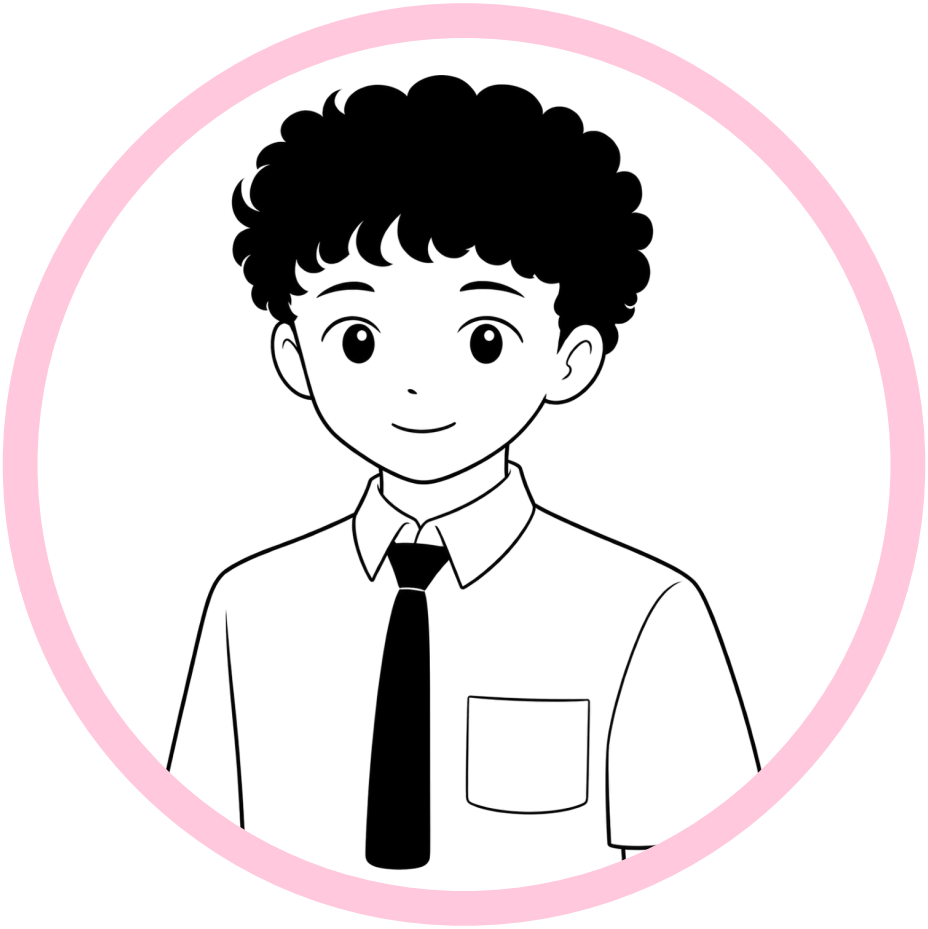
AQA A-LEVEL PSYCHOLOGY · 7182

PSYCHOLOGY



MARK SCHEME

3.3.8 ETHOLOGICAL EXPLANATION

SCORE	PERCENTAGE
/38	%

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Q1.

[AO1 = 6 AO3 = 10]

Level	Marks	Description
4	13 – 16	Knowledge of evolutionary explanations for aggression is accurate and generally well detailed. Evaluation is thorough and effective. Minor detail and/or expansion of argument is sometimes lacking. The answer is clear, coherent and focused. Specialist terminology is used effectively.
3	9 – 12	Knowledge of evolutionary explanations for aggression is evident but there are occasional inaccuracies/omissions. Evaluation is mostly effective. The answer is mostly clear and organised but occasionally lacks focus. Specialist terminology is used appropriately.
2	5 – 8	Limited knowledge of evolutionary explanations for aggression is present. Focus is mainly on description. Any evaluation is of limited effectiveness. The answer lacks clarity, accuracy and organisation in places. Specialist terminology is used inappropriately on occasions.
1	1 – 4	Knowledge of evolutionary explanations for aggression is very limited. Evaluation is limited, poorly focused or absent. The answer as a whole lacks clarity, has many inaccuracies and is poorly organised. Specialist terminology is either absent or inappropriately used.
	0	No relevant content.

Possible content:

- role of aggression in individual survival and reproductive success
- evolution and adaptation – genetic mutations and survival of the fittest
- competition for resources – aggressive individuals more able to compete for food, females etc so more likely to reproduce successfully
- aggressive genes are passed on to subsequent generations
- sexual jealousy – male violence against partners motivated by jealousy to ensure own paternity and genetic success
- mate retention strategies – direct guarding, negative inducements (threats) linked to aggression
- females look for males with resources – aggressive males more successful.

Possible evaluation

- use of supporting evidence, eg attractiveness of dominant behaviour in males (Sadalla 1987); positive correlation between mate retention behaviours and physical violence (Shackleford 2005)
- can explain gender differences in aggression
- cultural differences in acceptability and prevalence of aggressive behaviour suggest it is learned rather than evolutionary
- evidence cannot demonstrate cause and effect – all correlational

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- comparison with other explanations, eg social learning theory
- broader issues/debates, eg reductionism, determinism, nature v nurture
- implications: ethical – suggests aggression is innate and therefore cannot be controlled and individuals are not personally responsible; of psychological research into aggression for the economy.

Credit other relevant material.

Q2.

[AO2 = 4]

Level	Marks	Description
2	3 – 4	Knowledge of evolutionary explanations of aggression is clear and mostly accurate. The material is used appropriately to explain levels of aggression amongst young males in inner cities. The answer is generally coherent with effective use of terminology.
1	1 – 2	Some knowledge of evolutionary explanations of aggression is evident. Links to high levels of aggression amongst young males in inner cities are not always effective. The answer lacks accuracy and detail. Use of terminology is either absent or inappropriate.
	0	No relevant content.

