

# International Summer Institute 2015

An Experiential Learning Community in Postmodern / Social Construction  
Collaborative - Dialogue across Cultures,  
Contexts & Disciplines

## What Others Have Said

*"Best training event I've ever attended! . . . truly a collaborative and dialogical experience."*

*"Harlene and her colleagues walk their talk."*

*"What an inspiring and respectful learning environment."*

*"I learned more in this week than in any graduate course or other program that I have ever attended."*

*"I am so surprised about how much I grew personally from this experience."*

*"Again I have to give credit to Harlene for the way she structured this learning experience. I expected to learn from her, but could not have imagined I would have seven additional teachers as well." Texas, USA*

*"The feedback experience that you all gave me in the supervisor's course..getting all of those possible perspectives and ideas were wonderful and I want to thank you for the opportunity again..what a valuable experience for professors! Some shifting within and consequently outside of me occurred!" Texas, USA*

*"I am not sure if you remember me. I consulted you during your seminar in Prague in September this year the consultation was a public presentation of your work we were addressing the issue of relationship with prison guards. To start with, I would like to thank you again for the conversation I was feeling really good and free even if the context could have been quite stressful (people around). Also the „problem“ has stopped to appear as a problem since our conversation even if I have not made any radical changes in my behavior. I am able to see my relationships with prison guards from many different positions now and the problem has somehow lost." Czech Republic*

*". . . work is moving our field in more life affirming directions . . . your work is quite inspirational" California USA*

(continued on next page)

## **COLLABORATIVE THERAPY**

Stephanie Head  
University of Kentucky, Louisville, Kentucky  
Student Representative, Kentucky Association for Marriage and Family Therapy

It is becoming more and more clear to me. Who I am is as critical in being an effective marriage and family therapist as the skills I acquire. I have recently returned from a week-long intensive International Summer Institute with Harlene Anderson in Cuernavaca, Mexico. Her model is called Collaborative Therapy and is a postmodern approach to family therapy. As the workshop progressed, I began to realize that this humanistic approach will not only help me as a marriage and family therapist and social worker but also as a person in my daily living. Collaborative Therapy teaches one to attend to daily interactions as well as how to practice marriage and family therapy.

Postmodernism is skeptical of theories that speak in grand generalities and that universalize their conclusions. Translated into clinical practice this means that the therapist works to avoid dogmatic posturing about the "Truth" of the client's situation. The therapist attends to the experience of clients while encouraging and facilitating a conversation that generates ideas that doesn't necessarily result in consensus. Rather than attempting to build consensus around some grand statement of the "Truth," the therapist adopts a deliberate "not-knowing" approach to therapy. Alternative perspectives are encouraged and arise in the spontaneity of the therapeutic conversation. This is unlike many traditional therapies whereby the therapist attempts to steer the conversation toward some predestined insight, goal or therapist-preferred discourse.

Harlene Anderson and her associates modeled the postmodern Collaborative Therapy approach with workshop participants. They did this in a variety of ways and contexts including live consultations, clinical stories, small conversational groups, experiential exercises, readings, and cultural events (even visiting an Internationally known artist in his home). The totality of the experience had a profound effect on me. I felt free to move beyond my usual comfort zone. This was invited by not only the manner in which they interacted with us but by their making themselves available to us during "free" time such as dinner. Although I am only a student, I felt honored by Harlene and her associates and imagine that clients would experience the same inspiration of being attended to by their therapist if she/he practiced Collaborative Therapy."