Explain the role that culture plays in the formation and maintenance of relationships

The role of cultural dimensions

- Moghaddam (1993) Western society has "discontinuous relationships" and Eastern societies have "continuous relationships."
- Collectivistic societies "find love after marriage". Study by Singh on arranged marriages in India found long-term partners were happy with their arranged marriages.
- LeVine's survey asking if participants would marry a "perfect partner" if they didn't love him/her. Highest scores were in collectivistic cultures. Collectivistic cultures stress the value of the partner to the entire family.

The role of expectation

- US couples have a high divorce rate. They also have some of the highest expectations of love and excitement in a marriage. This leads to disillusionment.
- Yelsma & Athappilly (1988) found that Indian couples in arranged marriages rated higher marital satisfaction. Whyte (1990) found the opposite of Yelsma & Athappilly in Chinese couples. Could be the results of social comparison as attitudes in the society toward arranged marriage is changing.

The difficulty of studying the role of culture

- It is evident that cognitive and biological factors also play a role. Communication, for example, is important in all cultures.
- Failure of marriage in western society could be from the lack of a support network - or because of changing social and legal norms that allow people to leave relationships.
- The ecological fallacy shows that there is variation within all cultures. In addition, culture is dynamic, so older research may no longer be relevant.

Holistic points

- Culture plays an important role on determining the social norms and "rules" for relationships.
- The study of culture as a factor in relationships is difficult because it is impossible to isolate culture as a variable.