



Teacher Resource Bank

GCE Psychology A

Additional Sample Questions: PSYA3



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ADDITIONAL SAMPLE QUESTIONS: PSYA3

BIOLOGICAL RHYTHMS AND SLEEP

01 Outline **one** example of a circadian rhythm. (4 marks)

A circadian rhythm is one that occurs about once a day. An example of this is the sleep-waking cycle. This cycle is controlled by endogenous pacemakers which are the internal biological clocks and by the exogenous zeitgebers these are external factors in the environment that affect the cycle such as light and dark and temperature. These work together to regulate our daily pattern of sleeping and being awake.

Marks: 4/4

Comment [RMH1]: Shows candidate's knowledge. A definition would not earn marks per se but it is creditworthy in so far as it is elaboration of the example.

Comment [RMH2]: Accurate coherent outline of the example, brief but clear elaboration of endogenous pacemakers and exogenous zeitgebers.

02 Outline **one or more** explanations for sleep disorders (eg insomnia, sleep walking, narcolepsy). (5 marks)

Insomnia is a sleep disorder which consists of an individual being unable to sleep, and this can be short-term or long-term. There are two different types of insomnia, primary insomnia which occurs on its own and secondary insomnia where another condition causes the insomnia. Risk factors that influence whether we develop insomnia include sleep apnoea, age, gender and personality eg overweight males are prone to sleep apnoea. There is evidence that insomnia may be associated with high levels of arousal they can't seem to "switch off thinking" at night.

Comment [RMH3]: . Since this is not explanation it does not gain credit.

Comment [RMH4]: Useful information but to gain credit it would need to be linked to different explanations.

Comment [RMH5]: A list of factors and an eg would not constitute a reasonably thorough outline of an explanation.

Examiner's comment

The candidate has identified a range of risk factors and a possible neuro-chemical explanation but has not focused sufficiently on the requirement of the question. To gain credit in the top band the candidate would need to provide more detail of the explanation. A top band answer would need to say how/why they "cause insomnia".

Marks: 3/5

03 Evaluate **one or more** explanations for sleep disorders. (16 marks)

Research has shown that older people and females are more likely to suffer from insomnia thus showing the link between insomnia and age and gender. Another study showed that people suffering from sleep apnoea were more likely to suffer from insomnia, so establishing the link between apnoea and insomnia. A second study showed that sleep apnoea was more likely to occur in older than younger people. This may explain why older people are more likely to suffer from insomnia.

Comment [RMH6]: This is very weak evaluation. The research is not identifiable. Really these are descriptions of explanations with "Research supports" in front of them.

The last risk factor of insomnia is personality. Kales tested 130 insomniacs and found they had certain personality traits in common. They did not express their emotions and stress. This study had no control group so Kales repeated the study to compare insomniacs with a control group and found insomniacs had high emotional arousal and low self esteem, He concluded the high arousal kept them awake which in turn caused increased arousal, but you could ask is it the personality causing the insomnia or the insomnia causing the personality traits. Some research has shown insomniacs have lower levels of GABA a neuro transmitter which quietens the brain activity at night. This supports the personality explanation of insomnia.

Comment [RMH8]: This is much stronger evaluation in that the evidence is identifiable (by name or detail of the study) and a significant weakness is identified.

Comment [RMH9]: Further evaluation.

Comment [RMH10]: This feels more like AO1 than evaluation.

Comment [RMH11]: A rather muddled link between personality and biological explanation but separately they constitute evidence to support explanations.

Comment [RMH12]: Consideration of implications.

What is important is to distinguish whether it is primary or secondary insomnia because if it is caused by something else it is better to treat the cause rather than the insomnia itself.

There is evidence that there is a genetic cause of primary insomnia and of narcolepsy. Watson found a high correlation between MZ twins for insomnia but a very low correlation for DZ twins. As MZ have the same genes and DZ only share half their genes then this suggests a genetic link. But MZ twins my grow up together so it could be the stress of being a MZ twin. Studies of dogs showed a genetic cause of narcolepsy but these results can't be generalised to humans.

Comment [RMH13]: Not accurate/muddled mutation of Hert neurotransmitter – low levels.

Comment [RMH14]: Further explanation, evidence with interpretation

These explanations stress the role of nature and so are reductionist and determinist. If the cause is biological then treatment should be through drugs but if it is environmental it means the person has to do something about their environment or change the way they live.

