknowledged and then let them go. She described that experience as “incredible” and “the most cathartic experience I’ve ever had.”

Being able to physically see and move throughout the constellation was described as being unlike any other experience for most of the co-researchers. Jack spoke to the process of setting up the representatives and what his experience was in relationship to them in his constellation:

It’s almost like I am, when I dealt with my father, I was dealing directly with my father, even though there was a representative of my father there. It was like standing in front of my father. If I dealt with my mother or grandmother, sister, brother, no matter who I was dealing with, they were there. And I was able to clear it with them. And I was able to get response back from them to help me heal. And it was so cleansing.

Jules shared how the aspect of Family Constellations was a “direct access to the intuitive inter-psychoic soul” by being able to physically see the issue. By setting up one’s family the client could begin to see the alliances and become clearer as to why he or she may have felt a particular way or why a family member was acting a particular way “without a lot of words.” It is “like the speed of light” and “that has impacted me more than any other work I’ve ever done.”

Paul discussed a specific experience while doing a constellation about his mother and his feelings of abandonment and how the physical connection helped him to heal:

. . . this woman [representative for his mother] took about five steps, stopped, and said, “I knew when you cried.” And she took another five steps and said, “I knew when you cried.” And then she got in front of me and she said, “I knew when you stopped crying.” And at that point, I said to the facilitator, “You know, I need to do something that I never did. When I left for Vietnam, I kissed my mother on the cheek.” And I got up and I put my arms around this woman and I said, “I love you, Mom, and I’m sorry for all the pain I gave to you.”

Teresa commented on her physical experiences days after doing a constellation via telephone. She reported feeling energetic shifts or becoming “reenergized, tired, sad, or emotional” after a session, “especially if I really went – dealt with something that was important.”

Somatic Experiences as a Representative and Witness

The following are physical experiences co-researchers had during and after being representatives in a constellation: the occurrences of being physically pulled, what death may feel like, the split of schizophrenia, and the healing that can occur when feeling these things.

Esmeralda experienced physical pulls as a representative and was able to allow and trust in order to hold the energy of the person she was representing:

. . . in general, the really strong pulls you get, whether it be wanting to look in a certain direction or wanting to move in a certain direction, wanting to say something. It's just– it's really–it can be really powerful in terms of just what sort of comes through you.

Amy was “blown away” days after representing a mother in a constellation about hypothyroidism of which Amy is afflicted with as well. She found, even though she was physically more tired than normal, the experience very nourishing:

. . . when I came home from that weekend, I was sort of deliciously tired. It was hard to explain, but it was like there was this very warm feeling that came over. It was just sort of very soft and gentle and honey-like and lovely. It was this incredible peacefulness and it had a very motherly quality.

Representing someone in a constellation who had died was another powerful experience for Amy. She described it as “totally impersonal” and that although she was not engaged in anything going on during the constellation, she felt aware, present, and tuned in to what was going on and could feel the shift of healing.

It was like this whole—there was like a whole quality of lightness that happened inside me. It was like from an okay, fine, impersonal consciousness to the same thing but lighter, as if a weight had been taken off. And I thought, oh, I mean, it really felt to me like this is what death is like. . . . There's more light, there's more ease, there's more peace.

Colleen told of her physical experiences while representing someone with schizophrenia and how it was a healing experience for her. She reported feeling the split of schizophrenia within the woman due to “the incredible rage [the woman] carried toward her ex-husband.” Colleen reported beginning to feel the split almost happen within her as well:

And I started to feel myself become more and more and more and more detached from the people in constellation to the point where I literally felt this mental fog happen and I had—I started to lose all sense of reality and all sense of who these people were and what they meant to me. . . . And I realized afterwards that that was part of . . . what I was feeling coming through me . . . that split that she was starting to feel within herself. So it's—being a representative is an incredibly powerful healing piece for ourselves.

Jules witnessed a constellation about sexual abuse that affected her very strongly due to sexual abuse in her family. It was not her story but it was her sister's story. She reported how she held this issue away from her heart because she did not want to feel the emotional impact. Through witnessing the constellation, Jules realized how she had protected herself in this way and how she did not want to stay present for the constellation but she also realized how strong she could be.

I mean I stayed present to it as best that I could. I knew the work was going on and . . . it . . . brought my sister into my energy field . . . it opened my heart to my sister in a deeper way and I was able to really see that yes, this indeed had happened and I could no longer . . . any longer want to close my eyes to the fact that there was an aspect of abuse in my family that had been there. And that I could hold that. I could be strong enough to hold that. Help hold it for my sister.

Energy as Somatic Experiences

Co-researchers spoke of feeling energy being present, flowing, and informing

after the initial set up and during the constellation. They stated they were able to experience these energies as a client, representative, and witness.

A few of the co-researchers spoke of the energy felt while working with figurines. During a telephone session, Teresa set up a constellation with figurines. The constellation included her mother, father, sister, and brother. She began to feel deep anger inside her soul and body and was able to use that energy to help in healing:

You just wanna throw the thing, because you're like I'm supposed to be nicer. I'm supposed to—especially if it's something you've created for yourself that you're trying to change and it's like ah I hate you. But—[the figurines are] like it's a representative of that energy, but if you can actually feel that energy you can tap that energy and be present with that energy.

Laura shared her process of setting up a constellation and how she feels the energy during a telephone session. She explained that she begins talking about a situation within one of her relationships and then a constellation is set up. At this point, she reported being able to feel the energy begin to move:

. . . in that moment is when I can really feel the energy and it's really flows through my body and it's almost like you're in a trance sometimes and really you have to be, I think very relaxed and open, allowing that to happen for it to get that way.

You felt the energy. You felt the connection. There was just something that felt right about it, not just emotionally, but physically as well. . . . at first you couldn't explain it and I couldn't fully understand it, but there was just something about it that made it feel right to me and since then I have been in that process for a little over a year now.

As her first time as a representative, Colleen spoke of how the energy moved through her and she began to cry and have feelings she could not explain. She felt that these feelings were not hers in a sense, that she had no attachment to the story or the person. She became aware of her role as “a vessel for the energy to come through” when

she caught herself doing something within the constellation that she had never done

before:

I remember I found myself doing this strange thing with my fingers where I was rolling my fingers together almost like you would—if you had a pill in your fingers and you'd be rolling your fingers together. And I remember having the awareness of why am I doing that? This is not something that I would do. . . . When I looked at the client, she was doing the exact same thing. And I had the realization in the moment that it's like, oh. This has got nothing to do with me here. This is a physical habit that is in this family...

From this experience, Colleen came to the realization in the moment that “oh my God, there is something much greater happening here.” Since this first experience she has had many more and they have helped her on a personal level, “I can identify [these feelings] within my own family story or in my own story in my life but knew in the moment it was not mine. I was there as a representative. Some of them have been beautiful.”

Sitting on the outside, being a witness, Roark told of the different levels of energy he could feel and how it is felt throughout his body depending on which generation is being worked with in the constellation. He recalled an experience when the oldest generation was worked with:

. . . the energy felt like it was coming in low, like, around my feet and ankles; and then as it moved to another generation, it felt like it was coming in through my legs or my hips; and then as it got closer to the current generation, it felt like the energy was coming in through my chest or maybe through my head.

Trixie, while being a witness, discussed holding the energy and being present in order to be in service. She sat on the outskirts of the constellation and began to notice the energy flowing in the constellation. As she began to open herself to try to support the client and representatives she reported focusing on holding the energy:

You focus on being present and just focusing on being a support vessel so that energy can be funneled and help the client and the representatives to achieve what they need to achieve. And opening yourself up, you suddenly become part of the constellation feeling, emotions, channeling energy, channeling emotions and then you become an active part in the constellation, although you're not a representative in the constellation.

Co-researchers reported many somatic instances when experiencing constellations as a client. They felt physical symptoms, emotional and spiritual catharses, and a deep connection to the people who were representatives in their constellations. This connection enabled the deep learning that went with being able to see a constellation of their family or issue physically in front of them.

The flow of energy felt by the co-researchers as clients, representatives, and witnesses aided in their awareness and healing. This energy also guided them while in the constellation in order to support the flow of the constellation. Many were touched by the new emotions felt through this gift of energy and cherished the awareness gained by representing those with similar circumstances.

Experiences of Emotion. Emotions were felt throughout the constellation process and were spoken about in general, as a client, representative, and witness, and during the interview process as well. These emotions ranged from fear to excitement, tension to relief, anger to love, and bliss and grace.

In General

Jack stated with excitement and awe that the beginning was “very nerve-racking” when summing up the courage to do a constellation. He had no idea what a healing was. He was amazed that psychological healing could occur in a short period of time:

. . . if you're clear on what you're after, you can get there and you can clear it

maybe in an hour or less, which is absolutely—I mean it’s astounding when I think about it, and I think of, you know, . . . I’ve probably been in therapy 15 years of my life, you know what I mean, and never got the healing that I could get in a constellation. I mean totally, I mean beyond my imagination. I keep on saying that, but I’m still in awe of the process.

After expressing his awe and respect for the healing that takes place, he attempted to explain his experience of the constellation healing process:

. . . it’s really hard to explain how the process actually works. But once you go through the healing, if you go through a constellation, or even if you watch, sometimes if you just watch a constellation happen with somebody else the healing takes place at such a depth in your heart and soul, right in the essence of your being.

For Paul, the healing was not in the details of the story but what is internal for everyone. He stated that in his experience it is what has burned and conflicted him, how he had been missing the point on something, and how the healing was about grief and loss:

. . . it's all about healing grief and loss from conflict and those conflicts are all internal. Doesn't matter whether you've been on a battlefield or you've been a pampered little brat all your life, you still have conflicts and everyone in this world has PTS, post-traumatic stress. It is wounding of the soul or the heart or the emotions, whatever you want to call it, we all have it. And constellation is one way of healing that wound.

As a Client

During their constellations, many co-researchers spoke of the emotions experienced as a client and how sometimes they happened with figurines via telephone sessions and in a group setting with real people as representatives.

Esmeralda has done several constellations via telephone using whatever was available as figurines. She shared how incredible it was to be able to feel strong emotions using these objects and how difficult this process was to describe to other people but maintains, “Trust me. You’ll feel it.” She reported what she did when she used vitamin

bottles to represent her siblings:

. . . when I was walking by, I literally wanted to kick one of them and I'm like, why do I want to kick this? And then the facilitator said to me, what's this contempt that I feel? Oh, is that what it is? That's why I want to kick it. And that one [constellation] was one of the most powerful ones that I've done. And again, part of it is because you're really feeling it.

Trixie also felt that it does not depend on what the objects are when doing a constellation with figurines. She stated that it really depends upon how much you can let go of analyzing and thinking and use what is deep in your soul, using your emotions instead: "Letting go of the fear, the anger of every—just deep down in the core of feelings, what is there?" She shared that when she went right into her heart she could feel something happen between herself and the objects.

You feel compelled to move the objects. You look at it, and looking and how you move the objects, how they relate—because they're representatives for human beings. . . . It suddenly gives you an insight into the question that you had, into the issue that you had, into the problem that you had and it gives you a clue on maybe what the resolution should be and what should happen. And again, then, it gives you the strength and the power and the objectivity to say, I understand. . . . then [you can] go into your resolution, your healing process.

Co-researchers who had experienced constellations within a group gave more examples of the strength and depth of emotion that can occur. Dianna Lynn gave an example of a blind constellation, where the representatives did not know who they were representing. The constellation was about a dividing line between members of her family and her and her son. Her son appeared very agitated and nervous. The constellation showed her that she was protecting him. What was revealed next was that her youngest son appeared to be entangled with her deceased father. From this, a healing between her and her father began which would eventually bring peace to her son and the family:

I'm kneeling down next to my dad, and I'm crying. The person who is my brother,

my only brother, comes over and kneels down next to me. I'm like, wow. . . . it was almost like I could stand out and go, wow, this really works, because this person wouldn't know that they're my brother, but they're coming over because energetically, this would be their father. So it was just so amazing to me. . . . So what happened at the end, it's like, there became peace between my father and myself. And you know, then it came to, you know, everybody was together, and there was peace in it.

In a constellation about the end of her engagement, Colleen was able to ease the shock and pain she felt and begin to heal her heartbreak and feelings of betrayal by becoming aware of the soul agreement she had with that man.

I was able to be moved to the place of dropping into the soul level and seeing the soul agreement that I had with this man and when I got to that place, there was such profound healing that happened between him and I. Healing of my heart and the heartbreak that I felt and the recognition that on a soul level, that we had fulfilled our contracts with each other perfectly. And that in that place I was free to let him go and to move on.

In his very first constellation, Roark experienced deep grief he had been holding on to for as long as he could remember. He stated that some of it was probably some of the grief his mother held and that through his constellation he was able to begin to feel, for the first time, the entirety of that grief.

I was able to fully drop into and feel grief that I never had before, even though that grief energy had been with me my whole life. Some of the grief was my mother's unmet, un-grieved feelings about her father dying when she was 15. Some of it was the grief of not ever feeling a close connection with my mother, and that was related to her unresolved feelings, and her struggle to connect and be authentic with me. So, you know, I had known about this grief and had felt some level of it, but I think I went fully into it in my first experience. I didn't go into it through my mind at all.

As a Representative and Witness

Strong and deep emotions were also felt as representatives and witnesses, sometimes to the surprise of the co-researchers. There were reports of the surprise of how consistent the emotions could be felt as a representative, how stunned one can be at the

range of emotion experienced even when there is not a similar circumstance in the representative's life, and how healing the deep and powerful emotions felt can be.

The consistency of the emotions felt as a representative surprised Max. He reported being skeptical at first and that the constellation that “knocked my socks off” was the one in which he was a representative for a Russian man. In this constellation, he (representing the man) felt the entanglements with his history in Russia:

. . . the incredible, just unbelievable love I felt coming from my left with [the woman] representing my wife. It was so intense that I could barely look at her. She was six inches away from me shoulder to shoulder and I was just stunned by the power of that. And then I looked to my right and I just couldn't believe the distance and confusion I felt with the [son]. And then when I learned more about his actual story, you know, I could see where the distance and confusion from the father to the son was coming; which was apparently exactly correct. But I was just blown away. That was my first just knock your socks off representative experience. I was really shocked to discover that pretty much every time you get these incredibly powerful, emotional experiences.

The skepticism continued with Ruby. She was astonished by the emotions she felt as a representative for a mother and this had made her a believer because she had never been a mother.

I had never had that experience in my life but I knew that those emotions weren't coming from my experience and it wasn't coming from my head of, oh, well this person should be thinking this way. I was just – it was like a light bulb turned on and I was suddenly feeling that. And feeling the connections to the other representative that was beyond the story that the client had told or set up.

While being a representative for an adoptive mother, Trixie encountered longing to connect and a range of emotions such as ineptness, remorse, and resentment. She stated that she had the need to support the client, the adopted daughter, and non-verbally reached out to make the connection with her. Then Trixie felt the ineptness of the adoptive mother and that the daughter had always had a longing to connect. A lot of the

resentment in the relationship was the adoptive mother's inability to give the daughter what she needed. The strong desire to apologize was evident in giving the relationship another chance. Trixie stated she expressed this to the client through the eyes:

And I felt it was wonderful that at the end of the relationship, there was no complete healing between the adoptive mother and the stepdaughter but she understood. I could see she understood that the adoptive mother saw that she needed – that she could see the door opening for a second chance with the relationship. And it left right there and for me, it was a wonderful experience to be part of giving her the chance at a second relationship with her stepmother.

Colleen was able to describe and list many of the feelings she had experienced as a representative. She felt many different emotions that she, at times, identified within her own family story or life and other times when they did not apply to her at all. She shared that there have been beautiful, very expansive emotions of tremendous joy and love as well as those of rage and anger and that she knew when the emotions were not there for her on a personal level but “just an energy that was coming through me for healing.” Colleen also described the emotions felt when she represented someone who was deceased and how she could feel “the incredible love and connection that I had for my family members [who have passed on] as I moved into the death process” of the constellation. She also felt the “heartbreak of letting them go” and a place of no separation in death:

That the soul continues to live, just in a different place. And that has been hugely healing for me in my own journey and my own evolution as a person, and as a spiritual seeker to know that place of there is no separation when the person dies.

As a witness, co-researchers reported emotions of gratitude, being moved to tears, and how the depth of the constellation affected the depth of feeling these emotions.

Esmeralda reflected upon how deep the most current constellations she witnessed have

been and her gratitude for the healing taking place:

I just look at those people and I say, oh my God. You have such courage for allowing yourself to go through that process and then at the same time, I also realize how lucky I am. Sort of like the stuff that I went through is nothing compared to what some of the ones I've seen is. And just this feeling of incredible gratitude that that person is going to get a healing on whatever level and it really is going to change their life.

For Ruby it was about how her emotional depth depends upon the depth of the constellation: "There's times where the constellation has been so powerful and emotional where I will absolutely start crying and just feel so much for the journey the client is on, both in their life and at that moment in the constellation."

The depth for Colleen was seen as the gift of constellations and was often found in the power of her personal experiences relating to those she has witnessed. She has "witnessed constellations that have moved me to incredible tears just sitting on the outside." Colleen stated this happened due to the fact that "the energy of the constellation has touched something that I know on a personal level" and this had her being "carried into my own journey" of what her constellation could look like in that moment and the feelings, emotions, and issues that would be present which allowed her to "feel the wave of that and the emotion and the healing move through me."

During the Interview Process

For some of the co-researchers, the interview process evoked emotions and this was surprising. Dianna Lynn commented that doing the interview reminded her of how emotional her experiences were and that she was surprised they were still so strong. She remarked about how remembering her experiences through the interview has helped her realize what it was like for her clients when she was working with them:

. . . for me to talk about my own experiences today, brought me back to—oh, this is what it's like for them. And this is why they love it so much, because it's so tender, it's so heartfelt. It wasn't, like, oh, I'm going to tell you a story about this is what happened and we stood here and we did this, and intellectual in the head, it was so in my heart. It still is, and it's such a great place to—I'm glad I'm going to be able to move into my day this way. It's such a great place to be coming from, you know. So it was like, this is good that it was today. And I don't know why I need to be in this space, I'd like to be here all the time, but it is emotional.

Jack became very emotional when speaking about what sharing his experiences meant to him including how using constellations to help others with their lives would fulfill his life's purpose and he would feel complete.

I feel blessed that I got to experience this process. And if I ever get to be a facilitator and use it and help somebody in their life, that would mean—just something experienced, some of the things that I've experienced through it, that would be my life's purpose and I would feel like I was complete. And what I came here to do in my life, I would feel complete as a human being. That's how powerful this has been for me, and I'm just beginning. I'll get used to it. But right now, that's how it feels. . . . You know, there's a responsibility that comes with knowledge, and it's to share it.

