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Meaningful Coincidence in Art Therapy: An Exploration of Art Therapists'
Perceptions of Synchronicity in Their Clinical Practice

Helena Vassiliou

A Research Paper

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Abstract

Meaningful Coincidence in Art Therapy: An Exploration of Art Therapists' Perceptions of Synchronicity in Their Clinical Practice

Helena Vassiliou

This qualitative study is a preliminary inquiry on the occurrence and nature of synchronicity, also called meaningful coincidence, in the context of art therapy. I conducted three phenomenological interviews with three art therapists, exploring their clinical experiences with synchronicity, and how they felt it impacted their practice. These interviews revealed participants' views on synchronicity in their lives and work, as well as how it has impacted their clients' therapeutic process, their role as therapists, and their therapeutic relationships. They also provided their thoughts on certain caveats to keep in mind when confronted with synchronistic phenomena and touched on how they saw synchronistic manifestations in the context of art therapy as distinct from those in talk psychotherapy. Findings are limited to their exploratory and descriptive value and are not generalizable to populations outside the context of the study. However, they may stimulate further inquiry, or generate new understandings that can affect future clinical approaches and attitudes. Findings suggest that there are occurrences in art therapy that are sometimes perceived as indistinguishable from meaningful coincidences. This study has the potential to shed light on the extraordinariness of art therapy practice, perhaps placing the uncanny connections that occur therein alongside synchronicities on a spectrum of coincidences.

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Finally and most importantly, I am deeply grateful to the three women who accepted to participate in this study. Their sharing of time, invaluable knowledge, insight, and experience contributed to my understandings not only of synchronicity, but also about professional integrity and dedication in the practice of art therapy.

Dedication

This work is dedicated in memory of my father, Andronicus Vassiliou (1939-2008), whose fascination with everyday miracles taught me the great value in taking nothing for granted.

Table of Contents

	Page
Chapter 1: Introduction and Statement of Purpose.....	1
Research Questions.....	2
Operational Definitions.....	2
Synchronicity.....	2
The Context of Art Therapy.....	3
Consistency of Terminology.....	3
Observed Reactions.....	3
Overview of the layout of this paper.....	3
Chapter 2: Coincidence and Synchronicity.....	5
Coincidence.....	5
Synchronicity.....	8
History and Definition.....	8
Synchronicity in Clinical Practice.....	10
Synchronicity and the Therapeutic Relationship:	
Transference and Countertransference.....	12
Caveats.....	15
Chapter 3: Framework of the Project.....	18
Methodology.....	18
Participants.....	19
Data Collection and Analysis.....	20
Reflexivity and Assumptions.....	22
Limitations.....	23
Chapter 4: Findings.....	25
Interview 1: Simone.....	25
Clinical Examples.....	25
Observed Reactions.....	27
Therapist's Role.....	28
Implications for Art Therapy.....	28
Caveats.....	29

Interview 2: Evalyn.....	29
Clinical Examples.....	30
Observed Reactions.....	32
Therapist’s Role.....	33
Implications for Art Therapy.....	33
Caveats.....	35
Interview 3: Wendy.....	36
Clinical Examples.....	36
Observed Reactions.....	38
Therapist’s Role.....	38
Implications for Art Therapy.....	39
Caveats.....	39
Chapter 5: Discussion.....	41
Emergent Themes.....	41
Connection.....	41
Discovery and Being Moved.....	42
Intensity.....	43
Acausality.....	44
Creative Process: Implications for Art Therapy Practice.....	46
Caveats.....	47
Conclusion.....	48
Recommendations for Future Research.....	48
Summary and Concluding Thoughts.....	49
References.....	51
Appendices.....	56
Appendix A: Interview Questions.....	57
Appendix B: Call for Participants.....	58
Appendix C: Consent Form.....	59
Appendix D: Axial Codes: Themes – Interview 1.....	61
Appendix E: Axial Codes: Themes – Interview 2.....	63
Appendix F: Axial Codes: Themes – Interview 3.....	66

Meaningful Coincidence in Art Therapy: An Exploration of Art Therapists' Perceptions
of Synchronicity in Their Clinical Practice

Chapter 1: Introduction and Statement of Purpose

Understanding people's process of meaning making is of increasing interest to mental healthcare practitioners since it may help to elucidate how people approach and deal with life changes and unpredictable circumstances. The literature on meaning making seems mainly concerned with the context of coping with trauma and loss (Davis, & McKearney, 2003; Davis, Nolen-Hoeksema, & Larson, 1998; Davis, Wohl, & Verberg, 2007; Holland, Currier, & Neimeyer, 2006; Davis, Wortman, Lehman, & Silver, 2000; Janoff-Bulman, 2004; Neimeyer, Herrero, & Botella, 2006; Neimeyer, 2000) presumably because of the impact that these tragedies have on people's models of meaning. During a difficult period of loss in my own life, I experienced an extraordinary coincidence that was foundational in rebuilding my shattered world at the time. However, as I reviewed the literature on meaning making, I was surprised to find that this type of experience was under-represented. The aspects of meaning that are primarily discussed in relation to grief, bereavement, and coping are "sense making" and "benefit finding" (Davis et al., 1998, pp. 561-562), or "meaning as comprehensibility" versus "meaning as significance" (Janoff-Bulman, 2004, p. 33).

My inquiry led me to an entirely different avenue of literature that described experiences with meaning in the midst of life changes that felt more akin to what I had lived. These experiences fall under Jung's (1952/1973) concept of synchronicity, also known as "meaningful coincidence." Since their meaningfulness is what sets these types of coincidences apart from others, I wondered about their therapeutic potential in the

context of therapy, and as an emerging art therapist I was interested in exploring this potential.

While there is some documentation on synchronicity in clinical practice within the context of psychoanalysis (for a review of this literature see Main, 2007), synchronicity as it relates specifically to art therapy practice has received little attention (see Schaverien, 2005). My curiosity led me to wonder how the manifestation of synchronicity in art therapy might be different from how it has been described in talk psychotherapy.

Research Questions

The project's guiding question was: How have art therapists described their clinical experiences with synchronicity in art therapy? Subsidiary research questions were: (1) How has synchronicity manifested in art therapy? And (2) How has synchronicity been approached and dealt with by art therapists?

Operational Definitions

Synchronicity.

This term is used interchangeably with the phrase *meaningful coincidence*, to denote an acausal, co-occurrence of events, which holds special meaning for the person(s) involved.

I should also mention that the literature on synchronicity is abundant and branches out far and wide into many fields. The literature review that I have included in this paper is by no means exhaustive. I have found that the more tangents one is tempted to follow, the more the definition of synchronicity risks becoming obscure and mercurial. For the purposes of this paper, I will focus mainly on the Jungian and psychoanalytic literature

relevant to psychotherapy practice, with particular emphasis on works by: Aziz (1990), Cambray (2002), Hopcke (1988), Jung (1952/1973), Keutzer (1984b), Marlo and Kline (1998), and von Franz (1980/1978).

The context of art therapy.

This phrase encapsulates the therapeutic: space (i.e. the location, frequency of meetings, duration of treatment, etc.), relationship (i.e. between client and therapist), and process (i.e. verbal or non-verbal working through of themes and issues brought to therapy), as well as the artwork (i.e. any artifact or object) that is spoken about, produced, or handled in session.

Consistency of terminology.

In psychoanalytic literature, the word *analyst* is used to identify an individual facilitating the therapeutic process. Correspondingly this position is referred to in psychotherapy literature as that of a *therapist*. Likewise, the term *analysand* or *patient* is used in psychoanalysis to denote a person seeking therapy, who in psychotherapy is more often referred to as a *client*. Since the basis of my literature review is drawn from psychoanalytic writings, I am obliged to use the psychoanalytic terminology when referring to certain texts, but as I am more familiar with a psychotherapeutic framework, I use psychotherapy terminology throughout the rest of this paper.

Observed reactions.

This phrase is used as a heading throughout chapter 3 to denote participants' observations of reactions, including their own and their clients', to synchronistic events.

Overview of the Layout of this Paper

This paper is divided into five chapters for the reader's convenience. The first

chapter outlines the subject of inquiry, the research questions, and operational definitions. The second chapter begins with an overview of the concept of coincidence as an explanation for life events, which leads into a review of the literature on synchronicity. The subject of synchronicity is broached: (1) beginning with its definition as a concept that emerged from Jung's investigation, (2) as a phenomenon described within the context of talk psychotherapy, (3) with regards to its role and manifestation within the therapeutic relationship through transference and countertransference, and (4) with respect to a number of caveats associated with its occurrence. Chapter 3 provides a description of the project's framework, including: the methodological set-up, participants, data collection and analysis procedures, some of my self-reflexive thoughts, and the project's limitations. Chapter 4 reports a description of the findings from the three interviews that I conducted, which comprise the data of this study. Finally, the fifth chapter outlines the major themes that emerged from the interviews, discusses the findings in relation to these themes and the literature, identifies some of the distinctive aspects of synchronistic instances in art therapy, and concludes with recommendations for further research and some final thoughts.

Chapter 2: Coincidence and Synchronicity

Since synchronicity is alternately referred to as “meaningful coincidence” (Jung 1952/1973), an appreciation of the concept of synchronicity rests, to some degree, on how one views, construes, and integrates coincidences within a given worldview. Following is a brief discussion on how people often turn to coincidence as a useful explanation for otherwise inexplicable or extraordinary life events.

