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The Experience of Practitioners Who Deliberately and Consciously Use Subtle Energies in Group Facilitation: A Phenomenological Study

Antoinette Pearson

University of St. Thomas, Minnesota

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The Experience of Practitioners Who Deliberately and Consciously Use Subtle Energies in
Group Facilitation: A Phenomenological Study

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, LEADERSHIP
AND COUNSELING OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS

By Antoinette Pearson

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

March 1, 2016

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UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS

We certify that we have read this dissertation and approved it as adequate in scope and quality. We have found that it is complete and satisfactory in all respects, and that any and all revisions required by the final examining committee have been made.

Dissertation Committee

John Conbere, Ed.D. Committee Chair

Alla Heorhiadi, PhD, Ed.D., Committee Member

Robert Randall, Ed.D., Committee Member

March 1, 2016 _____

Date

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Abstract

This phenomenological study examined the lived experience of people who deliberately and consciously used subtle energies in group facilitation. Participants were those who had completed energetics courses and earned certification in Energetics and Organization Development from the University of St. Thomas. In addition, the participants selected for this study also had experience in applying subtle energies in their work with groups of people. In-depth interviews were conducted and analyzed to find themes that showed the meaning of the experience for people who used subtle energies in their group facilitation. Through this study, three essential themes emerged: (a) Overcoming fears that prevented full engagement with the client, (b) Sharing responsibility for interactions, outcomes and relationships, and (c) Becoming “real-self” during facilitation. Through these themes, I was able to show the meanings of this lived experience and how they are important to the practice of facilitation and the use of subtle energies.

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Chapter I: Background

Background of the Study and Researcher's Interest

The discipline of organization development (OD) is a field of practice that helps organizations improve their effectiveness. OD has historical influences from diverse fields of study in the social sciences. These major influences include psychology, group dynamics, sociology, anthropology, Gestalt psychology and management theory, to name a few (Burke, 1992; Nevis, 2005; Weisbord, 2010). The common thread among these diverse influences is that they focus on people and human experience at the individual, group, or organizational levels. Because of these divergent influences, the field of OD has not successfully established a taxonomy (Burke, 1992; Schein, 2010), resulting in various definitions and applications of the practice. This lack of agreement has caused angst among some foundational OD theorists, and “practical drift” (Snook, 2000), resulting from the various definitions, has created factions or camps among practitioners. An example of a camp is reflected in the current work of Bushe and Marshak (2014) on “Dialogic Organization Development.” That viewpoint proposes a new understanding of how groups or organizations collect data and come to understand the scope of an issue through “dialogic” methods that reflect a socially constructed reality. This perspective contrasts with what the authors have termed “Diagnostic OD,” the traditional approach to planned change where the consultant and/or client define the problem that is to be solved (Bushe & Marshak, 2014). The positive outcome from these current influences is that OD is growing as a field and is presumably meeting the needs of organizations today. Given the current influences, effective practitioners must engage in continuous learning to acquire new knowledge and awareness of emerging concepts of practice.

Staying current and understanding new knowledge is essential for agents who help organizations adapt to the environment or internal challenges. The agents are, in essence, facilitators who help an organization find ways to address its own problems. The facilitator's help often takes the form of managing organizational dialogue and group meetings that are part of strategic planning or formulating plans of action to solve specific problems. Some effective facilitators are trained OD practitioners, and OD is mostly about helping people in organizations to change and adapt.

Sometimes facilitators are hired to lead a large scale change process, and at other times they are engaged to help a group manage a meeting (Weisbord, 2012) or mediate a disagreement between opposing sides (Ury, 1993). The uses of facilitation are many, but facilitators are usually intended to help the clients that have engaged them, regardless of whether the services are compensated or offered pro-bono.

Facilitators' primary tool is their presence: interacting with and guiding the client group by providing a framework, through prompts or probing questions that help the client achieve its desired outcomes. In the discipline of OD this presence has sometimes been referred to as "use of self," "intentional use of self," "self as instrument," or other similar phrases (Block, 2011; Heorhiadi & Conbere, 2008; Seashore, 2004; Tannenbaum, 2005). Charlie and Edie Seashore (2004) illustrated their concept of "use of self" in a model illustrating how facilitators can deliberately bring themselves from unconsciousness to consciousness in order to make effective decisions that help the client groups with which they are working.

Effective facilitation occurs as the result of a helping relationship between the client and the practitioner (Schein, 1999). Facilitators must understand this relationship and be constantly aware of, and ready to intervene in, the group process. Sometimes dynamics within a group are

so subtle that the facilitator may not recognize them or know how to help the group. Schein (1999) has written extensively about the facilitator's role in helping a group address these dynamics and has described his approach as Process Consultation, a philosophy of how to consult. According to Process Consultation, the primary role of the facilitator is to help the client group diagnose and create solutions for its own problems and dilemmas. This means that the facilitator must be "present" and aware of the group's workings in the moment to be helpful (Schein, 1999, 2013; Schwarz, 2002). Schein (1999) wrote, "The most important thing to understand in any relationship is what goes on inside the head, especially one's own head." Self-awareness is therefore the critical first step toward effective facilitation. Furthermore, to help a group attain its desired outcomes the facilitator must be able to act in real time by asking good questions and recognizing the opportunities that present themselves (Schein, 1999).

Many answers exist for the question, "What makes a good facilitator? The answers reflect a diversity of approaches and philosophies about how to facilitate change. Examples of some effective approaches to facilitation include: a systems approach (Schwarz, 2002), a value-based approach (Block, 2011), or the Socio-Economic approach (Savall & Zardet, 2008). Still other facilitators utilize what has become known as "energetics" (Randall, 2014) to help groups find meaning.

Energetics is the "...application of the knowledge of the universe supplied by quantum physics and some ancient traditions, to promote individual and organizational healing" (Heorhiadi & Conbere, 2008, p. 36). Applying the lessons of energetics to facilitation involves the use of subtle energies that are at a "lighter level" than physical matter (Tiller, 2004). In the vernacular of physics, matter, such as light or heat, is energy that is moving at slower speeds and, therefore, is tangible to the basic human senses. Subtle energies, in contrast, are not as easy to

perceive because they are “fields that underlie physical objects and events” (Heorhiadi & Conbere, 2008), and, as defined by Tiller (2004) are “fields that are not generated by fundamental forces such as gravity, electro-magnetic and nuclear forces” (p. 1). According to Tiller (as cited in Heorhiadi & Conbere, 2008), “subtle energies are difficult to detect because many of today’s measurement instruments use electric signal responses which have much less speed than light speed, while subtle energy fields travel faster than light” (p. 1). Nonetheless subtle energies are real, and can be discerned. Heorhiadi and Conbere further wrote that people are energetic beings, and with training are able to read and interpret the subtle energy plane. The practitioner, who has knowledge and training in energetics and subtle energies, has the ability to facilitate group interventions at primary level, which can increase the success of that facilitation.

My interest in energetics and subtle energies was established through my training and certification in energetics and organization development at the Energetics Institute at the University of St. Thomas. The coursework in Energetics provided me with the most significant learning experience that I had in my doctorate program, an experience that was transformational. Because of my knowledge of subtle energies, but limited experience in using them, and my experience as an organization development practitioner, I wondered how facilitators with backgrounds like my own utilize energetics and OD principles in their practice. Because subtle energies are intangible and some people think of them as mystical (Spoth, 2013), discussions about its use are not prevalent in Western World academic journals; that adds to the mystery surrounding their use. Outside of the Energetic Institute, I have had few conversations about the use of subtle energies in groups or during their facilitation. I hoped to learn from other facilitators what they considered important about subtle energies and understand the implications for my own practice. I believe this study is relevant not only to me but also to other OD

practitioners who have backgrounds similar to my own and that it will advance research about the fields of OD and subtle energies.

Problem Statement

A facilitator's "use of self" is her or his primary tool for helping a group address its challenges and issues. OD practitioners have unique sets of perspectives and skills that form the basis for how they work. Some approaches to OD facilitation are better understood or better documented than others. Whereas the literature offers some limited theoretical information about the use of subtle energies in OD, no one has studied the actual experience of facilitators who deliberately and consciously use subtle energies in working with groups. I was curious about how facilitators, with backgrounds similar to mine, utilize subtle energies in their OD practice with groups.

Purpose of the Study and Research Question

The purpose of this study was to explore the experience of practitioners who use subtle energies as part of their OD work with groups. The research question answered by this study was, "What is the experience of practitioners who deliberately and consciously utilize the skills and knowledge of subtle energies as part of their facilitation work?"

Research Design

Research in the social sciences allows for interpretive epistemological designs whereby truths can be understood as they occur in collective social groups (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). A phenomenological methodology is most appropriate for this study to understand the essence of the experience of those who facilitate and use subtle energies in groups. I used Van Manen's (2003) philosophical approach to phenomenological studies. Data were collected through interviews with practitioners who use subtle energies in their group work. The interview data

were coded for common themes. Finally, I interpreted how participants described the essence of their experiences.

Significance

This study is important because it deepened the understanding of how subtle energies and OD can work together. Some practitioners, who use energetics in their work, have described the effect of subtle energies in terms of interconnected relationships (Allen & Mease, 2010), as seen when groups of people work together on task for the same purpose, intuition or a keen sense that guides their actions (Heorhiadi & Conbere, 2008), or the motivational aspects assessed in Gestalt coaching (Spoth, 2013, 2014). This study, based on the experiences of several facilitators who (a) used subtle energies in facilitation with groups and, (b) were influenced by energetics in ways that changed how they facilitated, produced themes that may flesh out those descriptions and provide meaning about how practitioners use subtle energies in their work with groups and organizations.

Definition of Terms

Organization development (OD). As defined by Burke (1992) OD is, “a planned process of change in an organization’s culture through the utilization of behavioral science technologies, research and theory” (p. 12).

Group facilitation. While there are many ways to describe group facilitation, the definition by Schwarz (2002) serves the purpose of this study. He defined group facilitation as “... a process in which a person whose selection is acceptable to all members of the group, who is substantively neutral, and who has no substantive decision-making authority diagnoses and intervenes to help a group improve how it identifies and solves problems and make decisions, to increase the group’s effectiveness” (p.41).

Subtle energies. Tiller (2004) wrote that "...subtle energy fields are defined as fields that are not generated by fundamental forces such as gravity, electro-magnetic and nuclear forces" (p. 868). Additionally, Heorhiadi and Conbere (2008) have described subtle energy as "... fields that underlie physical objects and events" (p. 36).

Energetics. Heorhiadi (2012) defined energetics as, "the interdisciplinary practice that involves the application of the knowledge of subtle energies to promote individual and organizational healing" (p. 1). Heorhiadi and Conbere (2008) expanded the definition by including the origins of energetics as the "...application of the knowledge of the universe supplied by quantum physics and some ancient traditions, to promote individual and organizational healing" (p. 36). Note, that while the definition of energetics describes the discipline and subtle energies describes the physical phenomena, throughout this study the terms energetics and subtle energies were used interchangeably by the participants and this author.

Common energetic terms. The following are definitions of terms that are frequently used in this study (A. Heorhiadi, personal communication, December 4, 2015):

- To harmonize the environment or room – is to visualize positive interactions with people in the room.
- Balancing – a controlled breathing exercise to achieve mindfulness and bring one's energy to a balanced state.
- Sending love energy to an individual or group – forming positive intentions towards the person or group of people.
- Removing pathological bonds – a mindful exercise to emotionally disengage from a person or group of people.

Chapter II: Literature Review

In this chapter I review scholarly literature drawn from three areas: organization development, group facilitation, and subtle energies. When the research outlined in this study is complete, additional scholarly literature will be reviewed and discussed in the study.

Organization Development

Although the term “organization development” was not coined until the late 1950s, this field of practice had its beginnings in the late forties with the work of Kurt Lewin (Weisbord, 2010) in reaction to the then dominant theory of accomplishing work. That theory, influenced by Taylor, Fayol and Weber emphasized efficiency in production and task completion without concern for the people who completed the work (Burke, 1992; Heorhiadi, Conbere, & Hazelbaker, 2014; Weisbord, 2010). Along with Lewin’s influence, various social science disciplines such as psychology, group dynamics, sociology, anthropology, and management began taking an interest in work environments and started designing new ways to conceptualize work in organizations. According to Alderfer (as cited in Jacobs & Heracleous, 2006), the common thread among these influences was consideration for the people who make up the organization and how work is accomplished.

The foundational concepts underlying OD have not changed over the years, and they have shaped the values that keep the field of practice differentiated from other forms of organizational intervention. OD values reflect a humanistic perspective that focuses on concern for the people in all change efforts and democratic ways of working with those engaged in change and development (Burke, 1992; Jamieson & Worley, 2006; Schein, 1999). These values gave birth to the name “organization development,” a practice for helping a human system improve its own effectiveness (Burke, 1992).

Lewin wrote that change is a psychological process that all people go through in essentially the same way. Therefore, this process also applied to groups and organizations because they are human systems (Lewin, 1951; Rainey, 2014; Schein, 1999). This psychological process remains at the core of change. Lewin, as interpreted and expanded by Schein (1999), asserted that this process contains three phases. In phase one the group needs to become aware of and motivated to change the status quo (unfreeze). In phase two, the group learns a new way of operating (move). And finally, in phase three the group adopts and maintains a new approach or method (refreeze). Lewin also explained this process with a field theory model showing forces that either advance or restrain change. These forces exist on a continuum and are always at work. Thus, the work of OD is far more than creating ideas for change and announcing that people need to do things differently. Rather, OD is a process of working with human systems that are complex and multi-layered (Rainey, 2014; Schein, 1999, 2009, 2013).

Based on their understanding of the psychology of human change, most OD practitioners use a generic model that has been around in one form or other since the early days of OD practice. This model or process generally includes the following phases: Entry and contracting; data collection; data analysis; action steps; and then evaluation (Block, 2011; Burke, 1992; Jamieson & Worley, 2006; Schein, 1999; Weisbord, 2010).

OD was influenced by a diverse group of disciplines early on, and those many influences have caused variations in the way it is practiced. Marshak (2014) has envisioned OD as a tree with an underground root system that forms a common base, but the branches of the tree expand in different directions that blossom into different sub-disciplines.

Conceptual theories of OD. As stated earlier in chapter one, the field of OD is hard to define because of the divergent influences that have resulted in various theories of practice (Burke, 1992; Marshak, 2006; Schein, 2010). As Schein (2010) has pointed out, OD has never developed a common taxonomy and, therefore, it is difficult to talk about OD as a singular thing.

Examples of varying theories of OD include:

- Appreciative Inquiry (Austin & Bartunek, 2006; Cooperrider & Sekerka, 2006; Hinckley, 2014), where the OD cycle builds on the positive experiences of the organization in dealing with desired future changes.
- Open Space Technology (Owen, 2008), emphasizing environmental feedback to the organization as a means of improving its product and services (Hinckley, 2014).
- Self-Organizing Systems (Wheatley, 1994), a theory that asserts that systems evolve and organize themselves.
- Learning Organizations (Argyris, 1999; Burke, 2006; Hinckley, 2014; Senge, 2006), where organizations learn from error correction based on assessing the underlying master programs that caused the problem.
- Systems approach (Bidol-Padva & Nkum, 2014; Burke, 2006; Lawrence and Lorsch 1967) that considers how changes in sub-units affect the whole system.
- Dialogic OD (Bush & Marshak, 2009; Hinckley, 2014) where the issues and solutions are imagined and identified through processes that focus on socially constructed reality as opposed to a more traditional “diagnostic” OD model.
- Process Consultation, (Schein, 1999, 2009, 2013) where the organization is responsible – with the help of a consultant – for learning how to identify and solve its own problems.

