

IB PSYCHOLOGY | SL AND HL

Human Relationships

BONUS Model Essay — SECTION C • 15 MARKS • ANNOTATED

The Complete Revision Notes

Group behaviour and interpersonal relationships, for the new IB syllabus, first exams 2027

ALSO INSIDE
A model 15-mark essay, annotated line by line back to these notes

10	14	6	2027
TOPICS	KEY STUDIES	IB CONCEPTS	FIRST EXAMS

JYOTIKA VARMANI
Excelling Psychology | excellingpsychology.com

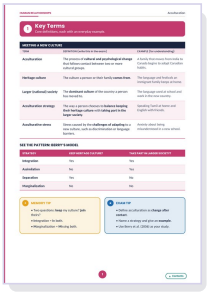
PREVIEW EDITION

One booklet for the whole context

Every topic in Human Relationships for the new IB Psychology syllabus (first exams 2027), from group behaviour to interpersonal relationships. Written for SL and HL, laid out the same clear way from the first page to the last.

10	14	6	10	1
topics	key studies	IB concepts	one-page recaps	annotated model answer

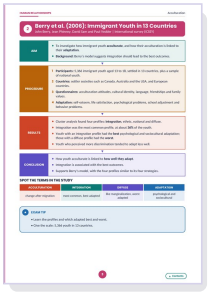
Every topic follows the same route



1

Key terms

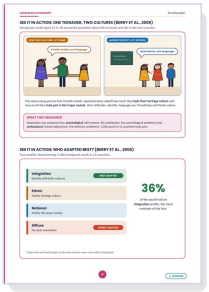
Exam-ready definitions, each with an everyday example.



2

Key studies

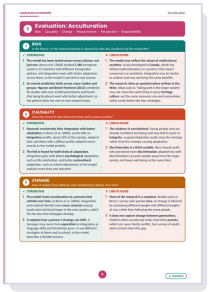
Aim, procedure, results and conclusion, cleanly set out.



3

See it in action

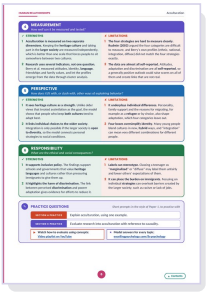
Illustrated pages that make each study stick.



4

Evaluation

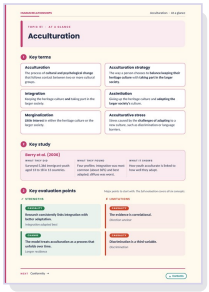
Strengths and limitations under all six IB concepts.



5

Practice

Short prompts in the style of Paper 1 to practise with.



6

At a glance

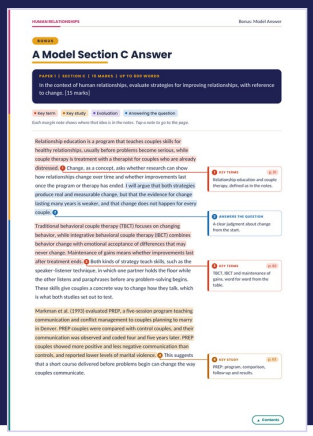
The whole topic on one page for the night before.

THE BONUS

A model 15-mark Section C answer

Written the way a strong HL student would write it, with margin notes that show exactly which page of the notes every key term, study and evaluation point comes from.

- ✓ Built from one topic only
- ✓ About 770 words
- ✓ 14 margin notes



In this preview

The contents and exam overview, sample pages from nine of the ten topics, and the opening of the model answer.

Contents

IN THIS PREVIEW
Highlighted entries are included. Tap one to go to it.

✓ IN PREVIEW Full booklet only

1 **Acculturation** ✓ IN PREVIEW · Key terms p. 1
Key terms p. 1 | Berry et al. (2006) p. 3 | Evaluation pp. 5-6 | At a glance

2 **Conformity** ✓ IN PREVIEW · Asch visuals p. 7
Key terms p. 7 | Asch (1956) p. 9 | Evaluation pp. 11-12 | At a glance

3 **Compliance Techniques** ✓ IN PREVIEW · Cialdini et al. visuals p. 13
Key terms p. 13 | Cialdini et al. (1975) p. 15 | Evaluation pp. 17-18 | At a glance

4 **Cultural Dimensions** ✓ IN PREVIEW · Hofstede visuals p. 19
Key terms p. 19 | Hofstede (1980) p. 21 | Evaluation pp. 23-24 | At a glance

5 **Social Identity Theory** ✓ IN PREVIEW · Evaluation, part p. 25
Key terms p. 25 | Tajfel et al. (1971) p. 27 | Evaluation pp. 29-30 | At a glance

6 **Social Learning** ✓ IN PREVIEW · Bobo doll visuals p. 31
Key terms p. 31 | Bandura et al. (1961) p. 33 | Bandura (1965) p. 34 | Evaluation pp. 37-38 | At a glance

7 **Chemical Messengers** ✓ IN PREVIEW · At a glance p. 39
Key terms p. 39 | Kosfeld et al. (2005) p. 41 | Evaluation pp. 43-44 | At a glance

8 **Cognitive Explanations of Relationships** ✓ IN PREVIEW · Cover + Rusbult p. 45
Key terms p. 45 | Rusbult (1983) p. 47 | Fincham and Bradbury (1993) p. 48 | Evaluation pp. 51-52 | At a glance

