

AQA Psychology A-Level

Topic 5: Approaches in Psychology Essay Plans

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Outline and evaluate the behaviourist approach. (16 MARKS)

AO1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• This approach is concerned with behaviour that can be observed and measured. Early behaviourists rejected Wundt's idea of introspection, believing that the concepts involved with introspection are too difficult to measure. Instead, behaviourists relied on lab experiments to ensure objectivity and control in their research.• Classical conditioning refers to learning through association and was researched by Pavlov using dogs as an experimental subject. A neutral stimulus is consistently paired with an unconditioned stimulus so that it eventually takes on the properties of this stimulus to produce a conditioned response.• Operant conditioning, as researched by Skinner through the use of his Skinner box, refers to learning through reinforcement or punishment, if a behaviour is followed by a desirable consequence, then that behaviour is more likely to occur again in the future.
AO3	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The behaviourist approach focuses on the measurement of observable characteristics. In addition to this, the method of data collection used is systematic, reliable and objective, so it plays a role in establishing psychology as a credible scientific discipline.2. Much of the research used to support the behaviourist approach has been conducted on animals. As a result, caution must be taken when applying the findings of such research to humans.3. In addition to this, the use of animals in research by behaviourists has been criticised. In Skinner's study involving rats- the rats were shocked when they didn't perform a certain behaviour.. Subjecting the mice to these aversive conditions is unethical.4. This approach contrasts the biological approach which states that behaviour is innate- rather than learned, which also takes the opposite stance in the nature-nurture debate, advocating nature, whilst the behavioural approach advocates nurture.



Outline and evaluate the social learning theory. (16 MARKS)

<p>A01</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Our behaviour is learned from experience. Bandura proposed the SLT which suggests that we learn through the observation and imitation of others. ● For indirect learning to occur, an individual must observe the behaviour of others, they may imitate this behaviour, but only if the consequences of this behaviour seem to be positive. ● If they observe the model being rewarded they are likely to themselves, imitate this behaviour (vicarious reinforcement). ● People are more likely to imitate the behaviour of models that they identify with. A person becomes a model if they are seen to possess characteristics that the observer has, or if they have characteristics that the observer wishes to have. ● Mediation processes refer to the mental event that determines whether an individual perceives a behaviour as being worth imitating.
<p>A03</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. This explanation has been criticised for underestimating the influences of biological factors in explaining behaviour. In Bandura's Bobo doll study, a consistent finding was that boys were all more aggressive than girls, despite them all observing the same models perform that behaviour. 2. The SLT is able to explain cultural differences in behaviour, this is able to account for cultural changes in behaviour. Children learn through modelling, and the behaviour that they imitate can be dependent on the consequences for this behaviour- the consequences of a behaviour can be dependent on how this behaviour is viewed by society. 3. This explanation demonstrates the importance of cognitive factors in behaviour. This is done through mediation processes, the behaviourist explanation cannot explain learning alone sufficiently, but the SLT provides a more comprehensive explanation of human behaviour. 4. Many of Bandura's ideas were developed based on the observation of the behaviour of children in a lab setting- but with laboratory experiments comes the risk of participants responding to demand characteristics, limiting the validity of the findings.



Outline and evaluate the biological approach (16 MARKS)

AO1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The biological approach suggests that everything is innate and governed by biology.• Twin studies are often used to ascertain whether or not a behaviour has a genetic basis. If, when comparing monozygotic (identical) and dizygotic (non-identical) twins, the concordance rate is higher for mz twins, it can be determined that there is a genetic basis for a behaviour.• Phenotypes refer to the observable characteristics of an individual, which is a consequence of interactions between the genotype with the environment. The genotype is a collection of inherited genetic material that is passed from generation to generation.• The theory of natural selection was proposed by Darwin, this states that any genetic material that can aid an individual's survival is passed on to their offspring with the effect that only those with the alleles that allowed this behaviour will survive.
AO3	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Although twin studies are often used to determine the biological basis for a behaviour, it is very hard to separate the effects of nurture from these individuals from nature. Twins often experience very similar environments and so determining the cause of their behaviour can be hard.2. This explanation also assumes causality where there may only be correlation. An example of this is low levels of serotonin, which have been found in depressed individuals, the approach assumes that these abnormal levels cause depression, but there individuals with low levels of serotonin that do not have depression- indicating a correlation but not a causality.3. A benefit of this explanation is that research related to it uses the scientific method, which means that any theories developed as a result of these studies are based on reliable data and are therefore likely to be valid.4. The biological approach also has treatment implications, through the biological approach successful drug treatments have been developed. An example of this is the use of antipsychotics to treat schizophrenia.



