Definitions and Concepts for AQA Psychology A-level

Topic 8: Issues and Debates in Psychology

Alpha bias: The tendency to exaggerate differences between groups, such as differences between males and females or between different cultures.

Androcentrism: The tendency to view the world from a male-centred perspective, treating male behaviour and experiences as the standard.

Beta bias: The tendency to minimise or ignore differences between groups, such as differences between males and females or between different cultures.

Biological determinism: The view that behaviour is determined by biological factors such as genes, hormones or brain structures.

Biological reductionism: The view that complex behaviour can be explained in terms of biological factors, such as genes, hormones or brain structures.

Causal explanations: Explanations that identify cause-and-effect relationships between variables or factors influencing behaviour.

Culture: The shared values, beliefs, norms and practices of a particular group or society.

Culture bias: The tendency for psychological research, theories or explanations to reflect the values and experiences of one culture more than others.

Cultural relativism: The view that behaviour should be understood in relation to the cultural context in which it occurs.

Cultural determinism: The view that behaviour is primarily shaped or determined by the culture in which a person develops.

Determinism: The view that behaviour is caused by factors outside conscious control, meaning that free will is limited or absent.

Emic: An approach that studies behaviour from within a particular culture, using concepts and meanings that are relevant to that culture.

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Environmental determinism: The view that behaviour is determined by environmental influences, such as learning and experience.

Environmental reductionism: The view that complex behaviour can be explained by reducing it to simple stimulus-response (S-R) associations and environmental learning.

Etic: An approach that studies behaviour using concepts and measures that are intended to apply across cultures.

Ethnocentrism: The tendency to judge other cultures using the standards and values of one's own culture.

Free will: The view that people have conscious control over their behaviour and are able to choose how they act.

Gender bias: The tendency for psychological research or explanations to favour one gender, often resulting in an inaccurate understanding of behaviour in other genders.

Hard determinism: The view that all behaviour is determined by internal or external causes and that free will does not exist.

Heredity: The transmission of characteristics from parents to offspring through genes.

Holism: The view that behaviour should be studied as a whole rather than being reduced to separate components.

Idiographic approach: An approach that aims to understand the unique experiences and characteristics of an individual.

Imposed etic: The assumption that a theory, model or research instrument developed within one culture can be universally applied to measure or explain behaviour in other cultures.

Interactionist approach: The view that behaviour is influenced by the interaction of different factors, such as biological, psychological and environmental influences.

Levels of explanation: Different levels at which behaviour can be explained, ranging from biological processes to psychological and social factors.

Nomothetic approach: An approach that aims to establish general laws and principles of behaviour that apply to groups of people.

Psychic determinism: The view that behaviour is determined by unconscious psychological processes and conflicts.

Reductionism: The view that complex behaviour can be explained by reducing it to simpler components.

Social sensitivity: The potential for psychological research to have consequences for particular groups of people or society, especially when findings may be used to discriminate against or disadvantage groups.

Socially sensitive research: Research that has potential social consequences because of the groups studied, the findings produced or the way the findings may be interpreted or applied.

Soft determinism: The view that behaviour is determined by causes but that some degree of free will or choice is still possible.

Universality: The extent to which psychological behaviour, processes or explanations can be considered applicable across different cultures or groups.

WEIRD samples: Research samples made up predominantly of people from Western, Educated, Industrialised, Rich and Democratic societies, which may limit the generalisability of findings to other populations.