9 **Communication in Relationships** ✓ IN PREVIEW · Gottman visuals p. 53
Key terms p. 53 | Gottman and Levenson (1992) p. 55 | Aron et al. (1997) p. 56 | Evaluation pp. 59-60 | At a glance

10 **Strategies for Improving Relationships** p. 61
Key terms p. 61 | Markman et al. (1993) p. 63 | Christensen et al. (2004) p. 64 | Evaluation pp. 67-68 | At a glance

INCLUDED | BONUS **Model Paper 1 Section C Answer** ✓ IN PREVIEW · Page 1 of 3
Strategies for improving relationships and change, 15 marks | 3 pages

▲ Contents

Where This Fits in the Exam

Based on the IB Psychology guide (first assessment 2027). Human relationships is one of the four contexts and is examined in **Paper 1** and **Paper 2**. Its topics fall under **group behaviour** and **interpersonal relationships**.

1. Syllabus topics and where to find them

Tap a row to go to that topic.

GROUP BEHAVIOUR			
1	**Acculturation** A	Berry et al. (2006)	p. 1 ›
2	**Conformity** A	Asch (1956)	p. 7 ›
3	**Compliance Techniques** A	Cialdini et al. (1975)	p. 13 ›
4	**Cultural Dimensions** A	Hofstede (1980)	p. 19 ›
5	**Social Identity Theory** A	Tajfel et al. (1971)	p. 25 ›
6	**Social Learning**	Bandura et al. (1961), Bandura (1965)	p. 31 ›
INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS			
7	**Chemical Messengers** A	Kosfeld et al. (2005)	p. 39 ›
8	**Cognitive Explanations of Relationships**	Rusbult (1983), Fincham and Bradbury (1993)	p. 45 ›
9	**Communication in Relationships**	Gottman and Levenson (1992), Aron et al. (1997)	p. 53 ›
10	**Strategies for Improving Relationships**	Markman et al. (1993), Christensen et al. (2004)	p. 61 ›

2. Paper 1 (SL and HL, 1 hour 30 minutes, 35 marks)

SECTION A — 8 marks

Two short answers: explain a theory or idea and give an example.

Six topics can appear here, marked **A** in the table: acculturation, conformity, compliance, cultural dimensions, social identity theory and chemical messengers.

SECTION B — 12 marks

Two questions applying content to an unseen situation.

Use the **definitions plus the examples**. Practise matching a term to a new scenario, one sentence at a time.

SECTION C — 15 marks

One concept-based essay from two choices, each from a different context.

Build it from accurate **key terms**, **key studies** and the **strengths and limitations** under the concept. Allow about 40 minutes.

See the model answer ›

3. Paper 2

These notes are built for **Paper 1**. Paper 2 tests research methods and your class practical, but its Section B asks you to evaluate an unseen study using the six concepts, so the evaluation pages are good practice for it too.

A habit for every answer

Underline the command term and the concept in the question, then finish with a conclusion that answers it.

▲ Contents

1 Key Terms

Core definitions, each with an everyday example.

MEETING A NEW CULTURE

TERM	DEFINITION (write this in the exam)	EXAMPLE (for understanding)
Acculturation	The process of **cultural and psychological change** that follows contact between two or more cultural groups.	A family that moves from India to Canada begins to adopt Canadian habits.
Heritage culture	The culture a person or their family **comes from**.	The language and festivals an immigrant family keeps at home.
Larger (national) society	The **dominant culture** of the country a person has moved to.	The language used at school and work in the new country.
Acculturation strategy	The way a person chooses to **balance keeping their heritage culture** with **taking part in the larger society**.	Speaking Tamil at home and English with friends.
Acculturative stress	Stress caused by the **challenges of adapting** to a new culture, such as discrimination or language barriers.	Anxiety about being misunderstood in a new school.

SEE THE PATTERN: BERRY'S MODEL

STRATEGY	KEEP HERITAGE CULTURE?	TAKE PART IN LARGER SOCIETY?
Integration	Yes	Yes
Assimilation	No	Yes
Separation	Yes	No
Marginalization	No	No

