Take home message: relationships are complex; people are not necessarily born to be good at relationships; we need to learn how to have successful and healthily functioning relationships; often the lessons we learn from society are not ideal or applicable at a personal level e.g., refer to de facto relationships

Week 1:
Human relationships: types, structures, functions and processes
Reading:
✓ Chapters 1 and 2

Relationships are essential to human existence. Humans have a basic fundamental need to <u>belong</u>; that is, to be accepted, appreciated, and cared for, and to reciprocate such attitudes and behaviours – in short, to love and be loved. In addition to fulfilling the basic fundamental need to belong, other human needs which human relationships are sought to fulfill include the needs for friendship, intimacy, nurturance, health and happiness. The bottom line is, humans cannot survive without other humans; we are completely dependent on our relationships with others to survive; loneliness can kill.

The types of relationships humans have include:
• Relationships with, friends, mates, colleagues, enemies and animals
• Spiritual relationships (e.g. with supernatural figures like God, saints and angels)
• Para-social relationships (relationships with TV characters)

The *scientific* study of relationships (enormous growth since 1980s) possesses an interdisciplinary enterprise comprising of a diverse set of disciplines/domains, including cross-cultural and anthropological studies, neuroscience, clinical and family psychology, developmental psychology, sociology, communication studies, social and personality psychology and evolutionary psychology. Key approaches include:

| Social theory | • **Look at <u>levels</u> of explanation – take an integrative, not exclusive, approach**
• Focuses on the interaction between two individuals, paying close attention to both behaviour and what goes on in people's minds (emotions and cognitions)
• The backbone of a social psychological approach to intimate relationships is provided by Kelley's 'interdependence theory':
    ○ In general, this theory posits that dyadic (two-person) relationships are more or less interdependent (interdependence is the quality or condition of mutual reliance). It is framed in terms of the rewards that partners can provide each other in different types of situations, and how the rewards collaborate with peoples' expectations from them. This theory comes from the idea that relationship closeness, not feelings of 'love', is key to all relationships and a function of the degree of interdependence; that people communicate to become closer to one another and striving to maximise the rewards. The three main components of the interdependence |

approach are:

1. Internal standards: the relationship evaluations and decisions that are made in specific situations (e.g. should I go or should I stay?) are not based on the objective nature of rewards, but rather on the consistency between perceptions of rewards in relation to two kinds of standards – 1) expectations about what benefits are deserved (given what that individual brings to the relationship) (comparison level or CL) and 2) the perceived quality of available alternative partners or relationships (i.e. believing that other romantic partners might be able to offer more rewards than current partner) (comparison level alternatives or CLalt). If the perceived rewards in the current relationship are higher than both CL and CLalt, people should be relatively satisfied and committed. Keeping rewards constant, but moving CL or CLalt higher than perceived rewards should lower a person's relationship satisfaction and commitment in the current relationship (see Figure 2.1).
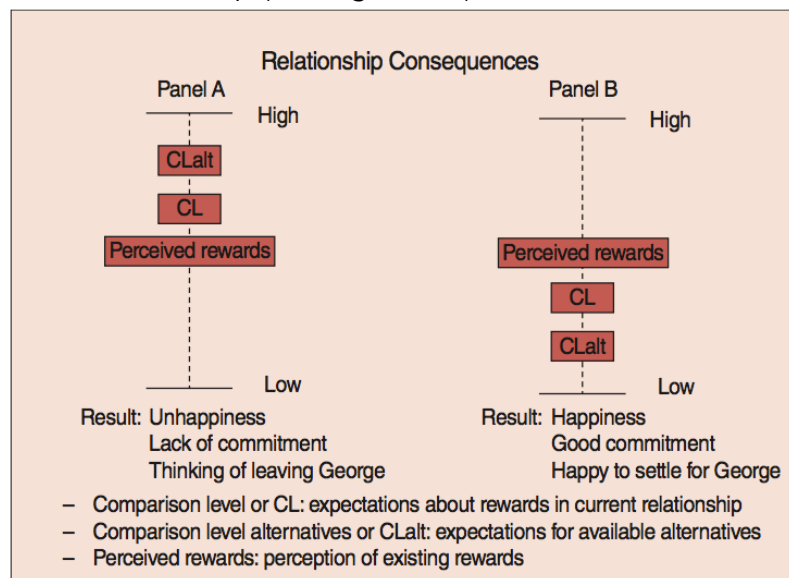