Comment [RMH15]: Bolt on reference to issues and debates. Not elaborated or used effectively.

Examiner's comment

This answer does focus on evaluating explanations. The candidate has presented evidence for a range of different explanations and there is evidence of reasonable understanding, thus lifting the response just into the reasonable band. In the first paragraph the evaluation is focused but rudimentary. In paragraph 2, 3 and 4 it is better, in parts demonstrating reasonable understanding, but the material is not well elaborated. Reference to issues, debates approaches is superficial.

Marks: AO2/3 = 9 marks

RELATIONSHIPS

- 04 Discuss the evolutionary approach to explaining parental investment in humans (eg sex differences, parent –offspring conflict).

(9 marks + 16 marks)

Parental investment is the extent to which a mother or father or both invest in their offsprings in order for their chances of survival to be increased.

Comment [RMH16]: Clarification of terms.

Evolutionary explanations are based on the idea that behaviour of our ancestors has evolved because certain attributes enabled some to survive and reproduce and others not. An evolutionary reason for parental investment would be because the parent wants to increase their chance of reproductive fitness and successfully pass on their genes.

Comment [RMH17]: Clear and focused.

Trivers devised a parental investment theory. He proposed that the females invest more time and energy in looking after their offspring than men do because in their life time they produce only 4000 eggs for fertilization whereas men have an unlimited amount of sperm. Women breast feed for up to two years so they can't reproduce again for some time. So they are choosy about who they mate with and have to make sure that each offspring carrying their genes survives. Men in contrast tend to be promiscuous and try to maximize the number of offspring they father. Instead of putting the same time and effort into rearing their young they move on to another woman. This is supported but the evidence of greater promiscuity of men in western society, though it is not true of all cultures and even in western society women are promiscuous. A further flaw in this theory is that it is the males resources that arguably enable the child to survive and pass on the genes and there is evidence from research into second marriages that shows fathers do invest in offsprings that are not their own. This research looked at children in a current relationship but born to a previous relationship compared to children born to parents in a current relationship where for example a male has left a female for another but still had offspring with that female. Here the research showed that the male invested the same in "his own child" as in his partners child. This criticises the main idea of Trivers theory as the father would be expected to put all their resources into ensuring their own genes survive. However it could be he invests in her offspring to convince her he can provide for any future children and so increase his chance of reproducing again.

Comment [RMH18]: With the exception of the 4000 eggs reasonably accurate and detailed outlining of an evolutionary explanation.

Comment [RMH19]: OK but what evidence it is easy to say this about anything.

Comment [RMH20]: Relevant but a bit muddled. The focus should be on competition for resources between adolescent and possible new baby produced by the mother – though the reader gets the idea.

Comment [RMH21]: Reference to the "main idea" seems to focus on assumptions and the commentary ok.

Comment [RMH22]: A second explanation – this does not have to be in as much detail.

Comment [RMH23]: Although this seems like evidence it is being used to present the idea so AO1.

Another evolutionary explanation is parent conflict. This is where the parent and child clash. Research has shown mother daughter conflict begins in adolescence where a mother will try to stop her daughter from reproducing until the mother thinks the daughter has the appropriate resources and emotional wellbeing to raise a child. As the mother shares only 25% of her genes with a grandchild compared with 50% with her own child, from an evolution point of view, having more children of her own would ensure more of

her genes survive. Whilst this may have been relevant to past times or rural communities where they have lots of children women today in Britain generally have few children so only the first part would be supported by evidence.

Evolutionary explanations focus on the biology, behaviours such as parent child conflict could equally well be explained by behavioural or psychodynamic approaches and behavioural explanations are supported by scientific evidence. With the evolutionary explanations there are assumptions about why men and women invest differently that we can not test. Evolutionary explanations are also deterministic

Comment [RMH24]: Hint at the issues of cultural bias – it would have benefited if it had been elaborated or the irony of this “genetic universal” being not true in all cultures.

Comment [RMH25]: This comparison with other approaches need to be elaborated to gain more than minimal credit (some for selection of approaches and for hinting that behaviour might be supported by scientific evidence).

Comment [RMH26]: To gain credit this needs to be explained - our need for our gene pool to survive that makes us invest and conflict. It would be further improved by considering the implications eg is it a male theory that lets them off the hook! Phrased more formally this could gain credit.