✦ MEMORY TIP

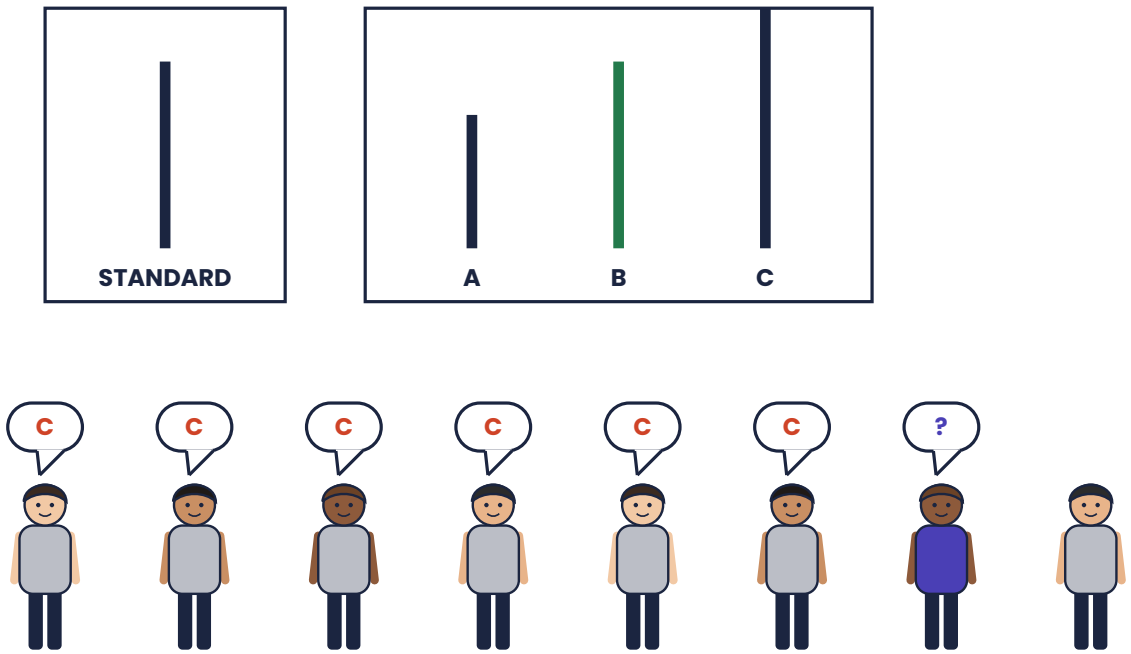
- Two questions: **keep** my culture? **join** theirs?
- **I**ntegration = **I**n both.
- **M**arginalization = **M**issing both.

★ EXAM TIP

- Define acculturation as **change after contact**.
- Name a strategy and give an **example**.
- Use Berry et al. (2006) as your study.

SEE IT IN ACTION: THE ASCH SET-UP

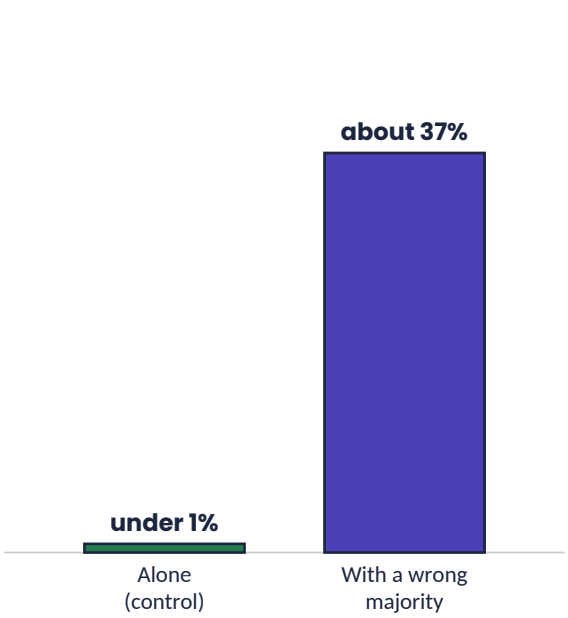
Which line matches the standard line? The answer is obvious, until the group answers first.

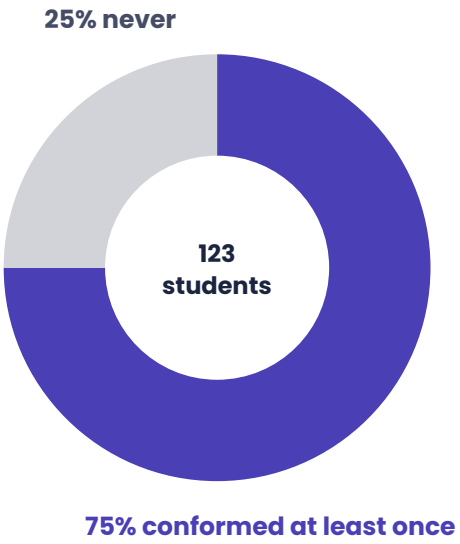


Grey figures are confederates. The real participant (colored) answered second to last.

SEE IT IN ACTION: HOW MUCH DID PEOPLE CONFORM? (ASCH, 1956)

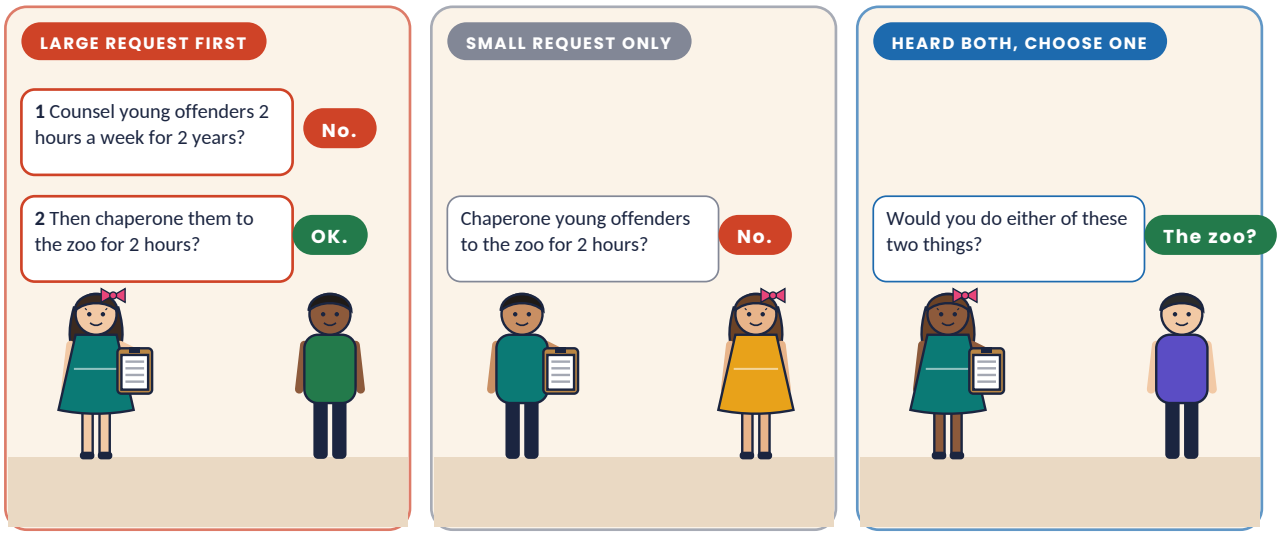
Wrong answers with and without group pressure, and how many people ever conformed.





