Assess a Theoretical Viewpoint in Psychology

It is assumed by many that humour plays an important role in romantic relationships and in attraction, perhaps being more important to women. This essay will examine this assumption. Firstly, this essay will explore studies that found that humour is important. Secondly, it will look at the perceived personality traits that come with the association between humour and attractiveness. Thirdly, it will examine studies that have found no relationship between humour and relationship satisfaction.

Firstly, some studies have found that humour is important in romantic relationships. Ziv and Gadish found a relationship between a husband's humour appreciation and marital satisfaction, however, no such relationship was found for a woman (Ziv and Gadish, 1989: 759). This is surprising, as we assumed that humour would be more important to a woman. The highest correlation was found between wives' marital satisfaction and their husband's perceived humour creativity (Ziv and Gadish, 1989: 764). Therefore, showing a relationship between humour and marital satisfaction. Ziv and Gadish were one of the first people to research the role of humour in relationships, making this a research breakthrough. McGee and Shevlin support Ziv and Gadish's findings. They found that those with a good sense of humour were perceived as more attractive and more suitable for a long term relationship by both sexes (McGee and Shevlin, 2009: 67), thus proving their hypothesis and our assumption.

Secondly, studies have found that there are negative personality traits associated with the relationship between humour and attraction. Bressler and Balshine found that only women evaluating men chose humorous individuals as preferred partners (Bressler and Balshine, 2006: 29), thus proving our assumption and showing gender differences. However, for both sexes it was found that humorous individuals were seen as less intelligent and less trustworthy than their non-humorous counterparts (Bressler and Balshine, 2006: 29), this is a surprising finding.

Thirdly, other studies have found no such relationship between humour and relationship satisfaction. Barelds and Barelds-Dijkstra found that partners resembled each other in regard to sense of humour, but found no relationship between humour similarity and relationship quality (Barelds and Barelds-Dijkstra, 2010: 454). Disproving their hypothesis and our assumption. The participants were randomly selected from Dutch directories (Barelds and Barelds-Dijkstra, 2010: 450), meaning the sample is not biased as all members of the target population have the same chance of being selected.

Overall, there are some studies which suggest that there is a relationship between humour and relationship quality/attraction and some that do not support said relationship. However, the studies, which support our assumption, only find a relationship between humour and relationship quality, not cause and effect. We cannot say that high humour levels cause an increase in relationship quality. All of these studies use self report measures, which can acquire socially desirable answers.