Examiner’s comment

The answer is focused. The outline if parental investment theory is sound. Although the parent conflict is muddled, overall the AO1 is reasonable.

The evaluation generally matches the descriptors for the top of basic band. However the answer is focused and there is a line of argument, qualities of reasonable evaluation. There is reference to one study. This has been used effectively although is not clearly described. The discussion would have benefited from ref to other research. There are a number of points made though they are not always clear or used effectively.

In the final paragraphs there is an attempt to use issues debates and approaches to develop the discussion but this is not reasonably effective. The points made needed to be elaborated and implication addressed.

Marks: AO1 = 6 marks AO2 = 8/9 marks

Total: 14 marks

AGGRESSION

05 Discuss explanations of institutional aggression. (9 marks + 16 marks)

Institutional aggression is aggressive behaviour that occurs within an organisation that has its own social roles. The behaviour of those in an institution is restricted and controlled and aggression may be motivated by social forces and social roles rather than anger or frustration.

Institutional aggression can occur in many institutions such as prisons schools and the army but mainly in prisons. Importation model and deprivation model both attempt to explain such aggression.

Comment [RMH27]: The candidate does have a grasp of what is meant by institutional aggression as opposed to aggression that may occur in an institution.

Comment [RMH28]: Clear indication of what is to be covered in the discussion.

The deprivation model claims that it is environment of the institution itself (eg prison) that causes the aggression. It argues that the prison causes certain "pains" for the prisoners leaving them stressed and edgy which in turn causes them to lash out in violent and aggressive ways. These pains include lack of freedom lack of heterosexual partners and sex, feelings of deindividuation and lack of identity. It is the strain of the absence of these "privileges" which causes a stressful environment and leads to aggression. This also provides an explanation for the violence associated with overcrowding in prisons where the lack of space causes territoriality and a heightened sense of deprivation.

The importation model contrasts with this insisting that the aggression stems from personality characteristics that predispose them to be aggressive when they enter the prison, often the reason they are put in prison. It is in their nature to be aggressive. The model also argues that the background in which a person grows up may have caused the aggressiveness that the person brings with them into the institution.

The importation model is supported by a study that showed high security prisons had more violent outbreaks and higher levels of aggression than lower security prisons and a study in US prisons found black inmates were seen to be more aggressive than white inmates as this could have been because they came from more violent and impoverished backgrounds.

The importation model would suggest that being in a gang before going to prison may make you more aggressive and likely to belong to a gang in prison. However Dehisi found that being in a gang did not affect aggression levels in prison and did not encourage gang like behaviour.

Because the importation model is deterministic it offers an explanation of aggression in prisons but it does not offer any way of managing or preventing institutional aggression and therefore lacks substance.

However the deprivation model does both explain and suggest ways to prevent institutional aggression eg less overcrowding, more activities, etc.

Further support for the importation model, comes from research involving sub cultures. This found that black inmates in US prisons were more likely to be aggressive and violent and white inmates more likely to be involved with drugs and alcohol, which reflects society at the time. However this is culturally biased and plays on stereotypes.

Although many studies have supported the deprivation model such as those that showed younger offenders were more aggressive and found their sudden lack of freedom harder to tolerate than older inmates, there are also studies to contradict it for example McCorkle found that overcrowding did not necessarily mean more aggression.

Comment [RMH29]: Outline of the model with some detail of the way aggression comes about.

Comment [RMH30]: Although the intro to the sentence is AO2 the description that follows is credited as AO1 importation model is clearly identified as one of the models to be described .

Comment [RMH31]: This is quite vague. A psychologically informed elaboration would improve this.

Comment [RMH32]: Evidence is used here to support the explanation but is weak because it is circular - aggressive inmates are not put in low security prisons.

Comment [RMH33]: Effective way of linking model and evidence.

Comment [RMH34]: Evidence used as a counterpoint.

Comment [RMH35]: Brave attempt at effective use of issue but the line of argument is a bit muddled, implying only deterministic models offer explanations and it does not necessarily follow that because it is deterministic aggression can't be prevented. A good eg of where this point might gain more credit if it was explained fully.

Comment [RMH36]: Useful comparison made.

Comment [RMH37]: An attempt to widen the discussion to include issues. However the material is not used effectively there is a circularity to the point. Why is the comparison of the 2 groups biased?