- The Socio-Economic approach to Management (SEAM) (Conbere & Heorhiadi, 2015), which examines organizational dysfunctions, assigns economic value to each of them, and then provides a model for improvement.

Although these several examples of variations in the practice of OD are not directly related to the topic of this research, they illustrate the point that working with groups can be accomplished in different ways, all loosely labeled within the practice of OD. Given variation in the theoretical approaches to OD, the role of the practitioner varies as well. For example, one early approach, as seen in the role of facilitators at the National Training Laboratories (NTL), was in keeping groups focused “on the group.” At NTL leaders from various organizations came together in Bethel, Maine to learn about teams, feedback, interpersonal and intrapersonal issues. The groups started without an agenda, and the facilitator’s role was to help the group learn about themselves and to help leaders become more effective (Hinckley, 2014; Mirvis, 2006; Schein, 2006). Today’s traditional OD practitioner is one who manages the aforementioned generic OD cycle tightly and is often quite directive (Burke, 1992; Gallant & Rios, 2014; Jamieson & Gellerman, 2014). Alternately, a SEAM practitioner assists the organization to identify and monetize dysfunctions in the organization based on a robust body of research (Conbere & Heorhiadi, 2015). Finally, process consultants focus on the process of the OD cycle and deliberately do not diagnose problems nor tell the organization how to solve them. Rather, the Process consultation practitioner helps the client learn how to solve its own problems (Schein, 1999, 2009, 2013). Each of these approaches to facilitation requires different skills and abilities, and practitioners generally choose the approach with which they are most comfortable and skilled.

Group Facilitation

Group facilitators are labeled in a variety of ways, including team leaders, guides, helpers, interveners, managers, trainers, coaches. Presumably these labels each have a slight nuance that causes a person to select one over another. Throughout this study, I used the term “facilitator” in the generic sense defined by Swartz (2002) in chapter one, which definition is: “A person whose selection is acceptable to all members of the group, who is substantively neutral, and who has no substantive decision-making authority diagnoses and intervenes to help a group improve how it identifies and solves problems and make decisions, to increase the group’s effectiveness” (p.41). Swartz’s definition of a facilitator also reflects the essence of OD, emphasizing the importance of participation and a focus on helping groups or the larger organization become more effective through its own analysis and problem solving (Hinckley, 2014; Marshak, 2014).

In the early days of what eventually became known as “organization development,” sometimes groups were facilitated by academics from outside of the client organization (Burke, 2011; Weisbord, 2010). Examples of such group facilitation could be found in the early work of Lewin, Lippert, Bradford, and Benne at MIT’s Group Dynamics Department. They worked with such organizations as the Harwood plant and General Mills, where the field of OD was coined and described as a “bottom’s up” intervention the focus of which was working in teams at the lower echelons of the organization (Burke, 2011; Seashore & Seashore, 2014).

DiBella (2014) described how the role of a group facilitator was defined at NTL, where Training Groups (T Groups) were used to learn how to provide feedback and build a group’s effectiveness. Groups and facilitation also became a focus of academics and practitioners, including Lewin’s work on the primacy of the group and its influence on individual behavior

(Bunker & Alban, 2006), group behavior, such as Bion's "collusion" (Burke 2011), conformity and deviance, cohesion, conflicts, and leadership (Minahan, 2014; Wheelan, 2005), trust and intimacy, authority and dependency (Smith & Berg, 1997). Tuckman's (as cited in Wheelan, 2005) stages of group development and the facilitation of effective group processes as exemplified in Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid (Seashore & Seashore, 2014) are other examples.

One lesson that emerged from the studies described above is the difference between the content and task of the group and the process the group uses to get things accomplished. Schein (2006) recently has argued that organizational structures also play an important role in a group's performance. Minahan (2014) described the task versus process focus in terms of an iceberg: People see the parts of the iceberg that stick out of the water, but most of the iceberg is hidden underwater. In this image, the tip of the iceberg is the group's task, which is easily seen, and the group's process is below the surface and much harder to see. Minahan also wrote that the role of the facilitator is to help the group address both areas of the iceberg. Swartz (2002) and Schein (1999) have written that a facilitator primarily works with the group on process and that those who facilitate content are really expert consultants not facilitators.

Schein (1967, 1999, 2009, 2013) has written extensively about the distinctions between expert consultants and process consultants. His belief is that expertise about content is usually squarely within the group, whereas the facilitation of process requires the group to call upon an outsider to bring into their consciousness effective ways of working (Swartz, 2002; Weisbord, 2010). Group process focuses on how things are done in the group versus what things are done (Schein, 2006). Process aspects include the group's consideration of who belongs to the group and who does not, success at the task for which the group was called together, and finally how

the group builds and maintains relationships (Schein, 2006). A process-oriented facilitator – generally from outside of the organization – must have special skills in order to be helpful.

Below the surface issues are generally related to the following questions: Is the group being effective? Is the data collected about the issues sufficient? Is there an intervention that could be helpful? (Schein, 2006).

Facilitator's required skills. Besides knowledge of group dynamics and task versus process, the facilitator needs to be equipped with basic facilitation skills. Rogers (as cited in Smith, 2008) identified three competencies in group facilitation: (a) being an authentic person who can be trusted; (b) care for people in general; and (c) an understanding of the learning that is happening from the individual's perspective.

Facilitation skills also have been described in terms of the values upheld in the facilitation process. The facilitators' community of practice has identified core values that guide them. Schwarz (2002) named four values that are essential, the first three of which he credited to Argyris & Schön (1974): valid information, free and informed choice, internal commitment, and compassion. Kiser (1998) combined traditional skills (e.g., credibility, flexibility, technical skills, communication skills, and observation skills) and values (e.g., empathy, acceptance, and congruence) to create a set of necessary facilitation skills.

Others have written that for groups to be effective, they must develop their own competencies to function as a group, and thus a facilitator's involvement becomes less directive as the group develops. The group needs to build its own task and process competencies to reduce its dependence on the facilitator (Dyer, Gibb Dyer, & Dyer, 2007). The facilitator's skills must be more instructive at first, so that the group can learn. As the group begins to gain the needed competencies, the facilitator needs to move into a coaching role. In the last stages of the

intervention, the group must learn to facilitate, evaluate itself, and make adjustments as needed (Dyer et al., 2007). Facilitator skills and competencies have been interpreted with slight variations throughout the literature but nonetheless, the major theme is the same: The facilitator needs to be able to help the group build its own capacity to function effectively (Argyris & Schön, 1974; Dyer et al., 2007; Kiser, 1998; Minahan, 2014; Schein, 2006; Schwarz, 2002; Smith, 2009).

Methods of facilitation. In addition to knowledge about group dynamics and basic facilitation, the practitioner also has options for the specific method of facilitation she or he uses with a group. The methods depend both on the facilitator and the reason the group needs help. For example, if the group needs to solve a problem, a method like the traditional OD cycle can be used. That is: (a) Identify the issue, (b) Collect data, (c) Analyze the data, (d) Plan actions, (e) Implement the plan, and (f) Evaluate the plan and the process (Dyer et al., 2007). If conflict resolution is the reason for the facilitation, an interest-based negotiation may be more helpful (Ury, 1993). If the group is made up of stakeholders from different organizations, facilitation by using an organizational culture model could be helpful (Dyer et al., 2007; Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010; Schein, 2006). If a group needs facilitation to develop or expand their business, a strategy process may be helpful (Drucker, 1985; Pietersen, 2002). The point of these examples is that facilitators must use methods that fit the situation and the needs of the client group.

Knowing how to use particular facilitation methods that fit situations is one way for a practitioner to use self as instrument in an intervention. Another “use of self,” written about extensively in the OD literature (Block, 2011; Heorhiadi & Conbere, 2008; Kiser, 1998; Seashore & Seashore, 2004; Schein, 1999, 2009, 2013; Tannenbaum, 2005) is the ability of facilitators to have an “in the moment consciousness” of who they are at deeper levels, such as

the psychological, emotional, and spiritual levels, and how their self-understanding helps or hinders those with whom they are interacting. For example, purposeful and conscious recognition of a facilitator's bias, awareness, or ego needs may influence an intervention with a group. Use of self is dynamic, and it is changing in response to the environment due to variables of the intervention, such as the make-up of the group, the group's needs, and the reason for the facilitation.

A concept that is similar to "use of self" is Langer's (as cited in Yangeneh & Kolb, 2009) Socio-Cognitive Mindfulness concept, defined as: "A state of which an individual, focused on present and direct experience, is intentionally aware and attentive and accepts life as an emergent process of change." Both "use of self" and "mindfulness" describe purposeful acts that move practitioners from unconsciousness to consciousness so as to be intentional in thinking and interacting with others (Seashore & Seashore, 2004; Yangeneh & Kolb, 2009). Schein (1999, 2009, 2013) in his writing about process consultation methods, asserted that one of the most important skills a facilitator needs is to be present in the moment and to know the current reality, both in the group and in her or his own head. Use of self is the primary tool for working with and facilitating groups (Block, 2011; Jamieson & Worley, 2006; Patwell & Seashore, 2006). One way a facilitator can use self while working with a group is through the knowledge and skills of subtle energies (Heorhiadi & Conbere, 2008).

Energetics

Energetics is a field of practice by people who have "...knowledge of the universe supplied by quantum physics and some ancient traditions, to promote individual and organizational healing" (Heorhiadi & Conbere, 2008, p. 36). Tiller (2004), professor emeritus in the Department of Materials Science and Engineering at Stanford University, who has completed extensive research in the field of subtle energies, asserted that energetics involves the

use of subtle energies that exist in all things and which are at a lighter level than physical matter and discoverable by the senses. Subtle energy is an emerging field in quantum physics and, according to Tiller, is not in the mainstream of the scientific world because refined instrumentation does not exist sufficient to provide proof in a positivistic ontological worldview.

Tiller's (2004) theoretical model of subtle energies emerged through experimentation that questioned the traditional scientific findings about how illness in the body was understood and treated. The traditional premise had been that illness was caused by chemical imbalances linked to deeper, primary energy sources in the body. However, scientists then began to experiment with electrical currents and the effects on the human chemical make-up, as well as its effects on healing. This research using electromagnetic energy field experimentation brought illness treatment into a new era, and Tiller referred to this phenomenon as subtle energies. Tiller then conducted experiments to see how subtle energies can be discerned through their effect on specified targets. In all cases, he was able to show that the targets had changed, and these results presented a new model for understanding subtle energy.

Tiller (2004) applied his research to human biological systems that scientifically supported the concepts of subtle energies that was emerging in the alternative medicine field. In the same vein, Anderson (2007) cited many researchers and studies that supported subtle energies, starting with Albert Einstein, who wrote that subtle energies are discernable but difficult to measure, and moving on to more current works by Tiller, Gerber, Hunt, and Grof, who have studied subtle energy in research or practice. Several authors (Heorhiadi & Conbere, 2008; Spoth, 2014; Wheatley, 1994) have written that people are energetic beings and, with training, have the ability to read and interpret subtle energies in themselves, groups and organizations. Heisenberg (as cited in Wheatley, 1994) has asserted that energy is about

interconnectedness, and Wheatley (1994) has claimed that because energy is about interconnection, understanding it requires a holistic perspective that deals with the deeper levels of group interaction.

Applications of energetics in practice. In my earlier description, I have focused on the literature that shows a scholarly foundation for energetics. However, a body of literature also focuses on the practitioner's perspective. This perspective is related to how practitioners use subtle energies in their work as opposed to a description of what subtle energies are and a defense of their validity. Practitioners of energetics, who have applied subtle energy in groups, can be found in various disciplines. Anderson (2007) described the classroom interaction between teacher and students as subtle energies that she used to assess learning in an educational setting. Other practitioners use subtle energy practices as a complement to traditional medicine in order to address energy blockages that may contribute to illness (Heorhiadi & Conbere, 2008; Mayo as cited in Randall, 2014). Similarly, the field of Gestalt coaching, as a respected field in the discipline of psychology, provides examples of subtle energies being used routinely in patient assessment and treatment, as well as the motivation to action in the cycle of experience (Spoth, 2013, 2014).

Those trained in the practice of subtle energies can use it in group interventions for better "use of self" and for understanding the dynamics in the group (Spoth, 2013, 2014). An important aspect of using subtle energy in groups and organizations is the facilitator's care for her or his own energetic field (Spoth, 2014) in order to read, assess, and offer appropriate interventions. Spoth also has identified several skills practitioners of subtle energy can use while working with groups. Those include expanding, contracting, and releasing energy from their own fields and expanding and changing energy fields, all of which require practitioners to have

the ability to use their own subtle energy in order to work effectively with the energy of the aggregate. Use of subtle energy is a valuable skill for facilitators, especially those who utilize “use self” as instrument, as is the case for OD practitioners.

Summary

This literature review illustrates the historical roots and purpose of OD and its focus on group effectiveness. The review also has shed light on aspects of group facilitation and other important, related topics. Finally, it has identified subtle energies as an area of practice that can be an important aspect of group facilitation and the practice of OD. These topics give the reader a primer and foundation for this research project and lay the groundwork for understanding the experience of facilitators who utilize subtle energy in working with groups.

Chapter III: Methodology

This chapter justifies the use of a phenomenological methodology for this study and describes the process that was used for data collection and analysis. It concludes with a discussion of ethical issues and the researcher's bias relative to this study.

Phenomenological Study

In this study I sought to understand the “lived quality and the significance” (Van Manen, 2003, p.10) of the experience of facilitators, who have knowledge of subtle energies and who have used it while working with groups. Such experiences can best be studied through an interpretive research lens, because meaning is found in each experience (Creswell, 2007; Van Manen, 2003). Given the interpretive approach to understanding reality, a phenomenological methodology was well suited for this study because the participants shared their unique experiences (Crotty, 2010; Van Manen, 2003), which helped me to understand the essence of the phenomena. The essence means a “complex array of aspects, properties and qualities – some of which are incidental and some of which are more critical” (Van Manen, 2003, p. xv) to the phenomena of subtle energies in the facilitation of groups. In other words, through phenomenological methodology enabled insight into the following questions: What was the event or phenomenon? How did the person experience the phenomenon? What was unique about the experience? What was the meaning of the experience? (Creswell, 2007; Husserl as cited in Crotty, 2010; Van Manen, 2003). Specifically, this study focused on finding meaning that emerged from the experience of facilitators who utilized subtle energies when working with groups.

Participant Selection

Selection criteria. Participants were selected purposefully; that is I selected those, who were in the best position to help answer the research question (Creswell, 2007). Participants were those who had completed all three energetics courses and earned certification in Energetics and Organization Development from the University of St. Thomas. Each of the three courses has a competency focus: course one – energetics and self as instrument (Heorhiadi, 2012); course two – energetics and work with individuals and groups (Heorhiadi, 2013a); and course three – energetics and organizations (Heorhiadi, 2013b). People, who had completed all three courses, accumulated approximately 105-120 hours of classwork in energetics and earned a certification in Energetics and Organization Development. A second criterion was the participants selected for this study also had the lived experience of applying subtle energies in their work with groups of people.

Selection process. To find participants who met both criteria, I contacted people who were members of the Energetic Club, primarily based in Minneapolis, MN. This club comprises approximately forty members, who possessed the above described energetic and OD certification and who met periodically to further their energetic knowledge and skills. I am a member of the Energetics Club, and I emailed Club members to find out if they were interested in participating and if they met the selection criteria. The form that I used in making the email request to potential participants is found in Appendix A.

