

Article Evaluation Worksheet

APA 7th Edition Reference:

Wolfe, B. H., & Scharp, K. M. (2022). Resisting and reifying meaning in everyday life: Using relational dialectics theory to understand the meaning of heterosexual dating. *Journal of Social & Personal Relationships*, 39(9), 2680–2700.
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What is the purpose of the study? Describe in 2-3 paragraphs.

Heterosexual women have intersecting identities that are privileged such as marginalized gender and sexuality. The authors of this research wanted to examine power dynamics within the dating process. Today, the social norm about dating has been referred to as being “taken-for-granted” in terms of meaning-making involved in dating. In this study, the researchers utilized relational dialectics theory (RDT) and its corresponding method, the contrapuntal analysis to look at a group that holds fluctuating societal power in the context of heterosexuality and dating.

Baxter, RDT’s theorist argued that the more a meaning becomes “taken-for-granted”, the more oppressive power it holds. This is why the researchers felt the need to revisit the meaning of dating from the perspective of heterosexual women who exist with both “unmarked” sexuality and “marked” gender identities. Studying this could expose the hegemonic ideologies that can create a no-win scenario for women dating.

How does the study utilize your assigned theory? Describe in 1-2 paragraphs.

This study utilized Relational Dialectics Theory or (RDT) because of the conflicted experiences heterosexual women face in the dating process. RDT is a perfect theory to use for this study because it is a theory of meaning making that uses semantic objects, a constructing meaning that is the focus of an investigation. Most RDT scholars focus on studying the semantic object of the meaning of a family, but it can be studied in a wide range of contexts. The researchers of this study utilize RDT to accomplish their goal of illustrating how cultural ideologies that surround heterosexual dating from the perspective of women battle for power and influence.

What is/are the research question(s) and/or hypotheses? (You may copy and paste these)

To illuminate the meaning of their Semantic Object, heterosexual dating from the perspective of women, they forwarded the following research questions:

RQ1: What discourses animate the meaning of heterosexual dating from the perspective of women?

RQ2: How do these discourses interplay to make the meaning of heterosexual dating from the perspective of women?

Is the study a quantitative or qualitative article? How do you know? Describe in 1 paragraph.

This study is a qualitative study. I can tell by reading the methods section that participants from a large southwest university were recruited through communication courses and asked to complete a questionnaire or survey. The reason why this survey was qualitative instead of quantitative is because participants could provide their unique answer or response compared to selecting options pre-written.

How was the data collected? Describe in 1 or more paragraphs.

As previously stated, students from a southwest university were given an opportunity to complete a survey if they were taking a communication course at the time. From which 161 participants completed the qualitative survey. This research article did not specify whether or not the participants filled out the survey in person or online.

Who participated? Describe in 1 paragraph.

Out of the total of 161 participants who completed the questionnaire, 104 participants identified as women and 40 identified as men. For the purpose of this research study, responses from men and non-heterosexual women were removed from the data set before the analysis process. In order to qualify for the survey, participants needed to be 18 years of age or older. Majority of participants self-identified as Asian, with other participants identifying as White, Latino/a/Hispanic, multiracial, Black/African American, and Pacific Islander. The majority of participants self-reported that they were actively dating or sometimes dating. Only 33 participants in this study indicated that they were not currently dating anyone.

How were the data analyzed? Describe in 1 paragraph.

The researchers analyzed the data a few different ways. The first was through contrapuntal analysis. Contrapuntal analysis is the corresponding method of Relational Dialectics Theory. It begins with the identification of discourses from a selected text that revolve around a particular semantic object and ends with an examination of the discourses interplay. In this study, the researchers began to read through the data and created a thematic analysis which included: generating codes, identifying themes, arranging them into discourses, naming the themes and discourses found, and selecting graphic examples. After discourses were identified, the next step in contrapuntal analysis was to identify the discursive interplay. This step is oftentimes

overlooked by researchers. The researchers of this study started by examining the response for instances of discursive closure. Baxter offered multiple forms of dialogic contraction including disqualification, naturalization, neutralization, topic avoidance, subjectification, and/or pacification. The researchers then explored the collection of interplay between diachronic separation and synchronic interplay. Researchers typically identify synchronic interplay through three discourse markers: entertaining, countering, and negating. Finally, the researchers examined the text for any instances of dialogic transformation.

What were the results? Describe in at least 2-3 paragraphs.

