

Reimagining Attunement: Perspectives on Dyadic and Family Art Therapy

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Abstract

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This research paper looks at various perspectives on the application of relational models in art therapy, through a theoretical literature review including attachment theory, object relations, and systems models. The role of the secure base (Bowlby, 1969), attunement (Stern, 1995), mentalization (Fonagy, 1997), and symbolic play (Klein, 1927; Meins et al., 1997) will be explored in their potential to enhance relationships. This inquiry is framed by the question: How can a critical analysis and integration of attachment theory and object relations theory inform a clinical understanding of attunement within dyadic and family art therapy? These theoretical frameworks will be compared to inform an integrated approach to relational art therapy, which may be used to facilitate parent-child attunement, and engage the capacity for symbolization as a tool for working through relational issues. The role of attunement through self-expression, witnessing and response that occur within the art therapeutic relationship (Malchiodi, 2011), as well as the role of the materials and their symbolic potential (Proulx, 2004) are considered. Looking at attachment through various cultural lenses, models are applied as a proposed support for art therapists addressing relational issues within transcultural contexts.

Keywords: art therapy, attunement, attachment, object relations, family systems, culture

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Introduction

Art therapy is an integrative healing modality with the potential to attend to both inner and outer realities (Riley & Malchiodi, 1994). Art therapy provides a way to express inner experiences with the aim of bringing about life changes, including enhanced interpersonal relationships. This research paper addresses the role of relational attunement in art therapy, particularly in working with parent-child dyad and family relationships.

Many art therapists use attachment theory as a model to understand the art therapeutic relationship, as well as the role of art expression in helping clients work through issues occurring within their close relationships (Malchiodi, 2011). Attachment theory describes how experiences of care and bonding within primary relationships shape early development, and may influence patterns of relating across the lifespan (Ainsworth & Bell, 1970; Bowlby, 1960). Object relations is a stream of psychoanalytic thought which includes Klein's (1975) elucidation of the child's inner world through symbolic play and Winnicott's insights into *transitional phenomena*, *facilitating environment* and *potential space* (Hughes, 1989). In this research paper I will explore the question: How can a critical analysis and integration of attachment theory and object relations inform a clinical understanding of attunement within dyadic and family art therapy? The aim is to discover the strengths and limitations of various theoretical frameworks, in order to apply a deeper understanding of attunement within relational art therapy practice.

Attunement is a sense of knowing others through physical and emotional resonance, providing a sense of connection, reciprocity and meaningful response (Erskine, 1998). It can also be experienced as harmony within the self, in "psychological, emotional, and somatic state(s) of consciousness" (Kossack, 2009, p. 14). Affect attunement is proposed to be the basis for the development of meaningful communication in early life (Stern, 1985). Successful attunement in therapy provides the foundation for repairing mental and emotional harm. A sense of safety and continuity is established through entrained affective and sensory interactive processes. Stern (2010) described attunement as a "language of vitality" expressed through forms of artistic expression as well as commonplace movements and gestures of communication (p. 81). Misattunement occurs when this sense of continuous connection is disrupted.

Therapeutic attunement involves a sense of connection, empathy, spontaneity and play (Kossack, 2009). Attunement can promote a strong therapeutic alliance, one best predictors of positive therapeutic outcomes (Ackerman & Hilsenroth, 2003). Misattunement within the

therapeutic relationship can cause clients to feel misunderstood or uncared for, and in extreme cases can be experienced as abusive or re-traumatizing. However, purposeful misattunement (Stern, 1985) can serve psychological development, if experienced within a safe environment that allows the client to reflect on and integrate past experiences of inadequate attunement. The concept of attunement has been applied to both interpersonal and creative processes in expressive arts therapies. Expressive arts therapies provide the opportunity to experience attunement and harmony, as well as dissonance and discomfort, potentially enhancing the clients' capacity for exploration and improvisation, ultimately promoting therapeutic change (Kossack, 2009). This process may also enhance attunement and security within familial relationships.

This research paper considers the role of attunement within relational art therapy, as well as explores how cultural considerations intersect with theoretical frameworks. This will address a gap in existing knowledge; while there is plenty of research on the subject of attachment theory applied to art therapy, as well as cross-cultural considerations in art therapy, there is insufficient research addressing the intersection of these fields, which I believe is important to ensure cultural sensitivity and efficacy in a relational art therapy practice. This work will provide a limited introduction to the wide range of cultural considerations in therapeutic work with parent-child dyads and families, with the hope to encourage future research developments.

Methodology

I took a theoretical approach to address the research question, incorporating bibliographical and philosophical methods of inquiry. A literature review compared different branches of development in attachment theory, object relations, and other relational models, looking at the variation in descriptive concepts around attunement. Junge and Linesch (1993) have stated that theoretical research reviews existing theories and integrates their content with the goal of creating a new theory or form of knowledge. This process identifies potential limitations of theoretical frameworks and finds a way for these to be addressed in order to create a new theory that is "more integrated, comprehensive and powerful" (p. 65). This research paper used the theoretical method in order to explore various models and attempt to establish an orientation for art therapy practice that addresses personal relationships within cultural context.

Primary and secondary texts, and academic journal publications in the fields of attachment theory, object relations, art therapy, family therapy, social work, and critical theory have provided the data for this inquiry. Examples of current art therapy practice are included. A

process of logical analysis, evaluation, and synthesis were used to reach a new perspective on how theoretical approaches touch on the concept of attunement (Junge & Linesch, 1993). Ainsworth (1969) stated that object relations and attachment theory study the same phenomena from different theoretical perspectives. Object relations deals with inner experience from a psychoanalytic perspective, and attachment theory deals with observable actions from a behavioural perspective. Based on a synthesized analysis of these theories, I propose a more integrated theoretical perspective to inform art therapy practice.

The literature review explores and compares concepts that pertain to attunement in dyadic and family art therapy. Strengths, weaknesses and limitations of each theoretical approach were evaluated, as well as the level of compatibility or conflict between theories. Structural and holistic coding was performed manually to categorize theoretical concepts into areas of relevance, which informed the structure of data presentation (Saldana, 2012). Throughout the paper, definitions are given to clarify theoretical concepts.

This inquiry was informed by ethical considerations. As Kapitan (2014) stated, "every research study has an ethical substructure that is best attended to holistically" (p. 195). The main ethical consideration in this paper involved conducting a cross-comparison of literature in a systematic way to provide a balanced view of various perspectives, while remaining aware of my subjective response and bracketing my personal opinions. Another ethical consideration of this research pertained to the proposed clinical implications and recommendations stemming from this theoretical inquiry. The goal was to provide a strong theoretical foundation for a practice that emphasizes cultural awareness and versatility. Recommendations are tentative with the intention of opening dialogues into further inquiry in the field of art therapy.

Including cultural considerations was another ethical principle underlying this research project. The Ethical Code of American Art Therapy Association (2013) states that:

Multicultural and Diversity Competence in art therapy refers to the capacity of art therapists to continually acquire cultural and diversity awareness of and knowledge about cultural diversity with regard to self and others, and to successfully apply these skills in practice with clients. Art therapists maintain multicultural and diversity competence to provide treatment interventions and strategies that include awareness of and responsiveness to cultural issues (p. 7).

Several other codes of ethics recognize the imperative for therapists to perform effectively in transcultural contexts. Attachment intersects with many cultural factors, which should be considered when addressing relational issues in therapy, hence my taking a critical approach.

Talwar et al. (2004) discussed the problem of ethnocentric monoculturalism, expressing concern over the inadequate inclusion of cross-cultural issues within art therapy discourse, regarding "culture, race or ethnicity, gender, religion, historical experiences within the dominant culture, sexual orientation, disability, socioeconomic status, education, political views, lifestyle, and geographic regions" (p. 44). This raises questions about the ability to work effectively with cultural difference in art therapy. Clinicians have a professional responsibility to improve our cultural knowledge, awareness and competency. This research will consider the role of cultural considerations in using a relational approach to art therapy. While the paper is not of a large enough scope to fully address the ethical and clinical implications of utilizing relational art therapy frameworks in diverse cultural contexts, the intention is to include a preliminary consideration of intersectional issues between attachment theory, dyadic/ family therapy and art therapy within a transcultural practice, and encourage future research into these topics.

Through a cross-comparison of historical and current perspectives, we may question and challenge the values and assumptions underlying theoretical concepts around attunement. The intention is to gain a more nuanced understanding of attunement within dyadic and family relationships as well as the therapeutic relationship, in order to formulate a more integrated theoretical stance which may be applied to art therapy practice.

Chapter One: Theoretical Foundations of Attachment-Based Art Therapy

Attachment theory is one of the most comprehensive models for understanding individual differences in interpersonally-oriented thoughts, feelings, and behaviours, as they occur within close relationships (Agishtein & Brumbaugh, 2013). John Bowlby (1969) first posited a biologically based *attachment system*, a dynamic behavioral system that facilitates the formation of a bond between infants and their¹ caregivers. Bowlby (1969) proposed that in early infancy the attachment pattern is based in the relationship with caregivers and, as the child matures, achieves an internal organization, becoming increasingly resistant to change over time. Bowlby

¹ Throughout the paper I often use the terms "they" and "their" referring to an individual when a specific gender is not indicated. This is to avoid assumptions of binary gender, by not using "him" or "her". When citing literature, authors' indications of gender may be left as is.

also described the ability of infants and children to develop mental representations of caregivers, which are held internally through cognitive processes. These mental representations allow the child to tolerate separation and distance by summoning an awareness of the attachment figure and sustaining a sense of continuity, anticipating reunion. As the infant or child begins to sense their caregiver as available and reliable, they establish a *secure base* of connection from which to begin exploring the world beyond these primary relationships.

Early experiences of attachment, exploration and separation were demonstrated by Ainsworth and Bell's (1970) Strange Situation studies. From an ethological perspective, these researchers described the evolutionary basis for children and mothers to seek balance between attachment and exploration, through reciprocal behaviours. Attachment promotes nurturance and protection of the infant, whereas exploration promotes learning and knowledge of the physical environment. Ainsworth and Bell described attachment as a bond between mother and child that is expressed through proximity and endures over time and occasions of separation. Infants learn to organize and direct their behaviour towards the primary caregiver (typically the mother) through active contact-seeking and communication. Over time, there is a mutual progression towards a more flexible attachment bond that allows for the child's increased exploration.

The Strange Situation procedure was created to observe behavioural changes that illustrate the shifting balance between attachment and exploration in child development (Ainsworth & Bell, 1970). This pioneer study has been repeated in various contexts. Performed with a mother, a one-year-old child and a stranger, the procedure begins with a familiar mother-child situation, and progresses through episodes involving the arrival of a stranger and the mother's departure. The researchers observed children's contact-seeking, communicative and exploratory behaviours to be contingent on the mother's response. In most children, the mother's departure reduced exploratory behaviour, and her return increased this behaviour. Seeking proximity and maintaining contact with the mother also increased after episodes of her absence.

