



Oxford Cambridge and RSA

Tuesday 20 May 2025 – Afternoon

AS Level Psychology

H167/02 Psychological themes through core studies

Time allowed: 1 hour 30 minutes

No extra materials are needed.



Please write clearly in black ink. **Do not write in the barcodes.**

Centre number

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Candidate number

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First name(s) StemUp Model Solution

Last name _____

INSTRUCTIONS

- Use black ink.
- Write your answer to each question in the space provided. If you need extra space use the lined pages at the end of this booklet. The question numbers must be clearly shown.
- Answer **all** the questions.

INFORMATION

- The total mark for this paper is **75**.
- The marks for each question are shown in brackets [].
- Quality of extended response will be assessed in questions marked with an asterisk (*).
- This document has **16** pages.

ADVICE

- Read each question carefully before you start your answer.

Section A

Core studies

1

(a) From Bandura et al.'s (1961) study into the transmission of aggression:

(i) Identify **two** features of the sample used.1 *72 children (36 boys and 36 girls).*2 *Aged between 37 and 69 months (mean age 52 months).*

[2]

(ii) Suggest **one** way the sample used in this study may be considered biased.*All of the children were drawn from one location, the Stanford University Nursery**School in America. This means the sample is biased towards the children of relatively**well-educated, middle-class parents, so the findings about imitating aggression cannot**be generalised to children from other areas of the USA or the rest of the world.*

[2]

(b) Identify the experimental method **and** design used in Chaney et al.'s (2004) Funhaller study.Experimental method: *Field experiment*Design: *Repeated measures design*

[2]

2

- (a) Explain why Casey et al.'s (2011) study into neural correlates of delay of gratification is considered a quasi experiment.

Casey et al.'s study is considered a quasi experiment because the independent variable did not have to be manipulated by the researchers. It was naturally occurring, as participants were already either high delayers or low delayers based on how they had performed on the delay of gratification (marshmallow) task as four-year-olds and on later self-report measures. [2]

- (b) Suggest why the method used in Casey et al.'s (2011) study can be considered reliable.

Reliability means the procedure is consistent, so repeating it would give the same results. Casey et al.'s study was a controlled laboratory experiment with a standardised, replicable procedure: every participant completed the 'hot' and 'cool' go/no-go impulse control tasks in the same way, seeing the same faces for 500 ms, and the fMRI scanner is a standardised, objective piece of equipment. It is therefore highly likely that if the study were repeated, similar results would be obtained, so findings can be checked for consistency. [3]

3

- (a) Outline **one** of the control tasks used in Baron-Cohen et al.'s (1997) study into autism in adults.

One control task was the Gender Recognition Task. Participants were shown the same standardised black and white photographs of the eye region that were used in the Eyes Task, but instead of having to identify the emotion or mental state being expressed, they simply had to say whether the eyes belonged to a male or a female, scored out of 25. [2]

- (b) Explain how Freud's (1909) study of Little Hans relates to the key theme of 'understanding disorders'.

The key theme of 'understanding disorders' is about recognising that some individuals display behaviours or symptoms that are considered abnormal or atypical, and trying to explain why they occur so that the person can be helped. The psychodynamic perspective explains disorders in terms of unconscious conflicts, often relating to the stages of psychosexual development. Freud's study of Little Hans applies this explanation to a phobia: Hans developed an intense fear of horses, especially white horses with black around the mouth and blinkers. Freud concluded that the phobia was a symbolic expression of the unconscious Oedipus complex, as Hans had sexual desires for his mother and feared castration by his father, who the horse represented. Resolving this conflict helped the phobia to disappear. [3]

4

- (a) Outline how the term 'ethnocentrism' could relate to Milgram's (1963) study into obedience.

Ethnocentrism is the tendency to view behaviour only from the perspective of your own culture, using your own cultural group as the basis for judgements about others. Milgram's 40 male participants all came from the New Haven area of America, yet he assumed the high obedience found (65% going to 450 volts) would apply to other nationalities, such as Germans, without testing those cultures. [2]

- (b) Describe **one** similarity between Milgram's (1963) study into obedience and Bocchiaro et al.'s (2012) study into disobedience and whistle-blowing.

