

# Synchronicity Learning Theory: Happenstance Learning Theory Re-envisioned

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study is twofold: firstly, to listen for elements of Krumboltz's (2009) Happenstance Learning Theory (HLT) within the stories of women, including risk, curiosity, optimism, flexibility, and persistence; and secondly, to determine whether these women frame their stories within a worldview that values other ways of knowing, such as intuition, that cannot be easily measured or observed. These women have been selected because they are at least fifty years old and have acquired the embodied wisdom that results from years of lived experience. Their stories have potential to contribute women's voices to inform a new model of career counselling which *re-envision*s HLT, where an exploration of worldview is considered part of the conversation around meaningful happenstance, called synchronicity. Counsellors may offer this new approach, named Synchronicity Learning Theory (SLT), in order to encourage an awareness of synchronistic experiences that help guide decision making within an interconnected and interdependent world. Using a narrative inquiry design, in-depth interviews were recorded, and verbatim transcriptions were woven together

in a storied form that includes six main themes that help inform SLT:

- 1) risk;
- 2) boundaries;
- 3) kindred spirits;
- 4) seasons;
- 5) flux; and
- 6) synchronicity.

Implications for future research, career theory development, and counselling practice are discussed.

*Keywords:* synchronicity, synchronicity learning theory, happenstance learning theory, career counselling, search for life meaning, intuition, new career theory.

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## The Void

The modern dilemma of social isolation (Kegley, 2018), the reduction in physical connectedness due to the increase in digital media and virtual ways of conducting all sorts of daily

tasks (Achterbergh et al., 2020), and even the lack of intimacy and support women gain from interactions with other women (Rankin et al., 2018) – all of these things can contribute to a sense of loneliness and questions around life purpose. Added to this, throughout modern history the world has operated under a patriarchal system that encourages competition, human dominance, and the acquisition of power and resources. Never before, at least not during modern times, has the survival of our species needed a more feminine, collaborative, and reciprocal approach towards sharing power and resources with an understanding of the cyclical and seasonal nature of Earth and all living things (Morrison, 2016).

Reconciling the career and life roles that women see available today, with an inner knowledge of this other way of engaging with the world that is cooperative, compassionate, and interdependent, leaves many women feeling unsettled, though few have words to easily describe this dis-ease (Sweeting-Trotter, 2014). At the same time, traditional ways of knowing common to Indigenous people all over the globe, including the descendants of ancient Celtic and Gaelic peoples, are often forgotten or dismissed (McVeigh, 2017). Women are frequently

discouraged from trusting their own inner wisdom and ancestral sources of intuitive knowledge (Sinclair, 2020). Faced with subtle and unnamed feelings of discontent, some of these women peer through this mist and seek counselling, hoping to find more than a job or an occupation, but a life purpose and meaning that fills a spiritual void. Counsellors continue to hear these stories, leading some to hope for a new approach to counselling that reflects these women's voices and considers a worldview that includes intuitive and embodied ways of coming to know, where a trust in the process of living allows for the possibility that career decision making and a search for life purpose could be aided by an awareness of this invisible world.

For the purpose of this study, career counselling is included under the larger umbrella of counselling therapy, where common approaches and basic principles are shared across multiple areas of focus, including both mental health therapy in general, and career counselling in particular. While specifically relevant to career counselling, Krumboltz's (2009) Happenstance Learning Theory (HLT) and the newly re-envisioned Synchronicity Learning Theory (SLT) are applicable to *both* career development and whole-life counselling therapy.

## Literature Review

### *Intuition*

Sinclair (2020) argues that intuition is a “non-sequential information processing mode, which compromises both cognitive and affective elements and results in direct knowing without any use of conscious reasoning” (p. 1). Years earlier, Jung (1921/1971) defined intuition as “perception via the unconscious where sense perception is a starting point to bring forth ideas, images, and possibilities through a process that is mostly unconscious” (p. 462). Tafreshi et al. (2018) more recently explore intuition by examining Women's Ways of Knowing (WAYS) and determine that there is a great deal of diversity in how the women they interviewed described and understood sources of knowledge and knowledge construction. Prior to this, Belenky et al. (1986) did extensive work into women's ways of knowing and grouped women's perspectives on knowing into five major epistemological categories including: silence, received knowledge, subjective knowledge, procedural knowledge, and constructed knowledge. What seems to be implied in this book is that these five categories form a hierarchy, and that subjective knowledge, which includes intuition, is inferior to constructed knowledge where strategies for knowing are both subjective and objective. None of the five categories included notable emphasis on embodied

knowing experienced as physical sensations within the body, though the importance of relationships, caring, and sense of community were closely linked to the ways of knowing attributed to women.

### *Embodied Wisdom*

Offering another perspective, Snowber (2016) focusses on embodied knowledge and the intuitive wisdom within the body and tells us that:

This approach is not new, nor does it represent new knowledge. This knowledge comes from the ancients, the wise ones, the indigenous people, and the mystics. You've heard it. You know it. That's because this knowledge is as earthly as the gardener's hands. (p. xiv).

Bolen (1993, 2004) also wrote extensively about the wisdom within women's bodies, and defines intuition as “the gaps between the conscious and unconscious, and instinctual wisdom and reason” (2004, p. 112). She further argues that:

Allowing intuition to blossom requires listening to and trusting your body and inner messages, and being present in the moment. Relying on intuition is not ignoring or denying logic or reason, but believing that your mind and body contains more levels of knowledge than can be assessed on the surface (2004, p. 112).

Above all, Bolen understood that intuitive knowledge was felt knowledge that was experienced in the body. Echoing Bolen, Attig et al. (2011) explore intuition in relationship to synchronicity and spirituality, using personality assessments within the MBTI along with Beitman's Weird Coincidence Scale to compare intuition levels with the frequency of meaningful coincidences. These authors argue that:

Those who are highly intuitive may be more likely to notice weird coincidences; or perhaps after having an unusual number of weird coincidences, they may be more likely to attend to their intuition, which may help them to notice further coincidences that may prove helpful to them (p. 3).

### *Synchronicity*

Russo-Netzer & Ickson (2020) contend that little systematic research has explored synchronicity-phenomenon, prior to their own phenomenological analysis of in-depth interviews conducted with forty-five adults. Their findings suggest a dynamic model of three major building blocks including:

1. receptiveness (R), demonstrated by increased attention and openness to feelings and cognitions;
2. an exceptional encounter (E), experienced as a sudden unexpected event that echoes an

inner feeling or thought; and  
3. meaning detecting (M), evident by connecting the event to oneself in a meaningful way.

