may apply the criteria described by the Filter Theory freely and usually without much influence from other people. However, this is not the case in collectivist cultures, where it is common for romantic relationships to be arranged, so partners are not free to apply individual filters to select their future spouse. This means that Filter Theory suffers from culture bias, as it assumes that the rules of partner choice in Western cultures apply to relationships universally.

- The importance of the 3 filters in developing attraction is something that many people experience in their everyday life, meaning that filter theory has face validity – as people can relate to it with intuitive 'this makes sense' understanding. However, social demography may not play as big a role in the development of relationships nowadays, as the development of technology, (such as dating websites and apps) greatly affects modern relationships. Compared with 20-30 years ago, people nowadays are more likely to develop relationships with someone who is not in their geographical proximity or from the same culture, making the Filter Theory's claims less valid.
- Basing the explanation of such complex phenomena as romantic relationships on the application of a series of filters is reductionist and limits the range of real life romantic experiences it can explain. For example, the Filter Theory does not explain why many people stay a long time in abusive relationships despite the lack of complementarity that is theorised as being a factor of long-term relationships. This suggests that a holistic approach to studying romantic relationships may be better suited to explaining the complexity of relationships maintenance.

Theories of romantic relationships: Social exchange theory

Social exchange theory

Is one of the so-called 'economic' theories of relationships. Economic theories describe relationships as a series of exchanges aiming at balancing rewards and costs. **Thibaut & Kelley (1959)** describe romantic relationships using the economic terminology of profit (rewards) and loss (costs). Costs involve things that you see as negatives such as having to put money, time, and effort into a relationship. For example, if you have a friend that always has to borrow money from you, then this would be seen as a high cost. The benefits are things that you get out of the relationship such as fun, friendship, companionship. Individuals minimise losses and maximise gains, which is the minimax principle. We judge our satisfaction with a relationship in terms of the profit it yields, however such rewards and costs are subjective, as one person may consider them being less valuable than you think they are.

Key study: **Kurdek & Schmitt (1986)**

They investigated the this theory in an experiment with 185 heterosexual and homosexual couples. Each couple lived together and didn't have children. The participants completed a questionnaire. They discovered that greater satisfaction was associated with the perception of the benefits of their current relationship and the comparison level for alternatives. Meaning that when an individual perceived their current partner to be better than alternatives they were more satisfied with their relationship. This provides support for the Social Exchange theory across a variety of different relationships (married, cohabitating, heterosexual and homosexual).

The comparison level (CL) is the amount of rewards you think you deserve. This develops out of experience from previous relationships, making us have higher expectations for the upcoming relationship and social norms influences the future relationship by determining what is considered to be a reasonable level of reward. Our CL changes after we are in more relationships and have more experience. People with a low CL had unpleasant or unsatisfying relationships. For example, if your next romantic partner tends to be more reserved and less emotional, that person might not measure up to your expectations. While someone with a high CL had rewarding relationships and would have that are involved in some kind of game-based scenario with rewards and costs variably distributed during the game. For example, **Emerson & Cook (1978)** designed a laboratory experiment where each of 112 participants was bargaining with a partner to maximise personal score in a computer game. The 'relationships' between these partners are nothing like real-life romantic relationships, which are based on getting to know another person and establishing trust. As such, these studies lack internal validity, making SET less applicable to real-life romantic relationships.

- The problem of assessing value and costs and benefits. The theory confuses people with what a cost and a benefit is in a relationship. **Littlejohn (1989)** found that what can be rewarding for one person may not be for their partner. Moreover, what we see as a benefit at one stage of a relationship, may be seen as a cost in a different stage of the relationship. Suggesting the difficulty of classifying about what is a cost and a benefit. Moreover, **Nakonezny & Denton (2008)** found that individuals have ways of quantifying the value of costs and benefits to assess if benefits outweigh the costs. They claim that value is difficult to determine and

Theories of romantic relationships: equity theory

Equity theory

Developed in the 70's by **Hatfield et al**, which claims that people who give little to their partner expect to receive little in return and vise versa with people who give a lot to their partner and expect a lot in return, suggesting equity between 2 partners is equivalent. Equity doesn't mean equality, though. It is not about the number of rewards and costs, but rather about the balance between them; if a person puts a lot into a relationship and receives a lot, it will feel fair to them.