Based on these observations, Ainsworth and Bell (1970) identified three main attachment styles that described children's level of ability to use their mothers as a secure base from which to explore. These styles are categorized as *secure*, *anxious-avoidant* and *ambivalent/resistant*. Babies with a *secure attachment* cried less, greeted their mothers positively more often, and responded more positively to the mother. They recovered more quickly from the mother's absence. Mothers of securely attached children were generally found to be more sensitive and

responsive to the child's cues. An *anxious-avoidant* style was indicated for children who were less exploratory, very distressed by separation and not easily comforted upon her return. An *ambivalent-resistant* style indicated children who were less exploratory and showed little emotional response to their mothers. The mothers of the babies with these insecure attachment styles tended to be less sensitive and responsive to their babies. In particular, they showed a delayed response to crying, and a lack of physical affection. Ainsworth and Bell (1970) proposed that *ambivalent-resistant* style resulted from the child's experience of inconsistent and unpredictable response to their needs by a caregiver. Main and Solomon (1990) later identified a *disorganized* attachment style, characterized by the child being flooded with a fear response.

Ainsworth and Bell's (1970) research highlighted the crucial role of caregiver responsiveness in child development, and supported Bowlby's (1969) theory of the attachment system and the 'secure base'. Increased exploration, as encouraged by secure attachment, has important implications for children in areas of learning and social development. Optimal child development requires a balance between attachment and exploratory behaviours.

Attachment and Attunement

Attunement is a form of responsiveness to relational needs (Erskine, 1998). Contemporary attachment research emphasizes interpersonal communication processes that contribute to the formation of attachment bonds. Stern's (1995) investigation into the infant's interpersonal world bridged the fields of developmental psychology and psychoanalysis, by drawing inferences based on behavioural observations of mother-infant dyads. Stern proposed that caregivers support infants' emerging sense of self by communicating with them in a meaningful way, treating them as "the people they are about to become" (p. 43).

There is a growing recognition of the importance of caregivers' capacity to regulate their own emotional responses, which in turn influences the child's regulation through an interactive process (Schoore & Schoore, 2008; Schuder & Lyons-Ruth, 2004). Caregivers often align communication and physical activity to match the child's state, so that the dyad is on the same level and the child is more ready to be guided by the caregiver (Siegel, 1999). Art therapy uses alignment and attunement within interactive creative processes. According to clients' needs, art materials may be selected which possess qualities that match or balance emotional states, in order to establish attunement within a continuum of aesthetic experience (Hinz, 2009).

Attunement involves affectively charged implicit communication. Caregivers attune with their babies by mirroring the child's expression of feelings and needs with responsive gestures. Stern (1985) proposed the importance of *purposeful misattunement*, which caregivers can use to shift the child's emotional state by over or under-matching the infant's expression in terms of intensity, timing, or behavioural shape. Purposeful misattunement goes beyond mirroring to incite a change in affect while sustaining a sense of connection. This occurrence of "theme and variation" play within the dyadic interaction encourages the infant's potential for autonomy and differentiation. Specific misattuned moments can contribute to the overall vitality of the relationship. This principle can be used in creative and aesthetic expression in art therapy (Kossack, 2009). The art therapeutic relationship may provide the context for *contingent communication* in which the child receives a response that resonates with their emotional experience. The art therapist can model, support and encourage the parent in providing a contingent response. The artwork also plays a communicative role. Both parent and child benefit from the experience of witnessing the artwork as an object having some form of congruence with their inner worlds. The possibilities afforded by art materials can encourage the caregiver to meaningfully communicate with their child in a way that increases the child's sense of security and trust within the relationship. This may enhance the child's epistemic trust, the sense that human communication can be relied upon (Buck & Havsteen-Franklin, 2013).

Attachment-Based Dyadic Interventions

Several interventions have been developed based on attachment research, which aim to enhance child-caregiver interactions, support the development of secure attachment, and address children's behavioral problems. These can provide a model for art therapy to move towards empirically supported treatments to promote attachment. Parent-child interventions have been successful in modifying behavioural interactions. However, families with the greatest need have been shown to benefit least from these interventions (Lundahl et al., 2006; Reyno & McGrath 2006; Webster-Stratton & Hammond 1990, as cited in Galanter et al., 2012). Efforts have been made to adapt programs to address environmental risks for insecure attachment.

Parent-child interaction therapy (PCIT). PCIT is an evidence-based behavioural training program, which has been adapted as a brief home-based intervention in order to meet the needs of diverse populations, using a community model. Adaptations aimed to address differences in family attitudes, beliefs and behaviors that are relevant to the treatment, or modify target

behaviours to be contextually appropriate. These adaptations are intended to ensure that efficacy of the intervention is transferable across contexts (Eynberg, 2005).

Parent-child attunement therapy. This adaptation of PCIT was developed to address the primary attachment relationships of toddlers with a history of maltreatment (Dombrowski, Timmer, Blacker, & Urquiza, 2005). The goals of this intervention are to strengthen caregiver-child relationships and support caregivers in learning effective techniques for managing their child's behavior. The program involves caregiver coaching and comprehensive assessment of the caregiver-child interaction pattern. Objectives include increasing the caregiver's attentiveness to the child's positive behaviour, reducing attention to inappropriate behaviour, and coaching caregivers to support the child's play by following rather than directing. Non-directive communication skills are emphasized, such as praising, describing and reflecting behaviour. The program is designed to affirm and strengthen the parent's skills.

Environmental risks may impede or complicate progress of treatment, for example by elevating parents' defensive response to coaching methods (Dombrowski et al., 2005). Parent-child interventions can benefit from incorporating a global assessment of environmental risk factors such as marital conflict, unstable housing and community violence. Further research can improve our understanding of how potential risk factors interact with assessment and treatment methods, in order to develop interventions that promote caregiver resilience and coping skills.

Modified interaction guidance (MIG). The original Interaction Guidance (McDonough, 2000) was developed to support families with a history of social adversity who may be challenging to engage therapeutically. The modified treatment involves providing video-feedback to caregivers. The primary goal is to enhance adaptive caregiver responsiveness through positive attunement behaviours, including appropriate physical orientation and proximity, face-to-face and eye contact, and contingent response to the child's cues. Secondly, MIG aims to reduce disrupted caregiver behaviours in several dimensions such as affective errors, role/boundary confusion, fearful/disoriented behaviour, intrusiveness/negativity, and withdrawal. In a study of caregiver-infant dyads referred for treatment based on relational disturbances attributed to a disorganized attachment style, findings suggested that socioeconomic status may represent a marker of resistance to the attachment intervention (Madigan et al., 2006). The authors expressed caution against over-generalizing these findings. As with PCAT research,

the limitations of MIG suggest that further research is needed to address environmental risk factors and adapt interventions appropriately (Dombrowski et al., 2005; Madigan et al., 2006).

The research outlined here provides examples of current evidence-based practice in attachment-based intervention. In general, the field of art therapy has not kept up with the trend in psychology towards evidence-based practice (EBP). Many art therapists have expressed reticence towards efforts to integrate art therapy and evidence-based practice (Bauer, Peck, Studebaker and Yu, 2015). The benefits of EBP include the promotion of "collaborative patient care, improvement of practitioner accountability, assistance in making the most effective decisions, and engagement of patients in the decision-making process" (p. 31). One of the main shortcomings of EBP is the omission of the therapeutic relationship as a central therapeutic factor. Art therapists' use of attunement can be encouraged and developed through training and practice, but cannot be easily standardized (Erskine, 1998). This consideration is relevant as to how the use of attunement in therapy can fit into an evidence-based model. Therefore, more research is needed into the intersection of EBT, art therapy, and attunement as a therapeutic tool.

Adult attachment representations: Influence on parent-child relationship

Art therapists need to utilize attunement on multiple levels: individually with each member of the dyad or family, within the family as a whole, and within the art therapeutic relationship (Levine, 2015). It is important to be sensitive and aware of parents' mental states. As Bowlby (1969) described, infants' and young children's behaviour is strongly contingent on the response of their primary caregivers, as they are dependent on these caregivers in order to survive and develop. Bowlby (1969) also proposed an effect of parents' own attachment representations on their parenting behaviours, and the subsequent development of the child.

The idea of attachment patterns enduring through generations was supported by Benoit (1997), who demonstrated that attachment styles could be predictably transmitted over three generations, as explained by a parent-child model. Additionally, maternal disrupted behaviour has been linked with the mother's disorganized attachment representations, supporting Bowlby's model (Madigan, Moran, Schungel, Pederson, & Otten, 2007). Further research has explored how attachment styles may transition from insecure to secure from one generation to the next, based on mental processes (Shah, Fonagy, & Strathearn, 2010).

Summary. The research reviewed so far has described attachment-related constructs through empirical studies. These include noteworthy findings with the potential to enrich

attachment intervention goals. Divergent findings suggest that more emphasis is needed on understanding environmental risk factors for insecure attachment in child-caregiver relationships.

Many parent-child interventions involve attunement within the dyad. Dyadic attunement can be observed behaviorally through levels of connectedness, joint attention, and reciprocity, and is associated with shared positive affect (Woltering, Lishak, Elliott, Ferraro, & Granic, 2015). As research continues to clarify dyadic attunement, this knowledge may be applied to promote attunement within parent-child dyads through the use of art therapy.

Developments in Attachment Research: Narrative and Arts-Based Approaches

There is a growing body of research that includes qualitative, art-based and narrative approaches to gathering data about attachment relationships and their representations. These research methods can reveal nuances and enhance the richness of our knowledge. Expressive and narrative clinical approaches provide the means through which clients can communicate their lived experiences, thereby bringing about multiple perspectives and new possibilities (Malchiodi, 2011; White and Epston, 1990). This process of creatively reworking one's life stories can deepen the understanding and connection within the therapeutic relationship, with the potential to enhance attunement and promote change. The following studies demonstrate innovative developments in attachment research which align with these clinical goals.

Longitudinal, intergenerational research examined the role of *mental representations* in child-caregiver relationships directly following children's placement in an adoptive home (Steele, Hodges, Kaniuk, & Steele, 2010). The concept of mental representations describes the hopes, expectations and fantasies of children and parents. This study used the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI) to identify parental attachment patterns based on reflections of their own childhood, which can be compared to their current parent-child relationship (Main et al., 1985). It has been shown that parent's thoughts and feelings about their own upbringing better predict the current attachment pattern than direct observations of the parent-child relationship.

