



8

PSYCHOLOGY OF HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS

8.1

Introduction: What is the psychology of human relationships?

Learning outcomes

- To what extent do biological, cognitive and sociocultural factors influence human relationships?
- Evaluate psychological research (that is, theories and/or studies) relevant to the study of human relationships.

The psychology of human relationships looks at the nature and causes of relationships between people. This includes the origins of attraction and friendship, the nature of romantic relationships, and how these relationships change and end. The darker side of human nature is also considered, with a focus on why we occasionally fail to help others in need or are violent towards others in our own social group. The ultimate aim of this study is to understand our relationships with others and to improve the quality of these relationships.

As with other options topics, you are expected to pay attention to the relative contribution of the different levels of analysis to our understanding of human relationships. There is a significant contribution from evolutionary psychology in terms of why we engage in altruistic behaviour and why we are attracted to some people more than others. Cognitive models are used to describe the decision-making processes in bystander intervention, and in the origin and breakdown of relationships. There is a lot of research attempting to investigate the role of cultural factors in attraction and the formation of relationships. There is also a significant contribution from social and cultural norms to the occurrence of violence. Research supports most of the ideas covered in this chapter using a range of methods, including experiments, interviews, and questionnaires.

● Examiner's hint

The command term *to what extent* asks you to make a judgement about the influence of factors from each level of analysis in this area. You will find it helpful as you work through this chapter to keep a record of what factors appear to be involved and whether there is good evidence for the importance of their role. It would be a good idea to keep a note of studies that you can evaluate. Sometimes, an evaluation is provided for you but sometimes you will need to apply your own evaluation skills to judge the quality of studies in this area.

8.2

Social responsibility

Learning outcomes

- Distinguish between altruism and prosocial behaviour.
- Contrast two theories explaining altruism in humans.
- Using one or more research studies, explain cross-cultural differences in prosocial behaviour.
- Examine factors influencing bystanderism.

Prosocial behaviour and altruism

Prosocial behaviour refers to any behaviour that is intended to benefit others. The kind of behaviour typically studied by psychologists in this area includes many different variants of helping behaviour such as giving donations, rescuing someone in danger, sharing, volunteering for the fire service or a community building project, and carrying a bag or pushchair (baby buggy) for an overloaded mother. There are many acts that can be considered prosocial, and psychologists have been interested for some time in why people engage in them, and under what circumstances people tend *not* to help.

Sometimes the reason for engaging in prosocial behaviour is a selfish one. For example, if a person puts money in a charity box *in order to feel good*, **egoistic motivation** is behind the action. There is a strong argument that such egoism accounts for most prosocial behaviour. In contrast, **altruism** is the performance of prosocial actions *without expectation of benefit for oneself*. There has been significant argument over whether or not it is possible for any act to be truly altruistic. This is because it is often easy to identify possible benefits to the actor. Some people argue that the ultimate goal of all human behaviour is personal pleasure (this is known as psychological hedonism). However, others argue that **altruistic motivation** does exist, with personal benefit not the motive to act, but rather a concern for the welfare of others *despite the possible costs of acting*. Batson (1991) defines altruism as 'a motivational state with the ultimate goal of increasing another's welfare'. Note the clear difference in ultimate goals: in egoism, the ultimate goal is personal benefit, achieved in this context by helping others; in altruism, the ultimate goal is increasing another's welfare, regardless of personal cost or benefit.

Prosocial behaviour is behaviour that benefits others. Altruism is one type of prosocial behaviour; that which occurs without personal benefit as its ultimate goal.



Prosocial behaviour may be egoistic or altruistic.



EXERCISE

- 1 Discuss with classmates or family whether the following examples of prosocial behaviour are possible examples of altruism or not, and justify your opinion. Note that there are no correct answers here. You might like to try this exercise again after you have finished this chapter.
 - a A woman walking in the centre of town sees a person standing on a corner with a map, looking lost. She stops and asks if he needs help finding something.
 - b A teacher walking upstairs at school drops some books. Two students walking behind him pick them up and return them to him.
 - c During a World Cup soccer game, a player knocks over one of his opponents and then offers a hand to help him up.
 - d A whole class of students, on hearing about a family made homeless by an accidental fire, write letters to local businesses and ask them to make donations of money and household goods.

● Examiner's hint

The learning outcome for this section asks you to *distinguish* between altruism and prosocial behaviour. This means that you must be able to define both terms, give examples of them, and make the difference clear.

Theories and research into altruism

The empathy–altruism hypothesis

This approach to explaining altruism is based on the idea that an emotional response (empathy) is generated when another person is *perceived to be in need*. We are then motivated to help the person in need for their own sake. Empathy is notoriously difficult to define. However, in the context of this hypothesis it is taken to include a range of feelings that are focused on others rather than oneself, including sympathy, compassion, warmth and tenderness.

The leading figure behind this hypothesis is Daniel Batson. He suggests that the perception of need begins with the perception that the other person is experiencing a mismatch between their current state and their potential state – this could be in terms of mood, pain, hunger or safety. An observer must, therefore, be able to have knowledge about both the current and potential state of the other person. For example, consider encountering a person begging for money on the street. Although there might be many explanations for your decision to give money, it is quite likely that you would hesitate to do so if:

- you could not see the person and make a judgement about whether or not they were hungry
- you could see the person and did not think they looked in need.

Following the perception of need, Batson (1991) argues, a person is then likely to evaluate the situation in terms of possible rewards and costs for helping. Two different egoistic pathways to helping are possibly activated in the observer at this point:

- recognition of some potential reward for helping (e.g. a strong feeling of virtuousness, or recognition in the newspaper)
- recognition that seeing the person in need has triggered personal distress and that the observer can make the personal distress go away either by helping or by leaving the situation.

However, a third possibility – one that is altruistic rather than egoistic – is also possible: that the observer will adopt the perspective of the person in need. This is the empathy referred to in the name of the hypothesis. It requires in the observer the ability to imagine (correctly or incorrectly) how the person in need is feeling.

The strength of the observer's empathic response is then affected by how great the need is perceived to be and the strength of the observer's attachment to the person in need. This means that your empathic response should be greater if you feel that a close family



When there is an opportunity to help, we may see possible rewards for ourselves or feel empathy for the person in need.

Does seeing two broken legs stimulate empathy in you?



member or friend is having trouble, and the response will increase according to how severe you think their need is. However, an empathic response should not include a feeling of personal distress: this is a quite different emotional reaction that you might be motivated to reduce for your own benefit.

The empathy–altruism hypothesis has been empirically tested many times, partly to distinguish it clearly from the egoistic models that were favoured by mainstream psychology. The hypothesis has faced one particularly difficult problem: it is usually not possible to know from observed behaviour what the actor's true motivation is; indeed, the actor may also be unaware of their true motivation.

In an experiment by Toi and Batson (1982), female psychology students were played a recording of an interview purportedly with a fellow student named Carol, who had broken both her legs in a car accident. The researchers manipulated strength of empathy by asking participants to focus either on the information in the interview or on Carol's feelings about what had happened. They also manipulated 'ease of escape' by telling participants either that Carol was stuck at home or that she would be in the same tutorial group as the participant and was returning to university next week.

When given the opportunity to offer to help Carol by going through class notes with her, participants were far more likely to help if they had been listening with a focus on how Carol felt (i.e. with elevated empathy). Although the feeling that they would probably meet Carol next week did increase the likelihood that they would help, the researchers did not find this more social factor to be as important as participants' level of empathy.

If we assume that the empathy–altruism hypothesis is correct and that altruism truly does exist in humans, what significance does this have? Do charitable organizations already know this and manipulate the public to increase charitable donations? Is it morally acceptable if they do?



EXERCISE

- 2 List limitations of studies like this which try to manipulate empathy. Consider validity issues in particular; think about the concepts of ecological validity and artificiality.

Batson et al. (1983) overcame the problem of not knowing what level of empathy participants experience in this kind of experiment by running an experiment that measured empathy by self-report rather than trying to manipulate it. Participants were asked to report their emotional state after observing a same-sex stooge randomly receiving electric shocks while completing a task. The stooge showed extreme discomfort about receiving the shocks because of a childhood accident. The participants were then able to voluntarily take the place of the stooge, logically expecting that they would be able to tolerate the shocks better. Again, the researchers found that high levels of empathy predicted the decision to volunteer.

Modifications to this study including making the shock sound more painful – this lowered the rate of helping behaviour. This suggests that although the cost–benefit analysis that



people are assumed to carry out before deciding to help does indeed occur, the more powerful underlying motive preceding this is probably an empathic concern for the welfare of the other person.

The kin selection hypothesis

A very different approach to explaining altruism is taken by sociobiologists and evolutionary psychologists. According to theorists in these fields, altruistic behaviour certainly does occur, and it is likely to have been selected for during human evolution. This means that there is a survival advantage in displaying selfless helping behaviour. However, there is a troubling question for those working in this area. How it can be advantageous for individuals to risk their own survival, reduce their own access to resources, or increase another's likelihood of reproducing? All these forms of activity should reduce the frequency of a genetic tendency to help being passed on to descendants. A further troubling issue is raised by the observation that cooperative behaviour seems to occur very infrequently among non-human animals.



i There is a common belief that meerkats are altruistic. They famously stand guard while others forage for food. Researchers have found, however, that the guards are the first to flee after sounding the alarm, so they have more time to escape than the others.

◀ Meerkats standing guard: selflessly guarding others or selfishly watching out for themselves?

The idea of kin selection offers a fairly simple evolutionary explanation for altruistic behaviour in humans. The basic premise is that helping others in your family group, particularly direct descendants, will increase the chances of the genes that caused the helping behaviour being passed on. You may individually decrease your own chances of survival, but if you are helping a direct descendant, you are increasing the chances of your shared genes being passed on. Moreover, the set of genes that causes helping behaviour can be assumed to be present in other close members of the family as well.

One interesting piece of evidence that such behaviour really does exist among humans has been provided by Sime (1983). This researcher analysed accounts of how people fled from a burning building and found that when individuals were with unrelated group members before exit, they tended to become separated, while those with family members before exit tended to stay together. This would favour group survival.