Similarly, Beitman (2016, 2022) also argues that certain conditions can encourage coincidence, such as times of high emotion and a conscious openness to synchronistic events, and he goes further to suggest that times of transition or change also predispose people to experience synchronicity (2016, p. 243) which are "often instrumental in helping us find people, solutions, useful information, and new possibilities" (2016, p. 35).

The term synchronicity was originally coined by Jung (1921/1971) to explain the meaningful coincidence between two things, such as a psychic occurrence followed by a physical occurrence, or two meaningfully connected physical or psychic occurrences with no apparent causal connection. Decades later, Connolly (2015) argues that "at the present moment, we are still unsure if such events should be considered normal, or an indication of psychopathology... where synchronicity destabilizes our certainties and strips away the illusion of a mind confined to a human body" (p. 160).

Jung (1952/2010) had been sympathetic to these challenges, and had argued that part of the difficulty with understanding synchronicity is that in the western world, people commonly view reality from the triadic perspective of time, space, and causality, and

thus discount occurrences and connections that happen without a thinkable cause. He suggested that synchronicity is easily understood within eastern philosophies, as well as by ancient and Indigenous peoples, who viewed the world from a holistic perspective.

Early on, Jung (1952/2010) suggested that advancements in physics and an awareness of the radioactive decay of matter allowed scientists to begin to understand the acausal nature of physical reality when looking at minute particles of matter. He tells us that:

Synchronicity is no more baffling or mysterious than the discontinuities of physics. It is only the ingrained belief in the sovereign power of causality that creates intellectual difficulties and makes it appear unthinkable that causeless events exist or could ever occur (p. 112).

In modern decades, advancements in physics have led to the mainstream understanding that the observer impacts what is being observed and our post-modern view of reality includes a broader awareness of the relationship between the psyche of the observer and the physical reality under observation, at least at this microscopic level (Hawking, 2010). Jung (1952/2010) suggested that similarly, the psyche of the observer can also impact the physical world, and this tight coupling of events that goes

beyond a linear, local, and causal view of material reality can be experienced as synchronicity.

### Happenstance Learning Theory

Krumboltz's (2009) Happenstance Learning Theory (HLT), originally referred to as Planned Happenstance Learning Theory (Mitchell, Levin, & Krumboltz, 1999), is based on the premise that the goal of career counselling is not to assist clients in making one career decision, and ending the counselling relationship there, but to encourage them to engage in exploratory actions as a way of generating unplanned beneficial events that could lead to a variety of career and life opportunities. Recognizing that the world is a chaotic environment where so many factors are outside of an individual's control, HLT encourages clients to be resilient amidst change while at the same time engaging in a variety of actions that may lead to an even greater number of unexpected opportunities to choose from.

What this theory does not include is the suggestion that chance events, referred to as happenstance, represent some level of underlying *meaning*, and that these events happen as part of a greater design. Instead, Krumboltz uses the word happenstance to mean a random, chance event void of any meaningful connection. Within this approach to counselling, the potential for happenstance, or chance events, is often discussed with clients as a valuable way

of identifying that even the best plans are not immune to disruption and that flexibility is essential. Counsellors, whose practice is informed by HLT, encourage their clients to take active steps to create even more chance, unplanned opportunities as a means of generating more possibilities in life. Risk, curiosity, flexibility, optimism, and persistence are five components of HLT that are discussed as ways of helping to generate more of these possibilities while coping with uncertainty within life.

#### *Risk and Curiosity*

The first two components of risk taking and curiosity can often be considered in tandem, where curiosity includes the initial *exploration* of actions that can be taken to generate more chance events within a person's life, while risk taking includes the willingness to move forward in a tangible way, such as signing up for a night class or engaging in a conversation with a new acquaintance (Krumboltz, 2009).

#### *Flexibility*

The third component is flexibility, which can be further developed after dealing with chance events. Keeping goals in mind (the what) while being flexible about the varied means of achieving those goals (the how) is key, while those who are rigid and unbending in their approach may have more limited means of

achieving their goals (Krumboltz, 2009).

#### *Optimism*

The fourth component is optimism, which can be considered more of a chosen attitude rather than a behaviour. Krumboltz believes that people who adopt an optimistic attitude are more likely to be successful over time (Krumboltz, 2009).

#### *Persistence*

The fifth component is persistence, and includes a willingness to focus sustained effort over a period of time, despite setbacks. People who choose to be persistent understand that even negative chance events can often lead to positive outcomes over time (Krumboltz, 2009).

#### *HLT Re-envisioned*

Considering how the language of synchronicity may be understood as communication between the seen or unseen world offers the suggestion that career decision making and a search for life purpose could be aided by a greater awareness of this invisible world. The re-envisioning of HLT into a new theory that includes this awareness became an exciting possibility. This led to the central question: What if what is considered as random are signs, portals, openings, and how then, if we learn to read these moments,

might we use this inspiration and these opportunities to live a most meaningful life? And if so, how might counsellors support their clients in this search for life meaning?

Paying attention to synchronistic events, with an openness to the idea that the world is a living organism with blurred boundaries between self and other, may offer an alternative to engaging in the career decision making process. Rather than navigate through and pivot around chance events that come our way, we might learn to embrace this complexity as evidence of our interconnectedness within a greater whole, paying attention to the potential meaning within and between these synchronicities. Meaningful coincidences suggest that we live in a matrix of unbounded links to one another, and that humans possess a greater personal power over synchronicity than most of us realize (Beitman, 2016; Coleman, Beitman, & Celebi, 2009).

### Purpose of Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is therefore twofold: firstly, to explore the presence or absence of the five HLT elements of risk, curiosity, optimism, persistence, and flexibility within the stories of five women; and secondly, to determine whether these women frame their stories within an epistemology based upon logical-analytical knowledge that can be measured and observed (the

seen), or a belief system which also values other ways of knowing (the unseen). These stories matter, as they have potential to inform a new model of career counselling which expands upon HLT, and where an exploration of belief systems is considered part of the conversation around *meaningful* happenstance, or synchronicity. Depending upon the client's openness to more intuitive ways of knowing, counsellors may use HLT in its traditional format, or may offer a re-envisioned version of HLT that encourages an awareness of meaningful synchronicities that help guide decision making along the life-career path.

