

- 1** Discuss what psychological research has told us about virtual relationships in social media.
(Total 16 marks)
- 2** Briefly outline the absorption addiction model of parasocial relationships.
(Total 2 marks)
- 3** Outline and evaluate **one** theory of the maintenance of romantic relationships.
(Total 16 marks)
- 4** Discuss the relationship between sexual selection and human reproductive behaviour.
(Total 16 marks)
- 5** Describe **and** evaluate **two or more** theories of the formation of romantic relationships.
(Total 16 marks)
- 6** Read the item and then answer the questions that follow.

Teddy is discussing his girlfriend, Sasha. He says, 'We were in the same year at university, both studying marketing. She was really good at the theoretical side and I was better when it came to practical work. We specialise in different areas now. I'm always proud to be seen out with Sasha. Other guys are really jealous when they see her. We tell each other everything though, no secrets in our relationship.'

Discuss factors affecting attraction in romantic relationships. Refer to Teddy's comments in your answer.

(Total 16 marks)

Mark schemes

1

[AO1 = 6 AO3 = 10]

Level	Marks	Description
4	13 – 16	Knowledge of what psychological research has told us about virtual relationships in social media is accurate and generally well detailed. Discussion is thorough and effective. Minor detail and/or expansion of argument is sometimes lacking. The answer is clear, coherent and focused. Specialist terminology is used effectively.
3	9 – 12	Knowledge of what psychological research has told us about virtual relationships in social media is evident but there are occasional inaccuracies/omissions. Discussion is mostly effective. The answer is mostly clear and organised but occasionally lacks focus. Specialist terminology is used appropriately.
2	5 – 8	Limited knowledge of what psychological research has told us about virtual relationships in social media is present. Focus is mainly on description. Any discussion is of limited effectiveness. The answer lacks clarity, accuracy and organisation in places. Specialist terminology is used inappropriately on occasions.
1	1 – 4	Knowledge of what psychological research has told us about virtual relationships in social media is very limited. Discussion is limited, poorly focused or absent. The answer as a whole lacks clarity, has many inaccuracies and is poorly organised. Specialist terminology is either absent or inappropriately used.
	0	No relevant content.

Possible content:

- self-disclosure in virtual relationships – effects of anonymity: feelings of closeness and intimacy; less emphasis on physical characteristics; lowered inhibition, increased self-disclosure
- hyperpersonal model (Walther 1996) on-line persona can be heavily manipulated and controlled (selective self-presentation can be hyper-honest or hyper-dishonest)
- absence of gating: removes factors that normally act as a barrier to interaction (eg level of physical attractiveness, physical anomalies, speech defects, being in a different age group, from a different social background etc) (McKenna 2002), (Rosemann and Safir 2006)
- reduced cues theory – negative effects of deindividuation and disinhibition
- virtual relationships develop quicker because intimacy occurs sooner than in real-life relationships (Bargh 2002)
- widens range of potential social relationships.

Possible discussion:

- historical development of various types of social media interaction eg early virtual relationships lacked visual face-to-face interaction – less rich NV communication; advanced technology allows for real life ‘live’ interaction
- cultural differences mediate effects of social media on relationships (Yum and Hara 2005)
- effects of more open self-disclosure, eg long-term effects – relationships that begin on-line are more durable than other relationships (McKenna and Bargh 2000)
- mediating effect of personality – introverts/extroverts (Peters 2005)
- NVC is not absent from virtual relationships – cues are just different, eg acrostics/emoticons substitute for facial expression and intonation; importance of timing of responses (Walther and Tidwell 1995)
- variable effects of different on-line contexts eg people disclose more on gaming sites than on dating websites because the latter is likely to lead to face-to-face encounter
- social benefits, eg effects on loneliness - easier access to social interaction/forums – easier to seek out company than in real life
- negative social consequences eg poorer/reduced face-to-face communication skills, eg reading familiar NVC cues.

Only credit methodological issues if used to discuss findings.

Credit other relevant material.

Only credit information on parasocial relationships if explicitly related to virtual relationships in social media.

