9.2 Factors in Attraction: Self-Disclosure and Physical Attractiveness: 30-minute Pack

AQA 7182 · about 30 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

At least three of the short-answer questions require full sentences. Complete the whole pack in about 50 minutes.

1 Identify two ways in which the halo effect could bias research measures of attractiveness and briefly suggest how a researcher could reduce this bias in a study of first impressions.

(Total for Question 1 is 4 marks)

2 State two findings or features from Altman and Taylor's model that support the idea that self-disclosure builds intimacy, and give one limitation of the model.

(Total for Question 2 is 3 marks)

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3 Explain how online dating apps might affect the temporal validity of findings about physical attractiveness and matching from the 1960s and 1970s research literature.

(Total for Question 3 is 4 marks)

4 Evaluate the role of self-disclosure and physical attractiveness in romantic attraction. In your answer, discuss relevant theories and evidence, consider methodological strengths and weaknesses, and comment on the extent to which findings remain valid given modern practices such as online dating.

(Total for Question 4 is 16 marks)

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Mark scheme · 9.2 Factors in Attraction: Self-Disclosure and Physical Attractiveness: 30-minute Pack

Question 1

identifies a halo effect bias, e.g. attractive people rated higher on unrelated positive traits such as intelligence or kindness oe	**M1**
explains that this can inflate correlations between attractiveness and other judged qualities, confounding conclusions oe	**A1**
identifies a second bias, e.g. researcher or rater expectations influence ratings (expectancy effect) oe	**M1**
suggests reduction: use blinded raters or objective measures and separate attractiveness ratings from trait ratings to reduce halo influence oe	**A1**

Answer: Halo bias can cause attractive people to be rated higher on unrelated traits and can create expectancy effects from raters; using blind rating procedures and separating attractiveness from other trait measures reduces these biases.

Question 2

supports: increasing depth leads to greater trust/intimacy oe	**B1**
supports: reciprocity of disclosure accelerates relationship development oe	**B1**
limitation: model is descriptive and may not account for cultural differences in acceptable disclosure or the fact that disclosure can sometimes harm relationships oe	**B1**

Answer: Support: greater depth of disclosure tends to increase trust and intimacy; reciprocal disclosure accelerates closeness. Limitation: the model is descriptive and may not account for cultural variation or situations where disclosure damages rather than builds a relationship.

Question 3

identifies temporal validity issue: modern online dating changes how people meet and the salience of visual cues oe	**M1**
explains that profile pictures increase the speed and dominance of appearance-based judgements, potentially strengthening attractiveness effects compared with earlier face to face contexts oe	**A1**
identifies that algorithms and filters can match people on many dimensions beyond physical attractiveness oe	**M1**
explains that these technologies may weaken pure matching on looks and increase assortative pairing on interests or values, reducing the direct applicability of early matching-hypothesis findings oe	**A1**

Answer: Online dating emphasises quick visual judgements via profile pictures, which may strengthen the role of attractiveness compared with the 1960s context, but matching algorithms and filtering for interests may reduce the simple effect of matching on looks, so early findings may not fully apply today.

Question 4

Level 4 Knowledge is comprehensive and accurate. Evaluation is balanced and perceptive, integrating theory, empirical evidence and methodological critique. There is well developed discussion of real world implications and temporal validity, with coherent and effective use of examples. Specialist terminology is used precisely.	**13-16**
Level 3 Knowledge is generally accurate with some detail. Evaluation is clear and covers strengths and limitations, with some integration of theory and evidence. There is reasonable comment on applications and modern contexts. The answer is organised and uses appropriate terminology.	**9-12**
Level 2 Knowledge is present but limited in detail. Evaluation is present but may be superficial or one sided. Connections to modern contexts or evidence may be brief or underdeveloped. The answer lacks depth and precision in terminology.	**5-8**
Level 1 Limited knowledge and little or no evaluation. Response may be a list of unsupported points. Specialist terminology is largely absent and the answer lacks organisation.	**1-4**
Level 0 No creditworthy material.	**0**

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Indicative content:

- AO1 points: social penetration theory (Altman and Taylor 1973) proposes development of intimacy through increasing breadth and depth of self-disclosure and reciprocity; reciprocity of disclosure builds trust and perceived intimacy.
- AO1 points: physical attractiveness plays a role via the halo effect, where attractive individuals receive positive trait attributions; matching hypothesis (Walster et al. 1966) suggests people pair with partners of similar attractiveness to minimise rejection.
- AO1 evidence: Walster et al.'s computer dance study provided experimental evidence about attractiveness and partner choice, though results are open to multiple interpretations.
- AO3 methodological critique: much evidence for matching is correlational, so causal claims are weak; Walster et al.'s experimental context had low ecological validity and student samples limit generalisability.
- AO3 methodological critique: measures of attractiveness are culturally and temporally specific and vulnerable to halo bias; ratings should be blinded and separated from other trait measures to avoid confounding.
- AO3 theoretical critique: social penetration is descriptive and may not apply equally across cultures where norms about disclosure differ; disclosure can sometimes reduce attraction or cause harm if too rapid.
- AO3 supporting evidence: research shows reciprocal self-disclosure predicts relationship development and satisfaction, supporting the theory's core claim about intimacy building.
- AO3 challenging evidence: not all relationships follow matching on looks; compensating assets such as status or personality can lead to asymmetrical pairings, and longitudinal research sometimes finds appearance similarity emerges over time rather than driving initial choice.
- AO3 ethical and practical considerations: studies of intimate disclosure raise confidentiality and distress issues; researchers must ensure consent and support.
- AO3 temporal validity and application: online dating increases the salience of visual cues and quick attractiveness judgements, which may strengthen the role of looks; conversely, algorithms and profile information emphasise other matching criteria, so early findings may not map neatly onto modern contexts.
- AO3 conclusion: both self-disclosure and physical attractiveness are important, but their relative influence depends on stage of relationship, cultural context and modern meeting methods. Strong evidence supports a role for reciprocal disclosure in developing intimacy, whereas attractiveness effects are robust for first impressions but complex in predicting long-term pairings.

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