

AQA Psychology A-level

Topic 8: Issues and Debates in Psychology Essay Plans

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Question : Discuss free will and determinism. Refer to at least two topics you have studied in your answer (16 marks).

<p>AO1</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe what free will is. • Give an example of a topic where free will is expressed– the Humanistic Approach. • Describe what determinism is, the difference between soft and hard determinism and the various types of hard determinism- biological, environmental and psychic. • Give an example of a topic showing determinism e.g. Biopsychology shows a lot of biological determinism.
<p>AO3</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. One strength of determinism is that it is consistent with the aims of science. Searching for causal explanations has allowed therapies, treatments and behavioural interventions to be introduced. An example is the use of Clozapine as a drug treatment for schizophrenic patients. 2. However a limitation of determinism is that no matter how scientific it seems , it is unfalsifiable. This is as it is based on the idea that causes of human behaviour will always exist which is impossible to prove wrong. Being unfalsifiable disagrees with the features of a science proposed by Popper (1934), suggesting determinism is not as scientific as it appears. 3. A strength of free will is that it has face validity. In our everyday lives we feel like we exercise free will for many different choices we make e.g. choosing what to eat when we go to a restaurant. 4. Overall the interactionist approach provides the best compromise between the free will vs determinism debate. An example is the Cognitive approach which takes this stance - it is believed that we act upon what we know from our innate schemas but that we have the choice to choose what we react to



Question : Discuss ethical implications presented by research studies (16 marks).

<p>AO1</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe what is meant by ethical implications. • Describe what is meant by socially sensitive research. • Can describe what concerns Sieber and Stanley (1988) identified that researchers should be mindful of e.g. the research's use on public policy. • Give examples of research that has had ethical implications like Burt's research into IQ- his research was then used for reason to implement the 11+ exam which is used to decide whether a child can go to a grammar school. Such has had an impact on the futures of children.
<p>AO3</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conducting socially sensitive research may lead to scientific racism. Goddard (1917) concluded from his research that IQ is genetic. This led to horrible practises in the 1920s in the US whereby anyone with a low IQ was seen as feeble minded hence sterilised. Such eugenic policies have used research to justify their discriminatory practises. 2. Another issue presented is that research can be used for social control. It is difficult to manage who benefits from research and from this choice whether it is fair on the public. 3. On the other hand, some socially sensitive research has had a positive impact on society. Loftus & Palmer (1974) did research into how leading questions can influence the accuracy of eyewitness recall. This research has made police more aware of this so that they are more careful when carrying out interview post-crime. 4. Although all research goes through an ethics committee which conducts a cost-benefit analysis, it remains very challenging to predict how the findings of the study will affect the public when released.



Question : Outline and evaluate reductionist explanations in psychology (8 marks).

AO1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Describe what is meant by reductionism.• Describe the levels of explanations which are the different ways of viewing the same phenomena e.g. neurochemical level, social-cultural level.• Could describe the reductionist hierarchy whereby psychology is one of the sciences with the least reductionism.• Could describe types of reductionism- biological and environmental.
AO3	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. A strength of reductionism is that it forms the basis of experimental research. This is shown through the operationalisation of the independent and dependent variable, standardisation and simply conducting experiments at simple levels.2. However a limitation of reductionism is that it oversimplifies complex phenomena. If it is focusing on biological aspects, it means that the social context of the situation is being ignored. When you point a finger , the same physiological process happens in each person but if you want to know why the person is pointing there will be different reasons for each person.3. An alternative explanation of behaviour is the interactionist approach which combines both reductionism and holism as it combines various levels of reductionism together. The model allows for combined treatments , like for schizophrenia both family therapy and drug treatments would be used to treat the mental illness.



Question : Discuss research that takes a nomothetic approach (8 marks).

<p>AO1</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe what is meant by the nomothetic approach and can also describe the opposing argument of the idiographic approach. • Give examples of research – firstly could mention BF Skinner’s research whereby he did many experiments on animals to show operant conditioning which he then generalised to humans. • Could also mention localisation of function whereby many brain scans were undertaken to produce generalisable principles of brain functioning e.g. HM whereby hippocampus was found to be involved with memory
<p>AO3</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The nomothetic approach uses statistics which results in the loss of the ‘whole’ person. This is as people are treated as scores rather than appreciating their individual differences. 2. The nomothetic methods have scientific credibility. This is as they use standardised procedures, group averages and statistical analysis. This does allow them to establish generalisable norms for example the average IQ has been found to be 100. 3. However, at times nomothetic research has been criticised for not being able to be applied to everyone. For example BF Skinner’s research into operant conditioning was only tested on animals. This raises doubt on whether the principles can actually be applied to humans.



Question : Discuss how gender bias has been presented in psychology (16 marks).

<p>A01</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe gender bias. • Describe what alpha bias is and give examples of research that has suffered from it e.g. In Attachment , Bowlby proposes monotropic theory stating women are more central in caregiving compared to men. Also lots of research exaggerates that the role of a father involves play and simulation whilst mothers tend to be more nurturing and caring. • Describe what beta bias is and give examples of research that has suffered from it e.g. In Biopsychology, the flight or fight response is assumed to also take place in women but research from Taylor (2000) found that women have more of a tend and befriend response • Describe what is meant by androcentrism and explain how it may lead to female behaviour being pathologized e.g. The PMS category.
<p>A03</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Being aware of gender bias has led to a better understanding of these problems it can cause in research whereby researchers are more aware of how their sex may influence the way they conduct a study. 2. A limitation of gender bias is that it can have negative implications for society. Gender bias has concerned essentialism which is when gender differences are stated to be fixed in nature. In the 1930s, scientists proposed that intellectual activity in women shrinks their ovaries so attending university would risk their chances of giving birth. Such is a politically motivated argument which has been disguised as a biological fact and shouldn't have been acceptable in society. 3. Moreover gender bias can negatively impact females' lives and affect how they go about their day. An example of this is through research providing scientific justification for why employers can deny women opportunities in workplaces. 4. Psychology research tends to promote sexism. This is as most researchers are male which gives them the power to label any female participant unreasonable or irrational. Also this means that there are likely to be less investigations into what females may want to research. Therefore a form of institutional racism is created.