The Story Stem Assessment (SSAP) is a narrative method for gaining insight into children's thoughts and feelings (Hodges & Hillman, 2004). Children are presented with a story opening that depicts family life, and then asked to continue the narrative verbally or in images. Using family story stems can elicit attachment-related themes as well as information about the child's sense of security, ability to set boundaries, and capacity for affect regulation. The SSAP has been used to measure attachment styles in children. Using the SSAP, Steele et al. (2010)

showed that children with a history of maltreatment who were late adopted showed more negative insecure themes, and fewer positive secure themes than the group adopted early. However, both groups showed a progression towards more secure themes. This suggests that new mental representations can be formed based on experiences of increased supportive care.

Children's mentalization may be enhanced by caregivers' ability to process emotions and confer reparative themes, reducing the child's anxiety. Therefore, children with internal models of disorganized attachment can change their mental representations in the presence of a supportive and attuned caregiver who lends the child their own more secure and positive mental representations (Steele et al., 2010). This has clinical implications regarding the potential for evolving mental representations within the child-caregiver relationship through dyadic and family art therapy interventions. The role of mental representations in attachment and psychological development will be further addressed in Chapter 2.

Feminist arts-based attachment research. Feminist research seeks to mitigate the power imbalance between researcher and subject, often with a shift towards co-participation. Buchanan, Power, and Verity (2014) performed research with a feminist perspective studying the experience of mother-infant dyads who lived under the threat of domestic violence. Innovative qualitative methods included interviews, focus groups and arts-based instruments. A person-centered approach was used to promote empowerment and collaboration. Research methods incorporated therapeutic principles such as empathy, exploration and reflection.

Focus groups explored the impact of domestic violence on the mother-child relationship, through expressive forms including written word, collage and clay. Contextual themes were explored such as lack of support, abuse by partners and social isolation. Personal narratives portrayed how these women often faced sustained emotional and physical hostility from their partners, which had a negative influence on the mother-child relationship. Relationship themes were examined, including protectiveness, recognizing and responding to emotions, and keeping their child in mind. The mothers explored their experiences of creating space to relate and bond with their child, identifying their hopes for their children, and accessing support and knowledge. They were aware of their relational space being compromised by domestic conflict, and described how they formed protective strategies and sacrificed their own goals, such as those related to work and education, in order to find spare moments alone with their child.

These findings (Buchanan et al., 2014) challenge some basic premises of attachment theory. These researchers argued that in some situations, protection of the child takes priority over attachment, and this may interfere with the mother-child bonding process. The authors suggest potential implications for policy and practice, including emphasizing the need to consider the circumstances in which attachment relationships occur, addressing the role of protectiveness, and creating a safe space for attunement and bonding. This research provides evidence for a strength-based approach aimed at enhancing positive aspects of the attachment relationship, rather than setting the reduction of disruptive behaviour as a primary objective. In cases where the parent-child relationship is focused on basic survival and safety, art therapy may help reactivate attachment processes and facilitate bonding (Malchiodi, 2014).

Cultural Perspectives on Attachment

Researchers have explored the influence of cultural factors on attachment relationships (Bretherton, 1992; Keller, 2012; Van Ijzendoorn & Kroonenberg, 1998). While norms and ideals regarding attachment behaviour differ across cultural contexts including country of origin, acculturation, and ethnicity, it has been shown that a strong cultural identity is associated with secure attachment (Agishtein & Brumbaugh, 2013). Therefore promoting expression of cultural identity in art therapy may enhance attunement and security.

Attachment theory has been critiqued for emphasizing values of psychological autonomy which are not relevant to all cultures (Keller, 2013). Bowlby (1988) acknowledged cultural variance in how different communities meet essential childcare functions. He stressed the importance of social support for parents in raising their children. A culturally sensitive framework that is attuned to differences in values, family structure, cultural traditions and social support can strengthen art therapy practice.

Attachment studies have established that the *secure base* phenomenon occurs across cultures (Ainsworth, 1978; Van Ijzendoorn & Kroonenberg, 1988). However, other attachment constructs show cultural variance. Research has demonstrated that attachment behaviours vary across cultural contexts, and are influenced by individual traits. Furthermore, cultural biases may interfere with assessment of caregiver responsiveness (Lordelo, 2002; Pasada & Jacobs, 2001, as cited in Ribas & Siedl-de-Moura, 2004). This has implications for methodology in measuring caregiver responsiveness. Variance in caregiving practices and attachment styles exists within cultures even more than between cultures, which suggests that assumptions about

culture may impede our understanding of attachment (Van Ijzendoorn & Kroonenberg, 1988). Rather, it is preferable to allow clients to guide us in understanding their unique experience.

Cross-cultural research has generally, though not universally, indicated that a secure attachment style is the most common classification across cultures, and is the most beneficial for children's psychosocial development. Therefore, according to Cassidy, Jones, and Shaver (2013), "we urgently need evaluations of comprehensive theory and research-based intervention protocols that can be widely implemented among families whose infants and children are at elevated risk for developing or maintaining insecure attachments" (p. 23). These authors proposed that researchers should continue to develop models to describe contextual differences in attachment related issues, including parenting, co-parenting, community care, environmental harshness and instability, conflict, and war. In addition, I would suggest further research on issues related to the roles of privilege and oppression in various forms of difference, for example socio-economic disparity, ethnicity, racialized identities, religion, gender, sexuality, age, disability status, differing developmental paths and neurodiversity.

Bretherton (1992) recommended further research for developing ecologically valid measures of attachment based in a deeper knowledge of "culture-specific folk theories about family relationships and attachment"(p. 771). A more culturally informed application of attachment theory would take into account both universal propensities and socio-cultural variation, in order to refine our models and address potential cultural biases.

Art therapists have demonstrated that art therapy interventions are appropriate to the task of promoting enhanced attachment security (Malchiodi, 2014; Proulx, 2003). The non-verbal communication and implicit relational qualities of art therapy may be especially well-suited to working within cultural difference, allowing the art therapist to attune to clients' unique modes of self-expression. Continuing to challenge and refine underlying theories will enhance our practice of relational art therapy. I advocate for this to include a critical analysis of gender roles in caregiving and a view towards caregiver responsiveness as a non-deterministic, culturally flexible, and therefore more valid and generally applicable concept.

Attachment-Based Art Therapy Practice

Art therapy approaches have developed alongside attachment research. An understanding of attachment is essential for parent-child dyad and family art therapy. Creative and expressive therapies may be especially amenable for attachment -based work. The art therapeutic

relationship has the potential to recapitulate early experiences and enhance a sense of attunement and security (Malchiodi, 2014). Art provides an array of visual and other types of information that may catalyze the process of change (Riley, 1985). Parent-child dyad work in particular has a strong foundation in attachment theory (Proulx, 2003). Art therapy provides interactions similar to those naturally occurring between children and caregivers, for example bodily engagement and non-verbal communication. Art-mediated interpersonal touch within art therapy can communicate care, support, warmth, and respect (Hass-Cohen, Kim, & Mangassarian, 2015).

The attachment experience of infants is of great interest for therapists. Following a long tradition, Sternberg (2005) suggested that infant observation could serve to develop capacities in psychotherapy training. Infant observation has been a part of art therapy training, especially for art therapists working with young children (Case & Dalley, 2014). Infant observation training provides the art therapist with a keen understanding of infants' and children's high level of sensitivity to the quality of responsiveness and care, as well as direct experience of early modes of communication and behaviour. Infant observation can enhance awareness of developmental processes, promote insight, and strengthen the use of attunement in art therapy. Images produced by a child in art therapy can be used as an opening into the child's world, a window into their internalized ways of having been seen, received and held since infancy (Zago, 2008).

The following section will outline key developments in attachment-based art therapy which directly involve the parent-infant relationship in treatment, or utilize an understanding of early relational experience to inform therapeutic approaches and objectives.

Parent-child dyad art therapy. It has been shown that treatment of children may be more effective when their parents are involved (Oren, 2012). The practice of dyadic intervention as a distinct modality has emerged from eclectic theoretical influence of attachment theory, object relations, family therapy and mother-child matrix theory (Dancette De-Bresson, 2016). Therefore, while attachment is a major theoretical support, dyadic art therapy can be viewed more generally as a relational modality. Art therapy provides a natural context for the dyad's mutual attunement, by "engaging the body in repetitive, rhythmic, tactile, auditory, olfactory and other sensory aspects" similar to bonding experiences between a child and their caregiver (Malchiodi, 2011, p. 37). Engaging sensory processes through art may enhance parent-child attunement (Malchiodi, 2014).

Art therapy pioneer, Rubin (1984) asserted that “unquestionably, the most important and influential dyad in a child’s life is himself and his mother” (p. 150). She observed that mother and child are often the most highly conflicted relationship within the family. Art therapy engages this dyad's dynamics by externalizing mental representations through creative play. The dyad can then gain awareness and insight into each other's perspectives and repair conflicts.

Part of the therapeutic value of art making may be in actively challenging one's functioning capacities. Kramer (1979), another prominent originator of art therapy, stated that:

...as we introduce children and adults to art we find them coming to it from opposite positions. The child comes from a life still dominated by fantasy and play, the adult from the responsibilities of the real world. The adult must at once become more playful... and the child must transcend play (p. 44).

In this view, attunement within dyadic art therapy may be seen as a form of interchange whereby the child and parent come closer to each other's perspectives, through the creative process.

Proulx (2003) has been a key figure in developing an approach to strengthening attachment bonds through art therapy. Proulx's dyadic art therapy approach has been widely used in a variety of settings. This model involves engaging the parent to collaborate in the creative process with their child and undergo their own healing of unresolved issues from the past, through the current parent-child relationship. Proulx emphasized that in dyadic work, the art therapist is treating the relationship as a whole, facilitating a process where the parent and child become each other's therapists. The art therapist acts as a third party whose knowledge of infant psychology and child development supports the process of attunement and reparation. The parent's past conflicts often influence the relationship with their child. Fears and anxieties from their own childhood may resurface as memories are stimulated by their child's development. The artwork is essential in creating a symbolic container within which the dyad may connect with unresolved attachment dynamics. Proulx advocated for treating the entire family within dyads, for example mother-child and then father-child concurrently, so that neither parent disrupts the other's therapeutic exploration of one-on-one dynamics with the child.

Art therapy can be used to enhance children's natural inclination for visual, kinetic and tactile stimulation. Internal models and schemas of the developing self may emerge through children's' first attempts at representation through artwork. The creative process encompasses a variety of activities and materials. Precursory art activities like scribbling and smearing provide

experiences of pleasure, self-expression and communication. Encouraging the dyad to playfully scribble together may contribute to their mutual reflective capacity (Malchiodi, 2014). Art materials offer an experience based in symbolization and metaphor. Familiar household materials can relax inhibitions and evoke powerful symbolic content. For example, flour and salt may symbolize nourishment. The act of attaching, with materials such as tape and string, can represent the parent-child bond. Boxes and trays are often used to communicate boundaries (Proulx, 2003, p. 71). The creative process may reflect attachment processes of proximity, separation and distance. Symbolic qualities of art making can promote implicit communication.