SEE IT IN ACTION: ASKED ON CAMPUS (CIALDINI ET AL., 1975)

A student researcher stopped students walking alone on campus. They did not know it was a study.



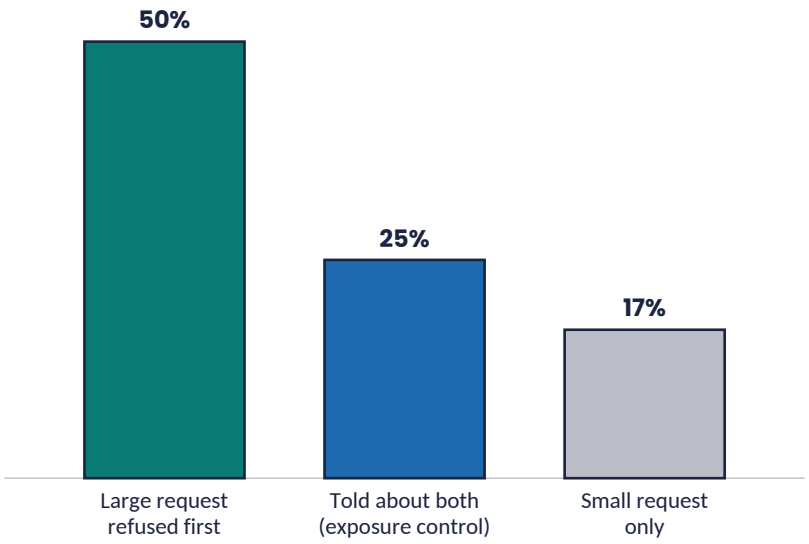
72 students at Arizona State University were assigned to one condition. The researcher recorded whether each one **agreed** to the zoo trip.

WHAT THEY FOUND

50% agreed after refusing the large request, against **17%** asked the small one only and **25%** who heard both at once.

SEE IT IN ACTION: THE DOOR-IN-THE-FACE (CIALDINI ET AL., 1975)

Students who agreed to chaperone a two-hour zoo trip, by condition.

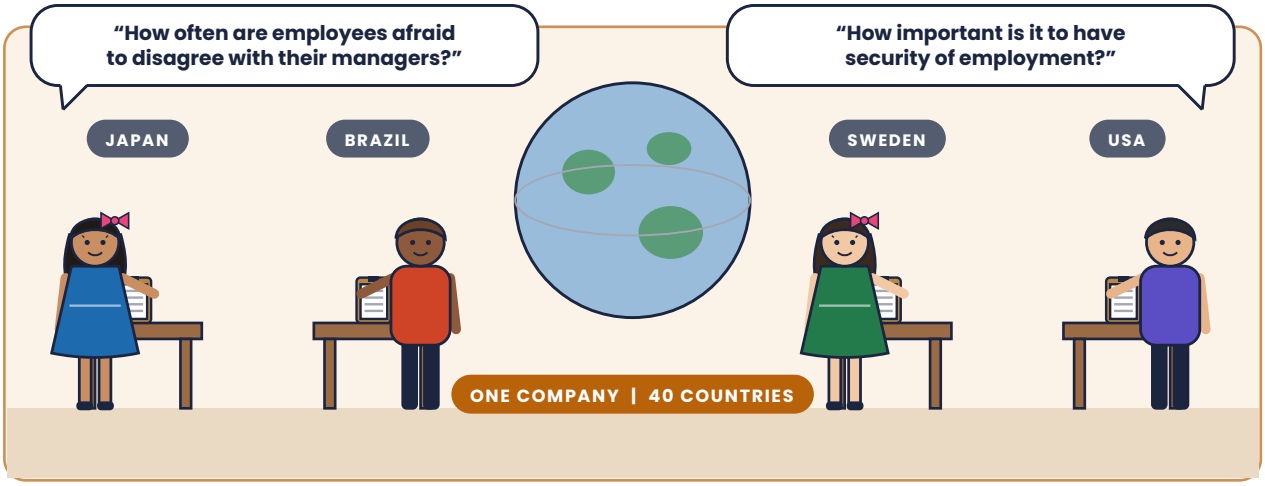


Step 1
Counsel delinquents 2 hours a week for 2 years? Everyone said no.

Step 2
Chaperone them on one 2-hour zoo trip?