Van Manen (2003) did not recommend a specific number of interviews but rather recommended that one interview until the complete understanding of the experience is obtained. Creswell (2007) recommended three to ten participants to reach saturation of the data in the experience, and that the number of subjects in a phenomenological study can be fewer than in a

positivistic study because the data collected by each participant is deep and robust. Following Van Manen's (2003) recommendation, the total number of participants was not known initially; instead, I arrived at the final number when I reached saturation of data. In other words, I stopped interviewing when no new information emerged from participant interviews.

I received six affirmative responses from Club members and scheduled interviews at locations that were convenient for each participant. Interview location is important so as to create a comfortable environment in which the researcher and participant can establish a trusting relationship before the interview begins (Creswell, 2007; Van Manen, 2003). Prior to the interviews, participants were asked to review and sign a consent form explaining the nature of the study and how I protected their identity and their information (e.g., each participant was given a pseudonym and all written and recorded information was locked and accessible only to me as the researcher). A copy of the consent form can be found in Appendix B.

Data Collection

The collection of data, of a thorough exploration of the lived experience (Van Manen, 1984) in a phenomenological study is usually through in-depth interviews (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994; Van Manen, 2003). I conducted six private, individual interviews; each was scheduled for two hours at a location chosen by the interviewee.

The semi-structured interviews included probes for follow-up that centered on the participants deliberate and conscious use of subtle energy in groups. Van Manen (2003) recommended only a few questions to help participants talk freely and reflect on their experiences, almost as though they were reliving it. The primary question I asked was: "What was your experience in deliberately and consciously using subtle energies with groups of people?" The probes I used were: "Can you illustrate your experience with a story? What was

that experience like? How did it feel to have that experience? What did that mean to you?" I bounded the questions with introductory and closing comments so that the flow of the interview felt like a normal conversation. This design provided a comfortable environment where trust was developed and participants freely answered the questions and offered information (Van Manen, 2003). I used Schein's (2013) Levels of Inquiry in the interviews where the questions were worded in a way that encouraged the interviewees to share their thoughts and experiences in full.

Interviews were digitally recorded and later downloaded and backed-up on my personal computer to provide a secure form of data storage. I then erased the recordings from my digital recorder. I took brief notes during the interview, mostly to jog my memory to go back to a thought or to identify what seemed to be an important aspect of the participant's experience. I also memoed my thoughts in the margins of my notepad, to make them explicit, and in my awareness. These margin notes provided a mechanism for a check on my biases and to keep my thoughts separate from participant's comments (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994; Van Manen, 2003).

The first four interviews were transcribed and reviewed for possible themes because I believed I was close to saturation on key ideas. I then needed to check with participant number five and then later participant six to see if the emerging themes resonated with them. This was in keeping with Moustakas (1994) and Van Manen (2003) who wrote that ideas and themes may emerge that a researcher wants to explore or confirm during subsequent interviews. Upon completion of each interview, I thanked the participants and asked them to contact me if they wanted to add more details to their interviews. I informed participants of a range of dates during which I would send them a draft summary of their key ideas. I sent the summary of the key ideas to the participants twice. The first time I used a member checking technique (Van Manen, 2003;

Moustakas, 1994), where I contacted two participants after the initial interviews to clarify information about which I was unclear. One interview had a pause in the tape, and my notes indicated information was missing. The second participant had used a term that I thought could be meaningful and needed to be clarified its meaning before I could use it. In both cases the participants gave me clarifying information.

The second time I clarified data using member checking (Van Manen, 2003) was when I invited participants to review my description of their stories and offer corrections. After participants reviewed their stories, they either confirmed they did not find inaccuracies or offered corrections to the data. All inaccuracies were corrected.

Data Analysis

When I completed and transcribed the interviews, I listened to the interview tapes and reviewed transcriptions to find initial key ideas. Because I had only a few years of experience with subtle energies and my preferences were not strongly formed, I was better able to “bracket” (Moustakas as cited in Creswell, 2007) my bias, or set aside preconceived beliefs and ideas. Employing Van Manen’s (2003) selective or highlighting approach to theme analysis, I constructed a spreadsheet of each interviewee’s major ideas and identified significant stories, experiences, or statements that carried meaning for participants. I then wrote a narrative of participants’ stories to highlight significant aspects of each person’s experience. I sent this draft to my dissertation committee member, who is specialized in subtle energies using Van Manen’s (2003) collaborative analysis technique to test my bias and to see if my analysis made sense. After this step, I organized the data into “clusters of meaning,” or themes that cut across the interviews (Moustakas, 1994; Van Manen, 2003). I then conducted another collaborative analysis when I reviewed the initial draft of themes with my committee subject matter specialist to

determine if theme clusters explained the phenomena (Van Manen, 2003). My dissertation committee member asked me why the themes were important, and I determined that I had not found the desired depth of experience and needed to conduct more analysis and in a different way.

I made a list of the significant ideas when I posed the following questions: Where or how did the use of energetics make a difference in participants' lives? What happened to the participants because of their use of energetics? From this list I was then able to write a structural description of the experience (Moustakas, 1994) that showed how the participants experienced the phenomena and a textural description (Moustakas, 1994) that described what was experienced and its possible meaning. Finally, in the last step of the analysis I interpreted the textural description data into clusters and separated them into incidental themes (i.e., meaning that may not be unique to the phenomena) and essential themes (i.e., meaning that must be present as part of the phenomena) (Van Manen, 2003). At this point, I checked my bias using a collaborative analysis with my committee expert to determine if the themes that I identified made sense (Creswell, 2007; Van Manen, 2003). Isolating incidental and essential themes made it possible to uncover the essence of the experience and write the narrative of the common experience of the collective participants (Moustakas, 1994; Van Manen, 2003).

Researcher Bias

In this study, I explained my knowledge of OD theory and that I have many years of experience as an OD practitioner and group facilitator. I also disclosed my knowledge of subtle energies and certification in energetics and organization development from the University of St. Thomas. Such background could have caused me to infuse bias into the study by making assumptions or neglecting to seek the appropriate level of detail in interviews and thus

compromise the deeper meaning of the experience of participants. I used Creswell's (2007) technique for bracketed my bias in interviewing by taking short notes in the margins of my notepad about my own thoughts and ideas to segregate my thinking from that of participants. I also relied on participant review and correction of the data to assure that I accurately captured the experience of the participants, a process known as "member checking" (Creswell, 2007, Moustakas, 1994; Van Manen, 2003). During the data analysis phase, I ameliorated my bias by using a collaborative analysis with my committee member subject matter expert to check that my interpretation of the data made sense (Van Manen, 2003). I used member checking with participants in this phase to reduce my bias on the meaning of the experience, and made changes based on participant recommendations. I also memoed my thoughts while reflecting on the data to keep my thoughts separate from participants and linked to the data. More about the researcher's bias can be found in chapter V.

Ethical Issues

In this study I sought private information about the experience of practitioners, who have used their knowledge of subtle energies while working with groups. Participants were also asked to reveal proprietary skills and knowledge that makes them effective facilitators. For these reasons, I provided a statement that I have followed and maintained this study in accordance with Institutional Review Board policies at the University of St. Thomas. This statement included assurances of confidentiality to all participants. I also used aliases for each participant to protect their privacy and the data they have given in the interviews (Creswell, 2007). Participants were advised of this protection upon responding to my email about their interest in participating in the study. These protections also were reviewed with each participant prior to each interview.

Chapter IV: Findings

This chapter describes the lived experiences of the research participants who deliberately and consciously used subtle energy in their facilitation with groups. Initially I describe a brief profile of the participants to provide background and context to the research. Participants repeated many stories to illustrate their points, yet I picked the ones that highlighted the points best. Second, the chapter presents themes that emerged from the description of the experiences of the participants.

Participants

I met participants in places they chose and times that were most convenient for them. They willingly shared stories about their experiences of deliberate and conscious use of subtle energies in their work as group facilitators. In order to maintain anonymity and confidentiality, I assigned a pseudonym to each participant. Pseudonyms were chosen in alphabetical order (e.g., Allison, Barbara, Charli, etc.) corresponding to the order of the interviews. Among all the possible names for each of the interviewees, I selected a name that seemed to fit the participant's behavior and demeanor. So, if a participant demonstrated strong feelings or gestures, I selected a name with a stronger sound (e.g., Francis instead of Francy). Participant stories provide a glimpse of their background and a context for their experience with subtle energies in group facilitation (see Table 1).

Table 1

Participant Profiles

Participant	Occupation	Age group	Married/# of Children	Education Level	Experience with subtle energies (in years)
Allison	Community Education	Early 50's	Yes/2	Masters	6
Barbara	Independent Consultant	Mid 40's	Yes/3	Doctoral Candidate	3
Charli	Independent Consultant	Early 50's	Yes/4	Masters	8-10
Diane	City Consultant - Retired	Early 60's	Yes/0	Masters	5
Evelyn	Sr. Consultant and Coach	^a	^a	Masters	30
Francis	Federal agency manager	Late 30's	Yes/0	Doctoral Candidate	3

_____ ^a Participant elected not to share this information.

Participant Stories

Allison. Allison was an accommodating participant; she responded to my request for an interview immediately and offered the use of a conference room for her and other interviewees. The conference room was large with a long table that sat 10 people comfortably. I was not sure the room would provide a comfortable setting for the interview, but Allison said she used the room frequently, and I assumed she would be comfortable there. In the event my assumption was wrong, I sat directly across from Allison to create a more intimate setting.

I led Allison through the consent forms and reviewed the process that would be used. First, I would ask one main question, “tell me about your experience in deliberately and consciously using subtle energies in your facilitation with groups?” Second, all the follow-up questions asked for stories about her experience or were clarifying questions about feelings or the meaning of her experience. The following is a summary of Allison’s story.

Background information. Allison was a middle aged woman, married with children who are in early adulthood. She was a coordinator in community education, a job she held for approximately 20 years. Most of her work had been in coordinating groups, either within her own school district or across neighboring districts, for the purpose of providing educational programming. Allison was trained in subtle energies through her master's program at the University of St. Thomas about six years ago and continued her training and skill development informally through the Energetics Club, monthly gatherings of graduates who completed all levels of Energetics classes. She used energetic skills for her own self-care and also in her professional role.

Allison's experience with subtle energies. Allison's description of her deliberate and conscious use of subtle energies in facilitation revealed certain groupings of thought that are highlighted below. As she told her stories, the following factors emerged as significant.

Confidence when dealing with conflict. Allison said that energetics helped her to feel more confident in dealing with conflictual situations; she told the following story. Allison held the role of a facilitator with a planning committee for a state conference. She said:

As we got together, there were challenges with this group, big challenges. I didn't know where I stood with this group; I was very apprehensive about my role in the group. I was assigned to the group because our district was in the process of hiring a director. So, I am a coordinator and I report to a director, I am not a director... and this is an arena of directors.

I already felt that I wasn't really sure that it was my place, and the reason that I was in the group was because our district was in the process of hiring a director and we didn't have a director, so I volunteered to be assigned to the committee, on behalf of [our district]

acting in the space a director would act. So, I didn't really feel equal to the other people on the committee, and a lot of that was my own baggage. I had specific baggage with one of the committee chairs. This particular chair...worked with me; I had negative history, so I was afraid in this group. I was not assured of myself; I had negative energetic ties to the leadership, so I needed to examine myself.

Allison continued her story and explained what she did using energetic skills:

I worked with the committee chair; I worked energetically ... to make sure that she and I could work and get along so that [the relationship] wouldn't be an obstacle in the group. And, for me to just have a lot of introspection in how I act and what I am thinking is influencing how I act, and how I shouldn't be bringing that old baggage in, so just really determined to use self as instrument to make the process an effective one, and not worry constantly about my relationship with the committee chair.

Allison found the conflicting ideas hard to manage, and they prevented her from moving the planning project forward. She felt this situation was a disruption and "... difficult, but I was successful. I think of this as leadership skills and... I use energetics because it's "selfishly, making things go my way, making sure things are smooth for me."

Being able to stand up to others. Allison believed that she was unable to influence others about her own opinion when conflict or tension was present. In particular, she found it difficult to stand up to one person on the committee.

I have a love-hate relationship [with her]; we are friends. Certain things I love about working with her and other things we have completely different ideas. Our work styles are so different. In meetings I can feel negative energy –when it goes bad – the minute it happens in a part of my body. I know I need to do something right away; I break the

bonds [disconnecting emotionally from the other person] so that the conversation didn't get confrontational.

I asked Allison how she felt when using subtle energies in that way. "It empowers me; I have the power to stop this using mindful techniques; I have the foresight to use this."

When I asked Allison what that meant to her, she said:

To put space between my thought and action, I change the energy and come out of the meeting without a bad attitude. With this particular person this dynamic only happened in group meetings. Maybe we are "vying for power," a power struggle in the meeting. I have the skill level to push back on you, not saying that is a great thing to do, but I have learned I can do things. It empowers me; I have the power to stop this using mindful techniques; I have the foresight to use this.

General feeling of happiness. Allison used energetic practices in her everyday life before she incorporated the skills into her role at work.

My personal skills [preparing myself energetically] helps the group because I show up as a different person. My self-examination impacts the group because it impacts their perception of me. Professionally, I feel more capable and more confident because I understand the theory and I can implement them [theories] and have better outcomes. Overall – I am a happier and healthier person; energetics helps me experience joy; energetics helps me experience happiness that affects everything. If you come to work a happy person, it helps everyone. If you are happy and well adjusted, you are a better employee, spouse, a happier person.

Summary of Allison's experience. Allison's story gave me a sense of how she felt when she used subtle energies in her professional life. For Allison, the major ideas from her experience

in deliberate and conscious use of subtle energies were that it gave her confidence when dealing with conflict, she felt better able to stand up to others, and she felt that, overall, she was a happier person.

Barbara. Barbara responded to the email request to participate in my study within a few hours of when it was sent. I felt Barbara was open to the interview process and extremely welcoming to me because she invited me to her home to conduct the interview. When I arrived at Barbara's home, her three children introduced themselves to me and then quickly left the house with a nanny so that Barbara had a quiet place for the interview.

Background information. Barbara is married and an active mother of three teenaged children. Barbara's life is busy with her children's activities and her career as a co-owner of an organizational and leadership development consulting business. She "works with clients in all areas of employee engagement, culture, leadership, and employee development. [Her practice] involves public speaking and organization development that is delivered in person or online." Barbara's business model uses "a blend of research, best practices, and improvisational comedy." She consults with clients in "federal, state and local government, universities, corporate, and not for profit organizations." Barbara's business is considered global; she has worked with clients in the US, Canada, Europe and Australia.

Barbara's initial training in subtle energies occurred three years ago as part of coursework in her doctoral program at the University of St. Thomas. She now uses subtle energy in her work because when she tried to do this, "things went much better," and now her use of subtle energy is a habit.

Barbara's experience with subtle energies. As Barbara told me her story about her deliberate and conscious use of subtle energies, I found that the following factors emerged.

