Issues & Debates

Gender Bias

The differential treatment and/or representation of males and females, based on stereotypes and imagined differences.

**Alpha Bias**

Refers to theories which overestimate the differences between males and females.

*Think Alpha Male — Showing Off or Exaggerating...*

**Beta Bias**

Refers to theories which ignore or minimise sex differences. These theories often assume that the findings from males can apply equally to females.

*Think Males Ignoring Females...*
Session Overview

Definitions
- Gender Bias
- Alpha Bias
- Beta Bias
- Androcentrism

Types of Questions
- Multiple Choice
- Definition
- Comparison
- Essays

The Beauty of Issues & Debates
- How to use Gender Bias to improve Year 1

Essay Writing
- How to structure a 16 mark essay
Definitions

Gender Bias, Alpha Bias, Beta Bias, and Androcentrism
Gender Bias
The differential treatment and/or representation of males and females, based on stereotypes and not real differences.

Question
Can you type the name of 3 famous psychologists into the chat window, but don't click ENTER until I say.

30 Seconds
Gender Bias

The differential treatment and/or representation of males and females, based on stereotypes and not real differences.

Androcentrism
Theories which are centred on, or focused on males.

Gynocentrism
Theories which are centred on, or focused on females.
Gender Bias

The differential treatment and/or representation of males and females, based on stereotypes and not real differences.

Alpha Bias

refers to theories which exaggerate the differences between males and females.

Think Alpha Male – Showing Off or Exaggerating...

Beta Bias

refers to theories which ignore or minimise sex differences. These theories often assume that the findings from males can apply equally to females.

Think Males Ignoring Females...
Gender Bias
The differential treatment and/or representation of males and females based on stereotypes and not real differences.

Alpha Bias
refers to theories which exaggerate the differences between males and females.

Beta Bias
refers to theories which ignore or downplay sex differences. These theories often assume that the findings from males can apply equally to females.

Androcentrism
Theories which are centred on, or focused on males.

Gynocentrism
Theories which are centred on, or focused on females.
Types of Questions

Multiple Choice, Definition, Comparison and Essays
Multiple Choice Questions

Which of the following statements describes the term androcentrism:
A. Theories that are focused or centred on men
B. Theories that ignore differences between men and women
C. Theories that exaggerate differences between men and women
D. Theories that apply equally to men and women
Which of the following statements describes the term androcentrism:
A. Theories that are focused or centred on men
B. Theories that ignore differences between men and women
C. Theories that exaggerate differences between men and women
D. Theories that apply equally to men and women

Briefly explain what is meant by the term gender bias in psychology. (2 marks)

Explain the difference between alpha bias and beta bias. (4 marks)

Outline how androcentrism has affected psychological research. (3 marks)

Discuss gender bias in psychology. (16 marks)
Multiple Choice Questions

Which of the following statements describes the term androcentrism:

A. Theories that are focused or centred on men
B. Theories that ignore differences between men and women
C. Theories that exaggerate differences between men and women
D. Theories that apply equally to men and women

- MCQs typically require knowledge of definitions.
- So what is the correct answer?

A
Types of Question

Definition Question
Briefly explain what is meant by the term gender bias in psychology. (2 marks)

Comparison Question
Explain the difference between an alpha and beta bias. (4 marks)

Application (Affect) Question
Outline how androcentrism has affected psychological research. (3 marks)

Essay
Discuss gender bias in psychology. (16 marks)

What one thing would help you to answer all of these questions?
Not the mark scheme...

Examples
Example of Alpha Bias

Freud argued that there are genuine psychological differences between men and women. His theory suggests that women are inferior as young girls suffer from ‘penis envy’, and he viewed femininity as failed form of masculinity.

Alpha Bias

Refers to theories which exaggerate the differences between males and females.
Beta Bias

refers to theories which ignore or minimise sex differences. These theories often assume that the findings from males can apply equally to females.

Biological research into the **fight-or-flight** response has often been carried out with male animals. It was assumed that this would not be a problem as the fight-or-flight response would be the same for both sexes.

Think Males Ignoring Females...
Example of Beta Bias (Part 2)

**Beta Bias**

refers to theories which ignore or minimise sex differences. These theories often assume that the findings from males can apply equally to females.

However, a beta bias can prompt more research: Taylor et al. (2002) found that females adopt a ‘tend and befriend’ response in stressful/dangerous situations: Women are more likely to protect their offspring (tending) and form alliances with other women (befriending), rather than fight an adversary or flee.

Think Males Ignoring Females...
Example of Androcentrism

The result of beta bias in psychological research is that we end up with a view of human nature that is supposed to apply to men and women alike, but in fact, has a male or androcentric view. For example, Asch’s (1955) conformity studies.
Explain the difference between an **alpha** and **beta bias**. (4 marks)

**One difference between** an alpha and a beta bias is that an alpha bias exaggerates the differences between males and females, whereas a beta bias minimises the differences between males and females.

For example, Freud's work is alpha-biased as he exaggerated the differences by saying that women were inferior and suffered from penis envy. **On the other hand**, the biological explanation of fight-or-flight has previously demonstrated a beta-bias, as it was assumed that men and women responded to stress/danger in the same way.
Outline how androcentrism has affected psychological research. (3 marks)

- Androcentrism refers to theories which are centred on, or focused on males.
- For example, Asch’s research into conformity was conducted on an entirely male sample. Asch assumed that the findings would be similar for both males and females, which is known as a beta bias.
- This can affect psychological research as it provides a potentially misleading or inaccurate representation of how one sex (namely females) will respond in a given situation (social conformity).
The Beauty of Issues & Debates

Improving Year 1 Evaluation
Year 1 vs Year 2

Outline and evaluate research into conformity. (12 marks)
- AO1 = 6
- AO3 = 6

Outline and evaluate research into conformity. (16 marks)
- AO1 = 6
- AO3 = 10

Therefore the number of knowledge marks is the same in Year 2, however the depth of evaluation increases significantly.

How do you improve the depth of your evaluation?
1. You could increase the number of evaluation points you write.
2. OR you could increase the depth of your evaluation.
Adding an Issue/Debate

- Outline and evaluate research into conformity. (16 marks)

**Evaluating research into Conformity**

- **Population validity** = 123 male students from America
- **Ecological validity & mundane realism**
- **Historical validity** = ‘a child of its time’
- **Ethics** = deception, protection from harm, etc.
One issue with Asch’s research is that it lacks population validity.

Asch’s sample consists of 123 male college students from America and is therefore biased.

This matters because we are unable to generalise the results to females and we do not know if females would have conformed in a similar way, on the basis of Asch’s findings.
One issue with Asch’s research is that it lacks population validity.

Asch’s sample consists of 123 male college students from America and is therefore biased.

Asch assumed that the results of his research would apply to females, which is known as a beta bias, where a psychologist minimises the difference between males and females. This can result in a biased view which assumes that men and women are alike when it comes to conformity, and therefore demonstrates an androcentric view of conformity.

This matters because we are unable to generalise the results to females and we do not know if females would have conformed in a similar way, on the basis of Asch’s beta-biased research.
Discuss gender bias in psychology. (16 marks)
Discuss gender bias in psychology. (16 marks)

Knowledge (AO1)

- Define Gender Bias
- Define Alpha Bias + Example
- Define Beta Bias + Example
- Link to Androcentrism?

Evaluation, Discussion (AO3)

Issues with Gender Bias
- Freud (negative perception of women)
- Biological psychology (incorrect view of fight-or-fight)

Strengths of Gender Bias
- Promotion of ‘equality’ in research.
- Feminist Psychology
**Issues and Debates: Gender Bias in Psychology**

**Essay Title:** Discuss gender bias in psychology. (16 marks)

A gender bias occurs when men or women are treated or represented differently in psychological research. Psychology has historically been a male-dominated field, and consequently many psychological theories assume and represent a male point-of-view. This is known as androcentrism. There are two types of gender bias that can occur: alpha and beta bias.

When a theory or study assumes that there is a real difference between males and females, then an alpha bias is said to have occurred. A prime example is Freud’s theory of psychoanalysis which viewed femininity as a form of failed masculinity. Consequently, Freud’s theory exaggerated the differences between males and females, which is an example of an alpha bias.

A beta bias, on the other hand, occurs when a theory or study minimizes the real differences between males and females. For example, biological psychologists have typically used only male animals to examine the fight-or-flight response. This beta-biased approach meant that female behaviour went largely unexamined until recently. These biases obscure the central aim of psychology which is to generate theories that have universality and apply to all people.

One of the main limitations of psychological research is that issues of gender bias are often unchallenged. For example, Darwin’s established theory of sexual selection suggests that women are selective (choosy) in terms of mate selection. These views have only recently been challenged by DNA evidence suggesting that women are equally as competitive as men when the need arises. This highlights the importance of continually challenging earlier gender research, and reducing gender bias to ensure that a valid picture of women is developed in contemporary studies.

Contemporary psychologists have looked for ways to reduce gender bias, proposing gender egalitarian assumptions. For example, some psychologists attempt to develop theories and techniques that emphasise the importance or value of women. Cornwell et al. (2013) noted that females are better at paying attention, as they are more attentive and persistent.
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Culture Bias

Cultural bias is the tendency to judge people in terms of one's own cultural assumptions.

ETHNOCENTRISM
- Means seeing the world only from one's own cultural perspective and believing that their perspective is both normal and correct.

CULTURAL RELATIVISM
- Insists that behaviour can be properly understood only if the cultural context is taken into consideration.
Culture Bias

Definitions & Examples
- Culture Bias
- Ethnocentrism
- Cultural Relativism

Types of Question
- Short Answer
- Application
- Essay

Essay Writing
- Discuss cultural bias in psychology. (16 marks)
The Specification

Specification: Gender and culture in psychology – universality and bias including androcentrism and alpha and beta bias; cultural bias, including ethnocentrism and cultural relativism.
Definitions

Cultural Bias, Ethnocentrism, Cultural Relativism

Alpha Bias, Beta Bias
Gender Bias

The differential treatment and/or representation of males and females, based on stereotypes and not real differences.

**Alpha Bias**

refers to theories which exaggerate the differences between males and females.

Think Alpha Male – Showing Off or Exaggerating...

**Beta Bias**

refers to theories which ignore or minimise sex differences. These theories often assume that the findings from males can apply equally to females.

Think Males Ignoring Females...
Cultural bias is the tendency to judge people in terms of one's own cultural assumptions.

**Alpha Bias**
occurs when a theory assumes that cultural groups are profoundly different.

**Beta Bias**
occurs when real cultural differences are ignored or minimised, and all people are assumed to be the same, resulting in universal research designs and conclusions.
Culture Bias

*Cultural bias is the tendency to judge people in terms of one's own cultural assumptions.*

**ETHNOCENTRISM**
- Means seeing the world only from one’s own cultural perspective, and believing that this one perspective is both normal and correct.

**CULTURAL RELATIVISM**
- Insists that behaviour can be properly understood only if the cultural context is taken into consideration.
EXAMPLE OF ETHNOCENTRISM

Ainsworth's Strange Situation is an example of ethnocentric research. The Strange Situation was developed to assess attachment types, and many researchers assume that the Strange Situation has the same meaning for the infants from other cultures, as it does for American children.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country (number of studies)</th>
<th>Secure</th>
<th>Avoidant</th>
<th>Resistant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>USA (18)</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK (1)</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holland (4)</td>
<td>67</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany (3)</td>
<td>57</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan (2)</td>
<td>68</td>
<td></td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China (1)</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel (2)</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden (1)</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

German Children - Show higher rates of insecure-avoidant attachment.
Cultural Relativism

- insists that behaviour can be properly understood only if the cultural context is taken into consideration.

EXAMPLE OF CULTURAL RELATIVISM

The meaning of intelligence is different in every culture. For example, Sternberg (1985) pointed out that coordination skills that may be essential to life in a preliterate society (e.g., those motor skills required for shooting a bow and arrow) may be mostly irrelevant to intelligent behaviour for most people in a literate and more “developed” society.

Therefore, the only way to understand intelligence is to take the cultural context into account.
Culture Bias

*Cultural bias is the tendency to judge people in terms of one's own cultural assumptions.*

**ETHNOCENTRISM**
- Means seeing the world only from one’s own cultural perspective, and believing that this one perspective is both normal and correct.

