

AQA Psychology A-Level

Option 1: Gender Essay Plans

This work by [PMT Education](https://www.pmt.education) is licensed under [CC BY-NC-ND 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/)



Discuss the concept of androgyny. Refer to the Bem Sex Role Inventory in your answer. (16 MARKS)

AO1	• Psychological androgyny was proposed by Bem, who believed that androgyny is more beneficial to mental health than the traditional fixed sex. This is because, according to her, men and women should be free to express and adopt both masculine and feminine qualities, one shouldn't have to stifle their personality to conform to accepted ideas about behaviour. • It was concluded by Bem, that stifling personalities is what leads to mental disorders. • Bem also developed the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI), through a psychometric test consisting of 60 personality traits (20 masculine, 20 feminine, and 20 neutral gender-unbiased traits). Individuals rate themselves on each trait using a 7-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = <i>"never or almost never true"</i> to 7 = <i>"always or almost always true"</i>). Based on their overall scores, individuals are classified into four distinct categories: ○ Masculine: High masculinity, low femininity. ○ Feminine: High femininity, low masculinity. ○ Androgynous: High masculinity and high femininity (associated with greater psychological health). ○ Undifferentiated: Low masculinity and low femininity (a category added by Spence et al. (1975), and later adopted by Bem following criticism of her original classification system). • The Gender schema theory was devised by Bem using this, she suggested that androgynous individuals differ from traditional sex-typed people due to their cognitive style. This flexibility allows them to respond to situations independently of gender concepts, making them healthier.
AO3	1. Bem's sex-role inventory has been proven to have high test-retest reliability, with a Kappa Score ranging from 0.76 to 0.94, as found by Bem (1981). 2. Prakash (2010), suggested that Bem's claims that androgynous individuals are psychologically healthier are correct. It was found that 100 Indian females tested on masculinity/femininity scores had lower



depression scores.

3. The validation of Bem's theory has treatment implications, as if androgyny is beneficial for mental health, the best way to raise children would be without sex-role stereotypes. But, when a British couple did this, they were accused of abusing their child- indicating that people still believe that stereotypes are important for healthy development.
4. The belief that parents raise their children in line with sex-role stereotypes is supported by Smith and Lloyd. A group of mothers were filmed playing with a baby that was not their own, the sex of the child was not always consistent with their name and sex. Mothers that thought they were playing with boys encouraged motor play, and those who believed they were playing with girls encouraged playing with dolls.



Discuss the role of chromosomes and hormones in sex and gender, refer to atypical chromosome patterns in your answer. (16 MARKS)

AO1	- Chromosomes play a role in the development of both sex and gender, with there being a link between sex chromosomes and genitalia. At 3 months, foetuses- if they are male, produce testosterone in the testes, causing external genitalia to form. Gene explains how individuals acquire their sex, and may explain some aspects of gender. - Testosterone is responsible for the development of secondary sexual characteristics of males, causing them to develop traits like deeper voices and facial hair during puberty. - Similarly, oestrogen is responsible for the secondary sexual characteristics in females such as the maturation of internal genitalia. Oxytocin is another hormone which promotes feelings of bonding in males and females. - There are atypical chromosome patterns that can affect both sex and gender development. An atypical chromosome pattern is Klinefelter's syndrome, which occurs due to an XXY configuration, this results in males being born with a penis, but being physically less masculine due to reduced levels of testosterone. - Another syndrome is Turner's syndrome, which occurs in approximately 1 in 2,000 females who have a 45,X (or XO) chromosome pattern, meaning they possess only one complete X chromosome rather than two (XX). The missing sex chromosome prevents the ovaries from developing fully, resulting in a lack of periods and infertility, as well as physical characteristics such as a webbed neck, broad chest, misshapen internal organs, and shorter-than-average height.
AO3	- Money and Ehrhardt argued that environmental determinism is crucial in the development of gender identity, but the subject of their study David Reimer suggests otherwise. Reimer, despite being raised female due to a botched circumcision, had a strong male gender identity, providing evidence in support of biological factors being crucial in the development of gender. - The Reimer case, being a case study, is unique, making it unable to be generalised. That being said, a study by Reiner and Gearhart provides further evidence to support the role of biology in gender development,



with 8 of 14 boys studied who were raised as female reassigning themselves as male after being born with almost no penis.