The expression and experiences of emotions through the constellation process proved to be an aid to the co-researchers' psychological healing as well as creating compassion for others. The depth and strength of the emotions ranged from awe and excitement to grief and loss. There were reports of anger, shock, and betrayal as well as love, connection and gratitude. These emotions helped carry co-researchers through their own journeys of healing and happened when a client, representative, and witness. Even the interview process brought back the strength and depth of the emotions felt during their own experiences with Family Constellations and reminded them what their clients may be going through and why they decided to be in service to others.

Experiences of Connection. It was found that co-researchers' experiences of connection through Family Constellations happened in a few ways: the experience of

connection while being in a group—learning through connection, the safety and bond connection may create; connection to family; connection to the “knowing field” and the effects of that; and how connection may help to create a desire and willingness to be in service.

Connection via a Group

Many of the co-researchers told of the ways being in a group supported their learning or healings. For Esmeralda it was about learning from others in the group, which created multidimensional levels of connections through representing other people and watching the constellations. She believed that being able to see rather than just hear about others’ experiences allowed for “incredible levels of healing” and clarification of her own issues through learning from the people in the group:

. . . you may come in and not be clear about what you're going to work on and by the end of the day you're very clear or you may come in and be very clear and find out that what you thought you were going to work on is not what you're going to work on. And then even being in the front of the room, while it can be somewhat intimidating, for some reason it just—you sort of—everybody sort of disappears in some way and it becomes okay to share what's going on for you.

Paul shared his thoughts on how the membership of the group works perfectly for everyone to be affected and that sometimes what may seem as an unrelated constellation becomes very relatable. He gave the example of a connection he experienced through one of his constellations:

[A woman who had represented my mother in a constellation had a conversation with my wife] and [my wife] told me a few days later that the woman had had a similar experience of my mother, losing several babies and having only one son who went to war. And it was unbelievable, the connection there.

One of the experiences Jules spoke about was how the feeling of a family bond was present through the commitment of the group members and the unique experience of

Family Constellations. This allowed her to open her heart and welcome the greater feeling of family:

. . . like our own microcosm family but this greater human family, of earth family, and that we're all part of that and there's a welcoming in. So it's just like this program just really allows me to look at my resistances. Look at the places where I might feel myself closing or feel myself shrinking and using every moment as an opportunity to just really look at that and open.

Ruby reflected on a connection to herself, spiritually and soulfully, "I'm connecting to it [Family Constellations] at a soul level and so it feels like almost immediately it's part of who I am." She reported having the experience of the "soul level" through the process of constellations makes it "much easier to connect it to my life outside the workshop room." She attributed this to the deep level of connection that was created in the room. She went on to say, ". . . it's by far the most powerful healing experience I've had."

There was also a community built around connection in the immersion program. Ruby added that she has "lifelong friends" from the program and that she believed this level of intimacy and friendships could not be built in any other way.

There's like this whole community of people that are rooting for my healing and for what I'm up to day in and day out because they have been—they have, you know, been there for me because they have been my mother, been my father. So it's a whole—like through this work, I've built a whole community to support my healing that one little event.

Family Connections

Noticing family patterns and how they were a form of connection to their families was an important awareness in the co-researchers' psychological healing. Also found was how important the role of becoming aware of a larger consciousness and our connections to our families was to psychological healing. Teresa discussed the patterns in family and

how constellations may help to break some of the patterns:

. . . you're so entrenched in the system among the family that the pattern just keeps repeating itself. So rather than breaking free from some of these patterns and breaking free from some of these things that hold you back from finding out who you are and how you contribute back to that matrix, you can clear things up that you might have never really ever thought about.

Even though Jules' parents are deceased, through FC she felt a deeper connection to them as well as felt supported by her ancestors and the other members of her family of origin. These feelings of connection and support had her sensing she "came here for a very specific reason – to learn and to heal my family" which gave her the gift of healing herself.

I feel a stronger bond with every single member of that family since doing constellation work and I feel a more intimate bond with grandparents on both the maternal and paternal side—and I have the feeling that I am being held energetically by family members who have gone before me in my family lineage, both maternal and paternal. I am actually being supported in this lifetime.

Ruby's connection to the group gave her the courage to talk about things she could not share with anyone and her perspective changed in the process of her constellation. She had not spoken of the situation to anyone but her husband and through the group she was "able to feel so comfortable in the circle of people that I could go places and talk about things I didn't talk about to anyone else." This gave her the courage to set up the constellation about that situation. It was through that constellation that Ruby was able to "see not only how everybody in my family was connected to it but also how I contributed to it." Because of this awareness, Ruby began to understand and feel a different way about the situation:

I no longer felt like I was a victim to it but I could see how it was really a soul agreement that I had, not only with my brother, but also my parents and the rest of my family. An awareness of this [soul agreement] and . . . the level of taking my

own responsibility for it and for my healing.

Patterns of sexual abuse in Colleen's family were recognized through Family Constellations, which aided her healing and showed her the soul contracts and connections she had with each member. As she recognized how these patterns played out in the generations, she reported that was when the healing began to move generationally.

It wasn't just with myself and my father. It started to go back. I started to see the bigger patterns that had been passed down through the generations. And for me, again, that was healing because when you start to see the family template that you're born into, it takes away a lot of the victimhood around an issue like this. You start to see the contract that you've had with people. You start—like I recognized the contract that I had with my father and he was my greatest teacher.

As the healing continued to move generationally and the depth of realization grew, Colleen's awareness shifted her whole perspective on her family, her life, and her journey:

And I started to recognize the contract, on a soul level, that my family chose this issue on a soul level, to heal. It was like really recognizing that my soul had chosen this issue, had manifested this family who showed up and played it out perfectly with me and that at the end of the day, that there were no victims. We had all come together with—in perfection
. . . each bringing our own piece for our own evolution.

As Roark began feeling the presence of his grandparents through Family Constellations, it gave him more of an appreciation for the connection and an awareness that he could ask for their help and guidance. This has been comforting for him. He had also carried this new awareness into his life with his mother and wanted her to feel the connection as well:

So, you know, I know where my father's parents are buried and I've been to visit their grave—we used to go maybe once a year when I was a kid, and as an adult, I've gone maybe two or three times. But now after doing the training, I feel the presence of my grandparents more, and I also want to go visit my mother's father's grave. I don't know if I've ever been there. And I want to take my mom there, because I don't know that she's been there.

Anger had been prevalent in Amy's family for generations. Family Constellations helped her to understand "how the line between what's personal and what's more than personal or impersonal is almost meaningless because we experience . . . this impersonal consciousness that goes across generations." FC allowed her to begin to see the patterns in her family and helped her to let go some of her anger toward family members. She was able to see the pattern of anger through the generations in her family between her mother and her mother's brother, between her mother and her father, and between herself and her sister and being able to see this "pattern was incredibly powerful because it's let me know that in a sense it's not real, it had just been passed down through the generations."

Connection to the "Knowing/Energy Field"

In Family Constellations in a group setting, the group as a whole holds the energetic container for someone to do a constellation. Through the interviews the container and "knowing field" or "energy field" (the energetic field used by the facilitator, client, and representatives of the family members of a constellation as an informing instrument, similar to Sheldrake's morphogenetic field) and how it connects everyone was explained. Co-researchers also mentioned the aspect of safety that was created while the group was holding the energy and space for a client and while being a representative.

According to Jack, the container consisted of "holding the space for the constellation to happen in front of you." This, he reported, "creates an invisible safety net" for everyone involved in the constellation through the energy of the people on the outside of the circle. It seemed very natural, like breathing and "it's almost like we're all in sync with each other." Then the whole room was "unconsciously, but consciously,"

supporting the client and this could have had an effect on anyone in the room.

It helps the person in the constellation and all the participants do the healing work. It's a really vital part of the whole process to create the safety and aura of this magic, so to speak, to happen. Yeah. And in that environment, if something touches you that's going on, you're being healed at the same time. So the possibility of you being outside of the constellation and having a total healing yourself is very high.

Alma discussed "universal themes" that she became aware of through the healing energetic connection of the "knowing field" while a representative and witness. She believed there were many opportunities while participating in another person's constellation, to become a part of "universal consciousness." She gave an example of when she represented a soldier who was killed by friendly fire.

There was an accidental death and—but there was like a feeling in being that representative that it was supposed to happen that way so it's making peace with what – like I could feel the energy of that soul saying, yeah, this is the way it was supposed to be there's a bigger meaning behind that death that had to do with war and healing conflict on a really large scale universally with war.

Colleen grew up in war and violence and saw representing war as a gift. When she stepped in and held the hatred, war, and violence for someone else, she was afforded a personal healing because of the "energetic give and take that happens." While representing death, Colleen felt the place "where there is no separation, that the soul just continues to live in a different place." She shared that it was healing in her evolution because the experience "expanded my spiritual journey to feel that place of no separation within myself. That there was a connection that exists through all time."

As a witness, Colleen had been touched to tears even though the issue was not experienced in her own life. One such example was a constellation about adoption:

. . . the pain and the suffering of that client that then moved out into the field and touched me and I had the realization in the moment that I was holding that and I

was allowing it to move through me for almost all of those people that have ever been adopted on some – on a soul level, almost. That's what it felt like. That wave was coming out and it was being felt in the room and the pain and suffering of that client was being felt and the collective consciousness in the room of all of those people that have been put up for adoption. All of those people that have had that issue in their life. And this happens time and time again.

Trusting the energy, the “knowing field,” was a key aspect to being a representative because it guided you through the constellation. This energy tended to have the representative feel the emotions of the person being represented as well as the ability to connect with others, according to Trixie. She also stated that the energy felt by connecting through the hands or eye contact are just as powerful.

You don't necessarily need to speak the words. It's just the energy that exchanges by touch or by eye contact and you can get a resolution, a conflict resolution there and if it's close to your own past and your own story and your own history, you can have – you suddenly have a benefit of being a representative just as much as if you would be the client. Or you have that benefit or you have the benefit that you've just been part of a resolution process that gives you more insight and gives you more calmness and more power to then go and reflect back at your own life and find resolution there.

As a witness, Trixie had become inadvertently a member of a constellation.

Sometimes it was because she could relate and sometimes it was just because she felt the energy of the field. She gave an example of witnessing a constellation of a man who was in charge of a platoon who fell under fire and many lives were lost. The man felt responsible for the deaths. Trixie's connection was that she had a family member who experienced a lot of pain and hurt through a war.

The energy of the constellation had touched me so much that I had my own constellation sitting on the outskirts. . . . suddenly I had emotions and feelings and I had energy with a family member long past and other family members past in my own family just by being—connecting to the energy that the client had experienced with the representatives in his constellation. So while that constellation was going on, I had my own on the outskirts. Just by relating to the story and by connecting to that—to the energy.

Being in Service

Many spoke to their experiences of connecting to their own consciousness and how Family Constellations may have shown them to be more open to connect to those in the group and those in their lives who were not in the room. Some spoke of different connections with their clients and most talked about how experiencing Family Constellations fueled their passion to be in service to others.

Even through the challenge of feeling vulnerable, many co-researchers shared their stories not only to share the effectiveness of Family Constellations but also because sharing could possibly help someone else. For Alma the vulnerability was in speaking her experiences aloud, it “is very different than holding it in my own consciousness.” She felt there was importance in sharing “for healing, for humanity,” and that the biggest challenge was to share about the shame she felt about some things that have unfolded in her father’s life. Sharing it, said Alma, helped her hold it differently:

. . . if what happened in my life and my dad's life, my family's life, can help to heal other people, then it's important to put it out there so it's a bigger—it's bigger than just my own story I guess is all I can say. And I'm seeing how that, in sharing with you, how I'm just affirming that again for myself.

Whether as a witness or representative, the intention to show up cultivated a deeper presence and awareness of consciousness to be of service to others for Jules. This intention to be of service encouraged her surrender to the process.

There's like an intention to be of service, to open my heart and body and mind and spirit to whatever wants to come through and getting rid of any egoish, egoic, sense of me and my personal story and letting—it's really parking—doing my very best to park that and to stand in the space of being an open channel for whatever is meant to come through as I stand in as a representative.

Dianna Lynn talked about how she used her constellation experiences to help

clients in her private practice.

I love being able to offer this to people, you know, who either spent years in another form of therapy or are just really stuck. It's so amazing to be on the other side, you know, to be sitting there with them, and just one on one, let them see in a different way and remember. And again, I'm always amazed at what they get and what shows up and what comes through for me, you know, to say or ask.

Clarity in being a representative had come from fully stepping into service to the client for Colleen. She believed that the clearer her intention had been around being in service to the client, the easier it had been for her:

And so it's the acknowledgement of that I'm here in service to the client and so I am going to become like an empty vessel—for lack of a better word—for that representative, for that, whoever it is I'm representing to come through with whatever they're bringing through for healing for the client. . . . And just it's—it really does become a place for—I'm just showing up here in service and so whatever needs to come through can come through. . . .

Being in service to one's family was another thing that motivated Colleen to become involved in Family Constellations and fueled her to continue her personal work. She looked at her commitment to FC as a calling and part of that calling was due to her family being the most important thing to her in doing her healing because as she healed herself, she had healed her family.

And what I recognized was that in some ways, the ancestors or my lineage has been calling for me to step into this container for a long time. I have been very aware of issues in the family lineage that was there for healing for a very, very long time and I think part of my longing to do this healing for myself was that I would find some way of being able to change the family story and to afford some healing to my family.

Because of her experiences, Colleen was driven to bring FC out into the world in order help others. She saw “profound changes” in her clients, many stating, “I would never have known that this is what was here for me if it hadn't been for some aspect of Family Constellations.” For Colleen this statement, and those like it, really spoke “to the

greater power of this work . . . and I feel very blessed to have found that for myself and for my family and my clients.”

Several connections were formed through the process of Family Constellations and ranged from the connection to the group of participants, the connections felt between representatives within the constellation, to the connection to the energy and “knowing field.” For the co-researchers, the feeling of connection was a key piece to their psychological healing and bringing this modality out into the world.

Changes in Perception and Understanding. There was an abundance of data referring to the co-researchers’ changes in perception and understanding of themselves and their situations via their experiences with Family Constellations. Many spoke in broad strokes about their changes and some gave specific examples that happened during a constellation.

A constellation that involved a woman whose mother murdered her father gave Max a greater understanding of what his former wife may have gone through in her life. According to Max, his first wife’s father died a violent death and there was a lot of violence in her family growing up. He had never experienced anything like that in his life, so it was difficult for him to understand. His shift in perspective came when he realized

. . . to what degree my inability to really empathize with that past history of hers would have created barriers in our relationship. I already knew at the time that clearly her, this experience growing up had impacted her in a variety of different ways. I already knew that from long ago. But this experience watching [the woman] sort of gave me a new perspective on that and I had just never thought about it.

Teresa’s perspective of her parents changed through reciting a resolution sentence

given to her by the facilitator, “I felt different. [Those words] actually helped me to be able to even deal a little bit more with my father.” Her relationships have been “enhanced or made slightly easier each time—more than slightly easier,” she reported. “It’s markedly easier in a way that I’ve never experienced with any other sort of therapy.”

Through Family Constellations she has also experienced something change in other family members, like her father and mother, without them knowing she was doing constellations.

It’s . . . pretty interesting to see somebody around you change when they don’t even—they have no awareness of what you’re doing or understanding of it, but it changes them or it changes the way you are around them and it allows the next thing to happen . . . I was like wow.

Family secrets and shame were challenges faced by Alma. These were held in the consciousness of her family and through Family Constellations she was able to see how much she carried unconsciously, the energetics of her father’s experiences with shame and secrets out of love and loyalty. She began asking questions of her family to find out if the things she remembered hearing so long ago were true. Asking these questions allowed her to go deeper with the constellation work and confirmed what she heard long ago. Going deeper “was very opening for me and in that way, healing.”

In one constellation, Alma’s deep acknowledgement was what initiated a healing that brought her peace, freedom, and the ability to move forward in her life:

I was able to acknowledge and make peace with what I unconsciously carried inside which held me back from moving forward and creating and manifesting things in my life more easily. It was making peace with what happened in my dad’s life and finding compassion for him and the situation and really just energetically giving it back to him to hold and to carry.

One of the gifts Jules received via FC was the ability to look at the disease

process in her and the women in her family. She was able to see how hypothyroidism was carried through the maternal line and learned, from being a representative, how there was “overworking” by the females in her family. Her awareness was about her belief that “in order to be loved [by my mother], I had to overwork” in all aspects of life.

Jules was also able to look at the alcoholism in her family at a deeper level. She stated that she “had a lot of judgment toward my sister around her alcoholism” but in doing this work that judgment disappeared.

I see it from a more sacred place, her use of alcohol and the ways she's had a bond to my mom through the use of alcohol and I've had to look at my own use of alcohol which I haven't totally given it up but the way I am with alcohol is completely—I would say it's—there's a deeper examination going on and the more mindfulness about it.

There are triggers in life and one of Amy's realizations after participating in FC was that she began experiencing an absence of such triggers and when those triggers disappeared, she began to notice that “something truer about myself is available, some aspect of being, just some aspect of presence is more available.” One trigger she discussed was the anxiety she had in her first year of college and how her daughter experienced similar anxiety when her daughter began college. Amy did a constellation about it and the outcome was unexpected.

Amy expected the outcome to be found in the mother/daughter relationship but what showed up was something completely different and something she did not think was even remotely connected. It had to do with her father's loss of his father around the same time in his life, his first year of college. This was very powerful for Amy. From that same constellation, Amy also saw something she had not recognized before:

. . . part of what happens in my relationship with my father is that he uses me as a

replacement for his father. So there's a sort of a parentification and also a competition, there's a lot of things, but that has to do with the loss of his father. And that was completely unexpected, a non-linear outcome. I never could have—you know, I don't know if there's any other way that I could have arrived at that understanding or connection. They're just connections I never, ever would have made any other way, I don't think.

Becoming more aware and being able to integrate the awareness was something Roark noticed. He shared being able to integrate his childhood feelings and experiences into his adult awareness in order to let go of the feelings of being stuck which allowed him to live more in the present moment.

I've been able to have more awareness, more self-awareness, and subsequently more learning, more understanding of my family's dynamics while going into similarly painful places, unresolved places, unresolved childhood feelings and childhood experiences. And I've been able to integrate them into my adult awareness, so that I've been able to resolve and let go of those feelings being held in a stuck place. So there's just more energy and more consciousness available to me now in the present moment as an adult.