Simpson and Kenrick (1997) suggest that our ingroup bias (pages 110–112) can be accounted for through kin selection, as it makes sense that a whole set of attitudes, opinions and behaviours should accompany an instinctive desire to help those who share many of the same genes. It is somewhat surprising, then, that we are not better able to identify those who share genes without clues like physical similarity. On the other hand, it should be no surprise that in situations where we are inclined to help, we tend to help people whom we perceive as more similar to us (page 261).

Kin selection theories suggest that we should favour close family in times of trouble.



Research done by Burnstein et al. (1994) is often considered to provide evidence for the kin selection hypothesis. They asked participants to report how likely it was that they would help people of varying degrees of relatedness, such as grandmother, first cousin or unrelated acquaintance. The situations in which participants could help ranged from basic favours to more extreme situations like the opportunity to rescue one person from a burning house. Not only did participants reveal that they were more likely to help closer relatives, this effect became more extreme as the possible cost to the participant increased. Other effects also fitted with an evolutionary explanation (e.g. younger people were more likely to be helped than older).

EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

Kin selection in UK and South African students (Madsen et al., 2007)

These researchers aimed to test the kin selection hypothesis experimentally using participants from two different cultures: UK students and South African students. One reason for using two different cultures is that the concepts 'kin' and 'family' are understood differently across the world, so if kin selection as an explanation for altruism did not seem to work in one of these groups, it may not be valid.

Participants were asked to perform a physical exercise that becomes increasingly painful: leaning against a wall with legs bent at the knee so that the thighs are parallel to the floor. Each participant had supplied a list of biological relatives but the list could not include relatives who shared a home with the participant. Before each trial, participants were told that one specific relative randomly selected from their list would receive payment according to the length of time they could stay in the 'seated' position against the wall.

The first version of this experiment, carried out in the UK, offered a rate of 40p per 20 seconds. Participants did, on average, spend more time in the uncomfortable position when the money was going to more closely related family members, although females were slightly more equitable than males. The experiment was revised and run again at a higher rate of pay.

Two separate groups of Zulu males in South Africa were then tested but with food items substituting for money. Again, participants made more effort to stay in the uncomfortable position for relatives who were biologically closer to them. There were some differences, particularly in that the Zulu participants did not seem to distinguish between cousins and biologically closer relatives such as siblings, aunts and nephews.

Thus it appears that kin selection is indeed a powerful motivator to perform altruistic deeds.

EXERCISE

- 3** Find similarities and differences between the two theories in this section. As a guide, address the following questions for each of the two theories.
 - a** Is the theory mostly focused on biological, cognitive, or sociocultural factors?
 - b** Is the theory supported by valid empirical evidence? What kinds of method are used?
 - c** What conclusions does the theory make about the existence and cause of altruism?
 - d** Does the theory apply across genders and cultures?



Cross-cultural differences in prosocial behaviour

The empirical research on page 256 highlights some cross-cultural similarities and differences in altruism. There are many other studies that focus more generally on prosocial behaviour. After conducting a simple study into helping behaviour in the USA, Robert Levine began a wider study in major cities of 23 different countries to try and explore what the differences might be.

Among a great many other variables including population size, Levine et al. (2001) considered how the dimensions of individualism and collectivism in these cities might be connected with helping behaviour, and also the notion of *simpatia* or *simpatico*. This notion exists in several Spanish and Latin American cultures; it is a generally 'proactive socio-emotional orientation and concern with the social well-being of others' that provides a social impetus to help strangers.

Three helping situations were used:

- a pedestrian drops a pen on the street without noticing
- a pedestrian wearing a leg brace drops some magazines
- a blind pedestrian with a cane waits at a traffic light for assistance crossing the street.



Who are you more likely to help?



From scores on these tests, an overall helping index was created. The top five cities were:

- Rio de Janeiro (Brazil)
- San Jose (Costa Rica)
- Lilongwe (Mali)
- Calcutta (India)
- Vienna (Austria).

The bottom five in the study were:

- Sofia (Bulgaria).
- Amsterdam (Netherlands)
- Singapore (Singapore)
- New York (USA)
- Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia)

There was a large difference between top and bottom, with Kuala Lumpur achieving less than half of Rio de Janeiro's overall score. Incidentally, it appears that the worst place to be a blind person crossing the street is Bangkok; the best in this study was Prague, but don't expect the Czechs to tell you you've dropped your pen.

None of the cultural variables the researchers measured were found to have a significant relationship with helping, but there was a relationship between greater purchasing power per capita and less helping behaviour. The researchers suggest this may be explained by more traditional value systems in countries that are less developed. However, this does not explain why Vienna was so high on the charts, or why Kuala Lumpur was bottom.

Another finding was that those countries high in *simpatia* were all above the mean in terms of helping behaviour. The researchers suggest that people living in these cultures are provided with a cultural script that tells them they should help. They note a possible confounding variable, however, in that the countries high in *simpatia* are also Roman Catholic. Whiting and Whiting (1975) also found that helping behaviour among children was more frequent in less industrialized countries.

The question remains then as to whether collectivism is a cause of increased prosocial behaviour or not. While it appears that individualistic cultures help slightly less often, the picture is more complicated than that. We are more likely to help members of ingroups than outgroups, and it seems that collectivist cultures have more clearly defined borders than individualistic cultures. Thus, there will be an interaction between the culture of the actor and his or her perception of the other's group membership. People within collectivist cultures may therefore be less likely to help a complete stranger, but more likely to help someone from their own cultural group who is not part of their immediate family. People in individualistic cultures, who prize independence, are likely to limit their kindness to members of their immediate family. This could be transmitted through child-rearing practices that reward or expect certain behaviours, such as sharing household chores (Whiting and Whiting, 1975).

However, it is important to remember that individualism and collectivism are on a dimension that *describes* cultures, rather than being dichotomous concepts; it is not clear that they *cause* differences in helping. It may be that other values which tend to thrive in these environments are responsible for differences in prosocial behaviour. It may even be because of the presence of such behaviour that the culture can be described as collectivistic or individualistic.

Other factors might be:

- the frequency with which we meet the people we might help, as evidenced by the tendency for cities with higher populations to be less helpful
- the encouragement or necessity to compete for resources, as described in Turnbull's controversial account of life with the extreme individualist Ik people of Uganda (1972)
- the norms of society that guide behaviour, such as whether it is appropriate to seek help from others or not.



Bystander intervention

One of the richest veins of social psychology literature relates to bystander intervention. It has long intrigued researchers as to how, why and under what circumstances a person who is not immediately involved in a situation either acts to intervene or decides not to.

Bystanderism is the phenomenon of a person or people not intervening despite awareness of another person's need, the phenomenon of remaining a bystander. This covers a wide range of situations: for example, when a person is aware that their neighbour is physically abusive towards his family but ignores it, when students ignore the plight of a bullied child at school, when a silent majority take no action against a powerful minority engaging in war crimes, even to the extent of ignoring the escalation of such activity towards genocide.

Pioneers in this field of research were Bibb Latané and John Darley, who were inspired by the now well-known story of the murder of Kitty Genovese in New York in 1964. Kitty was repeatedly stabbed, and 38 people testified to having heard her screams, yet none of them intervened. The researchers' work led them to construct a cognitive model to explain the decision an individual makes to act or not. One of the key conclusions they drew was that the number of bystanders present has an enormous influence on the likelihood that one of them will help: the likelihood goes down as the number of bystanders increases. According to their 1970 model, people must first notice something is happening, then consider that someone is in need of help, then assume responsibility and also have some idea about what can be done to help. This means that the decision to help is not as simple as we might have thought: there are a set of cognitive antecedents to action, and it is perhaps a wonder that anyone ever intervenes.



Many factors influence whether a bystander intervenes when a person is in need.

EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

Diffusion of responsibility, social influence and audience inhibition (Darley and Latané, 1968)

These researchers deceived university students into thinking they were actually participating in research about personal problems experienced by students. In all, there were 72 participants in the study; each in turn was led to one of many small rooms in a corridor and given instructions on the use of the microphone and headphones awaiting them.

They were told that others were participating at the same time, each kept anonymous in a separate room, with the researcher not listening. Each person, they were told, would disclose problems in turn and then take turns to comment on what had already been said. In fact, of course, the voices the participant would hear were recordings, and there were no other people present.

The first voice they heard was a male who described his troubles and mentioned that he experienced seizures sometimes, particularly when stressed. Other voices disclosed various problems intended to be irrelevant, with the real participant speaking last, to no real audience apart from the experimenter. Immediately afterwards, the first voice returned to comment and, of course, began to experience a seizure. He asked for help as the seizure came on, and eventually choked and became silent.

The researchers were measuring the amount of time taken from the beginning of the victim's plea for help to the participant standing up and leaving the room to notify the experimenter. The independent variable manipulated was the number of people the participant believed were also participating at the same time, and this was found to be extremely important. When participants thought they were alone with the victim, 85% acted within two minutes, compared with 31% of those who thought there were four other participants. After six minutes, 100% of the participants who believed they were the only one who could hear the problem reported the incident to the experimenter, whereas only 62% of those who thought there were four others did so.

Audience inhibition is the phenomenon of people not acting because they are inhibited by the knowledge that others are watching them.

Social influence in this respect refers to the influence of others on our ideas about what the most appropriate behaviour is in a particular situation.



The Darley and Latané (1968) study gives us one of the most important factors affecting bystanderism: **diffusion of responsibility**. When you are the only person who can deal with an emergency situation, you have 100% of the responsibility to do so (whether you actually choose to intervene or not). However, with more witnesses, each individual's share of the responsibility drops. It may be that in an ambiguous situation, we look to the actions of others for guidance (**social influence**); thus, inaction breeds inaction – if we see others not doing anything, we may not feel that it is necessary to do something. On the other hand, we may be afraid of appearing to overreact – sometimes known as a fear of social blunders or **audience inhibition**. In terms of Latané and Darley's model, this forms part of a person's judgement about whether intervention is necessary or appropriate. Imagine the embarrassment of offering to help someone who doesn't need help.