Comfort myself. Barbara regularly spoke to large groups of people and found energetics skills helpful. Before Barbara speaks to her audience, she energetically prepares herself by visualizing the speaking venue and emotionally and mentally preparing herself before her speaking engagements. She said:

Sending love energy to the speaking engagement helps me be less scared, because I comfort myself; it is like I am loving myself when I am walking in the door [Barbara feels like] It's like this is exactly where you should be, yah, it's emotional. It is good. We have even had such powerful sessions where people stand and do a standing ovation, and I used to be so embarrassed and shut it down. Now I totally take it all in, and sometimes it is so overwhelming that I do cry, but not as much because it is me; like I gave out love, and now you are giving love back and I got it; it's all good, and that is for sure energetic work. That is for sure when she [the energetic instructor] said, on the continuum of where you can love too much and love not enough, I am like right in a balanced space. So I am less scared because I balance myself [energetically prepare] and I am a loving presence.

Less fear. Barbara also told me a story of her experience of not being afraid when she prepared herself energetically to work with a team.

A funny thing happened; I can't believe I did it, but I think it was because I felt comfortable to go over to "that side of the room." There was some conversation about how the team makes decisions together; they don't really exchange in healthy conflict and they know it, and it was a really good conversation. Two team members at the end of the table were not contributing and I went over and sat near to them. I just thought I am open; I am going to be a light and see if that does anything. I then made a bold statement to them about their positions in the organization.

After Barbara said this, she saw that one team member opened up and the other person would not change his perspective.

At that point, I realized he is going to be where he is, there is nothing else I can do, and also energetics work made me be okay with that too. Meaning, you can't force on it; you can't force yourself to have another person have a perspective; you can just have grace and hope that you can share your perspective; and I did and I was proud of it. ...some feedback I received from a senior leader said my comment was bold but great that you said it. Some other feedback that I received from another leader was that [one person] felt put on the spot. I said, oh, that was interesting, I would never have thought that. I would have done it again. I think the energetic work, of visualizing myself in the meeting beforehand, makes me feel less nervous. And, then I send energy to the team, [concentrate on my intention for teamwork] ... so that they feel safer to collaborate. Another thing about this, with teams there is no senior team that I don't think that we can't work with. Now... I am in contact with another senior team, and I used to feel like that is too big of a team and I can't [work with them], and now I feel like, yah, we can... I now feel like, bring it! It makes me less scared, it makes it more fun; it is a really good thing. The energetics work makes me less scared.

Confidence in self. Barbara takes the time to energetically prepare herself prior to speaking to large groups of people. She visualizes the room where she will be speaking and then mentally and emotionally gathers her thoughts to be fully present prior to the actual speaking engagement.

This energetic preparation...makes me like the journey more, makes me excited being there and enjoy the experience more. I am not like, oh I should be home. I am grateful for

the whole experience. I am so much more present [when speaking] and can enjoy it more. I feel that my work is clearer.

Barbara talked about her experience with a group, when I asked her if she thought the audience had a different experience.

The group response to speaking – no doubt that there is something magical about the way we teach; we use theater and it is funny. People have never seen it; we, like, break into a theatrical scene...people are laughing. I know that is an interesting thing for the audience, but, I know that my confidence level makes me connect more. There is more emotion that I see; I notice more intense emotion in that instance of speaking. I prepare myself energetically...to have my energy be with them so the experience is good; but in my experience with teams, that is different work than this [speaking] work. I feel like it [my work with teams] is an amazing experience, and it makes a difference. But I don't know that they [the audience] would notice any difference, but I know that the effect is powerful.

Less judgement of self. For Barbara, her use of subtle energies has changed the way she interacts with her client group.

In a team meeting...we [my business partner and I] have had such crazy things happen. We are just in it and we figure it out; we say what is it that you need? That's another big thing, like not pushing our own [agenda], we are more about, since energetics, what is it that you need? ...using an [energetic] universal law. I don't know, I can't recite the laws. I just know them, and one is that you can't force yourself on it, what is supposed to happen, is supposed to happen. I don't know, but I still offer kindness and generosity, but I have no expectation about what happens to it. Now there are all these things coming to

light about how I show up since energetics; they are all kind of jumbled in my mind, but one is – I don't force myself on things as much anymore.

When I asked Barbara what does that mean to you? She said:

Oh my gosh, it is so freeing. Like... in coaching, when I first started doing one- on-one leadership coaching, if the client didn't do the thing, like I said, "try this thing" [activity], and they are like, "yah", and they don't do the thing [activity], I would say oh, the thing was probably stupid. I would say, and I was always negative of what I didn't do right, or what I didn't [do]; and [now] if they didn't do the thing [activity], I say "great, what do you need now?" It's like the best. I have so much less angst, less judgement on myself; it's like it has helped me be confident, less scared is a great way to put it.

Summary of Barbara's experience. Barbara's experience with deliberate and conscious use of subtle energies had a significant impact on "how she showed up" when she facilitated groups. She comforted herself by using energetic exercises which, she believed helped her engage more with her audience. She energetically set her intention for team collaboration, which allowed her to have less fear to try difficult things and more confidence to take on challenging or senior-level client groups. Barbara also found that her use of energetic principles allowed her to be less judgmental about her coaching skills.

Charli. Charlie arrived at the cafe and, when she saw me, welcomed me with a hug. After a few minutes of getting settled, Charli pulled out notes from her purse and said she did some reflecting on her deliberate and conscious use of subtle energies since our email exchanges regarding participating in the study. I reviewed the consent forms with Charli and described the process I would use for the interview. I would ask one main question about her experience with

subtle energies, and ask her follow-up questions for clarity or to encourage her stories. Charli said “great,” and we began the interview.

Background information. Charli is middle aged and married with children that span from teenaged to early adults. Charli has several years of work experience in corporate business settings, and within the last few years she left that environment to start an organization development consulting practice. She works with small and large organizations in for-profit and not-for-profit sectors. Charli had gravitated toward mystic ways of knowing such as Feng Shui, Reiki, Mindfulness, and homeopathic healing during most of her life. Within the last few years, she received training in subtle energies as part of her master’s program at the University of St. Thomas. The energetics electives were the primary reason she chose that program. Charli uses several mystic ways of knowing including subtle energies in her consulting practice. The following factors highlight Charli’s experience in her deliberate and conscious use of subtle energies in group facilitation.

Charli’s experience with subtle energies. As Charli told me her story, the following factors emerged.

Increased confidence. Charli told me a story about the time when she was working with a senior vice president of a company and his team to restructure the organization. Charli used her energetic skills so that she felt good in the session. She said,

I sent love energy [focusing her intentions on positive interactions] in the days before and then in the session; I remember I was so calm. I was so in my groove, whereas before I would be so uptight about the agenda, the task part of it, instead of what was happening with people. And when I let that go, I am in tune with everybody’s body movement, not only what they are saying but what they are not saying; I fully felt great in my

space. And sometimes, in the past, I have backed down and felt small and let somebody else take charge. And [now] that did not happen at all. I was there. I was present. I was fully being who I am and feeling very comfortable in that space, not feeling what if someone judges me, or am I really capable of doing this? That all goes away.

Letting go. Charli told me more about her facilitation experience with the senior vice president's team and how her use of subtle energies helped her feel comfortable not having to control the outcome.

Getting ready for the session, I harmonized the environment. First I do a cleansing [by getting rid of all my negative thoughts and emotions], then...I start to harmonize the environment around me [thinking of the desired outcome where the team is working together]. I build that out until I get to the point where I visualize, in that room, all the people, creating and having all the [positive] energy in that space; not the agenda and being specific that it will work out, but opening up in a [positive] energy; it's [having a mindset that] how things are supposed to show up, they will show up. So I did that a couple times the night before, really getting rid of bad energy [negative thoughts], making sure that I felt really great, really building up...myself as I was doing it. Then hours before [the session], I went to the room and harmonized [visualized positive interactions] and clean[ed] out the room of dark and negative energy, [I was] making sure the room felt good.

I also did some personal work – the [Energetics course] instructor showed me how to do some positive affirmations in front of the mirror; it was all about me and confidence in me and showing up as myself authentically. I had been doing that for months; [I had] so

many components [that] were incorporated [in my preparation]. Those were the things [I did] leading up to the session.

In the session, it was great. People were great, really open. The agenda did morph, but the leader was fine with this, and it had a really good outcome. That was OK, because that is how it was supposed to flow. The leader asked us to come back. It felt really good that the energy that I helped to create, helped with that, [and] helped with the whole flow of the day and how I felt in the course of the day.

Authentic self. Charli told me a story about an experience when she worked with a colleague on a proposal to restructure an organizational system. The colleague also had completed coursework in subtle energies. Charli said:

Before a colleague and I did the work of systems mapping, we balanced [focused our thoughts and feelings and got rid of distracting thoughts] before we did any work. We did a beta energy [focusing on creative rhythms] exercise that [helps you be] ... really creative. ... It was amazing; it just flowed; you would have thought we always worked together. It just moved; it flowed.

Charli and her colleague presented the system mapping to the client, and according to Charli, “the client loved it.” I asked Charli what that experience meant to her. She said:

The energy in me, the partnership, the energy in groups, getting into that space that is my space; my centering and who I am just flows. Normally I would be saying things like, “should I say this?” or “Should I not say that?” Oh my God, I have all this crazy stuff going on in my head and, instead, it is just me showing up and having it flow. It was great getting into...that creative space...getting clear on how energy waves can impact you in a positive way, personally and professionally. I am finding that there is less of a delineation

of the two. What I found is that it [the exercise] took the personal stuff out of it and we worked really well together. There is a groove, it's a flow; it is all happening here [hand on heart]. That's a big thing for me, and I am not getting caught up here [pointing to head].

Summary of Charli's experience. Charli's deliberate and conscious use of subtle energies in her facilitation identified several factors that she found meaningful. She believed that her use of subtle energies gave her increased confidence when she worked with her clients, allowing her to "play big instead of small." Charli believed the energetic exercises she employed prior to her group facilitation allowed her to release the control of the outcome she previously tried to maintain. Finally, Charli believed that her use of subtle energies, both personally and professionally, allowed her to put away a "façade of perfection," and she became comfortable showing her authentic self.

Diane. Diane was a willing and accommodating participant in my study. She responded to my request for research participants shortly after I made the request. She suggested several meeting locations to accommodate my schedule, and on short notice was willing to change an interview time because of a scheduling conflict I had with another participant. The café, in which we met, was very loud, so we had to carefully position our seats and talk loudly to hear each other. After these delays and problems, Diane did not show outward signs of irritation, and I was surprised and relieved by her continued interest in my study.

Background information. Diane was an older woman who had been married to her husband for many years. She owned a consulting business that specialized in life coaching, facilitation, and leadership training. She also recently retired from a city government position where she had worked for the past 14 years doing organization development. Prior to these

roles, she had spent most of her career working in community education. Diane's training in subtle energies came through the master's program at the University of St. Thomas.

Diane's experience with subtle energies. She had an interest in subtle energies for a long time, and had some instinctive ways of using subtle energy prior to taking the coursework in energetics. Diane said, "But now I have a better way [of working with subtle energies] than my instinctive way." As Diane told me her story, several factors emerged as meaningful in her experience with the deliberate and conscious use of subtle energies.

Building inner confidence. Diane told me a story of her experience as a co-facilitator where she didn't feel as important as other people in the group.

I was working with a national group that was going to get rid of itself; they were not doing any good... they were not effective. I was on the committee to make the group go away. I was with a lot of old white men, who thought they could get people together and get this [the group] started up again. Because of all the meditation work I was doing [in energetics courses]...that was not where my body was going. My body was [saying] -- it is really truly time to say goodbye and how am I going to make the shift to help? I was on these phone calls all the time; I was the only woman and they would poo-poo whatever I had said, or [say] yah yah yah. So I started to do the energetic thing of sending love energy [focusing my positive intentions for the group]...because that is the one thing we have in common; we all love this organization. I would do this all the way through [at each meeting] and pretty soon they [members] would say, tell us again what you think we should do. So we ended up getting the right people to speak [at the final adjournment presentation.]

Diane shared that she thought the whole event ended very well because she was personally thanked for her work by the people who hired her. The successful termination of the group stopped the potential for litigation and Diane believed that was due to her use of subtle energies in her facilitation.

Stopped deciding how they should act. Diane talked about one instance when she had challenges with expectations for one group with which she worked. She said:

This was hard for me; they were elite; they were people that did their work very well. And then, we had people who weren't so elite and they could be themselves. But the elite people, they really did turn out good work and they still had kind of a 'chip.' I did everything [energetically] as in the book practically, and we came out [good]. [One] person that was so negative, he quit talking. He was very smart and he quit talking, and the people who were not as strong started to contribute, which they never did before because the really smart people did it all. I was exhausted afterwards, and it [the use of subtle energies] worked. Because it [using subtle energies] was something I hadn't done normally. Because I stepped out of my deciding how they should act. I did the thing of braking pathological bonds [the exercise to not become emotionally engaged] with one of them [group members], and he really changed the way he was speaking; he stopped actually after a while. It was hard, I was exhausted and I was elated because we go to where we needed to go. The exhausted piece is that I was doing something I had never done in that way before. If you look at organization development things, like Myers-Briggs, I am a raging extravert and I go with my gut. And so I had to just stop for a while and not need to be the person with all the things to say, and I had to honor quiet, and that is kind of hard for me at first. It is much better now because I have learned and practiced.

Meaningful experience. The way Diane works with groups changed after taking Energetics courses. Now, prior to a meeting with a group, Diane goes to the room where she will be working, or visualizes it if she is not near the building, to think about her intention for the meeting and her desire for positive interactions. Diane shared:

We start at an equal piece place without negativity of the room. It doesn't mean that people can't get negative, that can happen, but we start at an equal place. The intention in the room is important because it is a guide, [which] is the best way to describe it. I need to know the intention so that I can stay in an energetic place. [My intention] is I want them [meeting participants] to come to a meaningful result. I might be doing a retreat, and it [the intention] is that [participants] have an understanding of their focus and are open to make a difference.

Energetics makes a difference. Diane told me of her experiences with energetics and I wondered why she chose this perspective rather than something else. I asked Diane why she uses subtle energies in her facilitation. She said:

I use energetics because it makes a huge difference; it is there. It is there, whether we pretend it is there or not; it's there! We all come in with our energy to meetings or to a training. We don't leave it in the trunk of the car, just like we don't leave our emotions in the car. And our emotions sometimes impact our energy as well. Our world often seems that we are going to put that aside so that we can get the answers, but I don't believe we will get the answers without doing that. Occasionally, I will get someone who says, "It's too bad you had us do this" – I didn't call it energetics, but we did a little breathing or something – "and it is too bad we did that; this is the best meeting we ever had and we could have had 15 more minutes." I'm saying [to myself], it wouldn't have

happened if we hadn't done that. I didn't say that [out loud] because I know people are sensitive to things like that. Energetics opens doors; it allows people to look bigger and brighter and deeper.

I can now hear clients. After telling me her stories and reflecting on some of her experiences, Diane had some overarching thoughts about her use of subtle energies.

Energetics is life changing for me, and it is life changing in the way I do my work; I know it is. It has changed the way I do my work, and I am better in it. And when I say better, people are getting a better deal from me. I hear differently; I have different types of questions now; they [my questions] are much more curious. In the past I had the answers, [and now] I am much more “tell me more about that,” “what do you think that needs to be?” In facilitation, when they leave it [the result] has really been their deal!

Diane changed her focus now that she used subtle energies in her practice. Previously she concentrated on how she appeared to the client (e.g., were her words chosen correctly, did she present a good example, was the exercise top notch) instead of what happened with the client group in regard to their interests (i.e., she was able to let go of concern for self and focus on concern for client).

