

# AQA Psychology A-Level

## Option 1: Gender Essay Plans

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

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| <b>AO1</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• It was concluded by Bem, that stifling personalities is what leads to mental disorders.</li> <li>• Bem also developed the Bem Sex Role Inventory, by asking undergraduate students to list personality traits attractive to both men and women. Individuals had to rate themselves against these words using a Likert scale. They were then characterised as either masculine, feminine or undifferentiated- the latter category was created following criticism Bem received about her categories.</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>                            |
| <b>AO3</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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).</li> <li>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.</li> <li>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.</li> <li>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.</li> </ol> |



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

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| <b>A01</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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, fetuses- if they are male, produce testosterone in the testes, causing external some genitalia to form. Gene explain how individuals acquire their sex, and may explain some aspects of gender.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Another syndrome is Turner's syndrome, which occurs due to an XO configuration in which females have a partially missing or damaged sex chromosome. This occurs in 1 in 2,000 females, and symptoms include being shorter than average, having a lack of periods, narrow hips, a webbed neck and misshapen internal organs.</li> </ul>                     |
| <b>A03</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 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.</li> <li>2. 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.</li> <li>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.</li> <li>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.</li> </ol> |



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

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| <b>A01</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kohlberg's theory is part of the cognitive developmental approach, which emphasises the role of cognition in the process of development. This suggest that changes in gender thinking are the result of changes to cognitive capabilities.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• The second stage occurs when the children are four, and is called the 'Gender Stability' stage. Children recognise that gender is consistent overtime, 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, depiste male genitals being visible, the doll was judged to be female because of the dress.</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>A03</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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.</li> <li>2. Gender constancy has been supported by Staby 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 claim that children change the way that they process information about their own and the opposite sex as they grow older.</li> <li>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 result, the support offered by Kohlberg for his theory is limited.</li> <li>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.</li> </ol> |



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

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| <b>A01</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kohlberg's theory is part of the cognitive developmental approach, which emphasises the role of cognition in the process of development. This suggest that changes in gender thinking are the result of changes to cognitive capabilities.</li> <li>• 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 overtime, but not that it is consistent across situations.</li> <li>• Children realise that gender is consistent across all situations in what is known as the 'Gender Constancy' stage.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• 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 ingroup information.</li> </ul> |
| <b>A03</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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.</li> <li>2. Gender constancy has been supported by Staby 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 claim that children change the way that they process information about their own and the opposite sex as they grow older.</li> <li>3. The gender schema theory is able to help people organise memories. Martin and Halverson found that children under 6, when showed pictures of people remembered more of the gender consistent ones, than the inconsistent ones, like male nurses/female doctors.</li> <li>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.</li> </ol>   |



## Discuss Freud's psychodynamic theory of gender development. (16 MARKS)

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| <b>AO1</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Freud's theory involves defence mechanisms in which repression is used to protect the conscious mind- the ego from provoking thoughts. Gender development, according to Freud takes place during the phallic stage of his psychosexual stages and is resolved by means of the Oedipus complex in males or the Oedipus feminine attitude in females.</li> <li>• Gender development via the Oedipus complex occurs as following: boys desire their mothers, and are jealous that they are not the sole object of her attention- so resent their fathers. This creates a repressed fear of castration, which is resolved as the boy identifies with his father and begins to take on their gender identity as their own, leading to masculine behaviour.</li> <li>• Jung proposed to Electra complex to explain female gender development, but this was never accepted by Freud who proposed his own alternative: girls are initially attracted to their mothers before realising she doesn't have a penis. This attraction ends, and they blame her for their own lack of penis and begin to experience penis envy. Her penis envy is then converted into a desire to have a baby, and she identifies with her mother and internalises her gender identity.</li> <li>• This resolution is less satisfactory- Freud saw no reason to identify with females.</li> </ul> |
| <b>AO3</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The complexes rely on children having knowledge of their own genitalia, as well as that of the opposite sex. But, Bem found that children of this age didn't know what the genitalia of the opposite looked like, thus making it impossible for either complex to occur.</li> <li>2. An alternative psychodynamic explanation to Freud's is Chodorow's, which suggests that mothers and daughters are close due to them being the same sex, whereas sons become more independent. Similarly, boys and girls both attempt to become close to their fathers, but only girls succeed because fathers treat boys and girls differently. This non-sexual explanation is preferred to Freud's.</li> <li>3. Although sexual, the case of Little Hans provides evidence to support Freud's theory. Hans had a fear of horses 'stemming' from his Oedipus complex, but his fear of castration by his father manifested in a fear of horses. Upon treating him for his oedipal issues, his phobia of horses was also treated.</li> <li>4. There are similarities between Freud's theory and the gender schema theory, with both of them placing emphasis on identification on solidifying gender development. In addition to this, they both have similar critical ages, providing support for his theory.</li> </ol>  |



