

Social exchange theory applied essay



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This threatens the survival of the relationship. Individuals are compelled to express sufficient commitment in order to save the relationship. When one of them is not yet ready to commit the conflict may terminate the relationship.

Human beings derive pleasure from sacrificing for those they love. After having sacrificed for a loved one and repeatedly rewarded for it by increasing attachment from the other, giving pleasure eventually seems to be intrinsically gratifying. Favors and presents, being signs of love, may stimulate one's affection for the other and vice-versa. One may encourage more gifts and favors not because of the material benefits themselves but because of the need to foster the other's love for him/her.

As the feeling of love increases, so does the need to please the other.

The individual with less involvement in the relationship gains more in the association since the other's concern with the continuance of the relationship makes him/her dependent and thus, giving the less involved more power. This said power may lead to exploitation of the other. A common manifestation of the said principle is that the individual with stronger affection for the other must yield to the other's wishes and exert effort in order to please the partner. Therefore, the individual with less affection gains advantages in the said relationship. Such an imbalance of power and extrinsic rewards is often the source and remains the axis of lasting reciprocal love attachments.

There is a dilemma to consider here.

Commitments must then be kept abreast for a love relation to develop into a lasting mutual attachment. If one is more involved than the other, this greater involvement obliterates love. It may be accepted that rewards in the relation may sustain the relationship for a while but the weak interest of the less committed or the frustration of the more committed partner would later cause the end of the relationship. There must be equal affection for love to persist. From: Blau, Peter.

“ Excursus on Love”. In Exchange and Power in Social Life. London: John Wiley and Sons, 1964.