Engagement with art materials can cause deep unconscious conflicts to emerge within the dyad. The art therapist makes use of ritual and boundaries to help contain anxiety. Careful selection and built-in controls of the art materials can maintain a sense of safety and security. Parents should be encouraged to join the child's developmental level and follow the child's lead in collaborative art making. The goal is that parents become more self-aware and cooperative, learning to view their children as individuals and better understand their needs (Proulx, 2003).

Regression to the infant's level can bring up unconscious conflicts for parents, and evoke experiences of insight. This can be difficult for many parents. Adults often activate strong defences against engaging in childlike creative play (Proulx, 2003, p. 38). The art therapist should create a therapeutic alliance with the parent, support their personal growth and healing, and refer them to individual therapy if appropriate. This calls for patience and empathy on the part of the art therapist as the parent becomes more vulnerable. This process can have a powerful transformative effect on family dynamics, potentially presenting new ways of experiencing and relating to one another and changing the course of intergenerational patterns.

Artwork may be taken home as a *transitional object* that reminds the parent and child of the creative experience. According to Proulx (2003), dyadic art therapy should provide a frame that is "stable enough to allow changes to happen" by establishing a balance between structured directives and free play (p. 66). This is comparable to Rubin's (1978) approach of providing a "framework for freedom" in child art therapy.

Joint painting procedure. Joint painting may be used as an art-based evaluation, to provide information about two main developmental tasks of parent-child dyads: (a) the parent's ability to supervise the child in support of the child's developing capacity for self-management in the service of individuation, and (b) the ability to maintain a positive and close relationship with

each other (Gavron & Mayseless, 2015). Initial evaluation of the parent-child relationship can be used to support further insights in the dyad's therapeutic process.

In the Joint Painting Procedure, the dyad is led through a structured process, first working adjacently on the same piece of paper and gradually working together to establish a shared space. This involves creating and framing a personal area, then each forming a bridge of connection to paint together. This process can convey important relational dynamics such as separation/individuation, parental intrusiveness towards the child, role reversal and mutual recognition, motivation and investment in the relationship, and the capacity for emotional expression. Non-verbal communication may help the parent and child to express emotions, improve the parent's responsiveness to their child's distress, and assist the parent to better understand and manage their own feelings within the relationship. Joint painting creates a tangible reflection of relationship qualities and conveys key themes that support the art therapist's understanding of dynamics. The procedure also provides parent and child a view into each other's inner worlds, which may promote attunement and bonding within the relationship (Gavron & Mayseless, 2015).

Treating attachment disorders with art therapy. Art therapy aims to address a wide range of presenting attachment patterns. *Reactive attachment disorder* is characterized by failure to attach to any caregiving figure. Detrimental early experiences of abuse and neglect may lead to withdrawal, aggressive acting out, disorganized behaviour, low frustration tolerance, inability to interpret social cues, and a reduction in empathy. This poses a challenge in forming new bonds in adoptive or foster care, as well as developing a therapeutic relationship. Art therapy is an option to reach these children with impaired relational capacities (Henley, 2005).

The treatment of children with severely disturbed attachment patterns is less effective without also involving primary caregivers in order to address these attachment relationships and promote family integration (Henley, 2005). Art therapy can utilize principles from Developmental Dyadic Psychotherapy, which emphasizes the development of affective attunement between therapist and child, caregiver and child, and therapist and caregiver. According to Becker-Weidman (2006), caregivers may feel "blamed, devalued, incompetent, depleted, and angry" (p. 159), so it is important that they also receive therapeutic support.

Children with reactive attachment generally have difficulty responding to situations of care. Attachment dynamics may play out in themes of anger, jealousy and aggressive attacks within the family, and including the art therapist. Sensory experiences and embodied

communication may help to engage and regulate emotions. Art interventions provide appropriate boundaries and an optimal level of sensory stimulation in order to tap into affective content without inciting overwhelming regression. By establishing a degree of relative safety and re-experiencing trauma within an attuned therapeutic relationship that involves caregivers, art therapy can contribute to gradual gains towards more secure attachment (Henley, 2005).

Arts-based parental therapy. Art therapy has been incorporated into parental training or parental therapy. Shamri, Snir, and Regev (2015) addressed the role of art-making in parental training intervention using Grounded Theory research. Interviews with art therapists described the complexities of incorporating art into parental therapy. The participants varied in their orientations, including psycho-educational, cognitive-behavioral or psychodynamic approaches. These research findings suggested that art materials can help parents overcome inhibitions, connect with unconscious memories, fears and wishes through creative expression, and process their own early conflicts, which may interfere with the parent-child relationship.

Art therapists in this study described a variety of challenges to parental therapy. Parents' expectations could be an impediment, such as the idea that the art therapist will be able to "fix" their child without their involvement. Some parents doubted that drawing or painting would address issues with their child, or displayed resistance to art making due to sense of exposure. Adults often associate art making with a loss of control, difficulty, embarrassment or shame. A foundation of trust within the therapeutic relationship enhances parents' openness to using art materials. It is important to consider that art materials may contribute to emotional flooding. Conversely, turning to art making as a pause from verbal exploration may assist to contain overwhelming emotions. These researchers suggested that the integration of art and parental therapy may require adapting the therapeutic frame, to enhance the potential for creative exploration. The use of art in parental therapy can provide a broader view of the parent as a client, by giving an opportunity for self-expression (Shamri et al., 2015).

Summary. An understanding of attachment can contribute to a foundation for addressing relational issues within art therapy. Arts-based assessments can help art therapists to recognize attachment patterns. Many art therapists find that involving parents in attachment-based therapy could increase children's therapeutic gains. Dyadic work is a common approach for infants and young children. Parents often benefit from these interventions and can be considered equally as clients engaged in a creative therapeutic process. Using an attachment paradigm, we can

conceptualize the art materials as providing feedback, like a parent to their baby. In dyadic art therapy, the new relationship with the artwork can stimulate change within the dyad.

Chapter Two: The Inner World of Attachment

This chapter introduces object relations concepts and how they intersect with attachment theory. Ainsworth (1969) commented that the fields of object relations and attachment theory have been historically divided by an opposition between the emphasis of inner experience versus observable behaviour. Overcoming this perceived contradiction, through increased interaction between the fields, may contribute to a broader understanding of infant development. Ainsworth asserted that: "behavioral phenomena...cannot be comprehended adequately without recourse to concepts of inner structures and processes which are not in themselves observable directly" (p. 9). The concept of inner representations describes how attachment bonds persist in the child's mind, even in the absence of reinforcement from the attachment figure. Therefore, object relations may be used to describe the inner world of attachment experiences.

Art therapy can approach attachment-related issues using both object relations and developmental models (Malchiodi, 2011). Sensory stimulation, and positive interpersonal experiences through art making, serve to elicit the quality of attunement in the child-caregiver relationship which promotes a sense of security necessary for optimal development. This chapter considers object relations perspectives, as well as research on mentalization and intersubjectivity, in order to address key concepts that inform the current understanding of how attunement occurs within familial bonds, and within the art therapeutic relationship.

Klein and Winnicott, both prominent child psychoanalysts, were key innovators of object relations theory. Many researchers have pursued a cross-comparison of their work in an effort to understand their differences, as well as the potential clinical affinity between their perspectives on object relations (Aguayo, 2002; Kavalier-Adler, 2014). A main area of compatibility for both theorists is the importance of reparation within the mother-child relationship. The process of repairing a broken sense of connection is central to our understanding of how attunement contributes to therapeutic change.

Kleinian Object Relations: Reparation Through Inner Representations

Klein (1969) focused on the fantasy lives of children, using a non-directive play technique to directly access the child's unconscious dynamics. She formulated a distinct set of

ideas, describing how internal impressions develop along with real experiences of bonding. She proposed that a child's sense of security develops primarily in relation to the mother, particularly through receiving nourishment and physical comfort. Positive experiences contribute to mental representations which strengthens the infant's developing ego. Experiences of frustration oppose this ideal, resulting in a process of splitting through which the internal "good object" (p. 179) is preserved in the infant's mind by keeping it apart from negative representations. According to Klein, this splitting process is "a precondition for the infant's relative stability" (p. 192).

Through the relationship with the mother, the child learns to manage the opposition between these internal representations, laying the foundation for psychic and emotional development.

Following Freud, Klein (1975) suggested that primary aggressive drives exist from birth and play an important role in psychic development (p. 179). She proposed a paradoxical nature of these internal dynamics, wherein aggressive impulses may contribute to the development of positive emotions such as gratitude and love. She theorized a common situation in which the infant envies the mother for her nourishing capacities. These feelings of rivalry activate opposite feelings of guilt and concern for the mother as a love object. The concept of the *depressive position* described a state of emotional desperation propelled by the infant's concern that they have destroyed the mother with their vengeful motivations. Thereby hatred becomes linked with love, through a desire to repair a sense of harm. This contributes to the child's emotional maturation, by developing the ability to identify with others empathically and reverse representations of interpersonal dynamics, through inner symbolic processes.

Klein (1975) proposed that the infant's positive relational experiences accumulate over time, provide reassurance of the capacity for good, minimize a sense of destructiveness and increase feelings of gratitude and security. Through a dynamic interplay between love and aggression, the child develops an active emotional faculty for coping within relationships, which ultimately informs the relationship to the self (p. 338). The capacity for reparation may be compared to concepts of self-containment and emotional self-regulation, which take place through relational means with the potential to effect inner change. Contemporary research has shown that physiological synchrony between a mother and child occurs most frequently during times of stress and conflict (Wolterin et al., 2015). Dyads who can become physiologically in sync may be better at recovering from negative interactions. These findings suggest that the mother and child play mutually integral roles in sustaining attunement within the dyad.

In an object relations view, creative activity establishes a harmony between the inner and outer world. The sensory experiences of art making may be used to enhance a capacity for mental and physiological attunement to promote reparation. Expressing aggression and negative feelings non-verbally can enhance ego development, through the externalization and re-integration of repressed affect (Proulx, 2004). Furthermore, art materials can provide the means by which to metaphorically externalize the experience of rupture and repair, contributing to a sense of restoration of the self (Hymer, 1983). Creative arts therapies establish an intermediary realm between reality and imagination, which offers an opportunity to newly invest in relationships, following the creative symbolization of reparation (Johnson, 1998).

Winnicott: Facilitating and Transitional Space

Winnicott was a pediatrician and psychoanalyst who focused on the mental disturbances of infants and young children, using therapeutic consultations in order to reveal these issues and improve the course of a child's development (Hughes, 1989). He suggested that children's developmental issues stem from unsatisfactory *environmental provision*, a term that refers to parents' level of psychological ability to care for their children. Emphasizing the role of the mother, he hypothesized a state of *primary maternal preoccupation* occurring during the first few weeks following birth, in which the mother withdraws interest from the outside world and becomes almost entirely focused on responding to the baby's needs. Both attaining and relinquishing the state of primary maternal preoccupation are considered to be significant achievements that support the healthy development of the child (p. 132).