Outline and evaluate the cognitive approach. (16 MARKS)

<p>AO1</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An assumption of the cognitive approach is that internal mental processes can be studied scientifically, which contrasts the beliefs of the behaviourist approach. As a result, this approach studies areas of psychology, like memory that were previously neglected by the behaviourist approach. • A way of studying internal processes is through the use of computer models. This refers to the process of using computer analogies as a representation of human cognition. Examples of this include the Multi-Store Model of Memory devised by Atkinson and Shiffrin. • Schemas are mental framework of beliefs and expectations that influence cognitive processing. Schemas contain our understanding of an object, a person or an idea. Schemas become increasingly complex during development as we gain more information about each object/idea. • Cognitive Neuroscience is an area of psychology dedicated to the underlying neural bases of cognitive functions. Cognitive neuroscience came into prominence following the use of techniques such as fMRI and PET scans to identify regions of the brain that may be associated with functions like language comprehension and speech.
<p>AO3</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The cognitive approach employs the use of objective and scientific methods during research. As a result of this, theories founded on this research can be said to be reliable. 2. This approach reduces human behaviour by comparing it to machines, though there are similarities between the way that machines and human minds work, the role of emotion is ignored. 3. This approach takes a soft-determinist stance, believing that our cognitive system can only operate within the constraints of what we know- but recognising that we are free to make our own choices. 4. The cognitive approach is employed broadly by present psychologists- it forms the basis of many successful therapies including CBT, showing its real life application.



Discuss the psychodynamic approach. Refer to two other approaches in your answer. (16 MARKS)

A01	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The mind, was suggested by Freud to be largely unconscious. Our unconscious allows us to deal with these threatening memories by means of defence mechanisms: repressing them, denying them or displacing them. • A structure of our personality was also developed by Freud. The id is the primal part of our personality which governs our desires and demands to be satisfied. • The ego is the reality personality, and acts as a mediator between the demands of the id and the superego. • The superego is formed at the end of the phallic stage and is the morality personality.
A03	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. This approach is deterministic, similar to the biological and behaviourist approaches. But Freud takes a psychic deterministic stance, believing that we are governed by our early childhood experiences. 2. The Humanistic approach has been praised for being positive, unlike the psychodynamic approach. It is claimed by that we were all victims to our pasts, and as a result existed in a state of unhappiness and despair. This approach is negative and disregards any free will that we may have. 3. Many of the theories developed by Freud were created post hoc- after case studies that he had researched. It can be argued as a result, that theories may lack validity as Freud may have tailored them based on one case study which is not representative of human behaviour 4. The approach has explanatory power, as it draws connections between adult behaviour and early childhood experiences. This is beneficial as a link has been found between the two.



Tatiana's parents are concerned about her mobile phone use. She is an anxious child and has low self-esteem. Tatiana only feels good about herself when she receives messages or positive comments on social media. She feels safe when she has her phone and socially isolated without it.

Tatiana's parents worry that her dependence on her mobile phone is starting to affect her well-being and achievement at school.

Outline and evaluate the humanistic approach. Refer to Tatiana's behaviour in your answer (16 Marks)

AO1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The humanistic approach is an approach that emphasises the role of free will in one's personal growth and development. This contrasts directly most other approaches which place emphasis on the role of external factors, such as societal and biological influences on behaviour. • Maslow was a humanistic psychologist, believing that the optimum state of being in regards to personal growth was 'self-actualisation'. For this reason, Maslow constructed his hierarchy of needs, with self-actualisation- the ability to experience periods of extreme ecstasy being placed at the top of the hierarchy. • Rogers was another humanistic psychologist, who argued that personal growth was dependent on the self being congruent with the 'ideal self'- how you would like to be. It is when the gap between the two gets too big is self-actualisation inhibited from occurring.
AO2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tatiana is said to have 'low self-esteem', which could be prohibiting her from reaching self-actualisation. As Tatiana is unable to reach self-actualisation, she is consequently suffering in school. • Tatiana only feels good about herself after getting positive comments only social media- she feels as if she has to meet the conditions set by others to feel worthy. • Tatiana's low self-esteem indicates a lack of congruence between herself and her ideal self, preventing her from self-actualising and performing well in school.
AO3	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Unconditional positive regard has implications for psychological treatments. Psychologists now take an approach that is empathetic, non-judgemental and offers unconditional positive regard, to improve patient prognosis. 2. The impact of the humanistic approach on psychology can be said to be minimal. These claims come from the fact that much of Maslow and Rogers' beliefs do not come from research using the scientific method, limiting the reliability of their findings, unlike other approaches like the biological. 3. That being said, the humanistic approach has its merits in places that other approaches do not. The biological approach is very reductionist, leading to it potentially ignoring vital factors that may influence behaviour. Conversely, the humanistic approach takes a holistic view of things, making it in theory, a more comprehensive approach.

