A Critical Imaginal Hermeneutics Approach to Explore Unconscious Influences on Professional Practices: A Ricoeur and Jung Partnership

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Abstract

Professional relationships are at the heart of professional practice. Qualitative studies exploring professional practice relationships are typically positioned in either the social constructivist (interpretive) paradigm where the aim is to explore actors' subjective understandings of their relationships and relational practices, or in the critical paradigm where the aim is to reveal objective unconscious structures and hidden power plays influencing actors' practices. This paper introduces critical imaginal hermeneutics as a systemic philosophical and methodological approach situated on the juncture of the social constructivist and critical paradigms where the dual aim is to explore both actors' subjective understanding and meaning-making processes associated with their relational practices as well as explore objective unconscious structures and power relations influencing their relational practices. At the core of this approach is a Critical Imaginal Hermeneutic Spiral – a methodological guide for text construction and interpretation processes developed by partnering Paul Ricoeur's critical hermeneutics and Carl Jung's imaginal arts-based approach. The spiral was developed, employed, and coined as part of the first author's doctoral thesis exploring clinical play therapists' relational practices with parents. It incorporates the Bourdieu and Jung thought partnership explored by the authors in another paper in this volume. The approach provides a systemic guide for developing practitioners' critical reflexivity regarding personal, social, and collective unconscious influences on their relational practices, and in turn minimising the unconscious influences that undermine the quality of professional practice relationships.

Keywords

Paul Ricoeur, Carl Jung, Pierre Bourdieu, Professional Practice, Relational Practices, Critical Hermeneutics, Critical Imaginal Hermeneutics, Critical Imaginal Hermeneutic Spiral, Unconscious Influences, Critical Reflexivity, Clinical Play Therapy, Play Therapy, Child Mental Health, Counselling, Psychotherapy

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Professional relationships are at the heart of professional practice. Qualitative studies exploring professional practice relationships are typically positioned in either the social constructivist (interpretive) paradigm where the aim is to explore actors' subjective understandings of their relationships and relational practices, or in the critical paradigm where the aim is to reveal objective unconscious structures and hidden power plays influencing actors' practices. This paper introduces critical imaginal hermeneutics as a systemic philosophical and methodological approach situated on the juncture of the social constructivist and critical paradigms where the dual aim is to explore both actors' subjective understanding and meaning-making processes associated with their relational practices as well as explore objective unconscious structures and power relations influencing their relational practices. At the core of this approach is a Critical Imaginal Hermeneutic Spiral – a methodological guide for text construction and interpretation processes developed by partnering Paul Ricoeur's critical hermeneutics and Carl Jung's imaginal arts-based approach. The spiral was developed, employed, and coined as part of the first author's doctoral thesis exploring clinical play therapists' relational practices with parents. It incorporates the Bourdieu and Jung thought partnership explored by the authors in another paper in this volume. The approach provides a systemic guide for developing practitioners' critical reflexivity regarding personal, social, and collective unconscious influences on their relational practices, and in turn minimising the unconscious influences that undermine the quality of professional practice relationships. Keywords: Paul Ricoeur, Carl Jung, Pierre Bourdieu, Professional Practice, Relational Practices, Critical Hermeneutics, Critical Imaginal Hermeneutics, Critical Imaginal Hermeneutic Spiral, Unconscious Influences, Critical Reflexivity, Clinical Play Therapy, Play Therapy, Child Mental Health, Counselling, Psychotherapy

Introduction

Professional relationships are at the heart of professional practice. They include professional relationships with clients (service users), colleagues, managers, and other key

players in a field of practice. We position critical reflexivity as a core dimension of professional practice whereby personal, social, and collective unconscious influences on practitioners' relational practices are systematically explored and unearthed in an attempt to mitigate the adverse impact of these unconscious influences on the quality of professional practice relationships.

Research exploring professional practice relationships typically focus on either actors' subjective understanding of their relationships and relational practices (social constructivist paradigm) or exposing the influence of unconscious social structures and hidden power relations in order to inform emancipatory practices (critical paradigm). The social constructivist paradigm is anchored in a postmodern relativist ontology where reality is considered individually constructed within a social context. There are as many realities as there are individuals, and all realities are considered equally valid (Scotland, 2012). Due to multiple realities and interpretations of realities, the researcher positioned in this paradigm is primarily concerned with exploring the complexity of participants' views (Creswell, 2013). The interest is not in universal truths but rather in "local" truths (Kvale, 1992, p. 34). The critical paradigm is characterised by a critical realist ontology where a distinct reality is considered to exist; however, it is considered to be shaped over time by society into a series of structures that are taken for granted and are ultimately hidden from consciousness (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The critical paradigm emphasises the role of power in constructing reality and what constitutes knowledge (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). Uncovering the influence of social structures on people's lives, and in turn facilitating the emancipation of people disempowered by social structures, is of central concern to research positioned in the critical paradigm (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2018).

Rather than viewing these as separate, mutually exclusive paradigms, we view the social constructivist and critical paradigms on an ontological, epistemological, and axiological continuum where purist positions pertaining to each paradigm can be found on either end of the continuum, and in the middle there exists a blurred boundary between the two. It is in this liminal space in the middle that the present study is positioned as we do not share the research objectives stipulated by purist positions found in either paradigm. Social constructivism's objective is to achieve deeper understanding of a phenomenon through exploring the interpretations of those experiencing the phenomenon; however, our contention is that, although exploring the deep (subjective) understanding of a phenomenon is crucial to the research inquiry, a truly deeper understanding of any phenomenon needs to include the exploration of hidden (objective) unconscious structural influences, as these influences lie at the depths. This critical understanding should ultimately inform a change agenda where the changes in practices no longer reproduce embedded unconscious structural influences. Critical theory has an emancipation agenda. Although we agree it may be an important goal, we argue that there are degrees of liberation on a continuum where on one end liberation equates to external emancipation (in the form of social action) and, at the other end, liberation equates to internal freedom achieved by increasing our awareness of the unconscious influences on our lives. Thus, our conceptualisation of liberation in the context of the research presented in this paper, and in terms of its positioning at the juncture of the critical paradigm, involves illuminating the unconscious influences that shape practitioners' relational practices. This paper proposes to build on both paradigmatic approaches as we argue they are both central to research that privileges the role of communication in both its ontological and epistemological positions. Consequently, we contend that clinical play therapists' understandings of the influences on their relational practices with parents are constructed relative to their sociocultural context (social constructivist paradigm), and that their relational practices with parents are influenced by personal, social, and collective unconscious structures, which they have varying awareness of (critical paradigm).

This paper begins with a rationale and personal frame of reference that led to the crystallisation of the research phenomenon. The paper then explores the concept of bricolage "where numerous modes of meaning making and knowledge production" are embraced to strengthen the quality and rigour of a study (Kincheloe, 2005, p. 345). Embedded in the concept of bricolage is that of liminality where intermediary paradigmatic spaces are embraced and binaries such as subjective/objective, conscious/unconscious, and verbal/non-verbal are surpassed. Based on bricolage and liminal sensibilities, the paper introduces *critical imaginal hermeneutics* as a systemic philosophical and methodological approach situated on the juncture of the social constructivist and critical paradigms where the dual aim is to explore both actors' subjective understanding and meaning-making processes associated with their relational practices as well as the objective unconscious structures influencing their relational practices. At the core of this approach is a *Critical Imaginal Hermeneutic Spiral* – a methodological guide for text construction and interpretation processes developed by partnering Ricoeur's critical hermeneutics and Jung's imaginal arts-based approach. The spiral was developed and employed as part of the first author's doctoral thesis exploring clinical play therapists' relational practices with parents. It incorporates the Bourdieu and Jung thought partnership explored in Paper B (Bologna, Trede, & Patton, 2020) in this volume. The paper concludes with a discussion of the expanded understanding achieved by using the Critical Imaginal Hermeneutic Spiral as a philosophical and methodological framework in the doctoral research. This includes the development of a Critical Imaginal Reflexivity Model, which contributes to the development of professional practice capabilities required by practitioners to effectively work with others.

Rationale and Personal Frame of Reference

In this section, I (Rosa), discuss my rationale and personal frame of reference that led me to crystallise the research phenomenon. My decision to explore clinical play therapists' relational practices with parents arose from my past experience as a psychologist providing clinical play therapy to children as well as my current experience as a clinical play therapy educator and clinical supervisor. Parents play a central role in facilitating therapy for their children, and therefore working with parents is an important aspect of clinical play therapy. Along with my colleagues, students, and supervisees, I have frequently lamented the challenges of working with parents, particularly the frustration that occurs when parents prematurely remove children from therapy. What I found intriguing is that difficulties with parents were reported by both early career and very experienced clinical play therapists. It also seemed to be an experience shared by clinical play therapists regardless of which professional group they belonged to (psychologists, mental health social workers, psychotherapists, counsellors, mental health occupational therapists, mental health nurses, and psychiatrists), or what theoretical orientation they drew from.

In 2009, I developed a nationally accredited Australian Qualification Framework (AQF) Graduate Diploma in play therapy. An outcome of the requisite industry consultation I conducted on the course curriculum was that I needed to develop a specific module on "working effectively" with parents and other significant stakeholders. This module offered both cause and effect explanations as well as concrete strategies to attempt to address the issue of working effectively with parents. Although I received positive feedback on the course module from the therapists, they still reported experiencing difficulty with parents, and the topic of parents continued to dominate both formal and informal discussions.

Not entirely satisfied with the theories and strategies I had been using, I began to experiment with other theories and models not typically used with parents. For example, I adapted the Stages of Change Model (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1986; Prochaska, DiClemente,

& Norcross, 1992) traditionally used in addictions, and applied it to parents. This had positive results both with my own work as well as with the clinical play therapists I taught and supervised. However, I discovered that therapists were using the approach as a culling tool to select the most engaged and motivated parents to work with.