Coincidence

Jung (1952/1973) said that chance “is only called ‘chance’ or ‘coincidence’ because its causality has not yet been discovered.” (p. 7); a coincidence is only anomalous insofar as it deviates from a model that cannot explain the nature of its occurrence. This is the foundation behind Jung’s theory of synchronicity. While contemporary researchers and thinkers acknowledge the important role that acausal explanation plays in people’s lives, particularly in how often it is used in referring to pivotal and meaningful life events (Bandura, 1982; Becker, 1994; Krantz, 1998), it is more often spoken about in terms of “chance,” “coincidence,” and “contingency,” rather than synchronicity. It is sometimes astounding to notice an almost deliberate avoidance of any mention of Jung and his contribution to bringing this phenomenon to light in the social science literature, even when some of his ideas are rehashed with a remarkable resemblance (e.g. Becker). Even so, an important nuance brought up by Becker is the everydayness that chance plays in people’s lives, rather than focusing on “unusual co-occurrences” (p. 187; i.e. synchronicity). He notes how in order for something to take place, there must be a set of contingencies, denoting a chain of occurrences dependent upon one another in a teleological way (i.e. toward the common purpose of making that

thing happen), met with a set of intercontingencies, which refer to how people's individual contingencies are codependent in order for something to happen between them. This is reminiscent of Schopenhauer's statement, as quoted by Jung (1952/1973):

...the selfsame event, although a link in two totally different chains, nevertheless falls into place in both, so that the fate of one individual invariably fits the fate of the other, and each is the hero of his own drama while simultaneously figuring in a drama foreign to him—this is something that surpasses our powers of comprehension, and can only be conceived as possible by virtue of the most wonderful pre-established harmony. (p. 12)

Therefore, it seems that acknowledging coincidences has the potential to make us aware of the purposefulness and connectedness of our lives. Becker reminds us that we use chance to explain all kinds of auspicious life events, like those leading up to our vocation or meeting our life partner, because their very importance to us bids an extraordinary explanation. In this way, attributing such events to chance may express an appreciation for the special value they hold for us. By the same token, recognizing that unfortunate life events are also attributable to chance and acknowledging the randomness of tragedy, death, and disaster can sometimes lead to a deeper appreciation for life (Janoff-Bulman, 1992; 1998; 2004). This marks a shift from seeing life as ordinary, to seeing it as extraordinary, which can have far reaching implications in the way people lead their lives (Janoff-Bulman, 2004).

Researchers, Griffiths and Tenenbaum (2007) wonder how coincidences can be grossly misinterpreted, leading to illogical conclusions; and yet are also at the root of some of the most inspired innovations. After all, it was the serendipitous coincidence of

mold landing in a particular petri dish that led to Fleming's discovery of penicillin (Durant, 2002). On the other hand, As Griffiths and Tenenbaum posit, a major discovery or modification of a theory is only warranted when "a coincidence must be more than just a coincidence." (p. 219).

Griffiths and Tenenbaum (2007) define coincidence as "an event that provides support for an alternative to a currently favored causal theory, but not... enough support to accept that alternative in light of its low prior probability" (p. 180). In their mixed methods series of three studies conducted with the participation of undergraduate students, Griffiths and Tenenbaum derived statistical predictions of coincidence strength, which they compared with participants' reported assessments of coincidences. They found that in general, people reliably discerned the strength of the coincidences presented in the studies. They attributed participants' inaccurate coincidence appraisals to a readiness to accept alternative theories based on an incompatibility of the facts presented with tacit theoretical paradigms.

Based on these findings, Griffiths and Tenenbaum (2007) argue that events deemed coincidental are regarded as such not because of their actual improbability, but because they are perceived as such vis-à-vis the perceiver's current theoretical standpoint. Making this subtle distinction implies that coincidences may have an important role in modifying existing theories and/or generating alternative and potentially pivotal hypotheses. This, they posit, would depend upon how accurately we conceive of the world and on our degree of openness to novel explanations. The idea that a reassessment of our assumptions may be inherent to our experience of coincidences may explain why they are so surprising to us and may also help to explain our curiosity at the

meaningfulness of synchronicity.

Synchronicity

History and definition.

Swiss psychiatrist and psychotherapist, Carl Gustav Jung (1952/1973) coined the term *synchronicity* to describe coincidences too uncanny to dismiss as mere happenstance; he called them “meaningful coincidences.” The word synchronicity is composed of the Greek *syn*, meaning together, and *chronos*, meaning time (Main, 2004), hence in reference to coinciding events. Jung referred to Schopenhauer as the “godfather” (p. 11) to his theory of synchronicity, recognizing that he too sought to derive an explanation for phenomena that defied a positivist causal model. Jung’s awe at the inexplicable nature of his own experiences with these phenomena over the course of his personal and professional life led him to believe that the law of causality was unsuitable for explaining certain kinds of happenings.

Jung (1952/1973) subsequently made use of the term synchronicity in two distinct ways: as an umbrella concept to facilitate referring to meaningful coincidences as set apart from unremarkable coincidences, and as a revolutionary theory, incorporating all acausal phenomena, to compliment the law of causality (Main, 2004). Employing the term in the latter fashion would entail adopting Jung’s entire analytic model (Main), as well as accepting the implications suggested by what he alternately phrased an “acausal connecting principle” (Jung) including the belief in supernatural or paranormal forces. Along these lines, two major trends in the discussion of synchronicity appear in the literature (Bright, 1997): one that examines the nature of its occurrence, oftentimes within a psychoanalytic clinical setting (e.g. Bolen, 1979; Bright; Fordham, 1962/1985; Hopcke,

1988; Keutzer, 1984b; Main, 2007; Reiner, 2006), and one that situates it as a concept, historically and philosophically, often in juxtaposition to other lines of inquiry within the humanities and natural sciences (e.g. Keutzer, 1984a; Main, 1997; Mishlove & Engen, 2007; Vaughan, 1980; Yasuo, 2008). There is a significant overlapping of ideas between these lines of inquiry, so that many of the parenthetical examples cited above do not necessarily belong exclusively to one category or the other, but rather fall somewhere in between.

Synchronicity happens when an image comes into one's awareness, whether physically (e.g. concretely, experientially) or implicitly (e.g. a hunch, impression, dream, etc.), and coincides with a so-called objective event in a meaningful way (Jung, 1952/1973); the experience is therefore a "meaningful paralleling of inner and outer events" (Aziz, 1990, p. 1). While one might be tempted to view oneself as having caused a synchronistic happening, it is the meaningfulness of the co-occurrence of events that connects them to one another rather than their being related through a series of causes and effects (Hopcke, 1988). Furthermore, and especially within the context of therapy, "the locus of meaning—that is, to whom it is meaningful" (Hopcke, p. 59), is the ultimate question.

The example most often cited in the literature is one of Jung's personal encounters with synchronicity during a session. Jung (1952/1973) describes a patient who had been especially unsusceptible to treatment due to her over-rationalistic defenses, so much so that he found himself willing for nothing short of a miracle to liberate her from her psychological resistance. It so happened that in one of their subsequent sessions, while the patient recounted a dream from the night before in which she was given a

golden amulet in the shape of a scarab beetle, a large insect knocked repeatedly at the therapy room window, trying to get inside the room. Jung opened the window, caught the insect in mid-air, and realizing that it was a rose-chafer beetle, known for its iridescent carapace, he offered it to his patient saying, “ ‘Here is your scarab.’ ” (p. 110). This bizarre coincidence marked a breakthrough in the patient’s treatment, opening for her a new outlook, as well as renewing Jung’s sense of competence in being able to facilitate her process. Thus the experience was profoundly meaningful for both patient and analyst.

It is not uncommon for people to react to synchronicity with surprise, leaving an impression that such occurrences are “meant to be” (Durant, 2002, p. 493; Hopcke, p.59), “dreamlike” (Hopcke, p. 59), “awesome, humbling, and moving” (Bolen, 1979, p. 7), “miraculous” (Jung, 1975, p. 494-95) or even “impossible” (Jung, 1952/1973, p. 24). In fact, the emotional arousal elicited by these happenings is thought by some to be the most salient quality about them (Hopcke; Jung). Considering the centrality of emotions to this type of meaning construction, synchronicity seems rich with therapeutic meaning making potential.

Synchronicity in clinical practice.

Jung often observed synchronistic phenomena arising for people who found themselves at a crossroads and at a loss for how to solve a dilemma (von Franz, 1980/1978). Von Franz explains that Jung saw the flow of psychic energy during a synchronistic encounter “from the unconscious toward the ego in order to guide it toward a creative discovery. That is why Jung also called synchronistic events *acts of creation in time*” (p. 198). The guiding effect toward creative solutions that synchronistic encounters can have for people who feel stuck suggests that they may have an accelerating function

with regards to problem solving and self-discovery.

According to Cambray (2002), synchronistic encounters in clinical practice have generally been interpreted in one of two ways. One way has been to exemplify synchronistic events toward substantiating Jung's theory about psychological archetypes. The other has been to focus on it as a reflection of transference and countertransference processes within the therapeutic relationship. Cambray claims that taking the first position is reductionistic in the sense that it risks limiting synchronistic events "to being the vehicles for dismantling impasses and breaking through resistances so that the 'real' business of analysis can proceed." (p. 420). He posits that assuming this stance may result in a lack of consideration for the contextual meaning of the synchronistic happening as well as its potential representation of aspects of the therapeutic relationship. Alternatively, Cambray remarks that the second reading implies that synchronistic events are rooted in "unresolved complexes in the patient and, at times, the analyst" (p. 420), which gives them pathological significance. However, this point is debatable depending on one's understanding of transference and countertransference, which will be discussed later in this paper.

Hopcke (1988) identifies two kinds of synchronistic instances in relation to psychoanalysis: those that occur in session, and those that occur out of session. Synchronistic events that occur out of session may be meaningful: (1) "primarily to the patient," (2) "either to the patient alone... or to both patient and analyst," or (3) "[to] the analyst alone." (p. 60). He organizes clinical presentations of synchronicity according to four possibilities: (1) in-session synchronistic occurrences; (2) when the patient's in-session material synchronistically connects with his/her life outside of session time; (3)

when the patient connects synchronistically to the person of the analyst; and (4) when synchronicity is experienced by the analyst alone. Hopcke is tempted but resists referring to this last point as “countertransference synchronicity” (p. 59) because of how loaded with meaning the term countertransference is. However, as I will discuss below, others have broached transference and countertransference purely from a synchronistic perspective.