Jack had the core belief that he was not good enough due to growing up poor, challenged with dyslexia and not being able to read, write, or do math. He wanted to be successful in order to prove his worthiness. To Jack, this want seemed out of reach. His very first constellation was about this desire. The constellation was about how Jack dealt directly with his father and his father's financial mistakes in life. These mistakes caused bankruptcy and the loss of their home. Because of these mistakes, Jack had always felt the need to avenge his father's legacy. Through the constellation, he was finally able to let the burden of avenging go:

And I was able to say that I only wanted to be your son. I didn't want to take on this burden of avenging you, and when I did, and it really shadowed my life, even though it came out—it ended up as a gift. But still, it was one of those things that ran my life. It ran me. And so, I was able to clear that with him, which was great.

Coming “face-to-face” with his father in the constellation, Jack was able to heal

his wound “way down deep” and he was able to accept that any “financially-oriented thing” could be for him. He desired to be successful for himself and was driven by his own desires, not the desire to avenge his father, “So now it’s my choice. So if I want to go ahead and be successful, it’s because I want to do it.”

In doing a constellation involving Laura, her fiancé, Laura’s mother, father, sister and her sister’s boyfriend and issues of control, Laura discovered something she did not want to see at first. “I think what I didn’t like about it was because we were talking about being controlling and my sister’s boyfriend is very controlling and my dad is too and then I was next to them and I was like [gasp], why am I there?” The constellation showed that Laura was being as controlling as her sister’s boyfriend and Laura’s father.

I have a different way of going about it than my dad does or my sister’s boyfriend does, because the way that I saw it in them was like mean and malicious and in me I think it’s [a] different kind of controlling-ness. I think it’s just mainly about anxiety or something and just liking things a certain way. Maybe it is for them too, but it comes out in a different way I think. So that’s why I didn’t fully group myself into that, but then when I saw it like that I was like oh God.

On some level Laura knew this but seeing it helped remind her and helped her to learn more about her motivation to be in control. This awareness gave her a different perspective of the controlling motivation of her sister’s boyfriend and a better understanding of her father.

Family Constellations helped Colleen to acknowledge her father and what happened between them, which changed her perspective. She felt that she was given a choice: “It was like I can choose to stay in the place of not allowing my father to exist in my life, or I have a choice to open up to receiving him . . . it has been a journey.” She went on to explain that it was not about forgetting but that she no longer wanted her past

to influence her present and future, “And that was where I recognized that the healing really started to happen because in my heart and soul, I longed for something different.” That something different was letting go of the pain that she carried with him and “that meant I could have my father in a different way for whatever time we had left together.”

This change in perspective was huge for Colleen “because that was where the story stopped playing.” She came to terms with what happened and began to let her father enter her life in a different way:

. . . you can't turn back the clock of time but what we do in this moment and from here on in, we can choose and that was what I realized in doing constellations was when I acknowledged him and when I accepted what happened. That I then had a choice that is like from here on in, I can choose the kind of relationship I have with this man. I'm no longer the victim. I am actually back in the place of being empowered and how I choose to create a new relationship with him, which was really what happened.

Last year Dianna Lynn was diagnosed with Lyme disease. She had a strong desire to do a constellation about her Lyme disease. She realized she needed to change her perspective about the disease. During the constellation, the representation for Lyme was “glued to me” but not frightening. “I so didn't want to be like, let's kill it, let's get rid of it . . .” She did not want to start a war with it because she remembered reading from one of Hellinger's books that “you need to get in bed with it and see how much space it takes up.” By the time she left the session, Lyme disease became her ally:

. . . just bringing in this whole different piece that was peaceful, you know, because now there was no war. It was like, okay, what are you going to teach me, what are you going to teach me, what do I need to learn.

As this shift in perspective was continuing, Dianna Lynn noticed that people with Lyme disease began booking appointments with her and she was better able to support them in their challenges with Lyme and help them to find peace in the disease as well.

“Through the whole constellation method, I’ve just learned it’s always about [finding] peace.”

Initially Trixie had her doubts about FC and its method and effectiveness until she became a representative. She explained that while a representative once she stopped thinking, a phenomenon occurred:

I actually felt the energy. I felt a different emotion that didn't relate to me at all, and my mental state at all and I felt a connection with another human being and I felt a resolution process and I stepped away from it and I go, what in the world just happened here?

She gained insight she would not have had in any other environment and realized that this insight was going to help her and “the more I participated in that phenomena, and in that approach, and that method, I thought, you know, this is not mumbo jumbo.”

Trixie began to realize that the representatives’ experiences with the energy of the constellation and other representatives “are just as powerful and maybe even more powerful than confronting the event [or person] in actual life.” She believed that working with this energy has given her resolutions that allow her to change, and that because her behavior also changed she was able to positively influence the relationships in her life, heal, move forward, and become more open to others. “It’s a tremendous vehicle of empowerment.”

The realization of how “very clinical” this methodology and process of therapy became a huge shift in perspective as well for Trixie. She believed it was “very much a process that you go through and that you follow” in order to go past the mental level and into the “heart place that gets you the insight, that gets you the empowerment, and the objectivity to change something within your life.” Her thoughts were that Family

Constellations should be given the credibility “any other therapy and any other approach that’s out there in psychology” has due to FC’s “very positive, very loving, . . . very powerful way to achieve healing for somebody.”

Changes in perception through Family Constellations brought understanding, compassion, and acceptance for others. Co-researchers were better able to deal with family members, family history and patterns, secrets and shame. This ability brought peace, freedom, and healing not only to the co-researchers but to their family members as well. Letting go of personal beliefs and accepting shadows of self and family fueled the deep healing and made believers out of even the largest skeptics.

Impact on Relationships and Self. Co-researchers reported that their experiences in Family Constellations had a direct impact on self and their relationships including relationships with partners or spouses, family members, and the world. Better communication, more trust and faith in self, and finding peace within struggle were just a few that are included in this section.

The group setting had always been a challenge for Esmeralda. Family Constellations helped her with this challenge and her relationships as a whole by giving her a reflection of something she needed to see that she feels she could not get any other way, specifically group dynamics in a safe environment. She stated that this awareness “pretty much changed every relationship I have . . . even ones where I haven’t necessarily directly worked on them.” She saw relationships shift for the better and stated FC also allowed her to recognize other opportunities for constellations to be done.

Walter shared that his healing through Family Constellations experiences had immensely changed his relationship with his wife, two children, and other family

members because he was able to let go of the pain, annoyance, and anger he felt.

. . . I guess, what I've come to learn is that you just let go of the stories you see, and you just – of really learning better of not paying attention so much to the past and the future, of being stuck there, but being present here. And that you can deal with those pieces in the here and now, rather than being stuck in the past or anticipating the future.

Impact on Self

The impact on self was described in many ways: being more balanced, recognizing patterns, increase in faith and trust, finding one's purpose, and being better able to deal with the circumstances of their lives. For Max, Family Constellations was about gaining more energy and balance in order to pursue the things he needed in life. He is self-employed so hustling to find work was a constant and “feeling more wind in my sails” as well as balance was a big part of his finding new work and dealing with life.

. . . too often in life I felt like I am back on my heels, just sort of out of balance reacting to what life is throwing at me and letting it knock me off balance. I really feel that since doing this [constellation] work I feel more in balance, more able to be on the balls of my feet and be ready to take what life is throwing at me and come back equally strongly. . . . I feel like I am just better able to deal with life.

Patterns of caretaking, feeling over-responsible, addiction, obsessions and compulsions were patterns shown to Jules via Family Constellations. In one constellation, she was able to see how she was doing harm to herself out of love and loyalty to her family through her fears about not having enough money. She would overwork and allow her husband to rule her authority. Looking at and accepting these patterns allowed Jules to alleviate those things that perpetuated the patterns.

I can shut the computer off at night even when I haven't checked all my emails. And I can stop what I'm doing and just say this I can deal with tomorrow. So I would say that has been my biggest kind of addictive or compulsive tendency is to overwork and I'm really changing my relationship with that after having done

constellation work

Jules felt that constellation work brought her to a new level of integrity in following her heart and soul. She believed that level of integrity “is the healthiest thing I can do for myself and the world. And that is first loyalty.”

Loyalty was a theme for Teresa as well. In her case, she was doing everything for everyone else and constantly pushed to do more, much to her own detriment. Family Constellations helped Teresa “break the chains” she felt from her family.

It’s like working back into who I am and what I am supposed to be doing. . . . So it’s (FC) provided me a more-room within myself to start to be able to feel like it’s possible to achieve that. Whatever that “you’re supposed to be doing” thing is.

Alma believed she was doing healing work for a long time, even before she realized she needed to look at the aspects of her life that challenged her. Family Constellations gave her the awareness that if she kept her intentions aligned things would come on their own time. She found more peace and freedom and this increased her ability and belief that she could move forward in her life without so much struggle.

She reported having more faith and trust with the issues that came up for her in life. She felt she had more “tools in my toolbox to move through them.” The learning for Alma had been “enormous”:

In certain areas of my life, there's been a pushing and a striving and a feeling like I have to get somewhere and get something done and – I'm a “do-er,” I guess you would say, in my life, and it's not that I don't have that quality. It still informs my life in certain levels, but there's an accepting of timing. . . . I have more peace with time.

Relationships with Partner or Spouse

Roark and his wife were able to experience the first of the FC immersion program together during their engagement. This helped them to see how many other influences

and energies each would bring into the marriage. They established a foundation “where we can allow space for those things and know that, you know, under stress and in conflict, those older influences and energies from our parents and their parents and ancestral lineages, they come out, they become present.” In knowing these energies and influences:

. . . we are able to be a lot more present with each other when we're in conflict, and a lot more communicative, and we're able to move through conflict, I think, more easily and more quickly than we might have otherwise. Each of us also knows that when we get into those reactions, we might know, wow, this is not really the way I want to be with you in relationship, but this is here, this is coming out, I'm fearful.

Having her husband present during her constellations, witnessing the “good and the bad” of her family, brought a new level of intimacy to Ruby’s marriage as well.

[It is] definitely a different level of intimacy to share that way and I feel like because we have both shared that way, that we can talk to each other and understand each other in a way that we wouldn't have otherwise. We've also done constellations together as far as working specifically on our relationship that have brought up things that I don't think either of us expected to bring and that might have taken years or might never have come up in our day-to-day relationship that help us communicate.

Max said the communication in his marriage was impacted by his newfound ability to talk frankly with his wife about aspects of their relationship:

Instead of letting things go on and never talking about them, and just trying to hide from that etcetera, we really have just been really able to talk about things. Just that in itself is a very powerful kind of thing, clears the air and get things out.

Since doing the workshop, Jules felt a greater freedom in her relationship with her husband. She felt free to be in her truth and have her deeper authority. FC had also helped Jules to quiet the chatter in her mind about her first marriage ending and how it was a mistake to end it. She told herself the story that she was more at fault than her first

husband and carried that with her into her recent relationship. Doing a constellation about that situation eliminated that story and she is now able to be more present in her current relationship.

And so I'm feeling that whatever happens between [my husband] and me, is between [my husband] and me, but there's—I feel like there's this depth in the relationship that I'm really here at a deeper level to work through things that I still need to work through...

Relationships with Family Members

Relationships with family members had shifted toward the better on one level or another for all of the co-researchers. More openness, better communication, increases in ease and comfort in the relationships, deeper bonds, and reparations were just some of the changes that were reported.

Family Constellations supported Colleen in being more open toward her father. She said she was able to open up to him in discussions and her heart has felt “waves of compassion come through,” which had her feeling more present with him. She began to see his pain, his wounds, and his family story, which influenced their family story. This allowed her to “let go of the charge I was carrying around him and to take him into my heart” However, what was most profound for Colleen was she was doing “all of this work” but was not having conversations about it with either of her parents but their relationship with them was beginning to change.

. . . my relationship with them grew and deepened even though they had no idea of any of the work that I was doing. And that, for me, that, for me, is how—is really how healing happens. And I had many beautiful times of sitting and having my father open up and share about his childhood and share about just his family story, which I would not have allowed myself to have had before.

Max’s nuclear family was spending more time together and having easier

discussions, “It’s been good because my father is going through this lung cancer thing.” He now finds it much easier to talk to his parents and siblings, bringing them closer together.

The most troubled relationship in Ruby’s life was with her brother. Today, because of FC, there is a level of ease and comfort between them. She now feels she could “pick up the phone and have a friend relationship with him . . .” and he was even present at her wedding:

. . . it was awesome. We just were playful and fun and it was almost – in some ways it was kind of like, from my perspective, it brought my family back together. It wasn't like there was my sister, my father, and my mother. Oh. And then there's my brother.

Ruby stated that even her mother has been more relaxed and their relationship has shifted as well. She had always felt she did not quite meet her mother’s expectations and demands for Ruby to listen to her and her mother would tell her so via telephone. Recently, she received a phone call from her mother saying, “I just really appreciate the way you listen to me and the way you hear me.” Ruby was shocked. Her mother also apologized for things she did years ago. Ruby believed that FC supported her in being with her mother in a different way and this perpetuated a new depth of their relationship that did not previously exist.

Changes in relationship with Esmeralda and her mother and brother had “been nothing short of phenomenal.” Both of those relationships did not really exist for her before FC. She reported she now talks with her mother almost daily and “in some ways it’s like having the mother I would have liked to have had when I was a kid and all of that gets to have happened before she passes, which is a wonderful thing.” In fact, Esmeralda

not only experienced the shifts herself but saw her “mother’s relationship with her oldest sister change from one of anger and hatred to one of gratitude.” Family Constellations truly “changed how I look at most of the relationships in general in my life.”

Jules also experienced changes in relationship with her siblings, a brother and two sisters. Since her involvement with Family Constellations, Jules felt a much deeper bond with all of them. She said that her communication with all of them increased and occurs at much deeper levels. The struggles with them had diminished as well:

I mean there's a deeper profound respect that all of my sibs have their own soul work to do and they're here for their own reasons. It helps me respect their process and has helped my boundaries for not feeling responsible for them, which I've often carried in my family; the feeling of responsibility for everybody. . . . there's much more of a kind of a slowed down acceptance of my life and theirs.

One of the richest experiences Jules shared happened with her sister. After witnessing a constellation about sexual abuse, Jules was able to call her sister and open her heart to her creating a safe space for her sister to be open as well:

. . . we cried together and I shared the things that had come up for me and I just really opened my heart and she said, “I feel so supported and I thank you for really hearing and believing me and understanding. And you are the only family member that I've ever been able to tell.”

About 10 years ago, Trixie’s parents broke off contact with her mother’s brother. Out of loyalty to her parents, Trixie also broke contact. She no longer had a relationship with her cousin, aunt, and uncle, which broke her heart. Doing a constellation about this situation in the family proved most healing for both Trixie and her mother. The constellation was about reaching out to her uncle and healing the relationship between him and her mother. After the constellation, Trixie sent him an email and about three days later she received a response:

[He was] surprised that I reached out, that they're happy that I did, with pictures and everything and now we're in regular contact with each other. Plus, my—I got the information of my cousin. So my cousin and I reached out to each other so we're now in contact again and the good thing is I told my mom about it and my mom was very happy and she had tears in her eyes and you could see her longing for her relationship with her brother.

After the initial email, Trixie began to notice that her mother desired to find a way to reach out to her brother.

[S]he said to me, when you—next time you email my brother, your uncle, tell him that I love him very much and that I miss him very much. So she is mentally thinking of him in a different way. It's not just the pain, it's the potential of maybe there's a healing there for her as well. I would have never ever done that without the constellation and the constellation approach.

In Teresa's case, the shift in relationships was apparent to someone outside the family. Family Constellations helped Teresa diffuse the feelings of entanglement she had with her parents so she could begin to have a healthier relationship with them. Meanwhile, her mother was seeing a doctor for her cancer diagnosis and he noticed a change in Teresa's mother as Teresa was diffusing those feelings. The doctor said to her, "I don't know what you're doing but it's really affecting your parents. They're changing." Teresa accepted the acknowledgment, although she may not have been able to explain it, and reported she is now able "to step back into my own life."

Relationship with the World

In relating to the world, many co-researchers experienced changes in work relationships, changes in how they work with clients and the impacts on those clients, as well as a desire to help those in need. For Max, there had been changes in work relationships. He often felt less inclined to "go along" with things and began to stand his ground, press his point, and be more outspoken rather than keeping quiet.

Probably the biggest impact there has been—I am on the Board of Trustees at my

church and I really had just been sitting back too much and letting things go. And since doing this work I have been much more inclined to just, in the face of a lot of disagreement, just jump in there and say this is what I think.

When working with clients, Dianna Lynn reported she was able to see their world through Family Constellation eyes.

It's part of my thinking process now. It's part of, like, you know, I speak English or I also think constellation—it's weird how there's no separation. It's just so a part of me now, that I'm always looking.

In his healing practice, Roark stated he had a vision of using FC with clients especially when clients appear to be stuck. He looks for the entanglements and patterns in the family. He also said that FC has given him a different perspective of the overall human experience:

. . . it's really softened my own reactions to judge or criticize or condemn almost anybody. You know, it still happens, you know, I'm human and so I do judge and I criticize and I condemn. [But] If I slow down and try to bring that person into my heart, then eventually I will find more compassion and understanding for whatever they've done.

Amy's interpretation of things changed since her experiences with Family Constellations. This had her looking at her clients' lives differently and had her feeling more compassion.

I see things more in terms of entanglement than in terms of, sort of, just, sort of, individual narcissistic wounding, or things that happened, just personally and historically. . . . That's what it boils down to. It's just given me that much more compassion for why people are the way they are and why they do what they do. And I feel less blaming or less, just less judgmental.

Helping veterans was very important to Paul and Family Constellations brought him “a lot of ancillary benefits” that he uses as a volunteer mentor and facilitator of The Warrior Connection (TWC). One of the ancillary benefits reported was the understanding that the burdens we carry have come to us through the generations. According to Paul,

this understanding helped the veterans he worked with deal with their grief and loss.

They were able to realize that the events in their own lives were related to those in their family history. Many men went into the service because their dads went into the service and experienced the same things as their fathers:

They went to war and they came back and they just shut down completely. And seeing that carried and seeing [that] carried forward from the family and then repeating it, . . . it's been a very, very eye opening and emotionally opening experience. [It's] the energy of understanding what that person is going through, understanding what flashbacks are and how they scar your life, your dreams, your outlook.