**CULTURAL RELATIVISM**
- Insists that behaviour can be properly understood only if the cultural context is taken into consideration.
Types of Questions

Short-Answer, Application and Essay
Briefly explain what is meant by the term cultural relativism. [2 marks]

Outline two examples of cultural bias in psychological research. [4 marks]

Just before the First World War Yerkes developed Army intelligence tests in order to assess recruits. The items on the tests were very specific to American culture and the test results showed that European immigrants fell slightly below White Americans in terms of intelligence and African-Americans were at the bottom of the scale with the lowest mental age. With reference to the above example, explain what is meant by ethnocentrism. [4 marks].

Discuss cultural bias in psychology. [16 marks]
Briefly explain what is meant by the term cultural relativism. [2 marks]

Outline two examples of cultural bias in psychological research. [4 marks]

Just before the First World War Yerkes developed Army intelligence tests in order to assess recruits. The items on the tests were very specific to American culture and the test results showed that European immigrants fell slightly below White Americans in terms of intelligence and African-Americans were at the bottom of the scale with the lowest mental age. With reference to the above example, explain what is meant by ethnocentrism. [4 marks].

Discuss cultural bias in psychology. [16 marks]
Briefly explain what is meant by the term cultural relativism. (2 marks)

Cultural relativism is the view that behaviour can only be understood if the cultural context is taken into consideration.

Comparison: Cultural relativism is the opposite to ethnocentrism, which is where behaviour is judged from one’s own cultural perspective.

Example: For example, Sternberg (1985) pointed out that coordination skills that may be essential to life in a preliterate society may be mostly irrelevant to intelligent behaviour for most people in a literate and more “developed” society and therefore intelligence should be judged in the context of the culture.
Outline two examples of cultural bias in psychological research. [4 marks]

One example of a culture bias in psychological research comes from Ainsworth research into attachment types. The Strange Situation was developed in America and many researchers assumed that the Strange Situation had the same meaning for infants in other cultures, which is not always the case, as German children show a higher rate of insecure-avoidant behaviour because independence is encouraged in the German culture.

Another example is...
- Milgram
- Asch
- Zimbardo

All assumed that the findings of their research applied to other cultures when in fact obedience/conformity rates differ in collectivist/individualistic cultures.
Just before the First World War Yerkes developed Army intelligence tests in order to assess recruits. The items on the tests were very specific to American culture and the test results showed that European immigrants fell slightly below White Americans in terms of intelligence and African Americans were at the bottom of the scale with the lowest mental age. With reference to the above example, explain what is meant by ethnocentrism.

[4 marks]

Ethnocentrism is when a psychologist views the world only from their own cultural perspective, and believes that this one perspective is both normal and correct. Ethnocentrism is an often inadvertent lack of awareness that other ways of seeing things can be as valid as one’s own.
Application

Just before the First World War Yerkes developed Army intelligence tests in order to assess recruits. The items on the tests were very specific to American culture and the test results showed that European immigrants fell slightly below White Americans in terms of intelligence and African Americans were at the bottom of the scale with the lowest mental age. With reference to the above example, explain what is meant by ethnocentrism. [4 marks].

Ethnocentrism is when a psychologist views the world only from their own cultural perspective, and believes that this one perspective is both normal and correct. Ethnocentrism is an often inadvertent lack of awareness that other ways of seeing things can be as valid as one’s own.

The extract states that the items on the tests were very specific to American culture, suggesting that Yerkes viewed intelligence from an American cultural perspective. This explains why European immigrants and African Americans scored less than the Americans; not because they are inferior in terms of intelligence, but because the test was culturally biased.
Discuss cultural bias in psychology. [16 marks]
Culture Bias

AO1: Cultural Bias
- Define Alpha Bias
- Define Beta Bias

AO1: Cultural Bias
- Define Ethnocentrism
- Example – Ainsworth Strange Situation
- Define Cultural Relativism
**Essay title:** Discuss cultural bias in psychology. (16 marks)

In psychology, cultural bias takes the same two forms as gender bias. Alpha bias occurs when a theory assumes that cultural groups are profoundly different, and that recognition of these enduring differences must always inform psychological research and understanding. Beta bias, on the other hand, occurs when real cultural differences are ignored or minimised, and all people are assumed to be the same, resulting in universal research designs and conclusions that mistakenly assume that all cultures are the same.

Another way to address cultural bias is through the distinction between ethnocentrism and cultural relativism. Ethnocentrism means seeing the world only from one’s own cultural perspective, and believing that this one perspective is both normal and correct. Ethnocentrism is an often inadvertent lack of awareness that other ways of seeing things can be as valid as one’s own. Cultural relativism insists that behaviour can be properly understood only if the cultural context is taken into consideration. Therefore, any study which draws its sample from only one cultural context (like American college students) and then generalises its findings to all people everywhere, is suspect.

A well-detailed introduction which clearly explains the difference between alpha and beta bias.

Additional specialist terminology used effectively.

A good example is used to demonstrate the idea of ethnocentrism. This could have been developed with a specific example (e.g. Asch)
Culture Bias

AO1: Cultural Bias
- Define Alpha Bias
- Define Beta Bias

AO3: Cultural Bias in Textbooks
- Smith & Bond (1998)
- 66% America, 32% European, 2% Everywhere else.

AO1: Cultural Bias
- Define Ethnocentrism
- Example – Ainsworth Strange Situation
- Define Cultural Relativism

AO3: Cultural Bias & Stereotypes
- US Army IQ Test WWI
- Validate Negative Stereotypes

AO3: Indigenous Psychologies
- Overcome Ethnocentrism
- E.g. Afrocentrism
Culture Bias

**AO1: Cultural Bias**
- Define Alpha Bias
- Define Beta Bias

**AO3: Cultural Bias in Textbooks**
- Smith & Bond (1998)
- 66% America, 32% European, 2% Everywhere else

**AO3: Cultural Bias & Stereotypes**
- US Army IQ Test WWI
- Validate Negative Stereotypes

**AO1: Cultural Bias**
- Define Ethnocentrism
- Example – Ainsworth Strange Situation
- Define Cultural Relativism

**AO3: Indigenous Psychologies**
- Overcome Ethnocentrism
- E.g. Afrocentrism
### Essay Writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Point</th>
<th>One way to deal with cultural bias is to recognise it when it occurs.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evidence or Example</td>
<td>Smith and Bond found, in their 1998 survey of European textbooks on social psychology, that 66% of the studies were American, 32% European, and only 2% from the rest of the world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain</td>
<td>This suggests that psychological research is severely unrepresentative and can be greatly improved by simply selecting different cultural groups to study. Therefore, just by appreciating and understanding cultural bias can help psychologists to avoid and overcome this issue.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Culture Bias

**AO1: Cultural Bias**
- Define Alpha Bias
- Define Beta Bias

**AO3: Cultural Bias in Textbooks**
- Smith & Bond (1998)
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**AO3: Cultural Bias & Stereotypes**
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- Validate Negative Stereotypes

**AO3: Indigenous Psychologies**
- Overcome Ethnocentrism
- E.g. Afrocentrism

**AO1: Cultural Bias**
- Define Ethnocentrism
- Example – Ainsworth Strange Situation
- Define Cultural Relativism
# Essay Writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Point</th>
<th>Evidence or Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One issue is that...</td>
<td>The US Army used an IQ test before WWI which was culturally biased toward the dominant white majority. Unsurprisingly, the test showed that African-Americans were at the bottom of the IQ scale.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*This matters because...*  
This had a negative effect on the attitudes of Americans’ toward this group of people which highlights the negative impact that culturally biased research can have.
AO1: Cultural Bias
- Define Ethnocentrism
  - Example – Ainsworth Strange Situation
  - Define Cultural Relativism

AO3: Cultural Bias
- Smith & Bond (1998)
  - 66% America, 32% European, 2% Everywhere else.
- US Army PIQ Test WWI
- Validate Negative Stereotypes

AO3: Cultural Bias & Stereotypes
- E.g. Afrocentrism

AO3: Indigenous Psychologies
- Overcome Ethnocentrism
- E.g. Afrocentrism
**Essay Writing**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Point</th>
<th>One strength of developing knowledge of culturally biased research is that... This heightened awareness of cultural diversity has led to the development of ‘indigenous psychologies’: theories drawing explicitly on the particular experiences of people in different cultural contexts.</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evidence or Example</td>
<td>One example is Afrocentrism, a movement which suggests that because all black people have their roots in Africa, theories about them must recognise the African context of behaviours and attitudes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain</td>
<td>This matters because it has led to the emergence of theories that are more relevant to the lives and cultures of people not only in Africa, but also to those far removed from their African origins. The development of indigenous psychologies is then seen as a strength of cultural relativism. But there are limitations as well: Are Afrocentric theories not as culturally biased as those they claim to replace?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Essay title: Discuss cultural bias in psychology. (16 marks)

In psychology, cultural bias takes the same two forms as gender bias. Alpha bias occurs when a theory assumes that cultural groups are profoundly different, and that recognition of these enduring differences must always inform psychological research and understanding. Beta bias, on the other hand, occurs when real cultural differences are ignored or minimised, and all people are assumed to be the same, resulting in universal research designs and conclusions that mistakenly assume that all cultures are the same.

Another way to address cultural bias is through the distinction between ethnocentrism and cultural relativism. Ethnocentrism means seeing the world only from one’s own cultural perspective, and believing that this one perspective is both normal and correct. Ethnocentrism is often inadvertent lack of awareness that other ways of seeing things can be as valid as one’s own. Cultural relativism insists that behaviour can be properly understood only if the cultural context is taken into consideration. Therefore, any study which draws its sample from only one cultural context (like American college students) and then generalizes its findings to all people everywhere, is suspect.

One way to deal with cultural bias is to recognize it when it occurs. Smith and Bond found, in their 1998 survey of European textbooks on social psychology, that 66% of the studies were American, 32% European, and only 2% from the rest of the world. This suggests that much psychological research is severely unrepresentative and can be greatly improved by simply selecting different cultural groups to study.

Culturally biased research can have significant real-world effects by, for example, amplifying and validating damaging stereotypes. The US Army used an IQ test, WWI which was culturally biased towards the dominant white majority. Unsurprisingly, the test showed that African-Americans were at the bottom of the IQ scale and this had a negative effect on the attitudes of Americans’ toward this group of people, which highlights an impact that culturally biased research can have.

A well-detailed introduction which clearly explains the difference between alpha and beta bias.

Additional specialist terminology used effectively. A good example is used to demonstrate the idea of ethnocentrism. This could have been developed with a specific example (e.g. Asch).

A third effective evaluation point.

This heightened awareness of cultural diversity has led to the development of ‘indigenous’ theories; theories drawn explicitly on the particular experiences of people in different cultural contexts. One example is Afrocenism, a movement which suggests that because all black people live their lives in Africa, theories about them must recognize the specific context of behaviours and attitudes. The matters because it has led to the emergence of theories that are more relevant to the lives and cultures of people not only in Africa, but also to those far removed from their African origins. The development of indigenous psychologies is often seen as a strength of cultural relativism, but there are limitations as well: Are afrocentric theories not as culturally biased as those they claim to replace?

[507 words]

Examiner style comments: Mark band 4

This is an accurate and well-detailed essay which used a range of specialist terminology (often beyond the specification) correctly and effectively. The evaluation is interesting, thorough and effective, and focused on the question. There were one or two occasions where a link to other topics or Year 1 content would have developed the answer, but this is clearly a mark band 4 essay.
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Issues & Debates

Free Will vs. Determinism

**Determinism**

Determinism is the view that free will is an illusion, and that our behaviour is governed by internal or external forces over which we have no control. Consequently, our behaviour is viewed as predictable.

**Hard Determinism**

... is the view that forces outside our control (e.g., biology or past experiences) shape our behaviour. Hard determinism is seen as incompatible with free will.

**Soft Determinism**

... is the view that behaviour is constrained by the environment or biological make-up, but only to a certain extent and that there is an element of free will in all behaviour.

**Free Will**

Free will is the idea that we can play an active role and have choice in how we behave. The assumption is that individuals are free to choose their behaviour and are self-determined.
Session Overview

Definitions
- Determinism
- Hard/Soft
- Biological
- Environmental
- Psychic
- Free Will

Types of Questions
- Multiple Choice
- Short-Answer
- Application
- Essay

Essay Writing
- Discuss the free will vs. determinism debate
Do you agree or disagree?

I have free will and can decide when I get out of bed.

My behaviour is determined by my circadian rhythm (biological factor) and expectations of my boss Jim (environmental factor).
Do you agree or disagree?

I have free will and can choose not to visit my boring grandparents.

My behaviour is determined by feelings of guilt (environmental factor) and therefore I visit my grandparents to remove these feelings (negative reinforcement).
Do you agree or disagree?