2**[AO1 = 2]**

1 mark each for any of the two following points:

- parasocial relationships make up for deficits in real life relationships
- parasocial relationships enable a sense of identity
- addictive nature means that parasocial relationships escalate through series of stages

3

Marks for this question: AO1 = 6, AO3 = 10

Level	Marks	Description
4	13 – 16	Knowledge is accurate and generally well detailed. Discussion / evaluation / application is thorough and effective. The answer is clear, coherent and focused. Specialist terminology is used effectively. Minor detail and / or expansion of argument sometimes lacking.
3	9 – 12	Knowledge is evident. There are occasional inaccuracies. Discussion / evaluation / application is apparent and mostly effective. The answer is mostly clear and organised. Specialist terminology is mostly used effectively. Lacks focus in places.
2	5 – 8	Some knowledge is present. Focus is mainly on description. Any discussion / evaluation / application is only partly effective. The answer lacks clarity, accuracy and organisation in places. Specialist terminology is used inappropriately on occasions.
1	1 – 4	Knowledge is limited. Discussion / evaluation / application is limited, poorly focused or absent. The answer as a whole lacks clarity, has many inaccuracies and is poorly organised. Specialist terminology either absent or inappropriately used.
	0	No relevant content.

Please note that although the content for this mark scheme remains the same, on most mark schemes for the new AQA Specification (Sept 2015 onwards) content appears as a bulleted list.

AO1

A variety of theories can be relevant to the maintenance of romantic relationships. Economic models such as social exchange theory, equity theory and investment models focusing on rewards and costs of relationships are all relevant. The matching hypothesis could also be relevant. A similar argument applies to evolutionary approaches; these can be relevant to maintenance of relationships.

AO3

For each of the major models, such as Rusbult's investment model, there is some research support that can be used effectively; in turn some of these studies can be criticised as lacking ecological validity and generalisability. Economic models also suffer from a restricted view of people and what they look for in relationships, ignoring concepts such as fairness. Also relevant is the ability of different theories to explain e.g. people who stay in abusive relationships, the maintenance of gay and lesbian relationships, or gender differences in attitudes to long-term relationships.

Alternative theories may be used to evaluate the target theory, but may receive credit only if used as part of sustained and effective evaluation and not simply discussed in their own right.

Other relevant evaluative points might include cultural differences and biases. Research has been mostly conducted from a Western point of view, ignoring factors more relevant to less developed societies, gender differences and biases, and ethical issues / socially sensitive research.

4

Marks for this question: AO1 = 6, AO3 = 10

Level	Marks	Description
4	13 – 16	Knowledge is accurate and generally well detailed. Discussion / evaluation / application is thorough and effective. The answer is clear, coherent and focused. Specialist terminology is used effectively. Minor detail and / or expansion of argument sometimes lacking.
3	9 – 12	Knowledge is evident. There are occasional inaccuracies. Discussion / evaluation / application is apparent and mostly effective. The answer is mostly clear and organised. Specialist terminology is mostly used effectively. Lacks focus in places.
2	5 – 8	Some knowledge is present. Focus is mainly on description. Any discussion / evaluation / application is only partly effective. The answer lacks clarity, accuracy and organisation in places. Specialist terminology is used inappropriately on occasions.
1	1 – 4	Knowledge is limited. Discussion / evaluation / application is limited, poorly focused or absent. The answer as a whole lacks clarity, has many inaccuracies and is poorly organised. Specialist terminology either absent or inappropriately used.
	0	No relevant content.

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AO1

Candidates may outline the background to research on sexual selection and human reproductive behaviour in terms of evolutionary theory, selfish gene etc. Also relevant would be a description of the detailed processes involved in sexual selection, including intrasexual (mate competition) and intersexual (mate choice) selection. Other factors affecting mate choice, such as parental investment theory, and variations such as short and long-term mate preferences, would also be creditable.

Research with non-human animals may earn marks insofar as it is made explicitly relevant to human reproductive behaviour.

Research studies may be presented as illustrating the relationship between sexual selection and human reproductive behavior.

AO3

There are a variety of routes to credit. Research findings, such as Buss's cross-cultural studies and dating research, could be used effectively. Evaluation of research eg use of questionnaires and social desirability issues, may earn marks if the implications for the reliability and validity of findings are clear.

Credit comparison with alternative approaches eg social psychological explanations. Credit a more theoretical approach focusing for instance on broader issues eg free will and determinism – if sexual selection, human reproductive behaviour and the relationships it involves are driven by purely evolutionary considerations, then they would be highly predictable. In fact human reproductive behaviour has changed dramatically over the last century, with non-heterosexual relationships, widespread use of contraception, and couples choosing not to have children. This implies that we have more control (free will) over our behaviour than is implied by the evolutionary approach. Credit also relevant references to reductionism, cultural differences, gender biases and socially sensitive research.

