



## Relating: Dialogues and Dialectics

By *Leslie A. Baxter PhD, Barbara M. Montgomery*

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This book draws on the dialogism of social theorist Mikhail Bakhtin to develop a new approach which the authors term "relational dialectics" to the study of interpersonal communication. Emphasizing a social self instead of a sovereign self, multivocal oppositions instead of binary contradictions, and indeterminate change instead of transcendent synthesis, chapters examine and critique prevailing approaches to interpersonal communication. Building on these theoretical foundations, the volume rethinks such key areas as relationship development, closeness, certainty, openness, communication competence, and the boundaries between self, relationship, and society, and raises intriguing questions for future research.

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

"...an ambitious and important book... Scholars should take seriously the implications of the relational-dialectics perspective advanced by Baxter and Montgomery." --John Carl (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill) and Julia T. Wood (Communication Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill) *Contemporary Psychology*, 1997

"This is an excellent work. It was a difficult undertaking and the authors succeeded in presenting a dialogic approach which is coherent, persuasive, and useful. Their review of alternative perspectives and historical roots is both fair and concise (a difficult combination)....This is a provocative and useful work. It should stimulate considerable research and theory." --C. Arthur VanLear, Department of Communication Sciences, University of Connecticut

"This is a superb book in every aspect...a tour de force that will be standard work on the subject for years to come. No one in the foreseeable future is likely to produce a work of this importance, and I predict that it will be required reading for scholars and students in the fields of communications, psychology, sociology, family studies, and others....A fine piece of work that accomplishes many things. It draws on an enormous body of literature from many different fields, weaves them together in a coherent whole, and addresses all of the key issues associated with a dialectical orientation....The writing style is excellent, holds the reader's attention, is gentle but substantive, and nicely reflects the personalities and intellectual style of the authors....This book is and will be a classic." --Irwin Altman, Department of Psychology, University of Utah

"The authors of *Relational Dialectics* articulate the common assumptions of all dialectical perspectives, examine the differences among various dialectical perspectives, and elaborate a particular approach to dialectics, a dialogic approach, based on the work of Bakhtin. The authors provide a thorough discussion of basic issues regarding communication and personal relationships, including relational development, intimacy or closeness, certainty of predictability, and openness or self-disclosure, from a dialectical perspective. The authors provide a basis for understanding, comparing and contrasting, and evaluating current dialectical perspectives provide the necessary foundation for future theory and research on communication and personal relationships from a dialectical perspective. The authors achieve their goal of stimulating a dialogue whose goal is to rethink fundamental issues in the study of communication and personal relationships." --Kathryn Dindia, Associate Professor of Communication, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

#### About the Author

Leslie A. Baxter, Ph.D., University of Iowa

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#### I. A Relational Dialectics Perspective

1. Thinking Dialectically About Communication in Personal Relationships

2. Dialectical Voices: Ours and Others'

#### II. Rethinking Communication in Personal Relationships

3. Rethinking Relationship Development

4. Rethinking Closeness

5. Rethinking Certainty
  6. Rethinking the Open Self
- III. Understanding Complex Dialectical Dialogues
7. The Complex Interplay of Selves, Relationships, and Cultures
  8. Understanding Interactional Competence in Relationships
  9. Dialogic Inquiry and the Study of Relational Dialectics
  10. Some Final (But Unfinalizable) Dialogues

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