A study by Latané and Rodin (1969) asked male participants (in pairs, by themselves, or with a stooge who would not intervene) to fill in a questionnaire. The young woman who gave them the questionnaire went to an adjacent room, at which point a tape recording was started, beginning with a loud crash, the sound of a body hitting the floor and then painful moans. When alone, the participants went to help 70% of the time, compared with 40% when two naïve participants were together, and only 7% when there was a passive stooge.

A further study by Latané and Darley (1970) again had participants filling out a questionnaire in a room alone, with two other participants, or with two passive stooges. While they were there, smoke began to come into the room through a wall vent, continuing for six minutes, by which time the room would be filled with smoke. Of those who were alone, 75% left the room to report the smoke to the experimenter. Small groups of participants reported the smoke only 38% of the time, and the dampening influence of two passive stooges reduced the rate of reporting to just 10%.

Clearly there is a very powerful influence from others on our decision to help, although it is still not clear exactly which aspect is most important: diffusion of responsibility, audience inhibition or social influence.

Further research by Latané and Darley (1976) attempted to tease these factors apart by varying the conditions under which participants saw an experimenter experience a powerful electric shock through a closed-circuit television system. They concluded that simple diffusion of responsibility was important by itself, and that being able to communicate with others made help even less likely.

Arousal, costs and rewards

Piliavin et al. (1981) presented the arousal: cost–reward model to cover more factors involved in the decision to act or not.

Arousal

These researchers suggest that initially, when we observe another person in some sort of need or danger, we experience an orienting physiological response, one that actually slows down our heart rate, for example. This may then be followed by the fight-or-flight response, particularly when the situation is perceived as an emergency, so we are motivated to act in some way in order to return to a normal state. The greater the arousal is, the more likely it is that people will help.

The researchers' conclusion is supported by many studies, including Amato (1986). Amato interviewed participants after a bushfire near Melbourne and found that higher donations to help victims came from people who reported more feelings of shock or terror. This suggests that increased emotional arousal is followed by motivation to act to reduce that arousal.

Is it possible to conduct research that genuinely tests whether we will help others in need?





Experimental evidence is provided by Sterling and Gaertner (1983), who asked participants to do exercise to raise their heart rates. Although arousal increases the likelihood of a person acting, if the emergency they were then exposed to was ambiguous, they were less likely to help. This suggests that arousal is a kind of cue for us to act, but if we are not sure why we are aroused, we cannot be sure that acting will reduce the arousal. Thus both **arousal** and **ambiguity** are important factors affecting bystanderism.

Cost–reward

The second part of the arousal: cost–reward model is an evaluation of the consequences of intervening or not. Rewards are not easily identified, but their presence does increase the incentive to help. Costs will vary from situation to situation, but they might include danger, time and effort. There can also be costs to *not* intervening, such as a feeling of guilt or potential criticism by others, or even self-blame. These costs tend to increase with the perceived plight of the victim and when the expected costs of *not* intervening outweigh the expected costs of intervening, we are more likely to act. For example, we might not approach an adult who looks lost in a crowd and offer help, but we are more likely to help if we see a small child looking lost. The time and effort expended to help the child are smaller costs for many people than the guilt (or the negative judgement of accompanying friends) of not helping, so the child is more likely to receive an offer of help.



There are costs and rewards for intervening and not intervening.

Similarity, victim attributes and responsibility

One of the factors that seem to increase physiological arousal and feelings of empathy is **similarity**. Piliavin et al. (1981) are supported by a large body of literature which shows that people are more likely to act to help someone similar to them. The literature tends to focus on similarity in terms of race, nationality, age and gender.

One of the most famous studies into bystanderism is detailed in the empirical research box below. Dissatisfied with the tendency for research in this area to be conducted in contrived laboratory settings, the researchers carried out a field experiment to test the effect of race and the type of victim on helping behaviour on a subway train in New York.

EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

Subway emergencies (Piliavin et al., 1969)

The researchers staged emergencies on a subway train in New York, always between the same two stations. They estimate that 4450 people were included in their study, an average of 43 people in the carriage where the emergency took place, with an average of 8.5 people near the victim. They established four teams of experimenters, each team consisting of two female observers, a male victim and a male 'model' who would eventually help the victim if nobody else did. Each victim assumed two different roles, one as a drunken man smelling of alcohol and carrying a brown paper bag with a bottle in it, and the other as a man with a black cane. One of the male victims was black, and the other three were white. A further two independent variables were the proximity of the model to the victim and the amount of time he waited before intervening. At a specific time in the journey, the victim collapsed to the floor and lay without moving until people arrived to help. The model was given two specific set times to wait before helping, with the intention that the observers could record the effect of the model on the behaviour of others on the train.

The results showed that people were more helpful than the experimenters expected. The victim with the cane role received spontaneous help 62 out of 65 times, and even the drunken victim role elicited spontaneous help 19 out of 38 times. The helpers were 90% male and 64% white. The percentage of male helpers perhaps reflects the values of the time – female passengers commented, for example, that it was for a man to help in this situation. The percentage of white helpers is approximately the same as the distribution on the train, but it was noted that it was

continued

slightly more common for a white victim to be helped by a white person. The effects were more dramatic for the drunken victims. The researchers put this down to more empathy, sympathy and trust towards members of one's own racial group.

The four main conclusions from the study were as follows.

- Victims who appear sick are more likely to receive help than those who appear drunk. This is explained in terms of the higher costs of helping and lower costs of not helping a man seen as responsible for his own situation.
- In a mixed group, a male victim is more likely to be helped by men than women. The costs of helping are higher for women in terms of effort to move the victim, and there are low social costs to not helping as it was perceived at the time as not appropriate for a woman to be the first helper.
- In a mixed group, a victim is most likely to be helped by a same-race observer because of the low costs of not helping members of different race and, possibly, fear as a cost of helping.
- Diffusion of responsibility was not observed on trials with the cane, presumably because it was clearly identifiable as an emergency situation in which the victim needed help. There was, therefore, high risk of self-blame or guilt for not helping, and low cost – particularly in terms of the fear of social blunders mentioned above.

Levine et al. chose these two teams because of geographic proximity and a long rivalry between them. He proposed that social identity theory (page 110) could explain the results.



Other research that exposes the role of similarity includes the Suedfeld et al. (1972) study. The researchers dressed a student as a peace protestor or as a supporter of Nixon at a time of widespread protest against US involvement in the Vietnam War. Pretending to be sick among the protestors, the student was far more likely to be offered help, and offered help to a greater level, when dressed as a fellow protestor than when dressed as a Nixon supporter. Similar results were found in Levine et al.'s (2005) experiment which tested the role of social identity in helping behaviour. This study found that Manchester United fans were far more likely to help a jogger who fell over if he was wearing a Manchester United shirt than if he was wearing a Liverpool shirt.

An exception to the similarity rule can be observed in gender interactions. In general, men are more likely to help than women in the kind of situations that tend to be used in experiments. Women, on the other hand, are more likely to receive help. A curious study by Przybyla (1985) showed erotic and non-erotic films to male and female participants and then gave them an opportunity to help a male or female confederate who had knocked over some papers. The rate of helping was by far the highest among males who had seen an erotic film and had the opportunity to help a female confederate. This was possibly due to a misattribution of physiological arousal.

Mood

Another factor picked up by research into bystanderism is **mood**. Being in a good mood seems to encourage attraction towards strangers and more attention to positive features. Thus, the identification of possible costs to intervening is less likely to focus on risk when there is ambiguity. Being in a bad mood is a less powerful influence, perhaps only taking effect if it is the kind of mood that increases self-focus. This was noted by Berkowitz (1987), who found that effort on behalf of others was reduced when participants had higher self-awareness.

Competence and experience

A key component after recognizing that someone is in need of help, is knowing what can be done to help. Believing you have the competence to deliver the necessary help is a vital predictor of helping behaviour.

● Examiner's hint

The learning outcome for this section asks you to *examine* the factors that affect bystanderism. This means you need to be prepared to describe the factors, support them with research, and provide a balanced account. This will require a criticism of the methodology used in some of the studies and an identification of key strengths in the literature.



Although many researchers have looked for and found some differences in the personality of those who help and those who do not, Huston et al. (1981) interviewed 32 people who had intervened in criminal acts (including bank robberies and muggings) and compared their responses with those of people who had not intervened. They found that the major differences were physical: those who intervened were taller and heavier. They were more likely to have some kind of police or medical training. They also carried more self-belief and described themselves as aggressive and principled.

Pantin and Carver (1982) showed a first aid training video to female students and found that this increased their willingness to help a choking victim. It appears that knowing what to do in an emergency situation is not only helpful, it also increases one's sense of responsibility to act, perhaps by increasing the expected guilt of not helping.



To access Revision notes 8.1 on bystander intervention, please visit www.pearsonbacconline.com and follow the on-screen instructions.

EXERCISES

- Construct a table and use it to record strengths and limitations of the major studies mentioned in this section. Consider in particular the ideas of ecological validity and mundane reality (revisit Chapter 2 for help with these). When you have finished, write a brief summary about the quality of research in this area of social psychology.
- Review the material on social responsibility. Construct your own table as outlined below and complete it with brief notes. (You will add to this table as you work through this chapter.)

FACTORS AFFECTING HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS

	Biological	Cognitive	Sociocultural
Social responsibility			
Interpersonal relationships			
Violence			

● Examiner's hint

A general learning outcome for this option is to be able to discuss *to what extent* these factors influence human relationships in terms of the three areas on the left of your table. You should find there are several factors that can go in each cell of the table, and you should begin considering the relative importance of biological, cognitive and socio-cultural factors so that you can answer practice question 1 at the end of this chapter.

8.3 Interpersonal relations

Learning outcomes

- Examine biological, psychological and social origins of attraction.
- Discuss the role of communication in maintaining relationships.
- Explain the role that culture plays in the formation and maintenance of relationships.
- Analyse why relationships may change or end.