5**Marks for this question: AO1 = 6, AO3 = 10**

Level	Marks	Description
4	13 – 16	Knowledge is accurate and generally well detailed. There is reference to at least two theories. Discussion / evaluation / application is thorough and effective. The answer is clear, coherent and focused. Specialist terminology is used effectively. Minor detail and / or expansion of argument sometimes lacking.
3	9 – 12	Knowledge is evident. There are occasional inaccuracies. There is reference to at least two theories. Discussion / evaluation / application is apparent and mostly effective. The answer is mostly clear and organised. Specialist terminology is mostly used effectively. Lacks focus in places.
2	5 – 8	Some knowledge is present. Focus is mainly on description. Any discussion / evaluation / application is only partly effective. The answer lacks clarity, accuracy and organisation in places. Specialist terminology is used inappropriately on occasions.
1	1 – 4	Knowledge is limited. Discussion / valuation / application is limited, poorly focused or absent. The answer as a whole lacks clarity, has many inaccuracies and is poorly organised. Specialist terminology either absent or inappropriately used.
	0	No relevant content.

Please note that although the content for this mark scheme remains the same, on most mark schemes for the new AQA Specification (Sept 2015 onwards) content appears as a bulleted list.

AO1

Theories of romantic relationships include: social exchange theory, equity theory and Rusbult's investment model of commitment, satisfaction, comparison with alternatives and investment.

One issue that may arise is the description of particular factors, such as proximity, without an overall 'theory'. If several factors are presented in this way, they could either be considered as aspects of a relevant theory and assessed together, or, if no other relevant material is presented, the two factors best outlined should be considered as two theories. Economic theories, such as social exchange and equity, can account for both formation and maintenance. Such theories can receive credit insofar as the emphasis is on relationship formation rather than maintenance. Similarly, evolutionary approaches may receive credit if the focus is on relationship formation.

AO3

Depending upon the theories outlined, relevant research evidence should be a key source of evaluative discussion. General commentary could include the quantitative nature of economic approaches and the failure to address the emotional side of relationships. On the positive side some theories have generated much subsequent research.

Cultural and gender issues are also central to this area, as is the general failure to consider the variety of romantic relationships. Alternative theories may be introduced, but may gain credit if used as part of sustained and effective commentary.

Issues that might be discussed include gender and cultural issues; ethics; free will / determinism etc.

6

[AO1 = 6 AO2 = 4 AO3 = 6]

Level	Marks	Description
4	13 – 16	Knowledge of factors affecting attraction is accurate and generally well detailed. Discussion is thorough and effective. Application to the stem is appropriate and links between factors and stem content are explained. The answer is clear, coherent and focused. Specialist terminology is used effectively. Minor detail and/or expansion of argument sometimes lacking.
3	9 – 12	Knowledge of factors affecting attraction is evident. Discussion is apparent and mostly effective. There are occasional inaccuracies. Application to the stem is appropriate although links to factors are not always explained. The answer is mostly clear and organised. Specialist terminology mostly used effectively. Lacks focus in places.
2	5 – 8	Knowledge of factors affecting attraction is present. Focus is mainly on description. Any discussion is only partly effective. Application to the stem is partial. The answer lacks clarity, accuracy and organisation in places. Specialist terminology used inappropriately on occasions.
1	1 – 4	Knowledge of factors affecting attraction is limited. Discussion is limited, poorly focused or absent. Application is limited or absent. The answer as a whole lacks clarity, has many inaccuracies and is poorly organised. Specialist terminology either absent or inappropriately used.
	0	No relevant content.

Possible content:

- Self-disclosure is the sharing of personal information about self – increased attraction
- Physical attractiveness – good-looking people are deemed to be more attractive
- Filter theory (field of availables and field of desirables) – we tend to be attracted by those who pass through a series of filters as follows:
 - o those who fit a certain social demographic – attracted to those we come into contact with
 - o those who are similar in attitude/backgrounds etc.
 - o those who complement our emotional needs

Possible applications:

- Filter theory/demographic ‘same year at university’
- Filter theory/similarity ‘both studying marketing’
- Filter theory/complementarity ‘theoretical side practical work’, ‘specialise in different areas’
- Physical attractiveness ‘proud to be seen out with Sasha. Other guys are really jealous when they see her.’
- Self-disclosure ‘we tell each other everything...no secrets’

Possible discussion points:

- Difference between role of factors in initial attraction and their role in continuing attraction
- Use of evidence to support the factors eg. Kerckhoff and Davis longitudinal study of similarity and meeting needs
- Role of attractiveness and link to theory eg Murstein’s matching hypothesis
- Self-disclosure only effective if appropriate to the stage in relationship – too much too soon has the opposite effect
- Evaluation in the context of general relationship theories eg exchange theory