3. This explanation ignores other factors in gender development, with individuals with Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia having prenatal exposure to male hormones, resulting in male external genitalia. Such individuals do not accept their assigned gender, suggesting that social factors play a role in gender.
4. Social influences are also important in the development of gender development. Imperato-McGinley et al (1974), studied a group of children who were raised as girls because of their insensitivity to testosterone. Due to large amounts of testosterone they developed penises, but later accepted their new roles without difficulty, which is attributed to the culture they lived in.



Describe and evaluate Kohlberg's theory of gender development. (16 MARKS)

AO1	• Kohlberg's theory is part of the cognitive developmental approach, which emphasises the role of cognition in the process of development. This suggests that changes in gender thinking are the result of changes to cognitive capabilities. • Stage 1 of the theory is 'Gender Labelling', in which children label themselves as either a boy or girl, but this is based on appearance only. Children change gender labels as appearance changes, their logic is superficial but not consistent. • The second stage occurs when the children are four, and is called the 'Gender Stability' stage. Children recognise that gender is consistent over time, but they do not recognise that it is consistent across situations. This was shown by McConaghy (1979) who found that when children were shown a drawing of a doll wearing a dress, despite male genitals being visible, the doll was judged to be female because of the dress. • Children realise that gender is consistent across all situations in what is known as the 'Gender Constancy' stage. They also learn about gender appropriate behaviour before this, such information is irrelevant as they thought gender was changing.
AO3	1. Kohlberg's theory assumes that children only gain knowledge about gender appropriate behaviour at the gender constancy stage. But it was found that children of this age have no signs of stability let alone constancy, but they have acquired information about gender stereotypes earlier than Kohlberg's theory suggests. 2. Gender constancy has been supported by Slaby and Frey (1975) who showed children images and females doing the same tasks. Children in the constancy stage spent equal time watching males and females, but the converse was true of those not in the constancy stage. This supports the claim that children change the way that they process information about their own and the opposite sex as they grow older. 3. That being said, Kohlberg's initial interviews were conducted on children as young as 2-3 years old, with the questions tailored to their age. It was argued that Kohlberg failed to acknowledge that their



opinions on gender may have been more complex than his questions allowed them to express. As a result, the support offered by Kohlberg for his theory is limited.

4. The theory places emphasis on the role of maturation in gender development, but this is challenged by the SLT. Maturation cannot explain why boys have a less flexible concept of gender roles.



Discuss two cognitive explanations of gender development. (16 MARKS)

AO1	• Kohlberg's theory is part of the cognitive developmental approach, which emphasises the role of cognition in the process of development. This suggests that changes in gender thinking are the result of changes to cognitive capabilities. • Stage 1 of the theory is 'Gender Labelling', in which children label themselves as either a boy or girl, but this is based on appearance only. Children change gender labels as appearance changes, their logic is not consistent. The second stage is called the 'Gender Stability' stage. Children recognise that gender is consistent over time, but not that it is consistent across situations. • Children realise that gender is consistent across all situations in what is known as the 'Gender Constancy' stage. • An alternative explanation is the gender schema theory which was proposed by Martin and Halverson (1981) who believed that the process of gaining gender occurs prior to the achievement of gender constancy. A schema is a mental representation of an aspect of the world. • Children learn schema related ideas from their interactions, as well as from TV shows and videos, such schemas are very much related to cultural norms. The ingroup refers to the group with which an individual identifies, it is from here that they develop their ingroup schemas, and actively seek out information about that group for them to imitate. • The GST, unlike Kohlberg's theory, is able to explain why people hold such fixed beliefs, and as a result, such fixed gender attitudes, as they ignore any information that is not consistent with their in-group information.
AO3	1. Kohlberg's theory assumes that children only gain knowledge about gender appropriate behaviour at the gender constancy stage. But it was found that children of this age have no signs of stability let alone constancy, but they have acquired information about gender stereotypes earlier than Kohlberg's theory suggests. 2. Gender constancy has been supported by Slaby and Frey (1975) who showed children images and females doing the same tasks. Children in the constancy stage spent equal time watching males and females, but the converse was true of those not in the constancy stage. This



supports the claim that children change the way that they process information about their own and the opposite sex as they grow older.