Summary of Diane's experience. For Diane, there were several factors that emerged as meaningful in her experience with subtle energies: She had greater confidence when she facilitated groups, she was more accepting of the group members, she had better outcomes in her facilitation, and she felt more comfortable to let the resolutions emerge from the participants rather than from her.

Evelyn. Finding a time to interview Evelyn was a challenge because every minute counted in her job as a senior consultant. Eventually, we were able to find a time that worked,

and the interview was conducted in a small coffee shop close to her home. I arrived at the coffee shop early and waited for Evelyn. I looked around the coffee shop at the scheduled interview time and found a woman who had papers on the table. I recognized them as participant consent forms, so I approached the table and introduced myself. Evelyn welcomed me with a smile, and I quickly arranged my things so we could start the interview. I explained the process I would use, asking one main question with several follow-up questions for clarity. Evelyn told me that she was familiar with the interview process due to an earlier vocation in journalism.

Background information. Evelyn is married and has grown children. Many years ago, she and her family transplanted themselves to the Midwest because they believed it was a better place to raise children. Evelyn was a senior consultant with a global organization and an executive coach. Evelyn completed coursework in subtle energies as part of the electives in her master's program at the University of St. Thomas. For Evelyn, these courses complemented her consulting practice and added to her 30 year knowledge base in energetic practices. Evelyn told me stories about her experience with deliberate and conscious use of subtle energies and, as she reflected, the following foci emerged.

Evelyn's experience with subtle energies. As Evelyn told me her story, several factors emerged as meaningful in her experience with the deliberate and conscious use of subtle energies.

Living to one's full potential. Evelyn's told me a story of a person, whom she coached in her independent consulting practice. She facilitated a dialogue with a woman who wanted to change her career. Evelyn said:

I was working with a client and she was really stuck in terms of, she knew she wanted and needed a new job but couldn't break free of the old job. I was using the mirror

technique [reflecting back what the person is showing, saying or not saying]; I use that a lot actually. She talked about a job where she got a job offer, and I am listening to her and watching her, and I could see and more importantly feel her body shrink back. In other words, when somebody is happy about something there is kind of a warmth and glow [in the] moment. I got nothing coming from her. She is smiling at me and she is nodding; she's got all the right facial expressions, all the right gestures, and this kind of stuff. And when she finished, I said, "You don't want this job." She said, "no, I do, I do, I really want it; you know this is a new job, this is great." It [the job] had a good title, the salary was right. In other words, you look at it from the outside and it looked like the real thing. I said, "No you don't want it," and then [her] whole visage changed. Everything changed, and she was mad and she said, "I'm taking it." I said, "Okay fine." I saw her not too long after that and asked her, "How is it going?" She said, "Well, it [the job] is every single thing that I hated about my childhood and have to clear [resolve], so everything I ever hated as a human being," and she had kind of a rough childhood that showed up at this job. [The client continued] "So the good news is that I am being faced with exactly what I need to clear and the bad news is that I am in a situation that is going to be hard to extricate myself."

Evelyn had another appointment with this client, and they continued their work to find the right job. Evelyn said:

I feel like I am using what God has put me on the earth to do. We are all energetic beings, and the beauty of your world and the beauty of understanding this is that we are instruments of something larger than ourselves. To me, we are individualizations of something much greater. ...Once you understand these principles, what is showing up

here [at this café] is just a very small piece of whom and what we are. In a sense it is, live to your full potential...it is also just to live fully.

Improving the learning environment. Evelyn facilitated a dialogue session with a client and manager to help them resolve a conflict. She described that session as follows:

I had a coaching client; he and his manager were not getting along. So the three of us were in a meeting, and the manager was behind a desk; the manager and the coaching client were on the other sides of the desk. This very large piece of furniture [was] blocking us, so kind of a large energy block. The manager is a nice guy, in other words, nothing wrong with that; my client was fairly angry, in other words had kind of a chip on his shoulder. We were all trying to be very logical, left brained, and I was trying to facilitate the conversation. It was going nowhere very quickly; okay, nothing was working. I basically retreated. In other words, I sat back in my chair, put my feet flat on the floor balanced [did breathing exercise], and then put my ethereal hands [specific energetic exercise] on the two of them. [There is] the concept that whatever shows up in your environment is an extension of you anyway. It is kind of like a mirror looking at you in the face. So I thought, these are two competing parts of myself, and I have to reconcile them. I got very quiet and I embraced both of them to flood it [the two of them] with [my] energy, with no set intention, other than to change the tone of the dialogue. ...It worked...all of the sudden, you could see both of them visibly relax, their body language changed, and then they started speaking to one another – more person to person, man to man, than boss to direct report. I just witnessed it; I didn't need to be in it [part of the conversation] at all. I just watched it unfold. So in coaching dialogues, I will often times do that.

“We are instruments of love, designed for love’s expression.” For Evelyn, when she used subtle energies in her facilitation, it meant putting her intentions into expressions of love, or positive energy. “In my world, we are instruments of love, designed for love’s expression. I come from the spiritual expression that says, after we die, we are only asked one question. And that question is, what did you learn about love in your lifetime?”

Evelyn then shared a story of a friend, who was dying of stage four kidney cancer:

We were at a birthday party and [my friend] was very ill at this point and he was sitting alone in a corner, shrunken away, and people were basically staying away from him. ... I sidled over to him and said, “What if you are one in a million?” He said, “What?” I said, “You know, one in a million, somebody wins the lottery, somebody gets well from cancer; you know, it could be you.” He said, “oh no, doctors are saying I’m done.” So I started talking about intercessory prayer and this kind of stuff, and you know he went to church, and I don’t know that he was huge into spirituality. I don’t know that I am either; by the way, I am not very religious, in fact I am really not religious at all. So the next day [friend’s name] was off to get more cancer treatment and he called a mutual friend and said, “Ask [Evelyn] to pray for me.” And again, if you’re into this stuff, you can get used as an instrument. I said, “I’ve got a better idea; let’s get the whole town praying for him.” ... At the time, I was ... [in public roles] and I asked him if I could write a positive prayer and send it to a few people. He said, “Sure.” I faxed it to every newsroom in the city. A positive prayer is basically loving each other. [For example] I open my heart, take my love and use it for [someone’s] best good. Bring whatever meant to be in whatever form is best at this time. So no guarantee of outcomes; we didn’t say take away his cancer. We didn’t do anything like that. We basically said, take our love and use it for

[the] best well, delivered ... in whatever is best, with the highest possible outcome. We asked people to pray at 10 A.M. and 10 P.M. Central time, again, the idea of collective energy. By the time [friend's name] got back, the whole town was praying for him. ... We also had weekly visualization... where I led people through some exercises... where we would all offer him love, unconditionally. Anyway, he got better... of course, the doctors said the chemo-therapy was working; we said "whatever." Within nine months he was cancer free. After all that, as soon as he was completely cancer free, proven by MRI's, blood test and God only knows what else, the doctors said, let's do a year of preventive chemo. I said, for God sakes, you have every medical test in the book that proves you don't have cancer. That would be like taking a healthy person off the street and saying, "You know, let's do a year of preventive chemo in case you ever get cancer." I said, give your body a rest, [he said] "no, no, no." He was scared, and I don't know that I blame him. But anyway, he is probably sitting here with us right now. Anyway, he did it [the preventive Chemo]. What happened was the day they ended the chemo, of course you can't put negative energy and intention into something without manifesting it, it is impossible. So of course, the cancer came roaring back... he lasted a few more months after that; it just wasn't going to happen. But after that, people started to call me. What I saw was people wanted to give their love; they wanted to help.

Evelyn told me two more stories about her experience where she brought people together to give love, or positive intentions to help people who were dying. After her last story, Evelyn told me that she decided not to do such things in the future.

I don't want to do this anymore. In other words, we are all going to die, and when we leave this earth is not for me or anyone else to decide. The other thing is that some people

need their illnesses, and it is important to their journey; but the third thing is, why do we need to manifest love when there is trouble? Why can't we do this; because we choose to have fun? In other words, enjoying life. It provided me with the negative contrast I needed to move on into something else. [I had experiences] where I witnessed how we used love to support life, rather than stop death. It is basically saying, "I want to have this experience and I can use subtle energies to embrace life, connect to it and enjoy it without getting too tied up when something happens or leaves." Loving people, there are countless stories...we all want to receive it and we all want to give it.

After hearing her story, I asked Evelyn what it meant to her when she had these experiences. She said:

It makes me happy; I feel in those moments the most alive and connected and passionate to life, and the most truthful, honest and authentic; like I am hitting on all cylinders. Like I say to my husband, 'I am on my game.' ...It makes me feel alive, like I am fully here.

Summary of Evelyn's experience. For Evelyn, her use of subtle energies helped her coach others to use their full potential. She also helped others in conflict resolution by creating the environment where dialogue is most effective. Third, Evelyn believed she was fulfilling her life purpose by manifesting love and helping others to do the same to live life more fully.

Francis. Francis and I met at a central location and then rode together to a small coffee shop that she suggested as a convenient place to conduct an interview. We met at the end of Francis' workday, so I was conscious that she may need a little time to mentally shift her thoughts to the interview. We spent a few minutes talking about general topics and, when we both were settled, we reviewed the consent forms and I explained the process that I would use. I

asked one primary question and then used several follow-up questions to get more details or clarify some thoughts.

Background information. Francis is married and lives in a growing community outside of a major metropolitan area. She calls this area home because, as an adult, she has lived in this location longer than anywhere else. Francis worked for a federal agency for the past 10 years, the first three of which were in a counseling role and the last seven of which have been in the Diversity and Inclusion Department. She regularly facilitates small and large group meetings on workplace expectations and regulations, and often facilitates employee grievances, investigations and workplace disputes.

Francis' experience with subtle energies. Francis received her training in subtle energies through her doctorate program at the University of St. Thomas, where part of her coursework included courses in energetics. When Francis was taking energetics courses, she used her training in subtle energies in her group facilitation daily. More recently, since completing her coursework, she has used the skills on a weekly basis. Francis told me of her experience in subtle energies, and the following ideas emerged as significant.

Being pleasantly surprised by the outcome. Francis coordinated a workplace mediation program for employees, who wanted to have their disputes heard by a neutral party. She said:

At that point [in the dispute], I am more of coordinator; I set up the room and get the parties ready and I do all of the paperwork; you know I do all the groundwork. But then, other trained neutrals are in [the meeting] because I have already been involved in one shape or form. ... [In this situation] I had these two people who, normally, I am really optimistic and hopeful for everybody in all the situations at work no matter how ugly they seem. ... I wasn't even sure why we were even doing it [the mediation]. I had no

hope that they were going to be able to resolve the matter because ...one person, in my opinion was not very rational, and I really didn't think that it was going to go well; but I thought, well, we at least need to try. So, the night before, it kind of struck me that [I would be] following the energetic laws and principles because I was affected by it [the problem], So, I sent love energy the night before [the mediation]; I balanced [my emotions] and harmonized the room ... getting it ready for them. Then I went to bed and I did not remember doing that [exercises]. The mediators came and I gave them the quick brief scenario. ...They came back a couple hours later with a written agreement and my jaw hit the ground! I was like, how, how, how did that happen? ... They [the mediators] left and I sat in my office thinking, 'what in the world?' because I kind of think I have a pretty good read on people, and [in this situation] I did not. If I was a betting person, I would have lost money on that one. Awhile later ...I remember thinking 'oh yeah, you sent love energy, and if the resolution was supposed to happen, it was going to happen. I remember just smiling the rest of the day.

I asked Francis to tell me the meaning of her use of subtle energies in this experience.

She said:

It was really cool. In the very beginning, even though I went through the three levels, there was that tiny bit in me that wondered, 'was energetics real, for real? I believe it is because I also knew that I was not taking any allergy medicine at all, anymore, so how could it not be real?' There was part of me that thought the mind is really powerful, so maybe I was able to do something in myself, so to be able to see it work with a group of people, a small group of people; ...it was gratifying, it was affirming, it gave me hope. That, and I had to remind myself that if that was what their outcome was supposed to be,

because I can't influence that, then that was what it was going to be. But I at least had the room in a way that they were going to come to the conclusion they were going to come to. I am just thankful that it was a resolution. But if their conclusion was, 'we're not going to get along, and that's just the end of it,' then perhaps they would have come out to say 'we agree to disagree' and it is not resolved and we are putting it to rest. I guess it is another outcome that could have happened. So I was really pleased that the environment was right for them to be able to come to some kind of agreement. It is gratifying to know that this is a way I can help groups.

Francis also told me about an experience, she had with a group of five workers and a supervisor, in which she had intervened. One person had the reputation of being a negative presence in the work environment, and she rallied the work-unit to submit a complaint that caused an uprising in the whole department. Francis said: "I did my investigation with everyone; I coached them on the issue and the Union was involved." The group did not cooperate with the interventions that Francis had facilitated and she lost her patience with the whole situation. However, Francis needed to get the workgroup back on task, and she decided to call one more meeting to resolve the issue. This time she used subtle energies. She described the situation as follows:

I balanced [my emotions]; I prepared the room before I went [to the meeting]. I cannot tell you the difference of how that meeting felt. I thought you know what, it [the outcome] is not for me to decide; I just need to make the environment appropriate for them to do whatever they are going to do and have myself in a better frame of mind. ... I know that I can't facilitate a group effectively if I am having opinions and anger; that is not at all how you are supposed to facilitate; I basically got my act together. [Because of]

the preparation I really went into it [the meeting] hopeful, and had I not balanced and prepared the room, I don't think it would have happened. I really think that the room being harmonized ahead of time impacted me, [so that] when I walked in the room ... my frame of mind was better.

I asked Francis what it felt like to have this experience and what did that mean to her?

She said:

It was gratifying; and I probably shouldn't take credit for it, but it is gratifying to know that this is a way I can help groups, even the ones that we don't have much hope for. It felt light in the room, both times. It didn't seem like anyone came into it dreading it, or anything like that, which was a difference from when we had the smaller subgroup meetings during the turmoil. We were still talking about the turmoil things in the big group... but it felt easier for them to talk about. There was less crying...and light just keeps coming to mind, almost restorative, really. I was very happy for them.

Building confidence. Francis teaches and facilitates large groups monthly on the topic of unconscious bias, diversity and communication. She shared two experiences that illustrated her use of energetics:

When teaching employee orientation, sometimes I harmonize the room and, sometimes I don't. I tend to use it [subtle energies] more when the people with the professions are on the list. ...Because I am talking about unconscious bias, diversity and communication, I tend to get a little more intimidated if we have psychologist, psychiatrist and doctor type in the audience. When we get the roster, I don't always look at it because I am super busy, but when I look at the list and see who is on it, I tend to automatically send love

energy into the room beforehand. I don't know if it is changing anything in the room, but I know it is making it easier to facilitate, or to teach.

The other story was about instances when particular professions are in group training.

Francis continued:

I know there was one time when we had a couple chaplains and a psychologist in the session. I know my content area; I don't even take the facilitators guide out anymore. I have done it [trained groups] basically once a month for five years. ... I am probably harmonizing the room for my own benefit and making sure my throat is not blocked with emotions ... so that I am getting across what I need to. As far as the result, I don't remember [the participants] being difficult or anything like that, so I would say that the result was probably satisfactory; it was positive.

Summary of Francis' experience. For Francis, it was obvious that she found the use of subtle energies helped her believe that a difficult situation can have the best possible outcome. She also believed she was better able to help the groups come to conflict resolution, and those results were valuable to her organization. Additionally, Francis' confidence in her own abilities to facilitate groups increased when she used subtle energies.

