



An investigation into the prevalence and phenomenology of synchronicity experiences in the clinical setting

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Defining synchronicity

A psychologically meaningful connection between an **inner** event (e.g. thought, vision) and one or more **external** events occurring simultaneously (Jung, 1952)

Jung also proposed a broader definition in which synchronicity experiences could involve a coincidence between an inner event and an outer event occurring at either a **distant place** or a **future point in time**





Definition of synchronicity for the research project

- When **two or more events** parallel one another through having identical, similar or comparable content;
- There is no discernible or plausible way in which this paralleling could be the result of normal causes;
- The paralleling must be sufficiently unlikely and detailed as to be notable;
- The experience must be meaningful beyond being notable.





What do we mean by the clinical setting?

The clinical setting is defined for the purposes of the research as the psychotherapeutic environment or a session or consultation between a practitioner (counsellor psychiatrist, psychologist, or psychotherapist) and a client or patient.





Example of synchronicity in the clinical setting





Literature review

Accounting for synchronicity experiences...

- Openness to unconscious communication (Marlo & Kline, 1998)
- High transference (Beitman & Shaw, 2009; Eisenbud, 1970; Servadio, 1935)
- High dependency needs (de Carvalho, 1996)
- When patients are withdrawn (Ullman, 1949)
- When interactions are unusually joyful (Carpenter, 2002)
- Critical turning point in therapy (Hopcke, 2009)





Previous survey research

- Tornatore (1977) conducted a survey with 609 psychiatrists and found 47% of respondents reported possible psi phenomena in the clinical setting
- 74% of a US sample believed chance events influenced their career development (Bright, Pryor, & Harper, 2005)
- 80% of a UK sample reported experiencing meaningful coincidences (Henry, 1993)





Research design

Mixed methods design “allows researchers to simultaneously generalise results from a sample to a population and to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon (Hanson et al. 2005, p. 224)



On-line nationwide survey with a representative sample of clinicians

In-depth interviews using IPA





Research aims

- How common are synchronicity experiences in the clinical setting?
- What explanations do clinicians give for synchronicity experiences in the clinical setting?
- Are there any differences in the reporting, interpretation or explanation of these experiences according to the type of clinical setting or clinician?



Synchronicity Experiences

6. Over your entire practising career do you think you have experienced a synchronicity event (as defined in this study) associated with a clinical setting?

Yes No

If you have answered 'no' then please go to [Question 10](#).

7. Over your entire practising career approximately how many synchronistic events do you think you have experienced?

[More Info](#)

8. Could you please describe your most memorable synchronicity experience in a clinical setting that you recognised or interpreted as synchronicity, either at the time or upon reflection?

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Prompt: How did it make you feel?

Prompt: Did you discuss this experience with the client/patient?

NB. We are interested in your experiences of synchronicity in a clinical setting not those purely described by clients/patients.

If there is another experience you wish to share then please do so below, if not please continue onto the next question.

9. Do you feel the event assisted with a client's/patient's therapy?

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Prompt: Did it affect a client's/patient's attitude or personal outlook?

Prompt: Was the event a breakthrough or turning point in the therapy/treatment?





Experience analysis

10. Do you think synchronicity events can be useful experiences in therapy?

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Prompt: Could they be opportunities for clinical intervention?

Yes No Maybe

Please elaborate

11. When a synchronistic event occurs in a clinical setting what would influence your decision to use/discuss the information from the experience in a session?

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12. When do you think synchronicity experiences are more likely to occur in a clinical setting? Please indicate how much you agree/disagree with each of the following statements.

[More Info](#)

	Please select one of the following				
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
a. If the client/patient has heightened emotional intensity or is in a negative emotional state.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. If the client/patient is withdrawn or withholding information from the clinician, and needs to build or maintain a sense of connectedness with the clinician.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. When there is a turning point in treatment or therapy.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. When interactions are usually joyful or harmonious (e.g. there is a positive therapeutic alliance or patient-doctor relationship).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>





13. What is your explanation for **why** synchronicity events might occur in a clinical setting? Please indicate how much you agree/disagree with each of the following statements.

[More Info](#)

	Please select one of the following				
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
a. A collective unconscious exists and all minds are connected.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. I believe in fate and that synchronicities are part of an underlying hidden design.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Synchronicity experiences are adaptive; they help an individual towards personal growth.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. Synchronicities occur due to transference, countertransference and the therapeutic relationship.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. Synchronicities occur because some important unconscious material needs to be expressed.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. Synchronicities are chance coincidences that individuals sometimes ascribe meaning to.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g. Synchronicities are a sign of 'divine intervention' in the spiritual or religious sense.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

14. Do you have a personal definition/explanation of synchronicity? Or any other opinions on the topic you wish to share?





Implications

- *On a therapeutic level...*

....it is important to explore what implications any reported synchronicity experiences have on the therapeutic relationship and clinical outcome

- *On a parapsychological level...*

...findings might shed some light on whether ESP is involved in synchronicity. If so, it would be an example of how psi might operate in a real world setting





Grato pelo atenção!
Thanks for your attention!

I'd be interested in hearing about your own
experiences!

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