

Teaching Guide

Chapter 7: The psychology of human relationships

Topic map

Section number and name	Learning outcome	Number of hours (suggested)	Relevant material
7.1 and 7.2 Psychology and human relationships; Interpersonal relationships	The basic human need to interact with other people is reflected in the characters, qualities and varieties of human relationships that the individual enjoys.	7	Figures 7.1–7.9 Self-assessment questions 7.1 Essay response question at the end of the chapter
7.3 Group dynamics	Physiological, cognitive and socio-cultural elements contribute to understanding intergroup behaviours and conflicts. That may enable psychologically grounded pro-active interaction in promoting social responsibility and reducing violence.	7	Figures 7.10–7.14 Self-assessment questions 7.2 Activity 7.1
7.4 Social responsibility	Physiological, cognitive and socio-cultural elements contribute to understanding why people strive to help one another, including in the absence of apparent personal gain.	6	Figures 7.15–7.16 Activity 7.2 Self-assessment questions 7.3

7.1 Psychology and human relationships

7.2 Interpersonal relationships

Overview

Although it has long been common knowledge that human beings depend on others for their well-being, our understanding of the nature of personal interactions and their associated challenges has increased during the last half century. Students should be aware that psychologists in both research and professional practice work in this field in order to promote social responsibility and reduce violent behaviour.

The IB narrows the field of interpersonal relationships to three areas of inquiry: personal one-to-one relationships, group dynamics and social responsibility.

Students may already be familiar with some of the research (e.g. Sherif et al. (1961); Wedekind et al. (1995); Baumgartner et al. (2008)) from their work in the core topic. Some teachers choose studies in human relationships within the core syllabus with a view to covering the chosen options at the same time.

Suggested activities

Possible starters

Open the topic by discussing this scenario: 'You are seated next to someone in your age-group on the plane. Towards the end of the flight, you get into conversation. You enjoyed it so much that you exchanged contacts and plan to meet again.' What might have attracted you to this person?

The class works in pairs first, each pair producing a list of five qualities that promote attraction. These are then used to contribute to a class discussion to identify the various elements. Finally, these elements can be classified under biological, cognitive and socio-cultural headings.

Main lesson content

- Why is the need for romantic love so great that people throughout history have died for it? This question should promote some exciting discussion. The TED talk [The brain in love](#) by Helen Fisher views the biological dimensions of falling in love, living in love and exiting love. The claims made in the study can be compared and contrasted with the models of Levinger (1980) and Duck (1982).
- Suitable TED lessons with 'Dig Deeper' follow-ups include [The science of attraction](#) by Dawn Maslar and [Stay in – or leave – a relationship](#) by Cynthia Silva.
- Good human relationships have been claimed to increase longevity, as exemplified in Susan Pinker's TED talk, [The secret to living longer may be your social life](#), focused on rural life in Sardinia. Students may wish to investigate how far successful, lifelong marriages and partnership relationships produce similar benefits.
- Class discussion could turn to the advantages claimed to be enjoyed by alpha males and females in their choice of partner. The TED talk on [The surprising science of alpha males](#) by Frans de Waal raises the issue of the relevance to the human situation of findings from observing the social hierarchy in primates. It might even lead to a discussion on how individuals of both genders can improve their cognitive and behavioural patterns towards attracting a high quality suitable partner.

Common misunderstandings and misconceptions

Students should be aware that the research as represented by the studies in the coursebook does indicate gender differences in connection with the formation, perpetuation and demise of relationships.

Supporting your students

This topic is unlikely to create difficulties for students as it is easy to relate to. However, some students may need to be reminded that by itself, personal anecdotal information is likely to be of limited value. It can be useful, however, to compare personal experiences with the claims made by the research studies.

Challenging your students

This topic could generate student-devised investigative tools. A possibility would be to put the students into the scenario of guiding a couple (married or in a relationship for one year) that no longer finds their association exciting enough to stay together.

The students' task is to obtain information on what attracted them to each other, how they nurtured the relationship, and why they are losing interest in each other.

They will need to devise a semi-structured questionnaire. With each question, they will need to justify how the findings can help the professional to offer effective guidance to the couple.

Homework suggestion

- Ask the students to consider the nine points on [What does a healthy relationship look like?](#) from the Huffington Post website. After revisiting the research in the coursebook, they should produce reasoned suggestions as to why marriages and relationships may not succeed even when both partners strive to live up to those nine points.

Cross-references with other topics

2.5 Ethical considerations

3.3 Hormones and their effect on human behaviour

3.4 Genetics and human behaviour

7.3 Group dynamics

Overview

This topic extends the concepts already encountered in *Section 5.2 The individual and the group*. Social identity theory and social cognitive theory including prejudice and discrimination contain research that could be applied to this topic. This section looks broadly at the origins of conflict, and the contribution that psychology can make to conflict resolution.

Suggested activities

Possible starters

- You can use deindividuation theory as a lively introduction to this topic. Deindividuation-associated changed behaviour patterns are well exemplified in the Halloween 'Trick or treat' study of Diener et al. (1976), presented on the video [Deindividuation & the Candy Experiment](#) on YouTube.
- As follow-up, students could contribute deindividuation experiences that they have experienced or know about.