SEE IT IN ACTION: ONE COMPANY, MANY COUNTRIES (HOFSTEDE, 1980)

Employees of one multinational company answered the same work-values questionnaire in their own language.



Because everyone worked for the **same company** in similar jobs, differences between countries were more likely to reflect national culture than the workplace.

WHAT HE FOUND

About **116,000** questionnaires (1967 to 1973) sorted countries on four dimensions. For example, the USA, Australia and Great Britain scored highest on **individualism**; countries such as Venezuela and Pakistan scored lowest.

SEE IT IN ACTION: SIX DIMENSIONS OF CULTURE

Each dimension is a scale with two ends. Countries get a score; individuals vary.

Individualism — **Collectivism**

High power distance — **Low power distance**

High uncertainty avoidance — **Low uncertainty avoidance**

Masculinity — **Femininity**

The first four came from the IBM data; the last two were added later.

Long-term orientation — **Short-term orientation**

Indulgence — **Restraint**

3 Evaluation: Social Identity Theory

Bias · Causality · Change · Measurement · Perspective · Responsibility

1 BIAS

Is the theory, or the research behind it, skewed by who was studied or by the researcher?

✓ STRENGTHS

1. **Minimal group research rules out self-interest.** In **Tajfel et al. (1971)**, boys never allocated points to themselves and did not know who received them, so favoring their group could not be about personal gain.
2. **In-group favoritism is found widely. Balliet et al. (2014)** meta-analysed 212 studies from 18 societies and found people cooperated more with in-group members everywhere. So the bias SIT explains is not limited to Western groups.

✘ LIMITATIONS

1. **Culture affects in-group bias. Wetherell (1982)** found Polynesian children in New Zealand chose more generous, joint-profit allocations to the out-group than white children, reflecting cultural values about sharing.
2. **Key samples were narrow.** Tajfel's participants were 14 and 15-year-old **schoolboys** from Bristol, who may have been unusually competitive. Groups from more cooperative backgrounds may show less bias, as Wetherell found.

2 CAUSALITY

Does the research show that one thing really causes another?

✓ STRENGTHS

1. **Categorization alone can cause bias. Billig and Tajfel (1973)** found favoritism even when boys knew they had been assigned to groups by a coin toss, so being categorized is enough.
2. **Bias appears without competition.** Tajfel's boys often chose **maximum difference** even when it cost their own group points, so a wish for distinctiveness can matter more than gain.

✘ LIMITATIONS

1. **Demand characteristics may explain the bias. Gerard and Hoyt (1974)** argued that when group labels are the only information given, participants assume they are expected to use them.
2. **The self-esteem motive is not proven. Rubin and Hewstone (1998)** reviewed the research and found mixed evidence that favoring the in-group raises self-esteem, which weakens the theory's explanation of why bias happens.

3 CHANGE

Does it explain how behavior and relationships change over time?

✓ STRENGTHS

1. **It explains how behavior shifts with the situation.** Which identity is **salient**, such as school, nation or team, changes how a person treats others, explaining why the same person can be friendly or hostile.
2. **It shows how intergroup bias can be reduced. Gaertner et al. (1989)** found bias fell when two groups were led to see themselves as one, supporting the common in-group identity model.

✘ LIMITATIONS

1. **Minimal groups do not show how real identities develop.** Groups formed in one **session** lack the history and emotion of identities built over years. So the research shows how bias can start, not how identities grow.
2. **It explains only part of real conflict.** Long-standing conflicts involve **power**, history and unequal status, not only categorization. Explaining or ending such conflicts needs more than changing how people categorize themselves.

LOCKED IN THIS PREVIEW

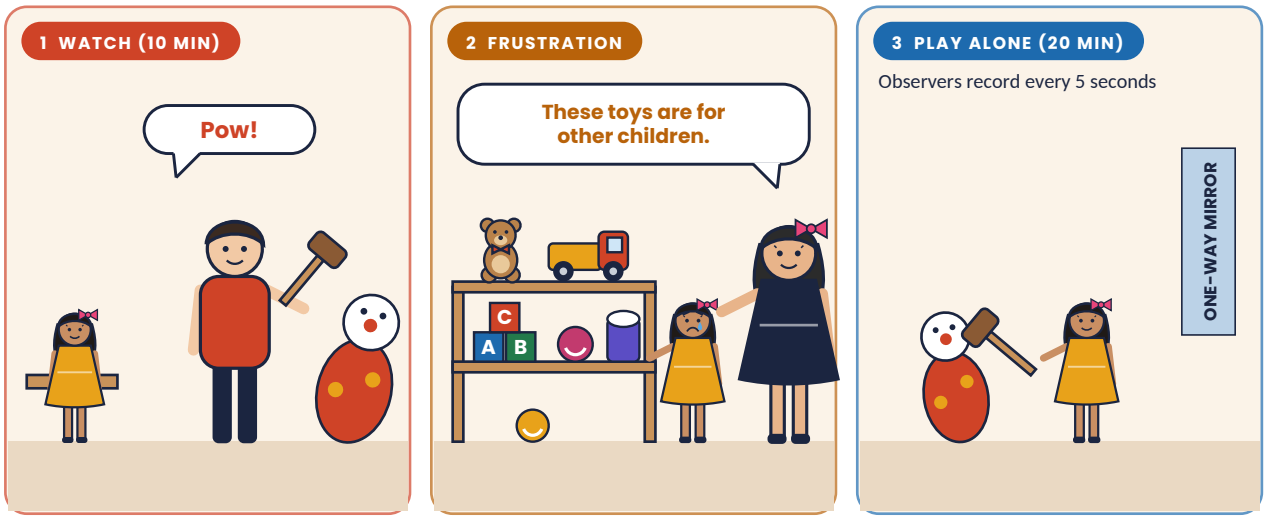
Measurement, perspective, responsibility

The rest of the Social Identity Theory evaluation: strengths and limitations for the last three IB concepts, plus practice prompts.

