Mayumi Y. Douglass & Tatjana Glebova

Contextual therapy's five-dimensional framework on trustworthiness in online-only relationships.

Summary:

Reaching a high level of trustworthiness is a desirable goal for many family therapists. Contextual therapists identify themselves as facilitators of a dialogue aimed at "the restoration of fairness, trustworthiness, and direct, non- self- sacrificing expressions of loyalty" (Ducommun-Nagy, 2024, p. 4). Trust plays a central role in face-to-face interactions and in online-only relationships. Online trust and face-to-face trust seem to be based on the same fundamental components (Coli et al., 2023).

The presenters are family therapy practitioners in the United States, where it has been found that 96% of individuals aged 18 -29 report having a smartphone, and 90% use at least one social media site. Moreover, 30% of individuals have used online dating applications, and at least two-thirds of those who make contact do not meet in person (Pew Research Center, 2019, 2020, 2023).

Meeting online has displaced friends as the main way heterosexual couples in the United States meet (Rosenfeld et al., 2019). Most teenagers and young adults engage in communication with friends and romantic partners using online instant messaging, and there has been an increase in the number of friendships and romantic relationships that are described as online-only (Nesi et al., 2018). Researchers have concluded that the rates and degrees of identity misrepresentation in virtual relationships tend to be more extreme (Campbell & Parker, 2022; see also Yang et al., 2021).

Examining relational ethics associated with trustworthiness and self-delineation in online-only relationships has become a new task for contextual therapists. This presentation's aim is to apply contextual therapy's five-dimensional framework to online relationships using a clinical case of a young male engaged in an online-only romantic relationship. Attendees will be invited to design clinical questions guided by the dimensions of relational ethics and mutual becoming.

This presentation will also delve into the ingredients that contribute to the attribution of trust in the context of youth' online interactions, such as the willingness to introduce new online friends or romantic partners to the inner circle of in-person friends and family members, to share

pictures with online friends and communicate via video calls, and to spend time together in person. An exploration of these ingredients in online relationships will include the phenomenon of catfishing, in which a person who uses a false identity online to involve themselves in one or more romantic relationships (Campbell & Parker, 2022).

Presenter:
Faculty Member, Lecturer University of San Diego.
Department of Counseling & Marital and Family Therapy.

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Workshop session 7C (NL) – 15.45hr.-16.45hr.

Catherine Ducommun-Nagy

The dialectic theory of the personality in the area of virtual relationships.

Summary:

This workshop will focus on a reassessment the Dialectic Theory of the Personality proposed by Ivan Boszormenyi-Nagy in the 1960, including his proposed six modes of relating, in the light of the new ways of relating that have been made possible by the internet, social media, and the AI.

This theory is based on a relational definition of the Self: no Self without an Other and no Other without a Self Furthermore, the need to relate to others as a source of definition/delineation of the Self is described as a fundamental/ontic need that takes precedence over any other needs and becomes a determinant of our behavior that is accounted for in the ontic/fifth dimension of the multidimensional model of relational dynamics proposed in contextual therapy.

In the area of the internet, one can wonder if contacts established on social media can remain a source of Self/Other definition. What happens to the Self/Other contraposition when people use avatars to interact online? What happens to the Self/Other dialogue if our questions are answered by AI, not by humans who could respond from their own vantage point and challenge ours? What happens to the Self when AI guided robots start to replace humans as personal assistants or companions?

After a brief summary of the main point of the theory, the presenter will try to answer these questions in dialogue with the audience, encouraging participants to bring in their own questions, observations, and reflections.

The goal of this workshop is to foster the reflection of therapists who wonder about the place of relational therapy, being any form of couple and family therapy or contextual therapy in a word in which virtual relationships may take the precedence over actual encounters.

Presenter:

Prof. Catherine Ducommun-Nagy MD is a Swiss board certified specialist in psychiatry and psychotherapy of children and adults and a contextual family therapist. She is a Clinical Associate Professor of couple and family therapy at Drexel University, Philadelphia and the president of the Institute for Contextual Growth, Inc. founded by her late husband Ivan Boszormenyi-Nagy in Glenside PA. She is teaching worldwide as a presenter at national and international conference and as invited lecturer for private and academic programs. She publishes extensively on contextual therapy and its applications in French and English.

References:

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Workshop session 7C (NL) – 15.45hr.-16.45hr.

Yvette Desmet

Connection and parentificationin a digital era.
New challenges, everlasting needs.

Summary:

With people in 2024 spending as much as 60.76% of their time online, it is crucial to examine the quality of the connections they form—both wireless and wired.

How has daily life changed in the short term, particularly post-COVID? In what ways have expressions of parentification evolved within the digital landscape?

I will explore these questions in depth during an insightful workshop at ICCT2025, structured in 3 parts.

PART 1. YOUR WORK/HOME IS WHERE YOUR LAPTOP IS

In the first part of the workshop, we start with a representation of Andolfi's house (see attachment), illustrating the placement of digital devices such as smartphones and laptops on different floors.

Afterwards, we will address several key questions together:

How do different generations handle this?

