

HHS4U – Intimate Relationships Theories

Learning Goals

Students will:

- understand different theories about relationships and marriage;
 - connect theories to real-life relationship situations;
 - discuss challenges in marriages and healthy relationship strategies;
 - compare arranged and free-choice marriages using theoretical perspectives;
 - evaluate which theories best explain intimate relationships.
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Success Criteria

Students can:

- define relationship theories correctly;
 - apply theories to examples of relationships and marriages;
 - compare arranged and free-choice marriages;
 - identify healthy communication and conflict resolution strategies;
 - explain advantages and disadvantages of different relationship styles.
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Key Vocabulary and Definitions

| Theory | Simple Definition |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Symbolic Interactionism | People behave based on how they see themselves and how others see them. |
| Exchange Theory | People weigh rewards and costs in relationships. |
| Life Course Approach | Relationships change through different stages of life. |
| Theory of Natural Selection | People pass on traits that help survival and reproduction. |
| Evolutionary Psychology | Attraction behaviours today may come from prehistoric survival needs. |
| Ideal Mate Theory | People compare others to their unconscious “ideal partner.” |
| Script Theory | Society teaches expected dating and relationship behaviours. |
| Structural Functionalism | Families and relationships help society stay stable and organized. |
| Conflict Theory | Relationships may involve power struggles and inequality. |
| Feminist Theory | Examines gender roles and inequalities in relationships. |
| Queer Theory | Challenges traditional ideas about gender and relationships. |

Minds On Activity (10–15 minutes)

Discussion Questions

Students discuss with a partner or small group:

1. What are some common problems between couples in marriages?
2. Do couples with children have more marital problems than couples without children?
3. What are some peaceful ways couples can solve conflicts?
4. What are important steps to building a healthy marriage?
5. What are the advantages and disadvantages of arranged marriages?
6. Can arranged marriages be successful in modern society? Why or why not?

Record student ideas on the board under categories:

- Communication
- Finances
- Parenting
- Gender Roles
- Cultural Expectations
- Trust and Loyalty
- Personal Values

Connect student ideas to relationship theories.

Part 1 – Common Problems in Marriages

Common Challenges

- Communication problems
- Financial stress
- Parenting disagreements
- Division of household labour
- Lack of trust
- Different goals or values
- Cultural or family pressures
- Work-life balance

Theoretical Connections

| Problem | Theory Connection |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Unequal chores | Conflict Theory / Feminist Theory |
| Parenting stress | Structural Functionalism |
| Miscommunication | Symbolic Interactionism |
| Feeling relationship is unfair | Exchange Theory |

| | |
|---|---------------|
| Different expectations about dating or marriage | Script Theory |
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Part 2 – Do Children Increase Marital Problems?

Discussion Points

Some couples experience more stress after having children because of:

- less free time;
- financial pressure;
- sleep deprivation;
- changing responsibilities.

However, children may also:

- strengthen family bonds;
- increase emotional connection;
- create shared goals.

Theory Connections

| Theory | Explanation |
|--------------------------|---|
| Structural Functionalism | Families work together to raise children and maintain stability. |
| Conflict Theory | Parenting responsibilities may create power struggles. |
| Life Course Approach | Relationships naturally change as couples move into parenting stages. |

Part 3 – Peaceful Conflict Resolution

Healthy Relationship Strategies

- Active listening
- Respectful communication
- Compromise
- Sharing responsibilities
- Setting boundaries
- Seeking counselling/support
- Managing stress
- Showing appreciation

Theory Connections

| Strategy | Related Theory |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Understanding feelings | Symbolic Interactionism |
| Balancing effort and rewards | Exchange Theory |
| Adapting to life stages | Life Course Approach |

Part 4 – Steps to a Healthy Marriage

Important Factors

1. Communication
2. Trust
3. Respect
4. Shared responsibilities
5. Emotional support
6. Commitment
7. Shared values/goals
8. Healthy conflict resolution

Application Activity

Students rank the top 3 most important factors and explain why.

Part 5 – Arranged Marriages vs Free-Choice Marriages

Arranged Marriage

A marriage where family members help select a partner.

Free-Choice Marriage

A marriage where individuals choose their own partner.

Advantages and Disadvantages

| Arranged Marriage Advantages | Arranged Marriage Disadvantages |
|------------------------------|---|
| Strong family support | Less personal choice |
| Shared cultural values | Possible pressure from family |
| Similar religion/background | May take time to build emotional connection |
| Greater family involvement | Individuals may feel limited |

Can Arranged Marriages Be Successful?

Points Supporting Success

- Shared cultural expectations
- Family support systems
- Commitment and stability
- Strong communication over time

Challenges

- Lack of personal freedom
- Possible incompatibility
- Pressure to satisfy family expectations

Comparison of Attraction Theories

| Theory | Main Idea | Example |
|----------------------------|--|---|
| Evolutionary Theory | People choose partners who increase survival/reproduction chances. | Preference for healthy partners |
| Filter Theory | People narrow choices using social filters. | Similar religion or education |
| Social Homogamy Theory | People are attracted to similar backgrounds. | Similar culture or social class |
| Complementary Needs Theory | Opposites may attract because needs complement each other. | Quiet person attracted to outgoing person |
| Ideal Mate Theory | People compare others to their "ideal" partner. | Looking for kindness, humour, or ambition |

Critical Thinking Questions

1. Which relationship theory do you think best explains attraction today?
 2. Which theories support arranged marriage?
 3. Which theories support free-choice marriage?
 4. Which theory seems least realistic? Why?
 5. How have social media and modern culture changed dating scripts?
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