Theme Formation

The previous section provided participants' stories about their experiences of deliberate and conscious use of subtle energies in group facilitation. I analyzed the stories to find common themes. To do so, I used Van Manen's (2003) selective or highlighting approach, which seeks to find thought patterns about the participants' experiences. I looked for patterns across stories by asking the question, "What are the overarching thoughts that emerged from the stories?" The following patterns quickly emerged:

1. Improving the environment for the client group;
2. Preparing self before their facilitation;
3. Dealing with distractions and uncertainties.

I analyzed these patterns to determine if these key themes occurred only within the subtle energy phenomena or if there were other contextual factors. I determined that these patterns could be the basis for the contextual themes to the phenomena or, as categorized by Van Manen (2003), incidental themes (see Table 2).

Table 2

Incidental Themes and Sub-themes

Incidental Themes	Sub-Themes
Improving the environment for the client group	- None
Preparing self before their facilitation	- Regular structured preparation - Casual preparation - Preparation as a life-style
Dealing with distractions and uncertainties	-Distraction for the facilitator -Distractions of facilitator that affect the whole group -The disruptive person

Incidental themes. The following themes emerged as patterns across all the participants' stories. The representative quotes that are included below are those which best illustrate the following themes.

Improving the environment for the client group. All participants found that when they used subtle energies before they worked with the client group, the environment was more conducive to teamwork, conflict resolution, and open honest conversations. Diane felt that using

an energetic practice of visualizing positive interactions allowed the client group to clear out negative patterns that would affect current working relationships. She said, “I use subtle energies to change the energy of the room, [if I am] physically in the room or energetically ... whoever comes in there, we start at an equal place without negativity in the room. It doesn't mean people can't get negative, but we all start at a different spot.”

When Evelyn is in a coaching role she is keenly aware of her environment and the interactions with the people with whom she is working. During a time when she believed the environment was not conducive for conflict resolution between two parties she “got very quiet and embraced [energetically] both of them. ... It worked... all of the sudden, you could see both of them visibly relax, their body language changed and then they started speaking to one another, more person-to-person, man-to-man, than boss-to-direct report.”

Francis believed the technique of harmonizing the room helped clients to be less defensive and tense; she described the harmonized room as the environment that “felt light, unlike the past. It felt easier for them to talk about the problem.”

Charli, shared an anecdote about a group of people with whom she had previous experience. She expected the group would be competitive and difficult to manage. Therefore, before they met, she “cleansed the room of all the negative dark energy” so that communication would flow and so that she felt good working with the client.

Each participant had different reasons for making the environment better for the group, however, they all believed this was an important part of their experience with subtle energies in group facilitation which nevertheless resulted in a visible effect.

Preparing self before their facilitation. Most participants set aside time to prepare themselves energetically prior to a facilitation experience. All participants were similarly trained

in energetic principles. Some of these principles included the idea that practitioners must use subtle energies to maintain energy balance and remove negative thinking in order to employ energy skills in their facilitation. As a result, a theme emerged where all participants spoke of self-preparation prior to facilitation. Although variations existed in their stories, the overall theme was very apparent.

Regular structured preparation. Allison believed that her personal use of subtle energies helped her to be perceived more positively by others in her work setting. She believed self-examination and clearing energy blockages through visualization helped her maintain her balance and present herself better to the group. She said, “This impacts the group because it impacts their perception of me. Professionally, I feel more capable and more confident because I understand the theory [of subtle energies] and I can implement them and have better outcomes.”

Similarly, Charli had been doing her own energetic exercises in order to generally feel better about herself and to be emotionally ready for her work with groups. She described her personal practices as, “...positive affirmations in front of the mirror; it was all about me and confidence in myself and...showing up as myself, authentically. I had been doing that for months, so many components were incorporated [into the preparation]... leading up to the session.”

Casual preparation. Similar to Diane and Charli, Francis practiced energetic skills in her personal life, however she expressed a more casual user emphasis. She practiced subtle energies in her own life when she could or when the circumstances were right. As with any new concept, Francis practiced subtle energies more frequently. When she first learned the skills, she “was practicing every day, and had some really huge personal successes.” For example, after clearing energy blockages by deciphering behavioral patterns and through visualization, she was

“completely relieved of ... allergies.” Even though Francis had personal success, she also had some doubts about subtle energy use with groups. She did not always use subtle energies. She explained, “I imagine it is like meditative practice, and I don’t meditate, but where you have to have that regular awareness and practice and stay in it to keep the skills up. I am more than a casual user, but I wouldn’t say I am daily paying attention to energies.” In essence, Francis used subtle energies in her own life, when she first learned about them, but said she had not been as structured in her practice since then. However, she acknowledged that the more a person used subtle energies, the better practiced that person would be.

Preparation as a lifestyle. Evelyn also prepared herself prior to working with clients, but her preparation was less mechanical and less about the specific actions she did in order to be balanced and cleared of energy blockages. She believed that she lived, or strived to live, in an energetic state by being sensitive to energy exchanges in all aspects of her life. In this manner she is prepared for every opportunity that comes her way. For Evelyn, energetics can be described as “No tension...that when you are in a state of release or relaxation, whatever is meant to flow to you, and more importantly through you, you can do that.” While sometimes she did complete energetic exercises to get herself balanced, the emphasis was on her general state of being not on a specific event, such as an upcoming session she would be facilitating.

All participants had personal preparation with subtle energies before they used them in group facilitation. Allison and Charli had personal activities or rituals in preparation for facilitation meetings. Francis was more relaxed and used subtle energies in her personal life when she learned about them; she also used them later in group facilitation, when she remembered to do so. Evelyn’s personal preparation was significantly different than the other

three in that she did not complete specific subtle energy rituals. Instead, she routinely kept herself balanced and ready for whatever situation was presented.

Dealing with distractions and uncertainties. Most participants believed that their use of subtle energies helped them manage distracting or disruptive interactions within the group they were facilitating and to be more comfortable with uncertainties. Participants believed they could impact the subtle energy in the room in order to keep themselves focused on facilitation, help group members stay engaged, or to help disruptive persons become engaged.

Distraction for the facilitator. Allison believed her use of subtle energies helped her keep a group on track when actions of others became an obstacle to her facilitation. For Allison, “It’s a leadership experience. For me, it’s effectively doing my job of being able to employ everything about myself to be effective.” When Allison sensed a build-up of energy, she believed “that may not always be negative, it is whatever is going on with people,” and she used a subtle energy skill of visualizing clearing away the extra energy. She found that “it clears out things that interrupt.”

Distractions that affect the whole group. Much of Barbara’s facilitation had to do with groups of people learning how to trust each other and work together effectively. Barbara believed that when she used subtle energies to place an open and collaborative intention in the group through visualization, she was more effective in helping the group. She said, “In teams, there is a lot of conflicts and disarray...I call it ‘funky energy.’ I knew that was happening, but before energetics, I couldn’t do anything about it.”

The disruptive person. Francis had a slightly different experience with people who were disruptive or had distracting influences on others in groups. Similar to other participants, she used subtle energies when dealing with a disruptive person in her facilitation. However, Francis also felt a responsibility to help the disruptive person. She said, “I want the person to stay

engaged; I don't want to shut them up, but that they stay appropriately engaged." For this reason, she visualized sending love energy to the person first. If that was not effective, she would visualize a barrier around that person that stops her from emotionally engaging with the person so that, "the person doesn't continue to be disruptive to the rest of the group and to [the facilitator]."

For Charli, her relationships with others were different because of her use of subtle energies. "It [subtle energies] has played a different element of how I show up and how [other] people show up. It has been calming for me." She noticed that she dealt with distractions differently now that she used subtle energies in her facilitation. For example, when Charli is facilitating and people say things that could be seen as disruptive, she just flows with them. "I met them where they were at. I really listened and stayed there with them." Prior to her use of subtle energies, Charli would have been less confident to deal with the disruptive person so that she could stay on her agenda. She is now more concerned that "everyone is heard."

Participants believed they were able to deal with disruptive people using subtle energies in group facilitation. Participants had different reasons for using subtle energies. Allison believed the use of subtle energies allowed her to be a better facilitator. Barbara's experience using subtle energies showed she was able to help the group as a whole. For Francis and Charli, their motives for the use of subtle energies helped the whole group and, equally important, a disruptive person.

Summary of incidental themes. Participants' stories had three main incidental themes that showed aspects of their experience with subtle energies in facilitation. The key that makes them incidental is that the theme could exist outside of the phenomena of the use of subtle energies in facilitation. These themes were:

1. Improving the environment for the client group;

2. Preparing self before their facilitation; and
3. Dealing with distractions and uncertainties.

Essential themes. As part of the analysis where I sought to find contextual themes, I applied Van Manen's (2003) highlighting approach to find patterns that were essential to the phenomena. I looked for major patterns or concepts throughout the stories about how the participants' lives were different because of their use of subtle energies. Based on the participants' experiences, this process helped me find themes that were essential to the phenomena and without which the phenomena would not be the same (Van Manen, 2003).

Three major themes emerged from the stories of participants; they were:

1. Overcoming fears that prevented full engagement with the client in facilitation;
2. Sharing responsibility for interactions, outcomes and relationships; and
3. Becoming "real-self" during facilitation.

The essential themes can be seen across the participants' stories, and are uniquely illustrated by participants' lived experiences (see Table 3).

Table 3

Essential Themes and Illustrations

Essential Themes	Illustrations
Overcoming fears that prevented full engagement with the client in facilitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Allison overcame fear of being lower in rank. - Barbara faced her fear about being accepted by the client group if she gave advice that was not right for the client. - Charli overcame her fear of being perceived as less than professional. - Diane’s opinion counted. - Evelyn used her fear of being misunderstood to move to her higher purpose. - Francis overcame her fear when working with experts.
Sharing responsibility for interactions, outcomes and relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Allison saw her part of the frustration that came from the interaction with the client. - Barbara stopped forcing her perspectives on her clients. - Charli ended unhealthy relationships. - Diane saw her part in building community. - Evelyn could see the extension of herself in her interactions. - Francis examined herself before working with the group.
Becoming “real-self” during facilitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Allison began to feel like a different person. - Barbara became authentic in her facilitation. - Charli’s creativity flourished in her facilitation. - Diane let go of appearances and became a better listener. - Evelyn felt part of a larger universe. - Francis found hope by using other parts of herself.

Overcoming fears that prevented full engagement with the client in facilitation.

Participants had fears that they overcame due to their use of subtle energies, and overcoming these fears affected their work as facilitators. Prior to their work with subtle energies, each person was afraid of how they were perceived by the clients. Sometimes the fear was personal, other times the fear was about how they were perceived by the client in their role as facilitator. Participant fears were expressed differently, but in all cases using subtle energies to overcome

those fears brought a new meaning to them personally, which influenced their facilitation. The following are illustrations from participants' stories:

Allison overcame fear of being lower in rank. In Allison's case, she was filling in for a director. She said, "I already felt that I wasn't really sure that it was my place" and her use of subtle energies helped her "have a lot of introspection in how I act and what I am thinking is influencing how I act, and how I shouldn't be bringing that old baggage in, so just really determined to use self as instrument to make the process an effective one, and not worry constantly about my relationship with the committee chair."

Barbara faced her fear about being accepted by the client group if she gave advice that was not right for the client. Barbara would get down on herself and worry about her performance if a client did not find her advice or recommendation helpful. She would say, "oh, it was a dumb thing to do, or I didn't do it right." Since practicing personal energetic exercises, Barbara was able to convey thoughts like, "Great, what do you need now?" She now gives herself kinder and gentler self-talk and, as a result, Barbara says, "I have so much less angst – less judgement on myself; I am less scared." This change in Barbara's belief in herself helps her feel good about her facilitation.

Charli overcame her fear of being perceived as less than professional. Charli was afraid to present her authentic self to others, and one of those times was when she was facilitating groups. When she practiced using subtle energies, it helped her be more comfortable showing her authentic self and, in turn, she was more relaxed and comfortable in her role as a facilitator. She said, "I had a little ritual. I would say some positive affirmations about myself and do a little dance, as part of my ritual. Doing that, I felt a shift in me and how I felt about me in my skill set.

I did not have as much confidence in my skill set normally, and working through the energy piece in that really helps build me up.”

Diane's opinion counted. For Diane, her experience was as a co-facilitator where she did not feel as important as other people in the group. She said:

I was on the committee to make the group go away. I was with a lot of old white men, who thought they could get people together and get this [the group] started up again. Because of all the meditation work I was doing [in energetics courses]...that was not where my body was going. My body was [saying] -- it is really truly time to say goodbye and how am I going to make the shift to help?

Evelyn used her fear of being misunderstood to move to her higher purpose. Evelyn used subtle energies in her work because it was a way that she felt she could help people at a more meaningful level rather than simply giving advice. An example of this was when Evelyn gathered large groups of people to provide “intercessory positive prayer” for a friend and community member who was critically ill. For Evelyn, she believed she was making a difference in her friend’s life [the man who was critically ill] and the community who gathered to provide collective positive prayers. Evelyn found that she was repeatedly asked to help people that were critically ill and she was afraid she would be seen as a healer instead of how she saw herself: a person who uses subtle energies to live more fully. She said: “Why can’t we do this [use subtle energies], because we choose to have fun? In other words, enjoying life. This experience gave her “the negative contrast [she] needed to move on, into something else.” Evelyn changed the way she used subtle energies to align with her higher purpose, “...to support life, rather than stop death... I can use subtle energies to embrace life, connect to it and enjoy it without getting too tied up when something happens or leaves.”

Francis overcame her fear when working with experts. Francis overcame her fear of not being good enough when people with greater expertise were present in her facilitation. She said: Because I am talking about unconscious bias, diversity and communication, I tend to get a little more intimidated if we have psychologist, psychiatrist, and doctor type in the audience. When we get the roster, I don't always look at it because I am super busy, but when I look at the list and see who is on it, I tend to automatically send love energy into the room beforehand. I don't know if it is changing anything in the room, but I know it is making it easier to facilitate, or to teach.

All participants overcame their fears that were related to not being good enough or being viewed in a way that was not desirable. Using subtle energies provided a means for participants to address their fears and helped them to become fully engaged in their facilitation.

Sharing responsibility for interactions, outcomes and relationships. Prior to participants' use of subtle energies in their facilitation, they believed the focus of the interaction was related to factors outside of themselves. The use of subtle energies helped them realize that they were the part of, and shared with the client, the responsibility to improve the environment or situation that affected the outcome. Illustrations of this theme were:

Allison saw her part of the frustration that came from the interaction with the client.

Allison was coordinating a conference planning session with people who did not agree about the direction of the conference. She discovered there were pockets of people disagreeing, and during "that period of time where people were trying to decide what side they were on was the most difficult for me because it felt like I couldn't keep ahead of what I ... [was] supposed to do." Allison then realized she needed to change the situation and she used her subtle energies skills to sever, through visualization, the emotional connection she had with one person she found most

frustrating. These skills allowed Allison to see her part of the interaction that was causing frustration and to manage competing ideas from the group without losing her focus. By changing her emotional state, through subtle energies, Allison was able to improve a situation she found frustrating.

Barbara stopped forcing her perspectives on her clients. Prior to Barbara's work in energetics, she thought it was her job as a facilitator to convince people to change their perspective. She now implements energetic principles, specifically the concept that essentially teaches "What is supposed to happen, happens." She said, "We are now more about 'what is it you need?' Since energetics, I don't force myself on others as much anymore." Barbara believed that she changed her focus to what the client needed instead of focusing on what made her feel important, and she found this to be "so freeing."