The impact of Family Constellations on relationships was vast and rich. There were many reports on relationships changing for the better even when others did not know of the work the co-researchers were doing. With their spouse/partner, co-researchers told of increases in communication, intimacy, honesty, and depth in their relationships as well as the ability to more be present with their partners. There were reparations and reconnections with family members and an increase in ease, comfort, and openness to create deeper bonds.

Many participants reported an increase in feeling more balanced, more faith and trust in self, the ability to make peace with their struggles, an ease in their addictions, giving them more opportunity for personal growth and psychological healing. Many believed that this personal growth enabled them to see the world through new eyes, which created an increase in compassion and the ability to work better with clients as well as an increase in the desire to be in service to others.

Presentation of Data

In this section, four individual depictions, one composite depiction, three

individual portraits and a creative synthesis are presented.

Individual Depictions. Individual depictions are written in first person. Verbatim interview information is utilized to capture the essence of the co-researcher's experience and is explicated in a condensed way. The co-researchers ranged in age from 26 to 70 years old. There were 5 men and 10 women. The average age was 49 years old. The co-researchers' professional backgrounds were in the sciences, as well as the medical, alternative healing, business, holistic, education, and social and psychology arenas. The following are four of the co-researchers' individual depictions.

Depiction of Jules' experience. My experience of Family Constellations has been extremely positive. I have felt nourished by being in a safe environment. The leadership and the facilitation have been very clear and the structure of format is very easy to understand. Therefore, being a participant in the group in an educational capacity has been a tremendous learning experience for me and I felt very held and supported in doing the work as a participant, or client, of the learning program. I have been a client of constellations for about seven months and I have had some amazing breakthroughs. One of them is that I feel a deeper connection with not only my family of origin but my grandparents as well. I have a feeling, now, that I am being held energetically by family members who have gone before me. I am being supported in this lifetime by all of them. I have a deeper sense of belonging to life and the earth as well.

The reason I began the constellation work was to learn and heal my family in order to heal and learn about myself. I had the opportunity to look at patterns within me that I used in my life—caretaking, feeling over-responsible. It has given me the opportunity to look more at the addiction in my family system and have compassion for

other's addictions as well as look at my own addictions or compulsions. I have used the figurines as well as participating in the immersion program and each was just as potent. Doing the constellations set up a sacred space that is very powerful for me.

One of the most powerful constellations I did was about my marriage. I would have crazy thoughts of whether or not I should be in my marriage. I have always had a deep bond and love for my husband; I just felt as if I was giving up parts of myself to be in this marriage. I was able to work all of this out through a constellation. What came through was that I had to say good-bye to my dad who passed away and my first husband, and to let go of the guilt of wanting to find myself so I could be present in my current marriage.

Since doing this constellation, I feel a greater sense of freedom in just being in the relationship, being in my truth, having my deeper authority. Also there hasn't been this idea that I did it wrong. All of that is just gone. There is no more chatter in my mind. That whole story has just gone. Now, I am feeling that whatever happens between my current husband and me is between us. I feel like there is this depth in the relationship; that I am here at a deeper level to work through things that I still need to work through but the drama in my mind is gone. This has helped me just relax and be present in this relationship. I am in it, messy or not, and I do not wish to be doing anything else but be in it.

A realization about my overworking and caretaking came from being a representative. It was a constellation about the female lineage and hypothyroidism. I represented hypothyroidism. I received a great gift about looking at that disease process in myself and in all the women in my family and how it had been carried through the

maternal line. I learned that there was an overworking to get love and attention whether through schoolwork or housework or professionally. I wanted my mother's love and I overworked to get the tender mother love feeling by thinking if I worked and was very good maybe the love would come.

I also got that the heart disease that runs in my father's family was a way to be loyal to my family's way of working and as a way that recognition and love in his family were shown in order to create a bond. It was through this awareness that I have made a conscious decision to slow down and work differently, create a different schedule by working less hours because I could really see that my overworking was literally harming me. This has been incredibly freeing. I feel constellation work has brought me to a completely new level of integrity. Following my heart and soul is the healthiest thing I can do for the world and myself. That is the first loyalty.

Being a witness can sometimes bring up something that is familiar in my life too. I am watching someone else work, being present, and find it is actually working me. One example is watching the constellation of a man who had been a victim of sexual abuse. This brought up the story of one of my siblings and how she has carried that throughout her life. It brought up how much I had held it away from my heart because I did not want to feel the emotional impact it had on me.

The constellation had opened something up that made me aware of this and I had the feeling of not wanting to stay present. It opened my heart to my sister in a deeper way and I was able to see and admit that the abuse did happen to her. I no longer wanted to close my eyes to the fact that there was an aspect of abuse in my family. I could now hold that and be strong enough to help hold it for my sister as well.

When I got home, I was able to call my sister and talk to her about it. We cried together and I shared the things that had come up for me. I opened my heart and she said she felt so supported and thanked me for really hearing, understanding, and believing her. I am the only family member she was able to tell and she thanked me for further opening the space for her.

It also affected my work with others as they started to share their stories, I could feel where I would want to leave. As a counselor, my clients could feel that and would not stay with me very long. I was doing them an injustice. Now that I have done this work, I am able to be much more present than before when someone brings an issue around sexual abuse.

Family Constellations has helped me to be of service and to open my heart, body, mind and spirit to whatever wants to come through. It has been incredibly amazing to feel emotions that come through, as when my body trembles or sensations arise. There is truly an energetic field and just to be in the space of being there for someone else is an amazing gift. I am more aware of the giving and receiving and the times when I may have talked a little compulsively. I am more mindful. I can now just be in a space to listen. There is no need for words. This has been very helpful in all of my relationships.

As I stated before, I am in the counseling field. Family Constellations has helped me tremendously in this line of work. The knowledge I have gained I have been able to pass to my clients. My sessions are not so much about the story anymore and I am able to guide my clients quicker in the feeling world. It has brought me into this field of presence in a dramatic way, into a deeper level of consciousness that almost arises before my eyes. Clarity develops about things that have been fuzzy before or I realize that I have come

from a more mental place in the past. I see my clients have dramatic breakthroughs in one session that may have taken a month or a year to achieve in the past. It takes them to a soul level and gives me the sense that there is a bigger soul at work, the “family soul.” Such sacredness allows for the healing, I believe.

When I say healing, I mean there is a conscious awareness on either a mental, emotional, spiritual, or physical level that is felt or experienced at a body level where the energy field is held. It could be a painful wounding that is able to be felt and energetically released. It could be an alignment of those levels, where the energy has been held in an unhealthy way. Family Constellations helps these wounds be seen, felt, experienced, and then released through tears or physically through trembling. It can be released through spoken word. Healing is an ability to be present to life exactly as it is manifested in the moment, to obtain a deep, deep acceptance in order to free up energies so that we can live with whatever is moving through our lives. I feel that Family Constellations works all of those levels to allow that deep presence and acceptance, however it is manifesting, in order to be acknowledged, accepted, and agreed upon so that full capacity to be present in life is achieved.

Depiction of Max's experience. Coming from a scientific background, I was at first unsure of how my experience of Family Constellations would play out. I really was skeptical of the things I had read about it, especially from a representative point of view. Having my own experiences, however, changed my perspective. In fact, it changed many of my perspectives.

The overall theme, for me, in doing this work has been looking at things I have known all along but just looking at them from a novel perspective and in a way that

begins a process that we can call healing—personally though, from a scientific place, I am not really sure what the word healing means.

The biggest thing that has emerged for me is this notion that coming from a family with a history of mental illness has colored my perspective on the world all of my life. I have experienced life colored through a distorted lens and that distortion was due to the family I grew up with. I had not ever processed it before in that way. It has been incredibly powerful.

An example of this would be one of my experiences in the FC workshop. I had done some one-on-one work before I attended and some of my examples may be of that too but this one is from the workshop. We were working on family of origin issues and one of the things that comes through is that my father has tried to distance himself from his family. My wife has long complained that this was true for me as well. What I realized through doing a constellation is that my keeping distance was out of loyalty to the traditions of my family; my father was distant from his family, his father was, and so forth. In seeing this, I saw where the love had stopped and that if I am isolated from my family, I am creating a barrier to that flow of love.

Out of this constellation, I also gained the courage to ask my father about his grandmother. I thought she was back in our country of origin. I was shocked to learn that my father grew up with his grandmother living much closer and he saw her maybe once a year. He had never talked about her in my lifetime before I asked about it. You could have knocked me over with a feather. I was just stunned that my father was so isolated from his family that he never even admitted his grandmother was nearby while he was growing up. All of this had me realize that it is not healthy to be so isolated and distant

from my family. This was the healing: being loyal to this particular family tradition probably did not make a lot of sense.

Being a representative, I have had incredibly powerful experiences. I have felt such strong emotions and feelings. One example is when I represented someone's father. In front of me were some entanglements from his history back in his country of origin. To my left was the representative for the wife. I felt an unbelievable love coming from my left. It was so intense I could barely look at her. She was six inches away from me shoulder-to-shoulder and I was just stunned by the power of that. Then to my right was the person representing my son. I just could not believe the distance and confusion I felt. When I learned more about the story afterward, I could see where the distance and confusion came from. This proved to me that the emotions I felt were correct. How could I know such a thing? I was just blown away. That is my "knock your socks off" representative experience.

As I stated before, I had always been skeptical about these representative experiences described in the books. I figured they were one in a hundred experiences where people would have such powerful reactions. I was shocked to discover that pretty much every time you have these incredibly powerful emotional experiences.

One other experience that really hit me hard as a representative was a two-person constellation of which I was someone's father again. I did not know this person's father had just died but from what I was experiencing in the constellation I felt an urge to step back. The moment I took one step back, I just saw this unbelievable expression on the daughter's face that just said, "Don't leave me, don't go. I need you." I absolutely froze because I could see this intense look. I waited and took another step. It was just so clear

that this relationship with her father was very close and the distancing of this relationship due to his dying was very painful for her.

The last representative experience I would like to share was when I represented someone's mother. I was very anxious about whether I could represent a woman and a mother. I did my best, I got up there, and I was just overwhelmed with the incredibly powerful emotion that I was not able to do what I needed to do as a representative. I just felt like I had fallen so short. I sat down really feeling terrible. Later that day, it occurred to me that maybe I was doing a good job and this is just simply what the mother felt; that she was not doing a good enough job being a mother. A month later I talked to the woman who did the constellation about this and she confirmed the sense that her mother always felt guilty about not having done enough as a mother. To me, that powerful emotion had once again reflected some kind of reality, and just having that reality reflected always seems to help people in ways that I really do not fully understand. I just see that empirically, that seems to be what is going on.

As I watch or witness a constellation, a very common experience for me is that my mind begins thinking about things in my own life that could relate. Seeing something may trigger a thought and then I spend the rest of the time pursuing that thought which gives me a new perspective on things from my own life.

The most powerful constellation experience for me as a witness was watching my wife do hers. It was during the couple's themed weekend. It really generated some very strong responses and I was practically sick for the rest of the day. The tension and stomach issues were overwhelming as stuff was being stirred up in me. In a lot of therapy, things are stirred up, and certainly, many things have been stirred up through this

process for me. Maybe that is part of the healing process too.

Experiencing Family Constellations one-on-one and in the immersion program has really taught me some powerful lessons and has immensely improved my relationships with others as well as with myself. My nuclear family is spending more time together and having easier discussions. It is easier for me to talk to both of my parents now. In the relationship with my wife, we now have the ability to talk frankly about things in our relationship instead of letting things go or trying to hide from them. That in it self is a very powerful kind of thing—clearing the air and getting things out; improved communication, really profound, deep changes in communication.

There have been changes in my work relationships as well. I feel less inclined to just go along with other things and I am more inclined to stand my ground and try to press my point and express my point of view rather than just swallowing it. I feel more energized to pursue the things I need to in my life. I feel a wind in my sails and more balanced. For so long I felt as if I was back on my heels in life as a reaction to what life was throwing at me instead of being on the balls of my feet in order to catch those things and even throw them back equally strong. This helps me navigate life better, I really feel like I am just better able to deal with life and that is such a relief.

Depiction of Ruby's experience. I feel everything that I have done that has to do with Family Constellations has been healing. There is growth to be had in all of it. It is visceral, the healing, because it really is more of an emotional or even a spiritual connection. I am receiving a healing. I am not thinking.

Healing is an acknowledgment of what is and then an acceptance and then agreement. To me, that agreement to what is rather than fighting and saying, "This is my

past and I hate it,” is really saying, “This is my past and this is my past. That is all it is.” It becomes more like a neutral event or an event I can learn from rather than being something that just happened to me. This helps me to move forward, be more open, and have a sense of peace that I did not have before doing constellation work.

Being in the circle, being a witness is more than just being an observer to me. It is really holding the space of healing for not only the client but for everybody in the room. I am engaged and actively participating in my observations of what is happening and then also thinking of wow, how does this affect me? What can I learn from that? Sometimes it is about being in awe of the facilitators and the choices they are making and wondering how the healing even came to be.

When I am a representative, while I might actually be representing someone’s mother, I may actually be experiencing what my mother is experiencing. I am feeling it. It is really that cliché of stepping into another shoes, but deeper. It is like stepping into another person’s emotions.

The very first time I was a representative, I was a mother who had died when the client was about 14 years old. I have not ever been a mother but I knew that those emotions were not coming from my experiences and it was not coming from my head. It was as if a light bulb turned on and I was suddenly feeling the connections to the other representatives that were beyond the story that the client had told. It was deeply powerful and I was stunned at the emotions I was feeling throughout it all because, honestly, I walked in a little skeptical. Knowing I am in service, however, allows me to get in touch with the soul agreement and feel a shift in my body to where I am not repulsed at the difficult things or to where it is comfortable to look in the eyes or step forward.

As a client, oh my God, it is all of those things. I may see things that I had not seen before, tips that I had not seen. The emotional aspects are powerful and cathartic. I see things from a whole new perspective and sometimes receive a healing I did not know I needed in addition to the ones that I did because Family Constellations helps me get beyond my story.

One of the most impactful things about constellations for me is I am able to feel so comfortable in the circle of people that I could go places and talk about things that I did not talk about with anyone else. I was able to set up a constellation with a situation with my brother and see not only how everyone in my family was connected to it but also how I contributed to it. I no longer felt like a victim. I could see how it was really a soul agreement that I had, with not only my brother, but also my parents and the rest of my family.

All but one of my constellation experiences has been with my husband. It has just been incredible for our relationship in many ways. It is one thing to tell someone here is what I think of my mother or other things from my past, it is another to set up a constellation and have your partner there witnessing the interactions of my family, the good and the bad. It is definitely a different level of intimacy. I feel because we both shared that way, we can talk to each other and understand each other in a way that we would not have otherwise. We have also done constellations together working specifically on our relationship. Getting to the depth we are today might have taken years or may have never happened without constellations.

With my family, there is a new level of ease and comfort, especially with my brother. I feel like I can pick up the phone and have a friendship with him now. I was

never comfortable with him, he came to our wedding almost a year ago, and it was awesome. From my perspective, Family Constellations brought my family back together. My mother has even relaxed. She has called me and said things that I would never expect her to say. I feel like I am able to be with her in a different way. Our relationship has another depth to it that it did not have before.

It is interesting; I have done some personal effectiveness trainings before and the piece that was missing for me in that was the spiritual piece. I feel like Family Constellations adds that piece in a big way. It connects all of me. It is different from traditional therapy in that way. Traditional therapy, to me, is intellectual but with Family Constellations, it is all right there. I am feeling it. I am in it. I am connecting at a soul level and so it feels as if almost immediately it is part of who I am. It is by far the most powerful healing experience I have had.

Another aspect is the community Family Constellations seems to form. I have lifelong friends from FC with an intimacy and connection that I cannot imagine having being built in any other way. There is this whole community of people that are rooting for my healing and have been there for me as my mother, my father. I have built a whole community to support my healing.

Depiction of Trixie's experience. To be very honest, I am very left-brained and analytical so when I first heard about Family Constellations and someone intellectually described it to me, I thought this is about the biggest mumbo jumbo that I have heard. I decided to try it anyway and I began one-on-one sessions over the telephone then I observed it through a workshop, and then through the immersion program. As these

experiences progressed, I thought to myself, this is not mumbo jumbo. This is actually a methodology and process.

I am able to get past the mental and to the heart place that gives me insight, empowerment, and objectivity to change something and help my wounds heal and strengthen my relationships. What a powerful way to achieve healing. Healing, to me, happens through connecting with the energy of the representatives through being in the energy field. It happens through releasing my anger, pain, hurt, and fear through felt and spoken connection of the constellation. It gives me strength and empowerment—tremendous strength and empowerment and a kind of objectivity to look at the situation, the event between myself and the other human being or even disease and look at my own emotion about it.

My first experience was over the phone. The phone constellation is a very weird phenomenon because I am removed from the facilitator. Human being representatives are not used; instead, little wooden figurines or any kinds of objects are used. It is interesting that I would feel compelled to move the objects as the constellation progressed and how the energy would take me inside the constellation. It was very powerful.

My workshop and immersion program experiences have the same basic premise but having a human being stand in for family members instead of figurines is just as or more powerful. I could feel the push and pull of the energy between the people in the constellation much stronger. I come from a very small family. My father was always traveling for business so I became very close to my uncle, my mother's brother. He became like my big brother. Later in life, my parents had a falling out with my uncle and

stopped speaking to him. Out of loyalty to my parents, I thought it meant I had to stop speaking to my uncle as well. It broke my heart. I had no contact with his family and had a longing to be back in touch. I did a constellation about this situation.

I did a constellation on reaching out to my uncle, to heal the relationship between him and my mother. It was very powerful and emotional. Some months after, through a family member, I got an email with his contact information, address, and everything. The note said, next time you email my brother, your uncle, tell him that I love him very much and that I miss him very much. I would have never ever done that without the constellation and the constellation approach, without being in the environment and thinking about my ancestors, my family, and the importance of healing where “love stopped” in the family.

My first experience of being a representative is really what got the ball rolling for me in Family Constellations work. For me, being a representative can be just as powerful as being a client. Being left-brained, I looked at the constellation from a data driven, analytical point of view. I realized as the constellation progressed that I am not acting a role. I can feel emotions and physical sensations that I do not know the origin of and by connecting with other representatives within the constellation, I suddenly feel something happening within emotionally and like I can resolve a conflict through just the hand or eye contact. The gift of being a representative may give more personal insight, calmness, and power to reflect how it relates to my own life and find resolution for myself.

One representative experience that touched me very much was about adoption. I was asked to represent the adoptive mother. The woman, the client, felt animosity toward her adoptive mother and longed to connect to her birth mother.