Unlock it at excellingpsychology.com

SEE IT IN ACTION: THE BOBO DOLL ROOMS (BANDURA ET AL., 1961)

72 nursery children aged 3 to 6 went through three rooms, one at a time, at Stanford University.



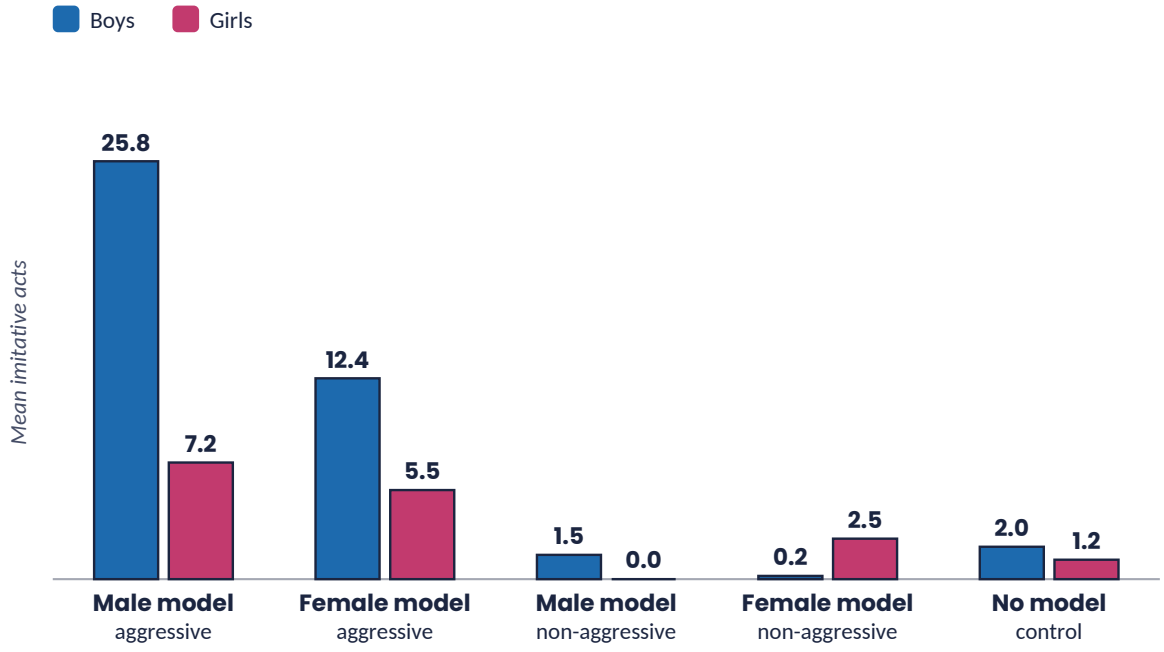
Children were matched for how aggressive they already were, then saw an **aggressive** model, a **non-aggressive** model or **no model**. Half saw a same-sex model, half an opposite-sex model.

WHAT THEY FOUND

Children who saw the aggressive model copied its **exact actions and words**; boys were more physically aggressive than girls overall.

SEE IT IN ACTION: WHO COPIED THE HITTING? (BANDURA ET AL., 1961)

Mean number of imitative physical aggression acts in the 20-minute play session.



Boys copied the **male** aggressive model most (25.8 acts). Almost no physical imitation happened without an aggressive model.

TOPIC 07 · AT A GLANCE

Chemical Messengers

1 Key terms

Chemical messenger
A **chemical that carries signals** in the body, such as a hormone or neurotransmitter.

Oxytocin
A hormone and neurotransmitter linked to **bonding, trust and attachment**.

Dopamine
A neurotransmitter linked to **reward and motivation**, including attraction.

Trust game
An economic game in which an investor decides **how much money to give** a trustee, who may or may not return some.

Intranasal administration
Giving a substance as a **nasal spray**, so it can reach the brain.

Double-blind design
Neither participants nor researchers know who received the real substance.

2 Key study

Kosfeld et al. (2005)

WHAT THEY DID
Male students received oxytocin or placebo nasal spray, then played a trust game.

WHAT THEY FOUND
45% showed maximal trust on oxytocin, against 21% on placebo; no effect against a computer.

WHAT IT SHOWS
Oxytocin increases trust in other people.

3 Key evaluation points

Major points to start with. The full evaluation covers all six concepts.

