



General Certificate of Education

**Health and Social Care
8621/8623/8626/8627/8629**

HC12 Human Development

Report on the Examination

June 2010

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HC12 Human Development

General comments

Candidates showed quite good knowledge of Freud's theory of psychosexual development. However, there was some confusion between learning theory and other theories, especially social learning theory. Some candidates seemed unsure of the distinction between a theory and a study, and some described a theory when asked to evaluate it. Another frequent error was to put learning theory explanations in cognitive terms.

A few candidates criticised studies by saying that they were 'outdated'. However, the mere passage of time does not affect the methodological quality of research.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- 01 A large majority of candidates were able to give Freud's names for three parts of the personality and most of these were able outline each one.
- 02 Most candidates were able to link parts of the personality with Freud's stages of development. Some however just repeated information about parts of the personality.
- 03 A majority of candidates made some relevant evaluation of Freud's theory of psychosexual development. Most evaluations were based on the problem of testability and the lack of good supporting evidence. A significant minority of candidates described the theory without attempting to evaluate it. No marks were available for this.

Question 2

- 04 Almost all candidates gained the full three marks for identifying the environmental influences listed in the scenario. Hardly any made the mistake of referring to genetic influences.
- 05 Most candidates were able to define universality and relate it to the reflexes mentioned in the scenario.
- 06 A small majority of candidates were able to name another feature of development that suggests the influence of genetics or maturation. A few mistakenly referred to environmental influences such as nutrition.
- 07 This question referred to a statement by a (fictional) teacher that research on parenting styles shows that some kinds of parenting behaviour cause children to grow up to be aggressive. Candidates were asked to discuss this with reference to a study of parenting styles. Most candidates named and described these styles with reasonable accuracy, and a majority of these gave the findings of the Sears et al. study, which was specifically concerned with the development of aggression. Candidates who made use of Baumrind's study found it more difficult to relate the findings to aggression, and some digressed into irrelevant findings. A minority of candidates recognised that the teacher's statement was not justified by the correlational data, and some of these also pointed out that a child's behaviour might also act as a determinant of, or at least an influence on, the parental style adopted. Some candidates made

the point that other factors can also influence aggression, but this did not gain credit because it does not bear on the correctness of the teacher's statement. The teacher did not say that the only cause of aggression in children was the rearing style adopted.

Weaker answers agreed with the teacher's statement, and the weakest answers referred to studies that did not relate to parenting styles.

Question 3

- 08 A majority of candidates were able to name one or more of the typical attachment behaviours illustrated in the scenario. Stranger anxiety, use as a secure base and proximity maintaining were most frequently mentioned. Weaker answers did no more than present some form of the information given in the scenario and did not gain credit. Some candidates suggested that Jake showed protest and despair (referring to short-term effects of separation) when in fact no separation had occurred. Other candidates answered in terms of different types of attachment (secure, anxious-avoidant etc) – making the false assumption that a child can move from one type of attachment to another momentarily.
- 09 Asked to suggest the likely age of the child in the scenario, who had evidently developed a specific attachment quite recently, candidates often over-estimated the likely age. Two to three years was a not uncommon answer.
- 10 Asked to outline the learning theory for the onset of attachment, a minority of candidates gave a clear account of how proximity was reinforced by the provision of rewarding care, especially feeding and nappy changing. Some candidates mistakenly referred to the infant 'knowing' that they would be rewarded. In fact the involvement of cognition is absolutely denied by the theory. It does seem very unlikely that infants are able to reason about the likelihood of future rewards. A surprising number of candidates mistook learning theory for Bowlby's theory, or for social learning theory. Some attempted no description of any theory, but wrote about Ainsworth's study instead.
- 11 Asked to evaluate the learning theory of attachment, some began by saying it was plausible, but gradually realised that the example given in the scenario contradicted the theory. Some candidates were reminded by the example of Shaffer and Emerson's study, and gained credit for this. Relatively few had the confidence to conclude that the learning theory explanation is unconvincing. Some candidates made appropriate references to alternative cognitive and ethological explanations. However many candidates, as in the previous section gave answers based on a misunderstanding of which theory was under discussion.

Question 4

- 12 This question gave candidates four statements about a child's language behaviour. Candidates were asked to identify which statements were cognitive explanations and which were learning theory explanations. A significant minority of candidates got all four correct, while the majority gained two marks, some probably by chance. The key difference between the statements was that two of them referred to cognitive process, e.g. 'she **knows** she will be rewarded' and 'she **notices** that another child receives attention', while the other two gave purely behavioural explanations.

Some candidates might have assumed that any explanation which refers to or implies learning must be a learning theory explanation. This is not so. Candidates should understand the extreme nature of learning theory explanations – that they rule out cognitive factors despite the fact that most people rightly regard human learning as a strongly cognitive process.

- 13 A majority of candidates showed reasonable understanding of the concept of shaping applied to language development, and many gained full marks. Weaker answers were sometimes framed in cognitive terms, e.g. ‘the child knows she will get attention’. Such answers did not gain marks. A less frequent error was to suggest that the process involved parents actively repeating words to children. Some thought that the shaping process was initiated by parents, involved correcting speech or teaching grammatical rules. Some candidates gave a confused mixture of language development stages and shaping.
- 14 A majority of candidates, asked to describe a study that has been used to support a Social Learning Theory of language development, described Berko’s study. A significant minority gained full marks for this. Some of the candidates who gained no marks described non-language studies, such as the ‘Bobo doll’ study. Others evidently mistook social learning theory for learning theory. Some candidates outlined a theory instead of describing a study.
- 15 Criticisms of the social learning theory explanation of language development were rarely well-informed. Many candidates made the relevant point that the theory ignores genetic or maturational influences. However many also stated that the theory ignored the role of cognition. Some of these were candidates who recognised that Berko’s study illustrated how children extract cognitions from examples. This and other criticisms might have resulted from a confusion between social learning theory and learning theory.

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