Standing there as a representative, I felt that longing for her to connect with her mother so I rather supported her quietly to make that connection. Therefore, she could maybe reach out and accept that love from a mother that she will maybe never know. That perhaps, many of the negative relationship actions I took were because I felt inept to fulfill the need of that child.

As a result, I felt the desire to really apologize and to let her know that the bad relationship with the adopted daughter was because I felt inept. I felt I could not give her what she needed so it went into negative emotions and pains in my stomach. I felt it was wonderful that at the end of the relationship, there was no complete healing between the adoptive mother and the stepdaughter but she understood. I could see she understood that the adoptive mother saw what she needed – that the client could see the door opening for a second chance with the relationship. It was a wonderful experience to be part of giving her the chance at a second relationship with her stepmother. What it taught me, as a representative, is to look at relationships where I thought I was not treated right.

Sitting in the outside circle witnessing a constellation can be healing and a learning experience as well. If I do not have any connection to the story, it is completely beyond all of my life experiences, I cannot really bond to it. If I can connect to the constellation, I feel like I become part of its energy field and begin to experience emotions and relate it to my life.

One constellation I felt a powerful connection to as a witness revolves around a person who had been a commanding officer in the military. In the constellation, we explored a situation in which the military team was under fire, and they had lost a team member. The client felt responsible for this man's death, the grief and guilt was palpable.

The energy exchange that happened in the client's constellation touched me so deeply that I had my own constellation sitting on the outskirts. It was an experience of where suddenly I had emotions and feelings about my own situation and shared energy with family members from long past just by connecting to the energy that the client experienced with the representatives in his constellation. It was so powerful.

Another aspect of sitting on the outside of a constellation is that I am there to support the entire constellation. I try to support everyone in the constellation and focus on holding the energy and being present so that the energy can be funneled to help the client and representatives in what they need to achieve. By opening myself up, I suddenly become part of the constellation and the feelings and emotions. I channel the energy and emotions and become an active part in the constellation even though I am not actually in it.

Something that I have thought about since I have begun Family Constellations is how it differs from traditional talk therapy. So Family Constellations is all about harnessing some of the critical facts of the issue that you want to resolve, of the relationship problem that you want to resolve, or the event that you want to get over. For Christ's Sake, when I have been in regular therapy, it has been talk, talk, talk, talk, how do you feel about that?

I think Family Constellations is a very different, very loving, very peaceful, very balanced and positive way for healing and personal growth. It is all positive. I think Family Constellations is the most positive vehicle I have ever seen. It does not need pills. Some things you cannot solve with constellations just like in other methodologies but to me it is just a pure, very pure, positive, loving environment as a vehicle to help you heal,

to empower you to heal.

Family Constellations has given me the ability to reflect on those emotions and behaviors and in words of my own that were spoken in the constellation and given me the swift kick in the rear to look at it from a different perspective. This gives me the strength to make a change. I have a better understanding now of both sides of the story or of the whole situation. I understand my emotions better. All of my experiences in Family Constellations have given me the empowerment to change my relationships for the better, get to know who I am, and begin to trust and receive love. My relationships are stronger and more authentic. I love that I can look at life and reflect on things that can be a challenge and change them.

Composite Depiction. To experience Family Constellations was to experience a psychological and emotional healing. It is a coming out of the darkness of psychological and emotional wounds and into the light of authenticity, empowerment, understanding, and new perceptions. The impact on relationships and the self are life changing and can seem, at times, magical and miraculous. Family Constellations left the co-researchers in awe of the process and how it gets to the significant parts quickly and illuminates the unconscious in a safe and sacred way.

Notwithstanding the awe and feelings of safety and sacredness, there were at times hesitation and reluctance. It was common as a client to feel nervous and resistant. The unknown created skepticism and trepidation in the work that lay ahead. However, determination and a desire to heal was the greatest motivation in this situation of resistance; after all resistance only meant change was coming. This was only the beginning.

Next, there was the ability to feel things physically as a client, representative, or witness. One example was the pain from losing a loved one and how it was felt in a person's body while being a representative in a constellation. The relief felt in the body from releasing it during the constellation was healing. The energy would flow through the body in waves, easing tension in the solar plexus and stomach, the throat and head. While it was difficult to explain, the healing was felt through a cathartic release that opened the heart to a deeper understanding, giving a new perspective on life and its circumstances. These shifts continued to happen even days after the constellation.

Also experienced was the ability to physically stand across from and feel the connection to various family members through a representative. Before working with constellations, often there was little or no connection felt. There were times when merely feeling the physical energy of that connection was enough to gain insight. Other times, physically touching a representative's hand or being able to hug or be held was healing because it was something not experienced in life. It was as if the actual family member were standing right there. It was a beautiful way to connect to and meet a family member at the soul level through physical touch in order to begin the healing process.

Many similar feelings and healings happened as a representative. There may have been a bodily expression of the emotion felt and, at times, a representative may have even deciphered an ailment or issue the family member was experiencing. This gave a better understanding of the person's physical and emotional state. The physical sensations aided the co-researcher as representative by providing clues as to when and where to move as well as when to stop. There would be an awareness of being pushed or pulled to look at another representative or space on the floor where one would feel the need to be. There

would be a tingling in the legs, the urge to move, and a pull toward where to walk. When it was time to stop, the tingling sensation would cease. The energy would inform and guide, and being able to feel and trust that made the process of being a representative that much easier.

It was common to experience physical sensations as a witness while sitting on the outside of the constellation and observing. At times there was a desire to go to sleep in order to avoid looking at personal issues that may have been parallel to what was being witnessed. Sometimes a witness would feel physically ill while sitting very close to a constellation. Other times there was an obligation to hold the space in order to keep those in the constellation safe. Intuition played a large role in knowing what was needed so the constellation could continually evolve. One also had to be mindful of breathing in order to keep the energy of the constellation moving. This could be physically exhausting although it did get easier with time and experience.

Family constellations also triggered emotions that had been buried deep within. At times, the strength and depth of feelings were overwhelming and painful but mostly individuals felt more alive than they had felt in years. A wide range of feeling such as anger, contempt, resentfulness, sadness, grief, loss, joy, peace, bliss, relief, and love occurred. The strength and depth of these emotions seemed to grow with each constellation.

There were times while crying throughout the entire constellation it felt as though the tears were coming from so long ago and from an endless supply. The heart would ache and there was a connection with emotions at the deepest level. Being connected at this level would be the doorway into the soul level. There was insight and understanding

into family member relationships and soul contracts were gained. This was the grace.

This was the bliss.

The strength and depth of the emotions felt as a representative were just as stunning. Feeling the amazing power of love while being a representative was something not easily forgotten and is held in the heart to this day. The emotions felt as a representative have run the gamut as well: rage, defiance, hatred, and incredible joy. To feel the rage and hatred was very challenging but also very healing. It was truly a gift because some emotions felt as a representative may not be able to be felt in a lifetime by one person due to experiencing different circumstances or experiences. Through Family Constellations, it was learned that emotions could not harm; in fact, it may be clues to pay attention to what is going on in life at that moment.

As a witness, there were tears of gratitude for not only the Family Constellations process but for the courage and bravery of those doing their constellations. The energy from the constellation travels to the outside circle as well and can be felt emotionally. If the issue touches you personally, it could bring many emotions to the forefront as your own journey is revealed to you. Even if it is not personal, the wave of energy carried the emotion of the constellation. If open and willing, you may feel it as well and be touched. Throughout the experiences with Family Constellations, there was a realization that feeling any emotion could be healing even if feeling them while doing an interview about it. These kinds of connections and others made the experience that much richer.

Other connections made through Family Constellations developed throughout the experience. By connecting with the other group members, the ability to learn many things and make many more connections was had. There were bonds formed not thought

possible. The ability to connect to the energy and “the knowing field” during Family Constellations allowed a connection to ancestors, family members’ souls, others’ family members, and to deeply connect with Self. Never before had participants felt such connections.

Having these connections created safety and security. The group members were supportive and did not sit in judgment. Through this support, opening up and connecting spiritually and soulfully gave the opportunity to go deeper into healing than originally thought.

There was a new sense of belonging to family and the realization that the connection felt in the room could be perpetuated outside with actual family members of the participants. Family Constellations experiences gave the courage to take action, began to reconnect family members who were excluded, and allowed the tough conversations to be had instead of putting it off.

There was also a growing awareness of the familial patterns of past generations to the present ones and connections to it. For example, the pattern of sexual abuse that ran throughout the generations in a family and the soul contracts between members were seen more clearly; all came together to heal this part of the family consciousness. All played a role in this evolution and there were no victims. A feeling of empowerment and more control of self and healing had begun.

At times, the energetic connection felt to ancestors brought feelings of love, strength and support from both the father and mother’s lineage. They were there all along and the feeling of aloneness began to dissipate. This realization gave comfort, motivation and courage to continue doing constellations. It was a calling and there was a desire to be

in service to not only family but also others so that healing could continue in the broader sense of others' families and eventually for the bigger picture of the world.

To be able to share this clarity and awareness while being with family and friends and even when working with clients is priceless. There is now the ability to take it out into the world and help others to heal their psychological and emotional wounds. Family Constellations is another modality with which to offer and seems to work faster and deeper than some traditional talk therapies. It is very exciting and many clients have agreed.

Many clients have stated it would have taken years to get to the depth of healing they experienced while doing a constellation. Some stated they might have never seen or known what was there for them consciously without Family Constellations. Still others have stated that they preferred the directness of the modality and the honesty that comes with it. Profound changes in clients and even self, family members, and family dynamics have been witnessed. The changes in the therapist transfer to the therapy room and there is an ability to take clients deeper and have true compassion for clients during their processes.

Family Constellations has had a profound impact on relationships and individuals. It changed reactions to people and situations and empowered others to act and react in a different way. Being better able to acknowledge and accept what is, what happened, and what has been as shown through the constellation process, there is more acceptance of self, all parts – the good and the bad, the shadows and the light and a reclaiming of it all to become the most authentic self. It is easier to acknowledge and accept family members as well.

Family members appear differently now. Through FC, the experience of seeing some family members' shame, anger, disappointment, longing, and even love that was heretofore unknown is invaluable. There is a releasing of judgment toward them and even eased triggered responses. There is clarity with the internal, unconscious picture or with thoughts of what family relationships were and there is a deeper understanding of where those thoughts originated. Therefore, there is more willingness and openness to form healthier relationships.

Relationship with a significant other has grown and now there is a foundation to build upon. There is better communication and more mindfulness toward each other's reactions. There is an awareness of what is brought into the relationship from our past familial patterns. This foundation aids in establishing a better understanding, which initiates more patience and compassion for one another as well as a willingness to talk things out as opposed to walking away or avoiding the issue that comes up. Family Constellations has given a depth of truth and honesty in the relationship that was not present previously.

The lines of communication and honesty have also been opened between mothers, fathers, and siblings. There is a level of ease and comfort. Blame has seemed to disappear and more often than before, family members are taking responsibility for their parts in the conflict or disconnection. There have been apologies for things said many years ago and appreciation expressed for the ability to listen and hear. Never in a million years, would there have been an expectation for that to happen. There was finally a feeling of being acknowledged and accepted.

Relationships with siblings have also flourished as well. Finally a deep bond is

occurring. There is more connection and more compassion. There is deep respect and gratitude for all. Space is being held when needed instead of playing the role of older sibling and feeling the responsibility to fix or take care of them. Resentment toward them is no longer felt and there is excitement about getting to know them through this lens.

Like the constellations in the night sky leading ships to their destinations, Family Constellations leads through the darkness into the light, illuminating one's fate and guiding one to his or her destiny. The wonderful thing is this guidance and healing comes whenever needed and whenever there is preparedness for it whether it is as a person doing a constellation, a representative, or a witness.

Individual Portraits. Exemplary portraits are created from the co-researchers' individual depictions, demographic information, and interviews and are done in third person. They indicate three co-researchers' experiences that best embody the themes of the data. Some direct quotes are used in each portrait to capture the experience in the co-researcher's own words.

Portrait of Paul's Experience. Paul is a married man in his 60s who is retired. He is the only child and both parents are deceased. Paul has participated in Family Constellations work since 2003 by attending several weekend seminars in various cities and states. He became a student in the Immersion Program in 2009 until 2011. Paul was interviewed over the telephone and seemed relaxed, open, and willing to share. During the interview, Paul's speech would become purposeful in order to make sure a point was being understood. He also would pause to gather his thoughts and at times, became emotional represented by him speaking more quietly and slowly and sharing his emotion. Paul began with his very first experience.

Initially, Paul stated that he was unsure as to what was going on during his first experience with constellations but was impressed with the facilitator and her ability to create the energetic atmosphere of “those of us that were fighting [in Vietnam] and those that were protesting the war.” Paul reported that his wife was one of the Marines in the constellation and after six months she told him what she had received from the constellation. The message for Paul was, “Who the fuck was I, Paul, to take responsibility for [the dead Marine] when he made his own decision to be in the war and in Vietnam.” He learned that it was not his call. It was profound for him because for so long he was “seeing people as what those I had lost would become rather than seeing people for themselves.”

In being a person who does a constellation, a representative, and a witness, Paul stated he felt it was a calling. “The energy field calls for you to be a participant in different ways. To be a client, something needs to be triggered. There is a knowing, a clarity of issue. It means feeling the energy.” Paul reported that one of the constellations he did was about his relationship with his mother. She had six pregnancies and only one came to fruition. Paul also reported losing a daughter himself, “She was born alive, lived for a while, and then passed away. I always wondered what had happened.”

Paul reported this constellation as being the shortest one he had ever experienced. After he was born, his mother was ill. She could not provide care for Paul for the first year of his life. He had other support in his father, grandmothers, and aunts. His father went to war, however, and he lost his second caregiver. He found himself with an affinity for his father that he could not give to his mother.

In his constellation, a woman representing his mother would repeat the phrase, “I

knew when you cried,” several times while moving closer to Paul. When she stood directly in front of him she stated, “I knew when you stopped crying.” Paul became emotional, put his arms around her and said, “I love you, mom, and I am sorry for all the pain I gave to you.” After a few days, the woman called Paul and reported that she had lost several babies, had only one son, and he went to war too. “The connection was unbelievable.”

His representative experience has allowed Paul to connect with his heart. Paul reported that the energy guides him during this process and that he is no longer “Paul” he is the person he is representing, “When the reality of the other person’s energy and spirit is connected with me, it becomes a reality for me in the constellation.”

As a witness, Paul has been triggered around the issues of abandonment. He reported that sometimes it triggers him into knowing the next constellation he should do. This helped Paul to realize that everyone in the room has come together for a reason even though sometimes it may seem like things may seem totally unrelated. “It is the energy that is healing, not the details.”

Healing, according to Paul, “simply means to become comfortable within yourself.” He stated he believes that it is when the disease becomes ease and the internal conflict disappears. There is no more judgment or worry about decisions made. For Paul it is all about healing grief and loss from internal conflict. Paul believes we all have wounding of the soul, heart or emotions and that Family Constellations is one way of healing the wound.

Paul did state “every modality that is found effective and works for an individual is good including Family Constellations.” He also stated that the more constellations he

did the more he healed, the more cell memories get brought up and addressed, and the issue does not sit there anymore.

I have often said to people that I lost my soul during Vietnam. In reality, the needle fell off my moral compass, and I could no longer trust my conscience. I knew that I was totally fucked, totally. Working in the constellation arena, in the journey with past work, the Warrior Connection has restored that moral compass.

According to Paul, Family Constellations is a beautiful, effective, and revealing modality that people who feel called to should experience. It is something that cannot be forced. It is voluntary and when one answers the call, there will be something there. It has been a very, very powerful influence in Paul's life. It has had a powerful effect on how he views people, how he relates to people.

Currently, he is working as a volunteer to help veterans deal with grief and loss through The Warrior Connection. He utilizes his experiences and understandings from Family Constellations to help veterans become aware that the burdens that one carries are not only from the events of their one's own life, but also from the past. Many men went into the service because their fathers did and like their fathers, they came back from war and shut down completely.

Paul reported that seeing those actions being carried forward through the lineage has been a very, very eye opening and emotional experience and being of service has been one of the greatest gifts from Family Constellations. He stated about sharing his experience, "What happens if somebody reads this and says, 'Well, I have issues like that; I'd like to discover this.' Maybe another healing would occur. There was never a thought of holding back."

Portrait of Colleen's Experience. Colleen is a single woman in her 40s, formerly

in the medical field and currently in the therapeutic healing field. She has been involved with Family Constellations for three years and uses the modality with her own clients. The interview was done over the phone so no physical description is available. She did seem relaxed, engaged, and eager to participate. At times, her speech would speed up, there were pensive pauses, and hints of emotion as her voice would become quiet and her tone would become soft and gentle.

She began with sharing that Family Constellations has allowed her the opportunity to step back into her family field and look at the patterns and entanglements as well as the false and negative belief systems that have been passed down through generations. As a result, she has been able to untangle some of those entanglements and to feel a greater connection to her parents and some siblings. She stated:

If I were to really condense it, Family Constellations have allowed me to have more of myself. I have let go of most of my family story that has kept me small and has allowed me to really start tapping into the bigger picture of who I am in relation to my family and myself.

The greatest constellation experience for her was about her relationship with her father. He molested her when she was a child and so he did not exist for her on many levels. In the constellation, she had to come full circle with that and stand opposite him, acknowledge him as her father and what had happened—a daunting feat.

From there she saw she had a choice, she could choose to stay in the place of not allowing him to exist in her life or open up and receive him. She was no longer the victim, “I started to see his wounds and his family story and how some of the events in his life had helped create some of the family story.” She reported that it was very healing for her because it allowed her to let go of the charge that she was carrying. She was able

to take him into her heart much more. The most profound thing about Family Constellations, she stated, was that “I was doing all of this work and I was not having a conversation with my father or mother about it. That, for me, is how healing happens. They didn’t need to know that I was doing this.” She went on to state that the energy she had worked through was what had started the change and this allowed her to show up in a different way.

She reported there were many beautiful times of sitting and having her father open up and share about his childhood and his family story and she believes that she would not have allowed this to happen before Family Constellations, to her that was healing as well:

What I mean by healing is looking at something that has not worked in my life nor does not work or a pain or wound that I carry and being able to look at the cause and effect on that in my life; whether it is constellations or other modalities that I’ve used to come to terms with some of that, to clear some of the energy around it to lighten, really kind of lighten the load around so it doesn’t weigh as heavy on me as perhaps it once did initially. And for me, it is really about coming out the other side and letting go of the charge of that in my life.