✓ STRENGTHS

CAUSALITY
Manipulating oxytocin shows it can raise trust.
45% vs 21%

CAUSALITY
The effect is specific to people.
Social only

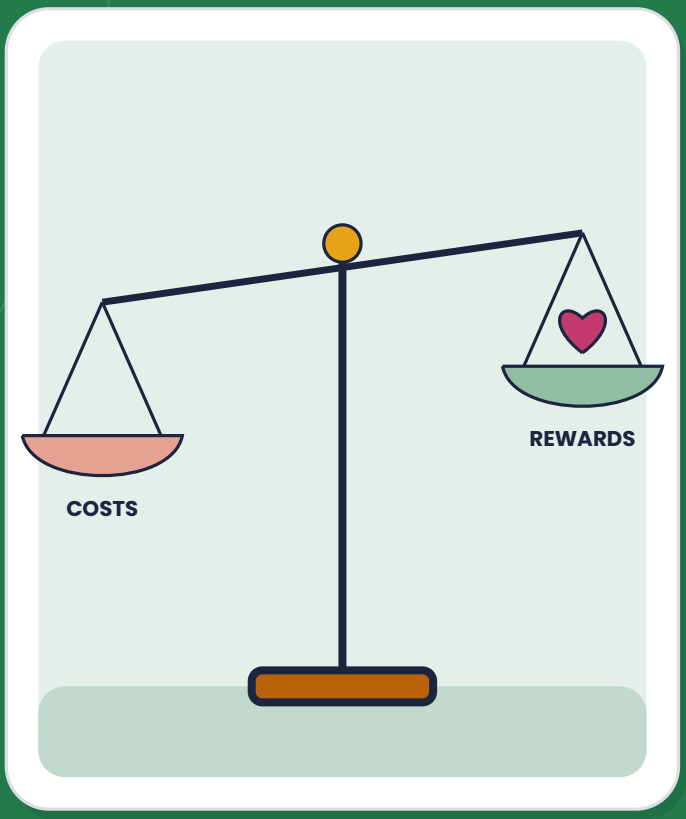
✗ LIMITATIONS

CAUSALITY
The effect has not replicated.
Replication

BIAS
Early research studied only men.
Men only

TOPIC

08 / 10



HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS | INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Cognitive Explanations of Relationships

IB Psychology | Revision Notes

1. **Key Terms**
   definitions and examples
2. **Key Studies**
   Rusbult (1983), Fincham and Bradbury (1993)
3. **Evaluation**
   evaluation across the six IB concepts

2 Rusbult (1983): A Longitudinal Test of the Investment Model

Caryl Rusbult | Longitudinal questionnaire study of dating couples

AIM

- To test whether **satisfaction, alternatives and investments** predict commitment and staying in a relationship over time.
- **Background:** satisfaction alone did not seem to explain why people stay in or leave relationships.

PROCEDURE

1. **Participants:** US college students in new heterosexual dating relationships.
2. **Design:** questionnaires completed repeatedly over about seven months.
3. **Measures:** rewards, costs, satisfaction, quality of alternatives, investment size and commitment.
4. **Outcome:** whether each relationship continued (stayers) or ended (leavers).

RESULTS

- Commitment rose with **increasing satisfaction**, **declining alternatives** and **increasing investment**.
- Greater rewards increased commitment; changes in costs had little effect.
- For **stayers**, satisfaction and investment grew and alternatives declined; for **leavers**, the reverse happened.

CONCLUSION

- Commitment depends on **more than satisfaction**: investments and alternatives matter too.
- The investment model predicts who stays and who leaves.
- Relationships are maintained partly through cognitive cost-benefit judgments.

SPOT THE TERMS IN THE STUDY

SATISFACTION	ALTERNATIVES	INVESTMENT	LONGITUDINAL
grew for stayers	declined for stayers	grew for stayers	seven months

★ EXAM TIP

- Learn the stayers versus leavers pattern.
- Name all three predictors of commitment.

LOCKED IN THIS PREVIEW

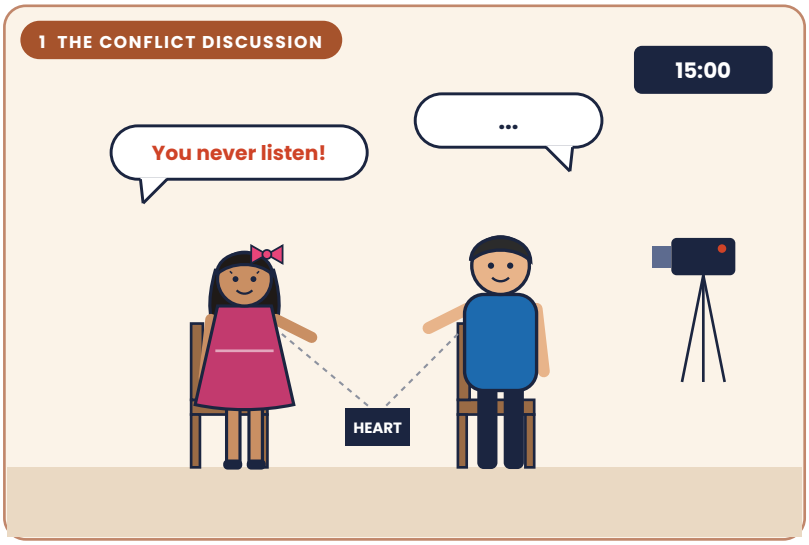
Fincham and Bradbury (1993): Attributions

The second Cognitive Explanations study, then two illustrated pages, the full evaluation and the one-page recap.