Consequently, I decided to specifically focus on parents who were deemed the most difficult to work with, that is, those that were assessed as being at the pre-contemplative stage of change (not ready to change). I began to use subjective interpretation concepts such as transference and countertransference,[1] concepts traditionally used with adult clients of depth therapies such as Freudian and Jungian approaches but increasingly used by a number of other theoretical orientations (King & O'Brien, 2011). Of all the approaches that I used in attempting to address the issue of dropout rates and other challenges associated with working with parents, this was the approach that achieved the most positive results, both in my own work with parents as well as according to the feedback I received from clinical play therapists I taught and supervised. My reflections on the success of this approach were that it seemed to focus predominantly on the heart of the parent–therapist relationship rather than aspects of the relationship such as communication and perceptions. It is also an approach that is highly contextual and individualised in that not only each parent, but also each encounter with each parent, is approached differently, depending on what the interaction reveals. Perhaps most significantly, the transference and countertransference approach made room for the exploration of therapists' fallacies and reactions to parents, rather than focusing predominantly on those of the parents.

There was however, one main difficulty I (and my students) encountered in applying concepts of transference and countertransference with parents. Unlike clients, parents do not have a clearly defined therapeutic frame – a distinct physical, temporal, and emotional container for their interaction with the therapist. Most interactions with parents are brief and therefore therapists only have a small window of time to interact with them and work through transference and countertransference issues. Thus, while I was making some inroads in terms of effectively working with parents, it felt like the proverbial case of "one step forward two steps back".

In October 2014, while I was considering a topic for my dissertation, I presented a workshop at an annual play therapy conference and when I asked the audience to name one of the most challenging aspects of their work with children, without pause, the unanimous and very loud response was "parents!" I was shocked at the unanimity of the response. No one offered a response other than parents. My heart sank. Having worked primarily (but not exclusively) from a Jungian perspective for more than 20 years, I could not interpret this as a mere coincidence, but rather a clear message in terms of something that need to be addressed and integrated into consciousness. In Jungian terms, this is typically referred to as shadow material – an unowned and unintegrated aspect of the personal, social, or collective unconscious that needs to be explored and integrated into conscious awareness. I was accustomed to the shadow presenting itself in therapy and supervision but naively had not considered its role in my choice of research topics. I did however recall reading somewhere that often a research topic chooses the researcher rather than the other way around. Is this what was happening? I suspected it was. I decided to do further reflecting and reading and, in the process, came across the work of Robert Romanyshyn (2007), who developed archetypal hermeneutics:

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[1] In the context of working with parents, transference refers to unconscious feelings, thoughts, and behaviour the parent projects onto the therapist based on unresolved feelings from other past or present relationships with significant adults in the parent's life. Countertransference refers to the therapist's unconscious reaction to the parent's transference and can include what the therapist projects onto the parent based on his/her own feelings from other past or present relationships.

the process begins with the acknowledgment that a topic chooses a researcher at least as much as, and more likely even more than, he or she chooses it. Its complex beginnings mean that a researcher is called into a work via his or her complex relationships to the work. In this context, research is re-search, a searching again for something that has already claimed you. (p. 283)

With this, I conceded that I had been "claimed" and returned to the literature once again. When I looked at literature from different disciplines, with a different set of questions and different theoretical perspectives, three main features of the clinical play therapy literature stood out. Firstly, most play therapy studies looked at one aspect of the parent–therapist relationship (e.g., communication, perception, or resistance) without connecting them to or situating them in personal, sociocultural, and collective contexts. Secondly, play therapy studies approached influences on practices as variables, that is, reified entities that are not only de-contextualised but approached as unconnected to people's understanding of them. The clinical play therapy field was approached as one reality rather than a multiverse of realities constructed by people's understanding of their world. Thirdly, the clinical play therapy literature was devoid of studies exploring unconscious influences on relational phenomena. I found this particularly significant considering the emphasis in the therapy and counselling fields on reflexivity. I found that the clinical play therapy literature limited reflexivity to work with clients rather than significant stakeholders such as parents. I was particularly drawn to the critical paradigm's emphasis on the influence of unconscious structural influences on practices. This married well with my Jungian background and its emphasis on unconscious influences on phenomena.

I reasoned that without a deeper, contextualised understanding of the parent–therapist relationship, including therapists' meaning-making and critical reflexivity processes, it would be difficult to confidently understand the complexity of practice issues associated with parents. It appeared that phenomena associated with the parent–therapist relationship had been under-researched to date because they had been examined predominantly in a positivist paradigm using quantitative methods. This approach did not capture the complexity and richness of the parent–therapist relationship in situated, contextualised practice where multiple realities are made and re-made and where a complex range of unconscious processes are at play. Departing from the positivist paradigm offered me new possibilities where I could explore the complexity and diversity of parent–therapist relational phenomena in more depth and in context. This provided a pivotal shift from my reluctance to take on the topic to a stage where I became excited and curious about what might be revealed behind the issue of working with parents.

Bricolage Approach to Quality and Rigour

In qualitative research design, there is increasing recognition that the quality and rigour of a study needs to be built into all aspects of the inquiry process (Morse, 2018). Qualitative research commentators such as Denzin and Lincoln (2000) and Kincheloe (2001, 2005) contend that quality and rigour are strengthened by embracing a bricolage approach. At its most basic level, bricolage celebrates, promotes, and facilitates the dialectical possibilities between disciplines, theoretical perspectives, paradigms, methodologies, and methods. However, bricolage does not simply involve eclectically stitching together different ideas, approaches, and methods in a crude, amateurish fashion, which may be implied by its original French meaning where bricolage refers to a do-it-yourself construction in the spirit of a handyman/woman. Rather, the notion of bricolage in the context of qualitative social science research, is steeped in notions of complexity, skill, and artistry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; and

Kincheloe, 2001, 2005). One aspect of this complexity is that bricoleur-researchers engage in an ongoing, thoughtful, and deeply engaged "tinkering" process to shape and construct their research approach (Kincheloe, 2005, p. 325). This tinkering process typically involves carefully creating a dialectical relationship among more than one discipline, paradigm, theoretical perspective, methodology, and method but not necessarily fusing them or collapsing them together. That is, it allows each respective construct to sing solo when they need to rather than always in chorus.

A liminal sensibility is at the heart of a bricolage approach. Liminality denotes an active regenerative space where we can deliberately and consciously access a source of transformative power (Pelton, 1989) by harnessing two different elements to facilitate the creation of something beyond what either element can offer on its own. It includes surpassing binary oppositions such as subjective/objective, conscious/unconscious, and verbal/non-verbal. It also involves highlighting the role of the researcher in the knowledge production process (Kincheloe, 2005) where dichotomies such as researcher/practitioner are explored as an important influence on knowledge making. For example, researcher-as-instrument is an established concept in qualitative inquiry literature and relates to "the distinctive function of the researcher's knowledge, perspective, and subjectivity in data acquisition" (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 123). The concept of researcher-as-instrument is based on the premise that, because research data is mediated through the researcher rather than "through some inanimate inventory, questionnaire, or computer" (Merriam, 1998, p. 7), it is important to acknowledge, discuss, and embrace key aspects of researchers' professional or personal backgrounds as they influence knowledge-making processes.

Liminal Paradigmatic Space – Boundary Crossing with Hermes

One way in which to study professional practice relationships using a bricolage approach is to locate the research in a liminal paradigmatic space between the social constructivist and critical paradigms. Exploring the symbolism of Hermes, the Greek god of communication, and his emblematic role in both paradigms illustrates and provides a rationale for this position. Research strategies that feature strongly in the social constructivist and critical paradigms privilege the role of communication in both their ontological and epistemological positions. In Greek mythology, Hermes was considered the god of communication – the messenger between the gods and humans. Hermeneutics, the art and science of interpreting texts, derives its name from Hermes to emphasis its translative purpose (Palmer, 1969). However, Hermes was a complex character. His personification of communication was multifaceted and did not simply involve language and writing. Hermes was known as the trickster god, frequently mischievously taunting his fellow gods. He was also known as the patron god of thieves – he stole Apollo's cattle, Poseidon's trident, Artemis' arrows, and Aphrodite's girdle (Sears, 2014). In addition to his association with overt forms of communication (language and writing), trickery and theft, Hermes was also known as the god of boundary crossings and transitions (Neville, 2003). Hermes was the only god whom Hades, the god of the underworld, permitted to travel between the Earth and the underworld (symbolically, the conscious and unconscious realms), and for this reason he is also referred to as the god of the liminal (Beebe, 1997). This hidden, underworld association with Hermes is reflected in the meaning of the word "hermetic," which means secret or sealed (Ramsay, 1997). It indicates that the tricky, hidden nature of Hermes needs to be uncovered, decoded, and deciphered. The multifaceted and trans-territorial nature of Hermes suggests that any research approach that holds communication as its central tenet should authenticate its communicative agenda by including considerations of both conscious, conspicuous facets as well as unconscious, hidden aspects of communication.

Ricoeur's Critical Hermeneutics

Ricoeur's critical hermeneutics is a methodological approach that we consider is positioned at the juncture of the social constructivist and critical paradigms as it incorporates both the constructivist tradition and critical theory, or what Ricoeur (1976, p. 73) refers to as "understanding and explanation," respectively. Ricoeur's approach metaphorically captures Hermes the trickster rather than simply Hermes the god of communication, as his critical hermeneutical approach includes a "moment of suspicion" (Stiver, 2003, p. 182) to uncover, decipher, and decode covert, surreptitious, unconscious influences at play. Ricoeur (1976) developed his critical hermeneutic approach, specifically what he referred to as a hermeneutical arc, largely in response to the Gadamer–Habermas debate that took place in the late 1960s. The debate involved Habermas' critique of Gadamer's (1975/2013, p. 289) seminal book *Truth and method*, particularly Gadamer's notion of "rehabilitation" of prejudice, authority, and tradition (which influence a person's preunderstanding of a phenomenon), and Habermas' claim that Gadamer neglected the role ideology plays within tradition and its influence on injustice and disempowerment (Ricoeur, 1981/2016a). Habermas argued that distanciation is needed from tradition, that is, a relatively objective critical distancing which "would make space for reflection, question dogmatic forces, and not conflate knowledge with authority" (Bilimoria, 1998, p. 59). For Habermas (1981/1984), domination takes place through communicative action, where language is unconsciously distorted by the dominant ideologies of society.