Family Constellations allows for healing to happen throughout the generations as well. Colleen began to feel it start to spread to the bigger picture of abuse that was carried within her family lineage. She started to see the patterns. She believes when she moved to resolution with her father, it opened the idea of resolution with the men in her lineage, culture, and country. “That was, for me, when the healing started to move. I began to recognize the contract that I had with my father and he was my greatest teacher.” She began to understand the depth and awareness of her situation and it shifted her whole perspective in life, her whole journey. “It was really recognizing that my soul had chosen this issue, had manifested in my family who showed up and played it out perfectly with

me and that at the end of the day there were no victims.”

Colleen received many other pieces around her mother, sister, and war and immigration as well as the struggle of her relationship with her fiancé ending. She had brought him to a workshop to do a constellation and within 24 hours, he made a decision that ended up being the catalyst for the end of the relationship. Six months later, Colleen did a constellation about him. This constellation showed her what had actually happened between them: “I was moved to the place of dropping into the soul level and seeing the soul agreement that I had with this man and when I got to that place, there was such profound healing between him and I.” She stated that she believed it allowed her to move on completely and allowed herself to heal in a way she may not have been able to or not to the same degree without the constellation. “I really got . . . to recognize my own ability to trust and to open my heart up to someone and to realize that, yes, my heart got broken but that I survived. It was huge.”

When speaking of her representative experience, Colleen used the words “incredibly powerful.” She reported being able to feel a wide range of emotions and experiences that may never happen to her in her every day life. One of her most memorable experiences as a representative was the first time she participated as one. She reported feeling emotions that were not hers. These emotions can be beautiful and expansive from feeling tremendous joy and love for someone she does not know to feeling anger and rage. “Feeling that depth of anger and rage has been challenging for me at times when the energy has come through that powerfully for me.”

She also reported feeling the place of no separation in death and how the soul continues to live, just in a different place when she represented who had passed away:

There is a connection that exists for all time. I have felt that connection from the other side come through me as a representative for someone that has died. That has actually expanded my spiritual journey to know that place within myself.

As a witness, Colleen reported she had been moved to incredible tears by just sitting on the outside of a constellation. The energy of the constellation triggered something she knew on a personal level and took her into her own journey. She stated that witnessing a constellation about war, of which she has experience, she realized in the moment that she was being in service to the energy that was being moved out into the world for healing to happen for her with that issue.

Colleen stated that she felt she has been on a healing journey for a very long time, probably since birth. She has been aware of the issues in her family lineage for a long time and believes that this modality has had a profound and expansive healing for her, her family, and country.

When she spoke of the profound effects of being of service to her family and others in order to help them heal, her longing and gratitude was palpable:

It's [Family Constellations] helped me heal myself but more importantly for me, it has allowed me to help heal my family and to continue to heal my family. I think, for me, it speaks to the longing that I have to be of service in doing this work and that speaks to my longing to bring this family constellation work out into the world more.

Colleen also expressed how good this interview has been for her:

I share this work with people but sometimes I don't actually stop to think of how much healing I've had in the journey. . . . So actually taking the time to share that with you has actually allowed me to drop in and go, 'Oh my God. How do I choose the ones that [I want to share] because there have been so many of them and recognizing that and going, 'Wow.'

Portrait of Roark's Experience. Roark is a married man in his 40s. He was formerly in a scientific field and is currently utilizing Family Constellations in the

therapeutic healing field. He has been involved with Family Constellations for three years and uses the modality with his own clients. The interview was done over the phone so no physical description is available. He was relaxed, contemplative, and excited to participate. He was very organized in his thoughts and made a point to illuminate them and his feelings. Roark spoke with ease and his sharing was filled with depth and honesty.

When speaking of Family Constellations as a whole, Roark stated that he had participated in many modalities but that he has gotten “more healing from doing Family Constellations than any other healing method.” It is within this modality that he has been able to stay within himself and be the most authentic while going to the depths of “difficult emotional and psychic spaces–wounds.” He also stated that it has helped him in his own practice as a healer because he can support his clients when they are in stuck places, entanglements, by using Family Constellations to facilitate healing.

He spoke of what healing means to him:

Healing, to me, is being more comfortable in your own skin. It is knowing that you are truly divine, you are truly one with the divine, you are a creator with the divine, and you are more than your history. It is also feeling safe and empowered that you can create a fulfilling life for yourself.

One of the challenges of healing for someone, according to Roark, is the wound of deep grief, as he knows this first-hand. He reported carrying grief his whole life and that some of it was his but also some of it was the unresolved grief of his mother about her father dying when she was 15 years old. The grief he felt was also about not feeling a close connection with her and her struggle to connect and be authentic with him.

It was through Family Constellations that he was able to “fully drop into and feel

grief like I never had before. I had known about this grief and felt some level of it, but I think I was able to fully go into it during my first constellation.” Roark stated that he is able to bypass his mind and any process of thinking he might think productive as opposed to just feeling and allowing what is there. He stated that he believed he was able to do so because he called in the spirit of my family members by selecting the representatives. He reported:

Just calling their names brought their energy and their spirits present and in this container [of Family Constellations], I was able to be with it in a deeper and more direct way than I ever had been before. It was really a deep, emotional, spiritual and soulful approach.

He also stated there was a point where the power of the feelings were overwhelming but that through the guidance of the facilitators:

I was able to be with more of it and hold more in order to get a much deeper understanding of my mother’s life and the life she had with her father, and how that influenced my relationship with her. So, it was extremely powerful.

He shared that he had done other healing and worked with a psychologist before and that he learned and grew from those experiences but that Family Constellations was a much deeper experience for him. He has had more self-awareness, more learning and understanding about himself and his family through this modality. This has allowed unresolved feelings and experiences to be integrated into his adult awareness and to resolve and let go of the stuck places in his life.

Being a representative for Roark has been a very powerful and growth invoking experience as well. He stated that it is exciting and thrilling at first but there is also a longing to be of service to someone else. During the process, he reports, “You allow the energies of another person, another person’s family member or ancestors to come into

you and for you to experience another person's energy. It's uncanny how strong that can be." He stated that it is more about emptying his own ego and personality and allowing another person's feelings to come into that empty space. "Sometimes it's very hard to tolerate the feelings of another person, particularly when they had very strong unresolved issues in their lives."

As an example, Roark told of the time he stood in as the meta-position of shame in a constellation about slavery. The shame manifested in him physically and his body tightened and kept tightening throughout the constellation. After, he was exhausted and had to take a walk in order to let go of those sensations. He stated that his experiences as a representative have given him more understanding and compassion for members of his family as well as others.

It's allowed me to have more compassion because anyone who perpetrates injustice on someone else, what I've come to find, is there's something in that person's life experience, or that person's lineage or ancestry, which has caused them to not be able to feel their own grief or their own pain or their own loss or the traumas of others, and then they propagate it onto their immediate family members or future generations.

A constellation in which he represented a son was another experience that touched him and paralleled his life. As the representative, he had a longing to be closer to his father, much like in his real life. He described how he would take a step toward the father and the father would move away. This happened many times throughout the constellation. Eventually, he stopped and felt the sadness that the father was rejecting him. This was all happening on the periphery of the constellation. Finally, the father stood next to Roark and he was unsure of his feelings.

The father ended up taking his hand and Roark felt uncomfortable and tight and

did not know if he wanted to receive the father, “I had this, you know, kind of grudge, like, well, I wanted you before and you weren’t there and you moved away from me, and now you’re coming back.” He reported feeling torn and wanting the father to take responsibility for not being available. Through this constellation, Roark stated he was able to heal the part of him that was not willing to accept that his father wanted to be present with him. He stated he is now able to be more open and let go of the resentment and criticism toward his father.

Roark also spoke about the gifts Family Constellations have given to his relationship with his wife:

We actually used principles of the constellation in our wedding ceremony. We deliberately and consciously wanted to honor our parents in the ceremony, and thank them for giving us life and love and for raising us and bringing us into the world.

He told of how he and his wife have a foundation where they can allow space for things and that they know that under stress and in conflict the influences and energies of each of their families can come out. He stated they are able to understand this, can discuss it, as well as feel the support and strength of parents, grandparents, and other ancestors behind them, which is helpful and very valuable.

Passion is one last thing Roark discussed. He believes it has been awakened in him through Family Constellations and has a deep desire to be in service:

I’m really, really passionate about the work, and I’m very, very excited about bringing it to the world and starting to facilitate workshops where I live. My wife and I are developing our partnership together and bringing it to where we live and possibly other places. I’m just really excited about the possibility of what this can bring to just about anybody.

Creative Synthesis

The creative synthesis is the final step of the heuristic model. Much like the process of this study, the creative synthesis is a process in and of itself. A progression of the work will be shown along with explanations and explorations of the meanings behind the choices of shape and color and how it relates to the overall experiences of the data found, the primary researcher, and the co-researchers.



Figure 1

The first phase was immersing in what was written in this chapter. I have grown to appreciate the structure, form, and foundation found throughout this study and the data. This is much like creating this work of art, in that I first needed a layout or form before I could begin laying color (Figure 1). To me, this is the initial engagement with my plain sheet of paper. I meditate and release my thoughts in order to tap into my unconscious. Afterward, I begin to draw from my heart and soul, what I feel best depicts my experiences, and for the purposes of this study, what best depicts my co-researchers' experiences.

Family Constellations has its own structure and foundations as described in the literature review and explication phase of the data. There is often a meditation before beginning the constellation. One does not know where the experience will lead but trusts it will go where it needs to.

It was now time to add color: time to make choices that would affect the entire representation, the whole of the experience. This occurs in Family Constellations when the choice to participate in some way is given. For me, choosing the colors is daunting. I do not know what it will look like. I cannot see the entire picture and that is anxiety

producing as self-doubt enters. It is not predictable, often times ends up much different than first expected, but most often as it should be. This is exactly what happened for me in this dissertation process and what was reported to happen in Family Constellations as well. All of these processes have explored what we thought, felt, and wished for at many levels and have produced something I could not have even imagined in the beginning of this process.

As I began to explore and decide which colors to use and what medium to use, the trepidation was palpable and I had to remind myself to trust the process and follow where my soul was leading, much like being a representative in a constellation. I decided upon watercolor pencils. I chose watercolor pencils because of their softness in color and the process being two-fold. I colored the space (immersion) and then took a wet brush to the color (illumination). Then I was able to see and feel the true, completed picture and have it touch my heart, much like Family Constellations and even the dissertation process, and finally I wrote about it (explication).



Figure 2

The first colors I chose were white and yellow. I wanted these colors to embody the energy felt throughout the constellations and behind the creation of this dissertation (Figure 2). Hence, they are the background colors. The white symbolizes the grace, purity, and sacredness the co-researchers used to describe the constellation process as well as the purity of one's soul. The yellow symbolizes the healing, strength, courage, and connection felt. It also represents the "knowing field" and family consciousness that occurs in every constellation of which we cannot necessarily see but is always there. The circular shape

represents the energy within one's soul. This energy can continue to grow and illuminate not only on the inside but can touch the outside world as well. This is also reminiscent of the healing process of FC beginning within, reaching out to the family, and continuing out into the world.



Figure 3

Green was the next color to be chosen (Figure 3). I chose the color green because it symbolizes opening, illumination, movement, and love. The shading goes from dark to light and back again to represent how we can go into our unconscious and back out again to integrate it and share it with our families and the world. The diamond shapes represent resiliency, expansion, and growth. It also represents family members, past and present, and we remain connected, and how if someone is excluded, love is unable to flow through the family.



Figure 4

The rays of blue and purple were added next (Figure 4). The color blue symbolizes clarity, spirit, catharsis, cleansing, and explication. These words were used to describe what the co-researchers' gained from Family Constellations and how they were able to explain the experience via interview and to others. Purple represents insight and the different perspectives that happened throughout each process discussed in this study and its occurrence in Family Constellations. The rays symbolize the movement from inside to outside, from the soul or unconscious, and from learning about one's self to engaging in being of service and stepping out into the world.



Figure 5

The actual center of this piece represents many things (Figure 5). The orange hexagon represents the container that those sitting on the circle during constellations create and its by-product of safety and the red represents the engagement, genuineness, and presence of the witnesses. The center circle represents the “family soul” and the ancestors who have gone before us and the “knowing field,” all of which helps us decipher what we need in order to do our deepest healing. It also represents our personal soul, our unconscious, and our truest selves. It embodies who we are, where we came from, and our destinies. It is the color of the paper because there are parts yet unknown. This is why some chose to explore Family Constellations and continue on the path to personal growth and exploration.

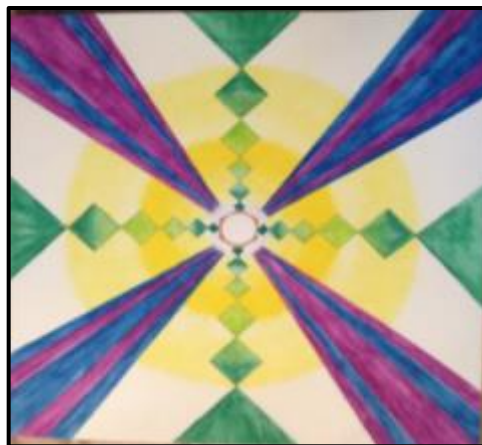


Figure 6

This piece of art (Figure 6), I believe, encompasses the experiences of the co-researchers, the process of Family Constellations, and my experiences during this dissertation. It explored and represented the depths of each through the creation of shape,

perspective, and movement and the fluidity and gentleness through the softness of color. It is my hope that those seeing this piece of work, both the dissertation and the art, gain a clearer understanding of Family Constellations and the impact of that experience on the co-researchers, their lives, and their families.

In this chapter, I discussed the themes found throughout the data, explicated the co-researchers' experiences through individual depictions, a composite depiction, and individual portraits in order to ascertain the Clients' Experiences of Family Constellations in Psychological Healing. A creative synthesis was also done and explained in order to depict the experiences in an innovative form. In the next chapter, I will summarize the subsequent chapters, relate the data found to the literature review, discuss the limitations of the study and future implications as well as share personal reflections.

Chapter VI: Discussion and Conclusions

This final chapter includes a summary and the implications and outcomes of this study. The summary of the study encompasses the whole of the research. It summarizes each chapter as well as the entire study. A comparison of this study's findings to the literature review is also included. The outcome portion highlights the social meanings and implications of Family Constellations and the ways in which it may aid in psychological healing. It also describes Family Constellations and its application to the field of psychology, psychotherapy, and psychological healing. Finally, this chapter includes the limitations of the study, future studies that may enhance or advance this investigation or knowledge on the subject, as well as personal reflections on the research project.

Chapter Summaries

Chapter I was, in part, a narrative of the researcher's personal experience with the research question, "What is the Clients' Experiences of Family Constellations in Psychological Healing?" It described the gifts of growth and awareness this method provided and how it transformed the many aspects of life and relationships for this researcher through both telephone sessions and an immersion program. Chapter I also defined the words *client*, *experience*, *family*, *constellation*, *psychological*, and *healing* as well as combining *family constellation* and *psychological healing* for a more thorough understanding of the topic. Finally, the chapter discussed the clinical, professional, and social relevance of Family Constellations, including a clinical example.

Chapter II presented the challenge of finding literature in a still new area of study. Relevant literature in the forms of classical and scholarly text, professional journals, and

dissertations were utilized. Several themes developed and discussed: (1) foundations of Family Constellations; (2) processes of Family Constellations, (3) influence of psychology theory on Family Constellations; and (4) integration of Family Constellations with current psychological practice. These themes were explicated and supported throughout the chapter. This information was used to position this study among the existing literature.

In Chapter III, the research model of heuristic inquiry was described. This included the concepts, phases, design, preparation, and the collecting, organizing, analyzing, and synthesizing of data.

Chapter IV utilized the information in Chapter III to explicate the specific methods and procedures used by the researcher in this study in preparation and collection of the data. This began with the formulation of the question, "What is the Clients' Experiences of Family Constellations in Psychological Healing?" via self-dialogue. The chapter ended with the process of collecting, organizing, analyzing, and synthesizing the data gathered.

The findings were presented in Chapter V. This included the explication of themes found throughout the data, four individual depictions and a composite depiction, three individual portraits, and a creative synthesis. The universal themes found among the 15 co-researchers were (1) experiences of healing; (2) somatic experiences; (3) experiences of emotion; (4) experiences of connection; (5) changes in perception and understanding; and (6) impact on relationships and self. The creative synthesis was presented in the form of a watercolor painting and was inspired by the thoughts and

feelings of the co-researchers and primary researcher and the family constellation and dissertation processes.

Comparison of Findings to Literature

This section compares and contrasts the findings from this study with the relevant literature examined in Chapter II. The findings from this study indicate that while there are similarities with the literature, there are also multidimensional factors that the other studies did not explore. The first and strongest finding of this study was a deep sense of connection and community that occurred for the co-researchers on many levels, as well as a promotion of emotional safety. Also reported was a profound psychological healing experienced by co-researchers while participating as a representative or a witness in the Family Constellation process. Finally, co-researchers' experiences of "energy flow" and its role in Family Constellations and psychological healing is discussed.

Psychological Healing through the Sense of Connection and Community. The sense of community that developed through Family Constellations was bonded with love, respect, and acceptance. The data revealed this connection and was felt on many levels: with the self, the group members, family, ancestors, and society or the world. Many co-researchers reported feeling a connection with the self that they had never felt before, which to them was fueled by personal honesty and the courage to acknowledge existing emotional and behavior patterns within their families and themselves. "I've had the opportunity to look at patterns within me that I have used in my life," bringing "me to a whole new level of integrity to follow my heart and soul" This is in line with the Strümpfel and Goldman's (2002) observation that one of the advantages in doing

dramatization included being able to see the patterns as something tangible, living, and observable, which aids in breaking them.

In the literature, Hellinger (1999) stated that love plays a large role in this bond; that when looking at others, one must “look with love.” According to the data, FC supports Hellingers’ (1999) statement through the reports of acknowledgement and acceptance in seeing what could not be seen before: “I started to see his [father] wounds and his family story and how some of the events in his life had helped create some of the family story. And that was just so healing for me” This co-researcher was then “able to take him into my heart much more . . . and for me was the most profound thing about family constellation[s].”

The co-researchers also expressed creating intimate bonds and lifelong friendships through FC that they may not have been able to create anywhere else. The co-researchers reported feeling no judgment. Therefore, participants were able to open their hearts and feel intimacy as well as create a safe and sacred container in which to work on their personal psychological issues and challenges. It was through this acceptance, that participants reported feeling that the people in the group were rooting for and supporting each other in their healing.

