

# Social exchange theory in psychology

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The Social Exchange Theory stood out to me the most because it applies to real life instances with friends, family, and relationships. The Social Exchange Theory is a social psychological and sociological perspective that explains social change and stability as a process of negotiated exchanged between parties. This theory argues that major force in interpersonal relationships is the satisfaction of both people's self-interest. Self-interest is not necessarily a bad thing and it can actually enhance your relationship with another person. The Social Exchange Theory views interpersonal exchanges as analogues to economic exchanged where people are satisfied when they receive a fair return on what they put out. The purpose of this exchange is to maximize benefits and minimize costs. It explains how we feel about a relationship with another person depending on our perceptions of fairness.

One example of a social exchange theory is the interaction of asking someone out on a date. If the person says yes than you have gained a reward (approval) and will most likely repeat the interacting by asking the person out on a second date. If the person says No than you have received a punishment (disapproval) and will most likely make you shy away from repeating this kind of interaction with the same person in the future.

You can find examples of the Social Exchange Theory in movies such as “The Break Up” with Jennifer Aniston and Vince Vaughn. In the scene where Gary comes home from work and wants to relax but Brooke has a romantic dinner ready for the two of them and wants to Gary to go to the Ballet with her as a couple. She makes a valid point when she says “ Its not about you loving the Ballet, its about you wanting to go to the ballet because the

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woman you love wants to go to the Ballet.” He gets angry that all she does is nag him and that he just wants to be left alone so she realizes that if that’s what he really wants then she is done and doesn’t deserve this relationship with someone who is so inconsiderate of her feelings. They were a couple for years and lived together and with that comes arguments. Relationships start to go down hill when you are around each other too much and get too comfortable, spending romantic nights out for dinner or a show tend to fade. When Brooke tried to do something nice for Gary, he wasn’t expecting it after a long hard day and all he wanted to go was relax and have some time alone. The conversation escalated about having a romantic dinner together to confessing their problems with each other to ending in a break up.

These arguments are very similar to real life scenarios in relationships. I can vouch that this is true because my last relationship was very much like Brooke and Gary’s minus the immediate break up. They say opposites attract, I think this is because you bring two different backgrounds or kinds of people together and you mesh one life out of it. Social Interaction Exchange works in funny ways because even two people who hate each other in the beginning could eventually fall in love. You start to accept the person and the differences between each other and learn to make it work and love it. When I think of the Social Exchange Theory I think of “ You get what you give” even though sometimes you will not get what you gave in return.

The Social Exchange Theory could work or could fail in relationships. Sometimes one person puts a lot more effort in the relationship than the partner does and this usually turns out to be a failing relationship. For <https://assignbuster.com/social-exchange-theory-in-psychology/>

example, I dated this guy from my neighborhood who I knew of but never really met until he was in my bar drunk one night and bumped into me. He asked me to hang out with him and when we went outside for a cigarette he asked me for a kiss in front of two of his female friends who clearly did not like that as one of them called me a c\*nt and that didn't go well for her. He messaged me on face book the next day and eventually we became boyfriend and girlfriend for four years. In the last year of our relationship I was sick of always having to meet him at the bar or his house to hang out with him. We would have a couple of drinks and eventually I would tell him that I'm fed up of being here all the time and we would get into an argument because he wasn't understanding that I wanted more to our relationship than just that. I was suffering inside because I loved him but I knew that he was never going to change because he genuinely enjoyed being there all the time. I knew I deserved to be treated like his girlfriend instead of one of the boys, so I left him and fortunately everyone understood why. I should have known that was coming the first time I met him at the bar I work at, drunk! Haha.

Sorry for the rant but my point is that the Social Exchange Theory happens when you don't even realize it and it is very common today in relationships. This theory represents an individual's outcome to different social interactions by examining the exchange of behavior during these social interactions. In other words, I wasn't getting what I deserved, and he wasn't trying so the cost of spending more time outweighed the benefits of the relationship so the outcome failed.

Before researching this theory, I would not have realized that there are theory's out there that suspect the outcome of real life, every day situations. Social Exchange Theory submits an economic exchange for interpersonal relationships, meaning the relationship are enhanced by satisfying each other's self- interest. Self- Interest is not known to be a bad thing but it is a concept that helps build the relationship. The Social Learning theory, where people learn from each other by observing, modeling behaviors and attitudes can help shape you and learn what is to come in a person using the Social Exchange Theory.

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