Ricoeur (1976) responded to the debate firstly by declaring that hermeneutics and critical consciousness are not mutually exclusive, and should "not be treated in dualistic terms, but as a complex and highly mediated dialectic" (p. 74). Ricoeur considers that a person's subjective understanding and an explanation of society's objective inherent structures relate and shape each other. Ricoeur's critical hermeneutic methodology offers a relational approach to phenomena. That is, a phenomenon can be explored subjectively (contextually) as well as objectively (structurally) as a whole, rather than focusing on one or the other. In a series of publications from the 1970s to the 1990s, Ricoeur outlined and elaborated on what he refers to as his [critical] hermeneutical arc, which defines his critical hermeneutic approach, particularly his theory of text[2] interpretation. The arc consists of three distinct "moments" in Ricoeur's interpretation process which he states builds on Gadamer's focus on subjective "understanding" (via question and answer dialogues leading to a fusion of horizons) and Habermas' focus on objective "explanation" (via exposing unreflected, hidden social interests and ideologies) as well as an appropriation of both (Ricoeur, 1986/1991). Ricoeur's critical hermeneutical arc offers a methodological bricolage approach to understanding as it incorporates a journey through subjective, objective, and appropriation moments.

The First Moment: Initial Understanding

Ricoeur (1976) describes the first moment in his arc as a "naïve grasping of the meaning of the text as a whole," which he states is the first act of understanding (p. 74). It takes the form of a guess "because the author's intention is beyond our reach" (p. 74). The guess work in this initial stage involves going through the hermeneutic circle, that is, exploring the parts of the text and constructing the whole and vice versa (Singsuriya, 2015). Some researchers such as Wiklund, Lindholm, and Lindström (2002) have interpreted this moment to include using a relevant theoretical framework and previous research on the phenomenon as a starting point to

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[2] In the hermeneutic tradition, text refers to "any discourse fixed by writing" (Ricoeur, 1981/2016b, p. 145). Consistent with research conducted within a hermeneutic philosophical framework, when referring to research in this paper, the terms *texts* and *text sets* are used rather than *data*; *text construction* rather than data collection; and *text interpretation* rather than *data analysis*.

exploring the text. The initial moment is a subjective moment as it explores the text in a contextualised way. That is, it is situated in the sociocultural and historical context of the phenomenon.

The Second Moment: Distanciation

In contrast to the subjective nature of the first moment, the second moment involves an objective structural analysis of the text, which Ricoeur (1981/2016) refers to as a critical moment or distanciation. Distanciation focuses on the text as semantically autonomous from the intentions of the author and something that can be interpreted outside of its sociocultural context (Kaplan, 2008). The second moment is based on Ricoeur's concept of a "hermeneutics of suspicion," where the text is interpreted as meaning something other than what it says on the surface (Bell, 2011, p. 531). Ricoeur (1970, p. 17) articulates this notion in his seminal work *Freud and philosophy*, where he explores what he describes as "the latent meaning" in language from Freud's psychoanalytic perspective. Ricoeur (1970) considers Freud one of the "three masters of suspicion" along with Nietzsche and Marx, all of whom he states consider consciousness as "false consciousness" (p. 17). False consciousness refers to exploited people not recognising that they are being exploited due to the process of systematic mystification, that is, the ideology of social systems and structures (Heywood, 2012). As a way of uncovering false consciousness, Ricoeur incorporates literary structuralism (as opposed to structuralism in the Marxist sense) in his arc, which seeks to illuminate the deeper "codes" that structure a text and are not apparent on the surface and probably not the intention of the author (Stiver, 2001, p. 62). These codes primarily refer to linguistic or narrative systems that stand out in their own right without needing reference to the author of the text or the author's sociocultural context (Scott-Baumann, 2009). Ricoeur does not stipulate what sort of structural analysis should be conducted in this second moment, only what the analysis should reveal, namely, that it should reveal universal narrative or linguistic structures such as those found in the work of Lévi-Strauss (Singsuriya, 2015). For example, Ricoeur (1981/2016b) discusses Lévi-Strauss' analysis of the Oedipus myth where he examines units he calls "mythemes" and how they function as "bundles of relations" (p. 122) throughout the narrative. Mythemes are organised around binary opposites. For instance, in the case of Adam and Eve, core mythemes are gender (male–female), virtue (good–evil), morality (truth–lie), law (obedience–disobedience), membership (inclusion–exclusion), and judgment (paradise–hell). Although Ricoeur contends that structural analysis is integral to objectifying the text and providing a type of rigour, he believes that structuralism is limited as it "cannot move beyond *structures* to *meaning*, from the *text* to the *world* [emphasis in original]" (Stiver, 2001, p. 62). To move beyond the text to what it refers to in the world, Ricoeur argues that an additional moment is needed, one that appropriates the first and second moment.

The Third Moment: Appropriation

Ricoeur (1981/2016a) refers to the third moment along his arc as appropriation, which is achieved by considering what has been revealed in both the first and the second moments to reveal "the mode of being unfolded in front of the text" (p. 53). Ricoeur (1976) also refers to this moment as the referential moment: "To understand a text is to follow its movement from sense to reference: from what it says, to what it talks about" (pp. 87–88). Thus, the appropriation moment moves beyond the specifics of the research phenomenon to a broader, meta-synthesis of what the research findings reveal. In his later writings, Ricoeur suggests that his critical hermeneutical arc may be better called a hermeneutical spiral as the researcher may repeatedly return to the text and arrive at new meaning (Ricoeur, 1984, p. 72). That is, the

process of transformation through understanding and critical reflexivity is an ongoing one and new insights and opportunities for developing deeper understanding of the phenomenon are endless. This signifies that a research study presents a snapshot of a deeper understanding of the phenomenon, but that there is always more to understand and more to transform.

Engaging the Imaginal – Jung's Active Imagination Method

Although Ricoeur's critical hermeneutic approach offers a bricolage approach to surpassing binary oppositions such as subjective/objective, conscious/unconscious, and understanding/explanation, his approach implies written and verbal communication as the principal modes of constructing and interpreting texts. Returning to Hermes and his role in bricolage and traversing liminal spaces such as the conscious and unconscious, it is imperative that text construction and text interpretation incorporate a hybrid communication approach that can avail itself of unconscious material. This can be achieved by partnering the customary verbal mode of communication characteristic of in-depth interviewing and ensuring written text construction with inviting participants to produce visual expressions of the research phenomenon. In the context of the bricolage approach explored in this paper, visual expressions are referred to as products of *the imaginal* in the tradition of philosopher Henry Corbin (1972), who uses the term to distinguish it from imaginary or imagination, which have connotations of fantasy and triviality. The imaginal is part of a mediatory realm with a mediatory function that links different universes, worlds, or realms with one another (Corbin, 1972). This is congruent with Jung's use of the imaginal, where the imaginal and the images it produces are considered the threshold between the conscious and unconscious realms (Romanyshyn, 2013).

The use of expressive and visual mediums features in both the social constructivist paradigm and critical paradigm and they are referred to by a variety of names including arts-based, arts-informed, creative, and visual methods/research strategies (e.g., Banks & Zeitlyn, 2015; Cole & Knowles, 2008; Gauntlett & Holzwarth, 2006; Leavy, 2015; Patton, Higgs, & Smith, 2011). However, these visual and expressive methods are used primarily to "record, reveal, elicit, illustrate, demonstrate or evoke meanings" (Felstead, Jewson, & Walters, 2004, p. 118), where images are approached predominantly as ways of facilitating a person's expression of their thoughts, emotions, and experiences. They are not typically used as a specific, systematic approach to uncover a relational web of unconscious structural influences on practices. As Romanyshyn (2013) points out, when research traditions such as hermeneutics do "acknowledge the presence and reality of the unconscious . . . they do not develop procedures to make the unconscious as conscious as possible" (p. 317). Specifically, the distanciation function of the imaginal is neglected. It is, however, strongly featured in the practice and research of Jungian psychology (Davidson, 2013). In Jungian psychology, the imaginal is at the centre of understanding unconscious influences, particularly collective unconscious influences. Jung (1964/1978, 1935/1997) considered symbolism the language of the unconscious and based on his concept of *active imagination*, he developed a systematic procedure and set of principles to unpack and explore the symbolism embedded in imaginal products and reveal hidden aspects of consciousness that verbal dialogue cannot reveal. Distanciation in the Jungian tradition is typically achieved by first expressing a thought, feeling, or experience through an external medium (e.g., in art form) and then personifying and dialoguing with the various elements of the form (Dallett, 1992). The distanciation process embedded in Jung's active imagination approach facilitates dialogue between conscious and unconscious and arrives at what Jung refers to as the transcendent function – where new possibilities are presented when we hold the tension of opposites (Jung, 1966/2014). Jung's concept of the transcendent function corresponds with Ricoeur's concept of appropriation as they both lead to a meta-understanding of a phenomenon by surpassing opposites and binaries.

Curiously, despite the congruence between Ricoeur and Jung's approach, a methodological partnership between the two has not been explored. This may be due to Ricoeur (1970) himself dismissing Jung – "With Freud I know where I am and where I am going; with Jung everything risks being confused: the psychism, the soul, the archetypes, the sacred" (p. 176). As Main (2006, 2007) points out, the numinous underpinnings of Jung's work have meant that many theorists have ignored his work as it threatens the rationalistic stance that dominates the social sciences. However, Jung's numinosity highlights the other half of an important duality neglected in the social sciences, namely, rationalism–irrationalism or rationalism–mysticism.