Furthermore, the inclusion of synchronicity as an "under-explored pathway to life satisfaction" (Russo-Netzer & Ickson, 2023, p. 1) could transform career theory and pave the way for new tools and approaches within the career development field, offering alternatives that fit within a narrative that is interconnected and interdependent as well as complex and chaotic. This led the researcher to wonder - is it possible to re-envision HLT so that this openness to chance events is not just something that creates opportunity, but may also allow for an unfolding of life based on a trust in the process of living, and where inspiration and guidance is communicated through meaningful synchronicities? Built upon a foundation of HLT, could a new theory, named Synchronicity Learning Theory (SLT), provide a

novel way of working with those clients who are open to the idea of *meaningful* synchronicity? The rich stories of the women engaged within this narrative inquiry suggest that the answer to this question is yes, and is outlined in detail below.

### Method

#### A Storied Approach

Freeman (2015) tells us that we are born into a storied world and live our lives through the creation and sharing of stories, and where narrative inquiry offers an approach that fits with a *relational* view of the world (Clandinin, 2016). Reflection on the words of Buber (1923) also remind us of the importance of the relationship between researcher and participant, and whether we enter into that relationship with the initial goal of *experience* or *encounter*. The listener who shares an *encounter* with the person telling her story engages in a profound connection that is transpersonal in nature, and where the researcher, for moments in time, suspends her separateness and no longer relates to the participant as the *other*. What is produced in the form of narrative research are more than transcribed observations or reported experiences, but meaningfully evocative, provocative stories that listeners can connect to in a heart-felt way. A narrative inquiry methodology was therefore adopted with the goal of fostering this intimacy between participant,

researcher, and future reader, where the sensuality of stories allows for an embodied learning that is felt in the body as well as contemplated in the mind.

### Participant Selection

This study was approved through the UPEI Research Ethics Board in the spring of 2022. The participants chosen for this narrative inquiry included women aged fifty and above who had gone through a career/life transition and who were open to speaking about their search for life purpose. The only restriction put in place included the inability to be a past or current client of PEI Career Development Services where the lead researcher is employed. Being fairly well known within her community and having a wide reach on social media, the lead researcher's public social media account was used to recruit participants, and within less than 24hrs five women who met the selection criteria had volunteered to participate.

It was quickly determined that all potential participants were former or current residents of PEI and available to participate in the interview process, either in person or on Zoom. The benefit of waiting for additional applicants included the possibility of women who presented more diverse backgrounds and stories. The drawback of waiting included having to come up with additional criteria in order to sort through who the best participants would be if more than five women

responded.

Even though Prince Edward Island is becoming a more diverse and multi-cultural province compared to the homogeneous society it was just a decade ago, the participants who volunteered for this study were all Canadian-born, cis-gendered, white, able-bodied women of European descent. The limitation that this creates is the lack of diverse women's voices reflected in the stories they shared. The benefit is that the commonalities between researcher and participants allowed for quick rapport building and a shared understanding of life experiences. It is this sense of intimacy that is of paramount importance within the narrative inquiry process, where the resonance between researcher and participant is essential.

While a further study might strive to include more diverse voices and perspectives, this researcher was satisfied with the rich stories of the five women who initially volunteered, and no further recruitment was necessary. Four of the women were between fifty and fifty-two while the fifth was sixty-three. One woman had no formal post-secondary training while three had an undergraduate degree and one had a master's degree. One woman had no children of her own but had contributed to children's lives in a significant way; two women had both children and step children; one woman had her own biological children and an adopted child as well as a grandson she was raising fulltime; and the last

woman had three biological sons. Considering their relationship status, one woman had never been married but had previously been in a common-law relationship for several years; one woman had been married for over thirty years; two women were divorced and one of them had remarried; and the last woman was in a long-term marriage with a man who had been married once before. At the time of the interviews, four of the five women were residing in rural PEI, and one woman had since moved to Ontario after having lived on PEI years earlier.

The rationale for limiting participant selection to women came from the goal of infusing more women's voices within new career theory, seeking input from those who viewed the world through a female lens. Women aged fifty and above were targeted based on the rationale that they had acquired embodied wisdom by the very nature of having lived within their bodies for at least fifty years. Payerle (2016) argues that some cultures value the wisdom earned by older women and recognize this wisdom through coming-of-age celebrations. Media within the western world, however, often portrays aging as a negative process and women's aging as a particularly troublesome phenomenon, where older women become almost invisible. Valuing older women's contributions is a small, conscious step towards balancing this disequilibrium.

## Data Collection

Data collection included three separate one and a half to two-hour meetings with each of the participants, either in person or on Zoom. An unstructured interview approach was adopted, and the initial question for all women was: “You have identified as a woman who is fifty or above and who has contemplated her life purpose while making a career/life transition. Can you tell me about that?” The intention of this question was to provide an open space to allow each woman to tell her story in her own way, independently choosing key elements to include and omit.

All interviews were immediately transcribed through Zoom, including the virtual interviews as well as those completed in person. The Zoom transcription technology was such a significant time saver and allowed the researcher to review the conversations before moving on to interview round two and three. Each round was completed within a two-week period, and all interviews were completed by the end of August 2022.

Interview number two began with the opening question: “How do you determine something is true for you, and what sources of knowledge do you trust, especially when making important decisions in your life?” The intention if this question was to get at the root of what women value as authentic sources of knowledge, both seen and unseen. Interview number three began with the

question: “If you were to think back to your twenty-year old self, or even yourself as you were about to leave high school, what advice would the mature you share with your younger self?” The intention of this question was to uncover key lessons each mature woman wished to share from a lifetime of lived experience.

In an attempt to infuse herself more intimately within the study, while examining her own biases and ways of understanding the world around her, this researcher posed the same three questions to herself and included her stories in the final narrative, sharing the common characteristics of being a woman over fifty who had searched for life meaning and had gone through a career/life transition. This also allowed the researcher to see how her own story *fit* with the stories of her research participants, bumping up against some and merging into others. The end result was an increase in the overall rigor of the research process as the researcher’s preconceived beliefs and opinions were brought to light. It also provided a rich opportunity to acknowledge that narrative inquiry by its very nature includes a deep sharing between researcher, participant, and future reader, where stories are deeply personal and include a subjective blending of ideas when told and retold, shared and received.

## Data Analysis

### *Weaving Story Threads*

Creswell (2006) tells us that “Restorying is the process of reorganizing stories into a general sort of framework. This framework may consist of gathering stories, analyzing them for key elements, and then rewriting the stories in a chronological sequence” (p. 56) where stories have a beginning, middle and end.

Keeping this in mind, the researcher set out to make sense

#### Image 1

*Ancient MacNeil of Barra Tartan*



of each woman’s story with the goal of weaving narrative story threads together in a design that represented each individual woman’s contribution, while at the same time allowed these interwoven pieces to form something greater than the sum of its parts – like a strong tartan cloth formed by individual story threads.