Each of these models plays on nature nurture. The deprivation model is very much based on nurture and environment both the environment a person is brought up in and the environment of the institution whereas the importation model is very much based on nature as the characteristics of a person ie their biology which causes the aggression. Both models and all the studies are androcentric as there is not mention of female institutions /females in institutions also most of the studies were in western institutions usually US culture giving the a culture bias of an individualistic culture that may not reflect how institutions work in a more collectivist cultures. In this way the explanations could be said to be culture biased and lack generalisability.

Comment [RMH39]: Debate addressed though the depiction of importation as purely biological is not accurate as characteristics could derive from early experience.

Comment [RMH40]: Further commentary based on issues and debates.

Examiner's comment

This response is focused throughout showing reasonable knowledge of two explanations, though knowledge of deprivation model is better. The analysis and evaluation is slightly better than the description. The answer addresses a range of evaluative criteria such as evidence to support and challenge, comparison of explanations, value and application of explanations, issues debates such as nature/nurture, gender, culture, determinism. In some instances the range is at the expense of the commentary being clear and convincing. The discussion reflects some limitations in understanding and interpretation of the explanations and evidence though overall the commentary is top of the reasonable band. Unfortunately there is not much depth to the importation and deprivation models that is accessible to students. Focus on de-individuation and situational variables might have offered more scope for evaluation.

Marks: AO1 = 6 marks AO2/3 = 11 marks

Total: 18 marks

EATING BEHAVIOUR

06 'Dieting often fails because people are trying to go against their biological drive to eat.'

Discuss explanations for the success **and/or** failure of dieting.
(9 marks + 16 marks)

Dieting involves putting a cognitive limit on the level of food you should be eating. Dieting can sometimes be successful but is often unsuccessful. It becomes successful if limiting of food intake becomes natural for the person. Successful dieting needs certain factors to be in place. The person needs to:
Identify a model of obesity and focus on their target
Create a mental state so that food is no longer seen as rewarding
Avoid a state where the person desperately wants food but cannot have it
Create a new identity as a thinner person

Comment [RMH41]: 1st explanation is superficial.

Comment [RMH42]: Not clear/some muddle but points are derived from cognitive approach.

Denial plays a large part in unsuccessful dieting as the person may believe they are doing well, when they are often eating more than they think and they do not recall accurately what or how much they eat.

Dieting is unsuccessful when it causes people to overeat. There are many causes of overeating. A person who is dieting and in a depressed mood or feeling down may attempt to cheer themselves up by eating. The food will then only momentarily fill the gap in mood before they begin to feel down again, but the immediate reward provided by the food makes them use food again when they feel really low. If they begin to fill this gap with mood they begin to overeat. The overeating is nothing to do with hunger or biology it is faulty learning and thinking.

Comment [RMH43]: A commonsense explanation that is made creditworthy by the elaboration that follows.

Comment [RMH44]: Some evidence of analysis of the explanation in behavioural terms but this would earn more credit if there had been more explicit reference to the process and appropriate use of psychological terminology.

Comment [RMH45]: Comparison with biological explanation would earn more credit if it had been elaborated.

Many researchers have found evidence to show that dieting can often lead to overeating. The pre-load taste test was an experiment on obese women who were placed into 3 groups, dieting, exercise and control. At the end of the 6 weeks they came back to the lab and either have a high calorie snack (milkshake) or a low calorie snack (cracker). They were then able to eat what ever they wanted from a table of food. The results showed that the group who had been dieting for 6 weeks had eaten the most food which ever snack they had been given. This research evidence suggests dieters are susceptible to overeating.

Comment [RMH46]: Creditworthy as evaluation in that it is presented as support for the explanation. But the evidence needs to be accurate to gain credit. The role of the preload needed to be explained and the result interpreted.

Comment [RMH47]: This is not really accurate as the crux of the investigation (the 6 weeks diet) was not in the lab and so not as controlled.

This experiment took place in a lab where the researcher had full control of particular variables that may have affected the validity of the experiment.

However as it took place in a lab the people taking part may have tried to get results the researcher would have wanted (demand characteristics) which may not have happened in a natural setting. They also only used obese women therefore there is gender bias and they didn't use other types of people in the control group.