The origins of attraction

The study of attraction can be enlightening, refreshing and frightening all at the same time, as we discover that, for example, biological factors we are not consciously aware of are very important in determining whether we are attracted to someone or not. On the other hand, one of the most reassuring factors involved in attraction is how much we already like a person. Researchers studying attraction have found, for example, that ratings of attractiveness are higher for photographs of people about whom participants have read a favourable story (Gross and Crofton, 1977). There is a large amount of research showing

that there are a number of biological, social, and cognitive factors that affect how much we are attracted to a person in the first place, whether as a friend or potential romantic or sexual partner.

Biological origins of attraction

Attraction to the opposite sex

A number of biological theories exist to explain attraction and one of the most fundamental is an evolutionary approach. Buss (1994) identifies two aspects of sexual selection that encourage the transmission of an individual's genes to the next generation:

- male ritual behaviour, frequently competitive, that marks an individual out as more dominant than his rivals and gives him better access to females
- characteristics of an individual that increase his attractiveness to females.

What makes men and women attractive?



For humans, this means that males have to some extent evolved in such a way as to be sufficiently attractive to women for reproduction to be a possibility. The key principle of male attractiveness is that characteristics which will confer benefits to the female or her offspring are favoured. According to Buss, the key component is control over economic resources within the particular context the male lives in. This is likely to require territory and tools. This is particularly important for a human female because of the length of time required to carry and raise a child.

In order to recognize such control over resources, it seems that women in the vast majority of countries researched by Buss rate the social status of a man as a more important factor in mate choice than males do, even when the women have significant resources themselves. Other characteristics rated highly in Buss's surveys in the USA include:

- age a few years greater than the female's
- ambition
- dependability
- intelligence
- height
- good health as signalled by energy and lack of disfigurement.

According to Buss, social status is only attractive for women as a sign of economic well-being.





Acts of love and commitment, and signs of willingness to channel his resources to her (through gift-giving, for example) also contribute to a woman's mate choice. Kindness and sincerity feature highly, as evidenced by what women write in personal columns when advertising for a partner. Thus, the key features of males that women find attractive are passed on to descendants and those who do not possess the key attractive characteristics are less likely to be able to reproduce.

Men, on the other hand, are attracted to youth and health as they are the most transparent predictors of reproductive ability. Again, research in a variety of cultures supports this idea: men express a preference for a female partner at least two years younger, with more extreme preferences expressed in Nigeria and several other African countries. In the USA, Buss (1994) reports that at first marriage men are roughly three years older than their partner, at second marriage five years older, and by the third marriage, eight years older. Universally valued physical characteristics identified across cultures include clear smooth skin, full lips, lustrous hair, and the absence of facial scarring or acne. Facial and bodily symmetry is also universally valued, perhaps because it is another indicator of good health. Body shape appears to be important, but only in terms of its relationship with social status – men in cultures where food is scarcer report more interest in plumper women. Singh (1994) found that men tend to be interested in fat distribution as a sign of future reproductive capability rather than body mass. Thus, a thinner woman and a plumper one could be rated as equally beautiful if they had the apparently most prized waist to hip ratio of 0.7.



The female waist to hip ratio of 0.7 seems to be valued by men in most cultures.

Same sex attraction

While evolutionary explanations for homosexuality were addressed in Chapter 2 (page 62), it is interesting to note that research indicates that homosexual men are similar to heterosexual men in their focus on youth and health indicators. Homosexual women are similar to heterosexual women in the type of characteristics they favour, but display even less interest in physical characteristics than heterosexual women (Deaux and Hanna, 1984). Unfortunately this is still an under-researched area and suffers from the same definitional problems we met in Chapter 2 (page 62). Treating homosexual and heterosexual as dichotomous categories may not be a helpful foundation for such research.

As discussed in Chapter 2 (page 62), evolutionary psychology theories are difficult to evaluate because they are impossible to prove and very difficult to disprove. Researchers are working on establishing the mechanisms of attraction in the brain and this will give some support to the evolutionary explanation. It appears that the feeling of attraction, whether this is conscious or not, occurs when the hypothalamus triggers physiological arousal. Various factors are involved including cognitive and social factors. This is evidenced by the curious observation that humans can become aroused by thought alone – but being attracted by thought alone is generally not possible.

One of the most interesting discoveries in recent times has been of the role pheromones play in human attraction. It had been believed for some time that humans do not use pheromones in the same way that animals do. Wedekind et al. (1995) asked men to wear a clean t-shirt for two nights and then asked women to rate the smell of the shirts for attractiveness. Both men and women were tested for a particular set of genes implicated in the development of the immune system. The women's decisions on the attractiveness of the t-shirt smells were then correlated with the results of gene tests. The researchers found a relationship such that the greater the difference between the genes of the men and women, the higher the rating of attractiveness. This fits neatly with evolutionary theory, in that the offspring produced by parents with different immune systems will have a survival advantage. The possibility that we are unconsciously detecting genetic differences between ourselves and others is a curious one that we can expect to understand better in future.



If pheromones that we cannot consciously detect influence our attraction to others, how can we trust our conscious perception of the world, particularly in terms of our thoughts about why we find a person attractive?

Social and cognitive origins of attraction

There are a set of factors that we may be slightly more aware of, though we generally do not realize their role in attraction. These are discussed in turn.

Proximity

People we spend more time with because they live near us, work with us or go to school with us are more likely to become our friends and partners. A simple study by Festinger et al. (1950) found that 65% of pairs of university friends were living in the same building as each other, with 44% living next door to each other. As the distance between the pair increased, the number of friendships dropped accordingly.

Darley and Berscheid (1967) found that women reported more liking for a woman that they expected to talk to intimately than for a woman they were not expecting to talk to. This suggests that it is not just proximity and exposure that increase our attraction to someone, but also the expectation of interaction.

Familiarity

This applies not just to people but to many things in our lives, including animals, places, clothing and sounds. Jorgensen and Cervone (1978) found that participants rated photographs of strangers' faces as more attractive the more times they saw them. Zajonc (1968) referred to this as the 'mere exposure effect', as if it is sufficient for us simply to see a person several times for us to start to find them attractive. Much of Zajonc's work was based around the repetition of unfamiliar sounds such as words in Turkish or Chinese presented to native English speakers.

This idea is supported by Moreland and Beach (1992). They experimentally tested the idea by having student participants rate the attractiveness of female research assistants, some of whom had come to their class more often than others – those who had been seen more often were rated as more attractive.

Mita et al. (1977) found that we rate our own face and the faces of others less likeable when we see the mirror image of them. This is an interesting finding for those of us who find either a photograph or a mirror image of ourselves dissatisfying to look at. It follows that more time spent in front of the mirror should lead to increased self-liking, but perhaps more extreme distaste when viewing oneself in photos! Curiously, it appears that over-exposure is possible, and we do become bored and even disgusted by seeing or hearing the same stimulus over time.

We find a mirror image of faces less attractive – consider this next time you look at a photograph of people you know.



Reciprocity

This is a slightly more complicated factor. It seems that we are attracted quite powerfully to those who like us or are attracted to us. A study by Dittes and Kelley (1956) provided anonymous feedback to participants in a group discussion about the attitudes of the other participants towards them. Participants tended to report more attraction to group members if they believed those members liked them.

It appears, therefore, that our attraction is based on the recognition of familiarity, frequency and predictability of contact, *and* on the processing of other information available. This shows how fickle our attraction can be and gives strong evidence that biological factors alone do not account for attraction.

Similarity

This is another factor we seem to be swayed by. Although people often find themselves attracted to people who are similar in terms of ethnicity, social class or age, there are a number of people who find partners quite different in these respects. However, it seems

that we experience a more powerful attraction to people who are similar to us in terms of beliefs and attitudes.

Aronson and Cope (1968) ran an experiment that tested the effect of apparent similarity of attitude between a participant and the supervisor of an experimenter. They found that when the experimenter was less polite and likeable and the supervisor was then harsh towards the experimenter, the participant was more likely to offer help when the supervisor needed it as well as when the experimenter was polite and the supervisor was kind. It is debatable whether this help offer indicates attraction, but it is intuitively appealing.

A variation on the theme of similarity is the **matching phenomenon** which suggests that a cognitive process moderates our level of attraction by favouring those who somehow match us, whether this be in terms of perceived attractiveness, age or interests, etc.

Social comparison

This occurs to moderate our ratings of attractiveness. A person will appear to be more attractive to us if we have been exposed to less attractive people beforehand. In the same way, an average-looking person will be perceived as less attractive if we have been exposed to more attractive stimuli. This was demonstrated in a study by Kenrick and Gutierrez (1980). These researchers asked participants to rate the attractiveness of a woman after some of them had been watching *Charlie's Angels* (a television programme starring three attractive women). The average woman was rated as less attractive by those who had been watching the programme. Clearly this is a cognitive factor indicating that attraction cannot be understood in an isolated context: it is to some extent an individual experience.

Reward theory

A slightly different process is involved in the active pursuit of a relationship with a person we are attracted to, which is a kind of cost–benefit analysis. **Reward theory** can be detected frequently when you ask people why they are together. This is a question we often answer in terms of how others make us feel. We are often more inclined to spend time with people who make us feel good or offer some kind of social status or benefits. Both operant and classical conditioning seem to be involved here:

- operant conditioning in that if spending time with a person directly or indirectly offers us rewards, this is reinforcing and will increase the desired frequency of such interaction
- classical conditioning in that people we associate with positive emotions become a source of such emotions.
- Through higher order conditioning, we may find that a stranger reminds us of someone around whom we have already built positive emotions. This may perhaps explain why we often find ourselves attracted to people who are physically or emotionally similar to our parents.

Lewicki (1985) ran a study that asked participants to rate the friendliness of women in photographs. Participants who had previously spent time with a friendly experimenter who looked similar to one of the women in the photographs were more likely to choose this photograph. Participants in a similar study were exposed to a deliberately unfriendly experimenter and then asked to give their data from a fake experimental task to one of two females. They tended to avoid interacting with the woman who resembled the unfriendly experimenter.

The gain–loss hypothesis

This is a variation on reward theory. Aronson and Linder (1965) suggest that we are more likely to like someone if we initially dislike them but then change our minds. In their experiment, participants heard a confederate making either negative or positive comments about them to the experimenter. Participants' ratings of how much they liked



Similarity in beliefs and attitudes can be a powerful influence on attraction.

