

Sample essay on relational dialectic communication theory

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The relational dialectic communication theory evaluates the tensions in relationships caused by human contradictions. The theory examines the tensions expressed in dialects of individual parties in interpersonal relationships as individuals express the clash of conflicting wants and needs. The theory explains conflicting needs an individual within a relationship can need or want and the conflicting dialect used to communicate that conflicting position. The theory originated with the work of Baxter and Montgomery began as their studies found repeated conflicting results. The pattern of repeat tensions was first discovered when Baxter completed her first series of interviews. Her study asking interviewees about their personal intimate relationships yielded a disarray of conflicting results. Later the conflicting patterns of dialect by individuals was refined to demonstrate the conflict of human wants and needs that underlie the conflicting patterns in interpersonal relationship communication.

One key component of the relational dialectic communication theory is contradicting dialect used to explain an individual's contradicting needs in an intimate relationship. Contradictions' are the underling concept of the relational dialectic communication theory. The old proverbs " opposites attract" and " bird of one feather flock together" applied to the same individual's description of their state of interpersonal relationships during the same conversation illustrate the contradictions' explained by the relational dialectic communication theory.

Fox et al. demonstrated the relational dialectic communication theory on social networking sites. In their study, Fox et al. conducted ten focus groups to examine the relational dialectic communication theory in social

relationships. Study participants reported that Facebook caused contradictory sentiments. Participants reported “ that the site is an important part of their life and also a source of significant problems” (Fox et al., p. 533). The article “ From Strangers To Spouses: Early Relational Dialectics in Arranged Marriages Among Muslim Families in Lebanon” describes the modern hybrid arranged marriages in Lebanon’s Muslim families as illuminating examples of the relational dialectic communication theory. The study found six types of contradictions in the dialects of the participants. Most participants describe being against the arranged marriage structure, yet they attend the arranged courtships in search of their “ true love” (p. 393 - p. 395). The Learning Module demonstrates the relational dialectic communication theory’s contradictory dialect on page 136 the first page of the chapter. Baxter describes her foundation of the theory as “ I was struck by the contradictions, contingencies, non-realities and multiple realities” in her explanation of her first series of interviews discussing people's personal relationships. An example of the relational dialectic communication theory I have encountered in my life is my love/hate view of rainy days. I hate the cold, wet feeling of cold rain; however, I love cuddling up and watching the rain. I sleep so soundly during a rain shower. In describing my love/hate opinion of rain to significant others, my dialect is a keen example of the contradictions that underlie the relational dialectic communication theory. The founding concept of the relational dialectic communication theory is the contradicting interconnected dialects of individuals within a social context.

Another major component of the relational dialectic communication theory is

the totality or wholeness. When taken out of context, individual conflicting dialects lose their meaning. The conflicting dialects as individual statements do not articulate the message the sender intended. For example, a person who describes needing both intimacy and space, and openness and privacy cannot be understood without the examination of the context the person is speaking in. Fox et al. reported that focus group participants reported three discursive struggles that were displayed intrinsically using Facebook. The three intrinsic paradoxes are expression-privacy, stability-change, and integration-separation. However, the article "From Strangers To Spouses: Early Relational Dialectics in Arranged Marriages Among Muslim Families in Lebanon" describes the wholeness in the contradictory dialects as the study examined the relationships of thirteen couples as a whole using various components of the relational dialectic communication theory. Baxter and Montgomery's core concept "social life is a dynamic knot of contradictions" (p. 136) describes the totality or wholeness as the knot that ties together social interactions. The interconnected wholeness is illustrated daily on my Twitter feed. The many tweets, feeds, and news links all have additional connotations that cannot be understood by reading the tweet alone. Understanding the social context of the sender, the many entwined relationships involved along with any environmental influences allow the receiver to understand the message.

The relational dialectic communication theory describes the contradictory dialects that structure interpersonal communication. The most important components of the theory are contradicting needs, wants and dialects that interconnect within a message from an individual within a intimate

relationship. Social interaction knits together a complex contradicting mess of interpersonal wants, needs, relationships, and communications that cannot be understood out of context. The theory explains the contradicting nature of personal and professional communication. The theory provides understanding to dialect that self-contradicts and encourages the receiver to seek understanding in the message as a whole rather than trying to understand the conflicting pieces out of context. The person's message is not jumbled but the person is describing a conflict in their needs or wants.

References

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