Comment [RMH48]: This seems very unlikely the social desirability point is more likely but this would have caused dieters to restrict eating after the preload.

Comment [RMH49]: It would only constitute gender bias if the investigator generalised to male and female. Using other types (non obese men) in the control group would not have overcome the "limited" sample.

The study had poor ecological validity as well as the questions about whether the study can be generalised. Furthermore when people are being observed they do not reveal their true self or act as they would in a natural setting. As it was a lab setting and the fact they knew they were being observed may have meant they were affected by social desirability bias. This would have distorted the findings of the experiment. Nevertheless it still provided evidence for overeating as a cause of dieting failure.

Comment [RMH50]: Why? This needs to be explained to gain credit.

Comment [RMH51]: This is a creditworthy point but would gain more credit if elaborated to consider the effect it would have on the results.

Comment [RMH52]: Given all the flaws the candidate cites it is illogical to conclude it supports the explanation!! There needs to be a clear line of argument.

Many experiments have been carried out and there are a variety of findings on how successful dieting is.

Comment [RMH53]: Too vague to be creditworthy.

Many experiments show that dieting doesn't cause overall weight gain or loss but merely weight fluctuation. Also if dieting causes overeating anorexics and vegetarians are anomalies as anorexics starve themselves and vegetarians refrain from eating meat. According to the overeating explanation of success and failure of dieting both these should be overeating.

Comment [RMH54]: Creditworthy as more specific detail provided.

Comment [RMH55]: An attempt here to consider the effectiveness of the explanation in real terms.

Therefore the explanation does not account for the free will in a person but it has helped us understand why dieting doesn't work for many. The sort of research has allowed us to produce more successful weight loss programmes rather than stringent diets. Today the emphasis is more on exercise and eating healthy foods than on dieting.

Comment [RMH56]: Link to issues and debates but lack of elaboration restricts credit.

Comment [RMH57]: Useful ref to the value of the explanation and research.

Examiner's comment

There is descriptive reference to a number of different approaches to explaining the success and/or failure of dieting, but the main focus is on overeating. The detail of the explanations is limited and is in parts muddled thus limiting the AO1 to the top of the basic band.

The main focus of the commentary and evaluation is in terms of research evidence from one study. Unfortunately the significance of the preload feature is not explained. The evaluation of this research is poor it seems formulaic and in parts it is inaccurate or incorrect. It is worth noting that inclusion of fairly trivial/speculative/erroneous comments based on methodology does not demonstrate sound/reasonable understanding. The candidate would have been better off *selecting appropriate* critical evaluative points and elaborating them more effectively.

It is important that the discussion generates a clear line of argument – in this essay the candidate states the study then says the explanation is supported!! Different approaches are addressed but in describing explanations explicit comparison is not made. There is reference to free will and to the application /practice which would need to be elaborated.

Marks: AO1 = 4 AO2/3 = 5

Total: 9 marks

GENDER

- 07 Outline psychological **and** biological explanations of gender development (9 marks)

Gender is the masculinity or femininity of a person. Social learning theory argues that gender development is the result on imitation, identification and selective reinforcement of gender appropriate behaviours. An alternative psychological explanation is Kohlberg's cognitive theory. He thought children went through stages where their understanding of gender was qualitatively different. The first stage is gender identity at around 2.5yrs when a child is able to tell you whether they are a boy or girl but do not see gender as fixed, a girl might believe she will be a man when she grows up. The next stage is gender of stability around 3.5 yrs where the child realises they will stay the same gender for life but might think that superficial changes in others might change gender eg if a girl cuts her hair and wears trousers she becomes a boy. The final stage 4.5 - 7 yrs is gender constancy where the child understands their own and others gender remains constant across time and in spite of superficial changes. These changes in thinking are associated with cognitive development, the development of conservation, and decentering.

Biological explanations of gender development involve the idea that gender is determined by genes and hormones. The pattern of genes determines the hormones testosterone (male) and oestrogen (female) that circulate and affect gender development physically and psychologically before and after birth.

It starts at 4 - 8 weeks after conception when the 23^d chromosome (XY for a boy and XX for a girl) instructs the gonads to release hormones. The testes release testosterone which acts on the hypothalamus. If no testosterone is released the brain develops in the female form. The male brain structure then differs as the SDN sexually dimorphic nucleus is 2.5 times larger and contains 2.2 times the number of cells than that of a woman. MRI scans have shown that women use the corpus callosum, which links the hemispheres whereas males use only one hemisphere showing brain structure may influence gendered development.