Synchronicity and the therapeutic relationship: Transference and countertransference.

It is surprising that the role of synchronicity in the therapeutic relationship has received little attention, considering that some therapists deem synchronistic events as the very indicators that they are attuned to their clients (Marlo & Kline, 1998). As the terms themselves imply, transference and countertransference refer to psychological transfers of unconscious material between client and therapist.

Forerunners of psychoanalysis tended to think of therapists as fully “analysed analyst[s]” (Knox, 2009, p. 6) capable of bracketing off their personalities and unresolved issues in service of being able to adequately analyze the issues and personalities of others. Countertransference was seen “as unanalyzed aspects of the analyst” (p. 6), and as a result, consideration of countertransference as a therapeutic tool was nothing short of taboo. However, many therapists have since come to understand the limits of their neutrality and many even embrace the potential that their subjectivity and all-too-humanity has to offer in their assistance of others who grapple with the same existential conditions (Mansfield & Spiegelman, 1996). Attitudes toward countertransference have shifted, and many therapists, particularly those who work within an object-relations

frame, deliberately interpret these reactions with the aim of acquiring a deeper understanding of the client (Mansfield & Spiegelman). Depending on the perspective one espouses, incorporating transference and countertransference reactions into the therapeutic process may be avoided or promoted.

Jung himself broke with the Freudian model that prescribed sitting outside of the patient's view, and instead opted to sit face-to-face, not only opening himself to the patient physically, but psychically as well (Aziz, 1990). Rather than denying his psychic influence on his patients, which would imply that individuals' psyches are self-contained and impervious to one another, Jung advocated a sort of "analytical bonding" (Aziz, p. 170) wherein a reciprocal intermingling of both conscious and unconscious material, between himself and his patients could take place. Jung said:

"For two personalities to meet is like mixing two different chemical substances: if there is any combination at all, both are transformed. In any effective psychological treatment the doctor is bound to influence the patient; but this influence can only take place if the patient has a reciprocal influence on the doctor." (Jung, 1931/1966, p.71).

In this way, the therapeutic relationship is not confined to the therapeutic hour; both patient and analyst continue to influence one another beyond the bounds of their sessions, and enter into each other's lives (Aziz). Fordham (1985) alludes to his experience of this kind of psychic permeability, in which the intermixture of patient and analyst selves gave him the impression that there was a sort of gestalt third self, composed of the two. He describes his experience, saying: "Something linked all these events into a sequence as if there were a unity in them outside my control. This something is what is meant by the

self. It is as if bits of my internal world were not separate from the outer and other people but both were part of a whole which was not myself only.” (p. 122).

Jung interpreted the occurrence of synchronistic phenomena within the therapeutic relationship as an especially deep unconscious connection between analyst and patient (Aziz). Furthermore, “the closer... the analyst and analysand are related to each other on the unconscious level, that is to say, the more intricately their respective destinies entwine, the more frequent such synchronistic phenomena will be.” (Aziz, p. 172).

Marlo and Kline (1998) consider synchronicity in the therapeutic relationship as a type of relationship in its own right. They have identified three approaches to transference and countertransference that vary among therapists: classical, contemporary, and synchronistic.

As touched upon earlier, the classical view holds that transference and countertransference are emotionally charged reactions or projections of unresolved material; the use of countertransference as a therapeutic tool, in this case, is contraindicated. From the contemporary point of view, transference and countertransference reactions are seen as projections that arise out of “the intersubjective field” (Marlo & Kline, p. 18) created, as Jung posited, within a mutually influential therapeutic relationship. Countertransference, according to the contemporary model, is then seen as a composition of elements from both therapist and client and may be interpreted and used therapeutically. Finally, the synchronistic perspective sees transference and countertransference as “mental objects, [which] are signifiers of meaning, purpose, guidance, or connection.” (p. 18). If one recognizes that the

therapeutic relationship creates a sort of intersubjective reality, in which participants' internal and external objects intermingle, then it seems plausible for projections that emerge from this relationship to be meaningfully connected for both parties.

A therapist's countertransference feeling of shared experience or similarity with a client may be accurate in the sense that it might point to a mutuality and purposefulness in their encounter, wherein both therapist's and client's needs are reciprocally met (Marlo & Kline). From a synchronistic perspective, clients and therapists who find themselves so psychically connected may be destined for one another in their respective journeys toward healing and wholeness. The drawback of this stance is that therapists who feel an especially sympathetic connection toward a client may face the potential challenge of clouded judgment, leading them to grapple with maintaining neutrality and objectivity in their interpretations (Marlo & Kline).

Caveats.

The tendency for synchronistic events to arouse awe and inspiration should not deter one from regarding them with utmost precaution. Actually, since synchronistic events can elicit a wide range of intense emotional reactions and potentially life-altering understandings, it is crucial to be as critical as possible with regard to their interpretation.

Aziz (1990) addresses the importance for individuals to extricate what "belongs" (p. 188) to them within a synchronistic experience, lest they fail to recognize the difference between the metaphorical or symbolic readings of the event with its literal manifestation. He warns that a failure to differentiate between these levels of meaning would indicate an " 'abnormal' reaction" (p. 188) to synchronicity, or even a psychotic state characterized by one's inability to distinguish between subjective and objective

reality. This abnormal reaction to synchronicity is one of three outlined by Aziz. The two others are: a “failure to interpret correctly the compensatory meaning of the synchronistic event... [and] wrongly seeing the synchronistic event as a manifestation of one’s or another individual’s, personal power.” (p. 191).

Cambray (2002) cautions that synchronistic encounters “can be radically disruptive while patients’ understanding of them is vulnerable to massive distortions.” (p. 422). This may be especially pertinent in consideration of the tendency for these events to occur during periods of high stress, when people may be susceptible to faulty logic. Cambray also refers to a special kind of tension that synchronistic events can arouse as individuals find themselves “poised at the edge of chaos and order.” (p. 428); a balancing act which can result in either strides toward personal growth or teetering toward the brink of mental unrest.

Keutzer (1984b) states that while synchronicity can result in spiritual consciousness and the broadening of one’s perspective, there is also potential for synchronistic experiences to result in “ego-inflation” (p. 379). When synchronistic events are interpreted in service of enhancing one’s sense of grandiosity, whereby appraisal of one’s power and control becomes distorted, they can be altogether counter-therapeutic. Likewise, becoming swept up in the euphoria and metaphysical impressions around synchronicity can risk dissociation from the practical matters of life, which may cause one to disengage from personal responsibility (Keutzer).

Since synchronistic events are inherently “value-neutral” (Cambray, 2002, p. 431), they present a moral and ethical responsibility to those attributing and interpreting the meaning around them. Aziz (1990) speaks about this ethical responsibility in terms of

bringing meaning to the synchronistic event that is sound insofar as it reflects integrity within oneself as well as in one's relationship to others.

Chapter 3: Framework of the Project

Methodology

Since synchronicity is acausal and spontaneous, and since its meaningfulness is subjective, it would have been impossible to reproduce and observe under controlled experimental conditions, making a qualitative framework more suitable for this study. As my research goals were centered on the exploration and description of a particular phenomenon, both associated with qualitative research methodologies (Marshall & Rossman, 2006), I proceeded with a phenomenological approach. Phenomenological research is undertaken in an effort to elucidate the essence of a phenomenon, in this case synchronicity, by exploring first-hand accounts of people's lived experiences (Patton, 2002). "From the individual descriptions, general or universal meanings are derived, in other words, the essences or structures of the experience." (Moustakas, 1994, p. 13). In order "to gather such data, one must undertake in-depth interviews with people who have *directly* experienced the phenomenon of interest" (Patton, 2002, p. 104). Interviews are useful for gathering data about a phenomenon that cannot be directly observed, in which interviewees can share their experiences retrospectively (Creswell, 2003). Therefore, I opted to conduct one-on-one interviews with three art therapists who had agreed to share their clinical experiences of synchronicity.

According to von Eckartsberg (1986, in Valle, 1998) since participants' descriptions of their experiences constitute the data in this kind of inquiry, they are considered co-researchers. The sharing of their life experiences and personal insights are essential to acquiring a deeper understanding of the phenomenon in question. I informed participants about the important nature of their role and expressed my appreciation for the

great value of their contributions to this study.

I chose to keep the interviews informal and semi-structured, to allow participants to guide the conversation and feel at ease to share their thoughts without feeling as though they were required to provide specific answers. While I had a number of open-ended questions on hand (see Appendix A) to aid in keeping the conversation on topic, I was committed to responding to the material as it unfolded. I found that I had to tailor my line of questioning to follow the thread of the conversation in a more organic fashion. Even so, I had the list of questions that I had prepared in front of me during all three interviews, some of which helped to shape the questions I actually posed during the back and forth exchanges.

Participants

Participation in this study was solicited by word-of-mouth and through a call for participants that was circulated by e-mail (see Appendix B). Participation in the study did not require a Jungian background, or for therapists to espouse a Jungian framework, only that they had an understanding of the concept of synchronicity. The criteria that I kept in mind when recruiting participants were that they : (1) were art therapists; (2) had at least 3 years of clinical practice experience; (3) could draw from at least one synchronistic experience in their practice; and finally (4) were not affiliated with one another in close association, such as being family members, in a romantic relationship, or longstanding friendship, in order to control for potential biases and shared perspectives amongst alliances.

Given that the Montreal art therapy community is fairly small and intimate, for purposes of maintaining participants' anonymity and confidentiality, I have assigned

them pseudonyms and I have kept each of their introductions that follow brief and deliberately vague. At the time this project was conducted, Simone was in her late 40's and had over a decade of experience working with adults in a mental health community setting. Evalyn was in her late fifties, and has worked for over a decade in institutional, community and private practice settings with adults managing psychiatric challenges, intellectual disabilities, and those seeking personal growth. And Wendy was in her mid fifties with around 15 years of experience working with a variety of age groups and populations, including adolescents and women who have experienced violence or abuse, in settings such as a psychiatric treatment centre and a high school.

