



ICCT2025 Antwerp 27-28-29 October 2025

International Conference Contextual Therapy

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

Workshop session 2a (E) – 13.30hr-14.30hr.

Cymone Damon Sams

**The intergenerational balance of give and take:
Destructive entitlement and relational dynamics in black
families – an auto-ethnographic study.**



Summary:

This autoethnographic study explores the intergenerational patterns of give and take and destructive entitlement within Black families. Using the lens of contextual therapy, particularly the concepts of invisible loyalties and fairness in relationships (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Spark, 1984/2013), this study examines the relational dynamics between my grandmother and her four daughters, each of whom navigated family obligations and expectations differently. The research highlights how patterns of relational debts, entitlement, and perceived injustices are transmitted across generations and how they shape identity, loyalty, and emotional well-being within Black families.

Purpose:

This study aims to provide a deeper understanding of how destructive entitlement and invisible loyalties influence relational ethics and intergenerational family structures. By integrating autoethnography with contextual therapy, it contributes to the discourse on how Black families balance expectations of caregiving, emotional reciprocity, and loyalty conflicts. The research also considers how digital tools, such as ancestry databases and DNA testing, influence self-perception and family narratives.

Approach:

The study employs an autoethnographic methodology (Adams & Manning, 2015), drawing from personal narratives, reflective journaling, and family storytelling to explore intergenerational family dynamics. Thematic analysis is used to identify patterns of give and take, entitlement, and familial obligations within the case of my grandmother and her daughters. The study also incorporates genealogical research as a contemporary tool that shapes identity and loyalty in the digital age.

Research Implications:

Findings from this study have implications for contextual therapy, particularly in expanding its application to Black families. It offers insights into how historical and sociocultural factors shape relational debts and entitlements, contributing to a culturally nuanced understanding of loyalty conflicts.

Furthermore, the research underscores the role of digital ancestry tools in reshaping family identity and obligations, raising questions about how emerging technologies impact contextual therapy's core principles.

Practical Implications:

Therapists working with Black families can apply these findings to better navigate intergenerational conflicts, address destructive entitlement, and facilitate reconciliation. The study also encourages contextual herapists to integrate digital ancestry research into therapeutic conversations as a means of exploring family arratives, loyalties, and unspoken obligations.

Presenter:

Adjunct Professor | Pacific Oaks College

- Developed and adapted course materials based on provided syllabi to meet learning objectives.
- Taught seven courses across online and in-person formats, utilizing diverse teaching methodologies to engage students. Courses include:
 - o Practicum I, Practicum II, and Practicum III – Clinical Portfolio
 - o Child Adolescent Therapy
 - o Cross-Cultural Mores & Values
 - o Communication and Counseling Skills
 - o African American Psychology
- Delivered lectures, facilitated discussions, and assessed student performance to foster academic growth.

Clinical Supervisor | Open Door Counseling

- Supervise and mentor a multidisciplinary team of clinicians, ensuring adherence to best practices and ethical guidelines in sex offender treatment.
- Conduct case consultations, provide oversight for treatment plans, and facilitate staff development through ongoing training and support.
- Coordinate and implement evidence-based interventions tailored to individual and group treatment needs.
- Ensure compliance with CASOMB (California Sex Offender Management Board) standards and provide direct services as a CASOMB-certified independent provider.
- Collaborate with legal and community stakeholders to support client rehabilitation and public safety.
- Maintain documentation and reporting standards to meet regulatory and organizational requirements.

Co-Founder, Lead Clinician, & Clinical Supervisor Reconnect Marriage and Family Counseling

- Executive Leadership: Founded and oversee a thriving group private practice specializing in psychotherapy, managing business operations, strategy, and growth.
- Clinical Services: Provide individual, couples, and group therapy with a focus on attachment, trauma, and psychedelic-assisted psychotherapy.
- Supervision: Lead weekly group supervision for staff, incorporating case conceptualization and specialized training in areas such as attachment theory and contextual therapy.
- Program Development: Designed and launched innovative therapy programs, including group therapy services and training curricula for staff development.
- Marketing & Outreach: Develop and implement marketing strategies through blogging, social media outreach, partnerships with local businesses, and Google advertising.
- Education & Training: Conduct workshops and continuing education for staff and the broader community, with a focus on attachment, trauma, and cultural perspectives in therapy.
- Client-Centered Care: Transitioned the practice toward private pay while maintaining accessible services and ethical client care standards.

