

ANSWER BOOKLET
LIVRET DE RÉPONSES
CUADERNILLO DE RESPUESTAS



International Baccalaureate
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4 PAGES / PÁGINAS

At the start of each answer to a question, write the question number in the box. / Avant de répondre à une question, veuillez écrire le numéro de la question que vous allez traiter dans la case prévue à cet effet. / Al comienzo de cada respuesta, escriba el número de pregunta en la casilla.



Example
 Exemple
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Personal relationships are the bonds between two individuals that can be romantic - based on intimacy and interdependence - or platonic in an unsexual manner. The study of personal relationships is extremely complex and involves all the biological, cognitive and sociocultural approaches to psychology in order to thoroughly explain it. However, the sociocultural approach mainly explores how relationships are initially formed, and why they may develop to change or end. Adopting the sociocultural approach can be undertaken by analysing how social factors and cultural influences as separate concepts affect personal relationships. Cultural factors explore how the set of values and ways of thinking that make up our identity as a result of growing up in a particular area affect our relationships, whereas social factors explore how we are ~~or~~ implicitly affected by our immediate surroundings and environment. In this essay, I will consider the merits of sociocultural factors such as proximity and ~~environmental~~ ^{cultural norms} ~~context~~ in their contribution to our overall understanding of personal relationships, before branching out to see how cognitive factors can also deepen our understanding.

One social factor that influences the formation of relationships is proximity. Proximity refers to physical closeness, and

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research suggests that we are more likely to form a relationship with someone who we are more proximate to in our everyday lives. This is because of 'availability'; a rational logical argument that relationships will arise more with people whom we frequently interact with.

Festinger (1950) carried out a study to explore the role of proximity in friendship patterns in MIT university.

Students at Westgate housing were observed and interviewed by researchers over a period of time. Students were interviewed in pairs. The results showed that 65% of friendship pairs lived in the same house, while 44% lived ~~next door~~ in the next adjacent room to the other. Festinger's results showed that there was a negative correlation between distance and number of friendships. This supports the idea of proximity, because it shows that the more opportunity we have to interact with someone, the more likely we will form a relationship.

Proximity pertains to both platonic and sexual partners, and this can be supported by a cognitive theory 'mere exposure effect'. This theory explains how the more frequently we encounter something, the more we positively evaluate it. This is because humans enjoy the comforting ~~predictability~~ predictability of the familiar - it gives us a reassuring sense of security.

Thus, while social factors do contribute to our understanding of relationships, cognitive concepts provide a foundation for our understanding. The relevance of physical proximity is diminishing in the modern world as a result of the internet. Humans are now able to connect with each other from thousands of miles away via chatrooms and social media, so psychologists may need to refresh this theory of 'geographical proximity' to 'psychological proximity'.

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Besides social factors, cultural influences have a profound influence on attraction and formation of relationships. Attraction is the romantic desire for a specific person. Social norms and cultural values influence our attraction as a lens through which we see the world. A study by Buss (1994) on 10,000 individuals from 37 cultures with a mean age of 23 was carried out, as the largest cross-cultural study on mate choice, involving two questionnaires. The results from these questionnaires showed that while some traits were universally attractive (etic) such as kindness, mutual love, and physical attractiveness, some were very culture specific (emic). USA ranked love as a top priority, whereas countries like China, India and Iran ranked chastity as very high. Europeans did not show any care about chastity. Furthermore, countries like China and Japan ranked domestic skills quite highly. Buss' findings very clearly show that cultural paradigms affect how we perceive attraction. In countries with heavily traditional culture with ~~strict~~ rigid gender roles, domestic skills and chastity proved very important. However, in more individualistic cultures, romance, physical attractiveness, and love were ranked highly. These distinctions may be as a result of arranged marriages in more traditional cultures. This study was good as it had a large sample size. However, the questionnaire had to be continuously translated and re-translated, which may have resulted in unreliability. Furthermore, self-reports are very subjective ~~mis~~ judgements which are very susceptible to bias. The findings of this study can also not accurately be generalised to each specific country, as the sample population was not representative of whole population.

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Having explored both social and cultural factors that influence personal relationships, it is clear that the sociocultural approach contributes a great deal to our understanding of personal relationships. However, using only one approach is not holistic, we ought to explore how the cognitive approach can also deepen our understanding.

One cognitive factor that affects the formation of a personal relationship is self-esteem. A true experiment carried out by Kessler and Borah (1970) aimed to see how our self-esteem affects our willingness to engage in conversation with an attractive woman. A fake IQ test was administered. Participants were split up into two groups who were both given fictitious scores. Group 1 was told their scores were 'off the charts' and the highest they had ever seen. Group 2 was told that their scores were impossibly low, and that it must have been a mistake - they were asked to redo them. All participants were told their scores privately. Participants were then sent to a waiting room, where an attractive woman would walk in. The independent variable was their level of self-esteem, and dependent variable was willingness to engage with an attractive woman. Results showed that higher confidence males were significantly more willing than low-esteem males to ~~engage~~ engage, and expressed a much deeper level of engagement. These findings make it clear how not only social or cultural factors influence how we form relationships, but we are influenced by our own cognitive biases. This study was unethical as it involved heavy deception and the manipulation of emotions, a lack of informed consent, and ultimately disappointment.

However this study had a very high ecological validity, as it occurred in a believable real-life setting.

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However, researchers failed to control their initial levels of self-esteem, and how predisposed they were to being socially awkward. Furthermore, it was not clear that talking directly translated to attraction.

Having considered a range of sociocultural factors such as proximity and cultural norms of attraction, it is clear that the sociocultural approach is vital to understanding personal relationships. Yet, they do not paint the whole picture. Human relationships are complex and dynamic in ~~an~~ a way that requires psychologists to look at the field of research from both biological and cognitive ~~two~~ approaches too. While the studies and factors previously outlined in this essay do ~~trivially~~ ~~effectively~~ contribute to our overall understanding of relationships, more research should be done into the interrelations between all three approaches. This is the only way to get to the heart of our complex human attraction, where a reductionist approach should be rejected. ~~These~~

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