Figure 2.1 Interdependence theory: perceived costs, rewards, and standards
Source: Adapted from Kelley and Thibaut, 1978, and Thibaut and Kelley, 1959

2. Mutual influence: this refers to the manner in which two partners in a relationship coordinate their daily interactions to sustain cooperation and concern for each other, rather than selfishly pursuing their own personal goals and benefits; this aspect of the theory focuses on the power and influence partners have over one another, and how they respond to one another when their interests either conflict or overlap, ultimately suggesting that mutual behaviour control –both partners are equally involved in decision-making/have more or less equal power and control over the final outcome – overrides fate control – when an individual decides to do something that affects his or her partner and the partner has little if any say in what happens – in establishing a satisfactory and desirable relationship, although, of course, many relationships in real life are blends of the two processes.

3. Interpersonal attributions: greater trust, commitment and more

	positive partner attitudes facilitate the often automatic shift that partners maker from a selfish (single) frame of mind to a relationship or partner-centred orientation

Evolutionary theory	o **Provide a backdrop to relationships issues – they constitute a <u>deep-level</u> explanation for why humans in general are motivated to do what they do; they help us to understand deep-seated and universal motives and emotions.** Accordingly, evolutionary theory posits:
	 ▪ Humans are social animals – they have to successfully manage relationships with others to survive
	 ▪ Humans need to find and keep mates, produce and parent offspring, compete for resources, maintain friendships, manage conflicts, and negotiate shifting power and status dynamics
	    ✖ Darwin's theory of 'sexual selection': sexual selection is generated by mate choice; males compete vigorously with one another to increase their chances of being chosen as a mate by the females, typically in terms of enhancing their features and traits such as their physical appearance and power; females concentrate on certain features/traits that will foster reproductive success and longevity.
	 ▪ Evolved psychological mechanisms (powerful needs and desires) help us achieve these tasks (e.g., need to belong). These include emotions as motivators:
	    ✖ Romantic love – signals reward → motivates mating and pair bonding
	    ✖ Jealousy – signals threat → motivates mate guarding
	    ✖ Guilt – signals that we have damaged an important relationship → motivates repair
	    ✖ Shame – signals that we are unacceptable to others → motivates atonement

Social cognitive theory	o <u>Mid-level</u> explanation (i.e. inside the human mind): people *learn* about relationships as they grow up from their families and culture – they develop theories (schemas) about relationship-related phenomena (e.g., love, marriage, parenthood). Learning eventually graduates into knowledge structures: ▪ Schemas (including attachment schemas*) create implicit (unspoken) expectations and beliefs about how the world and relationships 'should' be (strong beliefs may become 'rules') ▪ Partner mismatches in expectations and 'rules' can cause trouble Mid-level theories include attachment theory and role theory o Attachment theory: (attachment is an evolved drive [instinct] with biological foundations i.e. we are primed to be attached from the moment we are born; manifests in infant-caregiver and adult romantic relationships) ▪ Secure attachments are the source of our first powerful experiences of love, trust and joy ▪ Disrupted or unpredictable bonds trigger intense negative emotions such as anxiety, anger and sorrow ▪ As we grow, we learn (construct schemas) about trust, love and relationships from these early experiences