Considering the ancient MacNeil of Barra tartan as a metaphor for the collection of individual research stories, the reader can see how each individual

woman's story has remained intact and whole, though woven together with a type of coherence that allows clear patterns to emerge. Some colours intersect, while others blend into one another. Some colours are dominant and repeated, while others are subtle. Some are highlighted by a secondary colour, while others exist on their own. Some stand in striking contrast with one another, while others represent various shades of the same primary colour.

This metaphor was a helpful guide as the researcher set out to find meaning and shared meaning within each woman's story. This was achieved by returning to the highlighted copies of the interview transcripts while reading them over a second time to identify key ideas and important concepts. On a separate piece of paper, one word or visual image was recorded to capture the main ideas that emerged. These 166 visual cues, colour coded for each woman, were then cut out and laid out on the floor so that patterns became visible as similar and contrasting concepts became clear. This very tangible approach to thematic analysis allowed the researcher to identify both themes and outliers, while also helping to identify:

- 1) the presence or omission of the five components of HLT within each woman's story, as well as 2) the worldview and preferred ways of knowing valued by each woman.

### *Trustworthiness*

Once each narrative account was completed, the researcher shared an initial draft with each woman to allow for a discussion of what had been written. This practice of member checking added to the shared understanding of the main concepts and enabled the researcher to clarify ideas and check for accurate understanding, as well as provide each woman with an opportunity to change, add, or remove any elements or details from her story. All the women appreciated being included in this writing process, minor edits were made, and the privacy of one woman was further protected by removing several identifiable details. Further checks were made following the completion of subsequent chapters, and a few additional minor edits were made.

### **Findings**

Two initial factors were considered when analyzing the data and included:

- 1) the inclusion or omission of the five elements of HLT within each woman's story, including risk, curiosity, optimism, flexibility, and persistence; and
- 2) the worldview adopted by each woman and openness to ways of knowing, such as intuition, that cannot be easily measured.

In addition to this, six main themes emerged from the narrative

accounts of these women, and are as follows:

1. risk;
2. boundaries;
3. kindred spirits;
4. seasons;
5. flux; and
6. synchronicity.

The following section will address these findings in sequential order, starting with the five elements of HLT, continuing with the introduction to the six main themes that arose from these stories, and following up with information regarding worldview. Pseudonyms (Kelly, Jen, Joan, and Anna) have been used for four of the participants in order to protect confidentiality, while Lori and Jannie chose to be named and identified within this study.

### **Elements of HLT**

Considering whether each of the five elements of HLT are present within or absent from the narratives of these women was a key component of this research project. The following section considers how (a) risk; (b) curiosity; (c) optimism; (d) flexibility; and (e) persistence are portrayed or omitted from the stories of these women, paying special attention to how these components relate to career development and the momentum required to move forward in life in a meaningful way.



### *Risk and Curiosity*

All of the women included stories of risk and curiosity within their individual narratives, to varying degrees. Anna discussed creating a bucket list when she was about to turn fifty, including a three-week trek to Nepal as the ultimate challenge on her list. Being curious about the world around her, and taking the risk to travel across the globe on her own, demonstrates that she had learned the values of these skills within the first five decades of life. Kelly also demonstrates significant risk taking and curiosity when she talks about taking the leap of faith to start her own on-line business:

I decided to go on a mission for myself and not let those negative voices in my head control my actions anymore. Something inside of me said enough was enough and I just needed to push myself and grow and move outside of my comfort zone. It also happened at a time when my youngest went off to university and things changed when the kids weren't as dependent and I had more time. For so long I was on autopilot, focused on going to hockey games and making sure the crock pot was on in the morning, and feeling like I didn't have time for other stuff. Today I see that as an excuse. We choose how we spend our time and plan our day. What I do for my business now takes me two hours each day, so I have to plan my day and make

time for it, and if I don't plan it is simply doesn't happen.

Joan also talks about making a significant career shift just as she was about to turn fifty, demonstrating her ability to be curious about new opportunities and a willingness to take a risk on a new position within the federal government:

I had worked within the provincial government for eleven years, and it wasn't until the very end when it became a toxic environment that I had to make a move. I just kept my head down and continued to do my job with the provincial government while I started to look at my options, knowing my current job was no longer a fit. A change in leadership meant a drastically altered change to the expectations on staff. I was being asked to do more than one fulltime job at a time, and I knew that my mental health was more important than doing two fulltime jobs. When I got a call that they were looking for someone with my background to do this federal job, it didn't even feel like a decision I had to make. It was a no brainer, even if I wasn't able to get a leave of absence. It just felt right.

What was consistent throughout all narratives was an awareness that life was finite, and that curiosity and risk taking were a necessary part of moving forward and achieving any kind of goal, whether it was in their

personal lives or work lives. While the amount of preliminary information required before taking any type of risk varied from one woman to the next, their unanimous ability to explore possibilities and take active steps forward was an essential ingredient in their search for a meaningful life.

### *Optimism*

Optimism was another factor identified within HLT that was prevalent in all of the women's stories, though it should be noted that within several women's stories the decision to adopt an optimistic attitude was something that ebbed and flowed across the lifespan. Anna tells us that:

I recall, when my children were quite young, that there was a period of time that I struggled with my mental health. It was a two-year period, and I don't think that within those two years that I laughed once. Oh, it was a dark night of the soul and I just had this heavy veil of depression on me and I felt like I was always last, that my needs never mattered. I really don't know how I got out of it, but I remember attending a workshop and having the facilitator talk about the dark night of the soul. In that moment I could feel my energy level rising because I had a name for it, and that it was a pretty typical experience. And after that, I really started

to develop an appreciation for being alive.

Other women reflected upon a steady pattern of optimism across the entire course of their lives. Jen spoke about the hopefulness that she carried with her when forced to make significant changes within her personal life, ending her marriage after twenty-eight years. Lori referred to having an optimistic attitude when she talked about taking chances in life and trusting that things would work out. Lori tells us that:

Not every choice in life leads to a positive or preferable outcome, but without optimism, people are immobilized with fear of the unknown and never take those important first steps unless all the steps have been worked out. Knowing what all those steps may be is not always possible, not in a changing and dynamic world like ours.

Anna went a step further and linked her rebounded sense of optimism to intentional actions. She would write a card to herself every December 31st, summarizing the year, while turning around the following day to write a second card that would capture her hopes and intentions for the upcoming year. This optimism, she said, would allow her to create a vision for herself along with the steps she would need to take over that next year-long period.