Charli ended unhealthy relationships. This story illustrates the theme of sharing responsibility for interactions, outcomes, and relationships, and it also demonstrates the theme of becoming "real-self" during facilitation. Charli told me a story about a work relationship she had with the Senior Vice-President that was "fake," and Charli found it difficult to be her real self. After her work in subtle energies, she became comfortable showing her authentic self. As a result, she was also able to let go of "fake" or unhealthy relationships without feeling guilty. Charli said, "Almost overnight...the fake relationship feeling; it doesn't impact me anymore." She came to realize she and this person were "in a different light, a different path," and it was okay to let go of the relationship without feeling like she was a bad person. Charlie was now able to act in her own best interest, and that also allowed her to accept others with whom she was facilitating to do the same.

Diane saw her part in building community. For Diane, she took responsibility seriously about her part in a successful conference. She used subtle energies techniques (e.g., sending love energy, creating positive intentions) in all parts of the planning process. She said: “You can’t do this without energetics – building community. This is more than a fun conference; they [conference attendees] are reaching out to help kids. This hit my heart. I wanted to hit their hearts, and it hit mine back.”

Evelyn could see the extension of herself in her interactions. For Evelyn, the way she took responsibility in a facilitation situation or circumstances was slightly different than the other participants. Evelyn looked for the message or lesson that she was to learn when she facilitated with her clients. She shared a story of when she worked with clients to resolve a conflict by using subtle energies to surround the clients with her own energetic field. She told me about the energetic “concept that whatever shows up in your environment is an extension of you anyway. It is kind of like a mirror looking at you in the face. So I thought, these [client conflicts] are two competing parts of myself, and I have to reconcile them.” Evelyn was able to help her clients and examine herself based on what she found in the interactions of her clients.

Francis examined herself before working with the group. Francis experience in taking responsibility for her part in interactions was to examine how she presented herself to the group. She said:

...I know that I can’t facilitate a group effectively if I am having opinions and anger; that is not at all how you are supposed to facilitate; I basically got my act together. [Because of] the preparation I really went into it [the meeting] hopeful, and had I not balanced and prepared the room, I don’t think it would have happened. I really think that the room being harmonized ahead of time impacted me, [so that] when I walked in the room ... my

frame of mind was better.

Becoming “real-self” during facilitation. The final essential theme was that participants felt their use of subtle energies helped them become their “real-self” and, in turn, that allowed them to be better facilitators. For participants, finding their “real-self” was related to the conscious actions that addressed challenges or barriers that prevented participants from being authentic people. The philosopher Kierkegaard (as cited in Rogers, 1961, p.166) described this aspiration as “to be that self which one truly is.” When participants discovered a deeper understanding for who they were, it resulted in fulfillment and joy in their personal lives, and that in turn brought positive effects in their facilitation. The participants’ discovery of their real-selves occurred in different ways; however, their use of subtle energies was the mechanism that allowed the real-self to be discovered.

Allison began to feel like a different person. Allison’s use of subtle energies in her own life helped her address barriers to her wholeness. She said:

...personal skills [preparing myself energetically] helps the group because I show up as a different person. My self-examination [prep work] impacts the group because it impacts their perception of me. Professionally, I feel more capable and more confident because I understand the theory and I can implement them [theories] and have better outcomes.

Overall – I am a happier and healthier person; energetics helps me experience joy; energetics helps me experience happiness that affects everything. If you come to work a happy person, it helps everyone. If you are happy and well adjusted, you are a better employee, spouse, a happier person.

Barbara became authentic in her facilitation. When Barbara used subtle energies she found she could be authentic and who she really was. She explained,

Sending love energy to the speaking engagement helps me be less scared because I comfort myself; it is like I love myself when I am walking in the door. [Barbara feels like] It's like this is exactly where you should be, yah, it's emotional. It is good. We have even had such powerful sessions where people stand and do a standing ovation, and I used to be so embarrassed and shut it down. Now I totally take it all in, and sometimes it is so overwhelming that I do cry, but not as much because it is me; like I gave out love, and now you are giving love back and I got it; it's all good, and that is for sure energetic work.

Charli's creativity flourished in her facilitation. Charli healed obstacles that previously held her back—her fears and her lack of confidence. Her use of subtle energies allowed her to overcome the barriers and engage her authentic self. In the following story Charli was at her best when she was able to let her creativity lead in the interaction, and then she felt engaged, “in her space.” She said: “What I found is that it [the energetic exercise] took the personal stuff out of it and we [Charli and the other colleague] worked really well together. There is a groove, it's a flow; it is all happening here [hand on heart]. That's a big thing for me, and I am not getting caught up here [pointing to head].”

Diane let go of appearances and became a better listener. Diane's career had been focused on helping educators and organizations by giving advice and “fixing” problems. She said, “In the past I had the answers.” Since her training and use of subtle energies in her facilitation, Diane changed her approach to helping her clients, she explained:

Energetics is life changing for me, and it is life changing in the way I do my work; I know it is. It has changed the way I do my work, and I am better in it. And when I say better, people are getting a better deal from me. I hear differently, I have different types

of questions now, they [my questions] are much more curious. In the past I had the answers, [and now] I am much more “tell me more about that,” “what do you think that needs to be?”

Evelyn felt part of a larger universe. Evelyn’s journey of wholeness is very different than the other participants. She did not view her use of subtle energies as a personal acquisition, but rather that she was part of bigger universe with individual connections that make up the whole. When Evelyn helped people through facilitation or coaching achieve their full potential, as in the story of the woman who sought out Evelyn’s help to find a job, she ...”feels like I am using what God has put me on the earth to do. We are all energetic beings, and the beauty of your world, and the beauty of understanding this is that we are instruments of something larger than ourselves.”

Francis found hope by using other parts of her herself. Francis was able to use subtle energies as a pathway for conflict resolution in her facilitation. When a resolution was not probable through traditional negotiations, she found she could provide an additional level of assistance when she used subtle energies. She said, “I was really pleased that the environment was right for them to be able to come to some kind of agreement. It is gratifying to know that this is a way I can help groups.”

Summary of essential themes. All participants had significant impacts in their lives and facilitation of groups that they could directly relate to their use with subtle energies. The areas of impact fell into the categories of:

1. Overcoming fears that prevented full engagement with the client in facilitation;
2. Sharing responsibility for interactions, outcomes and relationships; and
3. Becoming “real-self” during facilitation.

Each participant had varied stories that exemplified these impacts and how they were manifested in their lives.

Summary of Findings

My findings fell into two areas, incidental and essential themes. Incidental themes (Van Manen, 2003), are those that flowed across participant stories and could also be found in conjunction with other phenomena besides subtle energies. They were:

1. Improving the environment for the client group;
2. Preparing self before their facilitation; and
3. Dealing with distractions and uncertainties.

The findings of essential themes were those themes that could not have occurred outside the phenomena of subtle energy (Van Manen, 2003). Three major themes emerged across participant stories. They were:

1. Overcoming fears that prevented full engagement with the client in facilitation;
2. Sharing responsibility for interactions, outcomes and relationships; and
3. Becoming “real-self” during facilitation

These themes provided an understanding of the meaning of the phenomena for practitioners who deliberately and consciously used subtle energies in group facilitation. In the next chapter, I will discuss these findings and their implications for practice.

Chapter V: Discussion

In this chapter I discuss my findings pertaining to practitioners who deliberately and consciously use subtle energies in group facilitation. The study findings are grouped in two categories: incidental and essential themes as defined by Van Manen (2003). Incidental themes are not dependent on the phenomena of subtle energies and may be related to other phenomena or contexts. Essential themes are those that are dependent on the phenomenon of using subtle energies in facilitation and, without which, the phenomenon would not be the same. The essential themes uncover the meaning that facilitators attach to their experiences of deliberately and consciously using subtle energies in their facilitation. For that reason, this discussion will focus on the essential themes. I will then discuss the limitations of this study, suggestions for further research, and implications for practice.

Discussion of Essential Themes

Overcoming fears that prevented full engagement with the client. The facilitators' fear of being viewed as less than competent was a barrier that caused the practitioners to hold themselves back from full engagement with a client. The fear of being rejected or being perceived in an undesirable way existed at the unconscious level among the study participants. When participants learned about subtle energies and deliberately began using them in their work, they were able to address such fears and overcome their challenges in facilitation. Using subtle energies became a process that brought participants' fears from the unconscious to a conscious level and helped facilitators overcome them. By addressing their own fears, the practitioners were able to more fully engage with the client, tending to the client's needs rather than being driven by their own fears.

In different disciplines much has been written about fears that prevent people from fully engaging in work. A large body of information exists in the psychological literature that

addresses fears as disorders or in the context of psychological interventions. For example, Social Anxiety manifests as Fear of Negative Evaluation (Watson & Friend, 1969) or Negative Self-Imagery (Ng, Abbott & Hunt, 2014). While this perspective is enlightening, it is outside the scope of this study. Here I will primarily address fears and the use of subtle energies in facilitation from the perspective of organization development.

External locus of control. One factor in the literature that relates to overcoming fear in facilitation is the construct of Locus of Control. People with a high internal locus of control believe they control their own experiences or outcomes, whereas those with a high external locus of control believe their outcomes are influenced more by others or chance (Rotter, 1990). Muroff, Ross, Williams, Neighbors, and Jackson's (2014, p. 157) study on race, gender, and conceptualizations of fear found that the primary reason of why white women believed situations or objects were fearful was related to having an external locus of control. These fears "involved a loss or lack of control, unpredictability, fate, or lack of clarity for that which is unknown" (p. 157). The Muroff et al. (2014) study is applicable because five of six participants in my study were white women. Further, skilled facilitators presumably work with groups from a fairly neutral perspective (Swartz, 2002), and it is common for decisions and outcomes to emerge in the facilitation that are unknown and unpredictable, especially at the beginning of a consulting contract.

Double loop learning. Argyris' (1993) concept of double loop learning also helps explain the theme of overcoming fear. Participants acknowledged that they had previously tried ways to address their fears through training, organizing, being educated, and being professional. However, those approaches did not alleviate their fears of being perceived as "less than" competent. The approaches amounted to examples of single loop learning. That is, they believed

that additional training or education would help them overcome their fears. It was not until the practitioners addressed their emotions through energetic courses that they learned they were responding from a fearful state and could change their response. In doing so, they questioned the governing program that had suggested the solution was in more training. When they addressed their emotions, they were in effect rejecting the single loop solutions and were working in the double loop.

Discussing the root cause of the fears that held back participants from fully connecting with clients is outside the scope of this study, however the fear response can be better understood by using Argyris' (2000) Theories in Use framework. When participants hid their fears and tried to present themselves in an idealized, professional way, they were illustrating what Argyris would describe as an example of an espoused theory. However, their theory in use was that they were operating based on fear. It was the participants' deliberate and conscious use of subtle energies that allowed them to see the inconsistency in the espoused versus theories in use. This new understanding helped participants to abandon their fear responses and engage more fully with the clients. Energetics was the venue for the double loop learning by challenging the governing theories in use. As a result, participants were better able to engage the client groups.

Emotional intelligence. Studies on the importance of Emotional Intelligence (EI) are prevalent in the leadership and management literature (McKee & Johnson, 2014). Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso (2004) have defined emotional intelligence as:

The capacity to reason about emotions, and of emotions to enhance thinking. It includes the abilities to accurately perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth. (p. 197)

Emotional intelligence acknowledges that emotions are part of human experience and, therefore, pertinent to any form of human interaction (McKee & Johnston, 2014; Stokes, 2009).

Competency in EI can be best understood in terms of a continuum model bounded on one end by individual emotional awareness and on the other by social awareness. The presumed ideal spot on the continuum is a balance between the extremes. Various authors (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009; McKee & Johnston, 2014) have offered EI assessments, tools, and exercises designed to help people find a balanced place on the continuum and, in doing so, improving their relationships and interactions with others. EI theory is another framework that can be used to give meaning to the theme of overcoming fear that prevented full engagement with clients. Using this framework, it is easy to see that participants used subtle energies to attain an emotionally balanced state for themselves and in their interactions with clients. Training in subtle energies focuses on increasing self-awareness in all parts of a person's being including emotions and the energy exchanges that affect social interactions. Prior to use of subtle energies, participants' emotional self-awareness was lower and they allowed fear of negative perceptions to affect their interactions with the client. After learning how to control their emotions through the use of subtle energies, they were able to improve the level of engagement with the client.

In sum, being conscious of the internal processes going on in one's own mind and how those processes affect one's responses with the client, is one of the essential skills of the facilitator (Schein, 1999). Deliberate and conscious use of subtle energies brought to light the barrier of fear and also the pathway to healing it. In turn, that knowledge allowed deeper engagement in facilitation with the client.

Sharing responsibility for interactions, outcomes and relationships. A typical facilitation experience involves helping the client process both the content of its issues, as well as

the interactions of the group members (Benne & Sheats, 2007). Facilitators are part of the group, but they have a different role than other members. This theme represents recognition that facilitators affect the functioning of the group, they have impact, and “everything they do is an intervention” (Schein, 2009, p.18) and can help or hinder the group depending on how they manage relationships in the group (Keeney, 1983; Nevis, 2005). Energetic principles teach that humans are all part of an interconnected universe and what they see in the environment is also part of them. In fact, energetics can be used as the lens through which people may see and perceive the world (Heorhiadi, 2012; Wheatley, 1994; Zukav, 1990). Changing how people see the environment will – in fact – change the environment (Heorhiadi, 2012). Having this interconnected energetic perspective is why participants believed they shared the responsibility for the interactions, outcomes, and relationships.

Self as instrument. The concept of self as instrument or “Use of self,” is a well-known tenet of organization development (Beckhard, 1977; Rainey & Jones, 2014). As I highlighted in chapter 1, the facilitator’s main tool is “self.” Use of self is the intentional use of one’s being when providing a structured process, providing timely prompts and questions, and having an awareness of how group members are processing information (Block, 2011; Heorhiadi & Conbere, 2008; Seashore, 2004; Tannenbaum, 2005). The “Self as Instrument” concept is congruent with the theme of shared responsibility for the interactions, outcomes, and relationships. However, through the application of subtle energies, the “Self” is viewed to include all parts of a person, including the capacity to use and read energy fields that are known to the trained practitioner. Practitioners who have a holistic approach to working with clients must care for themselves in the same way they care for the clients.

Helping relationship. The literature has long established that building relationships is essential to creating trust with clients and a willingness to openly discuss the problems they are trying to solve (Lippitt & Lippitt, 1986; Rogers, 1961). Facilitators need to see themselves as part of those relationships in order to help the client (Schein, 1999). Rogers' (as cited in Rainey & Jones, 2014), described "helping" as where the client and facilitator build a relationship, maintain mutual interaction, and develop an appreciation for each other. When participants in this study learned that they were interconnected to clients through subtle energies, they also realized they had part of the responsibility for affecting the relationship. Wheatley (2002) and Zukav (1989) have made similar assertions. Participants accepted their part in the relationships with their clients, and sometimes engaged in energetic activities to help the client. These activities included harmonizing the room, realizing the energetic connection was unhealthy and working to mend it, or used their own energy in the group to positively affect the relationships and the outcomes.

