



Relational Transitions: The Evolution of Personal Relationships

Richard L. Conville

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In this practical and innovative study, Richard Conville proposes a way to think about the process of communication in personal relationships. He moves beyond rigid stage models of relational development and advocates a new, helical model with a four-phase structure of transition between relational phases. The model is based on Difference--developed as a theoretical concept--and on structural analysis of relational partners' narratives of their transition experiences. This perspective offers both a conceptual and a methodological alternative to current work in relationship development. Though its focus is only one part of the wide-ranging communication field, its principles can easily be applied to other communication contexts.

Conville opens with a description of Difference, a necessary component of current theory in interpersonal relationships, and its role in the structure of relationships. He examines narratives by partners in three personal relationships to locate dialectical differences of time, intimacy, and affect. Later chapters examine the four transition phases of relationships: security, disintegration, alienation, and resynthesis. These four phases are seen as meta-dialectics that mark the social domain in which personal relationships are played out. *Relational Transitions* will prove to be of particular interest to scholars and students of communication, psychology, sociology, family studies, and anthropology.

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