I have free will and can choose not to visit my boring grandparents.
Free Will is an Illusion

- The idea that free will is an illusion is an ongoing philosophical debates.

- An American Author and Neuroscientist Sam Harris, argued that free will is an illusion: our actions are the product of brain states, which are themselves the result of prior causes which in turn are generated by the universe over which we have no control.

Therefore, you are in this webinar not through choice, but through a combination of biological and environmental factors, in other words your behaviour is determined.
Definitions

Determinism: hard determinism and soft determinism; biological, environmental and psychic determinism.
Determinism

Determinism is the view that free will is an illusion, and that our behaviour is governed by internal or external forces over which we have no control. Consequently, our behaviour is viewed as predictable.

Hard Determinism

...is the view that forces outside of our control (e.g. biology or past experience) shape our behaviour. Hard determinism is seen as incompatible with free will.

Soft Determinism

...is the view behaviour is constrained by the environment or biological make-up, but only to a certain extent and that there is an element of free will in all behaviour.
Biological Determinism

- **Biological determinism** refers to the idea that all human behaviour is innate and determined by genes.

Year 1 – Psychopathology: The biological approach suggests that OCD is partly genetic. Nestadt et al. (2000) found that people with first-degree relatives who suffer from OCD are five times more likely to suffer from OCD at some point in their lives.

Year 1 – Psychopathology: The behaviourist approach suggests that phobias are acquired through **classical conditioning** and maintained through **operant conditioning** and therefore, to some extent, environmentally determined.

Year 2 – Gender/Forensic: The psychodynamic approach suggests that **gender behaviours** are acquired during the phallic stage of development, through the resolution of the Oedipus Complex or Electra complex, where children identify with the same sex parent.
Biological Determinism

- Biological determinism refers to the idea that all human behaviour is innate and determined by genes.

Environmental Determinism

- Environmental determinism is the view that behaviour is caused by forces outside the individual. Therefore, behaviour is caused by previous experience learned through classical and operant conditioning.

Psychic Determinism

- Psychic determinism claims that human behaviour is the result of childhood experiences and innate drives (ID, Ego, and Superego), as in Freud’s model of psychological development.

Year 1 – Psychopathology: The biological approach suggests that OCD is partly genetic. Nestadt et al. (2000) found that people with first-degree relatives who suffer from OCD are five times more likely to suffer from OCD at some point in their lives.

Year 1 – Psychopathology: The behaviourist approach suggests that phobias are acquired through classical conditioning and maintained through operant conditioning and therefore, to some extent, environmentally determined.

Year 2 – Gender/Forensic: The psychodynamic approach suggests that gender behaviours are acquired during the phallic stage of development, through the resolution of the Oedipus Complex or Electra complex, where children identify with the same sex parent.
Determinism

Determinism is the view that **free will is an illusion**, and that our behaviour is governed by **internal or external forces** over which we have no control. Consequently, our behaviour is viewed as predictable.

**Hard Determinism**

...is the view that forces outside of our control (e.g. biology or past experience) shape our behaviour. Hard determinism is seen as incompatible with free will.

**Soft Determinism**

...is the view behaviour is constrained by the environment or biological make-up, but only to a certain extent and that there is an element of free will in all behaviour.

**Free Will**

Free will is the idea that we can play an **active role** and have **choice** in how we behave. The assumption is that individuals are free to choose their behaviour and are self-determined.
Free Will

Free will is the idea that we can play an **active role** and have **choice** in how we behave. The assumption is that individuals are free to choose their behaviour and are self-determined.

**Year 2 – Approaches in Psychology:**
Humanist psychologists argue against the determinism view, claiming that humans have self-determination and free will and that behaviour is not the result of any single cause.
Types of Questions

Multiple Choice, Short Answer, Application Essay
Which two of the following statements describes a free will point of view? [2 marks]
- A People are not responsible for their own actions
- B People behave in a random fashion
- C Behaviour always has a cause
- D People exercise full choice over how they behave
- E People have no choice about how to act

Explain what is meant by hard determinism and soft determinism. [4 marks]

Research suggests that depression runs in the family. However, many depressed people also have other issues, including social problems, or problems with drink or drugs. Despite these challenges, many depressed people overcome their depression and find ways to resolve their issues.

With reference to the extract above, explain what is meant by 'determinism'. Refer to at least two types of determinism in your answer. [6 marks]

Discuss the free will and determinism debate in psychology [16 marks]

SAMPLE
Which two of the following statements describes a free will point of view? [2 marks]

- A People are not responsible for their own actions
- B People behave in a random fashion
- C Behaviour always has a cause
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Discuss the free will and determinism debate in psychology [16 marks]
Which two of the following statements describe a free will point of view? [2 marks]

A People are not responsible for their own actions
B People behave in a random fashion
C Behaviour always has a cause
D People exercise full choice over how they behave
E People have no choice about how to act

- MCQs typically require knowledge of definitions.
- So what are the correct answers?

B & D
Explain what is meant by hard determinism and soft determinism. [4 marks]

“Research suggests that depression runs in the family. However, many depressed people also have other issues including social problems, or problems with drink or drugs. Despite these challenges, many depressed people overcome their depression and find ways to resolve their issues.” With reference to the extract above, explain what is meant by ‘determinism’. Refer to at least two types of determinism in your answer. [6 marks]

Discuss the free will and determinism debate in psychology [16 marks]
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With reference to the extract above, explain what is meant by ‘determinism’. Refer to at least two types of determinism in your answer. [6 marks]

- Determinism is the view that free will is an illusion and that our behaviour is governed by internal or external forces over which we have no control. There are different types of determinism including biological, environmental and psychic determinism.

- Biological determinism is the idea that behaviour is controlled by aspects of biology. The extract states that ‘depression runs in the family’ which implies that depression may be biologically determined and the result of genetics.

- However, the extract also suggests that many people who suffer from depression also have ‘other issues, including social problems’ which suggests that behaviour might be determined by external influences such as their parents or society, which implies that environmental determinism may also play a role.
Discuss the free will and determinism debate in psychology. [16 marks]
Discuss the free will and determinism debate in psychology [16 marks]

Essay

PLAN

1. Discuss = outline & evaluate
2. Approximately 20-25 minutes
3. ~500 Words (14 marks)
4. ~175 Words AOS1 (6 marks)
5. ~325 Words AOS3 (10 marks)
Discuss the free will and determinism debate in psychology [16 marks]

AO1: Determinism
- Soft/Hard
- Biological
- Environmental
- Psychic

AO1: Free Will
- Free Will – Humanist Example

WITH EXAMPLES

PLAN
1. Discuss = outline & evaluate
2. Approximately 20-25 minutes
3. ~500 Words
4. ~175 Words AO1 (6 marks)
5. ~325 Words AO3 (10 marks)
**Essay title:** Discuss free will and determinism in psychology. (16 marks)

In psychology, as in Western philosophy, the free will vs. determinism debate has occupied an important theoretical position. Free will is the view that people control their own behaviour by making real choices amongst alternative possibilities; determinism is the view that free will is an illusion, and that our behavior is governed by internal or external forces over which we have no control, and of which we are often unaware.

Determinism in psychology takes numerous forms, including biological, environmental, and psychic. Biological determinism claims that our behavior is entirely the result of genetic factors. For example, research has found that a particular gene (IGF2r) is implicated in intelligence (Hill et al., 1999). Psychic determinism, on the other hand, claims that human behaviour is the result of childhood experiences and innate traits, as in Freud’s model of psychological development. Environmental determinism posits that our behaviour is caused by previous experience learned through classical and operant conditioning. Humanists psychologists would argue against these views, claiming that humans have self-determination and free will, and that behaviour is not the result of any single cause.

An interesting introduction that defines the key terms immediately.

Research is effectively used to support knowledge.

All three types of determinism are outlined and key aspects of humanism are defined.
Discuss the free will and determinism debate in psychology [16 marks]

**AO1: Determinism**
- Soft/Hard
- Biological
- Environmental
- Psychic

**AO3: Humanist Argument/Evidence Against Determinism**
- Twin Studies: MZ studies typically find an 80% similarity in intelligence scores and a 40% similarity in the likelihood of depression.

**AO3: Determinism Provides an ‘Excuse’**
- Stephen Mobley argued that he was 'born to kill' after killing a pizza shop manager, because his family had a disposition towards violence. This argument was rejected in court.

**AO3: Free Will is an Illusion**
- Skinner argues that free will is an illusion. Libet et al. (1983) found that the motor regions of the brain become active before a person registers conscious awareness of a decision.
Discuss the free will and determinism debate in psychology [16 marks]

AO1: Determinism
- Soft/Hard
- Biological
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- Psychic

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**Essay Writing**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Point</th>
<th>Humanist psychologists would argue against the idea of determinism, claiming that humans have self-determination and free will.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evidence or Example</td>
<td>Furthermore, there is evidence to support this claim. Identical twin studies typically find an 80% similarity in intelligence scores and a 40% similarity in the likelihood of depression.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain</td>
<td>However, as identical twins share 100% of their genes, these results suggest that 20% is caused by other (environmental) factors. This demonstrates that biological determinism is unable to explain any particular behaviour, in this case, depression and intelligence.</td>
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Humanist psychologists would argue against the idea of determinism, claiming that humans have **self-determination** and **free will**.

Furthermore, there is evidence to support this claim. Identical twin studies typically find an 80% similarity in intelligence scores and a 40% similarity in the likelihood of depression. However, as identical twins share 100% of their genes, these results suggest that 20% is caused by other (environmental) factors.

However, as identical twins share 100% of their genes, these results suggest that 20% is caused by other (environmental) factors. This demonstrates that biological determinism is unable to explain any particular behaviour, in this case, depression and intelligence.

The same evidence indicates that no behaviour is completely environmentally determined. Identical twins only show an 80% likeness in terms of intelligence, it is therefore assumed that only 20% is caused by the environment, highlighting a limitation with biological and environmental determinism.
Discuss the free will and determinism debate in psychology [16 marks]

AO1: Determinism
Soft/Hard
Biological
Environmental
Psychic

AO3: Humanist Argument/Evidence Against Determinism
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AO1: Free Will
Free Will – Humanist Example
WITH EXAMPLES
### Essay Writing

**Point**

Many psychologists, theorists, and legal experts do not favour a deterministic point of view. If behaviour is determined by outside forces, that provides a potential excuse for criminal acts.

**Evidence or Example**

For example, in 1981 Stephen Mobley argued that he was ‘born to kill’ after killing a pizza shop manager, because his family had a disposition towards violence and aggressive behaviour. This argument was rejected by an American court.

**Explain**

Therefore, a **hard determinant** position may be undesirable as it provides an ‘excuse’ allowing people to mitigate their own liability and could lead to vexing legal issues regarding the nature of responsibility and intent (mens rea).
Essay title: Discuss free will and determinism in psychology. (16 marks)

In psychology, as in Western philosophy, the free will vs. determinism debate has occupied an important theoretical position. Free will is the view that people control their own behaviour by making real choices amongst alternative possibilities; determinism is the view that free will is an illusion, and that our behaviour is governed by internal or external forces over which we have no control, and of which we are often unaware.

Determinism in psychology takes numerous forms, including biological, environmental, and psychic. Biological determinism claims that our behaviour is entirely the result of genetic factors. For example, research has found that a particular gene (IGF2r) is implicated in intelligence (Hill et al., 1999). Psychodynamic determinism, on the other hand, claims that human behaviour is the result of childhood experiences and innate drives, as in Freud's model of psychological development. Environmental determinism posits that our behaviour is caused by previous experience learned through classical and operant conditioning. Humanist psychologists would argue against these views, claiming that humans have self-determination; and free will, and that behaviour is not the result of any single cause.

The evidence for this criticism of determinism is plentiful. For example, identical twin studies typically find an 80% similarity in intelligence scores and a 40% similarity in the likelihood of depression. However, as identical twins share 100% of their genes, these results suggest that 20% is caused by other (environmental) factors. This demonstrates that biological determinism is unable to explain any particular behaviour. In this case, depression and intelligence. The same evidence indicates that no behaviour is completely environmentally determined. If identical twins only show an 80% likeness in test scores of intelligence, it is therefore assumed that 20% is caused by the environment.

Many psychologists, theorists and legal systems do not favour a deterministic point of view. For example, in 1981 Stephen Mobley argued that he was 'born to kill' after his head injury, after becoming a shop manager, because his family had a disposition towards violence and aggressive behavior. This argument was rejected by an American court. Therefore, a truly deterministic position would be undesirable as it provides an 'excuse', allowing people to mitigate their own liability and could lead to serious legal issues regarding the nature of responsibility and punishment (mobley, 1981).

