

Discuss what psychological research has told us about why people develop parasocial relationships.

[16 marks]

Marks for this question: AO1 = 6, AO3 = 10

Level	Marks	Description
4	13–16	Knowledge of what psychological research has told us about why people develop parasocial relationships is accurate and generally well detailed. Discussion is thorough and effective. Minor detail and/or expansion of argument is sometimes lacking. The answer is clear, coherent and focused. Specialist terminology is used effectively.
3	9–12	Knowledge of what psychological research has told us about why people develop parasocial relationships is evident but there are occasional inaccuracies/omissions. Discussion is mostly effective. The answer is mostly clear and organised but occasionally lacks focus. Specialist terminology is used appropriately.
2	5–8	Limited knowledge of what psychological research has told us about why people develop parasocial relationships is present. Focus is mainly on description. Any discussion is of limited effectiveness. The answer lacks clarity, accuracy and organisation in places. Specialist terminology is used inappropriately on occasions.
1	1–4	Knowledge of what psychological research has told us about why people develop parasocial relationships is very limited. Discussion is limited, poorly focused or absent. The answer as a whole lacks clarity, has many inaccuracies and is poorly organised. Specialist terminology is either absent or inappropriately used.
	0	No relevant content.

**Possible content:**

- at a superficial level such relationships provide a source of entertainment (entertainment social – McCutcheon 2002)
- at more extreme levels, such relationships are explained as due to absorption-addiction or attachment problems
- absorption-addiction: such relationships are due to personal inadequacies (eg weak personal identity, poor real-life relationships, desire to escape real life). This leads to desire for complete psychological involvement in the celebrity's life and mistaken belief/delusion that the attention/feeling is reciprocated
- attachment explanation: insecure-resistant types feel need for fulfilment through relationships that do not involve chance of rejection.

**Possible discussion:**

- use of evidence to support contradict the explanation, eg McCutcheon (2006) insecure types had no increased likelihood of parasocial relationships; Meloy (1998) links between stalking and social incompetence
- basis of attachment explanation in Bowlby's attachment theory – issues with evidence
- links between absorption-addiction model and the three levels
- links between personality type and level of parasocial relationships: entertainment social linked to extraversion; McCutcheon (2014) links with impulsivity and sensation-seeking – traits linked to other addictive behaviours
- absorption-addiction model is more descriptive than explanatory
- tendency is culturally universal – may be a universal need
- discussion of how methodology of specific studies might limit what studies can tell us, eg correlations/self-report.

Credit other relevant material.