How do (home)working parents (one or both) influence family dynamics?

Using the ladder (see attachment), we explore all floors, reflecting on the impact of these changes and what they mean for relationships across the different levels (the 3 generations) of Andolfi's house.

Participants will be divided into 3 groups: one for the ground floor, one for the first floor, and one for the second floor. Each group will examine the effects on the family system from their respective floor's perspective.

PART 2. DIGITAL PARENTIFICATION

Next, we delve deeper into digital parentification and its consequences. We will address key questions such as:

Who are the 'digital natives'? How old are they now?

What role do they play in the lives of (grand)parents?

When does their role as a young 'digital assistant' extend beyond occasional technical support? At what point does it go beyond age-appropriate care, at the expense of their childhood and adolescence?

What is the impact of being 'chronically available'—always online—on young people transitioning into adulthood (as well as on their anxious parents)?

How does this affect closeness and distance, both positively and negatively?

PART 3. MIGRATION AND PARENTIFICATION

Finally, we will focus on parentification in the context of migration. Parents who watch their children (underage asylum seekers) grow up through the screen of a smartphone. When they are finally reunited with their 'child', the roles shift, and the child must guide them through life in their new country. This includes navigating the digital world, acting as a digital assistant and translator…

Presenter:
SOCIAL WORKER WITH YEARS OF EXPERIENCE IN POVERTY CONTEXTS
TRAINER – SYSTEMIC & CONTEXTUAL APPROACH
BOARD MEMBER, ACADEMY FOR CONTEXTUAL WORK
PRACTICE OWNER & CONTEXTUAL THERAPIST AT DROMEN OVER_HOOP
AUTHOR OF NEW BOOK 'BOKSEN BOVEN JE GEWICHT. KRACHTIGE EN KWETSBARE UITWEGEN NA PARENTIFICATIE' (ABOUT PARENTIFICATION)
COCREATOR OF PODCAST 'BOKSEN BOVEN JE GEWICHT' (ON SPOTIFY AND YOUTUBE, ABOUT PARENTIFICATION)
ORGANISER OF RETREATS IN FRANCE AND SPAIN
SOCIAL WORKER ARTEVELDE HOGESCHOOL GHENT
THREE-YEAR TRAINING IN SYSTEMIC THINKING (MARYSE ENGEL, GHENT)
MASTERCLASS LED BY PROF. IVAN BOSZORMENY-NAGY (AMSTERDAM)

References:
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ICCT2025 Antwerp 27-28-29 October 2025
International Conference Contextual Therapy
The need for connection. Relationship challenges in today's world.

Thea Bombeek

Family ties at work: how loyalty towards your family or origin shapes your work relationships and career path.

Summary:

Our family of origin serves as the foundation for our perceptions, values, and behaviours. The early experiences within your family shape the way you navigate the world, influencing not only personal relationships but also professional interactions. This workshop will explore how deep-seated family dynamics continue to impact the workplace. By bringing awareness to these ingrained patterns, participants will be empowered to make more conscious professional decisions while maintaining a healthy sense of loyalty to their roots.

From childhood, we absorb unconscious lessons about authority, collaboration, responsibility, and conflict resolution, which shape our behaviour in the workplace. Family dynamics influence communication styles, work ethics, and career choices. For example, if open discussion was encouraged at home, you may feel comfortable voicing your opinions at work. Conversely, if hard work was prioritized, you might struggle with overcommitment or setting boundaries. Loyalty to family of origin can also impact conflict management and personal boundaries with colleagues. Employees who took on caregiving roles (caring parentification) may find it hard to delegate tasks or might feel compelled to support coworkers at their own expense. Unspoken family expectations may also pressure individuals to prioritize family over personal fulfilment, subtly influencing their career paths. Recognizing these influences helps individuals understand how family loyalties unconsciously shape their professional choices and workplace behaviour.

This workshop offers a unique perspective on workplace dynamics, helping participants to bridge personal history with professional growth. By integrating these insights, individuals can enhance their professional relationships, leadership styles, and decision-making processes while maintaining inner peace and staying true to their essence.

Presenter:

Thea brings over 20 years of experience working with international organizations, including KBC-CBC and KPMG. She is a Master Certified Coach (ICF), a contextual therapist (Leren over Leven), a creative therapist (Balans), and a grief counsellor (Verbinding in Verlies). She holds a degree in Art History from the University of Ghent and a Master's in Human Resources Management from the Management School of Antwerp (UAMS). Additionally, she is a certified supervisor (CSA and EMCC) and a Certified Transformation Presence Coach and Mentor (Alan Seale).

After a 17-year career in the financial sector, Thea chose to take her professional path in a new direction. She has extensively explored the impact of (often invisible) loyalties in both her personal and professional life, as well as in the lives of her clients. Recognizing that a connection to one's roots can serve as either a foundation for growth or a source of limitation, she has conducted in-depth research on the topic. She is currently writing a book aimed at making the principles of contextual thinking more accessible to professionals and businesses.

Thea is also the author of Hoe overleef ik mijn collega's: Tools voor zelfvertrouwen op het werk (LannooCampus, 2018).

References:

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