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

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| <b>AO1</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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 behaviours 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.</li> <li>• 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 believed that people are not just shaped by environmental forces, but also have the capacity to direct themselves- a process he called environmental determinism. This is a key element of the Social Learning approach.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>AO3</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 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 didnt model this.</li> <li>2. 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 leads to changes in what is reinforces, suggesting the SLT is a more comprehensive explanation.</li> <li>3. 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.)</li> <li>4. 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.</li> </ol> |



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

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| <p><b>AO1</b></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender expectations vary between cultures, with their 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.</li> <li>• The influence of culture on media roles was found by Mead (1935) who looked at social groups in Papua New Guinea. The Arapesh men and women were found to be gentle and responsive, but the Mundugumor men and women to be more violent and aggressive.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Similarly, the failure of others that we identify with decreases a person's faith in their ability to master similar tasks.</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>AO3</b></p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Within cultures and across cultures, there is evidence to show that culture does influence gender roles, but here 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.</li> <li>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.</li> <li>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.</li> <li>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.</li> </ol> |





**Discuss and evaluate research related to Gender Identity Disorder. Refer to both biological and social factors in your answer. (16 MARKS)**

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| <p><b>AO1</b></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The brain-sex theory is a biological explanation for gender identity disorder. This relies on the belief that male and female brains are different and that maybe the brain of transeuxals do not match their genetic sex. The BSTc ( in the thalamus) has been found to be twice as large in heterosexual men than heterosexual women and containing twice as many neurons. This suggests that the size of the BSTc correlates with preferred sex- not biological sex, which leads to the formation of gender identity disorder.</li> <li>• Ramachandran (2008) suggested that gender dysphoria is an innate form of phantom limb syndrome. People who have a limb amputated often report that they still feel it itching. Ramachandran (1995) showed that this is due to cross wiring of the brain. With gender dysphoria the image of sex organs is hardwired in the brain opposite to biological sex, meaning that some males feel as if they shouldn't have a penis and some females feel they should.</li> <li>• Stoller (1975) suggested GID could be rooted in social issues, coming from issues with parental figures. Boys with close relationships with their mothers have female identification and gender identity, resulting in the formation of gender identity disorder in young males.</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>AO3</b></p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Assumptions made by the brainsex theory have neem criticised as it was found by Hulshoff et al (2000) that hormone therapy affects the size of the BSTc- suggesting that the differences in transgender brains may be due to the therapy rather than GID.</li> <li>2. However, the explanation of cross wiring has been supported, with Ramachandra reporting that 60% of non GID men who have their penises amputated feel sensations of a phantom penis. In contrast to this, only 30% of GID men do, suggesting that in GID men there was no representation of a penis in the brain in the first place.</li> <li>3. Research into GID must be conducted sensitively,as it can have consequences for individuals. If biological causes are revealed, it can help to increase understanding and reduce the stigma surrounding GID individuals. But on the other hand, individuals with such biological abnormalities can be hamed by assuming transexualism is inevitable.</li> <li>4. Zucker, Owen and Anderson (2010) found high levels of emotional maternal overinvolvement in GID boys, providing evidence to support social explanations of GID.</li> </ol>  |