The idea of free will has inspired other criticisms. Some psychologists, such as Skinner, argue that free will is an illusion. Skinner insisted that everything we are in fact environmentally determined. Some psychologists are unable or unwilling to admit it. In addition, more recent evidence provides little support for Skinner's claim. For example, Ture et al. (1983) found that the motor regions of the brain become active before a person registers conscious awareness of a future event. The decision to move the finger was actually a pre-determined action of the brain. This strongly suggests that many responses are biologically determined and that although we may believe that we have free will, Skinner's claim that free will is an illusion, may be correct. It is clear that psychologists do not favour either a "hard" determinist or an entirely free will point of view. Therefore, a "soft determinism" perspective that recognizes an element of free will is probably the most appropriate.

[547 words]

Examiner style comments: Mark band 4:
The knowledge is well-detailed and accurate and the answer demonstrates a clear understanding of the different types of determinism. The evaluation, while mainly focused on criticisms, is thorough and effective throughout. There is an impressive amount of specialist terminology which is used effectively.
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Issues & Debates

The Nature-Nurture Debate

**NATURE**
- Nature is the view that behaviour is the product of innate biological or genetic factors.

**HEREDITARY (Inheritance)**
- The process in which traits are passed down from one generation to the next.

**NURTURE**
- Nurture is the view that behaviour is the product of environmental influences.

The environment is seen as everything outside the body which includes people, events and the physical world.
Nature-Nurture Webinar

Definitions
- Heredity (Nature)
- Environment (Nurture)
- Interactionist Approach

Types of Questions
- Multiple Choice
- Short Answer
- Application
- Essays

Essay Writing
- Discuss the nature-nurture debate in psychology. Refer to at least two topics you have studied in your answer.
Definitions

Nature, Heredity, Nurture, Environment & Interactionist Approach
Heredity (genetic inheritance) is the process in which traits are passed down from one generation to the next.

The environment is seen as everything outside the body which can include people, events and the physical world.

**NATURE**
- Nature is the view that behaviour is the product of innate biological or genetic factors.

**NURTURE**
- Nurture is the view that behaviour is the product of environmental influences.
The interactionist approach is the view that both nature and nurture work together to shape human behaviour.
Heredity (genetic inheritance) is the process by which traits are passed down from one generation to the next.

**Nature** is the view that behaviour is the product of innate biological or genetic factors.

**EXAMPLE OF NATURE**

Bowlby proposed that children come into the world biologically programmed to form attachments because this will help them to survive. This suggests attachment behaviours are naturally selected, and passed on as a result of genetic inheritance (heredity mechanisms).

**Behaviour = Attachment**

**Cause =**

Innate/Biological Factors
The environment is seen as everything outside the body which can include people, events and the physical world.

**EXAMPLE OF NURTURE**

Behavioural psychologists explain attachment in terms of **classical conditioning**, where food (UCS) is associated with the mother (NS), and through many repeated pairings, the mother becomes a CS who elicits a CR in the child. Therefore, the child forms an attachment based on the pleasure experienced as a result of being fed.

**Behaviour = Attachment**

**Cause = Classical Conditioning [Learning – Environment]**

- Nurture is the view that behaviour is the product of *environmental influences.*
The genetic disorder PKU (phenylketonuria) is caused by the inheritance of two recessive genes. People with PKU are unable to break down the amino acid phenylalanine which builds up in the blood and brain causing mental retardation.

However, if a child with PKU is placed on a low protein diet for the first 12 years, they avoid this potentially serious lifelong disorder.

The **interactionist approach** is the view that both nature and nurture work together to shape human behaviour.

The disorder PKU (nature) is not expressed because of an altered environment (low protein diet – nurture).
**EXAMPLE OF THE INTERACTIONIST APPROACH**

The genetic disorder PKU (phenylketonuria) is caused by the inheritance of two recessive genes. People with PKU are unable to break down the amino acid phenylalanine which builds up in the blood and brain causing mental retardation.

However, if a child with PKU is placed on a low protein diet for the first 12 years, they avoid this potentially serious lifelong disorder.

PKU is a clear example of the interactionist approach. Nature (genetic inheritance) and nurture (high protein) have to work together for someone to experience the negative effects of this disorder.

The disorder PKU (nature) is not expressed because of an altered environment (low protein diet – nurture).
Types of Questions

Short Answer, Application, Essay
Short Answer

What is meant by the ‘nature-nurture debate’ in psychology? [2 marks]
What is meant by the ‘nature-nurture debate’ in psychology? [2 marks]

Researchers used the Maths GCSE results of identical and non-identical twins to assess Maths ability. If the twins had a similar result, then they were said to be concordant. The results of the experiment are shown in the graph below. **What can you conclude from the graph in relation the nature-nurture debate?** [4 marks]

Discuss the nature-nurture debate in psychology. **Refer to at least two topics you have studied in your answer.** [16 marks]
How many marks would you give this answer?

Nature is the view that behaviour is the product of innate biological or genetic factors, and nurture is the view that behaviour is the product of environmental influences.

0, 1 or 2

What is the key word in this question?

DEBATE
Nature is the view that behaviour is the product of innate biological or genetic factors, and nurture is the view that behaviour is the product of environmental influences. The nature versus nurture debate centres on the relative contributions of genetic inheritance (nature) and environmental factors (nurture) to human development.
Researchers used the Maths GCSE results of identical and non-identical twins to assess Maths ability. If the twins had a similar result, then they were said to be concordant. The results of the experiment are shown in the graph below. **What can you conclude from the graph in relation the nature-nurture debate?** [4 marks]
The results of the graph partly support the **nature** side of the nature-nurture debate. This is because the concordance rate of the MZ twins (65%) is significantly higher than the DZ twins (18%) which suggest that behaviour is partly attributed to nature because MZ twins share 100% genetic relatedness and have a significantly stronger concordance rate.
What can you conclude from the graph in relation the nature-nurture debate? [4 marks]

However, the results also highlight the role of nurture, as the concordance rate is not 100% (it is only 65%), suggesting that other environmental factors also play a role in Maths ability.
Discuss the nature-nurture debate in psychology. Refer to at least two topics you have studied in your answer. [16 marks]
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### AO1: Nature
- Define Nature
- Define Heredity
- **EXAMPLE**: Link to Bowlby’s Theory of Attachment

### AO1: Nurture
- Define Nurture
- Define Environment
- **EXAMPLE**: Link to the behavioural view of attachment (classical conditioning)
Essay title: Describe and evaluate the nature–nurture debate in psychology. (16 marks)

Amongst the most famous and consistently evoked debates in psychology is that often summarised (and simplified) as nature vs. nurture.

The nurture side of the debate suggests that our behaviour is the product of environmental influences which are caused by our interactions with the environment. These interactions include our social and physical world and can be referred to as ‘experience’. For example, it has been suggested that attachment behaviour might be explained as the result of classical and/or operant conditioning.

Nature refers to innate influences on human behaviour and cognition (biological or genetic), i.e., to all characteristics determined by genes, either at birth or subsequently. Many psychological disorders, for example schizophrenia, are said to have a genetic component.

Research has found concordance rates of 40% in monozygotic twins and 7% in dizygotic twins, suggesting that nature is an important contributing factor in schizophrenia. Similarly, Huntington’s disease is a genetically transmitted disorder that usually emerges between the ages of 30 and 50, although it can appear at any time since the genetic cause is innately present.

The term ‘nurture’ has been defined accurately.

While the example is correct, it could have been developed further to explain how classical/operant conditioning are examples of ‘nurture’.

The term ‘nature’ has been defined accurately and research evidence has been used effectively to enhance the definition.
Discuss the nature-nurture debate in psychology. Refer to at least two topics you have studied in your answer. [16 marks]


AO1: Nature
- Define Nature
- Define Heredity
- EXAMPLE: Link to Bowlby’s Theory of Attachment

AO1: Nurture
- Define Nurture
- Define Environment
- EXAMPLE: Link to the behavioural view of attachment (classical conditioning)

AO3: Interactionist Approach - Maguire
- Taxi Driver Study
  TOPIC: Biopsychology

AO3: Interactionist Approach - Nestadt
- Twin Studies & OCD
  TOPIC: Psychopathology

AO3: Interactionist Approach – Diathesis-Stress Model
- Real World Application to treatments/models
Discuss the nature-nurture debate in psychology. Refer to at least two topics you have studied in your answer. [16 marks]


AO1: Nature
- Define Nature
- Define Heredity
- EXAMPLE: Link to Bowlby’s Theory of Attachment

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- Define Nurture
- Define Environment
- EXAMPLE: Link to the behavioural view of attachment (classical conditioning)

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AO3: Interactionist Approach - Diathesis-Stress Model
- Real World Application to treatments/models
**Essay Writing**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Point</th>
<th>Research suggests that the nature-nurture debate has become a meaningless distinction and there is a growing body of research which highlights the importance of an interactionist approach.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evidence or Example</td>
<td>Research examining <strong>neural plasticity</strong>, in the <strong>topic biopsychology</strong> suggests that life experiences (nurture) shape our biology (nature). For example, <strong>Maguire et al. (2000)</strong> investigated the hippocampi volume of London taxi drivers’ brains. She found that this region of the brain was larger in taxi drivers in comparison to non-taxi drivers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain</td>
<td>Consequently, Maguire concluded that driving a taxi (nurture) actually had an effect on the size of the hippocampi (nature), demonstrating the importance of an interactionist approach and presenting evidence that <strong>nurture can affect nature</strong>.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discuss the nature-nurture debate in psychology. Refer to at least two topics you have studied in your answer. [16 marks]


AO1: Nature
- Define Nature
- Define Heredity
- EXAMPLE: Link to Bowlby’s Theory of Attachment

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  TOPIC: Psychopathology

AO3: Interactionist Approach - Diathesis-Stress Model
- Real World Application to treatments/models
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Point</th>
<th>While twin studies are often used to provide support for the nature argument, nearly all twin studies also highlight the need for an interactionist approach.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evidence or Example</td>
<td><strong>Nestadt et al. (2010)</strong> examined previous twin studies in relation to OCD. Nestadt found an average concordance rate of 68% in MZ twins and a 31% concordance rate in DZ twins, highlighting a significant genetic component.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain</td>
<td>These results do provide evidence of a strong genetic component, as the concordance rate of MZ (68%) twin is significantly higher than the DZ twins (31%), which suggests that behaviour is partly attributed to nature because MZ twins share 100% genetic relatedness. <strong>However</strong>, the results also highlight the role of nurture as the concordance rate is not 100%, again highlighting the importance of taking an interactionist approach.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Essay title: Describe and evaluate the nature–nurture debate in psychology.

(16 marks)

Amongst the most famous and consistently evoked debates in psychology is that often summarised (and simplified) as nature vs. nurture.

The nurture side of the debate suggests that our behaviour is the result of environmental influences which are caused by our interactions with the environment. These interactions include our social and physical world and can be referred to as ‘experience’. For example, it has been suggested that attachment behaviours might be explained as the result of classical and/or operant conditioning.

Nature refers to innate influences on human behaviour and cognition (biological or genetic), i.e. to any characteristics determined by genes, either at birth or subsequently. Many psychological disorders, for example, schizophrenia, are said to have a genetic component. Research has found concordances rates of 40% in monozygotic twins and 7% in dizygotic twins, suggesting that nature is a powerful contributing factor in schizophrenia. Similarly, Huntington’s disease is a genetically transmitted disorder that usually emerges between the ages of 30 and 50, although it can appear at any time since the genetic cause is innately present.

As psychological knowledge has deepened, the nature-nurture debate has grown increasingly complex. At the point where some psychologists believe that it is now a meaningless distinction, and a pointless distraction from more important matters. Plomin et al. (1977) have suggested the idea of “passive influence” in which genetic influences on parental behaviour create a particular environment in which their children are raised. For example, parents with a genetically influenced mental illness (like schizophrenia) may create an unsettled home environment. This suggests that disorders like schizophrenia may be the result of indirect influence. Furthermore, these ideas also demonstrate that the possible interaction between nature and nurture actually demonstrates that nature can actually affect nurture.

Other psychologists have suggested that the influences operate in the other direction. Research examining neural plasticity suggests that life experiences (nurture) shape our biology (nature). For example, Maguire et al. (2000) investigated the hippocampus volume of London taxi drivers’ brains. She found that this region of the brain was larger in taxi drivers in comparison non-taxi drivers. Consequently, Maguire concludes that driving a taxi (nurture) actually increases the size of the hippocampi (nature).