Critical Imaginal Hermeneutics – Partnering Ricoeur and Jung

In this section, I (Rosa), discuss the research strategy I developed and employed as part of my doctoral thesis exploring clinical play therapists' understanding and critical reflexivity of their relational practices with parents (Bologna, 2018). The study involved conducting a series of three in-depth, semi-structured interviews with each of the seven clinical play therapist participants over a 3-month period. In constructing and interpreting my texts, I incorporated and adapted aspects of Ricoeur's critical hermeneutics and Jung's active imagination approach to form four moments in my Critical Imaginal Hermeneutic Spiral. I developed the spiral to guide development of my progressively deeper, more enhanced understanding of my research phenomenon by revisiting and reintegrating different moments of understanding. Figure 1 represents the four moments of the Critical Imaginal Hermeneutic Spiral and how each moment assists in moving closer to the essence of the research phenomenon.
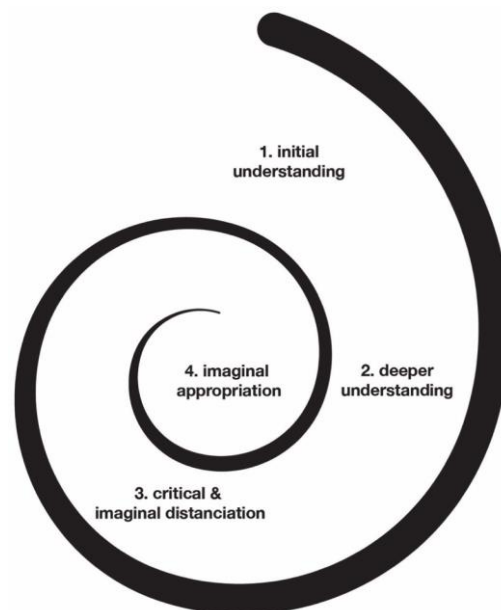

Figure 1. Moments of understanding in the Critical Imaginal Hermeneutic Spiral.

The spiral guided all aspects of my research design including research questions, text construction, and text interpretation processes. Table 1 provides a summary of my doctoral research design (Bologna, 2018) and includes how the four moments of the Critical Imaginal Hermeneutic Spiral correspond to my research questions, text construction strategies, text set questions, and text interpretation. Before discussing the four moments of the spiral, I first discuss quality considerations pertaining to the overall study, ethical considerations, and quality considerations specifically related to the text construction and text interpretation processes.

Table 1 – Research Design Applying Critical Imaginal Hermeneutics

Moment of understanding	Research questions	Text construction	Text interpretation questions	Text interpretation
Initial understanding	How do clinical play therapists understand personal influences on their relational practices with parents? (sub-question)	Interview #1	What are participants' initial understandings of the research phenomenon? What is the tone and mood that characterises participants' initial understandings of the research phenomenon?	Participants' initial understandings of influences on their relational practices with parents
Deeper understanding	How do clinical play therapists understand sociocultural influences on their relational practices with parents? (sub-question)	Interview #2	What are participants' deeper understandings of the phenomenon? What is the tone and mood that characterises participants' deeper understandings of the research phenomenon?	Participants' and my co-constructed deeper understandings of influences on their relational practices with parents
Critical and imaginal distanciation	What is the nature of clinical play therapists' critical reflexivity regarding unconscious structural influences on their relational practices with parents? (sub-question)	Interviews #2 and #3 and my imaginal product-making and sense-making process	What does the application of Bourdieusian and Jungian thinking tools reveal about the nature of participants' critical reflexivity? Is there an aspect of participants' shadow I have overlooked?	My distanciation of text sets using Bourdieusian and Jungian thinking tools; identification of participants' and my shadow via my imaginal product-making and sense-making process
Imaginal appropriation	What is the nature of clinical play therapists' understandings and critical reflexivity regarding influences on their relational practices with parents? (main research question)	My imaginal product-making and sense-making process	What stands in front of the text? What does it refer to?	Meta-synthesis of the three preceding moments using my imaginal product-making and sense-making process

Overall Quality Considerations

In regard to rigour in qualitative research, I concur with recent developments and arguments in qualitative research that a study's rigour is not confined to discussions or declarations regarding the study's methodological rigour, but begins at the inception of the research with the research topic and continues throughout to focus on the appraisal of the completed research (e.g., Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Morse, 2018; Tracy, 2010). Denzin and Lincoln (2018) refer to this as "a focus on 'webs of relationships' with the researcher as bricoleur" (p. 760). As previously discussed, I adopted and developed a hybrid, bricolage sensibility that guided the overall quality and rigour of my research through all aspects of my

study to achieve congruence within and among the different disciplines, theories, paradigms, and methods I drew from. As depicted in Table 1, I achieved congruence by aligning my research aim, research questions, paradigmatic assumptions, research approach, and research design. I did this mostly by ensuring each of these elements of my research included both the social constructivist and critical focus of my research, and that the theorists I drew from facilitated a dialectical interplay between conscious and unconscious influences. I was also mindful to provide as much detail as possible regarding my text construction and text interpretation processes so that the reader can determine degree of "fittingness" between my study's context and his/her context and in turn, the transferability of my research findings (Lincoln & Guba, 2000, p. 40).

Ethical Considerations

A key ethical issue I identified pertaining to my study was my existing relationships with potential participants, as the field of clinical play therapy in Australia is relatively small and, as a supervisor and educator in the field, it would be highly probable that I would have had some level of past or present professional engagement with participants. To address this issue, I suspended my involvement in delivering training and supervision for ongoing professional development elective units delivered by my training organisation while I constructed texts for my study. In recruiting participants, I emailed those who were publicly listed on the Association for Play Therapy website and based in New South Wales, Australia with an invitation to participate in my study. In addition to providing details of the nature of my study, I stressed the voluntary nature of participation, and that participants could withdraw from the study at any time.

In explaining the aim and research questions of my study to participants, I emphasised my role as the researcher, particularly a qualitative researcher. This included me sharing with participants how I came to research the topic, or rather how the topic chose me. I determined that this would assist me to forge my role as the researcher as a "conversation partner" (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 123) more so than someone outside the field or someone who did not identify with the phenomenon. I also stressed that I did not have a hypothesis that I was testing, and that I really did not know what to expect in terms of participants' experiences and understandings of the research phenomenon. I felt this was important to emphasise as most of my participants, particularly the psychologists, would have been more familiar with quantitative methodology and research situated in the positivist paradigm where hypothesis testing is the norm. Essentially, as a qualitative researcher, I emphasised my preliminary position as one of "not knowing" as opposed to "knowing" associated with my other roles. In emphasising this aspect of my role, I distanced myself from my supervision, training, and assessment personas.

Quality Considerations for Text Construction

I took several quality measures into consideration in preparing and conducting my interviews. These considerations included interview preparation, timing of interviews, sample size, critiquing my interview style, and my ongoing reflexivity via conducting my own interview transcription and maintaining a research journal.

Interview preparation. Before interviewing participants, I arranged for one of my university supervisors and her research assistant to interview me. I gave the research assistant a draft of an interview guide I had prepared, which she used as a guide to interview me while my supervisor took notes. This experience allowed me to fine-tune the wording of some of my

questions and gave me insight regarding how best to approach establishing a relaxed yet productive interview environment.

Timing of interviews. I conducted a series of 21 in-depth semi-structured interviews in total (three interviews with each participant) over a 3-month period for each participant, that is, approximately one month between interviews. I deliberately left a gap of approximately one month between interviews in order to give participants and myself sufficient time to reflect on our conversations.

Sample size. Although many qualitative approaches use saturation as a guide in terms of sample size for interviews, that is, stopping when the data is not saying anything new (Ezzy, 2002), hermeneutic approaches do not recognise saturation as an objective as the hermeneutic spiral always reveals something new. Smith and Osborne (2008) argue that in interpretive qualitative studies sample size depends largely on the richness of data, which can be obtained from a single participant, a few, half a dozen, or more. I conducted three interviews with each participant, which resulted in 4.5–6.5 hours of interview dialogues with each participant. I stopped recruiting at seven participants due to the richness and depth of the information I had collected at this point.

Critiquing my interview style. Although I considered myself an experienced therapeutic interviewer, and that "there are not necessarily hard-and-fast distinctions" between therapeutic interviews and researcher interviews (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 2), I was mindful that "classic mistakes" can still be made (Pezalla, Pettigrew, & Miller-Day, 2012, p. 181), and therefore determined it was important that I critique my research interview style. After transcribing my first interview and listening and re-listening to it, I identified two main issues to be mindful of and, where possible, to avoid in subsequent interviews. The first issue I identified was interrupting the participant and not allowing sufficient time between pauses (that is, asking the next question too quickly). The second issue was occasionally using theoretical jargon associated with practice theory and hermeneutics literature that participants were not familiar with but that had slipped into my vocabulary because of the literature I was immersing myself in around the time I conducted the interview.

Interview transcription. I personally transcribed all the interviews verbatim. I re-listened to each interview several times to ensure the accuracy of my transcriptions. While time consuming, this process allowed me to immerse myself in the texts for prolonged periods of time, which in turn facilitated a deeper, enhanced understanding of my research phenomenon. My prolonged engagement with my participants and the subsequent transcribing of all the interviews myself also assisted in strengthening the credibility of my study (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). I transcribed all interviews immediately after conducting them. This resulted in a few unexpected benefits. It facilitated me carrying my participants' voices into other participants' interviews. That is, on occasion, when discussing challenges and positive experiences associated with working with parents, I would bring other participants' experiences of the phenomenon into my discussion with the participant and ask whether they could directly or indirectly relate. This resulted in an added dimension to our conversational partnership, where the conversation was not just between each participant and myself, but with other participants whose voices I would occasionally metaphorically channel to form a larger conversational space and partnership. Although I did not speak of other participants' experiences often, when I did, the response from participants was unanimously positive and they all made remarks that they felt relieved they were not the only ones facing various challenges in terms of working with parents. It seemed to give participants a sense of safety

and permissiveness to disclose even more about their experiences and thoughts regarding working with parents. In this way, other participants' voices were used to facilitate an atmosphere of openness, deeper exploration, and reflexivity.

