
















The background of the image is a light blue color. It is populated with numerous stylized, flat-design illustrations of people of various ethnicities, ages, and genders. These figures are in various dynamic poses, such as walking, dancing, jumping, and embracing. Some are wearing casual clothing like t-shirts and jeans, while others are in more formal or specific outfits like a red dress or overalls. The figures are scattered around a central white rounded rectangle that contains the title text.

Relational Dialectics Theory

Questions Answered

- How do we maintain our individuality while we are in interpersonal relationships?
- How do members of a dyad express their feelings while still protecting their vulnerability?
- What are the strategies used to maintain a healthy relationship?
- How do we cope with the tension brought upon by our significant others?

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- Explains that relational life is characterized by ongoing tensions between contradictory impulses
 - “Contradiction is the central concept of relational dialectics.” –Baxter & Montgomery
 - Developed to describe, predict, and explain the tensions that occur in all personal relationships
 - Developed to better understand the contradictions that are present in relationships and the strategies to overcome them

History

- Developed by Leslie Baxter and Barbara Montgomery in 1988.
- Related to the Yin and Yang dynamics, which makes an emphasis on values always being in motion, like relationships.



Type

- Social Scientific
- Humanistic
- Intrapersonal
- Interpersonal
- Intercultural



Metatheoretical: Interpretive

- Ontology
 - Truth is constructed through interaction
- Epistemology
 - Used to describe and interpret meaning
- Axiology
 - Recognize how our values influence the truth

Earlier Studies

- RDT relates to the Social Penetration Theory which examines the development of closeness in relationships
 - Relational closeness can progress from superficial to intimate
- RDT also relates to Certainty Reduction Theory, which states the beginning of relationships are filled with uncertainty





Approaches to Theory

- Monologic Approach- framing contradictions either/or.
- Dualistic Approach- framing contradiction as two separate entities.
- Dialectic Approach- framing contradiction as both/and.
 - Relational Dialectics Theory uses the Dialectic approach





Real Life

- Theory is evident in Friends.
- What is going on in this clip?
- How does Rachel feel?
- How does Ross feel?



Dialectics

- Interactional dialectics- are tensions resulting from and constructed by communication.
- Contextual dialectics- are tensions resulting from the place of the relationship within the culture.
- Public and Private dialectic- refers to the tension between the two domains
- Real and Ideal dialectic- is the difference between idealized relationships and lived relationships.

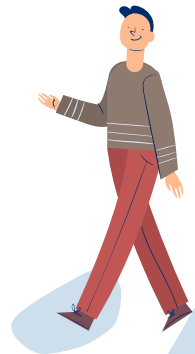
Vocabulary

- **Totality:**
 - suggests that people in a relationship are independent. When something happens to one member in a relationship, the other member(s) will be affected as well.
- **Contradiction:**
 - Refers to oppositions- two elements that contradict each other. Contradiction is the central feature of the dialectic approach. Dialectics are the result of oppositions.



Vocabulary

- **Motion:**
 - Refers to the process of relationships and their change over time.
- **Praxis:**
 - Although we do not have completely free choice in all instances and are restricted by our previous choices, by the choices of others, and by cultural and social conditions, we are still conscious and active choice makers.



A light blue background is populated with numerous stylized, flat-design illustrations of people of various ethnicities, ages, and genders. They are depicted in various dynamic poses: some are dancing, some are walking, some are standing with hands on hips, and others are in more expressive, almost acrobatic stances. The clothing is diverse, including t-shirts, jeans, overalls, dresses, and jackets. A large, white, rounded rectangular speech bubble is centered on the page, containing a list of assumptions. The overall style is modern and inclusive, representing a global and diverse community.

Assumptions

- Relationships are not linear
- Relational life is characterized by change
- Contradiction is the fundamental fact of relational life
- Communication is central to organizing and negotiating relational contradictions.