Most psychologists now believe that we should consider both nature and nurture and therefore adopt an interactionist approach. A classic example of the interactionist approach is the diathesis-stress model which suggests that even though we may be born with a psychological vulnerability, such as a gene for depression, the depression will not develop if it is triggered by a stressor in the environment. The research has demonstrated that not everyone with the gene for depression goes on to develop it. Suggesting instead that one’s nature is only expressed under certain conditions of nurture.

The interactionist approach has led to the development of theories/models that have helped improve our understanding and treatment of many physical and psychological illnesses.

[481 Words]

Examiner style comments: Mark band 4:
This is a very clear and well-detailed essay which defines the key terms succinctly and provides an interesting range of evaluation points. There were two opportunities where the answer could have expanded or developed examples/explanations. However, on the whole, this is good mark band 4 essay.
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Issues & Debates

Holism & Reductionism

Holism

Holism comes from the Greek word ‘holas’, which means ‘all’ or ‘whole’ or ‘entire’ and is the idea that human behaviour should be viewed as a whole integrated experience, and not as separate parts.

Biological Reductionism

Behaviour is related to physical level and explained in terms of neurons, neurotransmitters, hormones, and structure, etc.

Psychological Explanations

Multiple levels

Social & Cultural Explanations

Multiple levels

Biological Explanations

Lower level

Environmental Reductionism

Is also known as stimulus-response reductionism. Behaviour can be reduced to the simple building blocks of S-R (stimulus-response) associations.

Reductionism

Reductionism is the belief that human behaviour can be explained by breaking it down into simpler component parts. There are three levels of explanations including:
Holism and Reductionism Webinar

Definitions
- Reductionism, including:
  - Biological
  - Environmental
  - Levels of Explanation
  - Holism

Types of Questions
- Short-Answer
- Essay
- ‘Application’ Essay

Essay Writing
- Discuss holism and reductionism in psychology. (16 marks)
What do you see?

Describe what you see in relation to the following image.

20 Seconds
What do you see?

Describe what you see in relation to the following image.

Did you write ‘cube’?

Is so, you’re wrong. There is no cube.
What do you see?

Describe what you see in relation to the following image.

20 Seconds
What do you see?

Describe what you see in relation to the following image.

Did you write ‘lots of cones’?

Is so, then you’re trying to be smart!
The letter ‘S’

A bold white triangle

The Loch Ness Monster?

The sun

A cube

Another sun
Holism and Reductionism

- The perception of these images can be explained by **Gestalt Psychology**.

- Gestalt Psychology adopts a holistic approach to perception: when we perceive something in the real world, we do so as a whole rather than as a collection of bits and pieces.
Holism and Reductionism

- If you examine the image on the right, what you will instantly perceive is the outline of a cube.

- However, there is in fact no cube in the image and your mind has created a cube due to the position and configuration of the black shapes.
Definitions

Reductionism (Biological and Environmental), Levels of Explanation and Holism
Reductionism is the belief that human behaviour can be explained by breaking it down into simpler component parts.
Social & Cultural Explanations  
(The influence of social groups on behaviour)

Biological Explanations  
(Neurochemical, Genetic,  
Brain Structure, etc.)

Psychological Explanations  
(Cognitive,  
Behavioural/Environmental)

Reductionism
Reductionism is the belief that human behaviour can be explained by breaking it down into simpler component parts.

Year 1 Topic Memory: Memory could be explained at a social and cultural level, as research suggests that cultural expectations affect what we remember and how we recall information. (Bartlett, 1932 – Schema Theory).

However, memory can also be considered at a psychological level. For example, cognitive psychologists examine particular aspects of memory. For example, Miller (1956) examined the capacity of STM and Peterson and Peterson (1959) examined the duration of STM.

Finally, memory can also be considered in terms of biological components. For example, Maguire et al. (2000) found an association between the size of the hippocampus and memory for spatial navigation.
Reductionism is the belief that human behaviour can be explained by breaking it down into simpler component parts.

Biological Reductionism
refers to the way that biological psychologists try to reduce behaviour to a physical level and explain it in terms of neurons, neurotransmitters, hormones, brain structure, etc.

Environmental Reductionism
is also known as stimulus-response reductionism. Behaviourists assume that all behaviour can be reduced to the simple building blocks of S-R (stimulus-response) associations and that complex behaviours are a series of S-R chains.
**Biological Reductionism** refers to the way that biological psychologists try to reduce behaviour to a physical level and explain it in terms of neurons, neurotransmitters, hormones, brain structure, etc.

**Environmental Reductionism** is also known as *stimulus-response reductionism*. Behaviourists assume that all behaviour can be reduced to the simple building blocks of S-R (stimulus-response) associations and that complex behaviours are a series of S-R chains.

**Year 1 Psychopathology:** The biological approach claims that OCD is caused by higher levels of dopamine and lower levels of serotonin.

**Year 1 Psychopathology:** The behaviourist approach claims that phobias are initiated through classical conditioning and maintained through operant conditioning.
Reductionism is the belief that human behaviour can be explained by breaking it down into simpler component parts.

Biological Reductionism refers to the way that biological psychologists try to reduce behaviour to a physical level and explain it in terms of neurons, neurotransmitters, hormones, brain structure, etc.

Environmental Reductionism is also known as stimulus-response reductionism. Behaviourists assume that all behaviour can be reduced to the simple building blocks of S-R (stimulus-response) associations and that complex behaviours are a series of S-R chains.

Holism comes from the Greek word ‘holos’, which means ‘all’, ‘whole’ or ‘entire’ and is the idea that human behaviour should be viewed as a whole integrated experience, and not in separate parts.

Reductionism is the belief that human behaviour can be explained by breaking it down into simpler component parts.
Holism

Holism comes from the Greek word ‘holos’, which means ‘all’, ‘whole’ or ‘entire’ and is the idea that human behaviour should be viewed as a whole integrated experience, and not as separate parts.

Gestalt Psychology

Gestalt psychology adopts a holistic approach to perception: when we perceive something in the real world, we do so as a whole rather than as a collection of bits and pieces.

Humanistic Psychology

Humanistic psychology argues that humans react to stimuli as an organised whole, rather than a set of stimulus-response links. As an approach, it uses qualitative methods to investigate all aspects of the individual, as well as the interactions between people.
Reductionism is the belief that human behaviour can be explained by breaking it down into simpler component parts. There are three levels of explanations include:

- **Biological Reductionism**
  Behaviour is reduced to a physical level and explained in terms of neurons, neurotransmitters, hormones, brain structure, etc.

- **Environmental Reductionism**
  is also known as stimulus-response reductionism. Behaviour can be reduced to the simple building blocks of S-R (stimulus-response) associations.

- **Holism**
  Holism comes from the Greek word ‘holos’, which means ‘all’, ‘whole’ or ‘entire’ and is the idea that human behaviour should be viewed as a whole integrated experience, and not as separate parts.
Types of Questions

Short Answer, Essay, ‘Application Essay’
Explain what psychologists mean by ‘levels of explanation’ in relation to reductionism. [3 marks]

Give an example of biological reductionism from an area of psychology you have studied. [3 marks]

Discuss holism and reductionism in psychology. [16 marks]

‘The best way to understand and explain behaviour is to reduce it to the simplest component parts.’ In the context of the holism-reductionism debate, discuss this view. Refer to at least one topic in your answer. (Total 16 marks)
Explain what psychologists mean by ‘levels of explanation’ in relation to reductionism. [3 marks]

Give an example of biological reductionism from an area of psychology you have studied. [3 marks]

Discuss holism and reductionism in psychology. [16 marks]

‘The best way to understand and explain behaviour is to reduce it to the simplest component parts.’ In the context of the holism-reductionism debate, discuss this view. Refer to at least one topic in your answer. (Total 16 marks)
Explain what psychologists mean by ‘levels of explanation’ in relation to reductionism. [3 marks]

Reductionism is the belief that human behaviour can be explained by breaking it down into simpler component parts. There are three levels of explanations include:

1. Sociocultural Explanations (Highest Level)
2. Psychological Explanations (Middle Level)
3. Biological Explanations (Lowest Level)

The reductionism approach argues that human behaviour can be explained by breaking it down into simpler component parts.

There are three different levels of explanation within reductionism: 1) higher levels take into account social and cultural factors; 2) middle levels which reduce behaviour to more simple psychological explanations; 3) lower levels which reduces behaviour to individual biological factors (e.g. neurochemistry, genes, brain structure, etc.)
One example of biological reductionism comes from the Year 1 Psychopathology topic.

The biological approach argues that obsessive compulsive disorder is caused by increased levels of dopamine and lower levels of serotonin and therefore reduces the cause of OCD down to an imbalance of neurotransmitters.
Essay Writing

Discuss holism and reductionism in psychology. [16 marks]
Discuss holism and reductionism in psychology. [16 marks]
Holism and Reductionism

[Introduction] AO1: The Holism and Reductionism Debate

AO1: Reductionism
- Define Biological Reductionism
  - Example - OCD
- Define Environmental Reductionism
  - Example - Phobias

AO1: Holism
- Define Holism
  - Example – Gestalt Psychology
**Essay title:** Discuss holism and reductionism in psychology. (16 marks)

The holism and reductionism debate focuses on an important question in the philosophy of science: Can complex behaviours be reduced to their simpler components?

The reductionist approach argues for the affirmative. For example, biological reductionism reduces all behaviours, no matter how complex, to the actions of neurons, neurotransmitters, hormones, etc. For example, biological psychologists argue that OCD is caused by the neurotransmitters serotonin and dopamine.

Environmental reductionism insists that behaviour is nothing more than a series of stimulus-response links. A good example of environmental reductionism comes from the behavioural explanation of phobias, which argue that phobias are initiated through classical conditioning and maintained through operant conditioning.

The holistic approach argues that human behaviour is best understood as an integrated experience rather than as separate and distinct parts. For example, Gestalt psychologists adopt a holistic approach to perception: when we perceive something in the real world, we do so as a whole rather than as a collection of bits and pieces.
AO1: Reductionism
- Define Biological Reductionism
  - Example - OCD
- Define Environmental Reductionism
  - Example - Phobias

AO1: Holism
- Define Holism
  - Example – Gestalt Psychology

AO3: Psychology as a Science
- Experimental Reductionism
- Causal Relationships

AO3: Real World Application
- Biological Treatments
  - SSRIs for OCD
  - Soomro et al. (2008)

AO3: Reductionism is Limited
- Ignores the complexity of behaviour
- ADHD

[Introduction] AO1: The Holism and Reductionism Debate
[Introduction] AO1: The Holism and Reductionism Debate

AO1: Reductionism
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- Biological Treatments
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AO3: Reductionism is Limited
- Ignores the complexity of behaviour
- ADHD
## Essay Writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Point</th>
<th>Evidence or Example</th>
<th>Explain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scientists (including psychologists) are drawn to reductionist explanations.</td>
<td>For example, most experimental psychology is based on the assumption that human behaviour can be studied effectively in relatively simple experiments, where complex behaviour is reduced to isolated variables (known as experimental reductionism).</td>
<td>This allows researchers to study the different factors that influence human behaviour in a controlled manner while establishing causal relationships. Consequently, both biological and environmental reductionism are viewed as scientific approaches, whereas holism is not.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
[Introduction] AO1: The Holism and Reductionism Debate

AO1: Reductionism
- Define Biological Reductionism
  - Example - OCD
- Define Environmental Reductionism
  - Example - Phobias

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- Define Holism
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AO3: Reductionism is Limited
- Ignores the complexity of behaviour
- ADHD
**Essay Writing**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Point</th>
<th>Criticism of reductionism takes many forms. Some psychologists argue that biological reductionism can lead to errors of understanding because it ignores the complexity of human behaviour.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evidence or Example</td>
<td>For example, to treat conditions like ADHD with drugs in the belief that the condition consists of nothing more than neurochemical imbalances is to mistake the symptoms of the phenomenon for its true cause. Ritalin may reduce these symptoms, but the conditions which gave rise to the ADHD have not been addressed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain</td>
<td>Furthermore, since success rates of drug therapies are highly variable, the purely biological understanding seems inadequate and therefore explanations which consider multiple factors are more suitable.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Criticism of reductionism takes many forms. Some psychologists argue that biological reductionism can lead to errors of understanding because it ignores the complexity of human behaviour. For example, to treat conditions like ADHD with drugs in the belief that the condition consists of nothing more than neurochemical imbalances is to mistake the symptoms of the phenomenon for its true cause. Ritalin may reduce these symptoms, but the conditions which gave rise to the ADHD have not been addressed. Furthermore, since success rates of drug therapies are highly variable, the purely biological understanding seems inadequate. The holistic explanation attempts to overcome this criticism by blending different levels of explanation; holistic theory and approaches attempt to provide a complete and realistic understanding of human behaviour. However, holistic explanations do not establish causation because they do not examine behaviour in terms of operationalised variables that can be manipulated and measured. This means that holistic explanations are viewed as unscientific.
Essay title: Discuss holism and reductionism in psychology. (16 marks)

The holism and reductionism debate focuses on an important question in the philosophy of science: Can complex behaviours be reduced to their simpler components?