The support of the group also motivated and propelled the co-researchers to go deeper into their psychological issues and process, which allowed for greater emotional healing. The acceptance and support of the group allowed one co-researcher to “look at my resistances” and “at the places where I might feel myself closing or feel myself shrinking and using every moment as an opportunity to just really look at that and open.” This is in line with Rogers (1970) concerning what supports the development of a climate

of communal trust: “A climate of mutual trust develops out of this mutual freedom to express real feelings, positive and negative. Each member moves toward greater acceptance of his total being—emotional, intellectual and physical—as it is, including potential” (p. 7).

Interestingly, two of the “orders of love” found in the literature (Ulsamer, 2008), (1) everyone has the right to belong, and (2) everyone has their own fate, had a place when describing the group climate. The data showed that when working within a Family Constellations group, the sense of belonging and the right to create our own fate were needed in order to build acceptance, safety, intimacy, and connection in the group. This, according to the data, aided in the participants’ healing by increasing their courage and commitment to do personal psychological work. The group became a part of the collective consciousness and “there’s a welcoming in.” This “welcoming in” gave one co-researcher the courage “to feel so comfortable in the circle of people that I could go places and talk about things I didn’t talk about to anyone else.” She was then able to “take my own responsibility for [the situation] and [see] how I contributed to it” and because of doing this, I “. . . no longer felt like the victim.”

This feeling of connection and community, witnessing and feeling the collective consciousness of the FC group, motivated many of the co-researchers to make a commitment to support other people in their lives in their psychological healing whether family, friends, or clients. For some, there was a sense of duty to bring FC out into the world after their own healing experiences: “If I ever get to be a facilitator and use it and help somebody in their life, that . . . would be my life’s purpose and I would feel like I was complete.”

Another example of connection and community was the willingness on the part of FC members to participate in this study. Even though feeling vulnerable, many participants were willing to share their experiences in the light that others may benefit or gain insight from their experiences. “If it happened in my life and my dad’s life, my family’s life and can help to heal other people, then it’s important to put it out there—so it’s bigger than just my own story” Therefore, participating in Family Constellations had the potential to cultivate a deeper presence and awareness of other people and family members in order to be in service to them by being witnesses to their processes. Through this process, participants reported being able to see and feel a sense of community with ancestors, families of origin, current families, and as one co-researcher explains, “. . . a greater human family, an earth family.”

This coincided with Tauvon (2001) as he discussed Moreno’s (1987) theory of “social atoms.” Social atoms were described as the atoms being parts of a larger pattern. This larger pattern consisted of “psychological networks” and those networks were a part of the “psychological geography of a community.” This community, the largest formation, was then part of the “psychological totality of human society itself” (p. 347) – the greater human family.

The willingness of the participants to share in order to be in service to others, also corresponded with Corey and Corey (1996). They stated that, “Groups provide a sense of community, which can be an antidote to the impersonal culture in which many clients live” and can demonstrate “to people that they are not alone and that there is hope for creating a different life” (p. 5). Rogers (1970) similarly described how new awarenesses of participants in groups “tend to carry over, temporarily or more permanently, into the

relationships . . . ” (pp. 7-8). Interestingly, there was no mention in the literature about a sense of community or connection formed through the other group psychotherapeutic approaches of Family Reconstruction and Family Sculpting.

Psychological Healing through being a Representative and Witness. Moreno (1946), Tavon (2001), Costa (1991), and Taylor (2002) discussed Psychodrama, Family Sculpting, and Family Reconstruction respectively and their observations of the people who were representatives – or actors, not the client. These authors observed how the representatives were able to feel what the person they were representing was feeling. They could therefore obtain knowledge on what had happened in that particular person’s life.

This also was found in this study’s research data. A few co-researchers were unsure if they would actually be able to feel the emotions of who they were representing and reported being “stunned by the emotions I was feeling throughout it all because honestly, I walked in a little skeptical.” However, the feelings were unavoidable and “incredible, just unbelievable.” One co-researcher described the love he felt coming from another representative in the constellation activity as “so intense that I could barely look at her.”

Many of the co-researchers explained that while acting as a representative, they felt emotions that had nothing to do with their current life situation and they would have no personal knowledge of the other person’s story. “I haven’t been a mother . . . [but] it was like a light bulb turned on and I was suddenly feeling that [like a mother].” Another person described it as being “a vessel for the energy to come through,” for the energy of the person she was representing, and found that she began to do “this strange thing with

my fingers. . . . And when I looked at the client, . . . the realization in the moment [was] this has got nothing to do with me here. . . . This is a habit . . . that is in this family,” concluding, “there is something much greater happening here.” An explanation may be found in Gestalt theory, as described in Strümpfel and Goldman (2002): field theory states that the field includes other people, the environment, and the whole individual—body, mind, and emotions—and that the individual is constantly being affected by the whole field.

What Tavvon (2001), Costa (1991), and Taylor (2002) did not discuss was the potential for psychological healing that may occur while being an “actor” or playing a role in another person’s reconstruction, or even a healing experience for those simply watching. In contrast, data findings in this study revealed that there was great potential for profound emotional healing by being either a representative in or witness of another person’s constellation work. The ability to feel another’s emotions similar to one’s own or to see those experiences reflected from another gives an additional avenue to explore one’s own wounds and subsequently process them.

Additionally, the data showed that immersing in the experience of being a FC representative was in fact, nurturing and promoted self-understanding, while exposing the representative to feelings he or she may not have been previously able to feel about a particular personal situation, or did not have the opportunity to work on yet. This allowed the person to relate those feelings and beliefs to their own life experience and become motivated to process and heal those very same issues.

Similarly, Moreno (1946) specifically discussed the method of “mental catharsis” as a means of healing for the actor (client and representative) and those in the audience.

According to Moreno (1946), “The catharsis in one person is dependent upon the catharsis in another person” (p. 180) and induces “liberation from the tragic conflicts, from the emotions in which they are caught” (p. 179). However, Tavon (2001) and Taylor (2002) only described the impact on the client’s experience of representatives or actors involved in his or her own constellation, psychodrama, or family reconstruction process and not on the experiences of the witnesses themselves.

To expand on what was found, watching a constellation evolve as a witness had the potential of bringing the witness’s own issues to light, at the same time. By seeing the constellation process unfold, co-researchers gained strength, understanding, compassion, and insight into their own experiences as well as those of their family members. Co-researchers reported that witnessing opened their eyes and hearts to what FC calls “family soul” (a combination of the individual and collective/family consciousness along with the so-called “orders of love”) in a deeper way, thus giving individuals the strength to look and see the issues that were currently present for them. When individuals were open, they felt emotion and energy, and channeled that into what moved the constellation, becoming an active part of it. Co-researchers reported feeling “a great responsibility in holding the field of the constellation in a safe and honoring way” and feeling that this was “a way to contribute to the healing of the client.”

Psychological Healing through the Role of Energy. The findings also revealed the role energy played in FC work and psychological healing. Energy, described in FC literature as the push and pull or the force behind the feeling of emotions, and the strong sense of connection between participants, was reported by co-researchers as being felt during their involvement in the constellations. Similar to the findings, Ulsamer (2005)

stated that the flow of information in the constellation, informs the facilitator as well as the representatives, and connects everyone at a deep level beyond the particular story told by the client. This energetic flow of information allows the representative and facilitator to “come in contact with a deeper level of truth. . . . [they] become a channel for the truth in the respective family and their system . . .” (Ulsamer, 2005, p. 105). This flow of energy lives in the “knowing field.”

This study found that constellations tapped into the feelings and experiences of the client’s family and those family members represented in the constellation. Additionally, there were universal themes (i.e., death, abuse, loss, or addiction) and a collective consciousness (i.e., unresolved pain through family history) that occurred. The universal theme of death was present for one co-researcher acting as a representative: “I could feel the energy of that soul saying, yeah, this is the way it was supposed to be, there's a bigger meaning behind that death that had to do with war and healing conflict on a really large scale.”

A painful collective consciousness was felt in a constellation about adoption, “The pain and suffering of that client was being felt and the collective consciousness in the room of all of those people that have been put up for adoption.” It reportedly touched all of the people in the room who may have had a similar experience. The representatives become a vessel for this energy—as mentioned in the previous section. Similarly, Shelldrake (2009) asserted that the patterns of the past of a species exists in the field of morphic resonance and that gives the species a collective memory connecting social groups together, like families, even when members are not present due to being miles away, deceased, or estranged.

Meanwhile, Tauvon's (2001) description of tele, which is the process that attracts or repels individuals to each other through a mutual flow that is unconscious and non-verbal, is slightly similar. However, Family Constellations goes one step further in mentioning energy as the catalyst to direct the flow of the constellation (Faust & Faust, 2005). Many co-researchers discussed in detail how they were able to feel the flow of energy throughout the constellation as a client, representative, and witness and how it guided them to move in the constellation and support the client, therefore becoming a vital part of psychological healing and creating a feeling of safety, support, and sacredness or spirituality for others. Participants reported feeling this "energetic give and take through the eyes, physical contact, or words" and that these exchanges "come in waves."

Additionally, the findings revealed that this exchange of energy could be felt when using the figurines in individual sessions or via telephone as well. "You felt the energy. You felt the connection. There was just something that felt right about it, not just emotionally, but physically as well," a co-researcher reported about her telephone session. Another described how feeling energy helped her: "[The figurines are] like it's a representative of that energy [of anger], but if you can actually feel that energy you can tap that energy and be present with that energy."

In summary, the data showed that the sense of connection and community, the emotions and energies felt, the situations observed, and experiences of the client, representatives and witnesses of a constellation played a large role in psychological healing through Family Constellations. While some of the literature was relatable to this study, there was a gap in exploring the actual experience of the clients: viscerally,

energetically, and emotionally, as well as the effect these experiences had upon clients' relationships with self, others and the world.

The findings of this study begin to close those literature gaps by showing the importance of connection and building a sense of community in order to support emotional healing in a client, whether by group interaction or one-on-one sessions. Additionally, the data revealed that Family Constellations in a group setting could produce psychological healing for the witness or representative, not just the client. The data also revealed that the role of energy and energetic connections whether in a group, one-on-one, or via telephone is an important one in being able to feel emotions and for moving healing along for client and witness alike. These components not only helped the clients, representatives, and witnesses with psychological healing but also had a ripple effect throughout their families and friends.

Family Constellations is an effective new tool to consider in the psychological arena and psychotherapeutic realm. The findings showed FC's effectiveness in aiding those with psychological issues and that one must be aware of the importance of building community and connection with the client, as well as the fact that psychological healing can occur for those who are involved only as a witness. The findings also show that energy plays an important role in the therapeutic setting and when working with clients. Clinical psychologists and others who work with clients in psychotherapeutic ways could gain much knowledge of the client by opening their minds and hearts to feel not only the words, but also the energies of the client, as well as the energies of his or her "family consciousness." If therapists could become aware of and tap into that aspect of the client

experience, clients may be able to process their experiences and achieve deeper levels of psychological healing.

Application of Findings

The findings suggested that Family Constellations does have the ability to support clients and participants in going to deeper levels of psychological healing in a group setting as well as individually. This section will explain the possible professional, clinical, educational, and social applications of the findings of my study.

Professionally, Family Constellations has the opportunity to bring newfound information and experiences into the psychology profession. This information, such as the impact of building a sense of community and the energy involved in psychotherapy, allows psychotherapists to look at other perspectives of therapy and consider other options that may affect clients. It is pushing the envelope and challenging the limited dimensions of traditional psychology, psychotherapy, the empirically driven treatments, and the medical model. As the data revealed, there are other possibilities at play that therapists can use in order to give clients the best options possible for their psychological healing, one of the major responsibilities of psychotherapists.

The clinical applications are many, not only in doing constellations with a client, but in applying the key concepts of this work to the general field of psychotherapy, as well. The concepts and tenets of Family Constellation approaches could become foundational in working with clients:

- Looking for patterns in the family history,
- Finding out information about the client's ancestry,

- Using the “orders of love” as a basis to help the client discover a path to healing,
- Looking for those who have been excluded in the lineage of one’s past and present,
- Being aware of energy and the role it can play when working with clients,
- Learning about the concept of the “knowing field” and gaining information from it as the therapist,
- Realizing the client has his or her own choices, consequences, and responsibilities in psychological healing, and
- Knowing the importance of creating safety and sacredness in the therapy room through respect, honoring where the client is and the process with authentic caring and love.

The emphasis on common human experiences, “the human commonality underlying cultural diversity” (The Inner Process, 2013, para. 6) may be the reason Family Constellations could support many people of different cultures and ethnicities. FC is practiced all over the world in different countries, on different continents, in different languages, as discovered while researching literature and FC organizations. It may be pertinent, however, that as in any therapeutic situation, the facilitator or therapist still must be aware of and sensitive to ethnic and cultural backgrounds of the client and group members. For example, a client who is more private or adverse to group work may, instead, work with a therapist or facilitator doing FC through individual sessions.

Family Constellations seems to have a ripple effect. This ripple of psychological healing may be felt through the relationships the client has with self, his or her family,

others, communities, and the world. Having a tool that promotes understanding, compassion, empathy, and acknowledgement may help to support a deeper sense of community and hopefully, it may encourage peace within families and throughout communities and the world.

In a world where there seems to be so much emphasis on individualism and psychopharmacology, Family Constellations may be a great addition to the toolbox of the psychotherapist and possibly a deeper, more connected, and quicker option for some clients. In doing so, FC may support the client's path to psychological healing as well as the possibility of healing of the world via one person and/or family at a time.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

A limitation is age, race and culture. The research study pool mainly consisted of Caucasian men and women between the ages of 25 years and 70 years. Although they had diverse backgrounds, it would broaden the scope of the study if members from different races were added. Recommendations for future research include a more diverse participant pool as far as race and age are concerned. Studies including diverse cultural experiences with Family Constellations would give a more comprehensive look at the effects and future applications of Family Constellations with different racial populations. Adolescents may be a key age group to study with Family Constellations, as they sometimes are a challenging group to work with in traditional talk therapy. This may be another avenue for psychotherapists to use with that population.

The last limitation is that most of the co-researchers experienced the same facilitators and immersion program, which may have resulted in the commonalities in responses, terms, or information they were taught. A study with participants who each

have experienced Family Constellations with different therapists and facilitators could be conducted to see how much the psychotherapist or facilitator influences the outcomes or makes a difference in Family Constellations' effectiveness.

A final recommendation would be to conduct a long-term longitudinal study in order to observe the effects of Family Constellations on the individual's life over a lengthy period. This would explore the permanency of the psychological healing of those participating. These studies could be conducted via mixed-method research model in order to satisfy those that strongly believe in empirical research without losing the human experience aspect. This could be utilized via case study or a participant pool.

Personal Reflections

Music has always been a way for me to find comfort, understanding, and joy. It was no different for this study. The song that struck the match to begin the fire that is my passion for Family Constellations is by Lady Antebellum called, "I Was Here." The song is about finding your place in the world and leaving your mark. In the beginning, I would listen to this song repeatedly and discovered that my initial topic would not fulfill this calling. I wondered if I had the wherewithal to leave my initial topic and embark upon a new one. Could I handle the consequence and fall out of the cost of the extra tuition? Could I stand up for what I believe in? Am I good enough and smart enough to do it? What will my friends and family think?

The fear set in, that fear of being worthy to eventually call myself an expert on the topic; the fear of being good enough, smart enough, experienced enough. These fears came and went throughout the entire process along with anxiety, frustration, anger, and passion. It has always been my belief that I had to suffer to create something great and

this study was no different. I doubted my abilities and myself—the ultimate roadblock in my process. This self-doubt began to silence the song that had initially brought out my desire to undertake this study.

As I began to write the first chapter, I became aware of how writing about my personal experience with Family Constellations would integrate my past year and I did not realize how hard that would actually be. I thought that having been through the experience once already, it would be easy to put it on paper; at times, it was as if I was living the experience again. Reliving it gave me an appreciation of where I began this journey, how far I have come, and the realization that I would do it all again. This realization helped me when interviewing co-researchers. It gave me an understanding of how it must have been for them to retell their experiences.

The literature review broadened my scope of FC and psychology. To explore the history of Family Constellations and the ways in which it is executed and used in the psychology profession already had me feeling optimistic for the future of this work. The gift in this chapter was that I was able to begin to see how Family Constellations can fit in the world of psychology and that this work can and does belong here.

Realizing how the method chapter mirrors the process for Family Constellations was surprising. Not only were they similar in the concepts of immersion, indwelling, focusing, and internal frame of reference but also in the phases of initial engagement, immersion, incubation, and explication. These similarities helped me to comprehend and appreciate the dissertation, constellations, and my own processes on a deeper and more intimate level.

The presentation of findings chapter was most inspirational. I was honored to hear

the co-researchers' experiences. They were honest, open, and willing to share. I felt the power of this work and the gratitude of the participants. This touched my heart and reaffirmed my decision of choosing this topic. Family Constellations seems to be contributing to psychological healing on the individual, familial, and community levels.

Clinically, I have been using Family Constellations and its concepts for about three years. In the beginning, I was a little hesitant on how it would be received by my clients. I came to find out quickly that most were very open to the modality. Most stated that they had never gone that deeply or quickly into their emotional issues in such a gentle way before in therapy. Through Family Constellations, I have learned to be graceful and gentle when working with clients as well as honoring where they are and where they have been in the context of psychological health and life experiences. I also discovered how serendipitous working with clients could be. Often, after working on a certain issue myself, a client came in with a very similar experience and I am not only able to guide and support him or her without hesitation or doubt but he or she teaches me something as well. This is the gift of continually doing my own psychological healing and being willing to gently peel back the layers of protection and resistance with clients.

As I reflect on those times and see where I am in this present moment, I see magnificent changes and awareness. I see more clearly what this study and Family Constellations has given and taught me. I have a new appreciation for what I have gone through and what others will learn and become aware of when reading this dissertation. I have created this document full of research, findings, richness, and potential. I have done this fueled by my passion, love, and commitment. I can truly see my dissertation experience as a gift, many gifts.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Genogram Example

1. a solid, thick line **————** often indicates an enmeshed relationship between two family members.
2. a wavy or jagged line **∩∩** indicates a stormy, turbulent, or hostile relationship under stress (see Figure 3).
3. a solid, thin line **——** indicates a normal, accepting relationship, even under stress.
4. a broken line **- - - -** indicates a distant, negative, or indifferent relationship under stress.