Winnicott distinguished two main functions within the mother's role (Hughes, 1989). The *object-mother* attends to the child's needs by providing nourishment and comfort. The *environment mother* is responsible for facilitating the baby's experience in relation to the environment, particularly by responding to cues and warding off the frustrations of unpredictable situations. The mother or caregiver should provide a consistent and reliable presence. In the case of unreliable environmental provision, the baby is forced to respond to intrusions and frustrations on their own. This may lead to a situation where the child begins to organize his or her own care mentally, rather than relying on the responsiveness of the caregiver.

Winnicott proposed that when the child must respond to environmental demands without the reliable mediation of a caregiver, a pattern of compliance and defensive coping develops. This pattern, termed the *False Self*, is associated with pathological development (Hughes, 1989,

p. 137). For Winnicott, effective caregiving and effective therapy should support the True Self rather than reinforce the False Self. The *True Self* as a concept was enigmatic and undefined, but generally characterized by spontaneity and freedom. Winnicott placed personal responsibility on the patient to dissolve the patterns of the False Self. The therapist may provide environmental adaptations, which offer opportunities for personal change and growth (Hughes, 1989).

Winnicott (1953, 1971) also advanced the influential ideas of *transitional object*, *transitional phenomena*, and *potential space*. The transitional object is a physical object that takes on personal significance for the child. The importance of its role in development is characterized by how the child uses this object. The child claims the object as their own, expects constancy from the object and manipulates it in a way that expresses feelings ranging from affection and love to anger and hatred, for example through cuddling or mutilating the object. The child perceives the object as having a sense of animated vitality. The transitional object provides a bridge from the maternal bond into the rest of the world.

A *transitional phenomenon* is a concept with similar qualities, but occurs in the realm of experience rather than referring to a physical object, although objects may be involved (Winnicott, 1953). For example, when a child enters into a state of play, the child experiences the chosen content of that play as transitioning between reality and fantasy. *Potential space* occurs when one is able to freely engage in play, relying on the environment to be supportive and facilitating. Winnicott has likened the therapeutic relationship to a potential space for play (Applegate, 2004). These concepts of transitional objects and phenomena have been utilized to describe the creative play and engagement with materials in art therapy.

Summary. Klein and Winnicott advanced the idea that early relational patterns provide the basis for the child's emotional organization and the personal mastery of ego functions, capacities which are engaged throughout development by way of symbolic and processes. Object relations concepts can powerfully describe how change occurs within art therapy.

The Role of Mentalization in Mirroring and Attunement

Fonagy's (1997) research on mentalization made links between attachment and the development of children's symbolic capacities. Fonagy proposed that the caregiver's relatedness to their child involves a form of mental representation, which supports attunement and affective mirroring within the relationship. According to Fonagy, the caregiver's mirroring of the child utilizes a higher order mental representation with the symbolic potential to communicate

complex affect in a more tolerable form, thereby promoting emotional regulation. Contemporary attachment theory illustrates how the fantasy lives of caregivers and children are mutually influential, as each member of the dyad externalizes their mental representations through interactive behaviour and communication (Stern, 1995, p. 14). The concept of *mentalization* can be utilized to understand how personal and interpersonal change occur within the art therapeutic relationship (Taylor, Buck, & Havsteen-Franklin, 2013).

Mental representation makes use of procedural knowledge, which is impressionistic and based in affect (Fonagy, 1997). The ability to successfully mirror and respond to the child's emotional expression involves the caregiver communicating an understanding of the child's feelings in a way that is impressionistically accurate, but not overwhelming. This depends on the parent's capacity to observe moment-to-moment changes in the child's mental state and respond in a way that provides the child with a sense of safety and security, even when faced with intense feelings and needs. Through this process, the child is led to interpret the caregiver's state of mind as benevolent, and experience the relationship as loving and supportive. These attributions regarding the qualities of the caregiver in turn inform the child's developing sense of self. Fonagy (1997) asserts that mentalization within the dyadic relationship plays a central role in a child's self-organization. Art therapy can provide the child-caregiver dyad an opportunity to play together and utilize art materials as a means for spontaneous exploration and self-expression, encouraging the caregiver to witness, mirror and respond to their child.

Attachment, mentalization, and symbolic play. Meins and Russell (1997) demonstrated a link between attachment security and children's performance in symbolic play. Secure attachment may enhance children's abilities to engage with an adult in instructed play involving pretend scenarios. Securely attached children demonstrated higher executive functioning in their pretend play, were less likely to ignore suggestions of an adult, and were more likely to use non-representational objects to construct their own symbolic meanings. All children, regardless of attachment style, showed similar trends in solo play, where an adult was involved by eliciting pretend play with questions and encouragement, rather than instruction. These results indicate that enhanced social flexibility may be associated with secure attachment. Toddlers with a secure attachment style have demonstrated more persistent efforts in their pretend play and stronger abilities to organize their play around a theme. They also showed enhanced capacity for play in response to maternal involvement (Slade, 1987).

Maternal involvement in children's play has been shown to be most effective when suggestions or directions are not too close or too far from the child's current abilities, encouraging and non-punitive, and delivered in a way that is sensitive, rather than prescriptive (Meins & Russell, 1997). These principles can be used to guide children in art therapy, in order to help bridge the gap between the child's present and potential abilities. This is also relevant to the process of building the therapeutic alliance in art therapy. As children feel more supported, validated and confident in their creative abilities, they may begin to increase their investment in the therapeutic process of creative self-expression and exploration. Further research could clarify the implication of these findings, helping art therapists understand when a non-directive versus a directive, structured approach is indicated as most beneficial, considering the client's attachment pattern. Slade (1987) has shown that mothers of insecurely attached children have difficulty becoming involved and enjoying symbolic play with their babies. Mentalization-based interventions such as dyadic or family art therapy may promote the relational capacity of the dyad to enter into each other's mental worlds through play.

Mentalization research has revealed the limitations of accurately measuring caregiver sensitivity (Shah, Fonagy, & Strathearn, 2010). Furthermore, research has shown that transmission of attachment styles over generations is not entirely explained by maternal responsiveness (van IJzendoorn, 1995). This is referred to as the *transmission gap*. Slade (2005) addressed the puzzle of the transmission gap in her research on *parental reflective function*. The parent's capacity to reflect upon their child's experience, as well as on their own experience as a parent, has been evidenced to support the intergenerational shift towards secure attachment. Meins et al. (2012) described *mind-mindedness*, a concept that refers to the capacity of caregivers to view their child as a psychological agent. Caregivers' interpretations of their child's mental state, during free play, including intentions and motivations, ranges in level of attunement. More accurate and appropriate interpretations connect children's actual mental states. Children of parents with a higher degree of mind-mindedness are more likely to have a secure attachment style. Therefore, art therapy interventions which aim to enhance caregivers' attuned use of mind-mindedness may also have the potential to promote attachment security.

Beyond dyadic communication. Stern (2010) observed the incidence of power plays between mother and child, through which the child learns about being in relationship. A process of negotiation, through playful implicit communication, can teach the child how to perceive the

mother in a way that recognizes her subjectivity. This suggests that mind-mindedness occurs mutually within the dyad, and that increased mutual understanding may enhance attunement.

Attachment theory has traditionally focused on dyadic communication as central in infant development. However, contemporary research suggests that infants are born primed to engage in dyadic and triadic social situations. Infants are highly attentive and responsive within a triangular situation of person-person-object, or three person interactions. They routinely make triangular bids to communicate with two adults, for example looking to one adult in an attempt to verify or interpret the response of the other (Fivaz-Depeursing, Lavanchy-Scaiola, & Favez, 2010). This has clinical implications for the role of the art therapist and art objects in dyadic art therapy interventions. The capacity for triadic communication also implies that bringing multiple caregivers into art therapy may be a practical option. A view beyond dyadic communication contributes to an understanding of the infant as naturally inclined towards social responsiveness.

Object Relations and Mentalization Approaches in Art Therapy

A psychodynamic approach to art therapy can be used to illuminate internal dynamics and stimulate personal transformation. Art materials have been effective in giving physical expression to inner psychic processes such as mentalization and symbolization. Art making as a mode of communication can increase the mutual understanding within a relationship by revealing mind-states, which can serve to enhance attunement and enact reparation.

Projective techniques. Projection can be used as a therapeutic method for a client to symbolically enact inner dynamics using an external representation. Projective techniques such as the Fantasy Animal Drawing (Handler & Hilsenroth, 1994) have been used to help children explore themes of attachment (Baumann, 2013). The creation of an imaginary creature is an opportunity to explore experiences of connection, loss and aggression. Artwork may be used to temporarily place personal feelings and inner dynamics onto the image as a distanced external object. The child can then symbolically own, disown and transform challenging emotions through play within a transitional space. Projective techniques may be used to express attachment to the art therapist, and the emotional challenges leading to the termination of the therapeutic relationship. This process potentially reflects attachment dynamics also experienced with caregiving figures. Projective techniques may also be appropriate for dyadic and family therapy in order to create distance and encourage the symbolic expression of relational dynamics.

Parent-child art psychotherapy. Parent-child psychotherapy is performed in a variety of formats. The focus of treatment may be directed towards the child, the parent or the relationship as a whole. The presence of the therapist provides support for parents to bond with their children. Parent-infant art psychotherapy has been used to address intergenerational issues attachment and separation-individuation (Siegel, 2011). Consideration of the family as a whole includes goals for setting boundaries. Art can provide a means for evolving symbol formation with personal relevance. Parents can use art to explore their own experiences of infancy and childhood, and link these to the current relationship by symbolically expressing emotions such as fear, distrust and isolation. Creating physical space for these expressions through artwork may in turn open up psychic space for these feelings to be acknowledged and validated. At times it may be helpful for psychotherapists and art therapists to make home visits in order to be involved in caregiving routines, provide positive feedback about parenting capacities, give reassurance, and normalize challenges (Hall, 2008; Siegel, 2011).

Mother infant painting. Arroyo and Fowler (2013) used a non-directive, integrative and systems theory approach to a mother-infant painting group. The goals of this intervention program included: promoting quality time together in a creative space, providing psychological and emotional support, expression and release of thoughts and feelings, time away from daily life stress, giving and receiving positive messages about parenting, and building confidence and self-esteem. The painting group had a mentalizing function, contributing to a sense of intentionality and personal value, in order to support attachment relationships. Parents improved their ability to connect creatively with their child, follow the child's lead, tolerate messy and unexpected events, experience the interplay between structure and unstructured form, and increase non-verbal communication. This resulted in an overall improvement of intimacy and attunement between mother and child, and an overall reduction in post-natal depression. This suggests that therapeutic attunement to the parent's needs can benefit the dyad as a whole.

