



# Challenges and opportunities in research with contextual therapy theory

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# Situating my interests

- ▶ Beginning training as Social worker at in-patient psychiatric hospital
- ▶ Family therapy training at university based clinics and child and adolescent in-patient psychiatric hospital
- ▶ Moving to working with marginalized populations
- ▶ Current work with resettled refugees in Syracuse, NY

# Research using contextual therapy theory

- ▶ What do we know so far?

Popular in clinical work

Empirical evidence for considering relational ethics is emerging

- Relational Ethics Scale (Hargrave and others) used in most studies
- Association between horizontal RES and relationship outcomes, individual health and well-being
- Association between vertical RES and FOO experiences

# Research using contextual therapy theory

- ▶ Challenges in research:

How do we research relational processes of fairness/relational ethics using surveys?

*Quote from participant to demonstrate relational process of fairness*

How do we measure relational processes of fairness/relational ethics?

*Examples of items from RES*

# Research using contextual therapy theory

Dyadic research using contextual therapy:

Two quantitative studies using data from 65 couples from a University training clinic

Data collected from both partners

Data analyzed accounting for interdependence of partners' scores.

Research using dyadic designs show:

- Relationship between partners' RES and relationship satisfaction
- Partners' RES, depression, and relationship satisfaction

# Research using contextual therapy theory

A different way of measuring relational process of fairness

*Examples of items from a new balance of fairness measure being developed by us.*

# Research using contextual therapy theory

- ▶ Summary of next steps to move towards building more empirical evidence:

There is emerging empirical support for contextual therapy theory's assumptions

Need for relational research

Need for outcome and process research





Expanding the contextual lens

# Expanding the contextual lens

- ▶ Brief introduction of study of refugee families:

Two qualitative, phenomenological studies:

Study 1: Experiences of family in resettled refugees from Iraq.

Study 2: Experiences of ethnic identities in resettled refugees from the Middle East.

# Expanding the contextual lens

- ▶ Experiences of relative safety
- ▶ Experiences of loyalties and loyalty conflicts
- ▶ Intentional attention to legacy
- ▶ Importance of transnational context

Quote:

# Expanding the contextual lens

- ▶ Clinical work with resettled refugees – Importance of transnational context
- ▶ Case vignette

# Towards the future

- ▶ Operationalizing and measuring important constructs
- ▶ Developing training protocols for therapists
- ▶ Intentionally examining and including processes of power and privilege
- ▶ Evolve, adapt, as context changes.