To access Revision notes 8.2 on factors that influence attraction, please visit www.pearsonbacconline.com and follow the on-screen instructions.



the confederate were greatest when these evaluations moved from negative to positive. It might be an interesting exercise to consider how you felt about your closest friends when you first met them.

The role of communication in maintaining relationships

Another vein of psychological research focuses on how relationships are maintained after they are formed. This looks especially but not exclusively at romantic relationships. Some friendships last and others fade; some romantic relationships last a lifetime and others end quite quickly and dramatically. Communication is just one of many factors that have a significant role in keeping relationships together and tearing them apart.

Dindia and Canary (1993) defined four types of relationship maintenance:

- continuing a relationship or keeping it in existence
- keeping a relationship in a specified state, such as at a particular level of intimacy
- keeping a relationship in a satisfactory condition
- preventing or correcting relationship problems.

Canary and Dainton (2003) describe communication as a centripetal force that maintains relationships, suggesting that relationships are by nature destined to be pulled apart by centrifugal forces unless they are maintained. One of the simplest forms of communication for maintenance is routine conversation consisting of elements such as *How was your day?* and its rather mundane answer. The potential exchange of information in such conversation is likely to be small, especially over time, but any changes to this routine conversation are very noticeable. Canary and Dainton offer the example of responding to such a question with *Why do you ask?* This question is probably not part of a couple's script and would indicate some disturbance in the relationship.

Canary and Stafford (1994) identified five maintenance strategies that combat relationship decay:

- positivity – acting cheerfully, doing favours for your partner, trying to be spontaneous
- openness – talking about joint history, making disclosures about yourself
- assurances – offering comfort, affirming commitment to the relationship, asking if the partner is OK
- social networking – meeting friends or family for meals, asking mutual friends for relationship advice
- sharing tasks (completing joint responsibilities) – hanging the washing, cleaning the car, washing the dishes.

Weigel and Ballard–Reisch (1999) used this approach as the basis for an investigation into the relationship between the length of time a couple had been together and the amount of relational maintenance behaviour they engaged in. The researchers also considered satisfaction. Newer relationships tended to involve more explicit maintenance, but this appears to fade away as the relationship continues, returning in the later years of the relationship. Importantly, they also found that satisfaction was related to the use of maintenance behaviours.

Gottman et al. (2003) famously claimed that positivity is a vitally important part of relationships, giving us the magic ratio of positivity to negativity in successful relationships of 5:1. They explain that this means that a negative statement or act in a relationship cannot be balanced with a single positive equivalent; at least five are needed. Research in this area can often be criticized because it relies so heavily on correlational research. We must ask whether successful relationships require such maintenance

Centrifugal means moving away from the centre; centripetal means moving towards the centre.



John Gottman claims to be able to predict which marriages will end in divorce, partly through looking for a 'contempt' micro-expression in the partners' faces.



behaviours in order to exist, or if the communication styles uncovered in research might stem from the quality of the relationship. This is a problem of bidirectional ambiguity as discussed in Chapter 1 (page 18).

A further problem is that when we rely heavily on self-report data, the research can be subject to bias. For example, when a person is satisfied with their relationship, they may be more likely to view interactions from their partner as positive, or to notice their attempts at openness or disclosure more than a person who is unhappy in their relationship and who focuses more on negative aspects. An interesting collection of findings indicates that women tend to engage in many of these maintenance behaviours more than men, especially in terms of sharing tasks and openness (Dindia and Canary, 2006). This raises the issue of whether research is adequately accounting for individual differences in maintenance strategy use across genders and cultures.

Weigel and Ballard-Reisch (1999) show that communication patterns differ across marital types. *Traditional* describes the type of marriage where the spouses view themselves as interdependent, and tend to communicate a lot but deny or avoid issues that might cause conflict. *Independent* types have more freedom and egalitarian roles and communicate with each other a lot to negotiate and renegotiate their relationship, and tend to confront issues rather than avoid them. *Separate* couples are less expressive in their communication than the other groups.

EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

Marital type and maintenance behaviour (Weigel and Ballard-Reisch, 1999)

To test if there are differences in the type of maintenance behaviour used by different marital types, the researchers asked university students to distribute questionnaires to married couples they knew. The 141 heterosexual couples who returned the questionnaires were mostly Caucasian and their median length of marriage was 10 years. The questionnaire consisted of items from Canary and Stafford's (1992) Relational Maintenance Strategy Scale, which tests for positivity, openness, assurances, network use and sharing tasks, as well as scales to determine the type of marriage, their marital satisfaction and level of commitment.

Several differences were found. Traditional couples tended to use more maintenance behaviours than the other types, with separates using least. The cause of this difference is hypothesized to be related to their motivations for being in the relationship and their expectations regarding dependence. Of course, if two partners have little intention of being mutually dependent emotionally, it follows that they will not disclose as often or attempt to discuss issues that may cause conflict. Separates were also less likely to use openness and assurances than the other two types, while traditional couples were clearly different in their use of social networks and sharing tasks. Although previous research had found that traditional couples are most satisfied, this research failed to find any significant difference in satisfaction between the types, although several significant correlations were found within types between use of specific maintenance behaviours and satisfaction, commitment and love. For example, independents who engage in more assurance as a maintenance strategy report greater levels of love in their relationship, while the same strategy is associated more strongly with satisfaction for separates and traditionals.

EXERCISE

- 6 How easily could these research findings be applied? How useful are they?

Deborah Tannen is a linguist and author of several books relating to communication in interpersonal relationships. She has studied communication differences between males and females in a general social context and in a work context. In *You Were Always Mom's Favorite* (2009) she focuses particularly on relationships between sisters. Her work has

W To learn more about John Gottman's work, go to www.pearsonhotlinks.com, enter the title or ISBN of this book and select weblink 8.1.

T Self-report data is commonly gathered through questionnaires. Is it a good way to capture the truth?

W To learn more about Tannen's work, go to www.pearsonhotlinks.com, enter the title or ISBN of this book and select weblink 8.2.

John Gray, author of *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus*, also argues that there are communication differences between men and women. For example, during a disagreement, a man tends to try to win rather than to understand his partner, while she tends to exaggerate events to demonstrate her emotion (e.g. Why are you *always* late?).



highlighted ways that men and women communicate within single sex groups and how the differences between them cause misunderstanding and conflict. Examples from her research include the tendency for women to say *Sorry* as a way to express empathy, while men use it and hear it as an apology. Both variants serve the purpose of maintaining same-sex relationships. Men who express a negative state of mood or feeling can be frustrated when a woman responds with her own experience of a similar feeling rather than acknowledging the importance of the man's. Men typically interrupt each other and expect to be interrupted in a rather competitive conversational style, while women tend to take turns more fairly. Thus there is a difficulty for women who might want to speak in a group of men but are unwilling to interrupt.

Although communication clearly has a role in maintaining relationships, it is important to note that it is only one of many strategic or routine devices we employ to keep ourselves together. The change and end of relationships is discussed on pages 272–274.

The role of culture in the formation and maintenance of relationships

A great deal of research has focused on relationships within individualistic societies such as are dominant in the Anglo-American world and western Europe. However, the growth of communities of ethnic minorities with different cultural values and the study of more collectivist cultures have allowed us to more clearly understand the various roles that culture plays in both the formation and maintenance of relationships.

One of the most important cultural differences is between those societies where young adults typically make their own choice about who their partner will be and societies where

marriages are arranged by the family. Although someone coming from a culture following the first of these norms might find it hard to believe, a large percentage of arranged marriages appear to be successful despite the absence of choice for the partners. Making such a choice for a relative can be an elaborate process and families often take great pride in attempting to find a good match. Perhaps it is no surprise that bypassing many of the distracting influences of passionate infatuation can have more successful long-term results.

There are certain universals to attraction in terms of mate preference (pages 204–205) but there are also cultural differences. In some countries, chastity and homemaking skills are more valued in women than other characteristics, particularly in more traditional societies with more clearly defined gender roles (Buss 1990). In these societies, what makes a good wife for a man is more easily determined by a man's family than it might be in more individualistic Western societies where high value is placed on romance and passion. Although there is evidence that this has little impact on marital satisfaction (Yelsma and Athappilly, 1988), it may be problematic that so much research in this area relies on questionnaire methods.

Arranged marriages are common in some parts of the world.





Cognitive dissonance could well affect the answers of respondents from both groups, with people unable to write that they are dissatisfied. However, there may also be social norms affecting how appropriate it is to express dissatisfaction with a marriage. There are also different understandings across cultures about what is a good or a bad marriage. Affection, for example, may not be a big part of relationships for some cultures. Indo-Pakistani marriages tend to be satisfying when there is a strong religious component to the relationship, when there is financial security, and when there is relatively high status and parental acceptance by families with good reputations (Ahmad and Reid, 2008).

There is also significant evidence that expectations are changing in many traditional societies and more intimacy and romance is expected than previously, which can lead to difficulties.



Cognitive dissonance is also discussed on page 250. It is an uncomfortable feeling caused by holding two contradictory beliefs or ideas at the same time and a person is motivated to resolve this by changing one of them. Perhaps it is difficult for a person who is committed to a marriage to admit to being dissatisfied.

EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

Communication in South Asian Canadian relationships (Ahmad and Reid, 2008)

The researchers in this study attempted to investigate whether special communication styles were required to maintain arranged marriages. They focused specifically on listening styles in the relationship and constructed a survey to be completed without participants sharing their answers with their spouse. A snowball sample was obtained by asking the participants to give surveys to others they knew.

In particular, the researchers expected that their survey would show a strong relationship between marriage satisfaction and marriage type where levels of traditionalism are low and self-ratings of levels of listening to understand (as opposed to listening to respond) are high.

