

Applying Contextual Theory to Therapy: An Analysis of the Practice of Ivan Boszormenyi-Nagy

Abstract for presentation at ICCT 2018.

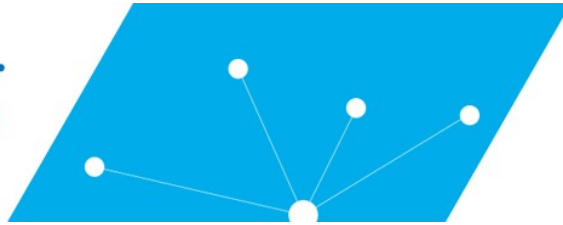
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Within couple and family therapy, a variety of models and methods exist, basically distinguished by different assumptions and theories. This pillarization emerged as an extension of the development of family therapy during the second half of the past century, 'the golden age of the great model developers' (Sprenkle & Blow, 2004, p. 3). Contextual therapy, founded by Ivan Boszormenyi-Nagy and his associates (henceforth: Nagy), was one of these developing models and subsequently one of the pillars of the field. It stood out for connectedness and reciprocal care, offering an alternative for the unilateral emphasis on individualized problems and pathology.

The central paradigm in contextual therapy is relational ethics (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Krasner, 1986; Boszormenyi-Nagy & Ulrich, 1981), thoroughly and extensively described in the publications of Nagy. By extension, Nagy formulated several concepts and methodological principles, but with a limited indication of how they should be applied in therapy. He probably realized this, when he wrote: 'in order to become a therapeutic guideline, the ethics of relational responsibility has to be translated into intervention methods' (Boszormenyi-Nagy, 1987, p. 296). The author of this submission has the experience that implementing contextual theory in therapy is rather complicated, partly because the founder wrote only limited about its concrete implementation or application. This hinders the training of (future) family therapists. It also creates a barrier to disseminating and researching the efficacy of contextual therapy. Since then, several family therapists and researchers did a good job translating the rather complex contextual theory into an understandable and accessible model. But up to now there has never been a methodical analysis of the in-session implementation of the principles of the contextual theory by the founder himself.

The author of this abstract, together with dr. Martine Noordegraaf and Prof. dr. Hans van Ewijk, did such an analysis, by encompassing a qualitative analysis of recordings of the concrete practice of Nagy, providing an answer to the following research question: In what way does Nagy apply the principles of his contextual theory to therapy-interventions? (J. H. van der Meiden, Noordegraaf, & van Ewijk, 2016, 2017).

The presentation at the ICCT 2018 will include this qualitative research on ten video-recordings of therapy-sessions conducted by Nagy himself. It will describe the research design and method, the research process, as well as the findings, comprising five clusters representing common therapeutic



interventions, imbued with relational ethics, and six clusters, each representing a specific contextual methodical element.

In the discussion following the presentation, I hope to have a good conversation about these findings and their recognizability, what is still missing and what we can do with it.

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Resumé

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Education

- Bachelor Social Work, 1981. GSA 'De Vijverberg' Ede.
- Advanced (post HBO) Study Programmes in Social Work (Voortgezette Agogische Beroepsopleiding MBI), University for advanced social work, Zwolle.
- Master Class Contextual Therapy, Hahneman University Philadelphia / Hogeschool van Amsterdam, Amsterdam. Certificate of attendance 1995, theoretical education and supervision.
- Final thesis on contextual therapy and personal development.
- Final Certificate Contextual Therapy, Grandparenting ECP 1997
- European Certificate of Psychotherapy

Experiences and skills

- PhD candidate at University of Humanistic Studies Utrecht, The Netherlands
- Senior researcher at Researchgroup Youth and Family, Christian University of Applied Sciences Ede, The Netherlands
- Founder and director of the Institute Contextual Approach, the Netherlands
- Manager and supervisor in an organisation for social work and contextual therapy
- Teacher, trainer, supervisor contextual therapy at the Christian University of Applied Sciences Ede, The Netherlands
- Private clinical practice for contextual therapy
- Social Worker

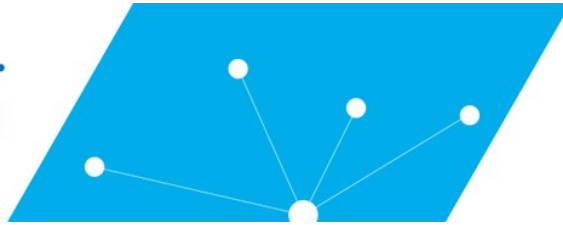
Registrations

Contextual therapist, supervisor and learning therapist VCW, System-therapist NVRG, European Certificate Psychotherapy, Social Worker BPSW

Recent publications on contextual therapy

- Meiden, J. H. van der. (2003). *Als banden knellen. Over relatieproblemen tussen ouders en kinderen*. Heerenveen: Groen.
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