Mentalization-based art interventions. Art therapy is being increasingly informed by theories of mentalization and reflective function (Taylor, Buck, & Havsteen-Franklin, 2013). Art therapy can be used to encourage caregiver mentalization. For example, in a study by Or et al. (2010), mothers were asked to sculpt a representation of the relationship with their child. This research was based on Slade's (2006) recommendations on how mentalization-based interventions can strengthen attachment security and the child's developing sense of self. The art

therapist models reflection on the child's mind states, facilitates wondering by posing open questions, holds the parent in mind in order to support their emotional experience, and elicits affect states within the therapeutic encounter. Slade proposed that mentalization occurs most powerfully when affective experience is also involved. Or et al. (2010) suggested that the art materials could provide additional support for mentalization. A sculpting task serves as a safe container for mothers' own childhood memories, including painful emotions. Through a creative process such as clay sculpting, caregivers can gain insights on the relationship with their child, stimulate implicit memories, and reflect on themes such as support, separation/individuation and self-care as inspired by their own visual representations.

Response art and mentalization. The art therapist's own creative process can facilitate mentalization by expressing internal representations through the form of images (Havsteen-Franklin & Altamirano, 2015). This can enhance the sense of spontaneity and improvisation within the therapeutic relationship, give the art therapist new perspectives on the client, and support the ability to stay client-centered. These authors compare the art response approach to verbal approaches, and suggest enhanced benefits of non-verbal mentalization interventions. The use of mentalization in therapy can have unintended negative effects (Fonagy & Bateman, 2006, as cited in Havsteen-Franklin & Altamirano). For example, therapists' use of verbal insight may create dissonance between the client's inner experience and the perspective introduced by the therapist, potentially leading to instability and bewilderment. Attempts to promote good mentalization may be perceived as intrusive by the client, or as pushing the therapist's own agenda. When used sensitively, communication through art may avoid these potentially risks of verbal mentalization techniques. A key to using response art effectively relies on the art therapist's ability to model authentic expression, while keeping the client in the centre of the experience, rather than shifting attention towards the therapist's own self-expression.

Havsteen-Franklin and Altamirano (2015) suggest that art response is a dynamic model of explicit mentalization that contributes to a shared experience of collaborative curiosity, thereby enhancing the therapeutic relationship. Communication through the mutual creation and sharing of response art can be understood as a form of attunement, engaging both implicit and explicit relational processes. Response art also may act as a transitional object, bridging the space between inner representations and social behaviour.

Summary. Object relations and mentalization-based psychodynamic approaches are effective in addressing the dynamics of the parent-child relationship. Art can play a role in revealing fantasies and mental representations, in order to influence change in the dyad's ways of relating. Because mental representations are often based on significant relationships, there is considerable overlap with attachment-based approaches. Attunement plays a role throughout the therapeutic process; a sense of connection and trust is necessary for clients to feel safe enough to express their inner world. Externalizing inner dynamics through art can serve to enhance attunement within the child-parent dyad by improving mutual understanding of mind states.

Symbolic Processes in Art Therapy

Art therapy engages clients' symbolic capacities through creative expression. Symbolic expression can support the clients' sense of self, promote insight, and catalyze personal and interpersonal change. Symbolic process may also provide a means of self-regulation. Contemporary attachment theory highlights the importance of self-regulation. In a therapeutic context, the concept of regulation describes how "implicit systems of the therapist interact with implicit systems of the patient" (Schoore & Schoore, 2008, p. 14). The social and emotional qualities of symbolic play can enhance children's capacity for self-regulation (Whitebread, Coltman, Jameson, & Lander, 2009). Art therapy makes use of symbolic play to improve the capacity for regulation within the parent-child relationship.

Klein (1975) stated that "symbolism is the foundation of all sublimation and of every talent" (p. 219). Symbolic processes provide the basis of one's relation to the outside world and orientation to reality. A symbol is considered to be a figurative representation of an idea, conflict or wish that is psychically significant. Symbol formation has been related to the capacity of the ego to tolerate anxiety-provoking situation in early life. Symbolic capacity contributes to psychic development by allowing an individual to function more flexibly in the absence of a significant object, such as the caregiver, by symbolically evoking that object (Wilson, 1985). When a child cannot symbolize a desired object, they must rely on a substitute, leading to rigid fixations. Engaging symbolic capacities is a central function of art therapy approaches. Symbolic processes in art making, combined with implicit interpersonal communication, serve to adapt and strengthen mental representations and improve the quality of communication within relationships. Furthermore, art making has the potential to bring the symbol and the symbolized into close proximity, contributing to a congruent affective experience. Symbolic expression of

emotions may take on an equivalent physical quality. Traces of the symbolic process are left behind to witness in the creative product (Zinemanas, 2011).

Decentering is therapeutic technique for encouraging a shift in perspective. Relational issues can be addressed by "decentering into the alternative world of the arts and imagination" (Levine, 2015, p. 59). Art therapy utilizes the client's *aesthetic response* as a therapeutic tool. Therapeutic attunement may encourage aesthetic response through imagery and symbolic play. In dyadic and family art therapy, the goal is to experience an aesthetic response *together*. The art therapist helps each member attain this experience by encouraging a shared creative process, thereby increasing the capacity to take risks and instigating a shift towards enhanced mutual understanding. When fears and anxieties inhibit the ability to take risks in creative play, art therapists may observe choices in art media and activities to understand possible motivations, and gradually guide participants through a variety of creative experiences (Hinz, 2009).

Therapists should provide a wide range of art materials and activities in order to promote the creative and symbolic process of culturally diverse clientele. Art expressions are best viewed with an open mind, and sensitivity to cultural context. Malchiodi (2005) stated that "therapists should view children's art expressions as cultural expressions that reflect a wide range of personal and unique experiences" (p. 106), therefore it may be counter-therapeutic to interpret images as direct representations of emotional or mental states. Misunderstandings may arise in the therapeutic relationship connected with cultural issues, beliefs and values that are expressed verbally and symbolically. Art therapists can enhance the level of attunement by using clients' own cultural symbols to gain a better understanding of their perspective (Kristel, 2013).

The ability of the art therapist to suspend the distinction between reality and fantasy, and join clients in playing with the meaning of their own cultural symbols, can be an important factor in promoting healing potential (Røijen, 1991). Levine (2015) proposed that "rather than looking at the art work as a repository of symbols that need to be interpreted, we could look at art making itself as a means of developing imaginative and symbol-making capacities" (p. 40). Using this approach, art therapists often emphasize the process rather than the product. Symbolic functions are engaged in the act of interpersonal communication as well as the creation of art objects.

Chapter Three: Cultural Paradigms for Relational Art Therapy

Despite research into sociocultural factors affecting attachment relationships, there have been few advances in applying a culturally informed framework to attachment-based art therapy

practice. This may lead to issues in assessment and treatment due to a failure to place an understanding of clients' attachment relationships within cultural context. Neglecting to address the connections between attachment and culture may also lead to challenges within the therapeutic relationship. Ibrahim (1985) has asserted that “when differences exist [between client and therapist] counselors and psychotherapists can fall prey to making negative judgments about their client’s concerns, behaviors, perceptions, attitudes, and values” (p. 321, as cited in BenEzer, 2012). Thus, this present consideration aims to guide art therapists in avoiding such errors and maximizing the therapeutic potential of intercultural encounters. This chapter offers conceptual models for better understanding and managing cultural influences as applied to relational art therapy practice. This will include considering the clinical implications of cultural issues from feminist, object relations, ethnorelative and family systems paradigms.

Feminist Perspectives: The Maternal Matrix and Art Therapist as a Loving Third

Feminist thought has been applied to attachment concepts, ranging from support to critique, to outright rejection of attachment theory (Birns, 1999). One main criticism is that the emphasis on early experience within the mother-child relationship may contribute to a mentality of blaming the mother for negative issues in the child's development, and disregarding the influence of equally important environmental and societal factors. Chodorow (2010) contended that attachment theory's conception of the role of the mother in the relationship with her child affronts the mother's own subjectivity. This is problematic from a sociopolitical perspective. Art therapist Hogan (2012) proposed that object relations models may be negatively internalized by parents, for example the concept of the "good enough mother", which she argued has become virtually unattainable to attain within the context of a misogynistic society. Art therapists should avoid further oppression of clients using theoretical concepts in a reductive way. Art therapy provides an opportunity to creatively explore one's own unique experience of parenthood.

A consideration of multiple significant relationships and a shift to view development as spanning the life cycle may increase cultural competence in therapy. Birns (1999) proposed that the assumption of a monotropic relationship to the mother, as well as the emphasis on early relationships as essentially formative, are contrary to a cornerstone of feminist belief which "acknowledges the fact that we can and must be able to change human behavior" (p. 12). The human capacity to evolve enables us to strive for societal gains towards safety and equity. Our view of relationships should consider personal and social contexts. As Stern (1995) contended:

...a mother is not just another patient, nor only a parent to a young patient, nor simply another member of a system. She is a woman in a unique period of her own life, playing a unique cultural role and fulfilling a unique and essential role in the survival of the species (p. 145).

Following the discourse of feminist theorists, I propose that this statement could be made of all parents and caregivers. I make this point not to discount the unique experience of each mother, but rather to encourage a shift in thinking which may align with feminist goals of societal transformation. Art therapists can engage clients to define their own roles in relationships.

Critiques of attachment theory have implications for clinical practice. An attachment-based model may position the therapeutic relationship as essential to the client's progress (Minuchin, 1981). This outlook may discount the influence of multiple significant relationships, as well as the inner capacity for change and the various possibilities of an individual's developmental path. I propose that in addressing these critiques, it is useful to apply the concept of the *loving third* to describe the role of the art therapist. Kristeva (1987) theorized that infants primarily identify within symbolic meaning, a realm termed the *loving third*. The *loving third* has been conceptualized as a model for social support and affirmative modes of meaning in the social realm (Oliver & Edwin, 2002; Watkins & Schulman, 2010).

Using this model, the art therapist may be considered as one positive figure, among a larger network of beneficial social connections, contributing to an experience of inclusion and support within a community. Levine (2015) echoed the importance of viewing young clients in a wider context beyond art therapy sessions, stating: "I don't want the therapy to be a realm that is so precious and so special" (p. 265). She emphasized that attunement and support occurring within art therapy must be provided with the purpose of flowing outward into the child's life.

Intersecting psychoanalytic and feminist theory, Ettinger (2010) has proposed an ethics of respect as a central approach to working with familial issues. She described infant development as inherently relational and occurring within a "maternal matrix" (p. 3), which supports the formation of the child's ego. Given the increasing diversity of family life, maternal functions are not always performed by the biological mother, nor are they dependent on sexual or gender identity. Rather, the main "maternal" quality is openness to the Other, which supports relational encounters and advances the child's psychological development. Similarly, therapeutic attunement involves this quality of openness as relational support.

