listening to either rock music that stimulated positive mood, to ‘modern music’ that stimulated negative mood, or to no music at all. The participants gave more positive evaluations of personal character, physical attractiveness and general attraction in the rock music condition than in the other two conditions. This demonstrated that associating someone with a good feeling can make it more likely they will be attracted to them.

However, it should be noted that being attracted to someone does not mean that a person would be more likely to form a relationship with them. Other factors, such as matching, opportunity and so on, would determine whether a relationship would be initiated.

In a study by Griffith and Veitch statements by strangers were presented to participants who were in either uncomfortable surroundings or physically comfortable surroundings. Results suggested that in the more uncomfortable surroundings, the stranger was liked less. It was concluded that the stranger’s statements had become associated with the participant’s negative feelings about their surroundings. This supports the reward/need satisfaction model as it suggests that a person will form a relationship if they associate the person with a pleasant feeling. If they associate the person with an unpleasant feeling then the relationship is more likely to breakdown or not be formed in the first place.

Both of these pieces of research are lab studies and as such can be seen as quite artificial. This means that they lack ecological validity and therefore, may be limited in their ability to explain the formation of real life relationships.

Further evaluation of the reward/need satisfaction model (AID)

1. This theory may be considered deterministic because it suggests that when others provide us with reinforcement or are in some way associated with reinforcement, relationships are more likely to form with those individuals. In other words, when it comes to the formation (or not) of relationships according to this theory, our behaviour is determined by the type of reinforcement, rather than our free will.

2. The theory can be described as being ethnocentric. Collectivist cultures do not have the same emphasis on the need for reward and satisfaction for the individual. Arranged marriages are not based on positive associations made through conditionings, and their formation is for less emotional reasons (e.g. family ties, financial reasons). However, it should be noted that helping others and self-sacrificing can be a reward in itself, so in collectivist cultures this may drive formation of a relationship rather than a personal reward.

3. This theory can be considered a very simplistic theory. Relationship formation involves extremely complex behaviours which deal with hard to investigate behaviours such as emotion and motivation. Attempting to explain these behaviours in terms of rewards and associations may well oversimplify what is actually a very complicated process. This explanation does not consider the evolutionary reasons why relationships may form, e.g. for reproduction purposes.

2. The Matching Hypothesis

The emphasis of the matching hypothesis is that couples seek to form relationships with the best possible partner they think they can attract. They also want to feel that they have the best possible partner that won’t reject them. As a consequence of this, it is observed that
Cultural differences regarding the importance that love is given as a prerequisite to marriage

Levine et al carried out a study, investigating love as a basis for marriage in 11 countries including India, Pakistan, Thailand, Brazil, Japan, England and the USA. The participants were all asked the same question, "If a boy/girl had all the other qualities you desired, would you still marry this person if you were not in love with him/her?"

Only 3.5% of the American respondents declared that they would marry a person they did not love. In contrast, 50% of the Pakistani and 49% of the Indians said they would marry without love. This shows a cultural difference in love as a prerequisite for marriage and therefore shows cultural variations in relationships and attitudes to love.

The individualism-collectivism dimension may explain the findings of Levine et al. In individualist cultures, people tend to perceive love commitment as an opportunity to cherish and nourish their own self. In countries that are traditionally collectivist, love is an opportunity to strengthen the bonds with a family and social group. Therefore, marriage itself and the satisfaction gained in the relationship are perceived differently. In collectivist cultures, people expect love to grow over time, as the spouses get to know each other better and learn how to fulfil mutual family and social obligations. In these cultures, the extended family is important with many generations for the same family living together. In such a setting, romantic love between two individuals may undermine these family relationships and diminish personal commitment to the group. Therefore, members of collectivist cultures do not seek initial infatuation, romance and passion.

In individualist cultures, people value the initial excitement and thrill of the relationship, regardless of group expectations. In this case, personal commitment and intimacy in a romantic relationship are seen as positive.

Cultural differences in type of marriage—whether free choice or arranged

Myers et al compared the levels of satisfaction of individuals living in arranged marriages in India with those of individuals living in marriages of choice in the USA. Respondents were asked to complete a questionnaire measuring marital satisfaction, as well as the characteristics that they considered to be important in a marriage.

Findings: The most significant finding of this study was that there were no differences in marital satisfaction between people living in arranged marriages and marriages of choice. However, some cultural differences were found with regard to the factors considered important for a successful marriage. For example, those living in the US placed a high priority on live and loyalty, whereas in India, love was regarded as less important as a necessary precursor to marriage, but it was expected to grow as the years went by. These results suggest that, regardless of the different factors considered important in the two cultures, satisfaction with one’s marital relationship is not affected.

However, it is possible that respondents who completed the questionnaires may have been affected by social desirability bias. They were being asked about how satisfied they were with their relationships which is clearly a socially sensitive question, particularly in collectivist societies. It may, therefore, be the case that respondents felt under pressure to answer in a