Unlock it at excellingpsychology.com

SEE IT IN ACTION: THE LOVE LAB (GOTTMAN AND LEVENSON, 1992)

73 couples talked about a real problem in their marriage for 15 minutes while they were filmed and monitored.



2 SENSORS

Heart rate, skin conductance and movement were recorded the whole time.

3 CODING

Trained coders scored every speaker turn as positive or negative from the video.

Couples were called **regulated** if positive turns outweighed negative ones, and **non-regulated** if negativity won. They were contacted again in **1987**.

WHAT THEY FOUND

Non-regulated couples were less satisfied, in poorer health and **more likely to have separated** four years later.

SEE IT IN ACTION: GOTTMAN'S FOUR HORSEMEN

Four communication patterns that predict relationship breakdown.

1 Criticism

"You never help. You're so selfish."

TRY INSTEAD

Complain about the behavior: "I felt let down when the dishes were left."

2 Contempt

Sneering, sarcasm, eye-rolling

TRY INSTEAD

Show appreciation and respect, even during disagreement.

3 Defensiveness

"It's not my fault. You started it."

TRY INSTEAD

Accept some responsibility: "You're right, I could have helped."

4 Stonewalling

Silent withdrawal, no response

TRY INSTEAD

Take a short break to calm down, then return to the talk.

BONUS

From notes to a 15-mark answer

Knowing the content is half the job. The other half is turning it into an essay under timed conditions. The full booklet ends with a complete Paper 1 Section C answer, so you can see what a well-built answer looks like when it is made only from these pages.

THE QUESTION | PAPER 1 | SECTION C | 15 MARKS

In the context of human relationships, evaluate strategies for improving relationships, with reference to change.

Built from one topic: Strategies for Improving Relationships

KEY TERMS	Relationship education, couple therapy, IBCT, TBCT, maintenance of gains, speaker–listener technique	pp. 61–62
KEY STUDIES	Markman et al. (1993), Christensen et al. (2004)	pp. 63–64
EVALUATION	Two strengths and two limitations under Change	pp. 67–68
JUDGMENT	A clear answer on change in the first paragraph, carried through to the conclusion	

What makes it useful

- ✓ **About 770 words** within the 800 allowed, with every point fully developed.
- ✓ **A student's voice** clear and well argued, the way a top HL student writes, not a textbook.
- ✓ **14 margin notes** each joined by a line to the exact sentence it explains.
- ✓ **Tap to check** every note links straight to the page in the notes it draws on.

The first page of the answer follows.

BONUS

A Model Section C Answer

PAPER 1 | SECTION C | 15 MARKS | UP TO 800 WORDS

In the context of human relationships, evaluate strategies for improving relationships, with reference to change. [15 marks]

Key term · Key study · Evaluation · Answering the question

Each margin note shows where that idea is in the notes. Tap a note to go to the page.

Relationship education is a program that teaches couples skills for healthy relationships, usually before problems become serious, while couple therapy is treatment with a therapist for couples who are already distressed. 1 Change, as a concept, asks whether research can show how relationships change over time and whether improvements last once the program or therapy has ended. I will argue that both strategies produce real and measurable change, but that the evidence for change lasting many years is weaker, and that change does not happen for every couple. 2

Traditional behavioral couple therapy (TBCT) focuses on changing behavior, while integrative behavioral couple therapy (IBCT) combines behavior change with emotional acceptance of differences that may never change. Maintenance of gains means whether improvements last after treatment ends. 3 Both kinds of strategy teach skills, such as the speaker–listener technique, in which one partner holds the floor while the other listens and paraphrases before any problem-solving begins. These skills give couples a concrete way to change how they talk, which is what both studies set out to test.

Markman et al. (1993) evaluated PREP, a five-session program teaching communication and conflict management to couples planning to marry in Denver. PREP couples were compared with control couples, and their communication was observed and coded four and five years later. PREP couples showed more positive and less negative communication than controls, and reported lower levels of marital violence. 4 This suggests that a short course delivered before problems begin can change the way couples communicate.

1 KEY TERMS p. 61
Relationship education and couple therapy, defined as in the notes.

2 ANSWERS THE QUESTION
A clear judgment about change from the start.

3 KEY TERMS p. 62
TBCT, IBCT and maintenance of gains, word for word from the table.

4 KEY STUDY p. 63
PREP: program, comparison, follow-up and results.

▲ Contents



LOCKED IN THIS PREVIEW

The answer continues

Two strengths and two limitations under change, and a conclusion that weighs both sides. Then a panel showing every idea comes from one topic.

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THE FULL BOOKLET

Everything you need for Human Relationships

You have seen how the pages work. The full booklet gives you the same treatment for every topic in the context, from conformity and social identity to improving relationships.

- ✓ **All 10 topics** every topic in the Human Relationships context, group and interpersonal
- ✓ **14 key studies** each with aim, procedure, results and conclusion, plus illustrated pages
- ✓ **Full evaluation** strengths and limitations for every topic under bias, causality, change, measurement, perspective and responsibility
- ✓ **10 one-page recaps** the whole topic on a single page for quick revision
- ✓ **Practice prompts** Section C practice for every topic, plus Section A practice for the six Section A topics
- ✓ **The model answer** the complete answer, annotated line by line back to the notes
- ✓ **Fully linked** tap any contents entry, page reference or margin note to jump straight there

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