Data Collection and Analysis

Once I had confirmed participants' interest and suitability, the interviews were scheduled on three separate dates. I sent the consent form (see Appendix C) in advance by e-mail, and encouraged participants to read it over and get back to me with any questions or changes they may have wanted to discuss prior to their interview. The form presented them with the option to check off their preference for the method that I would use to collect the data (i.e. either video or audio recording). I informed them that the purpose of this recording was to capture their answers in their own words and to facilitate my analysis of the data. I reiterated that their identities would be kept anonymous in the reporting of the findings. There were no modifications to the consent form requested and all participants were in agreement with its content. Two interviews were held in a closed conference room in the visual arts pavilion of Concordia University in Montreal, where I set up the interview table with cookies and refreshments. And one interview was held in a private office, out of convenience, at one of the participant's place of employment, where

I brought and set up a platter of cookies. My intention was to create a comfortable, friendly setting, in which participants could feel at ease to share their ideas freely, which I thought would be pleasant and less intimidating over a snack table.

At the start of each interview, I had participants sign the consent form, and each was given a copy for her personal records while I retained originals to file along with my records for this project. All three participants opted for audio recording of the interview session. Since I had convenient access to a video camera, I used it to record the interviews, leaving the lens cap on so that the image was obscured and only the audio was recorded. I reminded participants that there were no right or wrong answers in this type of interview and that their opinions and ideas were welcome. I also informed them that I would be taking notes during the conversation to help me listen and organize my thoughts. All three interviews flowed in a pleasant and respectful manner.

Once I transferred all of the audio footage onto CD-ROM, I solicited the collaboration of one of my peers, Maia Giesbrecht, to help with the transcription of the interviews. I then reviewed all of the transcripts, paying particular attention to the portions that I did not transcribe myself, to verify their accuracy and to immerse myself in the material. The fully reviewed transcripts constituted my data, which I then analyzed according to the coding approach described by Neuman (1997). In this coding procedure, the researcher is guided by his/her research question throughout each of the three phases: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. According to Neuman's model, in the open coding stage, I identified labels along the margins of the text in a first attempt to summarize the content. Then, in axial coding, I organized these codes under headings (see Appendix D, E, F). And finally, in the selective coding phase, I used the themes to

review the data for illustrative examples and quotes to include in the body of my paper where appropriate.

Reflexivity and Assumptions

As a qualitative researcher conducting phenomenological interviews, I was the primary instrument in this study, which presented me with the challenges associated with my dual role as a participant-researcher (Patton, 2002). And because this study is rooted in my own personal meaning making experience with synchronicity, it was important for me to bracket my assumptions and biases toward establishing a basis of credibility (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). With this intention in mind, I constructed a mind map centered on my experience, around which I free-associated and referred to as a visual journal while I worked on my project. This helped me to process and flesh out my expectations from what participants shared about their experiences.

Since the interviews unfolded more like conversations rather than formal question and answer periods, I actively participated in the dialogues while maintaining a position of openness to new ideas and to opinions that challenged my assumptions. I have, with my current level of knowledge and experience, reported the findings of this study to the best of my ability.

This project grew out of my own life experience, and one synchronistic encounter in particular that I found especially powerful and healing. While I am familiar with and acknowledge some of the caveats associated with these types of intense experiences, I do believe in their rich therapeutic and reparative potential. Though the meaning that I continue to draw from my experience fluctuates and touches many aspects of my life, its positive impact remains as poignant as ever. It is this poignancy of meaning that led to

my inquiry about the occurrence of synchronistic events in art therapy and how they might also offer clients the opportunity for understandings and insights that could be as life altering as this one was for me. And since art therapy, by its very nature, engages people with images, I wondered whether this would make synchronistic occurrences within art therapy somehow unique.

Limitations

This study was intended as a preliminary exploration of the occurrence of synchronicity within the context of art therapy. I realize that the study's validity and reliability could have been enhanced if it was performed on a larger scale, using triangulation of methods and analysts (e.g. involving more participants, conducting multiple focus groups, pairing these with in-depth individual interviews, and involving multiple data analyzers and coders). However, the fact that this project was conducted concurrent to my coursework and internship responsibilities obliged me to weigh practical issues against the wider spectrum of possibilities that this project could have spanned with more time and resources.

Since the data is anecdotal and case based, involving only three participants and myself, results are limited to their descriptive and exploratory value, and are not generalizable to populations outside the context of the study. However this study does hold the potential to clarify the phenomenon for readers, which may stimulate further inquiry, or generate new understandings that can affect future clinical approaches and attitudes. Participants' unique impressions may serve to orient other art therapists who find themselves encountering similar phenomena, which may help to maximize opportunities to work with synchronicity therapeutically.

Chapter 4: Findings

The examples given below are paraphrased accounts of participants' actual experiences with synchronicity that they each shared with me during our interviews. Unless followed by a parenthetical reference, all citations within quotation marks are participants' own words. As was stipulated in the consent form, out of respect for their clients' confidentiality, the amount of detail and description that participants shared about their clients' experiences was to their discretion. I am reporting these examples here, under the assumption that participants have masked people's identities sufficiently to preserve their clients' anonymity, and/or that participants have obtained their clients' consent to share clinical material for educational purposes, such as this research paper.

Interview 1: Simone

According to Simone, much of the work of therapy is about people negotiating polar opposites within themselves, usually regarding work, relationships, and health. She describes this negotiation as a tension or ambivalence that arises when one is faced with the dilemma about whether or not to make contact, that is whether or not to move away from or toward a given situation. One of the circumstances in which she notices synchronistic events happen is when clients are in the midst of transitioning between states of being or important decisions.

In Simone's experience, since art therapy offers a non-verbal means of communicating (i.e. making contact), she has found that clients' artwork, especially within a group setting, acts as a meeting ground wherein meaningful connections happen all the time.

Clinical examples.

Simone cited examples of synchronicity that fall under two main types: those in which a commonality occurred amongst group members (i.e. in their artworks, themes they shared, or interpretations they offered), and those in which people's artwork had a prognostic foretelling of events that subsequently followed in their lives.

Simone runs groups that she splits into two smaller groups and has clients work in silence on opposite sides of the room as a way to create a meditative environment.

Whenever Simone runs these kinds of split groups, she has consistently observed common themes and aesthetic resemblances spontaneously arise in the artwork created on either side of the room. She claims that these uncanny similarities cannot be explained by group members seeing each other's work since the way they are set up on each side of the room would not permit them to, nor by any prior verbal exchanges before the art making, which she keeps to a minimum. Rather, Simone sees these similarities as forms of synchronistic, non-verbal dialogues, resulting from group members' desires to connect with and communicate with one another.

On another occasion, in a group session, Simone was shocked to learn that the majority of participants all shared that they had recently dreamt about large waves of water. For Simone, this indicated "a connection... [that was] happening on another level.... [in which] time and space... does not match, yet everything is coming together in one event where... several people all bring up that one particular theme."

Simone has also seen synchronistic phenomena arise when she uses a family clay intervention, in which clients sculpt their families out of clay and then spend several sessions restructuring the pieces according to the changes they wish for within their family dynamics. Simone maintains that 3-dimensional media, particularly clay, seems to

evoke synchronistic potential for clients. She named a couple of examples in which clients' re-organization of their clay sculptures paralleled actual transformations that subsequently occurred within their family dynamics. She wondered whether this might be partly due to the intention and visualization involved before one carries out a sculptural work. In the case of the family clay intervention in particular, clients' rearrangement of the clay pieces presents an additional opportunity for clients to think about directing their intentions, resulting perhaps in a psychological preparation for dealing with real life changes. Simone said she believes that "Having intention is an integral part of synchronicity," but that there are also instances in which a synchronistic event "just happens." I understand this to mean that she identifies two types of synchronistic happenings: those that have a participatory aspect, in that people's intentions or wishes may be channeled, and those that are entirely spontaneous but meaningful nonetheless.

Observed reactions.

Simone described synchronistic happenings in terms of things falling together so that they "fit perfectly" for the people involved. In group settings, regardless of whether the synchronistic event involved one or all group members, Simone felt that all group members had benefited from it. She described clients as having undergone major transformations and changes following the synchronistic event as well as the development of a metaphysical awareness, in which many people began to wonder about some greater force or purpose within their lives. Some even attributed the event to magic. Clients have also been "surprised," "excited," comforted, grateful, and afraid following a synchronistic event.

Simone herself has felt "surprised," "intrigued," and "curious" despite the

frequency with which she has witnessed synchronicity in her life and practice. She also associated a physical sensation with these types of events—Goosebumps—which she has come to interpret as a sort of confirmation that something synchronistic has indeed taken place.

Therapist's role.

Since synchronistic events have aroused powerful reactions in her clients, particularly in their questioning of supernatural forces at work, Simone felt that it was important to reflect self-empowerment in these instances, reinforcing that each person can “be the creator of [his/her] own reality.” When clients believe her to be the “source” of their synchronistic experience, believing that she has a psychic influence over their lives, Simone often finds that she has to invite them to consider alternative readings of the situation that are more aligned with their own sense of competency and influence.

Implications for art therapy.

For Simone, art therapy sessions provide an ideal place to “make things happen.” She believes that the “creative process gives an opportunity for manifestation in reality,” which can be empowering, helping clients to “move away from victim mode” as they observe the impact that directing their intentions can have on their lives. Drawing on the family clay intervention, Simone sees opportunities for empowerment in clients’ control of the clay pieces, a process of literally “putting things into place... and moving and making and transforming meaning... to a point of coming to a place of comfort where things fit, [and] fall into place.” This, she believes, illustrates for clients the difference between “being carried by an emotion” and directing it. When something synchronistic arises in the artwork, Simone has seen people move from a process of “purging” to a

more conscious expression of their emotions and ideas, which has oftentimes led people to feel more in control in situations where they might have otherwise felt powerless.