The reductionist approach argues for the affirmative. For example, biological reductionism reduces all behaviours, no matter how complex, to the actions of neurons, neurotransmitters, hormones, etc. For example, biological psychologists argue that OCD is caused by the neurotransmitters serotonin and dopamine. Environmental reductionism insists that behaviour is nothing more than a series of stimulus-response links. A good example of environmental reductionism comes from the behavioural explanation of phobias, which argue that phobias are initiated through classical conditioning and maintained through operant conditioning.

The holistic approach argues that human behaviour is best understood as an integrated experience rather than as separate and distinct parts. For example, Gestalt psychology adopts a holistic approach to perception; when we perceive something in the real world, we do so as a whole rather than as a collection of bits and pieces.

Scientists (including psychologists) are drawn to reductionist explanations. For example, most experimental psychology is based on the assumption that human behaviour can be studied effectively in relatively simple experiments, where complex behaviour is reduced to isolated variables (known as experimental reductionism). This allows researchers to study the different factors that influence human behaviour in a controlled manner, while establishing causal relationships. Consequently, both biological and environmental reductionism are viewed as scientific approaches, whereas holism is not.

Also, biological reductionism has led to the development of biological therapies, such as drugs. For example, SSRIs are more effective than placebos at treating the symptoms of OCD and reduce the symptoms for up to three months after the treatment (Scrimgeour et al. 2009). The use of SSRIs in patients with OCD has helped reduce the symptoms associated with OCD, thus providing relief for some patients which has been made possible as a result of biological reductionism.

Criticism of reductionism takes many forms. Some psychologists argue that biological reductionism can lead to errors of understanding because it ignores the complexity of human behaviour. For example, eating disorders like ADHD with symptoms in the belief that the condition consists of nothing more than physiological imbalances is to mistake the symptom for its true cause. Reductionist views may reduce these symptoms, but the conditions which gave rise to the ADHD have not been addressed. Furthermore, since success rates among the various techniques are highly variable, the purely biological understanding of human behaviour is inadequate. The holistic explanation attempts to overcome this criticism by blending different levels of explanation. Holistic theory and approaches attempt to provide a complete and realistic understanding of human behaviour. However, holistic explanations do not establish causation because they do not examine behaviour in terms of operationalised variables that can be manipulated and measured. This means that holistic explanations are viewed as unscientific.

Finally, criticisms of environmental reductionism are both methodological and substantive. Much of the relevant research in the behaviourist tradition has made use of non-human animals as subjects. But is human behaviour simply a scaled-up version of that of dogs or rats? Critics of reductionism point to the social context in which humans are embedded from the earliest moments of life, and to hard-to-measure factors like cognition, emotion, and intentionality. In this case as well, the reductionist position seems, if not clearly incorrect, then at least inadequate.

[559 Words]
Examiner style comments: Mark Band 4
This is a well-detailed essay that outlines the key terms effectively and provides clear examples to demonstrate knowledge. The evaluation is thorough and effective and has effectively discussed both holism and reductionism within some points, striking a good balance.

A01 A03
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Issues & Debates

Idiographic and Nomothetic Approaches

IDIOPGRAPHIC
- Psychologists who take an idiographic approach focus on the individual and emphasise the unique personal experiences of human nature.

The term ‘idiographic’ comes from the Greek word ‘idos’, which means ‘private’.

NOMOTHETIC
- Psychologists who take a nomothetic approach are concerned with establishing general laws, based on the study of large groups of people.

The term ‘nomothetic’ comes from the Greek word ‘nomos’ which means ‘law’.

[Diagram images of people and magnifying glasses]
Idiographic and Nomothetic Approaches

Definitions & Examples
- Idiographic Approaches
- Nomothetic Approaches

Types of Questions
- MCQ
- Short Answer
- Application
- Essay

Essay Writing
- Discuss idiographic and nomothetic approaches to psychological investigation. [16 marks]
Definitions

Idiographic and Nomothetic Approaches
IDIOGRAPHIC

- Psychologists who take an idiographic approach focus on the individual and emphasise the unique personal experience of human nature.

The term ‘idiographic’ comes from the Greek word ‘idios’, which means ‘own’ or ‘private’.

NOMOTHETIC

- Psychologists who take a nomothetic approach are concerned with establishing general laws, based on the study of large groups of people.

The term ‘nomothetic’ comes from the Greek word ‘nomos’, which means ‘law’.
IDIOGRAPHIC

Psychologists who take an idiographic approach focus on the individual and emphasise the unique personal experience of human nature.

Methods of investigation include:
- Case studies
- Unstructured interviews
- Thematic analysis

These methods provide an in-depth insight into individual behaviour. The idiographic approach does not seek to formulate laws or generalise results to others.

The term ‘idiographic’ comes from the Greek word ‘idios’, which means ‘own’ or ‘private’.

Why are case studies a powerful research method?
IDIOGRAPHIC RESEARCH

Why are case studies a powerful research method?

A single case study can highlight flaws within a theory and significantly undermine other research.

Can you think of an example from the Year 1 Memory Topic?

Patient KF
Shallice and Warrington (1970)

IDIOGRAPHIC

Psychologists who take an idiographic approach focus on the individual and emphasise the unique personal experience of human nature.

The term ‘idiographic’ comes from the Greek word ‘idios’, which means ‘own’ or ‘private’.
Shallice and Warrington (1970) examined the case of Patient KF, who experienced a motorbike accident. KF’s short-term forgetting of auditory information was greater than his forgetting of visual information, suggesting that short-term memory (STM) consists of multiple components.

The idea of a single STM component is undermined by Patient KF, and the results suggest the existence of a separate auditory and visual STM store.
IDIOGRAPHIC
- Psychologists who take an idiographic approach focus on the individual and emphasise the unique personal experience of human nature.

The term ‘idiographic’ comes from the Greek word ‘idios’, which means ‘own’ or ‘private’.

NOMOTHETIC
- Psychologists who take a nomothetic approach are concerned with establishing general laws, based on the study of large groups of people.

The term ‘nomothetic’ comes from the Greek word ‘nomos’, which means ‘law’.
NOMOTHETIC RESEARCH

Methods of investigation include:
- Experiments
- Correlational research
- Psychometric testing (personality)

The nomothetic approach is the main approach within scientifically oriented psychology.

Which approaches in psychology take a nomothetic approach?

The term ‘idiographic’ comes from the Greek word ‘idios’, which means ‘own’ or ‘private’.

NOMOTHETIC

Psychologists who take a nomothetic approach are concerned with establishing general laws, based on the study of large groups of people.
The Biological Approach
Biological Psychologists take a nomothetic approach when explaining psychological disorders, such as OCD and depression. They typically pinpoint biological factors, such as neurotransmitters, that are responsible for such disorders and use biological therapies (e.g. drugs) to treat all patients.

The term ‘idiographic’ comes from the Greek word ‘idios’, which means ‘own’ or ‘private’.

Psychologists who take a nomothetic approach are concerned with establishing general laws, based on the study of large groups of people.
Which approaches in psychology take a nomothetic approach?

**The Behavioural Approach**

Behaviourists, such as Pavlov and Skinner, conducted experiments with animals in order to establish laws of learning (classical and operant conditioning) that could be generalised to humans and non-human animals.

The term ‘idiographic’ comes from the Greek word ‘idios’, which means ‘own’ or ‘private’.

Psychologists who take a nomothetic approach are concerned with establishing general laws, based on the study of large groups of people.
Which approaches in psychology take a nomothetic approach?

The Cognitive Approach

Cognitive Psychologists, such as Atkinson and Shiffrin, developed general laws, such as the Multi-Store Model of Memory, which they believed could be generalised to everyone.

Do Cognitive Psychologists always take a nomothetic approach?

The term ‘idiographic’ comes from the Greek word ‘idios’, which means ‘own’ or ‘private’.
While the cognitive approach attempts to establish general laws (e.g. the Multi-Store Model of Memory) in relation to cognitive process, cognitive psychologists also utilise the case study method (an idiographic technique):

- Shallice and Warrington (1970) Patient KF
- Corkin (1997) Patient HM
# Evaluation & Comparison with Issues, Debates & Approaches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Free Will vs. Determinism</th>
<th>Nature vs. Nurture</th>
<th>Reductionism vs. Holism</th>
<th>Idiographic vs. Nomothetic</th>
<th>Scientific</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Biological</strong></td>
<td>Biological Determinism</td>
<td>Nature</td>
<td>Biological Reductionism</td>
<td>Nomothetic</td>
<td>Scientific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Behaviour is controlled by internal biological factors (e.g., genes, hormones, neurotransmitters, etc.)</td>
<td>Behaviour is the result of innate biological factors (e.g., genes, hormones, neurotransmitters, etc.)</td>
<td>Behaviour is broken down into biological structures/processes</td>
<td>Nomothetic states general laws, as well as share similar methodologies</td>
<td>The biological approach promotes scientific methods of investigation (e.g., brain imaging)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Behaviourist</strong></td>
<td>Environmental Determinism</td>
<td>Nurture</td>
<td>Environmental Reductionism</td>
<td>Nomotheic</td>
<td>Mostly Scientific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Behaviour is controlled by stimulus-response conditioning.</td>
<td>Humans are born as a tabula rasa (blank slate) and behaviour is learned</td>
<td>Behaviour is broken down into simple stimulus-response associations</td>
<td>Nomotheic &amp; Idiographic attempts to establish general laws of behaviour but utilises an idiographic approach with case studies.</td>
<td>Mostly Scientific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social Learning Theory</strong></td>
<td>Determinism (Soft)</td>
<td>Partially Reductionism</td>
<td>Nomotheic</td>
<td>Most Scientific</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Behaviour is controlled by environmental forces. However, humans have personal responsibility and free choice.</td>
<td>This approach states elements of both the Behaviourist and Cognitivist approaches</td>
<td>Attempts to establish general laws of behaviour (e.g., vicarious reinforcement)</td>
<td>Utilises scientific methods that also take into account meditational processes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cognitive</strong></td>
<td>Determinism (Soft)</td>
<td>Nature &amp; Nurture</td>
<td>Experimental Reductionism</td>
<td>Nomotheic &amp; Idiographic</td>
<td>Mostly Scientific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Behaviour is controlled by meditational processes; however, humans can choose what information they attend to.</td>
<td>Behaviour is the product of information processing and modified by experience</td>
<td>Behaviour is investigated in terms of associative variables (e.g., capacity of STM)</td>
<td>Attempts to establish general laws of cognitive processing but utilises an idiographic approach with case studies.</td>
<td>Most Scientific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Psychodynamic</strong></td>
<td>Psychic Determinism</td>
<td>Most Nature</td>
<td>Reductionism &amp; Holism</td>
<td>Not Scientific</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Behaviour is determined by unconscious drives and early childhood experiences.</td>
<td>Behaviour is the product of innate drives, but modified by early childhood experience</td>
<td>Behaviour is reduced to innate drives, while taking into account the multiple aspects of human behaviour.</td>
<td>Examines many concepts/theories which cannot be empirically tested. Relies on subjective interpretation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Humanist</strong></td>
<td>Free Will</td>
<td>Holism</td>
<td>Idiographic</td>
<td>Not Scientific</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Humans control their own environment and are capable of choice.</td>
<td>Focuses on understanding all aspects of human experience and interaction.</td>
<td>Focuses on the subjective human experience and makes no attempt to create general laws.</td>
<td>Rejects scientific methods and is therefore unable to provide empirical evidence.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Comparison:** Compare and contrast the different approaches, using issues and debates.

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**Nomothetic**

Psychologists who take a nomothetic approach are concerned with establishing general laws, based on the study of large groups of people.

The term ‘nomothetic’ comes from the Greek word ‘nomos’, which means ‘law’.

---

**Idiographic**

Psychologists who take an idiographic approach focus on the individual and emphasise the unique personal experience of human nature.

The term ‘idiographic’ comes from the Greek word ‘idios’, which means ‘own’ or ‘private’.