Ettinger (2010) contended that respecting parental figures is necessary for therapeutic support. This is a compelling perspective relevant to attachment work. When a child's early relational experiences are less than optimal, it may be difficult for therapists to avoid denigrating parental figures. However, blaming parents can be an impediment to therapeutic change. When therapists maintain an attitude of respect and compassion, the client may be able to express feelings of sadness, disappointment or anger more safely. This can contribute to healing by enhancing the client's potential for "creativity and ethical transformativity" (Ettinger, 2010, p. 14). Therefore, an ethics of respect supports the capacity for change. Mentalization, as a therapeutic tool for keeping the client in mind, can also be used to sustain a reflective stance towards attachment figures. Art therapists, by reflecting on these influential figures in a way that is open and accepting, rather than denigrating or judgmental, may enhance the affect attunement within the therapeutic relationship. Hence the importance of a strength-based approach to parent-child dyadic work, parental therapy and family therapy. In individual child art therapy, parents should be engaged through consultation. Shore (2000) emphasized the need for art therapists to "recognize the integrity of the parent-child bond even in cases where the parents demonstrate a high level of destructiveness" (p.14). Parental strengths and lapses will often be unconsciously shown through the art work. Art therapists should evaluate parents' ego strength before sharing interpretations of the child's perspective, as this may ignite conflict in some cases. The distance afforded by the artwork can provide a safe means of exploring complicated dynamics.

Maintaining compassion and respect towards parents may be challenging for art therapists who witness the suffering of children due to inadequate attachment experiences. It is not within the scope of this paper to specifically address the impact of attachment-related trauma, abuse and neglect on children's development and wellbeing. However, we must consider the art therapist's responsibility to uphold the ethical standards of the profession, while also allowing oneself the space to struggle with moral and ethical issues that inevitably impact therapists on a personal level. Seeking support within supervision, gaining a deeper understanding of transference and countertransference, through personal reflective processes such as response art, and prioritizing self-care are all strategies to strengthen art therapists' abilities to cope with the challenges of working with attachment-related issues.

Dyadic work often involves difficulties within the therapeutic relationship, as the therapist is challenged to attend to the mental states of both parent and child. Transference may

be characterized by the chaotic mental processes of disorganized attachment. Therapists' countertransference may include feeling overwhelmed, challenges to clear thinking and a tendency to oscillate between inaction and overreaction. These difficulties can be mitigated by establishing a secure therapeutic frame, thinking before acting, and assuming a leadership position in guiding communication (Diaz Bonino & Ball, 2013).

While these challenging dynamics may be further emphasized or complicated by the inclusion of art materials, I suggest that the sensory and symbolic qualities within the art therapeutic relationship can provide a helpful vehicle for an art therapists' appropriate mentalization of the dyadic relationship, in a way that is attuned on interpersonal, relational and communal levels. Through deep personal reflection and creative involvement, art therapists can help process the dyad's relational dynamics, in order to offer a new understanding of life experiences and foster a positive sense of integration (Shin, Choi, & Park, 2016).

The "Potential Space" of Art Therapy within Cultural Difference

Sociocultural diversity as the location of cultural encounter may be described by Winnicott's concept of *transitional space* (Applegate, 2004). In object relations theory, transitional phenomena bridge two disparately experienced realities, thereby supporting psychic development. Similarly, art therapists can become more receptive to areas of intercultural encounter through sensitive inquiry, maximizing the *potential space* for healing and change.

Applegate (2004) warned against generalizing the findings of attachment research based on narrow populations which may not represent the lived experience of many people, in order to avoid misattributing pathology to behaviour which could be understood as normal and adaptive when placed in cultural context. Mutual construction of the therapeutic relationship is advised in order to attune to the client's cultural context. The therapeutic relationship can be experienced as a new relational pattern and the formation of a new culture, a therapeutic culture characterized by play and creativity. Art therapy provides an array of options for self-expression. In modes of their own choosing, clients are able to create and play within their own world of meaning. As the dyad communicates through the art, the art therapist has the opportunity to learn about how they experience the relationship. Within the potential space of art therapy, parents and children can explore relational and cultural issues using their own symbolic language.

BenEzer (2012) also uses Winnicott's notion of potential space to enable a meeting of two different worldviews within the therapeutic relationship, in intercultural psychotherapy. This

may involve the therapist adopting some of the clients' cultural customs, especially in the area of communication. Clients are already adapting their cultural context by entering into treatment in the first place. In art therapy, clients may be going beyond their comfort zone to engage in the creative process. Therefore, art therapists should strive to meet them halfway.

Winnicott proposed that effective therapy involves playing together. BenEzer (2012) used this idea to suggest that the potential space between cultures also requires: "a willingness to 'play the other' in fantasy or reality, and to test ideas, beliefs, attitudes, or codes of behavior of the other culture, in imagination or in action" (p. 336). By playing the other, therapist and clients form a *mutual creative space*, which serves to both expand and strengthen the boundaries of the self for each participant. This is a helpful outline for how art therapists can work with cultural differences that relate to our clients' experiences of attachment and relationship. Art therapists should keep in mind that all relationships occur within a larger cultural tapestry.

Ethnorelative Framework for Relational Art Therapy

Talwar et al. (2004) made recommendations for art therapy training to utilize a "sociopolitical cultural framework that considers diversity in values, interactional, styles, and cultural expectation" (p. 46). The authors argued that life events are layered within social, political, and cultural histories. Using such a framework of understanding, we may view attachment disturbance or trauma as occurring within larger encompassing systems. This shift in perspective would require an adapted clinical approach. Talwar et al. (2004) argue that ethnocentric monoculturalism currently informs the dominant view of relationships within the field of psychology, and that culture-bound values may hinder the formation of a good therapeutic relationship. Therefore, cultural sensitivity may increase therapeutic attunement.

Art therapists can develop strategies for shifting the ethnocentric lens of art therapy. Kapitan (2015) described her own experience of frame switching while working with diverse cultures. Using a case example of an art therapist working with an adolescent client, she portrayed alternate paradigms for addressing concern about the client's parents and their seeming lack of involvement in their child's life. A monocultural approach to this case may involve treatment goals of promoting a healthy attachment through the therapeutic relationship, encouraging the client to express feelings through art, and increasing self-efficacy to cope with challenges of possible trauma and abuse. Through a cross-cultural analysis, Kapitan (2015) revealed how this approach is characterized by individualistic rather than collective thinking. She

expressed concern that a monocultural treatment approach may establish a dynamic where the art therapist is seen as providing and the client as receiving. Furthermore, therapeutic choices may be informed by a commitment to victorious narrative in which the art therapist takes the role of expert and helper. Kapitan argued that art therapists risk overstepping boundaries if they neglect to acknowledge and engage other caring adults in the client's life.

Similarly, Shore (2000) recommends using art therapy consultation to promote caregivers' strengths, through empathy and validation. Art therapists should be aware of their own desire for power and validation. For example, if a parent is seen as hostile and rejecting to their child, the art therapist may designate oneself as the source of comfort the child needs. This would be a disservice to the therapy of the parent-child relationship, and may be informed by cultural misperceptions. It is important to consciously work with these forms of countertransference, in order to avoid playing into the dynamics of the child's wish for an idealized caregiver, which could result in the therapist colluding in the exclusion of the parent. Rather than giving advice, the art therapist can facilitate practical strategies and agreements through the creative process itself, by dealing with imagery sensitively and offering open questions and suggestions to elicit the dyad or family members' personal motivation for change, including inviting the parent to speak about doubts and concerns in their experience of therapy.

A shift towards an ethnorelative view in art therapy involves attuning not just to the individual client, but to the needs of the client's community as they are expressed through that individual's struggles. Using a dynamic constructivist approach, we may view the entire community as the client (Kapitan, Litell, & Torres, 2011). This involves an adapted concept of the therapeutic relationship. An ethnorelative approach to art therapy requires applying cultural knowledge and awareness around various art practices within diverse contexts, in order to meaningfully witness, support, validate and respond to the client's creative expression. Kapitan's shift in the power dynamics of the therapist's role seems to resonate with the idea of the "loving third" (Oliver & Edwin, 2002; Watkins, 2010), the supportive role that exists in between subjective stances, creating a space through which new possibilities may be explored.

Systemic and Structural Approaches in Relational Art Therapy

Considerable overlap exists between dyadic parent-child art therapy and systemic family art therapy. Art therapists have used attachment theory to understand the influence of early relationships on the child's development, and systems theories to recognize the patterns of

interaction between family members (Buck et al., 2014a; Waller, 2006). Family art therapy approaches may be especially appropriate as children begin to grow older.

Minuchin (1981), the originator of Structural Family Therapy, pioneered an approach for treating the family as a system. He advanced several critiques of attachment theory. He challenged the idea that infants' early experiences with primary caregivers will become repeating patterns that shape relationships throughout the lifespan, advocating instead for a view of multiplicity in relationships and the human tendency towards change (Wylie & Turner, 2011). Central to Structural Family Therapy is a belief in every family's healing potential, capacity for conflict resolution, and relational as well as individual inner growth. The family is a natural context for both growth and healing (Minuchin & Fishman, 1981, p. 11). A structural approach views dependence and autonomy as complementary characteristics of the human condition. This paradigm may be more culturally versatile and less inclined towards pathologizing different attachment styles. Structural and systems models can promote art therapists' awareness and sensitivity to the broader contexts in which familial relationships exist.

The attachment-based concept of *attunement* can be compared to the family therapy principle of *joining* (Minuchin & Fishman, 1981). Joining with the family's modes of meaning may provide a sense of validation, conveying that the art therapist is genuinely willing to understand each family member's mind state to make sense of how one's experience fits within the larger relational network. Structural Family Therapy makes use of graphic images to chart relational ties, power dynamics, boundaries and subsystems within families. These practices may be reworked as art therapy interventions performed with clients to depict their current situations, life stories, and family histories in order to reveal interpersonal and intergenerational patterns.

The use of art can help to clarify relational dynamics in family therapy (Sori, 1995). Structural concepts used by family therapists may be communicated using art materials, with the potential to physically reflect intangible realities. This approach can be used in family therapy to engage clients in a dialogue around family dynamics. The potential to transform interpersonal patterns is supported through the creation of concrete works which express positive processes such as communication and collaboration. Structural processes (such as boundaries, enmeshment, inclusion or exclusion) can become more easily observable to the therapist through the family's art making, eventually leading to enhanced insight of family members. The creative process in family therapy facilitates emotional self-expression of all family members, genuine

interpersonal communication and relationship building, and encourages family members to acknowledge interpersonal patterns, take responsibility, and enact change within the family system. Art modalities may be applied to assessment, intervention and to support termination.