Examiner's comments

Generally well written, clear structure some accurate detail, though not all accurate. Given the AO1/AO2/3 balance this answer is quite long. Of the two explanations the psychological one is the better as it focuses on gender development the bio explanation focuses on sex differences.

Marks: AO1 = 8 marks

Comment [RMH58]: Reassuring that the candidate distinguishes between gender and sex.

Comment [RMH59]: Clear succinct intro to the theory.

Comment [RMH60]: Useful point though could have been developed.

Comment [RMH61]: Generally accurate outline but incomplete and muddled in parts. To gain more credit the outline needs to link the gender role behaviour rather than biological sex.

08 Consider whether psychological or biological approaches provide the better explanation of gender development. (16 marks)

The biological approach shows how hormones affect the body and influence gender development through brain structure and hormones. Money and Ehardt investigated girls with high prenatal testosterone levels due to the anti-miscarriage drug CAM and compared them to non-affected sisters. They found that the CAM girls had a higher IQ, career aspirations and preferred to play with boys, supporting the influence of testosterone on gendered behaviour. However misleading questions were asked of the mothers eg which is the more tomboyish? and the differences found were only minor. Hines also studied CAM affected children and only found that girls were more boyish when playing rough and tumble games. This suggests that testosterone may not be the only factor and psychological explanations may be needed to complete the picture. Psychological and biosocial theories are less reductionist than biological theories where explanation at the level of genes and hormones is insufficient to explain all aspects of gender development. By taking a more holistic view of the person psychological and biosocial theories can add to the biological explanation of gendered behaviour and understanding of gender development.

Biological explanations are also more deterministic. There is powerful evidence supporting this explanation from studies of boys with underdeveloped testes who were raised as girls but reported that they had always felt "something was wrong" and then they successfully changed gender in puberty. In contrast, in today's society it is increasingly evident that biology is not destiny we can make gender choices that override biology and people with gender dysphoria can successfully change their gender. Explanations that focus on nature are inevitably more deterministic but nature is constantly being modified by experience.

Kohlberg's cognitive theory has been supported by studies of Slaby and Frey who confirmed the sequence of Kohlberg's age related stages in understanding gender but they also found consistency developed earlier. Kuhn found children at 2 yrs showed good knowledge of western sex role stereotypes. Kohlberg believed understanding of gender influenced motivation to learn gender appropriate behaviours. This view is challenged by Halverson who found when 9-18 month babies are presented with gender stereotypical activities on a split screen eg woman baking man changing tyre they looked longer at the same sex images. They also argue that children form in group out group gender schemas when their understanding is very basic and later develop their own gender schema. However gender schema does not explain why boys seem to develop stronger and earlier preference for typical male things before the

Comment [RMH62]: This is a restatement of the explanation not commentary/evaluation.

Comment [RMH63]: Concise outline of the study used to support the bio view.

Comment [RMH64]: This leads the reader nicely into the next study though if the validity of the research is in question a little more elaboration would be creditworthy.

Comment [RMH65]: Use of Hines as a counterpoint and the conclusion drawn is reasonably effective.

Comment [RMH66]: Genuine attempt to USE issues/debates and approaches to weigh up bio v psycho explanation.

Comment [RMH67]: Making a comparison rather than just saying they are deterministic relates to the question requirement. The point has also been supported by evidence though detail of this is limited.

Comment [RMH68]: Succinct information re the findings/conclusion used to evaluate the explanation.

Comment [RMH69]: Effective use of evidence.

development of gender schemas and to explain this Halverson says we need to refer to biological explanations. It seems that both nature and nurture together determine gender development. It is worth noting that there could be culture biases as most of the research has been into gender development in western society.

Overall neither biological or psychological explanations are better they explain different aspects of gender development and together help to explain gender development.

Examiner's comments

The answer is well focused and has genuinely addressed the question requirement to make a reasoned judgement about which approach provides the better explanation of gender development. There is a clear line of argument and evidence to support assertions has been expressed concisely. The candidate includes detail of the evidence that is useful for evaluation but does not waste time including detail that does not provide scope for effective use of evidence.

