



ICCT2025 Antwerp 27-28-29 October 2025

International Conference Contextual Therapy

The need for connection. Relationship challenges in today's world.

Workshop session 1a (E) – 11.15hr.-12.15hr.

Tatiana Glebova & Suzanne Bartle Haring

The study of intergenerational effects of sociocultural trauma and its implications for contextual therapy.



Summary:

This conference's theme highlights a critical importance of the era, or historical sociocultural context, we live in on our relationships and family dynamics. One of the key strengths of the contextual therapy theory is a thorough attention to the dimension of facts, given circumstances of individual and relational existence. Among the current challenges there are some relatively new ones such as various forms of online relationships, artificial intelligence or global warming along with the old ones such as poverty, violence and overall social safety. For example, the world has experienced the highest number of violent conflicts since World War II with a record and growing number of children affected by them (UNICEF, 2024). In contextual therapy terms, this reality represents distributive or situational injustices that have a negative effect on all dimensions of relational reality (Ducommun-Nagy et al., 2023) and have transgenerational consequences (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Krasner, 1986/2014).

In the first part of this presentation we will describe findings from our quantitative studies which support that notion in the sample of immigrants in the United States from the AddHealth dataset (Harris et al., 2019), the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health of a US-representative sample of individuals who were in grades 7-12 in 1994-95 (N = 20,743). The historical sociocultural context in countries of origin was quantified as an index of broad categories of social safety threats - to life (wars, genocide, high level of criminality), to freedom (political repressions), and to socioeconomic stability (poverty). Socio-cultural trauma index was associated with self-reported mental and physical health in expected direction with some nuances in the first- and second-generation immigrants. We will also provide findings that compare racial ethnic groups who immigrate to the United States, and how the intersection of race/ethnicity and sociocultural trauma impacts both physical and mental health. As individuals carry these scars from both past and current sociocultural contexts this has the potential to "bleed into" their intergenerational relational ethics.

In the second part we will discuss the studies' implications for clinical practice. Boszormenyi-Nagy stressed that "Distributive justice is a principle of relational reality that commands a higher degree of therapeutic perceptiveness than retributive justice" (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Krasner, 1986/2014, p. 92). We will present some practical recommendations of how to increase that perceptiveness when our clients' families come from countries with high level of sociocultural trauma.

Presenter:

Suzanne Bartle Haring - The Ohio State University.
Professor, Human Sciences.

References:

- Boszormenyi-Nagy, I., & Krasner, B. (2014). Between give and take: A clinical guide to contextual therapy. Routledge. (Original work published 1986)
- Ducommun-Nagy, C., Meulink-Korf, J.N., & De Vries, G. (2023). Revitalizing relationships. The resources of contextual therapy with inspiration from the pastoral process and interfaith studies. African Sun Media.
- Harris, K. M. (2013). The add health study: Design and accomplishments. <https://doi.org/10.17615/C6TW87>



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Workshop session 1b (E) – 11.15hr.-12.15hr.

Heather Warren & Thomas Stone Carlson

Narrative means to contextual ends: Using narrative therapy practices to invite due consideration in contextual therapy.



Summary:

Contextual therapy, with its foundational commitment to relational ethics and the principle of due consideration, offers a transformative framework for addressing intergenerational legacies and fostering relational accountability. A unique aspect of contextual therapy is the lack of specific interventions aside from the approach of multidirected partiality. While this aspect encourages practitioners of the theory to be creative and flexible, it has also left potential practitioners feeling lost with how to translate the theoretical concepts into actionable therapy practices. Narrative therapy's emphasis on relational accountability shares the ethics and values explored in the fourth contextual therapy dimension of relational ethics and offers a structured yet expansive approach that complements and enriches contextual work.

Intimate witnessing practices, as articulated in contemporary narrative couple's therapy, are structured around fostering accountability and connection by inviting individuals to consider the shaping effects of their actions on their significant other's experience of self. This practice operates on a foundation of relational ethics, emphasizing attentiveness, accountability, and the transformative potential of seeing the other as a fully realized moral agent.

In intimate witnessing practices, individuals are invited to step inside the experience of their significant other by speaking as if they were their significant other. In this practice, partners are invited to reflect on the emotional and relational impact of their own actions on their partner's experiences of themselves. From a contextual therapy perspective, the individual is afforded the opportunity to (1) practice due consideration in relation to their significant other, (2) consider the effects their actions had on them as well as (3) gain an appreciation of the important historical and contextual factors that has impacted their significant other's life. By inviting significant others to speak from the position of one another, intimate witnessing practices make it possible to bypass blame and defensiveness that is so common in intimate and familial relationships. Throughout this process, participants are gently guided to articulate the lived experiences of their partners in honorable and respectful ways that can help meet the aims of due consideration.

In my experience, using intimate witnessing practices with families has been a helpful means of achieving due consideration in my contextual therapy practice. In this presentation, I will illustrate this practice by way of transcripts of therapy sessions and therapeutic documents.

