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| **Theories of Romantic Relationships: Rusbult’s Investment Model AO1** |
| **Satisfaction and Comparison with Alternatives*** A satisfying relationship is based on the concept of the comparison level
* It is deemed profitable if there are many rewards (support, sex, companionship) and few costs (anxiety, conflicts)
* Each partner is generally satisfied if they are getting more out of a relationship than they expect based on previous experience and social norms
* As well as having an alternative level of another relationship, we also decide whether it might be better to have no relationship at all…
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| **Investment Size**Rusbult realised that the CL and CLAlt derived from SET are not good enough to explain commitment. If they were, then many more relationships would end as soon as either the costs outweighed the rewards (representing loss) or a more attractive alternative presented itself. Therefore she introduced a crucial third factor influencing commitment – *investment*.‘Investment’ refers to the extent and importance of the resources associated with the relationship. An investment is anything we would lose if the relationship were to end. There are two types of investment:* *Intrinsic:* any resources we put directly into the relationship. Can be tangible e.g. money and possessions, or intangible (less easy to quantify) e.g. energy, emotion and self-disclosures
* *Extrinsic:* previously did not feature in the relationship, but are now closely associated. Can be tangible e.g. possessions bought together (like a car), mutual friends acquired since the relationship began or children. Intangible include things like memories.
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| **Satisfaction vs. Commitment**Rusbult et al (2011) argue that the main psychological factor that causes people to stay in romantic relationships is not satisfaction, but commitment. This may help to explain why dissatisfied partners may choose to stay in a relationship – it’s because they are committed to their partner. This could be because they have made an investment that they didn’t want to waste. Therefore they will work hard to maintain and repair a damaged relationship, especially when it hits a rough patch. |
| **Theories of Romantic Relationships: Rusbult’s Theory AO3** |
| **Supportive Research**P: One strength of Rusbult’s Investment theory of romantic relationships is that there is supportive evidence.E: For example, Le and Agnew (2003) conducted a meta-analysis where they reviewed 52 studies from late 1970s to 1999. The studies Included 11,000 PPs from 5 countries. They found that satisfaction, comparison with alt. and investment size all predicted relationship commitment. E: This is strength as it supports Rusbult’s claims that relationships in which commitment was greatest were the most stable and lasted longest. Their analysis was supportive even further as they found that these outcomes were true for both men and women, across all cultures in the analysis, and for homosexual as well as heterosexual couples.L: As a result, the credibility of Rusbult’s investment theory as an explanation for romantic relationships is strengthened. | **Real-Life Application**P: One strength of Rusbult’s investment theory as an explanation for romantic relationships is that it has real-life applicationE: For example, it explains relationships involving intimate partner violence (IPV, AKA abusive relationships). Rusbult and Martz (1995) studied ‘battered’ women at a shelter and found that those most likely to return to an abusive partner (i.e. the most committed) reported making the greatest investment and having the fewest attractive alternatives.E: This is a strength of Rusbult’s investment model because at first, it seems surprising that any rational person subjected to violence by a partner should continue to be committed to the relationship. They don’t leave, so the key factor must be due to something other than satisfaction, such as investment. The model recognises that a victim of IPV does not have to be satisfied with a relationship to stay in.L: As a result, the explanatory power of Rusbult’s investment theory as an explanation for romantic relationships is increased. | **Oversimplified**P: One issue with Rusbult’s investment theory as an explanation for romantic relationships is that it oversimplifies the notion of adult romantic relationships.E: For example, Goodfriend and Agnew (2008) point out that there is more to investment than just the resources you have already put into a relationship. In the early stages of a romantic relationship the partners will have made very few investments. They may not even live together at this point. E: This is a weakness because Rusbult’s model is a limited explanation of romantic relationships because it fails to recognise the true complexity of investment, specifically how planning for the future influences commitment. Goodfriend and Agnew extended Rusbult’s original model by including the investment romantic partners make in their future plans i.e. being motivated to commit to each other because they want to see their cherished plans for the future work out.L: As a result, these ideas cast doubt over the credibility of Rusbult’s original model of investment as an explanation for romantic relationships. | **Correlational Research**P: One weakness of Rusbult’s investment theory as an explanation for romantic relationships is that much of the research is correlational.E: For example, strong correlations have been found between all the important factors predicted by the investment model.E: This is a weakness because even though a relationship between variables can be suggested, there is still no evidence of causation. Most studies do not allow us to conclude that any of the factors actually cause commitment in a relationship. It could be that the more committed you feel towards your partner, the more investment you are willing to make in the relationship, so the direction of causality may be the reverse of that precidted by the model.L: As a result, the overall credibility of Rusbult’s model of investment as an explanation for romantic relationships is reduced.  |