	▪ Adult attachment styles:
	     ✖ Secure attachment – children who experience trust and security learn (acquire schemas) that others can be relied upon and that they are valuable
	     ✖ Avoidant attachment – children who experience cold, neglectful parenting learn (acquire schemas) that relationships are painful and non-rewarding. Love hurts – who needs it? Refer to 'daddy issues'.
	     ✖ Anxious attachment – children who experience inconsistent parenting learn (acquire schemas) that relationships are precarious, leading to extremes of hurt, hope, jealousy and anxiety in adult relationships
	 o Role theory: people acquire schemas about relationship roles (e.g., being a wife, mother, Managing Director) from their society/culture
	     ▪ People acquire schemas about relationship roles (e.g., being a wife, mother, Managing Director) from their society/culture
	     ▪ What does it mean to be a 'good' mother, father, wife, husband?
	     ▪ Multiple roles can mean conflicting expectations (e.g. being a manager, mother, student etc.)
	     ▪ Role requirements may differ for men/women, husbands/wives, mothers/fathers e.g., 'emotion work'

Social exchange theory	o Economic models of relationships emphasise their rewards, costs, comparison levels, short-term versus long-term profits and losses o Assume a 'rational' (purely cognitive) approach to relationships o When exchange is unfair… the 'cheater detection mechanism' – registers unfairness of exchange, elicits anger, hurt, revenge…
Stage theory	o A developmental (life cycle) approach to relationships o Describes 'typical' patterns of relationship initiation, development, maintenance and dissolution o Moving through stages… partners may not be in step with other another e.g. not ready for commitment, parenthood, retirement etc. at the same stage
Dialectical theory	o Sociological approach describing the process of managing tensions in relationships e.g. connectedness (wanting togetherness) versus autonomy (wanting independence) – the most central tension in most relationships

Integrating approaches: overall, you can look at relationships from all of these different perspectives and obtain an enriched understanding e.g., dialectical tensions (pushes and pulls) may derive from schemas (including attachment), from conflicting roles, from ambivalence about relationship stage, from perceptions of inequity (unfairness), from biological drives and instincts, and conflicting emotions.

• Classifying relationships

Clark and Mills (1970s) – two categorical model	*Communal* (e.g., family) based on shared needs and commitment versus *exchange* (e.g., business partnership) relationships

Fiske and Haslam's four-category model	1. Communal sharing (based on need) 2. Exchange/Equality matching (based on give and take) 3. Authority ranking (based on power and status) 4. Market pricing (based on value, treat others as commodity and aim to be 'bought'; refer to 'gold diggers')

- Relationship types may be mixed:
  - o A relationship may at different times follow communal, exchange, authority-ranking and/or market pricing norms
  - o But each type has its own rules and expectations
  - o Can lead to conflict when expectations do not match e.g., when parents expect financial payment (exchange) for a child's upbringing (communal) – 'taboo trade-off'

  Culture alert:
  - o Be aware of potential Western bias in theory and research findings → interesting question: what are the *universals* of human motivation and behaviour? And what are the *culturally-shaped* motives and behaviours?
    - ▪ Societal/cultural influences: relationships don't exist in a vacuum; relationship behaviour is shaped by cultural norms and values – "I/me" (individualism; "me" orientation) versus "you/we" (collectivism; "we" orientation)

  - o Anthropological and cross-cultural approaches, on the other hand, focus on the way in which broad cultural and institutional contexts frame and guide the behavior of individuals and couples. Whereas social psychology tends to focus on the links between the individual and the dyadic relationship (e.g. how one person's traits influence his or her partner and relationship outcomes), anthropological approaches tend to focus on connections between the couple (e.g. the rules and norms in relationship) and the wider culture in which the relationship is embedded.

Explaining relationships

It is essential to distinguish between proximal (current) and distal (distant) causes of relationship events. Ultimately, our understanding of causal dynamics becomes colete only when the particular distal and proximal condition(s) are identified and understood. Distal, or background, variables may have an important impact on the proximal, or current conditions of a relationship.

Proximal feelings (e.g., love, hate) may have a variety of distal

causes (e.g, a prior betrayal; schemas; personality variables).

E.g., Romantic partners Jack and Jill are having sexual problems. Why?