- Specialized Expertise: Advocate for and integrate African American experiences and perspectives into therapeutic practices, with a focus on loyalty, family dynamics, and healing trauma.

References:

- Adams, T.E., & Manning, J. (2015) . Autoethnography and family research, *Journal of Family Theory Review*, 7(4), 350–366. doi:10.1111/jftr.12116.
- Boszormenyi-Nagy, I., & Spark, G. (2013). *Invisible loyalties*. Routledge. (Original work published 1984)



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Workshop session 2B (E/NL) – 13.30hr.-14.30hr.

Greteke De Vries & Hanneke Meulink-Korf

Experiences from contextual pastoral care-and-counselling and interfaith encounters, inspired by contextual therapy.



Summary:

The influence of Contextual Therapy (CT) on pastoral care-and-counselling needs to be clarified and promoted. In the Netherlands, in 2001, the Foundation for Contextual Pastoral Care-and-Counselling (CPCC) was set up. Since then (and even before!) it organizes introductory courses and it issues a journal on contextual pastoral care. This Foundation provided a two year post-academic course in contextual pastoral care and counselling for church ministers and spiritual caregivers. In January 2025 this course was transferred to the CHE, a Dutch university for applied sciences. Dissemination of contextual pastoral care and counselling to protestant theological institutions in Central Europe and South Africa and international dialogues about contextual pastoral care broadened perspectives and practices of professionals from different cultural/religious backgrounds. This shows, f.i, when they take the position of multidirected partiality while conducting rituals such as baptisms, weddings, funerals, and also when they intervene in conflicts within communities of faith. They also draw from relational ethics to reflect on holy scriptures and religious doctrines.

This pastoral approach proves to be more than a one-way application. CPCC research contributes to foundational concepts of CT. Notions about human relationships from the philosopher E. Levinas were brought into conversation with the Buber-concept of dialogue that had inspired Boszormeny-Nagy so much. Especially the contextual concept of loyalty as 'a triadic configuration' can be related to 'the third one' (Levinas) for whom 'I' am responsible too (so the focus of professionals is not only on 'I' and 'you').

Presently, the boundaries between family systems and other social systems are weakening as a result of the still growing influence of globalisation, social media and the internet. Therefore, pastoral counsellors often meet people who are distressed, f. i. by the preference of their loved ones for another cultural or (non-) religious conviction. How to help to prevent (further) alienation between these family-members? Or they take care of blended families who come from different backgrounds and need to find a common ground. Moreover, contextual pastoral counsellors or ministers may be involved in interfaith encounters in the institutions they are working in, or in the neighbourhoods their communities are situated, and then 'intersectionality' should be considered as a tool for understanding destructive entitlement and 'religious literacy' is needed for fair bridging.

In this workshop we will elaborate on CT and CPCC by reading a religious (biblical) tale as a common ground for a multilogue. The story is about an intercultural refugee family with mother in law Naomi and her foreign daughters in law Ruth and Orpa. We offer a (re-) introduction of concepts such as 'relational and situational injustice', 'destructive entitlement and frozen trauma', 'loyalty conflict', 'connecting speech', 'the third one', 'exoneration', 'inequity aversion' and 'fair bridging'.

Presenter:

Hanneke Meulink-Korf, PhD, (1948) is retired assistant/ associate professor in Theology (Pastoral care and counselling) at University of Amsterdam and Leiden University. She is a practicing contextual therapist and supervisor. She is registered by Vereniging van Contextueel werkers and by Vereniging Persoonsgerichte experientiele Psychotherapie (until 2025). She wrote several books and articles. Together with the late dr. Aat van Rhijn she published two books, both translated in English. She was one of the initiators of Contextual pastoral care in the Netherlands and (comparable to this) the master programme Dialogical Intergenerational Pastoral Process at Stellenbosch University (South Africa).

*Meulink-Korf, H. & A. van Rhijn 2016. The unexpected Third, Contextual pastoral care, counselling and ministry: an Introduction and Reflection. Wellington: CLF. Translated from the original of 2002 by Noeme Visser.