One similarity is that both studies recruited their participants using a self-selected (volunteer) sampling method. In Milgram's study, the 40 male participants aged 20 to 50 from the New Haven area responded to a newspaper advertisement and direct mail asking for volunteers for a study of memory and learning at Yale University, and were paid \$4.50. In Bocchiaro et al.'s study, the 149 undergraduate students at the VU University in Amsterdam were recruited through flyers posted in the university canteen asking for volunteers for a study, and were paid 7 euros or given course credit. In both studies, the participants therefore chose to put themselves forward. [3]

- 5 Describe the procedure used in Grant et al.'s (1998) study into context-dependent memory.

Participants were tested individually. Instructions describing the experiment as a class project and stating participation was voluntary were read aloud, and they were told their comprehension would be tested with a short-answer and a multiple-choice test. Each participant read a two-page article on psychoimmunology once, as if for a class assignment, and could highlight and underline. All wore headphones: the silent group heard nothing, while the noisy group heard moderately loud cafeteria noise but were told to ignore it. Reading times were recorded. After a two-minute break to minimise recall from short-term memory, participants were tested in either silent or noisy conditions, so some were tested in the same context they learnt in and others in a different context. The short-answer test came first, then the multiple-choice test. Participants were then debriefed. The procedure lasted about 30 minutes. [4]

Section B

Areas, perspectives and debates

6

- (a) Describe **one** strength of using the cognitive area to explain behaviour.
Support your answer with evidence from any of the core studies placed in the cognitive area.

One strength of the cognitive area is that it usually employs a scientific method, using controlled laboratory experiments. This means extraneous variables are minimised, so researchers can establish cause and effect between the independent variable and the mental process measured, giving high internal validity and a replicable procedure. For example, in Loftus and Palmer's second experiment all 150 participants watched the same film of a car accident and answered the same questions, with only the verb ('smashed', 'hit' or no question) changed. This allowed them to conclude that the leading question caused participants to reconstruct a memory of broken glass that was not in the film. [3]

- (b) Describe **one** weakness of using the cognitive area to explain behaviour.
Support your answer with evidence from any of the core studies placed in the cognitive area.

One weakness of the cognitive area is that its research often lacks ecological validity and mundane realism, because mental processes are studied through artificial laboratory tasks. This means the findings may not reflect how people actually think, remember or pay attention in everyday life, so they may not generalise to real-world settings. For example, in Loftus and Palmer's study participants watched short film clips of car accidents on a screen and then answered written questions. Watching a film is not the same as witnessing a real accident, where there would be emotion and stress, so the estimates of speed and the reports of broken glass may not represent how real eyewitnesses would recall an event. [3]

- (c) Explain how Loftus and Palmer's (1974) study on eyewitness testimony links to the cognitive area of psychology.
Support your answer with evidence from Loftus and Palmer's (1974) **second** experiment into eyewitness testimony.

A key principle of the cognitive area is that the mind works like a computer: information is input, processed and output as behaviour, so behaviour depends on how information is processed. Loftus and Palmer's study links to this because they showed that eyewitness testimony (the output) is affected by how the memory is reconstructed after the event. In their second experiment, 150 participants watched a film of a car accident and a week later were asked 'Did you see any broken glass?' There was none, yet 16 of 50 in the 'smashed' condition reported seeing it compared with 7 of 50 in the 'hit' condition and 6 of 50 controls, so the leading verb had been processed into the memory. [3]

- (d) Describe **one** way the cognitive area is similar to the behaviourist perspective.
Support your answer with evidence from core studies or other appropriate research.

One similarity is that both the cognitive area and the behaviourist perspective conduct research using controlled laboratory experiments, where an independent variable is manipulated and its effect on a dependent variable is measured. This means both collect objective, quantitative data, can establish cause and effect and produce replicable findings, so both can be considered scientific. For example, in the cognitive area Loftus and Palmer manipulated the verb in a question ('smashed', 'collided', 'bumped', 'hit' or 'contacted') and measured speed estimates, finding a mean of 40.8 mph for 'smashed' but 31.8 mph for 'contacted'. Similarly, Bandura et al. manipulated whether 72 children observed an aggressive model, a non-aggressive model or no model, and counted the imitative aggressive acts each child produced in a controlled playroom, finding far more in the aggressive model condition. [4]

- (e)* Evaluate the situational position in the individual/situational debate in psychology. Support your answer with evidence from core studies that can be viewed from the behaviourist perspective. [12]

The individual/situational debate is about whether behaviour is caused by a person's own characteristics or by their environment. The individual position sees personality, traits and disposition as the main cause of behaviour, so behaviour should be constant across situations. The situational position, which the behaviourist perspective supports, sees the surrounding environment, including other people, rewards and punishments, as the main cause of behaviour, so behaviour depends on the situation a person is in.