The results of the study suggested that two discourses emerged from examining the meaning of dating from the perspective of heterosexual women. These two discourses were labeled as the following: the central discourse that Dating is Romantic and Necessary (DDRN) and the contrasting discourse that Dating is Restrictive and Unrealistic (DDRU). Five themes accounted for the dominant discourse of DDRN, these themes were labeled as: dating is predictable, dating is permanent, dating is monogamous, dating pleases others, and dating is unequal. In response to the DDRN, three themes accounted for the discourse of DDRU which states: dating restricts independence, dating is unsafe, and dating requires relationship sacrifice.

The findings of this study situate dating as a process that remains dominant through early socialization and the communication of gendered expectations from members of the social network. Although sometimes resisted, the dominant discourse of DDRN remains prevalent in the utterances of heterosexual women. As a result, DDRU was concluded to only be able to hold off the DDRN for a short time by delaying when women start dating, instead of replacing it all together. Put differently, women will still discuss dating as it eventually becomes necessary for marriage.

What are the implications of these results? In other words, why are these results important? Describe in 1-2 paragraphs.

The lack of resistance preserves the ruling dating process as a foundational aspect of a power structure that normalizes gendered oppression through access to life accomplishments including marriage and family. Despite broad cultural shifts around dating, this study uncovered that the meaning of dating from the perspective of heterosexual women has not changed dramatically and continues heteronormative sacrifices of self (DDRU) for partner (DDRN). The reliance on the dominant discourse illustrates how necessary the DDRN is for everyday life and the reproduction of family through marriage. This study is also important because it contributes to the idea that the DDRU or the marginal discourse is still not powerful enough to defeat the women's ultimate goal of marriage. The process of dating remains important to women because

of the larger utterance chain the act(s) are embedded within. Rather than dating being understood as isolated occurrences scheduled with a possible partner, the process represents one's larger investment in finding a husband to make a commitment to and start a family with. In this sense, being a good woman remains connected to wanting to ultimately get married and perform femininity through heterosexuality.

In addition to highlighting that the DDRU failed to overcome the DDRN, this study also contributes to the Relational Dialectic Theory literature by examining a process of interpersonal development as compared to an established relationship. This contribution advances the theoretical potential to analyze not only existing connections of parent-child relationships, but also the ways in which relationships form as discursively impacted by dominant ideologies. The contrapuntal analysis in this study utilized discursive competition as diachronic separation, synchronic interplay, and dialogic transformation. Of theoretical importance, this study provides examples for the way in which the dominant discourse maintains power even while the marginal discourse attempts to resist. These practices are foundational to the prevalence of the dominant discourse when the resistance from the marginal discourse is unsuccessful in interrupting powerful supremacy.

What are the limitations that the author(s) identifies? Describe in 1 paragraph.

There was only one major limitation of this study, which was that since the researchers collected close-ended survey data they weren't able to ask follow up questions to the participants that they would have been able to ask if they had conducted interviews instead. They expressed that asking the participants follow-up questions would have been helpful with interesting results because it could have potentially led to the expansion of the practical applications that could have challenged the dominant discourse. An example stated in the article was if they researchers had asked additional questions about each women's views on relationships and how that view has changed or developed over their life, during the analysis process they could have gained more helpful information about ways the women felt or advocated for their safety and independence based on their relationship status or dynamic.

What is your own evaluation of the article? Identify at least one strength and one weakness of the actual methodology of the study (avoid focusing on writing style when evaluating the article). Describe in 1-2 paragraphs.

I believe the researchers/authors did an excellent job composing and executing this study. I believe it is a topic that is very interesting to learn about, especially considering how drastically the dating culture has changed within the last century. One weakness that the authors even mentioned in the limitations of the article was that if

they had conducted interviews they would have gained more important and insightful information. And I agree with that because most surveys tend to be used quantitatively in studies, not that they can't be qualitative because this survey definitely was qualitative, but I feel like the study's results would have been different if interviews were conducted just given the nature of the study. Something else to note was that the participants used were heterosexual women, and all other responses were removed before analysis. I believe this ties into one strength of the research, because the researchers wrote a statement of positionality which I felt was very important to add for this selected topic of research. I don't believe the authors had intentions of harming anyone's ideology or feelings toward sexuality and gender. By only selecting heterosexual females for this study, the authors expressed in their statement they wanted to fully explore this group to try to understand the meaning of the dominant discourse that is privileged and widely shared in our country's dating culture, and the marginal discourse constructed in resistance.