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

Formation of relationships
- Individualist cultures assume that the free choice of a spouse is based on romantic love but they may in reality be “arranged” by social position, religion, wealth, opportunities, and class, according to Duck (1999).
- Moghaddam et al. (1993) argues that interpersonal relationships:
  - in Western cultures tend to be individualistic, voluntary, and temporary
  - in non-Western cultures tend to be collectivist, involuntary, and permanent.

Singh (2005) Arranged marriages in India
- The majority of marriages in India are still arranged by the parents or their representatives with or without the consent of the boy or girl involved. There is no room for romantic marriage in the Western sense. In the big cities, educated people now tend to seek the consent of their sons and daughters about the choice of preferred partners.
- In the past, young Indians trusted their parents in the process of finding a suitable match. A large percentage of the arranged marriages seemed to work, and if they did not very few knew about the dissolution of the marriage.

Buss et al. (1990) Cross-cultural study of mate preferences in 33 countries
- This study investigated the effects of culture and gender on heterosexual mate preferences in a sample of 9,494 adults from 33 countries.
- In all cultures, men and women agreed that love and mutual attraction are primary factors in mate selection.
- In countries with traditional values (collectivist countries such as China, India, Iran) men placed high value on a woman’s chastity, her desire for home and children, and her ability as a cook and homemaker. In the same societies, women valued men with good financial prospects, high social status, and ambition.

Maintenance of relationships
- A large proportion of marriages in the Western world end in divorce (in some countries up to 50% of marriages). In some cultures, divorce is non-existent or rare (e.g. in China).

Arranged marriages usually last longer than romantic marriages (Fiske, 2004). Marriage in traditional societies is a contract between families and often involves economic and social engagements that create powerful bonds between the families and makes divorce impossible. This could be a reason for stability of marriages.

Are arranged marriages happier?
- Gupta and Singh (1982) interviewed 50 Indian couples who had married for love or lived in an arranged marriage. The couples who married for love reported diminished feelings of love after a few years of marriage. Those who lived in arranged marriages reported higher levels of love.
- Yelsma and Athappilly (1988) compared 28 Indian couples in arranged marriages, 25 Indian couples in love marriages, and 31 American couples. Individuals in arranged marriages scored higher on marital satisfaction compared to the couples in love marriages.

Xiaohe and Whyte (1990) investigated the prediction of defenders of arranged marriages that “love matches start out hot and grow cold, while arranged marriages start out cold and grow hot.” A sample of 586 married women in the Sichuan province in China participated. The data showed that the role of parents had declined and young people were more involved in matchmaking. The researchers found that wives in love marriages were more satisfied with their marital relationship than the wives who were in arranged marriages. This was found regardless of the length of the marriage. The researchers concluded that their data does not support the idea that arranged marriages are happier than love marriages.

According to Hogg and Vaughn (1998) in spite of the focus on love in relationships in the West, there is general agreement among psychologists that a relationship that survives over time is one in which the partners adapt and change with respect to what they expect of each other. Love that involves friendship, caring, respect, and mutual sharing of experiences could result in the powerful bonding of lasting relationships as in the ideal of the Western “love marriage.”