Research journal. I maintained a research journal throughout the interview and text construction process, which informed both my interview preparation (e.g., specific questions I wanted to ask participants in the following interview) as well as the text interpretation processes. My research journal included documenting my own imaginal products, which involved creating imaginal products of my impressions of an interview or some other aspect of the research process. The use of visual expression to accompany my written notes assisted in the articulation of my thoughts and exploring aspects of the research process from different perspectives.

Quality Considerations for Text Interpretation

The main criteria of quality I considered in relation to my text interpretation were transparency and credibility. Transparency involved including participants' voices in rich, meaningful ways. I did this by providing ample portions of their dialogue (via direct quotations) and, where relevant, the dialogue between participants and myself to demonstrate how I facilitated the interviews. Transparency also involved providing representations of participants' imaginal products accompanied by the associated dialogue between participants and myself in terms of the imaginal sense-making process. Additionally, I was mindful to highlight and differentiate when I discussed participants' understandings of the phenomenon of relational practices with parents, and when I discussed my understanding of participants' understandings. Smith and Osborne (2008) refer to this as a double hermeneutic. In discussing my text interpretation, I was also mindful of presenting both common themes emerging across participants (across interview texts) as well as distinctive, idiosyncratic interpretations made by specific participants. I did this to provide richness and depth in interpreting my text sets and understanding my research phenomenon. The transparency of providing participants' voices via verbatim quotations also enhanced the credibility of my research in that their perspectives were authentically presented (Fossey, Harvey, McDermott, & Davidson, 2002). I did this at the three stages of my interpretation process before arriving at my appropriation moment. That is, participants' voices were represented in detail and depth in the initial understanding, deeper understanding, and critical and imaginal distanciation moments of interpretation. Examples of the above can be found in my thesis (Bologna, 2018).

Initial Understanding Moment

The first moment of the Critical Imaginal Hermeneutic Spiral corresponds to the first moment of Ricoeur's critical hermeneutical arc where the aim is to explore participants' initial understandings of the research phenomenon. In my study this was garnered primarily from my first interview with participants, with minimal probing from me. In terms of text interpretation of this moment, I approached the texts with the broad question: *What are the participants' initial understandings of the research phenomenon?* Patton (2015) uses the metaphor of distinguishing a radio station signal from static noise to illustrate the process of text interpretation, highlighting how this process begins with the text construction process rather than simply the text interpretation stage. I extend this metaphor to include not simply what signals or patterns my text sets were emanating but also the tone and mood of the texts. I determined that tone and mood were important to explore as they would assist me to more fully interpret the *nature* of participants' understandings, not simply identify *what* they understood.

This formed my second question to the text sets: *What is the tone and mood that characterises participants' initial understandings of the research phenomenon?* I began posing my questions to my texts following each participant interview, and I recorded the answers in my research journal. I continued posing the questions as I was transcribing my interviews (the text construction process), as well as when I immersed myself in my text sets by reading and rereading them to determine emerging patterns and themes (text interpretation process).

To determine patterns and themes emerging from my text sets, I applied the basic principles of the hermeneutic circle, which involves understanding the phenomenon by considering the parts in relation to the whole and the whole to the parts (Gadamer, 1975/2013). I began this process by reading and rereading the first interview transcript and coding each paragraph according to themes associated with the participant's initial understanding of the phenomenon. I engaged in the same process with the next participant's first interview transcript and looked for similarities and differences. I continued this process with all seven first interviews. I then distilled the central themes regarding participants' initial understandings of the research phenomenon. This involved reading parts (each participant's first interview transcript) and comparing the parts to other parts (other participants' first interview transcripts) and with the whole (all participants' first interviews). Participants' initial understandings of the influences shaping their relational practices with parents focused primarily on personal influences (in contrast to sociocultural or collective influences).

Deeper Understanding Moment

For the second moment along the Critical Imaginal Hermeneutic Spiral, I incorporated a deeper understanding moment. This moment does not feature in Ricoeur's approach. I incorporated this moment for two reasons. Firstly, given that critical hermeneutics is concerned with a progression to deeper understanding through the engagement and re-engagement of the hermeneutic circle or spiral, going from initial understanding to structural understanding (distanciation) was too sudden and did not capture the moment of deeper understanding that followed and overlapped with the initial understanding moment. In this context, I use a depth metaphor to indicate progressively exploring hidden, unconscious influences on practices where an increased level of probing and reflexivity is needed. Secondly, I incorporated this moment to match the organic process of my interview dialogues with participants, whereby participants and I engaged in a distinctly co-constructed moment of understanding the research phenomenon that penetrated past participants' initial understandings of the phenomenon. For this moment of my text interpretation process, I approached the text with two questions: *What are participants' deeper understandings of the research phenomenon?* and: *What is the tone and mood that characterises participants' deeper understandings of the research phenomenon?* As with the previous moment, I posed these text questions in both the text construction and text interpretation stages and adopted the principles of the hermeneutic circle to determine the central patterns and themes. Participants' deeper understanding of the phenomenon expanded past their initial understandings (which were focused on personal influences) to one that encompassed understanding sociocultural influences shaping their relational practices with parents. That is, participants' understandings moved from the micro (initial understanding) to the meso and macro (deeper understanding).

Critical and Imaginal Distanciation Moment

For the third moment along the Critical Imaginal Hermeneutic Spiral, I drew on Ricoeur's distanciation moment, which incorporates a critical structural interpretation of the text. This involved three processes of distanciation. I first facilitated participants' imaginal

product-making activity. The imaginal product-making activity for my study involved inviting participants to map out the general sequence of their contact with parents (e.g., initial phone call, intake meeting, bringing the child in for their first session, review meetings) with any play therapy medium of their choice (e.g., image cards, sandplay figurines, collage, drawing) to symbolically represent how they understood and made sense of each part of the process (e.g., the purpose, intention, and overall function of each part of the process). There were four aims behind inviting participants to create an imaginal product. First, given that the imaginal plays a central role in clinical play therapy practice, I considered the imaginal tools and processes used in clinical play therapy as valuable resources in developing a research strategy. Given hybridisation was at the centre of my study's research sensibility, I took the view espoused in the related field of art therapy, where some researchers have actively embraced what Sinner, Leggo, Irwin, Gouzouasis, And Grauer (2006) refer to as a "hybrid, practice-based form of methodology" (p. 1224) where "we acknowledge the holistic nature of our identities as vigorously and vibrantly connected" (Leggo & Irwin, 2014, p. 151). Second, I wanted to use participants' understandings of their situated, contextual, and temporal interaction with parents as it occurred over time as a basis or springboard to explore my research phenomenon (clinical play therapists' relational practices with parents). Third, I wanted to explore participants' understandings of each part of the process and how these understandings related to their overall understanding of the influences on their relational practices with parents. In other words, I engaged a hermeneutic circle of understanding regarding their relational practices – how the parts related to the whole and vice versa. Fourth, I wanted to use the activity to discuss relational practices that were not captured in the temporal sequence, but nonetheless infused their relational practices. This was based on the Jungian premise that all images contain both our conscious intentions (that is, what we think the images relate or refer to) and unconscious structures (such as archetypes), which we are unaware of until we engage with the imaginal sense-making process (Avens, 1992). Further details of the imaginal product making process, including imaginal ethical considerations are detailed in my thesis (Bologna, 2018).

The second step in the distanciation process involved drawing on participants' distanciation which was featured in their imaginal sense-making processes, to inform my own distanciation of my text sets. Namely, once participants' imaginal sense-making process was conducted, I applied my own distanciation of the texts. My distanciation of the texts corresponds with Ricoeur's stipulation that the distanciation moment include an objective structural analysis of the text. I did this by forming a thought partnership between Bourdieu and Jung to develop a suite of concepts used to reveal personal, social, and collective unconscious structural influences on practices which are discussed in Paper B (Bologna, Trede, & Patton, 2020). For this moment of my text interpretation process, I approached the text with the question: *What does the application of Bourdieusian and Jungian thinking tools reveal about the nature of participants' critical reflexivity?* I answered this question by reading and rereading the text sets with the Bourdieusian and Jungian thinking tools in mind. I coded the text with the thinking tools as my categories and noted any overlaps. For instance, some parts of the text corresponded to both Bourdieusian and Jungian thinking tools and revealed the interrelated influence of personal, social, and collective unconscious influences on practices.

The third aspect of distanciation included an imaginal technique that drew on my professional practice role as a psychologist and clinical supervisor practising from a Jungian framework to assist determine whether there were any aspects of participants' unconscious shadow I had overlooked due to the influence of my own unexplored shadow. Specifically, I asked whether my own unconscious blind spots precluded me from identifying participants' unconscious blind spots. To do this, I employed the Blind Image Card Technique, which is an imaginal technique I had previously developed for use in clinical play therapy and clinical supervision with the purpose of engaging with the unconscious more directly. It is an imaginal

technique that is particularly suited to personifying the unconscious, asking the unconscious direct questions, and in turn engaging in a dialogue with it[3] (Bologna, 2002). The word "blind" in the title of the technique is used to highlight that the image card is produced without looking and also refers to the technique revealing what our conscious mind cannot see or access. With regard to producing the image card without looking, this is achieved either by turning a set of image cards over so the images cannot be seen and then choosing a card randomly, or by randomly choosing a card from a set of image cards with closed eyes. Much like the hermeneutic approach of posing a question to a text, a question is first formulated before choosing the card. The question I posed before choosing my card was: *Is there an aspect of participants' shadow I have overlooked?* Once the card was chosen, I unpacked it using a Jungian imaginal sense-making process detailed in my thesis (Bologna, 2018). The technique is based on Jung's free association method; however, rather than use a word and then freely associate other words that immediately come to mind, the free association is done with a pre-existing imaginal product (i.e., the image card). The technique is based on the premise that, by producing the imaginal product without involving our conscious mind (i.e., choosing it "blind"), we can engage in free association with the image without our conscious mind contaminating the process because we do not have a predetermined intention for what the image is about.

