



Definitions and Concepts for AQA Psychology A-level

Topic 8: Issues and Debates in Psychology

Alpha bias: When differences between males and females are overstated. For example, the difference in mating behaviours between males and females is exaggerated, suggesting males are more promiscuous by nature.

Androcentrism: (Andro = male). A bias towards a male-centred view. In psychology, many subjects of important studies were male, resulting in general psychology paradigms being more male-centred.

Beta bias: When differences between males and females are understated. For example, the general consensus was the fight-or-flight response was equally adopted by male and female animals, whereas under scrutiny it was discovered females could also adopt the “tend-and-befriend” response.

Biological determinism: The idea that all human behaviour stems from your genetic code in some way.

Biological reductionism: The idea that behaviour can be reduced to simple physical components such as nerves and ions.

Cultural relativism: To view a person’s culture from the perspective of someone within that culture, rather than your own.

Determinism: The idea that things are predetermined and everything has a cause.

Environmental determinism: The idea that all human behaviour is a direct result of the environment and outside forces.

Environmental reductionism: The idea that behaviour can be reduced to simple responses to stimuli.

Ethnocentrism: A bias towards your own culture, and judging other cultures by that subjective standard.

Hard determinism: The idea that free will is non-existent, all choices and behaviour arise due to pre-existent causes.

Holism: A type of learning approach that suggests that to understand human behaviour we

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must look at the human as a whole.

Idiographic approach: A type of learning approach that suggests we should focus on the unique experiences of each individual to understand human behaviour.

Interactionist approach: The idea that all human behaviour has multiple causes that stem from the simplest causes (genes) all the way to complex causes (social and cultural systems).

Nomothetic approach: A type of learning approach that suggests we should establish general laws of behaviour that can be applied to all people to understand human behaviour.

Psychic determinism: The idea that all human behaviour is a result of unconscious mental processes.

Reductionism: A type of learning approach that suggests that, to understand human behaviour, we must reduce it to its simplest parts.

Social sensitivity: The possibility for studies to have results that could negatively impact some groups of people.

Soft determinism: The idea that although the choices we pick from are limited and predetermined, humans still have the free will to pick within these predetermined choices.

