9.3 Filter Theory of Relationship Formation: 30-minute Pack

AQA 7182 · about 30 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions.

1 Outline complementarity of needs as a later-stage filter and describe its meaning.

(Total for Question 1 is 3 marks)

2 Identify and explain a methodological limitation of the evidence for filter theory related to correlation.

(Total for Question 2 is 3 marks)

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3 Discuss filter theory as an explanation of relationship formation.

(Total for Question 3 is 16 marks)

4 Explain how filter importance shifts from early to later stages of relationships.

(Total for Question 4 is 4 marks)

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Mark scheme · 9.3 Filter Theory of Relationship Formation: 30-minute Pack

Question 1

states that complementarity is the third filter and becomes more important in established, longer-term relationships oe	**M1**
explains complementarity as partners providing what the other lacks, for example one partner being nurturing while the other is more independent oe	**A1**
explains that complementarity can increase relationship stability by meeting partners' needs over time oe	**A1**

Answer: Complementarity refers to partners having needs or traits that fit together, such as one partner being more dominant and the other more submissive, and becomes important in longer-term relationships because it helps partners meet each others needs and sustain the relationship.

Question 2

identifies correlational evidence or cross-sectional studies as a limitation oe	**M1**
explains that correlation does not establish causation, so similarity may be a consequence rather than a cause of closeness oe	**A1**
explains that other variables could account for the association, reducing confidence in the filter sequence oe	**A1**

Answer: Much evidence is correlational, which is problematic because correlations cannot prove that filters cause relationship formation; similarity might develop after people become close, or a third variable could explain the association.

Question 3

Level 4 Detailed knowledge of filter theory is accurate and wellorganised, including the three filters and the proposed temporal shift in importance. Evaluation is thorough and balanced, addressing empirical support and clear limitations. Relevant studies and criticisms are used interactively to support judgement, including discussion of Sprecher and Duck, correlational limitations and modern online contexts. The answer is coherent and uses appropriate specialist terminology.	**13-16**
Level 3 Knowledge of the theory is accurate with some development. Evaluation is clear and includes some relevant evidence and limitations. There is some use of studies and application to modern issues, but analysis may be less comprehensive. The answer is mostly wellstructured and uses appropriate terminology.	**9-12**
Level 2 Basic knowledge of filter theory is present but may be incomplete or partially inaccurate. Evaluation is limited or descriptive, with few specific studies and limited linkage to the theory. Reasoning is sometimes unclear and specialist terminology may be used inconsistently.	**5-8**
Level 1 Very limited knowledge of the theory, or mostly irrelevant content. Little or no meaningful evaluation. The answer lacks structure and specialist terminology is largely absent or misused.	**1-4**
Level 0 No relevant content.	**0**

Indicative content:

- AO1: Core description of the theory, Kerckhoff and Davis (1962), three filters: social demography (proximity, social class, religion), similarity in attitudes (important early), complementarity of needs (important later), and the idea that the filters narrow the field and shift in relative importance over time.
- AO1: Mechanisms: social demography increases meeting probability and opportunity to interact; similarity increases liking and communication; complementarity meets longerterm needs and provides functional roles.
- AO3: Empirical support includes studies that find attitude similarity predicts initial attraction and that complementarity correlates with longerterm stability; longitudinal data provides some descriptive backing for changing predictors over time.
- AO3: Critical point, correlational evidence: many supporting studies are correlational or crosssectional, so causation is uncertain; similarity could be a consequence of closeness, or third variables could explain associations.
- AO3: Sprecher and Duck and other empirical challenges show the sequence is not always strict; similarity and complementarity can appear at different times, undermining a rigid temporal ordering and suggesting the model is more flexible than originally proposed.
- AO3: Modern context limitation: online dating and social media weaken social demography as a first filter because people meet across distances and social groups; algorithms may prioritise similarity on selected characteristics rather than proximity.
- AO3: Methodological critiques: sample biases, cultural and temporal validity issues since original studies were often USbased and from earlier decades; also operationalisation problems, for example how to measure complementarity reliably.
- AO3: Strengths and usefulness: the theory is parsimonious and intuitively plausible, it organises multiple influences into a coherent sequence and has practical value in guiding research and relationship counselling about which factors matter at different stages.
- AO3: Balanced conclusion might note that filter theory remains a useful descriptive model that highlights changing influences across relationship development, but it needs updating to accommodate flexible timing of filters and the impact of online partner selection, and stronger longitudinal and experimental evidence is required to support causal claims.

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Question 4

states that social demography is most important early because it determines who meets whom oe **M1**

states that similarity in attitudes matters in early development, promoting initial attraction and mutual understanding oe **A1**

states that complementarity becomes more important later as partners seek to meet each others longer-term needs oe **M1**

explains why this shift matters, for example because initial attraction relies on shared views while long-term stability relies on functional, complementary roles oe **A1**

Answer: Initially social demography restricts who can meet; then similarity in attitudes determines who becomes attracted and forms a close relationship; over time complementarity of needs gains importance as partners seek to satisfy long-term needs and keep the relationship functioning.

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