### *Flexibility*

Flexibility can be regarded as our ability to adapt to changes in our plans, overcome obstacles, deal with setbacks, and adjust expectations. Flexibility doesn't mean that we don't hold tight to significant goals and dreams (the what); it simply means that we are willing to take a variety of approaches to arriving there (the how), accepting that so many external factors are outside of our control. Flexible people understand that there may be more than one way to achieve their goals, and they open themselves up to multiple possibilities.

Each woman's story reflected degrees of flexibility as they negotiated challenges along their life paths. Joan offered insight into her own evolution of flexibility as she described her more recent ability to balance the demands of learning a new role. She admitted that in the past she would have been very anxious about not being fully competent in any new position, and yet with age and experience she has been able to loosen this control and allow herself more flexibility as she learns the roles, asking questions as needed and not feeling as apologetic about taking the time she needs to gain new expertise.

Jen also demonstrated significant flexibility when she left her high paying government job that was compromising her values. Remaining attached to the same dream of working within a helping profession (the what), she found a new opportunity within

a private adoption agency that allowed her to utilize her strengths and experience and yet work in a way that was in line with her value system (the how).

### *Persistence*

The fifth and final component of HLT includes persistence, which was not a dominant theme within the stories of half of the women. However, just because it was not notably present within the told narratives does not mean that it was not present within their lives. It simply means that these women did not focus on this element of HLT when sharing their narratives during the interview process.

Persistence was a notable theme within Jen, Kelly, and Jannie's stories. Jen demonstrated how persistent she was in her earlier years, when her children were young, as she pushed through years of education while juggling home and work and financial challenges, often operating as a single parent for much of this time. Kelly talked about persistence when she shared her experience of signing up for her new business venture and then having to take breaks from it when she put it on hold. Her persistence was demonstrated when she returned to it each time, feeling that powerful tug that there was something present in this opportunity that may lead to greater freedom within her life. And finally, Jannie demonstrated persistence in her story of attending university for thirty-one out of the past thirty-

five years, often one course at a time early on, as she raised seven children and worked fulltime:

Making the decision that a PhD was going to be part of my story is the narrative I have told myself for decades, never wavering, often wedging academic life into the small confined spaces between changing diapers and tending bar, making turkey dinners and tying skates, volunteering in my community and listening to the stories of my own clients who sat across from me in my rose-gold chair. For me, persistence wasn't a choice - it was the only option.

It therefore became evident from the stories of these women that even without being directly questioned on whether these five elements were present in their lives, stories of:

1. risk,
2. curiosity,
3. optimism,
4. flexibility and
5. persistence (to a lesser degree) were included in all accounts.

These central components of HLT seemed to resonate with the women in this study, as *additional* themes emerged from the narratives that they shared. The following section will now explore these six *dominant* themes that arose from their stories.

## Six Emerging Themes that Informed SLT

### *Risk*

Not unlike the element of risk that is identified within HLT, *risk* was also one of the main themes that arose from all of the women's stories included in this research. Risk doesn't always refer to risky behaviours, or dangerous actions, or reckless abandon. Risk can also refer to moving outside of our comfort zone in any way that causes feelings of vulnerability. Vulnerability can be uncomfortable – even downright terrifying, but so powerful – as a catalyst for action and subsequent momentum once the source of that vulnerability has been brought to light. The metaphor of a simmering fire represents this sense of risk within Kelly's story. She tells us that:

While you can have great plans swimming around in your head, all these plans to make changes, and all these goals, nothing is going to change until you take a *risk* and *act*. For me, I had great ideas in my head but I wasn't ready to act on them for a long time. Until you are ready, other things get in the way. Those things that happened before you were five or six years old will stick with you. When you open your mind and deal with things you should have dealt with fifty years ago, that can be a big step, and it was for me. When you change those voices in your

head, and start telling yourself new stories about yourself, amazing things can happen, especially when you surround yourself with the right people.

### *Boundaries*

Boundaries was another main theme present in almost every woman's story, described as the importance of setting healthy boundaries within both personal relationships as well as within the workplace. Boundaries can be thought of as the pathways and fence lines within our lives, those limits we set, or fail to set, both consciously and unconsciously. Joan shares that:

When I think of the path that I took in order to get to the place in my career that I am at today, I think one of the most important lessons that I learned along the way was about setting boundaries, both personally and professionally. When you're just starting out there is no way to push back against unfair expectations, and as we get older, we may have more options or at least less tolerance to accept unhealthy workplace treatment. You're just at this stage where you are just not putting up with things like you did in your twenties and thirties.

### *Kindred Spirits*

All of the women in this research shared the common opinion that, as they moved

through life, the bonds that they had forged with significant others were crucial, and often came in unexpected forms. This sense of community, referred to as *kindred spirits*, could extend to whole groups, or be focused solely on relationships with one or more significant people. While Lori and Jen spoke of the significance of childhood friendships they had maintained for decades, Kelly talked about the positive influence of an on-line group of women who had supported her professional growth, while Anna discussed the importance of the recovery group that she was part of, and the mentoring role that she provided to younger women. The metaphor of a kitchen table aptly captures this theme in the visual image of people coming together in a nourishing way. However, our sense of community remains very connected to the boundaries that we choose to set, and can also represent relationships that are not beneficial to our growth, as depicted in Jen's story:

I am going to talk about toxic relationships both within my career life and home life, as well as recognizing the importance of setting boundaries within all of those multiple relationships. When your actions are no longer in line with your values, you know it's time to make a change. Knowing when to make those changes, and surrounding myself with positive people, has been really important to me.

Anna echoes this message, but from a different perspective:

I have always valued my female friendships throughout my life, and even more so once I got through the business of raising young children and had more time to spend on relationships. I have often paid attention to other women's suggestions and advice, and I'm not saying that I follow everything one hundred percent, but I really value what other women have to share about their lives.

### *Seasons*

Because all of the women selected for this research were aged fifty and above, what they had in common was that they would soon enter or had already entered what Bolen (1993, 1999, 2004) refers to the third trimester of a woman's life – the wise woman stage that emerges beyond the child-bearing years, whether or not a woman has biological children of her own. The significance of the changes that can offer occur at this transitional stage of life around menopause are often absent from conversations around career decision making and career and life planning and will be outlined in more detail under the implications for counselling practice section below.

Other transitional *seasons* or stages in life were also identified in all of the women's stories, and can be represented by an image of the moon, a metaphor that captures the cyclical

and seasonal nature of life. To highlight this theme, Anna tells us that:

I have always seen my life as a kind of pie, with different pieces or slices, rather than a straight line. And I think of the phases or seasons of life that I am going through more so than my specific age – first the busy stage when the children were young, and then the later years when I had to deal with an empty nest syndrome. Philosophically, I guess I look back at each decade and see that who I ended up being at the end of each decade is definitely not who I was when I started out.