As I was a sole researcher, I engaged in the imaginal sense-making process on my own. I did this using the non-dominant handwriting method developed by Capacchione (2001). In this method, writing with the dominant hand is considered to connect to the conscious, verbal, analytical part of our psyche and writing with the non-dominant hand to the unconscious, nonverbal (visual/spatial), intuitive part of our psyche. I achieved dialoguing by taking a pen in my dominant right hand (conscious mind) and writing down a question I wanted to pose to the image. I then took the pen in my non-dominant left hand (unconscious mind) and wrote down my response to the question. This process of question–answer dialoguing with both hands can be a lengthy and engrossing process. I continued until I felt I achieved resonance with a response from my non-dominant hand that had not been part of my awareness prior to commencing the process. The distanciation moment revealed the nature of participants' critical reflexivity regarding personal, social, and collective unconscious structural influences on their relational practices with parents. It also revealed how my own shadow prevented me from identifying unconscious influences on participants' relational practices with parents.

Imaginal Appropriation Moment

The fourth moment along the Critical Imaginal Hermeneutic Spiral was guided by Ricoeur's notion of appropriation and involved determining what lies in front of the text, that is, not what the text is about, but what it refers to. This referential moment provided a meta-synthesis of the findings derived from the previous moments. To assist with this process, I engaged the unconscious by producing an imaginal product using the Blind Image Card Technique discussed in the previous section. Before choosing the card, I posed the questions: *What is in front of my text? What does it refer to?* The appropriation moment assisted me in synthesising my findings from the previous moments and developing my Critical Imaginal Reflexive Model, which I discuss later in the paper. This paper presents the findings from the final appropriation moment however, before presenting the meta-synthesis of the findings, an overview of the trajectory of participants' understandings and critical reflexivity from the first three moments is presented.

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[3] This technique is recommended for use with people who are accustomed to dialoging with the unconscious in a personified fashion and for this reason I did not use the technique with participants as I reasoned it may be too confronting or awkward for those not accustomed to this approach.

Trajectory of Participants' Understandings and Critical Reflexivity

The change in participants' understandings over the first three moments (and ultimately Rosa's understanding of their understandings) highlighted how understanding is deepened and enriched by co-constructive processes, particularly processes that engage the imaginal to unearth unconscious influences on relational practices. For instance, participants' initial understanding of their relational practices with parents centred primarily around identifying personal influences with an absence of social or collective influences discussed. These included: (1) parents' conceptualisations of mental health, therapy, and the therapist's role, (2) parents' responses to the therapist's boundary setting, (3) parents' willingness to change themselves, (4) parents' conceptualisations of child and parent, (5) the therapist's emotional health, and (6) the therapist's psychic health. In the second deeper understanding moment, where there was more probing from Rosa as the researcher, participants' understanding deepened to include social influences on their relational practices with parents. Namely, demographic, structural, temporal, and material influences. However, these social influences were primarily focused on conscious social influences rather than unconscious social influences. The absence of unconscious social influences as part of participants' understanding was found to be a function of participants' limited use or awareness of social unconscious reflexive tools. Additionally, participants' focus was mostly on the sayings, doings, and relatings of parents rather than their own. For instance, in identifying social class as shaping their relational practices with parents, participants focused on the *parents'* class as the influence rather than their understanding of their own class *in relation* to the parents' class.

Similarly, regarding the third moment of critical imaginal distanciation, participants' critical reflexivity was largely a function of the reflexive tools they used. Transference and countertransference were the main personal unconscious reflexivity tools used (by five of the seven participants) to identify personal unconscious influences on their relational practices, none of the participants used social unconscious reflexive tools to identify social structural influences on their relational practices, and three participants used archetypes as a collective unconscious reflexive tool to identify collective unconscious structural influences on their relational practices with parents. As discussed in Paper B (Bologna, Trede, & Patton, 2020), the findings from the third moment also revealed the important role of the imaginal product-making and imaginal sense-making processes in unearthing structural unconscious influences on relational practices. The critical and imaginal distanciation moment included the application of Bourdieusian and Jungian theoretical thinking tools which assisted in revealing an intricate web of personal, social, and collective unconscious influences on participants' relational practices with parents. Additionally, a tight congruence was found between the Bourdieusian and Jungian thinking tools. Most notable was how Jung's concept of archetypes was found to be associated with all the Bourdieusian thinking tools suggesting that influences on professional practice relationships have an archetypal core. Another finding from the critical and imaginal distanciation moment was that participants' understandings of their relational practices with parents were a function of participants' unacknowledged and unexplored shadow which was revealed by exploring Rosa's own unacknowledged and unexplored shadow. The core dimensions of participants' shadow included objectification, depersonalisation, and idealisation of parents.

The findings of the first three moments of the Critical Imaginal Hermeneutic Spiral also highlighted that although the parent -- therapist relationship is influenced and shaped by a range of personal, social, and collective unconscious influences, it can also be influenced and shaped by practitioners' agentic impetus stimulated by their critical reflexivity. This was evidenced throughout the interview process where most participants reported consciously and deliberately

changing their relational practices based on the processes of critical reflexivity they engaged in via the research interview process. Participants did not undertake this as a condition of the study or because of any instruction from the researcher, but rather as a spontaneous, organic response to critically reflecting on their practices in a co-constructive manner. A more detailed discussion of the findings from the first three moments and further examples can be found in the doctoral thesis (Bologna, 2018).

Summary of the Nature of Participants' Understandings and Critical Reflexivity

In answering the main research question: *What is the nature of clinical play therapists' understandings and critical reflexivity regarding influences on their relational practices with parents?* the following main conclusions were distilled:

- Clinical play therapists' understandings of their relational practices with parents are multilayered.
- Clinical play therapists' understandings of their relational practices with parents change and develop over time and can be influenced by co-constructed exploration of the phenomenon.
- Clinical play therapists' understandings of their relational practices with parents are a function of their critical reflexive tools.
- Critical reflexive tools can assist clinical play therapists to move from focusing on conscious influences to identifying more hidden, unconscious influences on their relational practices with parents.
- Clinical play therapists' critical reflexivity is enhanced by imaginal product-making and imaginal sense-making processes.
- Clinical play therapists' relational practices with parents are shaped by their unacknowledged and unexplored shadow.
- The quality of clinical play therapists' critical reflexivity influences the quality of their relational practices with parents.
- Clinical play therapists' critical reflexivity organically facilitates conscious, deliberate changes to their relational practices with parents.

Imaginal Appropriation of Research Findings

To arrive at a meta-synthesis of the findings from the three moments of understanding discussed above, Rosa engaged in the appropriation moment of her Critical Imaginal Hermeneutic Spiral, and what Ricoeur (1981/2016a) refers to as revealing "the mode of being unfolded in front of the text" (p. 53). With the questions: *What stands in front of the text? What does it refer to?* in mind, Rosa drew a card from Hakanson's (1998) *Oracle of the dreamtime* deck using the Blind Image Card Technique discussed earlier (cards face down). Figure 2 depicts the card Rosa randomly chose and turned over. Below is part of the transcript from Rosa's imaginal sense-making process that illustrates how the thread of the dialogue commenced. The abbreviations for Rosa's right hand (RH) and left hand (LH) dialoguing have been used.

Figure 2. Rosa's imaginal product for the imaginal appropriation moment

RH: *Describe what you see.*

LH: *An opal in the centre emanating a rainbow of colours.*

RH: *How would you describe the image to someone who could not see it?*

LH: *It's multi-coloured but the colours are not blended, they stand out distinctly to form a pattern. At the centre of the image is an opal emanating a rainbow of colours which make these different patterns.*

RH: *How would you describe what an opal is to someone who did not have knowledge of opals?*

LH: *It's a precious stone that is mined from the Earth and is defined by its colour, or more specifically its array of colours.*

RH: *What's the opal's main function or purpose?*

LH: *It's regarded for its beauty.*

RH: *How does it differ from other beautiful stones?*

LH: *Its colour, or more specifically its combination of colours. That's what makes it unique. Other gems I guess tend to be one colour, whereas the opal has many.*

RH: *How would you say your description of the image of the opal relates to your question regarding appropriating your findings and what stands in front of the text?*
LH: *My bricolage approach. Like the different colours in the image, the different elements I have drawn on have not been blended into one; they are still distinct but considered together they create a more valuable whole. For example, this relates to the different moments*

of my hermeneutical spiral. They're distinct but they make up a greater whole, a greater understanding. I also see Bourdieu, Jung, and Ricoeur as distinct yet complementary theorists contributing to a greater understanding. I guess all aspects of my bricolage approach could be described in this way.

RH: If any element of the image could speak, what would speak to you and what would it say?

LH: The black centre. Interesting because I didn't notice it until now. Only the other colours. The black centre represents the shadow. It would say: "Don't forget me. I am at the centre of understanding."