*Van Rhijn, A. & H. Meulink-Korf. 1997/2019. Appealing Spaces, the ethics of humane networking – the interplay between justice and relational healing in caregiving. Wellington: Biblemedia. Ed. Transl. and adapt. by prof Daniël Louw.

Together with Catherine Ducommun-Nagy and Greteke de Vries:

*Ducommun-Nagy, C. et al. 2023. Revitalizing Relationships. The resources of Contextual Therapy with inspiration from the pastoral process and interfaith studies. Stellenbosch: SUN Media.

Greteke de Vries, MA, (1959) is a Dutch theologian and minister of a protestant congregation in a multicultural neighbourhood in Amsterdam. She studied CPCC (with van Rhijn and Meulink-Korf and CT (with among others May Michielsen). She promotes and studies interfaith encounters. She is an experienced contextual pastoral minister and counsellor. She wrote a.o. a well-received biography on Aat van Rhijn, initiator of contextual pastoral care, and on dialogue in interfaith relationships. She is president of the Foundation for Contextual Pastoral Care-and-Counselling (CPCC) and member of Vereniging van Contextueel Werkers (VCW).

*Greteke de Vries, 2010. Meer dan voldoende te eten en een vrolijk hart- Aat van Rhijn, dominee en therapeut in het spoor van Nagy en Levinas, Vught: Skandalon

Together with Catherine Ducommun-Nagy and Hanneke Meulink-Korf:

*Ducommun-Nagy, C. et al. 2023. Revitalizing Relationships. The resources of Contextual Therapy with inspiration from the pastoral process and interfaith studies. Stellenbosch: SUN Media.



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Ard Nieuwenbroek

Elviskinderen, Living in the shadow of your passed sibling.



Summary:

The loss of a child has a profound impact upon the structure and dynamics of a family. This phenomenon is illustrated by the life of the late singer, Elvis Presley, who was born a twin, shortly after his brother was stillborn. The term "Elvischildren" refers to individuals who have lost a sibling either before or after their own birth. In American literature, these children are often called "replacement children" (Krell & Rabkin, 1979). However, many parents dislike this term, as they do not want to view their child as a replacement. However, this dynamic often occurs subconsciously. I therefore prefer to use the term Elvischildren to explain this concept. Since the 1960s, researchers in the United States, (e.g. Cain & Cain, 1964) have emphasized the profound effects of a child's death on family dynamics, narratives, career and relationship choices, as well as the existential motivations of the surviving siblings. Some Elvis children face challenges in their relationships with their parents, who, often unconsciously and unintentionally, may resist forming a close bond with them due to fear of another loss. Alternatively, parents may become overprotective, excessively indulgent, or even physically or emotionally abusive. Another challenge is that Elvischildren often (unconsciously) attempt to "make up" for their parents' loss, neglecting their own needs and struggling with self-validation. In recent years in my therapeutic practice, I have worked with many individuals, both young and old, who are Elvischildren. Their challenges are diverse, often encompassing burnout, repeated relationship failures, and depression. Using contextual family genograms, we frequently identify the root causes of their difficulties. Recognizing and understanding their identity as an Elvis child provides a sense of relief and paves the way for a contextual journey, one that sometimes involve their family of origin directly, and at others through fantasy and imagination. In this workshop, I will share my clinical and contextual experiences in recognizing and supporting Elvischildren.

Presenter:

Social Pedagogue and Contextual Therapist (VCW Certified)

References:

- Cain, A. C., & Cain, B. S. (1964). On replacing a child. *Journal of the American Academy of Child Psychiatry*, 3(3), 443–456. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0002-7138\(09\)61813-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0002-7138(09)61813-3)
- Krell, R., & Rabkin, L. (1979). The effects of sibling death on the surviving child: A family perspective. *Family Process*, 18(4), 471–477. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1545-5300.1979.00471.x>
- Nieuwenbroek, A., & Kimenai, J. (2022). Geven en ontvangen. ACCO.
- Nieuwenbroek, A., & Kimenai, J. (2023). Elviskinderen, uit de schaduw van je overleden broer of zus, ACCO.
- Nieuwenbroek, A., & Kimenai, J. (2024). Burn-out bij kinderen en jongeren. ACCO.



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Workshop session 2d (....) – 13.30hr.-14.30hr.

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Summary:

Presenter:

References:

