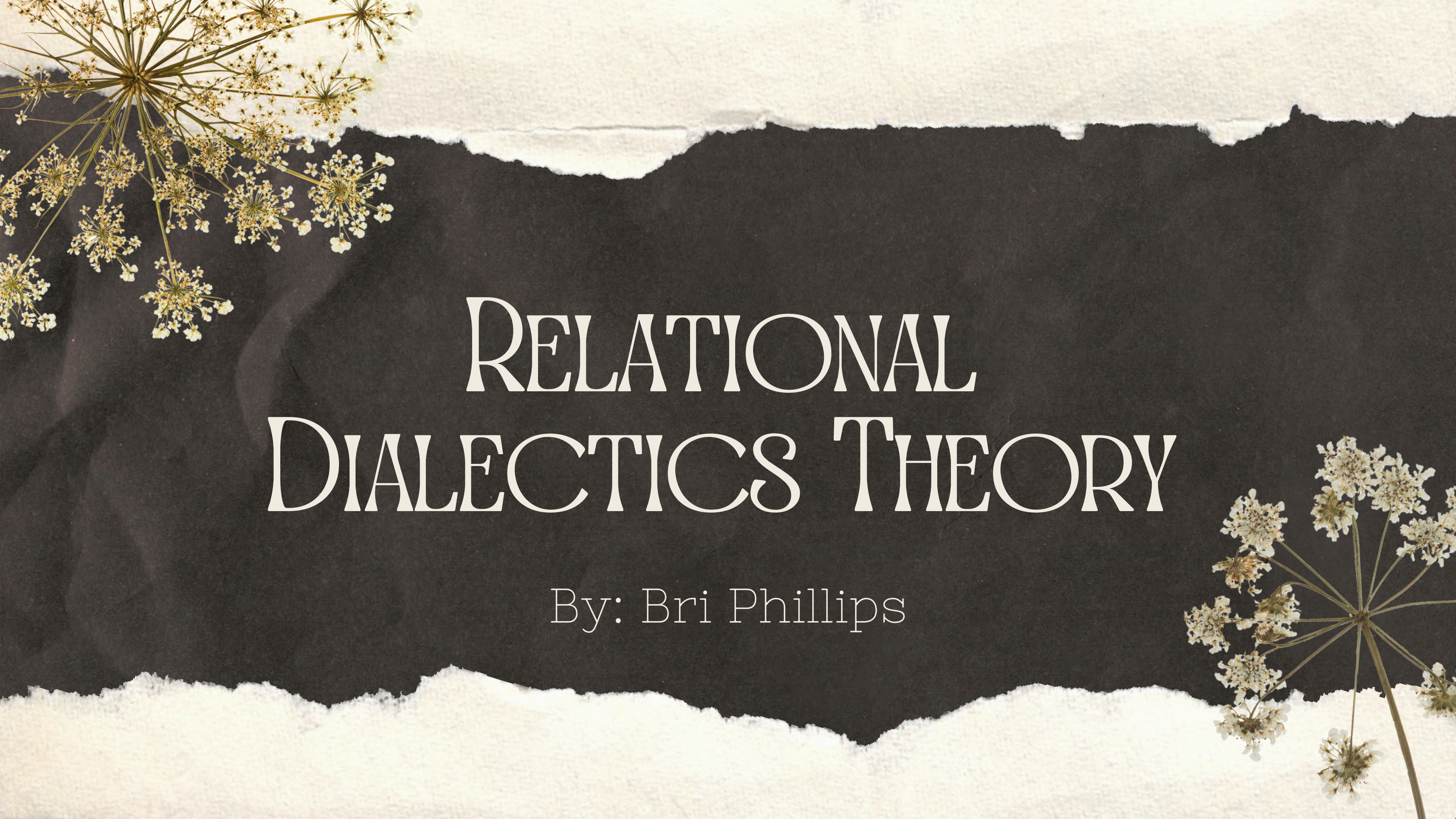


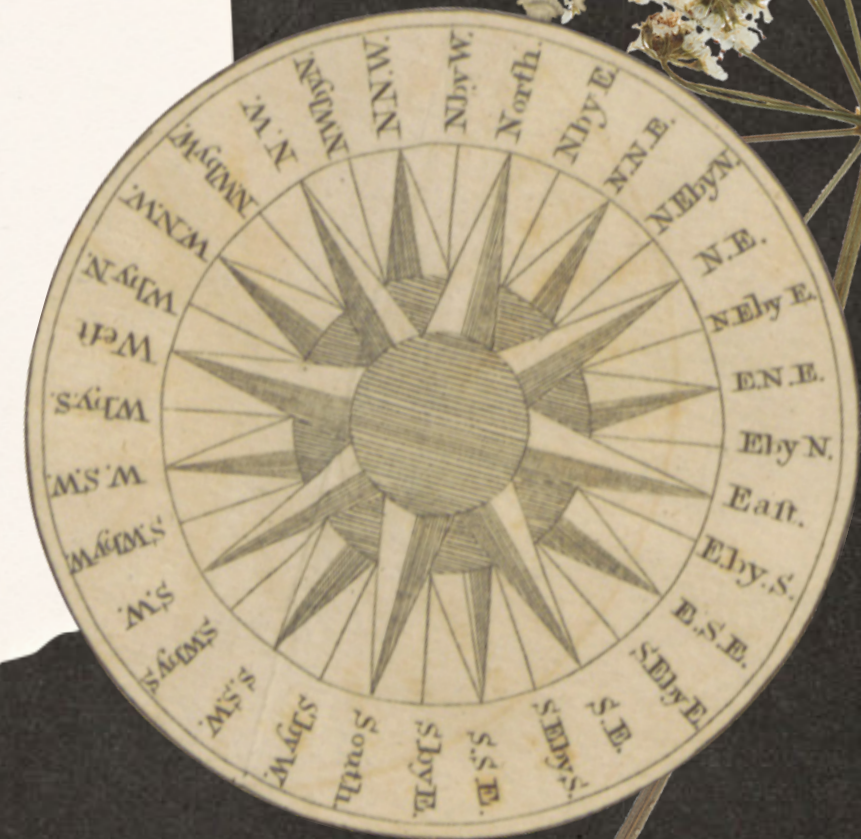


RELATIONAL DIALECTICS THEORY

By: Bri Phillips

AGENDA

- Review (RDT)
- Summarize Article
- Video Clip
- Discussion Questions



REVIEW

“RDT is a theory that requires mastery of sophisticated concepts. Yet, these concepts are also an integral component of the theory that cannot be ignored for the sake of simplicity. As such, using RDT...is not always a simple undertaking. Nevertheless, RDT provides a foundation for uncovering ideological power and (dis)advantage in everyday interactions.”
Textbook (pp. 202-203)

2 VERSIONS OF RDT

1996:

RDT 1.0 introduced by
Baxter and
Montgomery

RDT 1.0 examined tensions in
relationships, such as...

- connection vs. autonomy
- openness vs. closedness
- predictability vs. uncertainty

2011:

RDT 2.0
reconceptualized
by Baxter

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF RDT?

- RDT aims to identify both the presence of discourses in dialogic interactions as well as how their interpenetration creates meaning.
 - RDT's Primary Assumption: Meaning is made in the competition of discourses.

Terms

- What are discourses?
 - A system of meaning; an ideology, or a set of interrelated ideas
- What are utterances?
 - A system of turn taking in communication



EVERY UTTERANCE IS EMBEDDED IN A LARGER UTTERANCE CHAIN

Distal already-spoken:

utterances are informed by shared cultural discourses; large scale

Proximal already-spoken:

relational partners interact based on their relational past; small scale

Distal not-yet-spoken:

anticipation of abstracted "other" or the culture at large

Proximal not-yet-spoken:

relational partners interact based on anticipation of their relational future; small scale



THE *INTERPLAY* BETWEEN DISCOURSES



Monologue:
Emphasizing
one discourse
and silencing
others



Diachronic
Interplay:
Different
discourses occur
over time;
meaning is
unfinalizable



Synchronic
Interplay:
Different
discourses
occur at one
point in time



Transformative
Dialogue:
Formerly
competing
discourses are
merged and
create something
new together

CONTRAPUNTAL ANALYSIS

RDT's accompanying research method

Five Steps of Contrapuntal Analysis:

1. Identify a semantic object
2. Select a text
3. Identify the discourses
4. Examine the discursive interplay
5. Challenge assumptions and fixed meanings



MY ARTICLE

Resisting and reifying meaning in everyday life: Using relational dialectics theory to understand the meaning of heterosexual dating

Brooke H Wolfe¹ and Kristina M Scharp¹

Abstract

Heterosexual women have intersecting identities that are privileged and marginalized (i.e., gender), suggesting a complicated site to examine the meaning of dating where meaning has become taken-for-granted over time. We utilized relational dialectics theory's (RDT's) corresponding analysis, to examine a group that holds fluctuating societal positions on heterosexuality and dating. Findings from the responses of women in focus groups and interviews that competed to illuminate the meaning of heterosexual dating from the perspective of women: the dominant Discourse that Dating is Relationship (DDR) and the marginal Discourse that Dating is Restrictive and Negative (DDR-N). These discourses interplayed through contractive practices (i.e., naturalization), diachronic separation, synchronic interplay (i.e., embracing and negating), and dialogic transformation (i.e., discursive hybridization), illuminating a discursive struggle that both reified and

Resisting and reifying meaning in everyday life: Using relational dialectics theory to understand the meaning of heterosexual dating

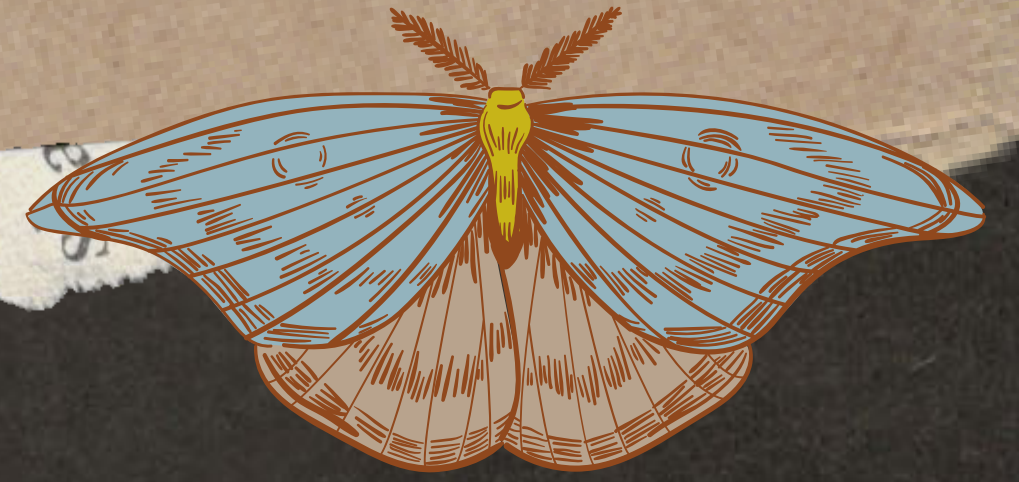
Brooke H Wolfe and Kristina M Scharp



PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

Heterosexual women have intersecting identities that are privileged such as marginalized gender and sexuality. The modern dating culture in America can be seen as a process that is “taken-for-granted.” In this study, the researchers utilized relational dialectics theory (RDT) and its corresponding method, the contrapuntal analysis to look at heterosexual women, a group that holds fluctuating societal power in the context of dating.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS



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?



METHOD



- This study is a qualitative study.
- Participants selected from a large southwest university recruited through communication courses, asked to complete a survey
- Total of 161 participants
 - 104 identified as women and 40 identified as men
 - Responses from men and non-heterosexual women were removed from the data set before the analysis process
 - Participants needed to be 18 years of age or older
 - Majority of participants self-identified as Asian
 - Other participants identifying as White, Latino/a/Hispanic, multiracial, Black/African American, and Pacific Islander
 - Majority of participants reported that they were actively dating or sometimes dating
 - Only 33 participants indicated that they were not currently dating





DATA ANALYSIS



Contrapuntal Analysis (corresponding method of Relational Dialectics Theory)

- Identified discourses from a selected text that revolved around a particular semantic object and examined the discourses interplay
- 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
- The researchers then explored the collection of interplay between diachronic separation and synchronic interplay
- Finally, the researchers examined the text for any instances of dialogic transformation.