Caveats.

In contrast to the empowering effect that synchronistic phenomena may have had for some people, as mentioned earlier, on more than one occasion Simone's clients have attributed the cause of the event to her clairvoyance or psychic powers. She iterated the importance for therapists who find themselves in this position to convey that they are not the source of the event. Likewise, while Simone has seen how positive these types of experiences have been, she has also witnessed their potential to be quite destabilizing. Acquiring a metaphysical awareness has not always been reassuring for people. Simone has seen many clients struggle to reconcile feelings of fear and anxiety provoked by a sudden awareness that their lives may be subject to powers outside of their control. Rather than developing a sense of connectedness and belonging to a larger plan that a metaphysical awareness can sometimes instill, people may instead end up internalizing a sense of powerlessness.

Interview 2: Evalyn

Evalyn, being well versed in Jungian concepts and terminology, has extensive knowledge about synchronicity and seemed to have been contemplating its place in her practice long before my interview with her. She reminded me about the etymology of the term coincidence, being "falling together," which I found very useful to remember while thinking about all three of these interviews.

For Evalyn, synchronistic experiences hold great potential for transformation and healing. She sees the participatory aspect in meaningful coincidences lending them great

potential to empower people, who have the freedom to choose how to integrate these experiences into their models of meaning. To honor how powerful her personal experiences with synchronistic phenomena have been, Evalyn has come to regard synchronicity with great awareness, carefulness and respect.

Clinical examples.

Evalyn cited a variety of encounters with synchronicity in her practice: (1) a client's feeling of synchronistic connection to her, (2) a mirroring between one of Evalyn's response drawings and her client's art work, (3) a happening that occurred in the art therapy room, prior to a session, that was related to the material her client spoke about in that session, and (4) a client whose spontaneous selection and use of media, paired with conditions in the environment of the art therapy room, at once reflected and responded to her therapeutic needs at the time.

In the first case, synchronicity manifested as a "felt-rightness" on the part of one of Evalyn's clients about having her as a therapist. The client chose to consult with Evalyn after having attended a talk in which the material that Evalyn presented was particularly resonant with one of her own experiences. The client considered their points of similarity as a sign of Evalyn's suitability as a therapist. Since this client happened to be familiar with the concept of synchronicity and was forthright about her rationale for consulting with Evalyn, they were able to discuss it directly over the course of the first few sessions. This proved to be a positive point of departure as it allowed them a rare opportunity to speak about the synchronistic event openly, permitting them to "disentangle the two journeys." However, synchronicity has not always presented itself in a way that allowed Evalyn to discuss it with clients in this way.

In another instance, synchronicity arose in a response drawing that Evalyn had made following a session with a client living with schizophrenia. Evalyn had been conscious of the fact that the drawing the client had made in that session had been transference in that it depicted a woman whose features strongly resembled her own and also because of how the client had described it. Immediately following the session, Evalyn decided to make a response drawing, a tool that many art therapists find useful to unveil and process countertransference reactions. It consists of taking a few moments after a session to create an intuitive image guided by one's feelings about the session and/or the client(s). Using similar media, Evalyn attempted to recreate her client's image. The more her drawing progressed, the more she found herself working indirectly until she began to draw all over the woman's face. She considered the possible meanings around this gesture, such as questioning whether it might have signified her resistance to her client's projections. It so happened that in their next session together, her client did the very same thing to his image of the woman, which led him to reveal his feelings about the futility of therapy and his doubts about Evalyn's ability to cure him.

On another occasion, just prior to beginning a session, in her struggle to open a window in the therapy room that was stuck, Evalyn accidentally broke an animal figurine that had been posed on the windowsill. She made a mental note of the accident and remembered contemplating, at the time of this occurrence, the possible latent meaning in something breaking just before a session. It came to pass that the client she saw immediately afterward also shared that she had broken an animal figurine—albeit a different animal—which she then associated with her own issues of stuckness. Evalyn felt as though her accident, also triggered by stuckness, functioned as a sort of

“prognostic awakening” in that it primed her consciousness to connect with her client’s material.

The final example that Evalyn provided referred to her work with a developmentally disabled woman who had an uncontrollable drooling problem that caused her much distress, particularly in regard to her relationship with her parents who were constantly wiping her face for her. The synchronicity occurred when this client began to work with popsicle sticks and hot glue to create a popsicle stick house. Evalyn recalled that there had been a fan on in the room since it was a hot day and that it hindered her client’s use of the glue gun because it was blowing the strands of glue all around as she was trying in vain to use it on the popsicle sticks. While the client was fairly non-verbal, there was a moment in which Evalyn felt they exchanged a look that seemed to confirm their mutual understanding of the pertinence of the situation. The uncontrollable, blowing strands of glue created by the wind from the fan seemed to be a reflection of the client’s uncontrollable saliva. Following this implicit, mutual understanding, the woman wholly surrendered to this spontaneous process and began to let the long strands of glue fly all over the place. She later made masks that she identified as her parents, and covered them with glue. Evalyn explained that the client eventually “rescued” the masks by peeling the glue away, perhaps metaphorically rescuing her parents from the mess of her drool. Evalyn felt that these media launched a very healing process of catharsis for this client, permitting her to work through many of her core issues.

Observed reactions.

Evalyn described synchronicity as inspiring the feeling of a “great wave of

affirmation,” a “participation of the world in our journey,” or a “felt-rightness.” Oftentimes the meaning in the event “appears to be clear” in a way that may fulfill one’s “desire for affirmation;” “we feel like it’s for us in some way.” At other times, the meaning can be ambiguous, or can even feel noxious, causing one to feel “paralyzed by all the webs of significance.”

Therapist’s role.

Evalyn emphasized the importance for therapists to “hold the synchronistic experience in hand and look at it,” that is to pause and tolerate its ambiguous meanings rather than committing to an interpretation of the event, no matter how clear it might seem at the time of its occurrence. In her experience, more often than not, the meaning behind a synchronistic experience has fluctuated over time. Therefore, Evalyn feels that it would be well-advised to allow for this fluctuation and multiplicity of interpretations by taking a step back from the initial reactions of surprise and awe, to reflect on the event as objectively and scrupulously as possible. She advocates a position of openness and awareness, while being particularly attentive to how the event might indicate underlying issues in the transference and countertransference, and keeping the whole picture in mind, as well as the best interests of the client, at all times.

Implications for art therapy.

Evalyn wondered whether the art therapy table could be seen metaphorically as the top line of consciousness, upon which the image making takes place. Taking this metaphor further, the tabletop would represent the liminal place between conscious and unconscious, in which a “mixture and admixture” of elements from both realms creates rich potential for synchronicity to take place.

Evalyn believes that synchronistic occurrences in art therapy may be different from those that occur in talk psychotherapy for a number of reasons. Aside from the cultivation of meaning construction facilitated by bridging mind and matter through insightful art making, Evalyn also feels that the objects created in art therapy hold a different importance for clients as compared with mental images that arise in talk psychotherapy, “in that, if there’s no object it disappears in time more completely for us than when we talk about it... With art therapy we have the object that endures.” Contrastively to the intangible, ungraspable image of the mind, the concretized object in art therapy acts as:

... a commemorative object of the journey. It is made of matter and will return into the world of matter. But, the image is what is alive and is transformed and what stays with us... it’s an interesting dialectic between the image and the incarnated image... but it is the energy that comes into them—matter and meaning making in the field—and then we’re talking about having to let go of the object also. We take the meaning into ourselves and the object remains as a souvenir, a remembrance—an object of remembrance for it.

Even so, Evalyn’s understanding of image making is not limited to the depiction of an image using materials. Rather, she sees images arising as “embodied experiences,” and art as “performance in the world.”

Referring to Jung’s own observation of synchronicities commonly arising out of the transference and countertransference relationship, Evalyn sees transferences to the media and to the images in art therapy as additional opportunities to invite synchronicity. She hypothesized that people’s transference to materials sometimes arises through their

“experimentation... that just mirrors their need for reparative experience or a cathartic experience, but that enables them to fall together into the practice with that medium in a way that creates meaning.” It is as though “the properties and qualities [of the art media] ... come to life within their use.” Along these lines, Evalyn said that in a way art therapists “invite falling together of psyche and matter in a way that creates meaning... in every session,” so that one might even say that “we [i.e. art therapists] cultivate synchronicity in art therapy.” She was particularly careful about clarifying that art therapists do not cause synchronicity, but rather “make the conditions available” for it to happen.

Caveats.

Evalyn prefaced our interview by addressing a number of caveats that she felt should be considered whenever presented with synchronistic phenomena in art therapy. She emphasized the importance of maintaining a critical regard for these types of happenings, since they do not hold any intrinsic value in and of themselves. The non-ethical nature of synchronicity behooves us to judge how applying our own ethical standards will affect its interpretation. She gave an example in which one of her clients who had been contemplating infidelity in her marriage claimed to have received a synchronistic confirmation that she should have an affair. This exemplified the carefulness one should take, particularly for therapists, in approaching the meaning in meaningful coincidences. Evalyn wonders whether strong synchronistic confirmations such as these might, at times, point to one’s selective attention more than anything else, so that people end up seeing what they want to see and acting upon impulses and wishes that do not always result in the scenarios they might have hoped for.

Additionally, acting impulsively on one's impression that the meaning around these experiences is "just for us" also risks ego-inflation, in which the perception that the universe is in accordance with our wishes could lead to self-centeredness, or in extreme cases may risk activating or exacerbating a psychotic sense of grandiosity. Failing to consider the ethical repercussions of one's interpretation of the situation, disregarding the potential "relational ethics" involved, risks ignoring how one's dealing with the event could affect others.