Systems thinking. Having a systems perspective is understanding that the whole is made up of the parts and that the parts are interacting, affecting each other and the overall system (Bido-Padva & Nkum, 2014; Heroiadi, 2012; Wheatley, 1992; Wheatley, 2002; Zukav, 1989). Facilitators are a part of the system and, by being present they affect the whole group. Bido-Padva and Nkum (2014) have written that awareness of how one's interaction affects the group is essential to a facilitator helping that group. Jones (2014) has asserted that systems have multiple levels including "individuals, groups and the organization separately and as a whole... a change at one level of a system can affect either negatively or positively all other levels" (p. 235). Thus, systems thinking supports the second theme in my study because the participants realized their interactions with individuals as being part of the system, and thus their role in

overall outcomes. Participants in this study became aware of their interconnectedness through subtle energies and made changes in their thinking and behaviors that affected the whole.

Becoming “real-self” during facilitation. Horney (as cited in Rainey and Jones, 2014) asserted that “The real-self” is the central inner force, common to all human beings and yet unique to each, which is the deep source of growth” (p. 113). When people come to know their real-self, then they can achieve their potential. Kets De Vries (1993) acknowledged this struggle to find the real-self in what he described as “feeling imposturous,” a sense that leaders can have when they are not expressing themselves authentically. Closely related to this view is Goffman’s (1959) assertion that the struggle to understand and express one’s real-self can be understood as different roles people play in order to meet the needs of the audience with which they interact. Participants in this study had the experience of playing roles off and on “stage” (Goffman, 1959), and the dissonance of that experience was problematic. In my study, it was clear that participants desired and found rewards in expressing their real, authentic selves after obtaining self-awareness through gaining knowledge of/and experiential learning with subtle energies.

Authenticity. The “real-self” theme, a desire to become and live authentically by the study participants, was the goal realized through subtle energies. Similarly, a study on root level changes through mindful or spiritual practices by Vlastic (2013) supports the “real-self” theme because it too identified the use of consciousness and intention. Vlastic’s study found that people were able to make radical self-directed changes through mind-body-spirit practices. The radical change was defined as “shifts in thinking, feeling and behaving” (p. 114). The mind-body-spirit practices helped people change who they were, and that changed how they saw themselves as well as others. In my study, participants’ use of subtle energies gave them what Rogers (1961) called “freedom to explore oneself at both conscious and unconscious levels” (p.34) and how

they interact in their environment. Other authors (Boelhower, 2013; Palmer, 2004; Rogers, 1961)), have written about findings that are similar to what participants in my study learned about how the flow of subtle energy can be blocked in human systems through patterned cover-ups (e.g., behaving with a façade instead of the way they were truly feeling; or processing information in unhealthy ways). Once my participants addressed those areas through subtle energy practices, they were able to be “that self which one truly is” (Kierkegaard as cited in Rogers, 1961, p.181). That way of being spilled over into all areas of their life in a general way, relationships with others, and specifically in facilitation with groups.

Wholeness. Related to “real-self” is the concept of “wholeness,” described in the literature in different ways, but also with similarities (Boelhower, 2013; Palmer, 2004; Rainey & Jones, 2014; Sanford, 1977; Zukov, 1990; Bushe & Marshak, 2009). One narrative is that the whole self is a presentation of all components of a person (Bushe & Marshak, 2009; Rainey & Jones, 2014). A second narrative is that wholeness is bringing together in unity and balance all aspects of the person (Boelhower, 2013; Palmer, 2004; Sanford, 1977; Zukov, 1990). Finally, the theme of becoming real-self during facilitation can be understood as the “organic unity and balance of all the forces within a person” (Sanford, 1977, p.15). The alignment of these somewhat different meanings underscores the importance for participants to bring together and purposefully balance the parts of themselves that were previously separated and used in isolation. Prior to energetic training and experiential use, participants dominantly used their mental and physical forms when interacting with others. Their emotional form was hidden, operated unconsciously, or was used defensively. Their energetic form was unknown and therefore unused. Energetics taught participants that human beings are whole beings, and energetics helped them to view themselves as whole beings with interconnected parts (Heorhiadi, 2012, Wheatley,

2002, Zukov, 1990). As whole beings through the use of subtle energies, the participants reached a balanced state and could be more effective. Having a sense of wholeness in life and interactions was profoundly fulfilling for participants in my study. The use of subtle energies that brought about wholeness was metaphorically described by one participant as “running on all cylinders.”

Limitations

In this study all of my participants were women, of whom five of six have Caucasian race. These two demographic factors (gender and dominant race) may have influenced how participants perceived their experience of using subtle energy. In addition, participants in this study were all from the Midwestern United States, which may have shaped their perception of their experience to fit a cultural lens of the Midwest.

Another limitation of this study was that all participants were trained in energetics from the same Institute and thus might have the same or similar understandings of subtle energies and how to use them. Further, all participants had advanced graduate degrees, had a high level of self-awareness, which in turn might create a certain way of how they perceived the environment, self, and their experience. Similarly, all of the participants were skilled facilitators which also may influence their perspectives of working the client and the environment. For example, a skilled facilitator may have established patterns for dealing with certain client situations that a less experienced facilitator would not.

Another factor that may be a limitation is the age of the participants. All of the participants were very mature and well along in their life stage development. Their view of the situations they discussed may have reflected the stages of their development, and perhaps

energetics was just part of those perspectives. Levinson (1978), Schein (1978) and others have explained how career stage affects a person's experience of the immediate situations.

Finally, the participants were all experienced energetics practitioners, they attended energetics practice meeting on a regular basis and maintained their subtle energies skills. Therefore their awareness of energy fields and appropriate subtle energy interventions may have influenced their perceptions as well as the responses to the questions I asked them. Likely, people with less or more recent training in Energetics, might have somewhat different perspectives and thus a different experience of using subtle energies.

Suggestions for Future Research

This study sought to find the meaning of the shared experience of deliberate and conscious use of subtle energies in group facilitation. According to social constructionism ontology, a common meaning is created by people, who are a part of a certain social group or a certain phenomenon. My suggestions are as follows.

One suggestion for future research could be surveying facilitators from broader geographic and demographic categories. In particular, it would be valuable to conduct similar research with male participants who have a comparable understanding of subtle energies to determine their experience. I am curious how similar or different their experience would be comparatively to the experience of women.

A second suggestion would be to conduct research with younger professionals who are in the early stages of their career development. Generally, they would be less experienced facilitators and may provide a perspective that did not emerge from the current study.

Another suggestion would be to conduct research with practitioners who have different perspectives about subtle energies. For instance, those with knowledge of holistic medicine,

quantum physics, or Gestalt counseling might provide new insights into subtle energies based on their specific training and education.

Implications for Practice

This study examined the experience of practitioners who deliberately and consciously used subtle energies in group facilitation and may have implications for the following areas of practice.

Facilitation. Facilitators who work with groups in the areas of organization development might benefit from this study. The study provides insights into the facilitator's role. It is important to recognize that awareness and emotional state of the facilitator impact the facilitator-client interaction, and thus the effectiveness of the facilitation process. The literature has supported the concept of facilitator's wholeness through various lenses in the past, but the benefit of using subtle energies during facilitation is one contribution of this study. In light of this study, practitioners should be open to learning about subtle energies to improve their self-awareness so that they can improve their interactions and effectiveness with their clients.

Self as Instrument. This study could be helpful to those who understand and use the concept of Use of Self, which has for years been part of the OD and Gestalt consulting literature. The concept of unity and balance as essential aspects of wholeness adds a dimension about how to use oneself as an instrument. In other words, practitioners must first holistically care for themselves before they will be able to effectively use a holistic approach with client groups. When practitioners are balanced and whole, they become a refined, sensitive instrument, and as result, they are able to better understand and respond to their clients at the physical, mental, and emotional levels.

Preparing holistic practitioners. This study would be of interest to teachers, educators, and trainers who work in programs that prepare holistic practitioners or those who use mindful techniques for working with groups. Such programs could be focused on OD practitioners, educators, mentors, counselors, coaches, physicians, nurses, and others who attempt to help clients in all aspects of their being. The type of coursework that occurs in such programs needs to go beyond teaching technical training. It must address the whole person, including the mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual aspects of the person. Studying energetics could be a valuable means for people to become better holistic practitioners.

Personal Bias

As the researcher, I was faced with addressing my own biases because I am a member of the Energetic Institute, and was trained in subtle energies by the same instructor as were my participants. I could relate to the participants' stories and had to take extra precautions to not read into what they were saying or make assumptions about their meanings. I did this by memoing my personal thoughts in the margins of my notes and work papers and by transcribing raw data very quickly after initial interviews.

An interesting aspect of this study was that I had not met most of the participants until immediately before the study. This caused me to listen intently to their stories and not ignore anything they said. It was an unplanned benefit to the study in which any of my potential biases were somewhat reduced.

Another factor that helped me become aware of my bias and not let it undermine the rigor of my research is that the practice and application of subtle energies is different for each person. Manifestations of the work of subtle energies depend on the interconnectedness that each person has with the other person or situation (Heorhiadi, 2012). I could relate to the general concepts of

what my participants did, but the kernels of meaning they expressed were all slightly different, as can be seen in their individual stories.

One aspect of the research where I needed to consciously bracket my bias was during the analysis of themes, where I uncovered essential themes across the participant stories. Because I had similar experiences to those of some participants, I had a tendency to ask myself, what does this mean to me? I found that dynamic difficult to overcome, so I discussed this challenge with my dissertation chair. Based on that discussion, we generated the appropriate conscious question: “How were the participants changed because of their experience?” This question led me to focus my attention on the meaning of the experience for the participants and on how they changed versus what I thought the theme meant from my perspective.

Finally, I found that studying all of the details of each person’s story created an impetus to make all elements of the stories fit into the themes, versus focusing on the overarching experience of participants. I recognized this as a bias and challenged it by asking: “What was the experience like for participants?” In the end, I was able to look deeper into the experiences of participants, versus the words they were using. As a result, participants were able to relive their experiences, and that allowed me to capture its essence.

Conclusion and Final Thoughts

This study examined the lived experience of professionals who deliberately and consciously use subtle energies in group facilitation. Through this study, three themes emerged that showed the meaning of this phenomena: (a) Overcoming fears that prevented full engagement with the client, (b) Sharing responsibility for interactions, outcomes and relationships, and (c) Becoming “real-self” during facilitation. Through these themes, I was able

to uncover the meanings of the participants' lived experiences and their importance to the practice of facilitation and the use of subtle energies.

My interest in this study came from the coursework that was offered through my doctoral program, and this coursework was one of the most transformational experiences of the program. I had some ideas about why I used subtle energies in my life as well as in my own facilitation, however, these were intuitive explanations. It was not until I uncovered the meaning of the deliberate and conscious use of subtle energies in the experiences of participants in this study that I could examine my experience at the deepest level. Beside my personal gains from this study, I hope I have nurtured interest in combining subtle energies and facilitation for other researchers to further expand the body of knowledge in the field of subtle energies and energetics.

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Appendix A

Email Recruitment Letter to Energetic Institute Graduates

Dear Energetics Institute Graduate,

My name is Antoinette (Toni) Pearson, and I am a doctoral student at the University of St. Thomas. Research for my dissertation has begun, and I would like to invite you to participate in my study, entitled *The Experience of Practitioners Who Deliberately and Consciously Use Subtle Energies in Group Facilitation: A Phenomenological Study*

This study will explore the experience of those who have knowledge of energetics and use it while facilitating groups.

If you agree to be a participant in this study, you will be asked to participate in a 60-90 minute interview. Participation in the study is completely voluntary. There are no financial benefits. I would sincerely appreciate your consideration to participate.

The identity of all participants will be kept confidential; information that is collected as a part of the study will be confidential and will be used in a manner that protects your privacy and identity. In my dissertation and in any follow-up reports that I publish, I will not include information that will make it possible to identify you in any way.

If you have knowledge in energetics and deliberately and consciously use it while facilitating groups, please consider participating in this study. The next step is to contact me at tonihartlpearsonconsulting@gmail.com. If you elect to participate in an interview, we will talk further by email or telephone about consent forms and setting up convenient times to meet (in-person, by phone, or Skype).

Thank you for considering this request.

Regards,

Toni Pearson
Doctoral Candidate
University of St. Thomas
tonihartlpearsonconsulting@gmail.com
Tel: (218) 390-6993

Appendix B
INFORMED CONSENT FORM
UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS

THE EXPERIENCE OF PRACTITIONERS WHO DELIBERATELY AND CONSCIOUSLY
USE SUBTLE ENERGIES IN GROUP FACILITATION: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

[IRB# 778718-1]

Dear Participant: I am conducting a study about the experience of those who have knowledge of energetics and consciously and deliberately use it while facilitating groups. I invite you to participate in this research. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a graduate of the Energetics Institute in good standing and you use energetics in facilitation with groups. Your participation is completely voluntary. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by Antoinette (Toni) Pearson, Doctoral Candidate of Organization Development, at the University of St. Thomas. My research advisor is Dr. John Conbere, Professor in the College of Applied Professional Studies, University of St. Thomas

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to explore the experience of those who have knowledge of energetics and use it while facilitating groups. The overall research question I seek to study is, "What is the experience of people who consciously and deliberately utilize the skills and knowledge of subtle energies as part of their facilitation work?" This study will focus on finding meaning that emerges from the experience of facilitators who consciously and deliberately utilize subtle energies when working with groups. The primary data collection method will be interviews.

This study is important because it may help to deepen the understanding of how the use of subtle energies and organization development can work together. This new knowledge requires investigating the experience of those facilitators who use both disciplines. My hope is the study will provide greater understanding of how people use the knowledge of subtle energies in their work with groups and organizations.

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things: (a) Participate in an interview of 60-90 minutes. (b) Allow the interview to be audio recorded (c)

Allow the researcher to take written notes during the interview. The participants will choose a location of their convenience for the interviews.

Risks of Participating in the Study: The study has no risks to the knowledge of the researcher. Information will be gathered about participant's perspectives regarding energetics and how they use it in group facilitation. Answers will be kept confidential and participants will be given a pseudonym to protect their identity. All data will be kept confidential and secure in locked file cabinets or a password protected data file

Benefits of Participating in the Study: This study provides no direct benefit to the participants.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept confidential. In any sort of report I publish, I will not include information that will make it possible to identify you in any way. The types of records I will create include audiotapes, consent forms and interview notes. They will be kept in a locked file cabinet in my home and I will be the only one to access them. Audio recordings, consent forms and notes will be erased and/or destroyed after 3 years, as per federal regulation. Destruction of all records will take place on April 20, 2019.

Compensation: There is no financial compensation for participating in this study.

Freedom to Withdraw: Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University of St. Thomas. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time up to and until the completion of the dissertation. Should you decide to withdraw data collected about you, your data will be deleted from the study. You are also free to skip any questions I may during the interview.

Opportunity to Ask Questions: If you have knowledge in energetics and consciously and deliberately use it while facilitating groups, please consider participating in this study. The next step is to contact me at tonihartlpearsonconsulting@gmail.com. If you elect to participate in an interview, we will talk further by email or telephone about consent forms and setting up convenient times and locations to meet (in-person, by phone, or Skype).

My name is Antoinette (Toni) Pearson. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact me at (218) 390-6993, or Dr. John Conbere at (651) 962-4456. You may also contact the University of St. Thomas Institutional Review Board at (651) 962-6035 with any questions or concerns.

Consent: If you wish to participate in this study, you will be interviewed. You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. Your signature certifies that you have decided to participate having read and understood the information presented. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

Signature of Participant

Date

I hereby give consent to audio record my interview.

Signature of Participant

Date

In my judgment I am voluntary and knowingly giving informed consent and possess the legal capacity to give informed consent to participate in this research study.

Signature of Participant

Date