---

Any Questions?
Types of Questions

MCQ, Short-Answer, Application, Essay
Multiple-Choice Question

Which of the following statements describes a nomothetic approach in psychology:

A. Studying an individual and formulating general laws
B. Studying an individual and not formulating general laws
C. Studying a large group and formulating general laws
D. Studying a group and not formulating general laws
Explain what is meant by the terms idiographic and nomothetic. [4 marks]

A prison psychologist used an idiographic approach to study offending. He asked two offenders to record their thoughts about their childhood and their offending behaviour in a journal over a period of four weeks. Qualitative analysis of the journals showed that the offenders often thought about sad childhood events and believed that their childhood experiences had influenced their offending. Findings from idiographic research like the study described above are often used as a basis for other investigations.

Explain how the researcher might develop the above investigation through taking a nomothetic approach. (Total 6 marks)

Discuss idiographic and nomothetic approaches to psychological investigation. [16 marks]
Short-Answer Question:

Explain what is meant by the terms idiographic and nomothetic. [4 marks]

Applied Question:

A prison psychologist used an idiographic approach to study offending. He asked two offenders to record their thoughts about their childhood and their offending behaviour in a journal over a period of four weeks. Qualitative analysis of the journals showed that the offenders often thought about sad childhood events and believed that their childhood experiences had influenced their offending. Findings from idiographic research like the study described above are often used as a basis for other investigations.

Explain how the researcher might develop the above investigation through taking a nomothetic approach. (Total 6 marks)

Essay:

Discuss idiographic and nomothetic approaches to psychological investigation. [16 marks]
Explain what is meant by the terms idiographic and nomothetic. [4 marks]

The term idiographic originates from the Greek word ‘idios’ meaning ‘own’ and refers to an approach where psychologists focus on the individual, using qualitative research methods like case studies.

The term nomothetic comes from the Greek word ‘nomos’ meaning ‘law’ and refers to an approach which tries to establish general laws based on large groups of people. Nomothetic approaches use quantitative methods like experiments, correlational research, etc.
A prison psychologist used an idiographic approach to study offending. He asked two offenders to record their thoughts about their childhood and their offending behaviour in a journal over a period of four weeks. Qualitative analysis of the journals showed that the offenders often thought about sad childhood events and believed that their childhood experiences had influenced their offending. Findings from idiographic research like the study described above are often used as a basis for other investigations.

**Applied Question:**

Explain how the researcher might develop the above investigation through taking a nomothetic approach. (Total 6 marks)

To develop the above investigation, using a nomothetic approach, the researcher would need to test a larger sample of offenders, in order to establish a general law of behaviour.

By taking a nomothetic approach the researcher is likely to use one of the following methods of investigation: experiment, correlational research or even psychometric testing.

In this investigation, the researcher might provide all of the offenders within the chosen prison with a questionnaire to assess early their childhood experiences and types of crime (e.g. violent crimes). The researcher could then carry out a correlational analysis to see if there is a relationship between sad childhood events and violent crime. If the researcher finds a correlation (either positive or negative) he would be able to generate a law of offending behaviour which he/she should generalise to the wider population.
Discuss idiographic and nomothetic approaches to psychological investigation. [16 marks]
[Introduction] AO1: The Idiographic and Nomothetic ‘Debate’

AO1: Nomothetic
- Outline the Nomothetic Approach
  - Example Biological Approach

AO3: Scientific Nature
- Use of quantitative methods, controlled, replication, etc.

AO3: Application Treatments
- Biological psychologists, OCD, drug treatments.
Essay title: Discuss idiographic and nomothetic approaches to psychological investigation. (16 marks)

What is the ultimate aim of psychological research: Is it to discover universal laws of human behaviour, or to develop an in-depth understanding of unique cases? This is the central argument in the debate between the idiographic and nomothetic approaches to psychological investigation.

Psychologists who take a nomothetic approach are concerned with establishing general laws, based on the study of large groups and the use of statistical (quantitative) techniques to analyse data. This means that experimental correlations, psychometric testing and other quantitative methods are favoured among nomothetic researchers. Biological psychologists take a nomothetic approach when explaining psychological disorders, such as ADHD. They typically pinpoint biological factors, such as neurotransmitters, that are responsible for such disorders and use biological therapies (e.g. drugs) to treat all patients.

The nomothetic approach is explained in detail, and an example is used to demonstrate further knowledge and understanding.
## Essay Writing

**Point**

The nomothetic approach is considered as scientific.

**Evidence or Example**

The use of experimental (quantitative) methods, controlled measurement and the ability to predict behaviour, are all strengths of the nomothetic approach.

**Explain**

This matters because controlled methods allow psychologists to replicate research to examine the reliability of findings, which has helped psychology establish itself as a scientific discipline.
### Essay Writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Point</th>
<th>Furthermore, because the nomothetic approach is viewed as scientific, it is useful for predicting and controlling behaviour.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evidence or Example</td>
<td>For example, Biological Psychologists take a nomothetic approach when explaining obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) and claim that OCD is caused by higher levels of dopamine and lower levels of serotonin. Drug therapies are developed on the basis of nomothetic research and work by readdressing a biological imbalance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain</td>
<td>This matters because SSRIs are used to treat OCD and increase the availability and uptake of serotonin. This reduces the anxiety associated with OCD which helps to improve the lives of people suffering from this condition, as a result of the nomothetic research.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The nomothetic approach is considered as scientific. The use of experimental (quantitative) methods, controlled measurement and the ability to predict behaviour, are all strengths of the nomothetic approach. Furthermore, because the nomothetic approach is viewed as scientific, it is useful for predicting and controlling behaviour. For example, Biological Psychologists take a nomothetic approach when explaining obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) and claim that OCD is caused by higher levels of dopamine and lower levels of serotonin. Drug therapies are developed on the basis of nomothetic research and work by readdressing a biological imbalance. SSRIs are used to treat OCD and increase the availability and uptake of serotonin, thus reducing the anxiety associated with OCD which helps to improve the lives of people suffering from this condition, as a result of the nomothetic research.

A thorough and effective evaluation of the nomothetic approach is provided, highlighting the real-world application and benefits of this approach.
[Introduction] AO1: The Idiographic and Nomothetic ‘Debate’

**AO1: Nomothetic**
- Outline the Nomothetic Approach
  - Example Biological Approach

**AO1: Idiographic**
- Outline the Idiographic Approach

**AO3: Scientific Nature**
- Use of quantitative methods, controlled, replication, etc.

**AO3: Unscientific Nature**
- Use of qualitative methods, uncontrolled, unable to replicate, etc.

**AO3: Application Treatments**
- Biological psychologists, OCD, drug treatments.

**AO3: Power of Case Studies**
- Patient KF
- Generate further research

[Conclusion] AO3: A False Distinction
The idiographic approach takes this stance, and idiographic research emphasises the unique personal experiences and methods of human nature. This means they favour qualitative research, such as the case studies and unstructured interviews which allow an in-depth insight into individual behaviour. An example would demonstrate further knowledge and understanding.

The idiographic approach is clearly defined. An example would demonstrate further knowledge and understanding.
[Introduction] AO1: The Idiographic and Nomothetic ‘Debate’

AO1: Nomothetic
- Outline the Nomothetic Approach
  - Example Biological Approach

AO1: Idiographic
- Outline the Idiographic Approach

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- Biological psychologists, OCD, drug treatments.

AO3: Power of Case Studies
- Patient KF
- Generate further research

[Conclusion] AO3: A False Distinction
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Point</th>
<th>There are numerous strengths of taking an idiographic approach, and a case study method is a powerful tool for evaluating psychological theories.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evidence or Example</td>
<td>The case of Patient KF (Shallice and Warrington, 1970) exposed a limitation of the Multi-Store Model of Memory, by providing evidence that our STM comprises of at least two components (auditory and visual memory) and not one, as stipulated by Atkinson and Shiffrin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain</td>
<td>Consequently, a single case study can generate further research into a particular phenomenon (e.g. memory) which contributes to the development of new theories highlighting a strength of the idiographic approach to psychological investigations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The introduction outlines the debate effectively.

The nomothetic approach is explained in detail and an example is used to demonstrate further knowledge and understanding.

The idiographic approach is clearly defined. An example should demonstrate further knowledge and understanding.

Many psychologists criticize the idiographic approach for its essentially unscientific nature. The emphasis on in-depth data collection and the difficulties in arriving at justifiable generalisations contradicts the central purpose of any mature science: to explain the most information in the fewest possible terms so that phenomena can be predicted and ultimately controlled. Research question that do not address these goals can seem scientifically pointless.

However, there are numerous strengths of taking an idiographic approach. It is a study method to powerful tool for evaluating psychological theories. The case of Patient KP (Shalllice and Warrington, 1970) exposed an illusion of the Multi-Store Model of Memory. New evidence that our memory comprises at least two components (auditory and visual memory) and not one, as stipulated by Atkinson and Shiffrin. Consequently, a single case study can generate further research into a particular phenomenon (e.g. memory) which contributes to the development of new theories highlighting a strength of the idiographic approach in psychological investigations.

A thorough and effective evaluation point highlighting a strength of the idiographic approach.

A counter argument presents an interaction to the idiographic approach.

An effective evaluation point, following on from an earlier point (about the nomothetic approach) is provided.

A thorough and effective evaluation point highlighting a strength of the idiographic approach.

An interesting conclusion provides another effective evaluation point when considering these approaches.

[523 words]

Examiner style comments: Mark Band 4

A well-detailed and accurate account of the idiographic and nomothetic approaches is presented. The answer provides a thorough and effective evaluation of both approaches and is clear, coherent and focused throughout. Specialist terminology and examples are used in most places to demonstrate further knowledge and understanding.
Holt (1967) argues that the ideographic and nomothetic distinction is a false distinction, as many approaches take advantage of both idiographic and nomothetic approaches. For example, while Cognitive Psychologists typically take a nomothetic approach to create general laws, they also take advantage of the idiographic approach when using case studies to provide evidence for or against a particular theory (e.g. Patient KF). Therefore it could be argued that the distinction between idiographic and nomothetic is meaningless and that psychologists should employ both methods depending on the nature of the research question.

**[Conclusion]** AO3: A False Distinction

*An interesting conclusion provided another effective evaluation point when considering these approaches.*
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Issues & Debates

Social Sensitivity

**Ethical Implications**

The term ethical implications considers the impact and consequences that psychological research has on the rights of other people, in a wider context, not just the participants taking part in the research.

**Research Studies**

Milgram (1963)

**Theories**

Bowlby’s Theory of Attachment

**Social Sensitivity**

Sieber and Stanley (1988) used the term socially sensitive to describe studies where there are potential social consequences for the participants or the group of people represented by the research.
Social Sensitivity

Definitions & Examples
- Ethical Implications
- Social Sensitivity

Types of Questions
- Short-Answer
- Application
- Essay

Essay Writing
- Discuss the ethical implications of research studies and/or theory, including reference to social sensitivity. [16 marks]
Was it right for Milgram (1963) to conduct his research?
Yes/No. Justify Your Answer.
Was it right for Bowlby to publish his theory of attachment?

Yes/No. Justify Your Answer.
Definitions

Ethical Implications & Social Sensitivity
Ethical Guidelines
A set of principles set out by the BPS to help psychologists behave honestly and with integrity.

Ethical Issues
Issues that arise when there is conflict between the rights of the participant(s) and the aims of the researcher(s).

Ethical Implications
Ethical Implications

Ethical implications considers the impact or consequences that psychological research has on the rights of other people in a wider context, not just the participants taking part in the research.

Research Studies

Milgram (1963)

Theories

Bowlby’s Theory of Attachment

Specification: Ethical implications of research studies and theory, including reference to social sensitivity.
Research Studies

*Milgram (1963)*

Did the ends justify the means?

The participants were deceived, they were unable to provide fully informed consent. The experiment was distressing.

However, they were debriefed and took part in a follow-up interview. Participants said that they suffered no long-term effects.

Therefore, it could be argued that the importance of the findings do justify the way the research was conducted, as the research is useful to society in determining the factors that affect obedience to authority.
Bowlby’s Theory of Attachment suggests that children form one special attachment bond, usually with their mother, which must take place within a critical period. Bowlby also suggested that this attachment bond affects their future relationships through an internal working model.

While Bowlby’s theory has contributed to the development of childcare practices, it has also encouraged the view that a women’s place is at home with her children, which could make some mothers feel guilty for wanting to return to work, following childbirth.
Ethical Implications

The term ethical implications considers the impact or consequences that psychological research has on the rights of other people in a wider context, not just the participants taking part in the research.