One strength of the situational position is that, because behaviour is seen as the result of environmental influences, behaviour becomes predictable and cause and effect can be established. If we know what features of the situation produce a behaviour, we can predict when it will occur. Bandura et al. demonstrated this: the children who observed an aggressive adult model punching, kicking and hitting the Bobo doll with a mallet went on to produce far more imitative physical and verbal aggression than those who saw a non-aggressive model or no model. The model in the environment, not the child's disposition, was the cause of the aggression.

A second strength is that situational research is usually very scientific, using controlled experimental methods, which increases the validity and reliability of the findings. Bandura et al. used a laboratory experiment with three rooms arranged identically for every child, a standardised ten-minute modelling phase, and observers recording behaviour at five-second intervals through a one-way mirror, with inter-rater reliability checked. This means the conclusion that aggression is learned from the situation is based on objective evidence rather than speculation.

A third strength is that the situational position has useful practical applications. If behaviour is shaped by the environment, it can be changed by altering the environment, for example by reinforcing desirable behaviour or punishing undesirable behaviour. Chaney et al. showed this when the Funhaler, which used a spinning disc and whistle as positive reinforcement for correct breathing, increased parent-reported adherence from 10% to 73%.

for medicating their asthmatic children the previous day. This principle can be adapted to other medical conditions and to settings such as schools.

However, there are weaknesses. The situational position can be reductionist because it ignores other factors that influence behaviour, such as genetics, personality and cognition. In Bandura et al's study the children were matched on their pre-existing levels of aggression rated by their nursery teacher, which shows that children do differ in natural aggressiveness, something a purely situational explanation cannot account for. Similarly, not every child imitated the model, suggesting individual factors interact with the situation.

Another weakness is that situational research often relies on observation and self-report, which can lead to observer bias and socially desirable answers. In Chaney et al. the data came from parents' questionnaire reports of their children's use of the Funhaler, and parents may have exaggerated adherence to please the researchers, making the findings less valid. In Bandura et al. the children may have shown demand characteristics, realising the Bobo doll was meant to be hit, so their behaviour may not reflect genuine learnt aggression.

In conclusion, the situational position is supported by strong, scientific evidence from behaviourist studies and leads to useful applications, but it is incomplete on its own. Behaviour is best explained by an interaction between the situation and the individual's characteristics.

Section C

Practical applications

Would you be influenced by your peers?

20 right-handed students were recruited through adverts in online student forums to play an online trust game. Participants agreed to take part by completing a form and returning it by email.

Introductory instructions told participants they could stop playing at any point and that their personal details would not be disclosed.

Participants played the game with four other peers. The game required them to decide whether or not to send money to a stranger. Participants were able to see their peers' choices during the decision-making phase of the study. 80% of the peers said they would send money to the stranger. The majority of the students also decided to send money to the stranger.

fMRI data analysis suggested a neural basis for social influence with individuals conforming to their peers by trusting their opinions and copying their behaviours.

All participants received an email telling them the outcome of the study once the results had been analysed.

7

- (a) Identify **one** ethical concern in the above article and outline how the researchers addressed this concern.

One ethical concern is the right to withdraw. The researchers addressed this by giving introductory instructions at the start of the trust game which told participants that they could stop playing at any point, so they knew they were free to leave the study without any consequences if they felt uncomfortable about sending money to a stranger or being watched by their peers. [2]

(b) Explain **two** reasons why the results of the study described in the article might lack validity.

1 The study was an online trust game, so it lacks ecological validity. Being able to see peers' choices on a computer screen and deciding whether to send money to a stranger is not the same as witnessing other people's decisions face to face, so participants may have just 'gone with the flow' and not responded as they would to real-life peer pressure.

