

**Social Exchange Theory Application Homework**  
**Interpersonal Communication or Communication Theory**  
**Patricia Vorndran, Delaware County Community College**

**I.LOC #2:** Employ communication theories, perspectives, principles, and concepts.

**II. Length of Assignment:** This assignment can be completed in 1-3 days. I assign it within a weekly module that includes additional assignments during a traditional 16-week semester.

**III. Materials Needed:** Students need access to the video and/or article (links below) as well as a text chapter, article, and/or video lecture that includes detailed discussion of Thibaut and Kelly's Social Exchange Theory.

Youtube video:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=3&v=vpwRLWTxTM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=3&v=vpwRLWTxTM)

Article:

Pisarcik, Kristin. 2007, July 31. Behind Closed Doors, Abuse Caught on Tape. *ABC News*.  
Retrieved from: <http://abcnews.go.com/Primetime/story?id=2608738&page=1>

**IV. Instructions:**

**Overview:** This assignment requires you to take your knowledge of Social Exchange Theory and apply it to a case-study. The case-study in which we will be applying the theory to deals with domestic violence. While I recognize that this is a heavy topic that can be uncomfortable to analyze, one value of studying theories such as this is that they can help us better understand real-life scenarios that are often challenging to grasp and address. Applying course concepts to such topics can maximize our learning.

**Assignment Directions:** After reading and watching the materials related to the Social Exchange Theory of Interdependence in this week's module, watch the "Social Exchange Theory Case-Study Video" and answer the following questions, posting your response by the deadline to the "Social Exchange Theory Application Homework" link in this week's module. *Please note that this video deals with domestic violence and some segments are rather graphic.* If you do not feel comfortable watching the video, you can opt to read the alternative article that provides the necessary information to respond to the questions. Please number your responses and make sure you fully answer each question, *drawing heavily upon the content from the Social Exchange Theory materials.* *Note:* You will need to make inferences to answer these questions. While we cannot know for sure what Susan's perceptions and basis for decisions were, do your best to infer in order to demonstrate your understanding of this week's theory and concepts.

1. What do you think were the perceived rewards for Susan to stay in the relationship with her husband? Explain.
2. What were the perceived costs? Explain.
3. Do you think her perception of costs and rewards changed over the course of the relationship? Explain.
4. According to the Social Exchange Theory of Interdependence, would Susan be satisfied in her relationship with her husband? Explain your rationale in the context of the theory and include in your response how the Comparison Level would impact her satisfaction level. Make sure you clearly connect your answer to the concept.
5. Using the assumptions of the social exchange theory, what is the rationale for her staying in the relationship for as long as she did? Discuss how the Comparison Level of Alternatives would impact her staying.
6. What do you think finally happened to cause her to leave? Discuss how the Comparison Level of Alternatives would fit in and fully explain your ideas.
7. How can we use our knowledge of this theory to help ourselves or others in dysfunctional relationships? Make specific reference to theory concepts in your discussion.

**V. Rubric or Scoring Guide:**

	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Fair</b>	<b>Poor</b>
<b>Discussion of costs/rewards</b>	Clear and thoughtful discussion of costs/rewards.	Discussion of costs/rewards was good but more elaboration would strengthen submission.	Vague discussion of costs/rewards provided.	No discussion or discussion not based on this week's materials.
<b>Discussion of satisfaction level in relation to comparison level</b>	Clear and thorough discussion of Susan's satisfaction level making connections back to the comparison level concept.	Good discussion of Susan's satisfaction level and connection made to comparison level, but a bit more elaboration would strengthen submission.	Provided discussion of satisfaction level, but discussion was limited and vague.	Discussion is unclear, not consistent with course materials, or not present.

<p><b>Discussion of comparison level of alternatives relating to staying and then leaving</b></p>	<p>Clear and thorough discussion of Susan's initial decision to stay and eventual decision to leave making meaningful connections back to the comparison level of alternatives concept.</p>	<p>Good connection of Susan's decision to stay and eventual decision to leave with connections back to comparison level of alternatives, but a bit more elaboration would strengthen submission.</p>	<p>Provided discussion of Susan's decision to stay and then leave the relationship, but discussion was limited in clear application to comparison level of alternatives concept.</p>	<p>Discussion is unclear, not consistent with course materials, or not present.</p>
<p><b>Discussion of how we can use theory to help those in dysfunctional relationships</b></p>	<p>Clear and thorough discussion of how we can use the theory with meaningful connections to the theory concepts.</p>	<p>Good discussion of how we can use the theory with connections to the theory concepts, but a bit more elaboration would strengthen submission.</p>	<p>Provided discussion of how we can use the theory, but discussion was limited in clear application to theory concepts.</p>	<p>Discussion is unclear, vague, not consistent with course materials, or not present.</p>

**VI. Notes:** While the topic for this assignment is sensitive and elicits emotional responses from many students, I find that it is a valuable exercise for them. At the conclusion of this assignment I often receive messages from students indicating that thinking about previous or current situations in the context of this theory has been very eye opening for them. Approximately 15% of students opt to only read the article and appreciate the alternative option to avoid watching the video footage.