The researchers measured marital satisfaction using the Revised Relationship Adjustment Survey; this includes items such as 'My partner understands and sympathizes with me' as well as extra items relevant to the sample such as 'Our marriage has provided me with the financial and/or social security I want'. The degree of traditionalism in the marriage was measured on the Traditional Orientation to Marital Relationship Scale specifically constructed for this study. Listening styles were measured with the Listening Styles in Committed Relationship Scale, which includes items such as 'When my partner is explaining him/herself, I try to get a sense of what things must be like for him/her, so that I may better understand how he/she must be feeling' (listening to understand), and 'I don't find it necessary to pay close attention when my partner is talking, because I already know what my partner is going to say before he/she even says it'.

The researchers found significant correlations between scores on the scales as expected: there was less satisfaction among the more traditional relationships, and this was accompanied by a tendency to listen to respond rather than to understand. It is suggested that expectations of equality in the relationship increase effort to listen, which in turn increase satisfaction.

EXERCISE

- This is a correlational study using self-report data from a survey. What kind of problems might this cause researchers when they interpret the results? What does the study show us about the role of culture in the formation and maintenance of relationships?

Canary and Dainton (2003) offer another example of how culture affects the maintenance of relationships. They show how Koreans tend to use less direct and explicit maintenance behaviours; for example, trying to appease their partners not by asking what they want but by anticipating – so they might, for instance, pour a second cup of coffee for a partner without asking. This links to the researchers' finding that Confucian concepts form the basis of Korean intimate relationships. So, for example, as long as a Korean person believes that their partner is engaging in eu-ri, a long-term obligatory association, they will remain in the relationship.

Why relationships change and end

Describing change in relationships

Knapp and Vangelisti (1996) proposed a model that describes the change of relationships through ten stages, the first five occurring in the growth of the relationship, and the last five occurring in the relationship's decline (Table 8.1).

TABLE 8.1 KNAPP AND VANGELISTI MODEL FOR CHANGE IN RELATIONSHIPS

Stage	Typical events and behaviour
Coming together – growth of the relationship	
initiation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • first meeting and brief interaction • first impressions are formed
experimenting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • small talk, testing the other person and searching for common ground
intensifying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • relationship becomes friendship • personal disclosures become common, especially regarding feelings about the relationship
integrating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the two lives become more connected and partners consider each other in making plans • those outside the relationship become more aware of the couple • use of 'we' becomes more frequent.
bonding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • some form of commitment is made, often ritualized, like engagement, marriage, cohabitation or friendship rituals
Coming apart – decline of the relationship	
differentiating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • differences become more obvious and partners desire independence • some arguments over this may begin • more use of 'I' and 'my'
circumscribing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • partners avoid difficult topics in conversation as communication is restricted but public appearances are maintained
stagnating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • further restrictions in conversation; partners 'know' what the other will say and prefer not to start talking • may stay together in order to avoid greater pain of breaking up
avoiding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • one or both partners choose to avoid contact, through lateness or alternate commitments or direct expressions of disinterest
terminating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • physical distancing and dissociation as partners prepare to be individuals

Knapp and Vangelisti describe but do not explain changes in relationships.



There is a heavy emphasis on communication between the partners in this model, beginning with actively seeking out ways to communicate more with each other and closing with actively trying to find ways to avoid communicating until ready to separate. Although the model applies particularly well to romantic relationships, it can also apply to friendships and family relationships. It is not uncommon to notice avoiding behaviours in room-mates, siblings and parents as they prepare to move away for reasons other than dissatisfaction with the relationship (e.g. when a child first moves out of home). Researchers are presently particularly interested in how well this model applies given that technology such as social networking sites have made it easier for people to communicate despite distance.

The model does not offer analysis of *why* partners move from one stage to another but has become well known for its accuracy in describing *how* change tends to occur.

Psychologist Steve Duck has produced a large amount of research on relationships. One of his most important ideas is that we filter our relationships, based on sociological factors such as the locations where we allow ourselves to meet others, pre-interaction cues such as



information received about people before we meet them and stereotypes or prejudice, then interaction cues and cognitive cues based on what the other person says and the cognitive judgements we make about them (Duck, 1985).

Breakdown of relationships

Another vein of Duck's research has focused on the *reasons* for the breakdown of relationships. Reasons cited include predisposing personal factors and precipitating factors. Predisposing personal factors include personal habits and cultural differences, which can present background instability and resentment. However, in many relationships such tension can be tolerated or resolved. External precipitating factors are more often the immediate causes of breakdown. These include difficult work situations (e.g. one partner works in the morning and the other in the evening, one partner needs to travel for work) and infidelity (Duck, 1982).

Levinger (1980) suggests that the relationship will end if there appears to be no solution to a problem except a new life, if alternative partners are available, if there is an expectation that the relationship will fail, or if there is a lack of commitment to the relationship. Byrnes and Clore (1970) suggest that learning theories can explain maintenance and break-up, particularly in terms of a classically conditioned association with difficult times and a lack of reinforcement for continued partnership.

Canary and Dainton (2003) suggest that relationships have a natural tendency to end. This means that we can begin to look at problems in relationships as catalysts for change rather than causes for change.

Some sociological theories about the end of relationships focus on exchange and equity. When the relative rewards partners offer each other are perceived to be unbalanced, when costs begin to outweigh benefits, when alternative relationships are available and appear to offer better or more balanced rewards, and when there are few barriers to leaving the relationship, we are motivated to end it.

Two early theorists working in this framework were George Homans and Peter Blau. Their work has been very influential but it is clear that when applied to human relationships, it has significant flaws. Rational choice is a key part of relationships, but there is a range of situations that cannot always be accounted for in terms of rational choice, exchange and equity. Examples of such situations include the mother-son relationship, and the struggle faced by a woman to leave her abusive partner.

Thus it is necessary to look beyond an individual's cognitions and rationality to various factors that lead to the kind of dissatisfaction that leads to conflict and break-up. Duck (1988) suggested that differences in background and culture, and previous experience of relationship instability all contribute. It is not hard to imagine how differences in expectations and communication styles could lead to conflict.



A catalyst initiates or accelerates a process but doesn't necessarily cause it. Canary and Dainton suggest that problems don't cause a change but make it come faster.



People do not always move in to or out of relationships in apparently rational ways.

EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

The dissolution of gay and lesbian relationships (Kurdek, 1991)

The break-up of heterosexual relationships has been difficult for researchers to study, and the relative infrequency of homosexual partnerships has made them even harder to study.

Kurdek was able to ask 13 couples (who were involved in a longitudinal study of gay and lesbian relationships, and who had broken up during the course of the study) to complete a survey that asked about the causes of their break-up.

continued

● Examiner's hint

Consider what the implications are of the conclusion that the reasons for break-up are similar in heterosexual and homosexual couples.

The answers given to open-ended questions were grouped into the following categories, presented in order of frequency:

- non-responsiveness (communication problems such as lack of assurance)
- partner problems (e.g. drug/alcohol abuse)
- sexual issues (e.g. partner had an affair)
- fusion (e.g. becoming too close and ignoring own needs)
- incompatibility (e.g. growing in opposite direction)
- control (e.g. one partner insisting things were done their way).

The participants were also asked to rate 11 common reasons for the break-up of heterosexual relationships on a scale from 1 to 5, where a high score indicated agreement that this was a factor in their break-up. Only three items achieved mean ratings above 3: frequent absence, sexual incompatibility and mental cruelty.

Kurdek was struck by the similarity of these results to research already completed on people who had been through the break-up of a heterosexual partnership. In particular, a breakdown in communication seems to play a major role in the dissolution of relationships.

EXERCISE

- 8 What strengths and limitations are there to this study?

8.4

Violence

● Examiner's hint

The command term *discuss* in relation to the effects of violence means you need to provide descriptions of both short-term and long-term effects and to address problems of research in this area, particularly focusing on methodological issues highlighted in the text. You should be sure to include reference to the studies in the empirical research boxes and remember to be critical about them too.

Learning outcomes

- Evaluate sociocultural explanations of the origins of violence.
- Discuss the effects of short-term and long-term exposure to violence.
- Discuss the relative effectiveness of two strategies for reducing violence.

Although there are many and varied explanations of the origins of violence, here we focus only on sociocultural explanations. Social learning theory appears to have a great deal of explanatory power across a number of situations.

Social learning theory explanations of violence

Bandura's experiments in the 1960s (page 122) gave clear evidence that children are more likely to engage in violent behaviour if they have previously been exposed to a violent model. A number of factors have been offered to explain how this might happen beyond the basic idea that children can learn through vicarious reinforcement. In particular, it seems that exposure to violence (whether via models that are similar or authoritative to the viewer, or observed via media like movies, television and video games) can lead to disinhibition and desensitization.

A longitudinal study of boys growing up in New York correlated a preference for violent television at age 8 with how aggressive their peers rated them at age 18, and later with the likeliness of them having committed a violent crime (Huesmann et al., 1984). This might be explained in terms of exposure to violent models over time causing the boys to lose the negative emotional reaction we initially have towards seeing violent acts (desensitization) and losing the urge to control aggressive impulses.

There are two key problems with this approach to explaining the origins of violence. One is that research to support the theory is very limited in what it can achieve. Ethical reasons clearly prevent researchers from experimentally inducing genuine violence in a realistic situation, leading to criticisms over the ecological validity of work such as Bandura's. The second key problem is that the approach cannot be taken to mean that all violence originates from observation or we would have a paradox – violence must occur in the first place to be observed. There are also a number of biological and cognitive factors involved in violence, including physiological arousal and the influence of hormones such as testosterone. In addition, there are other social and cultural conditions that might give rise to violence.

However, the theory does have significant strengths, mostly in terms of its usefulness in application. A large body of non-experimental research suggests that violence is affected by exposure to violent media; for example, the natural experiment tracking changes after the introduction of television in a small Canadian community (Williams, 1986), and the meta-analysis of studies conducted by Wood et al. (1991).

Other sociocultural explanations of violence make use of intergroup conflict theory (Sherif, 1966) and social identity theory (Chapter 2, page 110), suggesting that group membership plays a key role in developing the desire to act violently towards members of another group. However, these explanations are not as successful at clarifying why individuals actually perform violent acts or why an individual might act violently towards his or her own children or partner.