Rosa's imaginal product-making and ensuing imaginal sense-making processes provided a beautifully rich symbol that captured the bricolage sensibility which characterised the research approach, as well as the centrality and importance of clinical play therapists' unacknowledged and unexplored shadow. Rosa decided to further distanciate the image by exploring the Aboriginal dreamtime story outlined in the book that accompanied the card pack to determine whether there were further insights to be mined from the distanciation process. The dreamtime story told is about the world before people on Earth knew how to live ethically, as they had no laws or sacred ceremonies to guide their practices. Eventually, the Great Spirit came to Earth on a rainbow to instruct the people about the laws and sacred ceremonies to follow so they could live "moral correct" lives (Hakanson, 1998, p. 21). Once the Great Spirit imparted his teachings, he left Earth on the great rainbow. Where the rainbow had rested on the ground is where the people found rocks of the rainbow, or what we now know to be the first opals. The opals served as a reminder of the Great Spirit's teachings. The author's commentary following the dreamtime story states that the image of the rainbow and opal symbolise two previously opposing worlds being bridged: "the rainbow bridges the two realms, uniting the spiritual and material dimensions" (Hakanson, 1998, p. 22). Aside from yet another clear message regarding supporting the centrality of ethical practice (see Paper B; Bologna, Trede, & Patton, 2020), the dreamtime story also offers a metaphor (via the rainbow) of the bridging of worlds. This served to crystallise the importance of bricolage and liminality in the research, and how important they were in bridging conceptual, theoretical, paradigmatic, methodological, and disciplinary worlds and making accessible what would otherwise not have been. In sum, "the mode of being unfolded in front of the text" (Ricoeur, 1981/2016a, p. 53) was the importance of adopting and systematically applying multiple, complementary concepts, theories, methodologies, methods, and disciplines with the aim of facilitating a deeper and more critical understanding of the phenomenon. The findings from the appropriation moment were used to assist in developing and designing the Critical Imaginal Reflexivity Model, which is discussed in the following section.

Critical Imaginal Reflexivity Model

Based on the findings of the research, a Critical Imaginal Reflexivity Model was developed to guide the development of clinical play therapists' critical reflexivity practices and capabilities. The main aim of the model is to guide the development of personal, social, and collective unconscious literacy among clinical play therapists. That is, the aim is to discourage clinical play therapists from primarily focusing on conscious influences on their relational practices and to assist them to identify a systemic web of unconscious influences on their practices. This is based on the contention that, to enhance clinical play therapists' critical reflexivity and mitigate unconscious influences that undermine the quality of their relational

practices with parents, clinical play therapists need a range of critical reflexive tools to inform their practices. That is, the quality of clinical play therapists' critical reflexivity influences the quality of their relational practices with parents, and in turn the quality of the parent–therapist relationship.

The Critical Imaginal Reflexivity Model combines the fundamental components of critical reflexivity with the fundamental processes (the trajectory) involved in critical reflexivity. The model consists of two related spirals. The outer spiral (in colour) represents the trajectory of understanding from conscious to unconscious influences on relational practices, and includes the Bourdieusian and Jungian theoretical thinking tools (discussed in Paper B; Bologna, Trede, & Patton, 2020) in a hermeneutical spiral of deepened, enhanced understanding (see Figure 3). That is, the theoretical thinking tools used for methodological purposes in the research study have become part of the final research product where they play a central role in assisting clinical play therapists develop critical reflexivity capabilities. The inner spiral (in white) represents how engaging the imaginal using the Jungian imaginal product-making and sense-making processes assists in the movement toward deepened, enhanced understanding depicted in the outer spiral. That is, the Critical Imaginal Hermeneutic Spiral used to guide the text construction and text interpretation process, has become part of the final research product where it guides the trajectory of clinical play therapists' critical reflexivity.
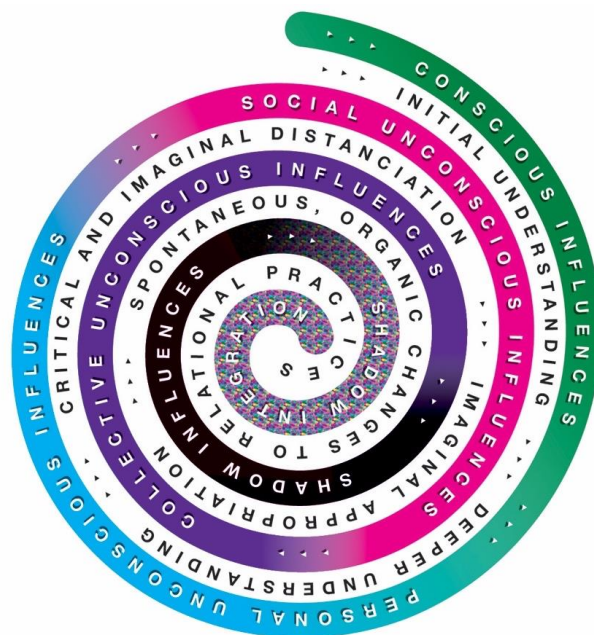
Figure 3. Critical Imaginal Reflexivity Model.

The model's spiral starts with identifying conscious influences on our relational practices (e.g., personal influences and sociocultural influences). This is followed by identifying personal unconscious influences, which are explored via engaging with corresponding thinking tools such as transference and countertransference (discussed in the Rationale and Personal Frame of Reference section of this paper). Next is the identification of social unconscious influences, which is achieved by applying thinking tools such as the cultural complex, habitus, field, capital, and hysteresis. The subsequent part of the spiral represents collective unconscious influences, which are revealed by applying thinking tools such as archetypal habitus, archetypal field, archetypal capital, and archetypal tensions. The shadow part of the spiral involves utilising tools to expose the field's shadow projections as well as our own. This process of critical reflexivity is aided by thinking tools such as archetypal symbolic violence, archetypal doxa, archetypal misrecognition, and tension of opposites. The final and central part of the spiral represents shadow integration, and draws on thinking tools such as synchronicity, union of opposites, and the transcendent function to assist us to identify, explore, and integrate the different aspects of our unacknowledged and unexplored shadow. It is important to note that shadow integration is synonymous with Jung's concept of individuation; however, I have chosen to use the term shadow integration rather than individuation to emphasise the ongoing (lifelong) process of personal and professional becoming rather than a fixed endpoint or place of having arrived.

The inner, parallel spiral (white background) incorporates the four moments of the Critical Imaginal Hermeneutic Spiral discussed which includes the role of the imaginal in the critical reflexivity process and how the final process of imaginal appropriation typically facilitates spontaneous, organic changes in our relational practices. Although spontaneous, organic changes to relational practices can occur at any time throughout the critical reflexivity process, the appropriation moment more readily facilitates these changes due to the moment's focus on synthesising and mining the gems unearthed by the critical reflexivity process built upon in the preceding moments.

Both spirals purposefully indicate a progression to deepened, enhanced understanding, as each of the moments along the spirals offers a scaffold to assist the trajectory of understanding. Comparable to a story or narrative, understanding can be compromised if we do not start at the beginning or if we skip sections of the story. Thus, it is recommended that the spirals indicated in the model be approached as a narrative or journey to deeper, critical understanding, where the story or journey commences at the beginning and follows the trajectory depicted in Figure 3. However, this does not assume a smooth, even-paced progression. Rather, it assumes that we frequently get stuck at particular moments of a journey, that we often need to revisit moments, and that journeys are frequently iterative. Although we acknowledge that the model encompasses many tools, we contend that clinical play therapists are accustomed to working with theoretical tools by way of their respective theoretical orientations. The model offers opportunities for clinical play therapists to extend their tool kit to include more comprehensive tools for critical reflexivity, and to do so using a clear trajectory that facilitates the development of professional practice capabilities as well as an ongoing engagement with professional and personal becoming.

Discussion

The interdisciplinary bricolage research approach presented in this paper facilitated a successful methodological partnership between Ricoeur and Jung evidenced by the findings generated by the Critical Imaginal Hermeneutic Spiral – a hybrid practice-based research design that was developed from this partnership. The findings revealed a deeper and more critical understanding of clinical play therapists' relational practices with parents and how

taken-for-granted, unreflected practices threaten to undermine professional practice relationships. The outcome of this understanding was the development of a Critical Imaginal Reflexivity Model which provides a unique, systemic guide for clinical play therapy practice, education, and supervision, including developing clinical play therapists' critical reflexivity, and in turn minimising the adverse impact of personal, social, and collective unconscious influences on their relational practices with parents. In this section we discuss the unique contributions of the research findings to the clinical play therapy field, implications for other practitioners working with children and parents, implications for interdisciplinary and bricolage research, implications for critical social science and methodologies, limitations of the study, and recommendations for future research.

Contributions to Clinical Play Therapy Practice, Education, and Supervision

The study discussed in this paper was driven by several gaps in the clinical play therapy literature, which centred around relational phenomena being largely de-contextualised, unconnected to clinical play therapists' understanding of them, and studied without consideration of personal, social, and collective unconscious influences that shape them. The study addressed these gaps by providing a contextualised exploration of relational phenomenon, extending the conceptualisation of relational to include social and collective influences (rather than simply personal influences), focusing on the role of clinical play therapists' understandings of influences on their relational practices as central to how the parent–therapist relationship is formed, and exploring the integral role of unconscious personal, social, and collective influences on relational practices. The Critical Imaginal Reflexivity Model developed encompasses all these elements to provide a unique, systemic guide for clinical play therapy practice, education, and supervision in developing clinical play therapists' critical reflexivity, and in turn minimising the adverse impact of unconscious influences on their relational practices with parents.

Theoretical contributions. The research expands and enriches the theoretical landscape by including other disciplines beyond psychology and psychotherapy. For example, sociology was employed to extend the conceptualisation of relational beyond person-to-person interactions, and to extend conceptualisations of the unconscious to include the social unconscious as per Bourdieu and his suite of theoretical thinking tools. Philosophy underpinned development of a new philosophical framework and methodological approach based on Ricoeur's critical hermeneutics. Additionally, these disciplines were engaged in an interdisciplinary fashion by coalescing their commonalities to form theoretical and methodological partnerships. For example, the thought partnership formed between Bourdieu and Jung provided an enriched and enhanced understanding of the unconscious influences on clinical play therapists' relational practices with parents.

Methodological contributions. The research findings contribute to methodological gaps in clinical play therapy research, where relational phenomena have largely been studied by research situated in the positivist paradigm using quantitative methods. Situating the research in both the social constructivist and critical paradigms enabled the exploration of multiple ways of knowing, including social constructivist and critical meaning-making. A unique method of text construction and text interpretation was also developed via the critical imaginal hermeneutic approach, which incorporated aspects of Jungian imaginal product-making and sense-making with Ricoeur's critical hermeneutics. This approach facilitated a deeper engagement with the unconscious, and in turn assisted in the determination of its influences on practices.