Interview 3: Wendy

It was a strong synchronistic experience that brought Wendy to the profession of art therapy, which convinced her about its inherent potential for triggering positive changes and insights for people.

Clinical examples.

Wendy was hesitant before sharing some of the clinical examples of synchronicity that she has encountered, questioning whether they were true synchronicities. I cite three examples here and discuss their synchronistic relevance in the discussion section of this paper.

In the first example, Wendy described a spontaneous intervention that she used after reading what seemed to be just the right material to inform her work with a particular client. According to Wendy, this intervention led to therapeutic breakthroughs for the client. Wendy had been working with a teenage boy in art therapy who had been referred to her as part of a treatment program for his attentional difficulties, and erratic and uncontrollable behavior. He spent many weeks destroying a large piece of marble that Wendy had given him to work on, after recognizing his need for an outlet for his

anger. Despite his scrawny build, Wendy recalled how the boy seemed to work tirelessly at smashing the piece of marble for entire hour-long sessions, over the course of many sessions in a row. Aside from taking appropriate safety precautions and providing him with the necessary tools, Wendy did not feel the need to intervene further in his process until he had worked the block of marble nearly down to nothing. She remembered an idea from a text that she had recently read, and without so much as a second thought she asked him, “What’s next?” to which the boy was at a loss. Then, recalling her text she said, “Well, after deconstruction comes reconstruction.” Wendy felt a palpable connection between her and the boy, as this phrase aroused an unusual receptivity in him, and after finally demolishing the piece of marble he began his first creative projects in art therapy. Alongside this newfound ability to build and construct with art materials, as opposed to destroying, the boy’s behavior as well as his overall functioning markedly improved. Wendy felt that the timing of the comment, although completely unplanned, was perfect. “I don’t remember saying anything like that to any other client,” she said, “It just came out of my mouth.”

In the second example, Wendy described another situation in which it seemed as though she was guided by a sort of foreknowledge, to take a workshop on dream analysis in art therapy, which she would immediately use for one of her groups. Right after taking the workshop, Wendy found herself running a women’s group in which the theme of dreams came about spontaneously. She felt that the training she had just taken was perfectly timed in that it prepared her to facilitate what these women were bringing to the fore on their own, although her choice to take the workshop had initially been out of personal curiosity and interest. She could have never known in advance that she would be

called upon to use these newly acquired techniques almost immediately after learning them.

In a third example, Wendy described her work with a five year old boy, who had been evaluated as developmentally delayed, his level of functioning having been deemed at around that of a two year old. After following her hunch to allow him to work non-directively, the boy developed a series of drawings that mapped a working through of his grief around his grandfather's death, which incidentally had come to pass when the boy was two years old. Wendy believed that the boy had been stuck at this stage of development due to the lack of opportunity to grieve and deal with the profound impact that this event had had on him at the time of its occurrence. She found that her non-directive approach helped to unblock the boy's course of development, which as it turned out allowed him to finally meet age-appropriate milestones and his performance was eventually re-evaluated as normal. Wendy was baffled to see how a non-directive approach to art making could be so transformative.

Observed reactions.

For Wendy, there is something undeniably extraordinary about the synchronistic encounter, which feels like “you need something and all of the sudden it's there,” “the right thing at the right time,” and as though things spontaneously “click” for people. In art therapy, she feels there seems to be a certain readiness in clients prior to the event—as though they have arrived at a threshold of awareness—preceded by a major transformation after the event, and oftentimes a surge of productivity and a ripple effect of positive life changes.

Therapist's role.

Wendy recommends taking the position of a patient observer for clients who experience synchronicity in art therapy. She feels that the level of trust and safety within the therapeutic relationship is essential in supporting clients to integrate synchronistic happenings constructively. She iterated the importance of maintaining faith in clients, and being open to their process of self-expression and discovery. By fortifying the therapeutic relationship with these qualities of trust, faith, safety, and openness, Wendy believes that the resulting connection with clients almost facilitates a kind of synchronistic “in-tuneness” or “intuition,” which she has come to rely on as a tool in her practice, to assess clients’ needs, receptivity to her interventions and interpretations, and overall timing and pace of their progress.

Implications for art therapy.

According to Wendy, art therapy provides a non-stressful way of externalizing material through art making. And since synchronicity is comprised of a “meaningful connection between an internal mental object and an external event” (Marlo & Kline, 1998, p. 13), Wendy believes that art therapy can be “a powerful medium” for inviting synchronistic expression.

Drawing from how much she has learned from these types of experiences in her practice, Wendy spoke about the possibility for therapists to also benefit from synchronistic encounters. In cases when synchronicity occurs within a group therapy setting, Wendy also sees potential for the shared meaning amongst group members to have a positive impact on everyone’s journey toward personal growth.

Caveats.

The only caveat that Wendy alluded to was with respect to withholding disclosure

of the event from a client, unless the disclosure would justifiably serve the client's therapeutic needs.

Chapter 5: Discussion

My discussion is organized around the major themes that emerged from the three interviews, which I relate with some of the themes I discussed earlier in my review of the literature on coincidence and synchronicity. I also touch on some of the distinctive qualities of synchronicity as it relates specifically to art therapy and how participants addressed the associated caveats. In my conclusion of this paper, I discuss the possible significance underlying some of the examples cited by participants that fell short of being considered true synchronicities.

Emergent Themes

After spending some time organizing and thinking about participants' input, I found that I could organize their ideas using the following themes, which relate synchronicity to: (1) an experience of connection, (2) a process of discovery and being moved, (3) a feeling of intensity, (4) the notion of acausality, and (5) the creative process and its implications for art therapy practice. Below is a discussion of these themes as they relate to the literature.

Connection.

Jung's (1952/1973) postulation of synchronicity as "an acausal connecting principle," not only highlights its acausal nature but its primarily connective property as well. His observation of the tendency for synchronistic phenomena to impart a sense of direction for people in the midst of a transition further illustrates this property. If coincidences in general can arouse insight and discovery, as Griffiths and Tenenbaum (2007) posit, and are often favored explanations for major life events, as Becker (1994) proposes, then it is not surprising that synchronicity in particular may be central to

informing important decisions.

Participants' descriptions of synchronistic instances in art therapy as something that "just clicked," "fit perfectly," "felt right," or instilled "affirmation" are compatible with the notion that these events may have a bridging potential, leading people to feel deeply connected to one another and to the meaning they draw from their experience. Both Simone and Wendy recalled that synchronicity had a powerful impact on people within a group setting, wherein group members' sense of mutuality and connectedness was healing for everyone. Like Jung, participants also noticed a correlation between the occurrence of synchronistic events and times of transition, wherein people negotiate their in-betweenness. They have found that synchronistic events have been like signposts for people who hover at the threshold of a new understanding, guiding them toward pivotal insights and decisions. Though Cambray may consider this view of synchronicity as reductionistic, it seems to be one of the most salient characteristics about it.

Discovery and being moved.

Important aspects of the felt connection around a synchronistic event in art therapy seem to be its degree of emotional intensity (i.e. how strongly connected one feels) and its direction of influence (e.g. whether the client feels connected to the therapist vs. therapist to client, client to life vs. therapist to life, client to media, etc.). These two factors seem to be what determine how moved one will be by the experience, both emotionally or insightfully, in one's potency of feeling, and literally, in the action one chooses to take following the event.

Interestingly, two out of the three women I interviewed mentioned that synchronistic events had been instrumental in their vocational decisions to become art

therapists, and all three had had personal experiences with synchronicity that impacted their lives in significant ways. This recalls Becker's (1994) notion that people tend to attribute events leading up to important life decisions to chance as a way of commemorating their specialness. But, drawing from Griffiths and Tenenbaum's (2007) hypothesis, perhaps associating coincidences with pivotal life events might point to their actual potential to modify our assumptions and understandings about the world. Perhaps coincidences actually are what move us to discover how special our most meaningful life moments really are for us. In this way, could meaningful coincidences feel so intensely moving to us because they actually do set our lives in motion, in directions we would not have thought possible without their influence?

Intensity.

Jung noticed that intense emotional arousal is a dominant feature of synchronistic experiences. I would like to consider here, the examples that participants shared, which fall short of meeting the criteria that would qualify them as synchronistic. Two out of the three participants hesitated before relating certain anecdotes, doubtful of their actual synchronistic significance. While it is true that they may not all be synchronistic per se, it is noteworthy that central to all of the examples is their indubitable intensity. For reasons too numerous to elaborate here, suffice it to say that the work of psychotherapy in general, by its very nature, can be quite intense (apart from synchronistic occurrences that may or may not arise therein). One can conjecture whether art therapy work might potentiate the intensity even further, because of the added layer of insight and meaning rendered accessible through the artwork. Regardless of whether the reader would recognize all the examples cited in this paper as synchronistic, participants seem to have

shared moments from their art therapy practice that reflect the extent to which they are continually impressed and amazed by their work. It can be challenging to extricate the differences between the inherent intensity of the practice of art therapy from the equally intense nature of synchronicity. At certain moments during our discussions, participants expressed a lucid understanding of the overlap between these two phenomena, realizing that they both have liminal and metaphysical characteristics.

Acausality.

Jung's emphasis on the acausal nature of synchronicity precludes attributing a chain of events to its occurrence. It seems important to distinguish between synchronistic phenomena and the now popularized *law of attraction*, heralded as the answer to all of life's quandaries in Rhonda Byrne's (2006) acclaimed book on which the film *The Secret* (Byrne et al., 2006) is based. The basic mind over matter tenet of this law states that we have the power to think things into being. Proponents of this idea suggest that whatever we focus our thoughts on will materialize; regardless of whether we focus on the things we want versus thinking about what we wish to avoid. Relevant to the discussion in this paper is the major difference between the law of attraction and Jung's notion of synchronicity, being that the law of attraction implies a causal relationship between our thoughts and the world around us, while Jung emphasized the acausal nature of meaningful coincidences.