Social interaction explanation of violence

An alternative approach is offered by Tedeschi and Felson (1994) who suggest that interpersonal violence should be considered as a form of social interaction. This requires that it be seen in terms of a means to achieve a certain social or material outcome. This could be the respect of peers, it could be possession of a valuable item, it could be the reduction of frustration, an opportunity to have sex, or a sense of pride or vindication. This approach is particularly attractive when understood in conjunction with social identity theory, because it provides motives for both violence as a sign of group membership and violence as a way to compensate for loss of self-esteem.

It is also possible to consider reasons why violence is seen as an appropriate course of action to achieve these goals, and various factors associated with increased violence hint at a powerful role for culture and socialization, maintained through social norms (page 119). For example, a study by Fite et al. (2008) found that children of parents with a high level of conflict in their relationship are more likely to consider aggression as the appropriate course of action in a number of social situations.

Culture of honour

Moving to the wider culture, Cohen et al. (1996) describe the idea of a **culture of honour**, in which even small perceived insults *must* be met with violent retribution. They specifically argue that in the south of the USA, a past of lawlessness and instability has resulted in extreme self-reliance, which is reflected in loose gun-control laws today. Their previous research supports this idea in that they found a tendency for white males in this area to endorse statements of violence if the violence was used in the name of protection.



To access Worksheet 8.1 on biological and cognitive factors in violence, please visit www.pearsonbacconline.com and follow the on-screen instructions.



How can we best study the causes of violence? Should we focus more on psychology or biology?



Some consider violence to be simply a social interaction, like gift-giving or greeting.



In a culture of honour, violence is accepted and expected in some circumstances.



Gun ownership laws vary around the world: in many countries it is considered a right for a person to possess a gun to use to protect themselves or their property. In other places, this would be seen as inappropriate.

EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

The culture of honour (Cohen et al., 1996)

To test whether there was a difference in readiness to commit acts of violence between individuals from the north or south of the USA, these researchers set up an experimental situation for 83 university students, 42 northerners and 41 southerners.

The students were asked to fill out a questionnaire which they had to take to a table at the end of a long, narrow hallway. A confederate working at a filing cabinet part-way down the hallway had to push in the drawer of the filing cabinet as the participant walked past. When forced to do it again on the way back, the confederate did so with greater force, bumped into the participant, and called him an 'asshole'. A control condition ran without the bump or insult. Two observers in the corridor rated the participant's emotional reactions, particularly looking for anger and amusement. After the corridor incident, participants had to guess the emotions on pictures of faces and then do a story-completion exercise, containing scenarios such as the following.

It had only been about 20 minutes since they had arrived at the party when Jill pulled Steve aside, obviously bothered about something.

'What's wrong?' asked Steve.

'It's Larry. I mean, he knows that you and I are engaged, but he's already made two passes at me tonight.'

Jill walked back into the crowd, and Steve decided to keep his eye on Larry. Sure enough, within five minutes Larry was reaching over and trying to kiss Jill.

The researchers describe their debriefing as thorough, with a short questionnaire at the end revealing that the experimental group were more positive about the experiment than the control group.

Northerners were rated as more amused when they were bumped, but there was no significant difference in the tendency to project negative emotions onto the faces, although northerners were more likely to see happiness on the faces. However, insulted southerners were much more likely to end the above scenario in violence than northerners or southerners in the control group: 75% ended the scenario with injury or threat of injury to Larry. The researchers take this as evidence that northerners see the situation as a cause for amusement, while southerners see it as a spark to violence.

A second experiment used approximately the same procedure, but levels of cortisol and testosterone in participants' saliva were measured before and after the insult. Insulted southerners' cortisol levels rose far more than in any of the other conditions. In an addition to the experiment, the insulted southerners were willing to take a higher level of electric shock if others were watching. A third alteration had participants walking down the hallway again and being bumped and insulted. The effect of this was tested as another confederate walked down the hallway in a kind of 'chicken' game: the confederate would not stop walking forward, and the dependent variable was thus how close the confederate could get to the participant before the participant moved out of the way. Those from the south were far more affected by the insult: non-insulted participants stepped aside an average of 2.7m from the confederate, whereas those who were insulted averaged just 0.94m and perceived themselves as appearing less masculine to a witness.

The researchers suggest there are two reasons for these results. Southerners may have been more surprised by this rudeness than northerners, and have different scripts for dealing with being insulted. In a culture of honour, seemingly small insults become a matter of great importance as they are a threat to masculinity and must be addressed. When two members of such a culture engage each other, this leads to an escalation that can finish in homicide.

Story completion tasks allow participants to project their own values and personality onto the characters in the story.



EXERCISE

- 9 This study contains several significant strengths compared to much of the research on violence. Provide a brief evaluation of the study, listing three strengths and three limitations. Do you think the conclusions are warranted?

Again, although the culture of honour is an important addition to our understanding of how violence may be encouraged, it is important not to ignore the role of other factors. Cognitions, particularly in terms of schemas and scripts for insult and retribution, clearly play an important role as not every member of a culture of honour engages in violent behaviour when threatened. Similarly, at a biological level of analysis, we might be able to see how such scripts for violence have evolved over time in particular environments. There are strong evolutionary arguments for intra-familial violence.

Feminist theory

A final perspective on violence must be considered because of its relevance to domestic violence. Feminist theory has been employed to explain the motivation of males to physically attack females. According to many theorists, the fact that it is so common for males to use physical violence in their homes is a symptom of male dominance in society. In order to assert their dominance and prevent any threat to their control over power and economic resources in the home, men resort to physical violence. In several countries in the world and in specific communities, there is something like a culture of honour among males, a script that instructs males to respond to threats to their power in this way and accepts or even rewards it when they do. Various cultural factors such as the need to 'save face' or 'keep the family together' tend to prevent anyone uncovering the abuse (Koverola and Murtaugh, 2006) and therefore support its continuation.

The effects of exposure to violence

Discuss the effects of short-term and long-term exposure to violence.

Research in this area has always been difficult, because until the use of qualitative methods in recent times, it was not clear whether any effects of exposure to violence could be isolated from effects of other things happening in the home, for example there may be very different outcomes for children who are beaten than for adults, or for those who witness violence without being directly assaulted; however it is becoming more and more apparent that those who have been exposed to violence consider it to have had powerful effects. Apart from the obvious risk of physical injury, whether temporarily painful or permanently disabling, Cahn (2006) describes effects that witnessing and experiencing violence in the short-term can have on children as follows:

- increased levels of anxiety and depression
- feelings of fear, anger, grief, shame, distrust and powerlessness
- increased risk of suicide
- increased risk-taking, school truancy, early sexual activity, substance abuse and delinquency
- diminished school performance
- increased risk of learning difficulties like dyslexia
- obedience problems, more lying and more cheating at school
- problems maintaining relationships with others
- increased likeliness to respond to conflict aggressively.

This is because exposure to violence is supported by studies of video game use, which clearly does not include direct physical assault on the study participant. This kind of

W To learn more about culture of honour research and some additional evolutionary perspectives on violence, go to www.pearsonhotlinks.com, enter the title or ISBN of this book and select weblink 8.3. To learn more about crimes of honour involving violence against women, go to www.pearsonhotlinks.com, enter the title or ISBN of this book and select weblink 8.4.

T Earlier we considered the argument that altruism does not exist: that people do not perform prosocial behaviour without gaining some kind of personal profit. Compare this now with violence. Use the same logic to consider whether violence without motive occurs and how this affects your understanding about people.

f Domestic violence has a profound effect on children, even when they are not the victims.

research has shown that even short-term use of violent games increases aggressive behaviour, aggressive thoughts, aggressive affect, aggressive schemata and decreases in prosocial behaviour and attitudes (Bartholow, Sestir and Davis, 2005). Bartholow et al. (2005) tested this in a sample of 92 university students who were told they would have their reaction times tested after playing a first-person shooter game. Although they were told they were competing in the reaction time task against another participant, there was no competition, only a confederate who was present for the beginning of the study. In fact during the post-game task, participants tried to press a button in response to a noise as quickly as possible, with the winner deciding how much unpleasant noise would be delivered to their competitor each time. Even controlling for trait aggression and previous video game use, being exposed to violence in the first part of the study caused an increase in the volume of noise participants delivered to the confederate. However the study also provided evidence that there was already increased aggression among those who had previously been exposed to video game violence.

The finding that long-term exposure to video game violence has an effect on behaviour in the laboratory is important, as it resonates with many of the presumed effects of exposure to domestic violence over a longer period of time. Although it can be extremely difficult to trace a causal connection between exposure to violence and its long-term effects, Cahn (2006) cites the following:

- potential for boys to become abusers later
- increased likeliness that girls who enter violent relationships to tolerate the violence
- continuing depression for both males and females and low self-esteem in females.

A typical finding in domestic violence research is that male perpetrators are more likely to have come from homes where they witnessed or were victims of domestic violence e.g. (Rosenbaum and O'Leary, 1981). It is extremely important to remember that the majority of this information comes from correlational studies; although it appears that many people who engage in violence in the home were once victims of violence themselves, it does not follow that victims of violence will become perpetrators in turn. Tavis and Aronson (2008) describe the terrible but not uncommon error made when children are separated from a parent because it is learned that the parent was previously a victim of domestic violence. A factor that compounds this problem is that a lot of data has been gathered from shelters – institutions established to provide a safe place for victims of domestic violence to go. There may be quite significant differences in the amount and type of violence experienced or witnessed by those who enter a shelter as opposed to those who stay, and the removal from familiar surroundings may be an added trauma for children (Edleson, 1999).

If we cannot gather the necessary scientific evidence to support the notion that being the victim of violence causes a child to later become a perpetrator of domestic violence, what social implications might this have? Is it necessary to conduct experiments in this area?



EXERCISE

- 10** Consider what evidence would be required to establish a causal relationship between being the victim of domestic violence as a child and becoming a perpetrator later. Why is this unlikely to be found?

EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

Intimate partner violence and its possible effects on men's mental health (Rhodes et al., 2002)

This study aimed to find out what mental health problems are present in people involved in intimate partner violence (IPV). The participants in the study were a convenience sample of 1122 men, mostly African American, visiting the trauma centre of a public hospital for non-urgent treatment. They were asked to use a computer to complete a 20-minute health assessment questionnaire which contained items concerned with IPV, depression, traumatic stress, suicidality, substance use and general health. The researchers were then able to compare the scores of those who were involved in IPV (37%) with the scores of those who reported none (63%).