Jack says, because of Jill's anxiety about having sex. As such, Jill's anxiety is a background (distal) cause of their current (proximal) sexual problems. Other considerations: Jill's fear of pregnancy (proximal) because of her religion (no contraception allowed), or her history of sexual abuse, or belief that sex is dirty) (all distal, background factors). It may also be attributed to Jack's lack of knowledge about female sexuality (distal/background factor affecting the current context)

<mark>Chapters 1-2</mark>

<u>Humans are cultural animals</u> ~

The development of language and culture, which allow information to be shared and communicated across individuals and down generations, has played a crucial role in generating some of the unique attributes and skills that humans now have. The power of human culture poses problems for an exclusively evolutionary account of human behavior. Humans are unique in possessing sophisticated cultural knowledge and beliefs, which are passed on from generation to generation through formal and informal channels. This form of transmission is non-Darwinian because it involves the transmission of acquired knowledge, beliefs, or skills to the next generation that is not accomplished via genetic inheritance. This **transmitted culture** can be accepted, altered, or rejected by individuals. Thus, the shared beliefs and knowledge of any given culture are capable of much more rapid transmission and change than is true of bio-logical evolution. Moreover, cultures are stuffed full of rules, norms, beliefs, guidelines, rituals, and sanctions, linked to love, sex, child-rearing, and marriage. Thus, a lot of transmitted culture directly concerns intimate relationships.

How can scientists (or anyone) tell when human behavior is a product of social learning shaped by a specific culture or is the product of our genes as an evolved, evolutionary adaptation? At first blush, one might think that such a question is easily answered by examining behavior across cultures. That is, if the behavior is different across cultures, it is probably an outcome of culture, and if it is universal it should be genetically determined. However, matters are not this simple.

Arguments about the causal effects of culture and genes on behavior do not, and should not, reduce to claims that human nature is completely a product of one or the other. Indeed, most evolutionary models factor in the power and influence of human cultural practices. However, they emphasize that many cultural practices, the human mind, and much of human behavior are products of longstanding evolutionary selection pressures. According to this view, humans are not blank slates at birth upon which the environment and culture simply write. Rather, the way in which genes are expressed tends to be flexible and operates in terms of the interaction between the organism and the cultural and physical environment. This, in turn, implies that we should focus on how individual humans develop in their environments across time.

For example, a social psychological approach to understanding how people select mates might be to postulate a psychological model examining the importance that each partner places on particular characteristics (which will vary across individuals) are treated as cognitively stored standards, such as the perceived importance of finding an attractive and healthy mate. Individuals may then use these ideal standards to make choices between different potential mates or to evaluate how satisfied they are with their current mate. Resultant levels of

satisfaction and relationship commitment, in turn, might then affect their own behavior, which might influence their partner's behavior, resulting in the couple deciding to live together or break off the relationship. Thus, a social psychological model describes *how* cognitions, emotions, and behaviors interact (combine) within each person, and also how individuals in relationships communicate and influence each other (see Chapter 3). These models can be quite detailed, describing, as they do, a complex reality. Nevertheless, they deal only with a certain slice of what influences individuals and relationships at a given point in time, much of which operates at the proximal level (see above) rather than at the distal level emanating either from the remote evolutionary past or wider cultural forces.

Evolutionary psychology, on the other hand, asks important questions that social psychologists usually do not ask, such as why do people want mates who are attractive and healthy in the first place, or what are the origins of certain gender differences? (To avoid confusion, throughout the book we will use "gender" to refer to males versus females, and "sex" to refer to sexual intercourse or related behaviors and attitudes.) Answers for evolutionary psychologists often lie in the evolutionary history of humans, particularly in the adaptive advantages that should have accrued to our ancestors in ancestral environments if they were attracted to and chose certain kinds of mates, such as those who were relatively attractive and healthy.

In essence, different disciplines approach intimate relationships with different goals and often examine them at different levels of analysis. E.g., evolutionary psychology is interested in the distal origins of love, sex, and mate selection, whereas social psychology focuses more on the proximal forces in the immediate environment that influence how we think, feel, and behave in relationships. Integrating the best parts of these two approaches of scientific investigation can yield novel insights and a deeper, more nuanced understanding of intimate relationships. Essentially, it is valuable to adopt an interdisciplinary approach to understanding intimate relationships.