In structural family therapy, the therapist assumes a leadership position, exerts control over interactions, supports and emphasizes different positions to shift the balance of the family dynamics, and attempts to understand the experience and perspective of all family members. Art therapy is conducive to all of the above (Sori, 1995). Art materials can support a directive approach in which the art therapist actively joins into the creative process, and exerts influence. Joining is more likely to be well received if the therapist views the family in a positive light and uses the creative process to identify and promote strengths. Just as purposeful misattunements can be used to promote overall attunement (Stern, 1985), structural approaches introduce meaningful challenges within a positive bond, to stimulate and promote change.

Minuchin (1981) has focused on the role of hierarchy within the family, and emphasized an authoritative rather than a democratic approach to parenting. Following this framework, Sori (1995) suggests that parents should be able to take a role of authority in the creative process rather than consistently deferring to the wishes of the child. Minuchin maintained that the ability to assert control is important for parents and therapists, because if there is no positive model for power within interpersonal relationships, then the tendency for control will emerge inappropriately. From an attachment perspective, a key factor may found in parents' ability to view their child as a psychological agent, which would give parental authority a quality of well-intentioned guardianship, rather than absolute control. The technique of joining involves a certain amount of pushing beyond clients' comfort zones to challenge maladaptive patterns.

A structural approach to family art therapy seems to be aligned with Kapitan's (2015) recommendations for emphasizing direct knowledge in cross-cultural art therapy practice. By taking an active role in representing their interpersonal experiences, clients may be empowered to recognize, understand and adapt their dynamics as family members. Structural concepts may support a client-centred approach, as opposed to a traditional model of the therapist as an expert. Through encouragement of clients' active participation in collaborative meaning-making in art therapy, we may avoid utilizing theoretical or structural concepts in a potentially divisive or objectifying manner. A systems-oriented, structural framework may contribute to a therapist's attitude towards parents as open, accepting and collaborative.

Physical Form as a Metaphor for Treatment Approaches

The qualities of the artwork in art therapy have profound symbolic potential. The quality of dimension (as in two and three-dimensional work) can be used in a way that aligns with therapeutic goals. Based on the continuum of security-exploration described by Bowlby's (1969) secure base theory, clients' unique needs and treatment goals can be understood as involving an interplay between security and exploration.

The two-dimensional plane is the primary means of expression for many art therapy clients, and has been described as intrinsic to the creative process (de la Pena, 2016) . Appropriate media selection is foundational to the development the art therapeutic relationship, and essential to art therapy goals. The art therapist creates the structure for the creative experience. Deliberate choices in proffering materials can provide the physical experience of a secure base. The 2D surface provides a starting point and a sense of safety and containment through physical boundaries, with the potential to contain clients' impulses and avoid regression or affective overload. This can be a supportive approach to dyadic and family art therapy.

Contrastingly, three-dimensional form can be used as method for exploration beyond the secure base of 2D. Fenner (2016) proposed constructivism as a theoretical approach as applied to a 3D creative process. Sculptural creation involves tacit knowing, as the artist is not always consciously aware of the artwork's meaning as it emerges. Structural or sculptural work may stimulate an interplay between sensory processing and developing self-knowledge, through which clients can come to view the self as multifaceted and dynamic rather than a unitary whole. Therefore sculptural processes may strengthen an awareness of the sense of self as existing within larger systems. This can provide a way to meaningful engage with diverse factors that may impact psychological development, such as cultural and ethnic identity, immigration status, socioeconomic status, multigenerational violence, gender role expression, intra-familial hierarchies, and differing familial definitions (Fenner, 2016).

These views regarding the use of dimension in artwork can inform assessment and treatment planning for dyadic and family art therapy. Art therapists should evaluate clients' needs in terms of security, containment and exploration, in order to establish a balance where the potential for healing and change is engaged on an individual basis. Sensitive selection of materials and interventions is one way of promoting an attuned relational experience.

Discussion

This paper addressed the research question: How can a critical analysis and integration of attachment theory and object relations theory inform a clinical understanding of attunement within dyadic and family art therapy? A comparison of attachment and object relations literature has indicated significant conceptual overlap in the area of interpersonal relationships. Both theoretical frameworks suggest that relationships are integral to psychosocial development.

Attachment theory has been critiqued for focusing too narrowly on the context of experiences in early infancy (Wylie & Turner, 2011). Kleinian object relations theory has been critiqued for lacking a point of connection between the inner dynamics of the psyche and real relationships (Bretherton, 1992). Winnicott (1953) established an understanding of intermediary experience with concepts of *transitional phenomena* and *potential space*, which have been utilized by art therapists, particularly in the realm of symbolic play. Both attachment and object relations theories have prioritized the mother-child relationship in a way that has been critiqued from political and cultural perspectives. In contemporary theoretical and clinical developments, the gap between emphasizing inner mental processes versus external, social realities, has yielded to an understanding of mutual influence through concepts such as *mentalization* and *intersubjectivity*, which offer new ways of conceptualizing attunement.

In such a rich and complex theoretical landscape, art therapists may wonder how to balance the considerations of various frameworks. I propose that attachment and object relations concepts can be utilized in art therapy, and combined with structural and systems approaches. Slade (2004) affirmed that attachment theory is compatible with psychodynamic orientations, and emphasized that the value of an attachment framework is not primarily in performing assessments of clients' attachment style classifications, but rather in "sensitizing clinicians to observing the functioning of the attachment system and to the internal and interpersonal functions of attachment processes" (p. 269). Knowledge of attachment strengthens our understanding of child development, for example by linking behavioural problems with the motivation for connection. An attachment perspective provides a strong basis for involving parents in treatment, in order to help parents to better understand their children, as well as address their own issues.

Attachment theory also provides a model for the clinical relationship based in an understanding of primary human needs, suggesting the central importance of the therapist's

capacity for emotional attunement. Emotional attunement as a therapeutic tool involves "the ability to hear, see, sense, interpret, and respond to the client's verbal and nonverbal cues", thereby communicating that the person is "genuinely seen, felt, and understood" (Wylie & Turner, 2011, p. 8). An object relations approach is well suited to the symbolic potential of art materials to access and play with inner fantasies. A systems approach helps art therapists to consider complex relationships, as well as the broader influence of family and community. All these theoretical approaches offer ways to attune and connect with clients. The art therapist makes use of their whole self on many levels in order to promote attunement and enrich the art therapeutic relationship.

Object relations and systems approaches are helpful in refining our application of attachment knowledge in art therapy. An attachment approach often conceptualizes the therapeutic relationship as recreating early attachment processes with the goal of performing a corrective function. There is a common view in art therapy that we "temporarily assume the role of the 'good enough' parent" to promote secure attachment (Malchiodi, 2015, p. 51). Based on the cultural considerations outlined in this paper, I suggest that this model may not always be appropriate. I propose instead that the art therapeutic relationship can augment, bolster and expand the child's relational capacities, by working in concert with existing attachment networks. This model, based on the notion of the *loving third*, has characteristics of a structural or systems approach, and is also aligned with intersubjectivity research.

The creative process provides a way for art therapists to attune through attentiveness and meaningful response to clients' expressive choices of materials, colour, shape, form, sound, rhythm and touch, to witness and to meaningfully respond. The art materials are animated by clients, and given the power to mirror and respond to their needs. This can have a transformative effect on parent-child relationships, as they form a relationship with the artwork itself. The art work communicates in such a way that the artists may become more attuned within oneself, in relationships, and connected to the creativity of life. The creation of art objects may render the artists transformed as well, through the act of physically evoking and giving shape to aspects of the self. Art materials and the creative process have much to teach us about how attunement is not always complete or perfect. In the act of creative play, the experience of frustrations, inconsistencies and surprises can serve to increase a sense of engagement, improvisation, and empathy, which may then flow into personal relationships (Kossack, 2009).

Reflexivity and Limitations

This research was guided by holistic approach which employed my own intuitive process of curiosity. This led to the inclusion of discoveries which I found interesting and relevant. While I have tried to provide a balanced perspective and offer both empirical and theoretical research, the arc of this inquiry has followed my own subjective experience. This research has been primarily motivated by the intention to challenge and develop my own theoretical orientation as an art therapist, a highly personal pursuit. Furthermore, as a white, university-educated, cisgender woman, my attempts to grapple with cultural considerations are always complicated by forms of privilege due to these social locators, as well as my own internalized experience of my cultural contexts.

It is also important to acknowledge underlying assumptions which may have influenced this research. My personal musings that preceded this inquiry include a karmic view of human relationships, as inspired by a children's book I was exposed to in my youth, called *The Mountains of Tibet* (Gerstein & Rinpoche, 1987). This story depicts how a spirit chooses the circumstances of their conception and birth, through which to incarnate into human life. This book was my first encounter with a karmic worldview, which continues to influence my personal philosophy. I include this information to indicate how my spiritual orientation influences my direction as an art therapist and researcher. Buddhist approaches to therapy involve unique conceptions of the self and human development. These philosophical assumptions can contribute to the attitudes we hold towards family and childhood (Brazier, 1996, p. 16).

The use of attunement within art therapy has limitations for clinical training and practice. As the present research findings have indicated, attunement can occur in a variety of ways which makes it difficult to standardize as a therapeutic tool. However, research increasingly indicates the importance of attunement within therapy, suggesting that further research is merited.

Recommendations

This theoretical exploration has garnered evidence to suggest that continued efforts towards cultural engagement in art therapy may enhance the use of attunement within the therapeutic relationship, as well as help art therapists to better understand attachment relationships. I propose that art therapists treating children may use attunement in a broad sense to engage caregivers. The phrase "re-imagining attunement", from this paper's title, refers not only to the historical trajectory of attunement as an evolving concept, but also proposes a

paradigm for art therapy practice. That is, attunement is a unique experience for each individual, so we must continually re-imagine attunement with each client we encounter, from moment to moment and across diverse contexts.

Attachment theory encompasses growing knowledge of human development, with an increasingly intersubjective perspective. The use of attunement is relevant for enhancing the therapeutic relationship, as well as promoting attunement in dyadic and family relationships. I believe that attachment-based art therapy is due for a shift in thinking, in which viewing parents as clients in their own right is potentially beneficial for the development of the family as a whole.

Conclusion

Attunement in dyad and family art therapy is a versatile process of aligning with the relational needs of children in order to promote healthy development. This process can be inherently therapeutic for parents as well, and benefits may resonate within families and communities. Art therapy provides a unique means of attuning to inner and outer experience, with the potential to enhance positive change within close relationships. Due to the qualities of implicit, embodied communication and symbolic play, art therapy interventions may be especially promising in promoting mutual psychological benefit in dyadic and family treatment. Art materials and the creative process provide an opportunity to experience attunement in a way that is flexible, holistic, and inclusive.

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