The reason why I feel compelled to address this difference here is because of the allusion to there being a relationship between synchronicity and intention that arose in my discussions with participants. The idea that channeling one's intentions may tap into synchronistic potentials implies a causal logic that is not compatible with Jung's acausal

proposal. Furthermore, viewing synchronicity as a reflection of our ability to control our outer world with our thoughts is not unlike harboring superstitious thoughts, which conflicts with Jung's intention for synchronicity to be regarded as scientifically plausible.

Despite these points, Simone's belief that intentions are integral to synchronistic happenings stems from her observation of clients whose investment of intentions into 3-dimensional media resulted in parallel manifestations within their lives. This is a curious correlation indeed, and I can see the appeal that a causal explanation like the law of attraction would afford. However, the law of attraction, like meaningful coincidence, is as extinguishable by the plausible explanation of selective attention, that is people's tendency to notice only what corresponds with their thought focus at a given time. A similarly attributable explanation is the notion of the self-fulfilling prophecy, in which our expectations are thought to cause us to think and behave in ways that will validate their accuracy. Simone's observations might have something to do with the amount of gestation, planning, and visualization involved before creating a sculpture, compared with the immediacy of 2-dimensional media. As touched on earlier, perhaps the process of sculpting prepares individuals psychologically to face real-life concretizations of their wishes and ideas. This point illustrates the difference between saying that people use 3-dimensional media to visualize and prepare for the changes they anticipate in their lives, versus implying that they may control elements of their lives through manipulation of 3-dimensional materials.

Creative process: Implications for art therapy practice.

Due to their potential to guide people toward creative solutions and self-discovery, Jung described synchronistic events as "*acts of creation in time*" (von Franz,

1980/1978, p. 198). Plunging into the philosophic implications of this statement is beyond the scope of this paper, but taken at face value it captures the single most relevant corresponding feature between synchronicity and the context of art therapy, which is also centered on self-reflection and problem solving through creative exploration. Thus synchronicity as an act of creation, taken literally as a process of invention, relates back to Griffiths and Tenenbaum's (2007) argument that coincidences stimulate innovation. It is the subjective meaning that distinguishes synchronistic coincidences from the rest, which makes them personally rather than empirically significant. In this way, it is true that there is something that is just for us in the synchronistic happening, but how we go about interpreting the event, that is how we re-create it in our minds, can make it for others also. Like the rearrangement of clay pieces in Simone's family clay intervention, though a symbolic gesture toward change and meaning making, it may have a catalytic effect on real life. Evalyn eloquently asked, "How do we give back to the world from that meaning that we have had through a collaboration of the world with us on our journey?" This sense of partnership between self and world is consistent with Jung's emphasis on the profoundly intersubjective, interrelational experience of psychotherapy. Perhaps in art therapy, the art may conduct a flow of exchange between self and world that might not otherwise occur without the art.

In a sense, acts of creation that take place in art therapy are never without awareness that one is in constant interaction with the world outside, in one's use of art materials while negotiating one's relationship to the person of the therapist. Considering Evalyn's response drawing example as having arose out of the "intersubjective field" (Marlo & Kline, 1998), it seems as though response drawings would be a unique way of

exploring synchronistic aspects of the therapeutic relationship. Apart from the intersubjective transference and countertransference exchanges within any therapeutic relationship, in which Jung observed the tendency for synchronicity to occur, Evalyn pointed out that art therapy invites further transference to materials and images. This would lend support to Simone's contention that synchronicity could be a form of non-verbal communication in art therapy, in which people's collective desire to connect might be transferred through their artwork. In this way, similarities in group members' artwork may be a facet of group cohesiveness. Expanding on Foulkes' (1964) discussion of *resonance* as unconscious connectedness in group psychotherapy, McNeilly (1983) has described the spontaneous emergence of similarities in themes or artwork within art therapy groups as “ ‘the language of the dynamic silence’ ...[that] leads to group cohesion.” (p. 218). Perhaps this is what Simone meant when she said that “there is synchronicity in the non-verbal.”

All participants saw the potential for synchronicity to manifest differently in art therapy than in talk psychotherapy because of how each of these approaches differs in their treatment of images. As Evalyn underlined, in cases where synchronicity involves an art object, it becomes cathected as a tangible reminder of the event in a more enduring way than a mental image might in talk psychotherapy.

Caveats

Participants' caveats and recommendations were all consistent with those I came across in the literature. I was particularly struck by Simone's mention about clients often attributing synchronistic events to her psychic powers. I can imagine that, aside from having to redirect their attention back toward their own sense of empowerment and

competence, she would also have to resist absorbing their undue admiration into her own ego. While participants did not frame this as a caveat per se, I feel it necessary to mention that whatever benefit is derived on the part of the therapist from the synchronistic event, it should never be at the expense of the client, nor should it serve the therapist's hubris. It is unsurprising that people would be tempted to search for a causal explanation after such an uncanny experience, but perceiving the therapist to have supernatural powers can be damaging as it results in an increase of the power differential between client and therapist. The very notion that the therapeutic relationship consists of the coming together of two mutually influential individuals suggests that there is something healing about the therapist's humanity. Elevating the therapist to the position of a guru or wizard robs the relationship of its therapeutic effect.

Conclusion

Recommendations for future research.

As I have previously addressed in my outline of limitations with regard to the scope of this project, performing this study on a larger scale may have yielded findings with greater breadth and depth. In retrospect, conducting multiple interviews with the same participants over time would have given me the opportunity to consider the material and revisit certain statements for further clarification and exploration. I found that discussing synchronicity, which is an elusive concept in and of itself, often led to further conceptualizations around equally elusive psychological constructs (e.g. the notion of the self, the ego, defense mechanisms, etc.). I think that I would have acquired a better appreciation for participants' ideas had we had more time together, for them to elaborate on their subjective understandings, and for me to extricate more of the meaning they

intended from their use of certain terminologies.

Perhaps an entirely different inquiry altogether would be to explore clients' perceptions of synchronistic occurrences in art therapy. It might be interesting to see how clients have experienced and addressed this phenomenon.

Summary and concluding thoughts.

This project set out to explore art therapists' descriptions of synchronicity in their clinical practice. I was also curious to know in which ways art therapists saw manifestations of synchronicity in art therapy as distinct from those discussed in the context of talk psychotherapy. The most salient differences that participants pointed out had to do with synchronistic potentials arising within clients' exploration of art media and in the art productions themselves, which are seen as tangible commemorations of the synchronistic event. Findings emerged according to themes around synchronicity's relationship to feelings of connection, discovery, and intensity, the concept of acausality, and the creative process. None of the participants focused on the role that synchronicity played in their clients' process of meaning making, although they did mention their own perceptions of the meaningfulness within each of the anecdotes that they shared.

Though some of the examples that participants discussed were not quite synchronistic, all were compelling examples of extraordinary moments in art therapy. This might reflect an association between the inherent intensity of the practice of art therapy with a sentiment of uncanniness similar to that experienced in response to meaningful coincidences. While the intensity of art therapy work is not enough to qualify it as synchronistic, there seem to be many shared properties between the nature of art therapy and that of the synchronistic encounter. For example, in both instances,

meaningful “acts of creation” take place, out of which potential for personal growth and discovery can arise.

Several times throughout these interviews, the discussion reached an impasse in which participants felt there were so many resemblances between synchronistic phenomena and extraordinary occurrences in art therapy that it became difficult to untangle the two. If we think of coincidences as being on a spectrum, where unremarkable co-occurrences are at one end, and synchronicity is on the other, perhaps the meaningful connections that spontaneously arise in art therapy can be thought of as falling somewhere around the latter end. I invite the reader to consider the examples that participants shared in this study as occurrences that might normally be taken for granted as part and parcel of the art therapeutic process, but which I think deserve a closer look. I hope that, like me, you have developed a newfound appreciation for the truly extraordinary transformative potential inherent in the work of art therapy.

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Appendixes

Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. What interests you about the topic that we're discussing today?
2. How has synchronicity manifested in your practice?
3. In your view, how important was the synchronistic event to your client's therapeutic journey?
4. How did you and your client react to the event?
5. In what ways has it contributed to your client's meaning making?
6. Were you able to incorporate the event into art therapy sessions therapeutically?
How?
7. In what ways was the art involved?
8. How do you think the event impacted the therapeutic relationship?
9. How do you see synchronistic experiences fitting into your art therapy practice in the future?
10. What are some of the pros and cons that you associate with these types of happenings as an art therapist?

data of the research project. I understand that listening/viewing of the footage will be limited to: Helena, her faculty supervisor, and a peer consultant whose input will help to validate Helena's interpretations of the material. I am aware that, at the termination of the study, the footage will be saved onto a CD, which will be archived, along with all other documents pertaining to the study, in a locked cabinet, for five years.

C. RISKS & BENEFITS

I understand that there are no foreseeable risks or potential harms to myself or to the others involved in this study. My participation is altruistic, toward the enhancement of understanding and knowledge that may benefit others in the future.

D. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at anytime without negative consequences whatsoever.

I understand that my participation in this study is confidential (i.e. that my identity will not be disclosed in the results of the study)

I understand that the data from this study may be published.