3. The gender schema theory is able to help people organise memories. Martin and Halverson found that children under 6, when shown pictures of people, remembered more of the gender consistent ones, than the inconsistent ones, like male nurses/female doctors.
4. An assumption of the GST is that schemas determine behaviour, but this isn't always the case, couples that have strong views about sex equality may still operate under stereotyped sex roles. This challenges the GST, as its basis is that attitude determines behaviour.



Discuss the social learning theory as applied to gender development. Refer to another explanation for gender development in your answer. (16 MARKS)

AO1	- It was proposed by Bandura (1991) that gender development is the result of learning from people who model and reinforce gender development. Vicarious reinforcement is the way in which children observe the behaviours of others and learn the consequences of such behaviour. If this behaviour is rewarded, then they decide that the behaviour is worth repeating, this is a form of indirect reinforcement. Information about reinforcement is stored as an expectancy of future outcomes. - In addition to this, if a child is rewarded for gender related behaviour, they are likely to repeat the same action in similar situations in the future. They may also, however, learn through direct tuition- explicit instruction about appropriate behaviour. Bandura argued that individuals are not passively shaped by environmental forces alone, but operate through reciprocal determinism, where cognitive factors, environment, and behavior dynamically interact.
AO3	- Direct tuition seems to be a more accurate description of gender development in children than the modelling theory. Martin et al (1995) observed children playing with toys and found that boys playing with toys labelled for boys (direct tuition), but when they saw boys playing with 'girls' toys they didn't model this. - The SLT is able to explain changing gender roles, unlike other approaches like the biological approach due to a lack of biological changes over the years. The SLT is able to do this, as changes in societal expectations lead to changes in what is reinforced, suggesting the SLT is a more comprehensive explanation. - But, the SLT fails to acknowledge the importance of biological factors in gender development. The SLT places emphasis on modelling- the role of nurture, but the case of David Reimer provides evidence against this. (Reimer, despite being raised female after a botched circumcision, had a male gender identity.) - The SLT is unable to explain unconscious elements of gender development- an assumption that gender behaviour is determined by factors in our control (mediational processes), which is a limitation of this theory.



Describe and evaluate the influence of culture and/or media on gender development. (16 MARKS)

AO1	- Gender expectations vary between cultures, with there being a general bias that women are more conformist. Berry, however, found that non-nomadic societies' conformity is the highest. Alleye (2011) reported that although women perform more domestic tasks and occupy less powerful positions than men- the gender gap is decreasing, showing a change in cultural influences. - Culture & Media (Mead, 1935): Investigated gender roles across three social groups in Papua New Guinea: - Arapesh: Both men and women were gentle, caring, and responsive (traditionally feminine traits). - Mundugumor: Both men and women were aggressive, ruthless, and violent (traditionally masculine traits). - Tchambuli: Gender roles were reversed compared to Western cultures—women were dominant, managerial, and breadwinners, while men were emotionally dependent, passive, and concerned with bodily decoration. - This study by Mead demonstrates that gender roles are culturally determined and socialised rather than purely biologically fixed. - Through the media, information about the likely outcomes of behaviours for men and women are given. If we see others succeed our self efficacy is raised- particularly if the person they see succeed is one they identify with. - Similarly, the failure of others that we identify with decreases a person's faith in their ability to master similar tasks. - The media can also change existing stereotypes, as well as perpetuate them. This is done by counter stereotyping- Pingree (1978) found when children were shown adverts with women in nontraditional roles, stereotyping decreased.
AO3	Within cultures and across cultures, there is evidence to show that culture does influence gender roles, but there is also evidence to show that biological factors are just as important. It is argued by Eagly and Wood that some roles are performed better by men than



women and vice versa due to biological differences. That being said, in societies where alternative child care from males is given, gender roles are more similar between men and women.

2. Cross cultural research, including Mead's, has been criticised as researchers may observe or perceive things differently to indigenous people of the region they are studying. In addition to this, native people may tell researchers what it is they want to hear.
3. The true extent to which media influences gender development is hard to determine, due to a lack of control groups. The presence of the media is almost everywhere, making determining whether gender development is due to the media or other factors difficult.
4. But when looking at the effects of the media on a community previously without TV, Charlton (2000) found no changes in aggression levels of people within the community. This study, although not applicable to gender due to it being based on aggression, seems to indicate that the media's influence is insignificant.