Possible content:

- male aggression derives from need to acquire / defend resources such as mates or territory (in the city) and / or to establish status (in groups of peers or between gangs)
- male aggression derives from sexual jealousy of other males who may have sex with or steal their mates.

Q3.

[AO1 = 2]

1 mark for a basic definition

Plus

1 further mark for relevant elaboration

Possible content:

- Innate releasing mechanisms (IRMs) are hard-wired brain networks that respond to specific stimuli (signs or releasers) by initiating a fixed action pattern, a set sequence of behaviours.

- IRMs are a key part of the ethological (instinctive) approach to aggression (and other behaviours such as courtship/mating). Examples of IRM in relation to aggression include the male stickleback showing aggressive behaviour to red-bellied sticklebacks (male rivals).

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Credit other relevant material.

Q4.

Marks for this question: AO1 = 6, AO3 = 10

Level	Marks	Description
4	13 – 16	Knowledge is accurate and generally well detailed. Discussion / evaluation / application is thorough and effective. The answer is clear, coherent and focused. Specialist terminology is used effectively. Minor detail and / or expansion of argument sometimes lacking.
3	9 – 12	Knowledge is evident. There are occasional inaccuracies. Discussion / evaluation / application is apparent and mostly effective. The answer is mostly clear and organised. Specialist terminology is mostly used effectively. Lacks focus in places.
2	5 – 8	Some knowledge is present. Focus is mainly on description. Any discussion / evaluation / application is only partly effective. The answer lacks clarity, accuracy and organisation in places. Specialist terminology is used inappropriately on occasions. One explanation only at Level 4
1	1 – 4	Knowledge is limited. Discussion / evaluation / application is limited, poorly focused or absent. The answer as a whole lacks clarity, has many inaccuracies and is poorly organised. Specialist terminology either absent or inappropriately used. One explanation only at Level 3
	0	No relevant content.

Please note that although the content for this mark scheme remains the same, on most mark schemes for the new AQA Specification (Sept 2015 onwards) content appears as a bulleted list.

AO1

Evolutionary explanations of human aggression focus on specific areas where aggression is thought to be adaptive. These include acquiring and protecting resources such as food, territory and mates, and status within the group, especially in males. High status then leads to greater access to resources in general and to mates in particular. Response should include the evolutionary context, ie the need to ensure survival of one's genes.

Credit knowledge of aggression in relation to infidelity and / or jealousy linked to male mate-retention strategies in response to imagined or actual sexual infidelity and reference to potential cuckoldry and the evolutionary drive for men to invest resources only in their own offspring.

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AO3

Use of research studies eg studies on criminal aggression (perpetrated mainly by young poor males) can be linked to the relationship between status and aggression (eg Daley & Wilson) and studies on tribes such as the Ache or Kung San provide some support for the relationship between aggression in males and access to resources such as food and mates. Further points include the use of different types of aggression, and interaction with gender differences.

Research studies have also supported gender differences in attitudes to infidelity, with males being more upset by sexual infidelity and females by emotional infidelity. However there must be clear relevance to human aggression for marks to be awarded.

Methodological evaluation of studies may earn marks, but only if the relevance of the evaluation for explanations is explicit and sensible. For instance, given an evolutionary perspective, studies on non-human animals (especially primates) cannot be dismissed out of hand, as they often are.

Alternative explanations of human aggression, such as social psychological or biological (genetics, neurotransmitters) approaches, may earn marks if used effectively as evaluation of evolutionary explanations.

Other relevant points might include free will and determinism. The idea that human aggression is driven by our evolutionary past is highly deterministic and there could be consideration of the validity of the determinist view. Students may also refer to reductionism, and gender and cultural issues. Applications of explanations / findings to relationship therapy and to an understanding of contemporary relationships would also be relevant.

Q1.

Most students could offer reasonable descriptions of dominance, sexual jealousy and mate retention strategies but these often failed to include any explicit mention of aggression or any explanation of how these behaviours have evolved. More able students emphasised the key mate retention tactics explicitly linked to aggression. Warfare and bullying were also used effectively. Despite the wording of the question, it was fairly common to see description of animal studies, often sticklebacks, which could only gain credit if used as part of an evaluation. The way that evolutionary explanations 'ignore biological explanations' or 'ignore genetic explanations' was a common evaluative point, showing basic misunderstanding. Similarly, it was sometimes stated that evolutionary explanations for aggression could not explain cases of genocide, with an apparent failure to recognise how elimination of an entire race would thereby confer advantage on the perpetrators who could survive, prosper and propagate their own genes.

Q4.

This popular question produced answers across the whole range of quality. At the top end there was good understanding of evolutionary theory in relation to aggression in individuals and sometimes in relation to groups. Links between infidelity/jealousy and aggression were clear and sustained, with reference to mate retention strategies and research studies into jealousy and physical abuse. Mid-range answers used similar material but failed, for instance, to sustain a focus on aggression but presented lengthy analyses of non-aggressive mate retention strategies. They also referred to research studies on jealousy and infidelity but without drawing out any relevance to issues of aggression.

Although most answers referred to some research, the dominant route to AO2/3 marks for moderate to weak answers was via evaluation of the evolutionary approach. Although this could be effective, it was often generic and sometimes inaccurate ('the evolutionary approach is reductionist because it does not take account of genetic factors'). This is an area where the 'free will v determinist' debate can be used effectively in terms of personal responsibility for aggressive behaviour, and some students did this well.