

Behind the Clinical Mask: The Therapist's Shadow and Client Clusters

Abstract

Jung viewed the shadow as the disowned self — aspects of the psyche repressed by the ego and masked by the persona. In psychotherapy, these unconscious contents inevitably seek expression and often manifest as what I term *client clusters* — recurring constellations of client presentations that mirror the therapist's unresolved material. This presentation introduces a theoretical model that situates the shadow in relation to other key Jungian constructs, and grounds it in art and play therapy practices. These creative methods offer pathways to effectively identify, explore, and work through shadow material in the context of countertransference. Using anonymised vignettes, we examine how to identify, respond to, and meaningfully engage with client clusters as reflections of the therapist's shadow. The model supports ethical, self-reflective practice and invites therapists to view the shadow as a vital source of growth, authenticity, relational depth, and a means of aligning more fully with the Self.

Bio

Dr. Rosa Bologna is a psychologist, clinical supervisor, and founder of the Academy of Art & Play Therapy. She holds academic and professional affiliations in Australia, the UK, and the US, and currently serves as an Adjunct Fellow at the University of Technology Sydney, supervising postgraduate research in transdisciplinary studies.