Main lesson content

- In considering origins of conflict, more recent studies have indicated biologically-based influences behind violent behaviour. These can supplement the more socio-cultural-inclined approach used by the coursebook. The influence of the structure of the brain on violent behaviour is clearly introduced in [The biological roots of violence](#) video featuring Adrian Raine, available on YouTube. The influence of high testosterone levels on aggression is exemplified by the study of Zak et al. (2009); [a clear summary](#) of this is available on the IB Psychology InThinking website.
- Subcultures and violence can be illustrated by football hooliganism. Its presence and nature in both more and less affluent European countries is powerfully presented in [Football beasts: An inside look at Europe's football hooligan subculture](#), available on YouTube. Warning! This presentation contains graphic images which you should preview before deciding to show the class.
- There are close links between stereotyping as discussed in Chapter 5, and prejudice and discrimination. Previously encountered research studies can be revisited, as their findings may contribute to the discussion on prejudice and discrimination. Studies such as Bargh et al. (1996), Hamilton and Gifford (1976), and Steele and Aaronson (1995), not covered in the coursebook, are also recommended. In addition, Sherif et al.'s (1961) Robber's Cave study may be framed as supporting the theory that competition for desired resources can create prejudice, stereotyping and conflict between competing parties.
- Prejudice and discrimination can happen without the perpetrator being aware of it. The TEDx talk, [The prejudice you don't know you have](#) by Havi Carel and Richard Pettigrew, available on YouTube, provides a lucid explanation and explores possible consequences.
- The first seven minutes of the video [Bullying, drama, conflict resolution education for middle school](#), available on YouTube, presents three school-based conflict situations with possible strategies for resolution. The students can bring in their knowledge of the origins of conflict when they discuss the likely results of the strategies presented.

Common misunderstandings and misconceptions

Ensure that students can clearly distinguish between prejudice, discrimination and stereotyping. These terms are easily misunderstood as being interchangeable.

Supporting your students

This topic should be easily accessible and engage all students. As with Sections 7.1 and 7.2, some students may need to be reminded that by itself, personal anecdotal information is likely to be of limited value. It can be useful, however, to compare personal experiences with the claims made by the research studies.

Challenging your students

- Students could revisit the football hooligans video, and review Sherif et al. (1961). Using those two sources, they could work in groups to design a superordinate goals-based pilot programme for 22 young adults of opposing sides who have been convicted of football hooligan offences. They could then critically assess the likely rate of success of their programme.
- Students could revisit the middle school bullying video. They could then critically examine the options offered in the scenarios in the light of their studies (Section 7.3.1) of the origins of conflict. They could also explore whether the options taken by the participants on the video would work in cultures known to the students.

Homework suggestion

- Activity 7.1 in the coursebook is a practical step-by-step exercise that enables students to apply their understanding of the origins of conflict to a case of conflict resolution.

Cross-references with other topics

2.5 Ethical considerations

3.3 Hormones and their effect on human behaviour

3.4 Genetics and human behaviour

5.2 The individual and the group

7.4 Social responsibility

Overview

This topic extends the group dynamics of the previous topic. It considers the role of psychology in identifying the need for pro-social behaviour, and in promoting pro-social behaviour.

Suggested activities

Possible starters

Ask the students to review their Service components within their IB Diploma CAS (Creativity, Activity and Service) programme, and discuss which service activities could be considered as altruistic as well as pro-social. For example, might they have done the same things without receiving CAS hours credit?

Main lesson content

- The coursebook presents a range of well-known classic research in pro-social behaviour. The Kitty Genovese murder and how it inspired the research of Darley and Latané (1968) is well presented on the [Nexus Psychology website](#), including contributions by Darley himself. It could be followed up by a more detailed approach to bystanderism [introduced by Philip Zimbardo](#).
- [Darker sides of humanity: The Good Samaritan experiment](#) on YouTube is an effective support to Darley and Batson (1973) in the coursebook. Students might want to consider whether global accelerating urbanisation has negatively influenced the incidences of pro-social behaviour.
- Kin-selection theory within the frame of the question, 'Why do we value some lives more than others?' is clearly introduced in [this YouTube video](#). This should complement Madsen et al. (2007) in the coursebook.

Some students may find themselves following up the tragic fatality of the hit and run victim, [Wang Yue](#), from the International Focus on overcoming the bystander effect. However, much of the content is likely to distress viewers and is not recommended for classroom use.

Common misunderstandings and misconceptions

Ensure that students can distinguish between pro-social behaviour referring to action intending to help others, and altruistic behaviour when there is no expectation of reward or recognition. Also, stress that bystanderism occurs when individuals do not step forward to help a victim specifically where other capable people are present.

Supporting your students

Some of this topic's terminology may confuse students. One idea would be to ask them to work through the research studies and briefly show how each exemplifies (or does not exemplify) concepts such as altruism, pro-social behaviour, bystanderism, diffusion of responsibility and pluralistic ignorance.

Challenging your students

Review the Wang Yue tragedy as presented in the coursebook. The students can investigate initiatives to promote pro-social behaviour in similar circumstances and write a memorandum advising the Chinese government on how it might educate young people to take the necessary action. Bear in mind that some studies (e.g. Levine et al., 1994) indicate that lack of pro-social behaviour exists to a greater or smaller extent in all countries.

Homework suggestions

- Activity 7.2 in the coursebook should engage the students and supply a range of responses from different cultures. The students could likewise consider the Anna Joyshot case in the Section 7.4.1 Newsflash that introduces this topic.

Cross-references with other topics

2.5 Ethical considerations

5.3 Cultural origins of behaviour and cognition

7.3 Group dynamics

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