2 The study may lack population validity because only 20 right-handed students recruited from online forums took part. Students are a narrow age group and right-handed people may have different brain lateralisation, so the fMRI findings about a neural basis for conformity cannot be generalised to older people, left-handers or those who do not use student forums.

[4]

(c) Outline why the results of the study described in the article support the determinism side of the freewill/determinism debate.
Support your answer with evidence from the article.

Determinism is the view that our behaviour is caused by forces beyond our individual control, so we do not have free will to choose how we act. The article shows evidence of biological determinism, because the fMRI data analysis suggested there is a neural basis for social influence, meaning that the brain itself causes individuals to conform to their peers by trusting their opinions and copying their behaviours. It also suggests external forces determine behaviour: when 80% of the peers said they would send money to the stranger, the majority of the students also decided to send money, which implies they could not resist the peer pressure and automatically followed the group rather than making a free choice.

[3]

- (d) Using your knowledge of psychology, suggest **and** explain **two** ways young people could be encouraged to avoid the effect of negative peer pressure.

My first suggestion is a school-based peer role-model programme based on social learning theory. Bandura et al. showed that children imitate the behaviour of models they observe, especially when the model is similar to them and is seen to be rewarded. Schools could therefore recruit popular, slightly older students to act as peer mentors who model saying no to risky behaviour such as vaping, drinking or sending money or images to strangers online. The mentors would run weekly sessions in which they demonstrate assertive refusal, for example calmly saying 'No thanks, that's not for me' and walking away, and would then be publicly praised by teachers so that younger students see the refusal being vicariously reinforced. Students would then role play the refusals in pairs and receive praise, so the behaviour is attended to, retained, reproduced and the young people are motivated to repeat it. This works because the situation that produced conformity in the article (seeing 80% of peers choose one option) is replaced by a situation where resisting is what the admired models do.

My second suggestion is a reward scheme based on operant conditioning, like Chaney et al.'s Funhaler. Chaney et al. found that adding immediate positive reinforcement (a spinning disc and whistle) to the inhaler increased children's adherence from 10% to 73%. Young people could download an app in which they log every time they resist negative peer pressure, for example refusing a dare or reporting bullying, and earn points immediately, with points exchanged for tangible rewards such as cinema vouchers or extra privileges at school, chosen by the young people themselves. Parents and teachers would verify the entries and add praise as a secondary reinforcer. Because the behaviour of resisting is immediately followed by a pleasant consequence, it is strengthened and becomes more likely to be repeated, counteracting the social reward of fitting in with the group.

[8]

(e)* Evaluate the suggestions you have made in 7(d) using your knowledge of psychology.

Both suggestions assume that behaviour is learnt from the environment, taking the nurture and situational side of the debates. This is supported by Bandura et al., whose children imitated an aggressive model, and by Chaney et al., whose rewards changed children's behaviour, so there is good evidence that modelling and reinforcement can change how young people respond to peers. However, this is reductionist because it ignores the biological basis of conformity. The article's fMRI data showed a neural basis for social influence, so if conforming is partly driven by the brain, a peer role-model programme or an app full of points may not be enough on its own, and the suggestions may underestimate individual differences such as personality or self-esteem.

A second issue is determinism. Both suggestions treat young people as if their behaviour is determined by the rewards and models around them, which is useful because it means behaviour is predictable and can be changed. However, it is a soft form of determinism, because the young person still has to choose to use the refusal skills or log the behaviour in the app. There is also an ethical concern that the reward scheme manipulates behaviour, and a social sensitivity issue in labelling some young people as easily influenced.

Third, usefulness and practicality differ. The peer role-model programme is cheap, uses existing students and has high ecological validity because it takes place in the real school setting where peer pressure happens, but its evidence base, Bandura's study, used an artificial laboratory situation with a Bobo doll and young children aged 37 to 69 months, so it may not generalise to teenagers facing real social pressure. The reward app relies on self-report, and just as Chaney et al. depended on parents' questionnaires, young people may exaggerate how often they resisted peer pressure to earn points, which lowers its validity. There is also a risk that once the rewards stop the behaviour extinguishes, as operant conditioning predicts.

Overall, the suggestions are psychologically well supported and practical, but they would be most effective combined with approaches that also address the individual and biological factors involved in conformity.

[8]

END OF QUESTION PAPER

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