Tensions

- Internal- between two individuals
- External- your relationship and society
- Three sets of tensions
 - Autonomy/Connection
 - Openness/Protection
 - Novelty/Predictability

Autonomy & Connection

- “Primary internal strain in relationships”
 - [Baxter](#)
- Simultaneous desires to be independent of our significant others and to find intimacy with them
- Relational life is permeated with the conflicting needs to be both close to and separate from relational partners

Example

- Internal-
 - When you attend the same college there might be a contradiction on the amount of time you spend together
- External-
 - The tension brought upon by hanging out with your girlfriend's friends constantly and the desire to be alone with her

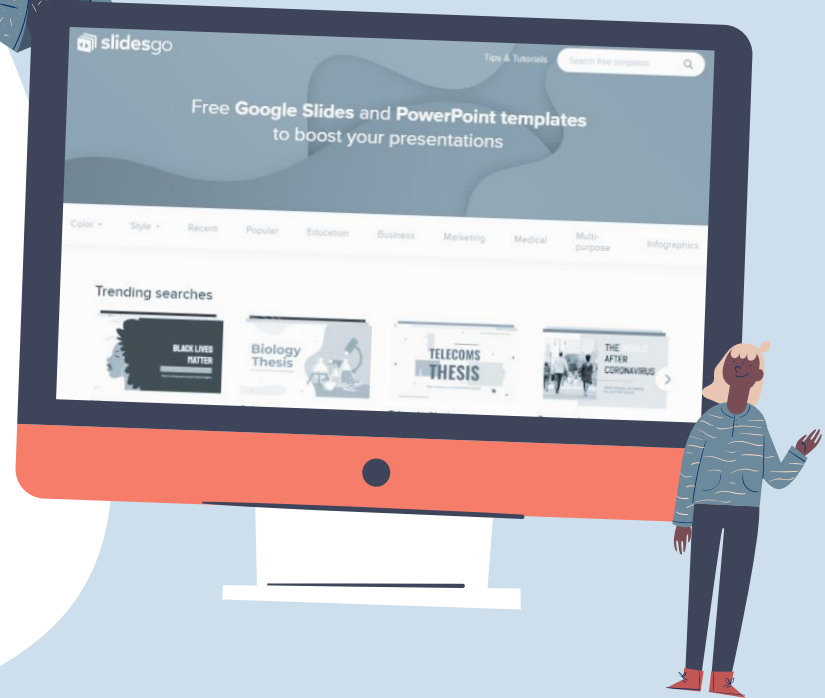
Predictability and Novelty

- Conflict between the comfort of stability and the excitement of change
- RTD differentiates from Uncertainty Reduction Theory which assumes that people move towards certainty and away from uncertainty as relationships develop



Example

- Internal
 - Special surprises like sending flowers to your work but understanding this breaks routine
- External
 - visiting your Mother in law's house every Sunday for dinner



Responses to Dialectic Tensions

- These tensions are ongoing so people have many different ways that they deal with the conflicting tension in their lives
- These methods can be affected by your personality, time frame in which your relationship lies, and the stage that you are in your relationship.

Responses to Dialectic Tensions

- **Segmentation**
 - Choosing different poles for different contexts
- **Cyclic Alternation**
 - Choosing different poles at different times
- **Selection**
 - Selection in choosing one pole and acting as though the other doesn't exist

Responses to Dialectic Tensions

- **Integration**

- Synthesizing the opposition in dialectic tensions
- 3 Sub Strategies-
 - Neutralizing
 - Involves choosing a compromise between oppositions
 - Reframing
 - Transforming the oppositions so they appear as though they no longer oppose one another
 - Disqualifying
 - Exempting certain issues from the general pattern



Critique

- **Limited testability**
 - Researchers cannot monitor what goes on behind closed doors
- **Limited scope**
 - There are limited studies on homosexuality and other cultures
- **Timelessness**
 - New research is introducing new dialectics with the changing technologies and ways of communicating

Scholar's Critique

- Weaknesses

- It creates a self-fulfilling prophecy effect.
- It does not have degrees of opposition, only contradictions.

- Strengths










- Improves the dualistic view that looks at relationships and communication.
- It challenges the one-dimensional and more archaic views of communication.

- **Theory critique by Andrei Duta.





Conclusion

- The relational dialectic theory describes explains and predicts the tensions that occur in our interpersonal relationships.
 - The theory expanded on other relational studies to help us better understand that relationships are ongoing.
 - The theory is relevant to each individual's life and the relationships within.
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The image features ten stylized, flat-design illustrations of people of various ages, ethnicities, and genders. They are arranged around a central light blue circular area. The people are in various dynamic poses: some are dancing, some are waving, some are standing with hands on hips, and others are in more expressive, joyful poses. The background is white with the light blue circle and a few white abstract shapes.

Thanks!

Do you have any questions?