Presenter:

Heather Warren:

Program Coordinator, CRF Crossroads Family Center

Thomas Stone Carlson:

Professor, Couple and Family Therapy Program, Alliant International University- San Diego Campus

References:

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The need for connection. Relationship challenges in today's world.

Workshop session 1c (NL) – 11.15hr.-12.15hr.

Joke van Ballegooijen, Karin Jonker & Chantal van Wijngaarden-Timmermans

Contextueel werken in de huisartsenpraktijk.



Summary:

De context en zeker de multigenerationele context speelt een grote rol bij gezondheid en ziekte. Juist in de algemene praktijk blijken de ideeën van Ivan Boszorgmenyi-Nagy waardevol en toepasbaar.

In de workshop geven drie huisartsen een inkijkje in hun inspiratie en werkwijze.

Joke van Ballegooijen, inmiddels met pensioen maar nog steeds actief in het geven van contextuele trainingen en intervisie, is in 40 jaar tijd als praktiserend huisarts 'selfmade' geworden op dit vakgebied, en heeft inmiddels vele collega-huisartsen enthousiast gemaakt. Mede hierdoor werken enkele tientallen huisartsen in de regio Den Haag in meer of mindere mate vanuit de contextuele benadering en is er een actieve intervisiegroep.

Chantal van Wijngaarden is al meer dan 15 jaar praktiserend huisarts in Nootdorp. In haar werk combineert ze haar medische expertise met oog voor de bredere sociale en relationele context van haar patiënten. Ze heeft een speciale interesse in de contextuele therapie van Ivan Boszormenyi-Nagy.

Karin Jonker is al bijna 20 jaar huisarts in Den Haag en vanaf het begin had ze behoefte aan meer 'context' in haar consulten. Die vond ze in de contextuele intervisiegroep voor huisartsen. Zij is 6 jaar docent geweest in Leiden bij de huisartsenopleiding van het LUMC en is momenteel bezig met het ontwikkelen van een cursus 'contextuele benadering in de huisartspraktijk' voor opleiders, die zij in oktober zal geven.

Onlangs publiceerden ze gezamenlijk een artikel in Huisarts & Wetenschap, getiteld 'Het belang van familierelaties: contextueel werken in de huisartspraktijk'.

In de workshop komen de volgende items aan bod:

- Theorie en methodologie van contextueel werk in de algemene praktijk.
- Casuïstieks uit hun eigen praktijk
- De van Contextuele Therapie voor zowel patiënt als huisarts.
- Samenwerking met andere zorgverleners.
- Publicaties en podcast.



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Workshop session 1d (F) – 11.15hr.-12.15hr.

Catherine Lebrun & Natacha Boxus

Attaque du Corps et dépression chez un jeune adulte : quand les pas, les symptômes auto destructeurs forcent à briser le silence et à ouvrir la porte difficile du dialogue sur les injustices du passé.



Summary:

Lorsque le suivi individuel d'un jeune adulte porteur d'une dépression sévère se heurte aux traumatismes familiaux, inviter les autres membres de la famille devient un levier thérapeutique incontournable. Pour le jeune qui amène sa famille en thérapie, comme pour ses proches, l'ouverture d'un dialogue sur les injustices du passé est souvent un passage obligé pour retrouver le chemin de la confiance dans le lien à soi et aux autres. C'est le constat que nous faisons régulièrement en pédopsychiatrie. Ce fut le cas pour Paul et sa famille que nous avons pu rencontrer en co-intervention.

Au cours de cet atelier, nous partagerons les moments clés de ce suivi, le courage dont Paul a fait preuve pour sortir de son silence, quels outils contextuels nous ont été utiles et ce que chacun a pu gagner dans sa vie personnelle en participant à ce dialogue sincère et authentique en séance.

Un temps d'échange autour de la thématique de la dépression chez les jeunes permettra ensuite d'interroger la place à donner à la famille dans le processus thérapeutique, les leviers à mobiliser mais aussi les réussites et les écueils de nos interventions.

Presenter:

Catherine Lebrun, licenciée en psychologie clinique, thérapeute de famille, formatrice au sein de l'Ardoise Pivotante, Institut de Formation et de Clinique Contextuelles. Elle travaille depuis plus de vingt ans dans un centre psychothérapeutique de jour situé à Liège qui accueille des enfants qui souffrent de troubles graves de la relation. Elle reçoit des couples et des familles dans un service de santé mentale à Verviers.

Natacha Boxus, pédopsychiatre, thérapeute familiale contextuelle, ayant travaillé comme médecin de famille pendant 10 ans. Elle reçoit des adolescents et des familles dans un cabinet de consultation à Liège et dans une équipe de thérapeutes famille formée à la contextuelle au sein d'un service de

santé mentale à Verviers. Elle accompagne également les parents et famille d'enfants porteurs d'une maladie chronique ou d'un handicap dans une optique de prévention de l'épuisement au sein d'une équipe mobile.

References:

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