I have carefully studied the above and understand this agreement. I freely consent and voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

NAME (please print): _____

SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____

If at any time you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Adela Reid, Research Ethics and Compliance Officer, Concordia University, at (514) 848-2424 x.7481 or by e-mail at areid@alcor.concordia.ca

Appendix D: Axial Codes: Themes – Interview 1

AXIAL CODING ~ INTERVIEW 1**Therapist's Impressions:**

polarities as an ongoing theme/observation

“push and pull between a decision”

“decision making in contact” → in work, relationships, and health

similarities/synch comes out in “dynamics of artworks”

people express common issues in a unique way

the struggle to reconcile polarities as synch

struggle to “deal with...ambivalence”

“there’s a non-verbal dialogue”

“There is synchronicity in the non-verbal”

“there’s a sense of reaching out to make contact” (non-verbally)

shared themes in participants’ artwork is seen as an attempt to connect and communicate with one another

“a connection is happening on another level”

“dealing more with the unconscious” → when several people bring one theme

a following through or parallel between inner (wish) and outer (behavior) experience

internal work precedes external manifestation

information can travel with “less resistance” when we’re unconscious (i.e. asleep = dreaming)

we send and receive information

it takes mindfulness to be aware of what we’re receiving vs. what we’re intending

“Having intention is an integral part of synchronicity”

“it just happens” (spontaneous synch) vs. “inviting” or “attracting” synchronization of things

she also notices a synchronicity about group formation & dynamics (suitability of participants)

concluding thought: “I trust in synchronicity”

“the idea of putting things into place [(e.g. the clay pieces)]...to a point of coming to a place of comfort where things fit; fall into place in the real world, our visible world”

sometimes things that come into consciousness have clear meaning

sometimes it takes years to link artwork or dream to something that happens much later is it synch in art therapy “when everyone aligns on a sole impression?” (shared meaning)

Observed Reactions:

“it all fit. Fit perfectly”

Client's:

transitions → feeling in between “where I’m at” vs. “Where I want to be”

“trying to struggle and find a middle ground”

a shared experience that fit everyone perfectly → elicits metaphysical awareness

“her whole dynamic shifted” (major change)

impression that “things happen that are greater than oneself”

“another level of work” = supernatural

client’s reactions: “surprised,” “excited,” “find comfort”

“notion of magic” and “the spirit side”

2 sides: “curiosity,” “excitement,” & “interest” vs. reaction of “fear” & “trying to make sense”

woman in clay e.g. had both “fear” and “appreciation”

leads to line of questioning “what is beyond me?” → can inspire curiosity and fear (when it’s too intense)

Therapist’s:

therapist is “surprised,” “intrigued,” “curious” (despite frequency)

gives her goosebumps = indication of synch and meaning

Therapist’s role:

therapist’s role is “is to reflect that part of synchronicity”

reflecting that they can “be the creator of [their] own reality”

Implications for Art therapy & Synch:

cross-similarities between groups in artwork compositions

Art therapy is an ideal place to “make things happen”

“purging” vs. “channeling”

“creative process gives an opportunity for manifestation in reality”

“sync can come into play when...artwork shows up in reality”

can be empowering = “moving away from victim mode” (passive vs. active)

“being carried by an emotion” (catharsis) vs. directing it (sublimation)

intention to create → intent is empowering → awareness

Examples:

e.g. parallel compositions between left and right side of the room

e.g. waves & tsunami dream theme in artwork → gave her goosebumps

more synch happens when 3D media is employed

e.g. extended family clay evaluation: shifting clay pieces pre-emptive to shifting role in reality

therapist’s own drawing was a premonition

e.g. “for sale” sign in artwork → “an intent behind the transference”

Caveats:

caveat: when client attributes synch to therapist

giving instead of owning power

failing to see that “they are part of that creation”

clients sometimes wonder if she’s psychic

education/clarification that therapist is not the source

can be destabilizing

Appendix E: Axial Codes: Themes – Interview 2

AXIAL CODING ~ INTERVIEW 2**Therapist's Impressions:**

Personal experience with synch that brought her to profession of AT

“I found it healing” (referring to own experience)

“psychoid realm, where psyche and matter meet”

potential for transformation

Jungians see synch as evidence of Unus Mundus (one world)

There is a participatory aspect to synch

Power of choice can be positive

Meaning can be clear or ambiguous

coincidence etymology = “falling together”

synch occurs when archetype is animated

“autonomous energies that are beyond us that can be at work”

synch often occurs during a “core conflict”

Observed Reactions:

“feels like this great wave of affirmation”

“appears to be clear”

“desire for affirmation”

“feeling of felt-rightness”

“something happens confirming that choice”

can be affirming but may also “point to the need for great care”

can feel “paralyzed by all the webs of significance” (“paranoid position”)→ caveat

can “make one feel affirmed and special”

feeling a “participation of the world in our journey”

“we feel like it’s for us in some way”

but “how is this also for the world?”

“a collaboration of the world with us”

can “deepen our sense of interrelatedness”

Therapist's role:

important “disentangle the two journeys”

synch can occur in projections in the transference and countertransference (e.g. broken figurines & stuckness)

event happened to her and not the client

“prognostic awakening”

overlap between client’s and therapist’s areas of trouble

awareness throughout is key

looking at “whole picture”

“a letting go in an opening of oneself to the process”

Implications for Art therapy & Synch:

surface of table in art therapy a top line of conscious

admixture in art making → where synch happens (between conscious and unconscious)

potential for synch to occur in response drawings

synch thought to be different in art therapy than in talk therapy

referring to Bright, synch may be seen as clinical approach to art therapy

synch may be “going on all the time”

we “invite falling together of psyche and matter in a way that creates meaning... in every session in art therapy.”

Synch happens a lot in transference: to therapist, to media, to images.

In a way “we cultivate synch in art therapy”

But, we don’t cause synch.

“we do make the conditions available”

cause = no; engage with = yes

art/image is not limited to the created object, but is a “performance in the world”

object is a “souvenir,” a “remembrance for [the meaning]” (if you see Buddha, kill him)

the object endures in art therapy = different from talk therapy

Roberta Shoemaker” significance of 1st drawing in art therapy as map of the journey to come

Implied teleology of the Self (purpose, strive toward meaning)

“properties and qualities [of materials] that come to life within their use” = psychoid realm

I reflect “art therapy is alchemy” participant agrees

Examples:

sometimes synch is felt by client in their choice of therapist (confirming their choice – e.g. addressed directly with client who chose her after seeing her presentation)

synch in internships (at beginning of training)

be careful, hold/pause the experience before reacting

Jung saw synch events when transferences and countertransference were activated

e.g. transference image in art therapy (blonde woman + futility of therapy)

client’s and therapist’s image + process mirrored one another

selection of art media can “mirror need for reparative experience” (e.g. uncontrollable drool & use of glue and popsicle sticks)

Caveats:

“holding [synch] in therapy with great respect”

risks inflating ego

must be looked at with “critical eye”

Is it about “selective attention?”

Synch has no intrinsic ethics (we choose)

How we construe it needs to be ethically considered (e.g. infidelity example)

we should consider “relational ethics” of situation (how it affects all involved)

years later, there may be a different meaning (meaning can fluctuate over time)

“...generally I’ve not disclosed”

up to the client to notice and initiate processing

can’t let own material “overtake client’s”

synch can be unhealthy, psychosis (in response drawing e.g., schizo in-patient)

in this case, he needed a “reparative relationship to some of that intermixture... with boundaries”

Synch may be seen as coming from Self to ego (beyond realm of ethics)

“ethical reflection” is key

beware of the trickster archetype in synch

“hold synch experience in hand and look at it”

Discussion: who is the experience for? (I ask)

both client and therapist

best interests of client must be in mind

Appendix F: Axial Codes: Themes – Interview 3

AXIAL CODING ~ INTERVIEW 3**Therapist's Impressions:**

“Synchronicity is happening a lot in my life throughout the years.”

It was a synchronistic experience that brought her to the profession of art therapy.

Perfect timing

Right timing: Reading something at the right time

“it just seemed like the right thing to say” (intuition?) “...just came out of my mouth”

“...it just popped out of my mouth.” (accident/unplanned/spontaneous)

Sometimes you have these moments and sometimes not → (occasional? special?

Unplanned?)

“Different than the usual type of intervention”

Observed Reactions:

Something special/atypical/unique about experience: “I don't remember ever saying anything like that to any other client.... it was the first time...”

Seemed like the perfect time

Connection

“...just seemed like the right thing at the right time.”

“...he totally changed. Everything totally changed.”

All of the sudden, whole thinking and being changed.

“it just clicked”

“after that he just started building things”

afterwards a positive change “everything seemed to change”

The relationship was different from any other r-ship this client had had in that it was trusting and un-punishing.

“He was ready to hear it.”

Something clicks all of the sudden.

“freaky”

“...you need something and all of the sudden it's there.”

Therapist's role:

Therapist takes a watching/witnessing stance

Non-directive therapy

Safety and trust felt important

Trust required in order for client to hear/accept therapist's timed comments/interventions knowing as a therapist vs. hoping (re: when a client is ready for an intervention)

faith in the client

“...maybe I was supposed to be there with that little boy at the right time.” → synch. as therapeutic r-ship

Therapist takes a stance of going according to the needs of the client(s) at any given time.

Being open to what's going to happen with the client.” → open to what happens

Offering appropriate materials according to needs

Sometimes client knows what they want and they tell you (consciousness?)

Implications for Art therapy & Synch:

“...art therapy is a powerful medium...”

art therapy is “a way to externalize something that was internal and be accepted.”

Materials facilitate r-ship.

AT is a non-stressful way of externalizing

Catharsis (externalizing) vs. holding things in (internalizing)

Synch. may be used as a tool: as intuitiveness + in-tuneness (aspects of r-ship)

Examples:

e.g. 1: 12 yr. old boy working with marble:

Just learning something before it's needed (preparedness/readiness/foresight?)

After right words (i.e. synch event), creating and building became possible for a destructive client.

Synch. event came after a period of destructive catharsis → spontaneous intervention following access to right information

e.g. 2: running a women's group after taking a dream workshop

e.g. 3: native boy + leather work (synch??)

e.g. 4: 5 yr. old and mourning gr. Father's death through self-directed drawings (unblocked learning delays) → goodness of fit with regards to media and intuition

Caveats:

Disclosing synch. depends on r-ship and whether it will help the client.

Everyone may benefit when something clicks → shared benefit + shared meaning

Readiness/clicking/growth

“...timing is very important”

Therapist may also benefit