HOW RDT WAS USED IN THIS STUDY



- Utilized RDT because of the conflicted experiences heterosexual women face in the dating process
- 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 the meaning of a family, but it can be studied in a wide range of contexts
- Utilized to accomplish the goal of illustrating how cultural ideologies that surround heterosexual dating from the perspective of women

CENTRIPETAL- CENTRIFUGAL STRUGGLE

gets to the heart of how power is conceptualized in RDT; power in RDT rests in the discourses themselves, not individuals or social groups

- Rooted in the belief that competing discourses do not hold equal weight within interaction
- Important to attend to the consequences of unequal discursive power
 - When discourse is given more importance or power, it takes the centripetal position meaning it is accepted as normative and natural
 - When discourse is situated within a less powerful position, it takes the centrifugal role meaning it assumes a marginalized position and is categorized as unnatural or aberrant (departing from an accepted standard)

RESULTS

Two discourses emerged from examining the meaning of dating from the perspective of heterosexual women. These two discourses were labeled as the following:

..... 1. The central discourse that Dating is Romantic and Necessary (DDRN)

- 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.....

..... 2. The contrasting discourse that Dating is Restrictive and Unrealistic (DDRU)

- 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 indicated that although sometimes resisted, the DDRN discourse 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 abstain from it all together.



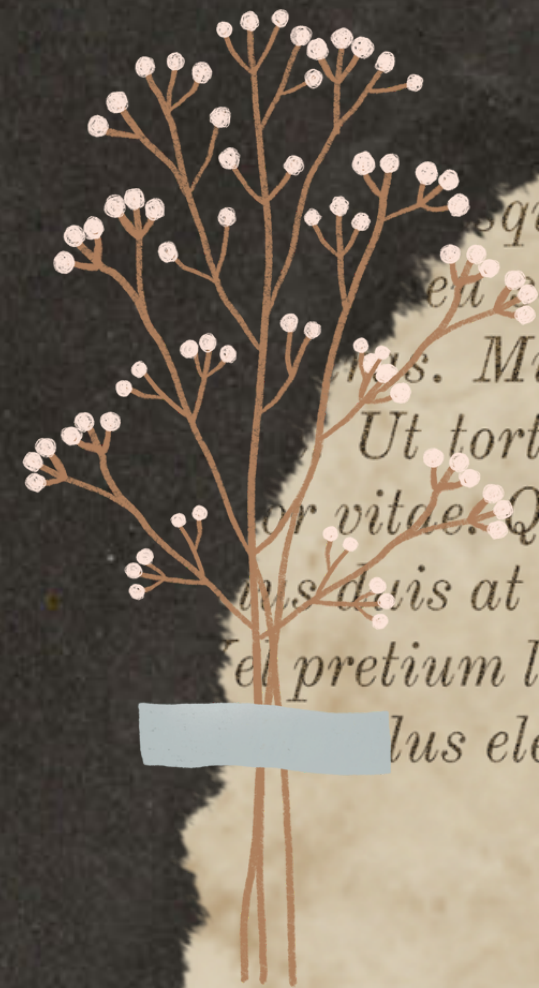
CONCLUSION

Implications:

- The meaning of dating from the perspective of heterosexual women has not changed dramatically.
- Illustrates how necessary the DDRN is for everyday life and the reproduction of family through marriage.
- 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.

Limitations:

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





What Do You Want? - The Notebook (4/6) Movie CLIP (2004) HD



Share



HD

Watch on



YouTube

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What themes or discourses can you identify in this video?
- In what ways do the themes or discourses interplay? Are there oppositional?
- What meaning/s are constructed in the dialogue?
 - Do you have any last questions about RDT?



THANK YOU

for listening!

CITATIONS

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.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/02654075221087462>

Slides from lecture - Dr. Morgan

<https://prezi.com/tskpi4fzivs1/relational-dialectics-theory-20/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E1I0hAxGFXw>