The research findings also address a surprising gap in clinical play therapy research, where using play therapy techniques and mediums as research methods is largely absent. The research findings address this gap via the adoption of a hybrid, practice-based strategy that involved the transplantation of play therapy mediums and activities used in the clinical play therapy setting into the research setting. The research findings highlight how imaginal tools and processes used in clinical play therapy can enrich and enhance research exploring unconscious influences on practices. Additionally, the bricolage approach developed and used in this study constructed new interdisciplinary theoretical and philosophical frameworks that open up new possibilities for understanding relational practices.

Implications for Other Practitioners Working with Children and Parents

The research findings discussed in this paper have relevance to other professions working with children, particularly those that have also emphasised the importance of the relationship between parents and practitioners, for instance, paediatric nursing (e.g., Nethercott, 1993; Smith, Swallow, & Coyne, 2015), primary school education (e.g., Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2009; Price-Mitchell, 2009), and early childhood education (e.g., Ceppi & Zini, 1998; Clarke, Sheridan, & Woods, 2010; Knopf & Swick, 2007; Rinaldi, 2006). Like the clinical play therapy field, the literature in these fields has overwhelmingly focused on "strategies" to develop better quality relationships with parents; however, these approaches have not emerged from critical explorations of personal, social, and collective unconscious influences on practices. In fact, critical approaches are overwhelmingly absent from studies exploring parent–practitioner relationships. The research findings of the present study offer a critical reflexive approach that facilitates changes to practices that arise from exploring personal, social, and collective unconscious influences on practices, and in turn the quality of the parent–practitioner relationship.

Implications for Interdisciplinary and Bricolage Research

Commentators on the complexities involved in the provision of and research on health services have frequently stressed the need for an interdisciplinary approach that involves drawing on two or more distinct disciplines throughout multiple stages of the research process, rather than simply one aspect of the research (Aboelela et al., 2007). The bricolage research approach presented in this paper provides an exemplar of an interdisciplinary approach woven through multiple stages of the research process. This included the conceptual treatment of the research phenomenon by drawing on the disciplines of psychology, sociology, professional practice, and philosophy; developing a thought partnership between a sociologist (Bourdieu) and psychologist (Jung); positioning the research at the juncture of two paradigms (social constructivist and critical paradigms); utilising a methodology that drew on two paradigms (critical hermeneutics based on philosophical hermeneutics and critical theory); and developing a hybrid practice-based research strategy (verbal dialogues combined with imaginal product-making and imaginal sense-making processes). Although we concede adopting an interdisciplinary approach has challenges (e.g., the volume of stimulating literature to wrestle with multiplies) we contend that boundary crossing between disciplines can be made less challenging by focusing on common threads. For instance, Bourdieu, Jung, and Ricoeur all have the commonality of surpassing binaries, embracing the liminal, and exploring unconscious influences as a central focus of their respective approaches. These core features were used as the foundation for developing partnerships between them and developing an integrated interdisciplinary approach to studying professional practice relationships.

Implications for Critical Social Science and Methodologies

The research findings reveal the integral role the interrelated dimensions of consciousness (personal, social, and collective) play in shaping practices, and in turn the importance of considering all three dimensions when exploring unconscious influences. The Critical Imaginal Hermeneutic Spiral offers a new approach to researching the unconscious by systematically and systemically incorporating all three dimensions of the unconscious. This addresses an important gap in the critical social science literature which neglects the systematic and integrated exploration of personal, social, and collective unconscious influences on practice issues. In terms of critical methodologies, the research addresses a gap concerning effective methods to identify and explore unconscious influences. The use of the imaginal to systematically uncover the interplay between personal, social, and collective unconscious influences is largely absent from the critical literature, including critical arts and visual research methods as well as the critical hermeneutic literature (Romanyshyn, 2013). Specifically, the distanciation function of the imaginal is neglected. The Critical Imaginal Hermeneutic Spiral offers to address these gaps by facilitating the distanciation of images and provides a systematic and systemic way to engage and explore the unconscious and its influences on practices.

Limitations of the Study

A paradox exists in the study in that one of its strengths is potentially one of its limitations. The strength, I (Rosa), refer to is the uncensored, honest, and often raw responses elicited from my participants. This feature not only strengthened the credibility and authenticity of the study but was also fundamental in revealing core aspects of the clinical play therapy field's shadow, which is an important yet neglected feature of the clinical play therapy literature. However, a possible limitation of participants' candid responses is that not only participants but also the clinical play therapy field can be left feeling exposed and vulnerable. Fawkes (2015) cautions how a typical response by professions that have had their shadow exposed and in turn feel vulnerable, is to employ "defensive strategies" and "shut down alternate perspectives" (p. 198). I contend that this is likely to take place in the event that participants' responses are decontextualised from the aim of the study, which was to ultimately improve outcomes for children by revealing hidden, unconscious influences on clinical play therapists' relational practices with parents. I concur with Fawkes (2015) who suggests that the tensions created by revealing a profession's shadow (and I would add a person's shadow) may need to for a time "be 'held' rather than resolved" (p. 196).

An additional and related paradox of the study is that although my familiarity with the field and my past professional relationships with most of the participants assisted me achieve authentic participant responses, I suspect it may have hindered participants candidly identifying the influence of clinical play therapy supervisors and educators due to the inherent power differential I hold in these roles. For example, I noted that none of the participants identified supervisors as an influence on their relational practices with parents beyond identifying them as a positive influence on their emotional and psychic health, that is, supervisors assisting them with self-care and working through parent countertransference issues. My own reflexivity regarding my shadow as a clinical play therapy supervisor and educator suggests that supervisors and educators likely play a more integral role in influencing clinical play therapists' relational practices with parents where their own shadows and that of the profession are unconsciously seeded and nurtured through the socialisation and pedagogical functions of their roles.

Recommendations for Future Research

We make five main recommendations for future research. These recommendations are based on either aspects of the research phenomenon not covered within the scope of the study discussed in this paper or aspects of the clinical play therapy context that did not feature in the research findings, and therefore may warrant further exploration.

Parents' and children's understandings of relational practices. The research specifically explored clinical play therapists' understandings of influences on their relational practices with parents and, in doing so, deliberately did not consider parents' and children's views. This was undertaken with the awareness that this was one of many steps in exploring and unpacking the complexity and richness of the research phenomenon. The next step we recommend is to explore parents' and children's understanding of clinical play therapists' relational practices with parents. This will further inform the overall phenomenon of the parent–therapist relationship. Prospective studies involving parents could explore parents' experiences using the critical imaginal approach developed in this study in combination with any number of appropriate play therapy mediums and techniques.

Group understandings of clinical play therapists' relational practices. An implied focus of the study was exploring *individual* clinical play therapists' understandings and critical reflexivity regarding influences on their relational practices with parents. Given one of the research findings revealed that understanding is a co-constructed process, and considering clinical play therapists typically discuss issues with colleagues informally at work as well as formally in group supervision, we recommend that future research explore the nature of clinical play therapists' understandings in *group* contexts such as the workplace and/or group supervision. Changing the setting from individual to group can provide additional and valuable knowledge regarding the research phenomenon. Group understandings could be explored in a professional practice development context where the researcher explores the Critical Imaginal Reflexivity Model with a group of clinical play therapists over a set number of meetings.

Exploration of gender and cultural and linguistic diversity influences. Considering that such a large percentage of therapists are female, and given the rich cultural and linguistic diversity (CALD) in Australia, we were surprised that gender and CALD were not identified by participants as major influencers on their relational practices with parents. Regarding the CALD background of both parents and participants, it is not clear if participants who did see parents from CALD backgrounds (different or similar to their own) simply did not identify CALD backgrounds as an influence on their relational practices, or whether parents from CALD backgrounds were not accessing clinical play therapy due to a range of barriers, and therefore were not considered by participants because they do not see these parents to begin with. We contend that exclusion from or inaccessibility of service provision is a type of relational practice in which groups of people are not able to access a service, and therefore warrants exploration. Future research could include local community members and services that *do* work with children and parents from CALD backgrounds, and explore exclusion and accessibility issues regarding clinical play therapy services with them.

Exploration of rural versus metropolitan influences. The study did not purposefully recruit participants from either rural or metropolitan areas. Only one of the participants practised and lived in a rural area, and her understanding of class as an influence on her relational practices with parents differed significantly from the other six participants, who lived and practised in or close to a metropolitan city area (see Bologna, 2018). This suggests that the

geographic areas clinical play therapists practise and live in shape their understandings of some influences on their relational practices with parents. Our recommendation is that future research study the unique influences on the relational practices of rural-based clinical play therapists, particularly those practising in areas characterised by social disadvantage such as high unemployment and poverty, and areas with high rates of child abuse and mental health issues such as youth suicide. Considering the high level of marginalisation and disempowerment in these settings, we recommend future studies employ a research design that has a strong emancipatory agenda such as participatory action research, and one that facilitates prolonged engagement with the community over a time frame that maximises the benefits of the research to the community.

Further exploration of shadow influences. Given the central role participants' shadows played in influencing their relational practices with parents, future studies could further explore the relevance and applicability of the Critical Imaginal Reflexivity Model, particularly the role and nature of shadow integration in the critical reflexive process and ensuring changes to practices. Additionally, given Rosa (the first author) found her own unacknowledged and unexplored shadow influenced the research phenomenon, future studies could focus on exploring the role of clinical play therapy supervisors' and/or educators' shadows on therapists' relational practices with parents. This could be achieved by employing any number of critical research approaches (e.g., critical imaginal hermeneutics, critical autoethnography, critical ethnography, participatory action research) depending where on the social constructivist/critical paradigm continuum the research is positioned.

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