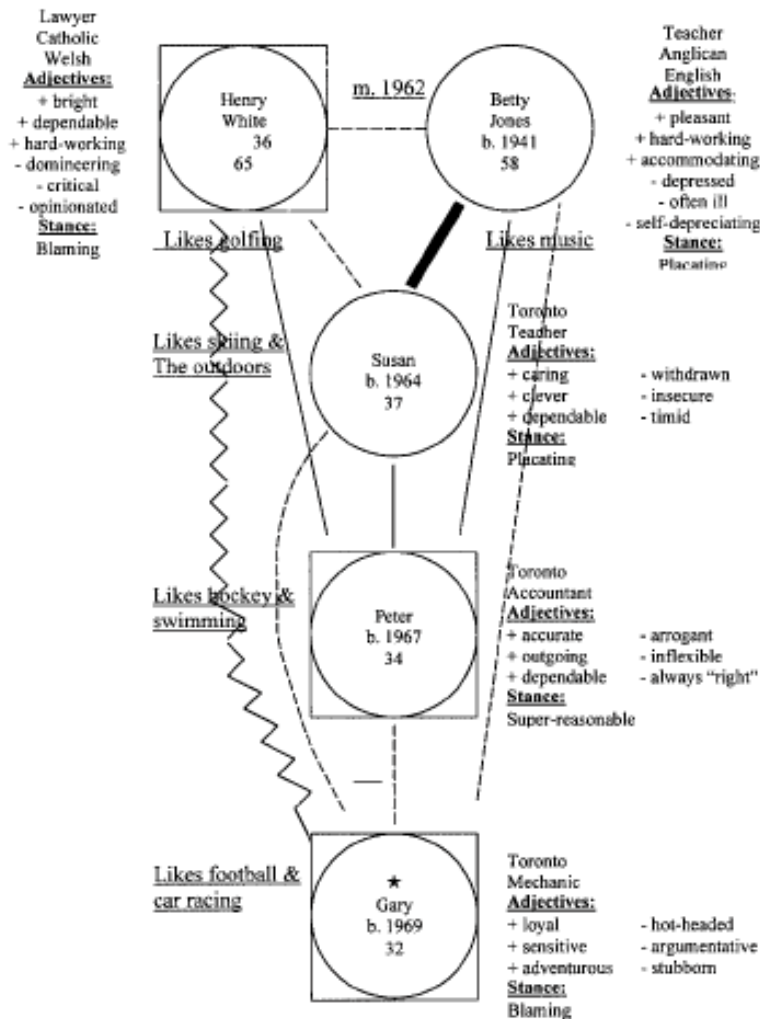


FIGURE 3: Stages I and II: Present Factual and Perceptual Past Family-of-Origin Map. Adapted from “The Satir model: Yesterday and today” by J. Banmen, 2002, *Contemporary Family Therapy*, 24(1), p. 16. Copyright 2002 by Springer New York, LLC. Reproduced with permission of Springer New York LLC in the format use in a thesis/dissertation via Copyright Clearance Center.

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Appendix B: Letter to Recruit Participants

Date

Dear Potential Co-Researcher,

My name is Michaelene Ruhl and I am a fourth year doctoral student at the Michigan School of Professional Psychology in Farmington Hills, MI. I am in the process of building a participant pool for my dissertation study. My dissertation topic is the Clients' Experiences of Family Constellations in Psychological Healing. The purpose of this letter is to explain, in a formal way, the nature of research design I am using, its purpose, and process, and what I am hoping the participants will be able to share with me.

I am contacting you because I would like to know if you have experienced or could be experiencing working in Family Constellations around healing. Healing can be described as connecting the mind, body, and soul/spirit not only of the individual but of the family ancestry to overcome dis-ease in the mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual channels of being human in order to gain clarity, understanding, and compassion for one's self. If so, I would like to speak with you about participating in my study.

The purpose of the study is to collect information/data from clients. It is my hope that the data from this study will help to develop a deeper awareness when it comes to using Family Constellations around healing. I also anticipate this study contributing to future studies and solutions to the challenge of healing.

The research model I am using is a qualitative one, which seeks to learn about and explore the depth and breadth of the Clients' Experiences of Family Constellations in Psychological Healing. It will require being interviewed for 1 to 1 ½ hours about your experience and verifying my findings by reading through my completed description of interview data analysis.

The confidentiality of this project is assured. The co-researchers' real names will not be used in this study nor will any identifying information.

Thank you for your commitment of time and willingness to recommend participation in this research project. If you have any questions about the nature of my research before participating or if there are any concerns, please call me at XXX-XXX-XXXX. I look forward to meeting with you.

Sincerely,

Michaelene Ruhl, MA, PsyS, LLP

Appendix C: Instructions to Research Participants

Date

Dear Co-Researcher,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the research for my dissertation on the following question, “What is the Clients’ Experiences of Family Constellations in Psychological Healing?” I value the unique contribution that you can make to my study and I look forward to interviewing you.

The purpose of this letter is to explain, in a formal way, the nature of research design I am using, its purpose, and process, and what I am hoping you will be able to share with me. I have also enclosed the Informed Consent form. I wish to secure your signature before we begin the interviewing process.

I want to assure you of the confidentiality of this project. Your real name will not be used in this study nor will any identifying information.

The research model I am using is a qualitative one, which seeks to learn about and explore your experience of being a client of Family Constellations in psychological healing through conducting interviews in which you share your responses to questions about this topic.

Please think about and recall specific experiences of doing family constellation work around healing. Healing can be described as connecting the mind, body, and soul/spirit not only of the individual but of the family ancestry to overcome dis-ease in the physical, emotional, spiritual, and mental channels of being human in order to gain clarity, understanding, and compassion for one’s self. I am searching for complete, vivid, and detailed portrayals and descriptions of what the experience was like for you.

Thank you for your commitment of time and energy in the participation of this research project. If you have any questions about the nature of my research before signing the release form, or if there is a problem with the time and place of our meeting, please call me at XXX-XXX-XXXX. I look forward to seeing you.

Sincerely,

Michaelene Ruhl, MA, PsyS, LLP

Enc

Appendix D: Michigan School of Professional Psychology Informed Consent

Principle

Investigator: Michaelene Ruhl

Dissertation

Chairperson: Donna Rockwell, PsyD.

Please read this document carefully, sign your name below only if you agree to participate and fully understand your rights. Your signature is required for participation. A copy of this consent will be provided for your records.

All research participation at the Michigan School of Professional Psychology (MiSPP) is voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw your participation. Your responses are confidential and protected as directed by ethical rules of the American Psychological Association. You are entitled to ask questions and to receive a satisfactory explanation or clarifications.

If you have concerns about your participation in this study, you may contact:

Principle Researcher: Michaelene Ruhl

Phone: XXX-XXX-XXXX

Any questions concerning the research process or your rights as a participant may also be addressed to Donna Rockwell, PsyD, at XXX-XXX-XXXX Extension, XXX.

Nature of Participation

This is an interview of 1 to 1-1/2 hours each in which your experience of: **Family Constellations in psychological healing** will be explored in-depth in an interview that will be recorded.

You will participate in a maximum of 2 sessions. In the first session, e.g., you will be asked to share your experience of Family Constellations in healing loss. If a second interview is needed, it will be to gather more data or to clarify previous information. You will also be sent the data collected to ensure the accuracy.

Purpose of the Study

The questions you will be answering address your experience of Family Constellations in psychological healing. Healing can be described as connecting the mind, body, and soul/spirit not only of the individual but of the family ancestry to overcome dis-ease in the mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual channels of being human in order to gain clarity, understanding, and compassion for one's self. The primary purpose of this research is to create rich and thematic descriptions of that experience to identify and process common themes and issues.

Possible Risks

Results from this study will be confidentially shared with the members of the investigator's dissertation committee. Due to the small number of participants, there is some risk that you may be identified as a participant in this study; however, every precaution will be taken to insure protection of your confidentiality. Responding to

questions that facilitate self-reflection may possible cause some people personal discomfort. This Primary Researcher is available should discomfort arise and will make himself or herself available to process feelings and reactions with the participant if needed. Provisions have been made for you to receive referrals for psychological assistance should you desire it and the co-researcher will be responsible for any expenses associated with referred psychotherapy.

Possible Benefits

You will be given the opportunity to contribute to human science research by participating in this study. When your participation is complete, you will be given an opportunity to learn about this research, which may be useful to you in understanding yourself and others.

Confidentiality

Neither your name, nor identifying information will be used in the research records. Transcripts and data will be stored in a secure and confidential manner. By signing this document, you are agreeing that this information can be used for the purposes of this dissertation and any future publications. All data will be kept in secured files in accordance with ethical guidelines of the American Psychological Association. Regarding limitations of confidentiality, State law requires psychotherapists to report to Authorities (or to take other prescribed actions) abuse, neglect and threats of harm to self or others.

Opportunities to Question

Any questions about this research may be addressed to the **Primary Researcher, Michaelene Ruhl at XXX-XXX-XXXX**. Other concerns can be addressed to the faculty member listed above. The option to raise questions or concerns is available before, during and after the research, or in the event that you withdraw from the research process.

Opportunities to Withdraw

If you decide to withdraw this consent or end your participation, you are free to do so at no penalty to yourself. You are also free to skip specific questions and continue participating at no penalty.

Opportunities to be Informed of Results

If you wish to be informed of the results of this study, please indicate by providing your mailing address, email, or phone number in the space below:

I have read the above statements, understand those statements, and voluntarily sign this form. I further acknowledge that I have received a copy of this consent form for my records.

DATED THIS _____ DAY OF _____, 2012

Participant Signature

Primary Researcher Signature

Appendix E: Possible Interview Questions

1. What is your experience of participating in Family Constellations as a client in order to heal?
2. What does healing mean to you?
3. How did you experience Family Constellations?
4. Describe how your participation in Family Constellations as a client feels.
5. How does Family Constellations differ from other forms of therapy you have encountered?
6. What ways do you see or feel Family Constellations has influenced your life?
7. Is there anything else that you would like to tell me?
8. What has it been like to share this experience?

Appendix G: APA Ethical Guidelines for Research Standard 8: Research and Publication

8.01 Institutional Approval When institutional approval is required, psychologists provide accurate information about their research proposals and obtain approval prior to conducting the research. They conduct the research in accordance with the approved research protocol.

8.02 Informed Consent to Research (a) When obtaining informed consent as required in Standard 3.10, Informed Consent, psychologists inform participants about (1) the purpose of the research, expected duration, and procedures; (2) their right to decline to participate and to withdraw from the research once participation has begun; (3) the foreseeable consequences of declining or withdrawing; (4) reasonably foreseeable factors that may be expected to influence their willingness to participate such as potential risks, discomfort, or adverse effects; (5) any prospective research benefits; (6) limits of confidentiality; (7) incentives for participation; and (8) whom to contact for questions about the research and research participants' rights. They provide opportunity for the prospective participants to ask questions and receive answers. (See also Standards 8.03, Informed Consent for Recording Voices and Images in Research; 8.05, Dispensing with Informed Consent for Research; and 8.07, Deception in Research.) (b) Psychologists conducting intervention research involving the use of experimental treatments clarify to participants at the outset of the research (1) the experimental nature of the treatment; (2) the services that will or will not be available to the control group(s) if appropriate; (3) the means by which assignment to treatment and control groups will be made; (4) available treatment alternatives if an individual does not wish to participate in the research or wishes to withdraw once a study has begun; and (5) compensation for or monetary costs of participating including, if appropriate, whether reimbursement from the participant or a third-party payor will be sought. (See also Standard 8.02a, Informed Consent to Research.)

8.03 Informed Consent for Recording Voices and Images in Research Psychologists obtain informed consent from research participants prior to recording their voices or images for data collection unless (1) the research consists solely of naturalistic observations in public places, and it is not anticipated that the recording will be used in a manner that could cause personal identification or harm, or (2) the research design includes deception, and consent for the use of the recording is obtained during debriefing. (See also Standard 8.07, Deception in Research.)

8.04 Client/Patient, Student, and Subordinate Research Participants (a) When psychologists conduct research with clients/patients, students, or subordinates as participants, psychologists take steps to protect the prospective participants from adverse consequences of declining or withdrawing from participation. (b) When research participation is a course requirement or an opportunity for extra credit, the prospective participant is given the choice of equitable alternative activities.

8.05 Dispensing with Informed Consent for Research Psychologists may dispense with informed consent only (1) where research would not reasonably be assumed to create distress or harm and involves (a) the study of normal educational practices, curricula, or classroom management methods conducted in educational settings; (b) only anonymous questionnaires, naturalistic observations, or archival research for which disclosure of responses would not place participants at risk of criminal or civil liability or damage their financial standing, employability, or reputation, and confidentiality is protected; or (c) the study of factors related to job or organization effectiveness conducted in organizational settings for which there is no risk to participants' employability, and confidentiality is protected or (2) where otherwise permitted by law or federal or institutional regulations.

8.06 Offering Inducements for Research Participation (a) Psychologists make reasonable efforts to avoid offering excessive or inappropriate financial or other inducements for research participation when such inducements are likely to coerce participation. (b) When offering professional services as an inducement for research participation, psychologists clarify the nature of the services, as well as the risks, obligations, and limitations. (See also Standard 6.05, Barter with Clients/Patients.)

8.07 Deception in Research (a) Psychologists do not conduct a study involving deception unless they have determined that the use of deceptive techniques is justified by the study's significant prospective scientific, educational, or applied value and that effective nondeceptive alternative procedures are not feasible. (b) Psychologists do not deceive prospective participants about research that is reasonably expected to cause physical pain or severe emotional distress. (c) Psychologists explain any deception that is an integral feature of the design and conduct of an experiment to participants as early as is feasible, preferably at the conclusion of their participation, but no later than at the conclusion of the data collection, and permit participants to withdraw their data. (See also Standard 8.08, Debriefing.)

8.08 Debriefing (a) Psychologists provide a prompt opportunity for participants to obtain appropriate information about the nature, results, and conclusions of the research, and they take reasonable steps to correct any misconceptions that participants may have of which the psychologists are aware. (b) If scientific or humane values justify delaying or withholding this information, psychologists take reasonable measures to reduce the risk of harm. (c) When psychologists become aware that research procedures have harmed a participant, they take reasonable steps to minimize the harm.

8.09 Humane Care and Use of Animals in Research (a) Psychologists acquire, care for, use, and dispose of animals in compliance with current federal, state, and local laws and regulations, and with professional standards. (b) Psychologists trained in research methods and experienced in the care of laboratory animals supervise all procedures involving animals and are responsible for ensuring appropriate consideration of their comfort, health, and humane treatment. (c) Psychologists ensure that all individuals under

their supervision who are using animals have received instruction in research methods and in the care, maintenance, and handling of the species being used, to the extent appropriate to their role. (See also Standard 2.05, Delegation of Work to Others.) (d) Psychologists make reasonable efforts to minimize the discomfort, infection, illness, and pain of animal subjects. (e) Psychologists use a procedure subjecting animals to pain, stress, or privation only when an alternative procedure is unavailable and the goal is justified by its prospective scientific, educational, or applied value. (f) Psychologists perform surgical procedures under appropriate anesthesia and follow techniques to avoid infection and minimize pain during and after surgery. (g) When it is appropriate that an animal's life be terminated, psychologists proceed rapidly, with an effort to minimize pain and in accordance with accepted procedures.

8.10 Reporting Research Results (a) Psychologists do not fabricate data. (See also Standard 5.01a, Avoidance of False or Deceptive Statements.)

(b) If psychologists discover significant errors in their published data, they take reasonable steps to correct such errors in a correction, retraction, erratum, or other appropriate publication means.

8.11 Plagiarism Psychologists do not present portions of another's work or data as their own, even if the other work or data source is cited occasionally.

8.12 Publication Credit (a) Psychologists take responsibility and credit, including authorship credit, only for work they have actually performed or to which they have substantially contributed. (See also Standard 8.12b, Publication Credit.) (b) Principal authorship and other publication credits accurately reflect the relative scientific or professional contributions of the individuals involved, regardless of their relative status. Mere possession of an institutional position, such as department chair, does not justify authorship credit. Minor contributions to the research or to the writing for publications are acknowledged appropriately, such as in footnotes or in an introductory statement. (c) Except under exceptional circumstances, a student is listed as principal author on any multiple-authored article that is substantially based on the student's doctoral dissertation. Faculty advisors discuss publication credit with students as early as feasible and throughout the research and publication process as appropriate. (See also Standard 8.12b, Publication Credit.)

8.13 Duplicate Publication of Data Psychologists do not publish, as original data, data that have been previously published. This does not preclude republishing data when they are accompanied by proper acknowledgment.

8.14 Sharing Research Data for Verification (a) After research results are published, psychologists do not withhold the data on which their conclusions are based from other competent professionals who seek to verify the substantive claims through reanalysis and who intend to use such data only for that purpose, provided that the confidentiality of the participants can be protected and unless legal rights concerning proprietary data preclude their release. This does not preclude psychologists from requiring that such individuals or groups be responsible for costs associated with the provision of such information. (b)

Psychologists who request data from other psychologists to verify the substantive claims through reanalysis may use shared data only for the declared purpose. Requesting psychologists obtain prior written agreement for all other uses of the data.

8.15 Reviewers Psychologists who review material submitted for presentation, publication, grant, or research proposal review respect the confidentiality of and the proprietary rights in such information of those who submitted it.
(APA, Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct, 2010, p. 11,
<http://www.apa.org/ethics/code/index.aspx#>)

**Appendix H: Transcriptionist Confidentiality Agreement
Dissertation Support Services**

I, _____, transcriptionist/editor, agree to maintain full confidentiality in regarding any and all recordings and documentation received from Michaelene Ruhl, Doctoral Candidate, related to the doctoral study on “What is the Clients’ Experiences of Family Constellations in Psychological Healing” Furthermore, I agree:

1. To hold in strictest confidence the identification of any individual that may be inadvertently revealed during the transcription of recorded interviews, or in any associated documents;
2. To not make copies of any recordings or computerized files of the transcribed/edited interview texts, unless specifically requested to do so by Michaelene Ruhl, Doctoral Candidate.
3. To store all study-related recordings and materials in a safe, secure location as long as they are in my possession;
4. To return all recordings and study-related documents to Michaelene Ruhl, Doctoral Candidate, in a complete and timely manner.
5. To delete all electronic files containing study-related documents from my computer hard drive and any backup devices.

I am aware that I can be held legally liable for any breach of this confidentiality agreement, and for any harm incurred by individuals if I disclose identifiable information contained in the audiotapes and/or files to which I will have access.

Name (printed) _____

Signature _____

Date _____