Key study: **Stafford & Canary (2006)**

Aim was to see how satisfaction and equity predicted the use of maintenance strategies used in marriage. Conducted on 200 married couples who completed measures of equity and satisfaction and each spouse was asked questions about their relationship maintenance strategies e.g assurance, sharing tasks and positivity. They found that satisfaction was the highest for spouses who preferred an equal relationship. Under-benefited husbands reported low levels of maintenance strategies compared to over-benefited husbands. The relationship between equity and marital happiness appeared to be complementary, spouses who were treated equitably tended to be happier and more likely to to contribute to their partner's equity and happiness

Inequity and dissatisfaction

According to the theory, an equitable relationship should be one where a partner's benefits minus their costs equal to their partner's benefits less than their costs. Moreover, it's not the amount of rewards and costs that matter but the ratio between the two, as long as one partner puts a lot or little in a relationship and at the same time they get the same amount in return, it will seem fair. However, if people feel over-benefited, they may experience guilt, pity and shame. Whereas, if a partner feels under-benefited they may feel angry, sad or dissatisfied. The greater the inequity, the more stress is in a relationship, which can lead to motivation to fix something about that.
There are consequences to inequity. What makes us most dissatisfied is a change in the level of perceived equity as time goes on. However, perception of equity changes over time. For example, it is perfectly normal for many people to put in more than they receive at the beginning of a relationship, but if it carries on like that for too long, it will lead to dissatisfaction.
Different couples deal with inequity differently. What seemed unfair in the beginning may become a norm as relationships progress, or the partner who gives more may start working even harder on the relationship until the balance is restored. This explanation can account for abusive relationships. For example, the partner who believes that they are at the losing side of equity may work even harder to make the relationship more equitable. However, they will only do this if they genuinely believe that this

frustrated when they wouldn't be rewarded after playing a game. In another morkey, which didn't participate, would receive a reward, the capuchins were even more angry and threw food at the experimenter. Further research by **Brosnan et al (2005)** found chimpanzees to be more upset by injustice in casual relationships than in close ones. Suggesting that the perception of inequity has ancient origins.

+ Research to support. In the study by **Stafford & Canary (2006)** found that partners who perceived their relationships as fair and balanced experienced the most satisfaction. Having research to support helps to improve the validity of the theory, as it demonstrates that equity has an influence on romantic relationships. As a consequence of higher validity, this means equity theory can be better generalised to real life romantic relationships and still hold true. In addition, there is further support by its successful application in couples therapy. Therefore equity theory has good external validity as it has been applied to real romantic relationships and has shown to make a direct impact. Can be used in relationship counselling to help identify whether fairness is perceived and how it can be improved and it can be applied to more types of relationships compared to SET.

The investment model of relationships

The investment model

Developed by **Rusbult** to have a way of understanding why people continue some romantic relationships but not others. There are many couples who stay together despite the costs outweighing the rewards, so there must be some other factors that keep them together. Rusbult's proposal contains three major factors that maintain commitment in relationships:

- Satisfaction level: comparing rewards and costs and see if the relationship is profitable (many rewards and few costs)
- Quality of alternatives: when individuals' needs might be better fulfilled outside of the relationship, which would lead to the relationship coming to an end. If there aren't better alternatives, an individual is likely to stay in the relationship.
- Investment size: the extent and importance of resources associated with the relationship, it's anything that we would lose if the relationship ended. There are 2 major types of investment:
    - ➔ Intrinsic investment: direct resources we put in a relationship e.g money, possessions, or resources less easy to quantify e.g emotion, self-disclosure.
    - ➔ Extrinsic investment: resources that weren't featured in the relationship at first but then became associated with it.
- Commitment level: high levels of commitment are in happy couples who anticipate little gain. Commitment is low if satisfaction and investment is low and people become dependent on a relationship if they feel satisfied with it, therefore commitment is a consequence of increasing dependence.

Key study: **Le & Agnew (2003)**

Meta analysis of 52 studies between the 70's - 90's with overall 11,000 participants from 5 countries (US, UK, Netherlands, Israel and Taiwan), which explored the different components of the investment model and the relation between them. Overall satisfaction, quality of alternatives and investment were highly correlated to commitment, with the correlation between commitment and satisfaction at 68%, with quality of alternatives at 48% and investment size at 46%.
The fact that the evidence for the Investment Model is found across cultures may suggest that the human need for investment and commitment to relationships developed through the process of natural selection to help people survive and reproduce. For example, parents who are committed to their relationship and invest in it will have a higher chance of ensuring their children's survival and therefore of passing on their genes. This means that the Investment Model supports the nature side of the nature-nurture debate.