Joan offers another perspective as someone who has never had children of her own:

I didn't go through an empty nest syndrome, but if we are talking about seasons and cycles, I do see a shift in my life now that I am fifty. When I was younger, I was always trying to please others by trying to be a good employee, and I got a lot of validation out of being good at my job. The imposter syndrome would always creep in, and I think my lack of confidence had a lot to do with my childhood and never feeling good enough. I would take on more and more work and never feel I could say no. But with age comes experience and I began to actually trust in my reputation and abilities, and it helped build my confidence. I

wonder if you just come to this stage of life around fifty when you start to see yourself as more capable, and then your focus shifts and you start to look more within.

### *Flux*

Flux was the fifth main theme common within these stories, and can be thought of as the movement of energy flowing between two sources, and the trust in the back-and-forth symbiotic merging of two into one. This description of flux is different from Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) understanding of flow as a state of focused concentration that occurs when people are at the peak of their abilities, often experienced by athletes or artists, where time seems to stand still and activities seem effortless. *Flux* can be represented by the metaphor of a pond flowing into a lake, and visa versa, and was articulated clearly within Jannie's story, as she considered the bodies of water near her childhood home:

During the stormiest days, when the waves of the lake came up onto the beach the farthest, and the water flowing down from the mountain was at a high point from the rains, there was no boundary between pond and lake at all, with briny water flowing into the pond and fresh water flowing back into the lake, back and forth and back and forth, like a mixing bowl of salt and water and seaweed and small stones, changes

occurring at a molecular level. And when you listened from the cottage well above the beach, you'd hear the rumbling low tones from the sand and pebbles and larger rocks being dragged from the beach back into the lake, and the rhythmic pulsating thrashing sounds of the water hitting the shore, only to be pulled back out and under by the force of the powerful undertow, two now as one, if only for moments in time.

This sense of flowing energy was present in each story, including Lori's, as she tells us that:

I just have a trust in the unseen wisdom all around me, and feel this energy that moves from one person to the next, impacting us in positive and negative ways. The biggest message that I share with the people I work with, and my own kids, is that sometimes you just have to go with the flow and take a chance, and you sometimes just have to trust that you don't know how everything will work out and be flexible if it doesn't work out exactly the way you planned. You never know who you are going to meet or what person or chance may come your way because you have put yourself out there and tried something new. There is just some greater power beyond us that's larger than us and we can call it the universe or God or whatever you want, and there can be lots of knowledge that can come

from being open to this if we let ourselves.

### *Synchronicity*

The final theme included within five of the women's stories is *synchronicity*, and is very much related to the theme of flux. While absent from Jen's story, it was a very dominant theme within Kelly, Anna, Lori, and Jannie's stories, and also appears within Joan's story as a minor theme. Synchronicity includes the recognition that synchronistic, a-casual meaningful connections may offer a glimpse into a world that is far more interconnected and interdependent that it appears on the surface. The types and variations of synchronicities described within these women's stories include:

1. dream premonitions;
2. having knowledge without any logical way of explaining how that knowledge was required;
3. being at the right place at the right time;
4. meeting the right person to help solve a particular problem or move forward in life;
5. finding an answer in a book or song or other form of media just when it was needed;
6. sharing physical symptoms with a loved one even at great physical distances;
7. observing specific number patterns at a rate very difficult to explain by chance alone; and
8. observing two or more phenomenon occurring together

where the connection cannot be explained by chance alone.

Lori tells us that:

When I think of synchronicity, I first think of premonitions, and either knowing or dreaming that something will happen in the future, which often happens to me sometimes, and there is just no way to explain how I would have that knowledge. I just feel there is more floating around than meets the eye. Sometimes I feel a sort of presence, like a shift in the energy I feel around me, and there are things around me that I can't even see or acknowledge but know they are very real. I think we just need to be really aware of what's around us. You never know when there may be an important sign that can teach you something or lead you on the right path. I see the world as having some type of design, and there are all these opportunities to learn and be inspired and find your path if you are open to receiving these signs. And when it comes to synchronicity, there is just often so much out there that goes beyond any explanation of an accident. You just know there is some kind of meaning behind it.

What is important to note is that what makes any of these occurrences significant is the deeply felt knowledge or belief that the connections are *meaningful*, and not simply random or by chance. It is

interesting to note that Jen was the only one not to include any mention of synchronicity as a theme within her story, and she was also the only participant whose worldview did not include a belief in an intuitive knowledge or awareness of the unseen world. Presented in more detail below, Jen believes intuition to be personal knowledge or instinct that can be attributed to life experience and good sense, rather than any type of awareness that comes from a spiritual source located within the invisible realm.

### Worldview

The consideration of worldview is essentially important when making decisions about therapeutic interventions within counselling. Counsellors know that one size does not fit all when exploring ways to work with each individual client. Determining whether these women frame their stories within an epistemology based upon logical-analytical knowledge that can be measured and observed (the seen), or a belief system which also values other ways of knowing (the unseen), remains an important element within this research project. The following section takes a closer look at the responses of each woman when asked the question: How do you know and trust that something is true for you?

Four of the women included in this project (Anna, Kelly, Lori, and Jannie) articulated a very strong trust in a belief system based on other ways of

knowing, or coming to know, that go beyond what can be seen and measured. To a lesser degree, Joan also shared this worldview. Dreams, premonitions, unexplained coincidences, number patterns, and bodily sensations were included in multiple stories, while a trust in unseen sources of knowledge was common to all five, including Lori:

When you ask about knowledge, I just feel as if there is a wisdom coming at me from all directions if that makes any sense. I can feel a presence sometimes, not on a regular basis but every now and then. I know some people don't even want to entertain the thought of something we can't see, but it has a lot to do with the way I think about life. If there is really a design to the universe, you just never know who is going to share something important with you. It could be the person you sit next to at the airport or someone who randomly crosses your path. Lots of knowledge can come from those interactions if you are open to it.

In contrast, Jen expressed a trust in sources of information that were concrete, measurable, and observable:

When I am making decisions that impact other people, I think it's important that I obtain research from a reliable source and I don't just trust anything that I read anywhere. If I need

to obtain knowledge around something like my own physical health, then I would go on-line and find information from a reputable source like the Mao Clinic. If I am reading a journal article then I would want to know that it's a reputable journal and that the study has been well researched. So that's one way I gain knowledge and can trust it is true.