Their results suggest that mental health problems such as those measured are most common among those who are both victims and perpetrators of violence.

In particular, there seems to be a strong relationship between IPV perpetration and suicidal thoughts, particularly for those who are on both sides of the violence. While only 0.7% of those who didn't report IPV reported suicidal thoughts, 3.5% of the victim-only group reported them, 2.5% of the perpetrator-only group, and 23.4% of the group who were both victims and perpetrators. Depression showed a similar trend, with reports at 3.3%, 9.7%, 7.5% and 40.3% respectively.

In terms of behaviour such as smoking, use of other substances and not wearing seatbelts while driving, the men who were both victims and perpetrators seem to be more at risk.

EXERCISE

- 11** What are the strengths and limitations of this study? The authors do not claim a causal link between violence and mental health. Do you think they should?

Battered woman syndrome – when victim becomes perpetrator

Referred to variously as battered person syndrome and battered spouse syndrome, this notorious condition was first described in the 1970s to explain the mystery of why a woman might stay with an abusive partner. While attempting to develop strategies to appease an abusive partner, women seemed to acquire passivity similar to the dogs in research by Seligman and Maier (1967) – characterized particularly by a lack of attempt to avoid punishment. With this explanation in place, lawyers started attempting to use the syndrome as a justification for a self-defence plea in cases where a woman had murdered her husband.

Saunders (1986) asked 52 battered women who had sought help from an agency or shelter to complete a lengthy questionnaire that assessed the frequency of different conflict tactics, their motivation for any violence in their relationship, and any social desirability bias in their responses. He found that the most frequent reason given for the violence which many of the women had carried out was self-defence (combined with fighting back). He suggests that much of the violence carried out by women is pre-emptory, to prevent an attack when the woman senses it is coming because of the partner's actions. He also points out that the kind of attacks most women engaged in were mildly harmful rather than seriously injuring. The study thus gives some support for the notion that violence begets violence and that one dangerous effect of domestic violence is the escalation of attacks to a sometimes deadly outcome.



To learn about the story of Gaile Owens, who was sentenced to death for killing her partner, go to www.pearsonhotlinks.com, enter the title or ISBN of this book and select weblink 8.5. Be warned that some of the details are very disturbing.

Strategies for reducing violence

Group therapy and the Duluth model

One strategy for reducing violence is psychological treatment for the perpetrator. This can include individual therapy that tries to address the causes of violence or the increasingly common anger management courses that are run in groups. Here, we focus on group treatment for men who have been identified as perpetrators of domestic abuse.

Robertson (1999) identifies three key problems that make the treatment of violent men difficult. All are centred on a lack of motivation to change their behaviour:



Group therapy for violent men usually includes lessons on anger management.

- culture and/or society may accept violent behaviour
- the violence is likely to have been effective in achieving particular goals and thus has been positively reinforced in the past
- a perpetrator of violence is seldom willing to submit to the power of therapists or facilitators and has not usually joined the programme out of choice.

To address these problems, group treatment can initially be a very favourable approach as it allows for the establishment of new group norms that do not accept sexism or violence. Thus, even within a culture that accepts violence, members of the group can be chastised for breaching the group's norms. A range of procedures can be carried out, including anger management training and cognitive-behavioural work focusing on developing insight into the costs and risks of violence relative to its rewards. Robertson (1999) describes programmes running as intensive residential courses from as little as six weeks to as long as three years because it can take a long time for the violence to stop.

Although these programmes usually report a good success rate, there are a number of criticisms. First, it is very difficult to assess success. Rates of recidivism are one way, but as the majority of domestic violence goes unreported and unrecorded, this is not an easy statistic to use. Shepard (1992) examined recidivism rates five years after a Duluth intervention and found that 40% of the men on the programme were either convicted of assault or had received police attention for it. This, along with the findings of Dutton et al. (1997), suggests that rates of recidivism are higher than recorded statistics can tell us, and that certain personality characteristics plus, for example, a substance abuse problem, can also predict recidivism.

Scores on measures such as the Conflict Tactics Scale may change as a result of therapy, but as Robertson (1999) asks, are we enhancing the safety of battered women or producing better-educated batterers? That is, are we teaching participants what the correct answers to questions are rather than really changing behaviour? A further problem can be that reducing violence is not necessarily an appropriate target: how much difference does it make to a victim of domestic violence if the beatings are weekly or daily? This is not yet clear. In addition, there is a risk with any group treatment that members will share strategies for committing violence or hiding it.

One of the earliest approaches to group treatment was part of the Duluth model for preventing violence. This includes cognitive-behaviour therapy in groups along with multi-agency attention to the domestic situation (such as increased likelihood of arrest for violence). This has been adapted for use in a number of countries and has been the target of some quite vicious criticism because of its ideological focus on patriarchal violence – that in which a male perpetrator asserts power over a female victim through violence. It has been criticized for having too much – even an exclusive – focus on females as victims, even when they carry out more violence than the male. The Domestic Abuse Intervention Project Power and Control wheel (Figure 8.1) helps men identify the behaviours they use to control family members.

The model has also been criticized for its lack of focus on other issues that contribute to domestic violence, such as substance abuse. Despite the criticisms, the model is in widespread use and has been adapted to be less gender-biased and less culture-biased too. Robertson (1999) refers to its successful adaptation for use with Maori people in New Zealand, which makes better use of extended family and community support networks.

EXERCISE

- 12 a Make an information leaflet or brochure that details types of abuse or violence and possible effects on victims.
- b Find out who people in your area can contact if they want help or advice about domestic violence and advertise this in your leaflet.
- c Contact a local organization or psychologist to find out what kind of treatment or therapy is available and make a note of this on your leaflet.

Figure 8.1

The Domestic Abuse Intervention Project Power and Control Wheel.



To learn more about a variation on the Duluth wheel for use with Muslim men, go to www.pearsonhotlinks.com, enter the title or ISBN of this book and select weblink 8.6.

To learn more about criticisms of the Duluth model, go to www.pearsonhotlinks.com, enter the title or ISBN of this book and select weblink 8.7.

Primary prevention strategies in schools

Primary prevention of violence attempts to stop the violence before it happens. Since so many aspects of mental and physical health are put at risk by violence, it is both economically wise and socially responsible for authorities to show an interest in programmes to reduce the level of violence in the community.

Education programmes have been devised to help males deal with norms about violence and to help females and children learn to recognize danger signs and develop coping and help-seeking strategies. One example of this is described by Brozo et al. (2002).

EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

'I know the difference between a real man and a TV man' (Brozo et al., 2002)

The authors of this research included two teachers of a group of 14 7th grade pupils in the USA. Pupils in this group studied a novel featuring young Hispanic and African Americans in New York and were expected to reflect on issues of masculinity and violence. They were in the middle of the exercise when the school shooting at Columbine High School occurred. As part of their studies, pupils were asked to complete a diary of their television viewing and consider portrayals of violence in other media, particularly in terms of the effect that the limited range of male types presented through media might have on behaviour.

At the conclusion of the period of activities and discussions, the students completed for a second time a survey about how much violence they had recently instigated. A significant reduction in self-reported violence was observed and responses to statements relating to the culture of honour concept (e.g. 'Real men protect their families by fighting') had changed. A student who initially wrote 'Yes ... Where I live you got to fight because people always messing with you,' afterwards wrote 'No ... you protect them better by having a good job and a good house.'

To access Worksheet 8.2 on domestic violence, please visit www.pearsonbacconline.com and follow the on-screen instructions.



EXERCISE

13 What issues are there with the validity of this study?

Programmes like the one described above are common enough in the USA these days. Smithey and Straus (2004) suggest that up to 67% of students are exposed to them and are becoming more knowledgeable about the nature and consequences of intimate violence. But it is very difficult to know if this has or can be translated into a reduction in violent behaviour. Similar conclusions were reached in 1998 by the National Research Council investigation into the effectiveness of strategies to prevent domestic violence: where there is quasi-experimental work comparing the effects of participation in schools that have run a programme and those that have not, the programme appears to have had an effect.

Edleson (2000) found that the longest follow-up study to investigate the effectiveness of school programmes was 16 months, which is clearly not long enough to observe the kind of sustained preventative effect that is intended by this kind of strategy.

Some police authorities keep a very close eye on people who are considered possible abusers, even using a criminal profile to identify those who are at risk of committing murder in the family, and intervene before it can happen. This may appear like the futuristic movie *Minority Report* in which telepaths warn agents about crimes before they happen.





Comparison of school-based prevention and group treatment strategies

EXERCISE

- 14** A basic framework to begin discussing the relative effectiveness of these two strategies is provided below. Copy the table below and complete it with brief notes and then construct a plan for a 22-mark essay.

	Group treatment	School-based prevention
Intended target of the intervention (which level of analysis?)		
How effectiveness is measured		
Evidence for effectiveness		
Problems with measurement of effectiveness		
Strengths of each intervention		
Limitations of each intervention		

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

- 1** Contrast **two** theories of altruism in humans. [22 marks]
- **Examiner's hint**
The command term *contrast* requires you to give an account of the differences between the two theories. Remember you can also be asked to *describe*, *explain* and *compare* the theories. For a 22-mark answer, it is often best not to start by describing first one theory and then the other, and then listing differences. A better strategy is to address both theories throughout the answer, comparing them in a number of ways such as their validity, usefulness, or the amount and quality of empirical research.
- 2** To what extent do biological factors influence prosocial behaviour? [22 marks]
- 3** Compare the role of sociocultural and cognitive factors in attraction. [22 marks]
- 4** Discuss the relative effectiveness of **two** strategies for reducing violence. [22 marks]



To access Worksheet 8.3 with a full example answer to question 1, please visit www.pearsonbacconline.com and follow the on-screen instructions.



To access Worksheet 8.4 with additional practice questions and answer guidelines, please visit www.pearsonbacconline.com and follow the on-screen instructions.