Research Studies

Milgram (1963)

Theories

Bowlby’s Theory of Attachment

Social Sensitivity

Sieber and Stanley (1988) used the term socially sensitive to describe studies where there are potential social consequences for the participants or the group of people represented by the research.
Research Studies  
**Milgram (1963)**

**Did the ends justify the means?**

The participants were **deceived**, they were unable to provide fully **informed consent**. The experiment was **distressing**.

However, they were **debriefed** and took part in a follow-up interview. Participants said that they suffered no long-term effects.

Therefore, it could be argued that Milgram’s research is socially sensitive as the results could be used to ensure that people obey orders, including those they don’t wish to follow.
Bowlby’s Theory of Attachment suggests that children form one special attachment bond, usually with their mother, which must take place within a critical period. Bowlby also suggested that this attachment bond affects their future relationships through an internal working model. While Bowlby’s theory has contributed to the development of childcare practices, it has also encouraged the view that a women’s place is at home with her children, which could make some mothers feel guilty for wanting to return to work, following childbirth.

Likewise, it could be argued that Bowlby’s Theory of Attachment is socially sensitive as it could be used to coerce mothers to stay at home and look after their children.
Research Studies

Milgram (1963)

Theories

Bowlby’s Theory of Attachment

Social Sensitivity

Sieber and Stanley (1988) used the term socially sensitive to describe studies where there are potential social consequences for the participants or the group of people represented by the research.
The researcher must consider their research question carefully. Asking questions like ‘Are there racial differences in IQ?’ or ‘Is intelligence inherited?’ may be damaging to members of a particular group.
The Research Question

The researcher must consider their research question carefully. Asking questions like ‘Are there racial differences in IQ?’ or ‘Is intelligence inherited?’ may be damaging to members of a particular group.

The Methodology Used

The researcher needs to consider the treatment of the participant's and their right to confidentiality and anonymity. For example, if someone admits to committing a crime, should the researcher maintain confidentiality?

The Institutional Context

The researcher should be mindful of how the data is going to be used and consider who is funding the research. If the research is funded by a private institution or organisation, why are they funding the research and how do they intend to use the findings?

Interpretation and Application of Findings

Finally, the researcher needs to consider how their findings might be interpreted and applied in the real-world. Could their data or results be used to inform policy?
Social Sensitivity

- **Cyril Burt** used studies of identical twins to support his view that intelligence is largely genetic.

- His views greatly influenced the *Hadow Report (1926)* which led to the creation of the 11+ which was used from 1944-1976.

- This meant that generations of children were affected by the 11+ exam.

- However, it later transpired that his data was falsified.
Burt should have considered his research question carefully. For example, examining whether intelligence is genetic could have serious implications and lead to further research where psychologists try to discover ‘intelligent genes’.
Burt should have considered his research question carefully. For example, examining whether intelligence is genetic could have serious implications and lead to further research where psychologists try to discover ‘intelligent genes’.

Burt used twin studies as the basis of his investigation; however, it later transpired that his data was fabricated. Some psychologists even believe that he made up the names of his two researcher assistants who collected the data.

While Burt was working for the University of Liverpool at the time, he also worked for London County Council and other institutions and therefore he should have been mindful about the intended use of his research, following publication.

Finally, and most significantly, Burt should have considered the severe implications of his findings which were used to inform policy. His views greatly influenced the Hadow Report (1926) which led to the creation of the 11+ which was used from 1944-1976.
Ethical Implications

The term ethical implications considers the impact or consequences that psychological research has on the rights of other people in a wider context, not just the participants taking part in the research.

Research Studies

Theories

Social Sensitivity

Sieber and Stanley (1988) used the term socially sensitive to describe studies where there are potential social consequences for the participants or the group of people represented by the research.
Types of Questions

Short-Answer, Application, Essay
Short-Answer Question

- Explain what is meant by socially sensitive research. [3 marks]
Short-Answer Question

- Explain what is meant by socially sensitive research. [3 marks]

Application

- Briefly explain how the researchers could have dealt with the issue of social sensitivity in this study. [4 marks]

Essay

- Discuss the ethical implications of research studies and/or theory including reference to social sensitivity. [16 marks]
The term socially sensitive research is used to describe studies where there are potential social consequences for the participants or the group of people represented by the research.

For example, Milgram's study could be considered as socially sensitive because the results could be used to ensure that people obey orders, including those they don’t wish to follow.
Retailers are a new class of workers, with a variety of roles and responsibilities. They are often responsible for managing inventory, processing transactions, and providing customer service. Retailers also play a critical role in the local economy, contributing to employment and economic growth.

Sample Answer:

Retailers are a new class of workers, with a variety of roles and responsibilities. They are often responsible for managing inventory, processing transactions, and providing customer service. Retailers also play a critical role in the local economy, contributing to employment and economic growth.

Specification: Ethical implications of research studies and theory, including reference to social sensitivity.

- Give an example of research that is socially sensitive.
- Give an example of a theory that is socially sensitive.

Explain what is meant by socially sensitive research. [3 marks]
Application

- Briefly explain how the researchers could have dealt with the issue of social sensitivity in this study. [4 marks]

In a study of antisocial activity and social background, researchers interviewed 100 children aged 14 years. They then classified each child according to their level of antisocial activity. They concluded that 26 were ‘very antisocial’, 40 were ‘mildly antisocial’ and 34 were ‘not antisocial’. The researchers found that the majority of the ‘very antisocial’ children attended Crayford secondary school, whereas most of the other two groups of children attended another local school.

- The researchers need to be aware of the methodology they use including the treatment of the participants and their right to confidentiality and anonymity. In order to deal with this issue of social sensitivity the research needs to ensure that they do not publish the names of any students or the school, which they have not done in this extract as they have named ‘Crayford Secondary School’.
In a study of antisocial activity and social background, researchers interviewed 100 children aged 14 years. They then classified each child according to their level of antisocial activity. They concluded that 26 were ‘very antisocial’, 40 were ‘mildly antisocial’ and 34 were ‘not antisocial’. The researchers found that the majority of the ‘very antisocial’ children attended Crayford secondary school, whereas most of the other two groups of children attended another local school.

Furthermore, the researchers need to consider the application of the findings which could have negative implications for the students, the school and the wider community. For example, the findings could lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy where the student think that their school is ‘anti-social’ and as a result become more antisocial.
Application

- Briefly explain how the researchers could have dealt with the issue of social sensitivity in this study. [4 marks]

In a study of antisocial activity and social background, researchers interviewed 100 children aged 14 years. They then classified each child according to their level of antisocial activity. They concluded that 26 were ‘very antisocial’, 40 were ‘mildly antisocial’ and 34 were ‘not antisocial’. The researchers found that the majority of the ‘very antisocial’ children attended Crayford secondary school, whereas most of the other two groups of children attended another local school.

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Discuss the ethical implications of research studies and theory, including reference to social sensitivity. [16 marks]
AO1: Ethical Implications & Social Sensitivity

- Define Ethical Implications
- Outline Sieber and Stanley’s four considerations for socially sensitive research
**Essay title:** Discuss the ethical implications of research studies and theory, including reference to social sensitivity. (16 marks)

Ethical implications can occur at every stage of the research process in psychology, not only at the moment of actually conducting the research procedure.

Sieber and Stanley outlined four aspects of the research process that raise ethical implications, especially in socially sensitive research. Firstly, the research question should not add to any prevailing prejudice or stereotype; for example, the belief (by some people) that intelligence is inherited. Secondly, the information obtained should be treated with confidentiality before, during, and after the research process. Thirdly, if the research is being funded by the government or an institution, the researcher should ensure that the data is not misused in any way. Finally, the researchers should ensure that the interpretation of the data or findings has no impact on the participants involved or the group of people that those participants represent.

According to Sieber and Stanley, if researchers follow these considerations then the research is less likely to have any social consequence on the participants involved and the group of people the participants represent.

While the outline of ethical implications is correct, a stronger definition would have been useful here: ‘ethical implications consider the impact or consequences that psychological research has on the rights of other people in a wider context’

A well-detailed paragraph detailing a theory of social sensitivity.
AO1: Ethical Implications & Social Sensitivity
- Define Ethical Implications
- Outline Sieber and Stanley’s four considerations for socially sensitive research

AO3: Issues of Discrimination
- Racial Differences in IQ (Yerkes)
- Eugenic Law

AO3: Real-World Application (EWT)
- Flin et al.
- Improved Accuracy in Child Eyewitnesses

AO3: Should we conduct socially sensitive research?
- No – Due to issues highlighted above
- Yes – Otherwise there would be no research
Social Sensitivity

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### Essay Writing

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Point</th>
<th>Socially sensitive research can lead to issues of discrimination and therefore some psychologists would argue against conducting this form of research.</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evidence or Example</td>
<td>For example, between 1907 and 1963, over 64,000 individuals were forcibly sterilised under eugenic legislation in the United States, and in 1972, the United States Senate Committee revealed that at least 2,000 involuntary sterilisations had been performed on poor black women without their consent or knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain</td>
<td>This could be ‘justified’ by (flawed) research findings (e.g. Robert Yerkes) which argued that black Americans had lower IQ scores in comparison to white Americans, highlighting a serious issue with socially sensitive research.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Social Sensitivity

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## Essay Writing

<table>
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<th>It is important to recognise that not all socially sensitive research is controversial and some is desirable and beneficial to society.</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evidence or Example</td>
<td>For example, research examining eye-witness testimony, especially the use of child witnesses (e.g. Flin et al.) has found that young children can be reliable witnesses if they are questioned in a timely and appropriate manner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain</td>
<td>In this area, socially sensitive research has resulted in a good working relationship between psychologists and the legal profession to help improve the accuracy and validity of children eye-witnesses.</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Social Sensitivity

**AO1: Ethical Implications & Social Sensitivity**
- Define Ethical Implications
- Outline Sieber and Stanley’s four considerations for socially sensitive research

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**AO3: Should we conduct socially sensitive research?**
- No – Due to issues highlighted above
- Yes – Otherwise there would be no research
Issues and Debates Essays

Essay title: Discuss the ethical implications of research including reference to social sensitivity. (16 marks)

Ethical implications can occur at every stage of the research process in psychology, not only at the moment of actually conducting the research procedure.

Sieber and Stanley outlined four aspects of the research process that raise ethical implications, especially in socially sensitive research. Firstly, the research question should not add to any prevailing prejudice or stereotype, for example, the belief (by some people) that intelligence is inherited. Secondly, the information obtained should be treated with confidentiality before, during, and after the research process. Thirdly, if the research is being funded by the government or an institution, the researcher should ensure that the data is not misused in any way. Finally, the researchers should ensure that the interpretation of the data or findings has no impact on the participants involved or the group of people that those participants represent. According to Sieber and Stanley, if researchers follow these considerations then the research is less likely to have any social consequence on the participants involved and the group of people the participants represent.

The considerations outlined by Sieber and Stanley provide a mechanism to safeguard individuals who are indirectly affected by psychological research. Because of the problems associated with socially sensitive research, it is not sufficient to simply safeguard the interests of the participants taking part in the research. For example, the current ethical guidelines do not require researchers to consider how their findings may be used by other people or institutions to form and/or shape public social policy. Sieber and Stanley recommend that researchers consider this when interpreting and applying their findings, to ensure that psychological research is not an indirect harm to other members of society.

However, socially sensitive research can lead to low social awareness and therefore some psychologists would argue against conducting this form of research. For example, research examining racial differences in IQ has often been used to justify new (and often unwarranted) forms of social control. For example, between 1907 and 1940, 64,000 individuals were forcibly sterilized under eugenic studies and theory.

A well-detailed paragraph detailing a theory of social sensitivity.

While the outline of ethical implications is correct, a stronger definition would have been useful here: ethical implications consider the impact or consequences that psychological research has on the rights of other people in a wider context.

A final strength of conducting socially sensitive research is presented effectively.

Examining the role of research in policy making, many researchers have found that in socially sensitive situations, it is important to recognize that not all research is controversial and some is desirable and beneficial to society. For example, research examining the accuracy of children’s memories, especially the use of eye-witness testimony, has been found to be reliable if they are questioned in a timely and appropriate manner. In this area, socially sensitive research has resulted in a good working relationship between psychologists and the legal profession to help improve the accuracy and validity of children’s eye-witnesses.

[588 words]

Examiner style comments: Mark Band 4
A well-detailed and accurate account of socially sensitive research is presented. The discussion is particularly effective in drawing on both strengths and limitations while presenting a good balance of information.
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