Jen continued on to talk about intuition, but in a manner somewhat dissimilar from the other women in the group:

When it comes to making personal decisions that impact me alone, I trust my gut. I actually trust my gut wholeheartedly, and when I go against it, I often look back in hindsight with regret. Trusting my gut means knowing that I am capable of making the best decision for myself, because I internally have that inherent knowledge and instinct to make the right decision. I say to my kids that it's your intuition, that inside voice in your head, in your subconscious, that is often trying to tell you things. Sometimes we never learn to listen to that voice.

What became clear within this research project, reflected in the stories of these women, is that while some people are very open to the idea of a source of knowledge that goes beyond the seen world, not everyone is comfortable with this worldview.

Implications for this variation in worldview, as it relates to new career theory and counselling practice, will be discussed in the following section.

### Discussion

#### Implications for New Career Theory and Counselling Practice

##### *Importance of Worldview in Counselling*

Kimmerer (2016) tells us that "I dream of a world guided by a lens of stories rooted in the revelations of science and framed within an Indigenous worldview – stories in which matter and spirit are *both* given voice" (p. 346). What is offered within SLT is an approach to counselling that takes a leap of faith and attaches itself to the mystery of the unseen realm, entering into our lives in those moments of meaningful connection, defying description or explanation and yet present, and felt, and experienced as real. Encouraging our clients to pay attention to those meaningful connections within their lives, those synchronistic experiences recognized as guideposts and signs for how to live their best lives is not to be confused with magical thinking were distorted thoughts draw connections where none exist (Coleman et al., 2009). SLT simply offers the suggestion that we remain open to the possibility that there is a spiritual dimension to the world that shows up or appears as the synchronicity

experienced within our lives.

Counsellors are well aware that not every theory or approach resonates with every client. While HLT remains a useful option for clients whose worldview is focused on a trust in evidence from the observable world around them, SLT may be a useful approach for those clients who gravitate towards intuitive ways of coming to know, who are willing to contemplate the mysterious and unknown. By first exploring ideas around synchronicity and ways of knowing, counsellors can make informed decisions about which approach, HLT or SLT, may be best introduced to each client. It is therefore essential that counsellors use some method of determining whether or not clients may be open to other ways of knowing before engaging in the steps below. Some counsellors may be comfortable simply discussing worldview with their clients, while others may prefer a more assessment-based approach and the use of the Myers Briggs Type Inventory (MBTI) (Briggs, 1944) with a concentrated discussion around ways of taking in information – through sensing or intuition. Still others may wish to utilize Beitman's (2016) Weird Coincidence Scale as a means of determining the appropriateness of SLT, offering this new approach to those whose score highly on their reporting of synchronistic experiences within their lives.

#### Synchronicity Learning Theory

Similar to HLT in many ways, SLT encourages clients to

take active steps within their lives in order to generate unplanned events that could lead to a variety of career and life opportunities. In contrast with HLT, SLT includes the belief that chance events can be meaningful, and that we should learn to pay attention to these meaningful coincidences, called synchronicities, as a way of communicating with a source of knowledge that is beyond the visible world. Counsellors may offer a simplified version of SLT to short term clients, or an expanded version to clients able to engage in a more in-depth counselling relationship.

### *Simplified Version*

Clients are encouraged to engage in actions that can generate unplanned beneficial opportunities within their lives, while seeking to understand the meaningful connections that may appear along their path. What is paramount within this simplified version of SLT is the momentum that is generated by moving forward in life and taking active steps that may or may not first appear to be directly related to the achievement of long-term goals. For example, the client who has always dreamed of becoming a writer may be encouraged to take the initial step of attending a monthly writer's guild meeting – not knowing in advance whom they may come in contact with or what information may be acquired from the encounter. Exploring possible actions that may move the client closer to their goals is a key focus of the

**Image 2**

*Synchronicity Learning Theory Components*



counselling relationship, as well as providing a non-judgemental space for the client to explore meaningful connections within these encounters. The counsellor's role is not to suggest or create meaning where none exists, as the key determinant of meaningfulness is the sense of felt meaning experienced by the client.

### *Expanded Version*

The expanded version of SLT can be understood as both emerging new theory and a novel step-by-step model, useful in helping clients to move forward in life. Counsellors interested in adopting this model of counselling may consider Erikson's (1902-

1994) person-centred approach, where Freire (1970) tells us that the client is the expert in her own life, and fully capable of discovering the answers within herself. As a means of gently assisting with this self-discovery, counsellors can engage in the conversations below, beginning with the identification of goals and moving forward to include components one through six, not necessarily in a linear order and sometimes requiring a back-and-forth movement as more than one component requires further examination and attention. In this sense, the counselling relationship does not focus on making one career decision and ending there, but includes a longer-term



relationship as the client moves forward in life, evaluating and re-evaluating components one through six in the pursuit of their identified goals.

### ***Step One: Risk – Taking Risks to Generate Unplanned, Beneficial Opportunities***

Considering ideas around risk, limitations, and vulnerability, the first component of SLT is to:

- d. name any goal, big or small;
- e. identify the limitations and challenges that we see getting in our way of achieving that goal;
- f. consider the possible next best step that moves us in the direction of that goal; and
- g. take the calculated risk to move forward one step at a time, adjusting plans as required.

Conversations around risk, curiosity, flexibility, optimism, and persistence are useful at this stage, focussing specific attention on encouraging clients to engage in exploratory actions as a way of generating unplanned beneficial events that could lead to a variety of career and life opportunities.

### ***Step Two: Boundaries – Setting Boundaries around Focus of Attention***

The second component of SLT is to set clear boundaries around focus of attention. Focus of intention can be thought of as

an intentional or unintentional concentration on any aspect of living. When we shift our thinking and begin to think of our focus of attention as a finite resource, we often start to identify ways that we are wasting this resource as well as aspects of our lives that would benefit from more focused or prolonged attention. Conversations around first identifying, and then setting clear boundaries around how we choose to use our vital focus of attention and life energy, is key.

### ***Step Three: Kindred Spirits – Identifying our Kindred Spirits***

The third component of SLT is to acknowledge the significance of the people within our lives, now absent or present. Surrounding ourselves with positive people is essential, but not always possible. Our relationships with the significant people within our lives often impact us long after they are gone, and sometimes there is a need to closely examine the messages that we have accepted as true. Early on we learn to see ourselves reflected in the stories that other people tell us. As we move forward in life, it is important to re-examine those internalized stories and decide for ourselves if it is time to change those narratives. Conversations around our relationships with the people who have aided or challenged our growth and development is central at this stage, whether current or in the past, with the goal of re-storying messages that are no longer

helpful. An examination of the kindred spirits we currently choose to surround ourselves with is also essential, as well as the energy we bring to these relationships.

