

Supplemental Paper

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There were many aspects of my final project that went into the process of making it the great result that it ended up being. Firstly, was the idea making process. While I initially struggled with this part, I did know that I wanted to utilize the CBS television show, *Survivor*, with whatever communication theory or concept I chose. This is because I knew that my knowledge on *Survivor* would give me a lot of insight and that I would be able to find situations within the series to use with the theory that I ended up using. The theory I utilized throughout the project was one that I found an easy time understanding, with it being the relational dialectics theory. This theory focuses on the tensions displayed within communication between multiple individuals, with one example of these many tensions being the desire for integration versus a desire to be an individual, which is the integration versus separation tension.

I utilized this theory into my project by going through several steps that would go into each draft. First, I would pick a conflict from CBS' *Survivor* that I think could work well with a certain tension or aspect within the relational dialectics theory. Then, I would research to find a source that would work with the chosen tension or aspect that I could work into the conflict at hand that I was basing each draft upon. After finding a tension, situation, and source to utilize, I would craft a draft for an Instagram post that would use all three of the aforementioned parts I did research on before posting the draft on Instagram.

For the first draft, I utilized the conflict of Lex Van Den Berghe and Kelly Goldsmith in *Survivor Africa* (2003) and related it to the *what happened conversation* that occurs when both members of the conflict at hand attempt to find information to the other's involvement in a situation. I went into depth with how I believed Van Den Berghe and Goldsmith handled this conversation poorly, adding to the conflict. I utilized Dumlao's *Using Relational Dialectics to Address Differences in Community-Campus Partnerships* to reference this concept, addressing

how they mentioned that “When handled poorly, differences can lead to negative consequences like hurt feelings, jeopardized outcomes, or wariness about future partnerships...” (Dumlao, p. 151, 2012). For the second draft, I utilized the conflict between Kelly Wiglesworth and Sue Hawk that came to a climax at the final tribal council in *Survivor Borneo* (2000) where the integration vs. separation tension was very much highlighted by the differences in gameplay and loyalty between the two women. I utilized Ziemann’s *Relational Dialectics: Friends or More?* and compared it to the integration vs. separation tension that appeared in a conflict between Ross and Rachel within the television show *Friends*. Furthermore, Ziemann mentioned how this tension can clearly be seen in reality by mentioning that “This fight between Ross and Rachel is a prime example of how they are suffering from the integration-separation dialectical tension. This fight, though, can occur not only in a fictional show but in real life as well...” (Ziemann, p. 9, 2013).

For the third draft, I looked into the overall conflict between Rob Mariano and Russell Hantz in *Survivor: Heroes vs. Villains* (2010). Their conflict stemmed from the power they held within their tribe and the meaning they made from the other in conversations when they were not in power. In it, I referred to Baxter’s *Original Voices. Relational Dialectics Theory* when I mentioned that “...discourses are rarely on equal footing, meaning systems typically have unequal power in the meaning-making process...meaning-making is less of a semantic democracy and more a struggle among semantic unequals...” (Baxter, 2021, p. 11). The fourth draft revolved around the Taku Tribe in *Survivor 42* (2022) and some of the tribe’s agitation at Jonathan Young revealing more about their tribe at a challenge than what they would have liked for the others to know. I highlighted the dialectical tension of openness vs. closedness and utilized Hannah Hoakmen’s *Examining Mentorship in the Field of Sign Language Interpreting:*

An Application of Relational Dialectics Theory to compare the results of the study with the situation at hand and talked about open and closed types of leadership in regards to communication. The fifth draft involved Ben Driebergen's unpredictability within *Survivor Heroes vs. Healers vs. Hustlers* (2017) and how the conflicts that came from it were related to the tension of unpredictability vs. predictability. I used Baxter's *Dialectical Tensions in Relationships* to help in my conversation about how Driebergen's game going against the group's perspective on what the game's norm caused much conflict within the season.

I went back to *Survivor Heroes vs. Villains* (2010) to reference the conflict between Rupert Boneham, Candice Cody, and Colby Donaldson where Cody's betrayal of the other two in the game angered the two men. I utilized the topic of naturalization, which I compared to a form of stereotype. I also used Parcell's *Relational Dialectics Theory: A New Approach for Military and Veteran-Connected Family Research*. *Journal of Family Theory & Review* to talk about the topic of naturalization to reference to how the stereotypes of playing the game with loyalty may not have been as normalized in their definition of the game of some minds as others who have betrayal normalized in their definition of the game. For the seventh draft, I returned to *Survivor 42* (2022) to talk about the conflict between Young and Lindsay Dolashewich as they argued over the other's lack of understanding over what they were saying. I used O'Hara's *Discursive Struggles in "Diabetes Management": A Case Study Using Baxter's Relational Dialectics 2.0* and the topic of utterances and the subtopics that came with discourses of proximal already-spoken, which involve conversations within an event that is currently occurring. The eighth and final draft used a situation between Brandon Hantz and Phillip Sheppard where the former became upset at the latter for his treatment over Hantz throughout their time together on *Survivor Caramoan: Fans vs. Favorites* (2013). I used the topic of

utterances once again and Sporer's *Family Identity Disrupted by Mental Illness and Violence: An Application of Relational Dialectics Theory*, only this time I utilized the subtopics that came with distal already-spoken, which involve past conversations that occur before an encounter.

To conclude, my enjoyment of *Survivor* helped me greatly within this assignment, as it helped to give real life situations to compare these theories and concepts to that helped me to understand the relational dialectics theory much better. Utilizing Instagram also helped with this project as well, as it is a social media platform that I understand very well. Having multiple sources to utilize also helped to gain more of an understanding of the theories and topics as well, and it gave more real world applications that helped to show how it can impact society today. Overall, I do believe that the project was a success and that it helped to create awareness of the theory, as I had multiple friends of mine who had followed the account that I did this project on. I think that the relational dialectics theory is an important theory, and that if we look into it enough, we can find that it works in the real world more than we think it would; not just in *Survivor*, but in our own everyday lives as well.

Link: https://instagram.com/rg_come427?igshid=YmMyMTA2M2Y=

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