### ***Step Four: Seasons – Acknowledging the Seasons of Life***

The fourth component of SLT is to name and acknowledge the different seasons and cycles of life that we move through. This is not simply a matter of age, but liminal spaces that we naturally and sometimes even suddenly move through as we grow and evolve. Storying with our clients as they name and inquire into the seasons of their lives will empower individuals to locate their stories within the continuity of what has come before, and what is yet to come. Conversations around significant life transitions is a key component of the career development process, including the various outside factors that demand our attention and energy at various stages across the lifespan.

### ***Step Five: Flux – Recognizing the Flux between our Inner and Outer Reality***

The fifth component of SLT is to develop a trust in the back-and-forth flow of energy between ourselves and the outside world, including our internal thoughts and feelings and the outside external reality. The two elements of persistence and

optimism that are also found within HLT may be considered again as part of flux. Clients who maintain a sustained and persistent effort over time have the best chances of achieving their goals. Flux within SLT also includes gratitude and compassion, as well as a trust in the process of living. Clients who do not initially recognize the link between their thoughts, feelings, and attitudes (the internal world) and their relationships and environment (the external world) may resist this component part of SLT. If so, one option is to determine whether the client believes in the intrinsic value of any one of these four components of persistence, optimism, gratitude, and compassion before engaging in conversations around how one or more of these intentional attitudes may impact our movement forward in life.

### ***Step Six: Synchronicity – Noticing Meaningful Connections within Synchronicity***

The sixth and final component of SLT is twofold, and fully encompasses the simplified version of SLT. First, a) clients are encouraged to take actions that may generate chance or random events that may lead to unexpected opportunities that may push them forward in life. And secondly, b) clients are encouraged to be open to meaningful connections within the synchronistic moments that occur within their lives – moments of intuition, unexplainable coincidences, repeated patterns

– those moments that awaken them to the mysteries of the unseen world. Paying attention to these synchronistic events, with an openness to the idea that the world is a living organism with blurred boundaries between self and other, may offer an alternative way of being in the world that resonates with those deepest parts of ourselves that long to be part of something more. Conversations at this stage will focus on supporting our clients to contemplate and examine the synchronicity within their lives, using this information to help them find more than a job or career, but life purpose and meaning.

### **A Special Note on Seasons**

Whether our clients are young adults possibly overwhelmed by a plethora of options, or caregivers juggling the demands of children and elderly parents, or middle-aged folks re-examining the very purpose of their finite lives, or those who fit no predictable pattern or life-stage at all, we need to remain conscious of and in-tune with cyclical life seasons and respond with an understanding of what these seasons mean within the career counselling process. Perimenopause and menopause are significant transitions for many, and in addition to the physical and psychological shifts, moving through this stage often includes a questioning of life purpose (Marnocha, Bergstrom, & Dempsey, 2011). Careers can be impacted as well, as some women

question their ability to maintain fulltime employment while dealing with some of these changes and disruptions, navigating these liminal spaces often without support.

The more we learn about the transformative power that surrounds this stage of life, and the more we attempt to make space for conversations that have been long overlooked, the better our clients will be served as they move between the mother-phase and wise-women phases (Bolen, 2004) of their lives, whether or not they have had biological children of their own. Simply acknowledging the significance of this transition can go a long way, while providing an invitation for our clients to engage in these conversations if they are ready, able, and wanting to do so. Failing to acknowledge this part of a woman's life may demonstrate carelessness or lack of understanding on the part of the counsellor, as this is an issue that goes beyond primary health care and seeps into so many dimensions of career/life counselling.

### **Limitations and Possibilities**

As a narrative inquiry, this study offers rich stories of life experience shared by five participants and the lead researcher, all women aged fifty and above. What it does not promise are results that can be generalized to all people, nor can it be assumed that all women over fifty would have similar experiences or perspectives on life. Instead, this method of

inquiry allows for the possibility that some people will read these stories and see themselves within the narratives of others, finding deep meaning and purpose within their words.

Furthermore, the six themes arising from these women's stories – which form the basis of SLT - may or may not be dominant themes within the lives of every reader, or every client. Based upon this researcher's almost twenty years of lived experience and professional training as a counselling therapist, they are themes that frequently come up in counselling conversations, especially in regard to the search for life purpose that often occurs at midlife. What remains most important for counsellors to keep top of mind is the initial exploration around intuition and meaningful coincidences before deciding whether SLT may be a useful and appropriate model for an individual client. Those clients most open to intuitive ways of knowing, who express an awareness of the mysterious, unseen world, may be the best candidates to explore this new approach called SLT. Many other clients, however, would be better served with alternative approaches like HLT – where coincidences simply offer chance opportunities to move forward in life – with no underlying meaning attached.

### Recommendations for Future Research

Future research might explore the usefulness of the MBTI (Briggs, 1944), the Weird Coincidence Scale (Beitman, 2016), or the SAMD (Russo-Netzer & Icekson, 2020) in determining whether HLT or SLT might be the most appropriate fit for each individual client, based on their openness to intuitive ways of knowing and experiences of meaningful synchronicity within their lives. In addition to this, a further narrative inquiry into the lives of people, both men and women, who have participated in a Synchronicity Learning Theory approach to career counselling would be a beneficial way of gathering additional, rich information about the overall effectiveness of SLT as a new model of counselling.

### Conclusion

The following reflection has been taken from the author's original dissertation entitled *Woven threads of synchronicity from the stories of wise women: A narrative inquiry*, (Payne, 2023) that formed the basis of this research article:

I wonder if, as a modern, western society, and now as individuals, some of us have lost the ability to connect with someone or something greater than ourselves. As a culture, have we become hungry, ravenous really, for a spiritual connection and sense of meaning that fills us up, and

makes us feel whole? Has this sense of individuality become so central to this worldview that some of us have temporarily lost that human instinct to focus attention on the other (Derrida, 2005), preoccupied with the cultural illusion that we are unique, independent individuals living wholly separate lives? (p. 198)

Is it possible that there are invisible forces within the world, or between worlds, connected to synchronicity, that enact or invite movement in mysterious ways? For some people, lived experiences have demonstrated that the world is more interconnected than they first believed it to be, and that a-causal connections will be better understood as the boundaries between physics and philosophy continue to merge and collide...

The language of synchronicity may offer a way to communicate with a universe that is web-like, interdependent, and inter-vibrational – and where synchronistic events can act as portals and openings through the thin veil that separates the seen and unseen dimensions of the world... as counsellors help their clients navigate these liminal spaces with the bravery to live their best, most meaningful lives (Oliver, 2012).

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