This answer demonstrates how issues and debates can be used effectively. In the second and third paragraphs reductionism and determinism are used as criteria for comparison of the two approaches and are embedded in a line of argument. Thereby giving this part of the answer coherence that is not achieved when reference to issues and debates is generic and bolted onto the end of an essay as an afterthought.

Marks: AO2/3 = 13 marks

Comment [RMH70]: Taken back to the conclusion of the previous section on biological explanations.

Comment [RMH71]: This is a bolt on. It is not clear whether it is a criticism of all the research or just that relating to psychological explanations. It could have been used more effectively if the candidate had linked it to the psychological explanations and then compared this with the more culturally diverse research into bio explanations more effectively.

Comment [RMH72]: This conclusion would work better and gain more credit if the "aspects" had been highlighted in the earlier in the discussion.

COGNITIVE AND DEVELOPMENT

09 Describe **one** theory of cognitive development. (9 marks)

Piaget's theory of cognitive development centres around the view of the child being a scientist who learns through exploration and discovery. He suggests children develop through a universal and invariant series of 4 stages - sensori-motor, pre-operational, concrete operational and formal operational. The sensori-motor stage develops between 0 and 2 yrs and the child develops object permanence where it can understand that an object continues to exist even when it can't be seen. Between 2 and 4 years the pre-operational stage develops and the child develops the ability to take others perspective. They understand that someone else has a different view to them.

Comment [RMH73]: Sound overview with appropriate use of terminology.

Comment [RMH74]: Could be better explained but key detail of these stages has been selected and presented concisely.

Between 7 and 11 the concrete operational stage develops along with conservation. Conservation allows the child to understand that the same amount of something eg volume or number even when it is moved or changed. During this stage the child also develops seriation where it is able to order objects into particular series eg in terms of height or length.

Finally from 11 years onwards the child develops formal operations and is able to carry out abstract thought.

Piaget suggested that children learn through assimilation and accommodation where they assimilate new information into a schema or where they accommodate and change a current schema to fit in with new information. Also Piaget suggests that a state of disequilibrium is important to cognitive development as it motivates a child to assimilate and accommodate in order to solve the problem and return to a state of disequilibrium.

Comment [RMH75]: Muddle? Slip up.

Examiner's comment

Overall a sound description that includes detail of stages, processes and the concept of universality. It is accurate and reasonably well detailed given the time and marks available. There is a bit of a muddle at the end of the last paragraph but in the context of the rest of the paragraph it appears to be a slip rather than lack of understanding. There is much more detail on Piaget's theory but 'substantial' in the top band refers to that which it is reasonable for a candidate to present in the time available.

Marks: AO1 = 9 marks

- 10 Consider ways in which research into cognitive development has been applied to education. (16 marks)

Research into cognitive development has been applied to education in a variety of ways. Each theory suggests slightly different applications and some theories such as those of Piaget, Bruner and Vygotsky have influenced policy and practices in education.

Comment [RMH76]: Useful scene setting in term of policy and practice – this is eligible as an issue and is developed further later in the essay.

Piaget's theory led to teachers taking a more passive role in the classroom allowing the children to work alone and at their own pace to learn through discovery and exploration. However it has been argued that Piaget's theory itself was reductionist and ignored the role of social interaction in learning and development. For this reason Vygotsky's theory of cognitive development incorporated the role of the social environment with biological maturity. His theory led to a greater amount of mixed ability classes as it explained how children learn with reference to more knowledgeable others and the way in which these experts help

Comment [RMH77]: Focus on application teacher role.

Comment [RMH78]: Is this relevant here or appropriate. However the point about reductionism is not made effectively. The point needs to be elaborated / explained. Not taking the role of social interaction into account does not make the theory reductionist.

individuals develop further. The Vygotsky based idea of MKO ties in with the concept of the child's zone of proximal development with which the child needs help to proceed. Not only has this led to mixed ability classes incorporating those with special needs and the concept of peer tutoring but has also meant teachers have moved away from taking a passive role to working with children in their ZPD. Teachers now have to assess where the child is and make sure that their work is within the ZPD and provide scaffolding to support the child to learn. Scaffolding involves a teacher expert or MKO providing support by questioning or making suggestions to support a child when learning an activity or piece of information. This idea has been supported by evidence from studies of mothers helping their children complete jigsaws of varying difficulty. Where mothers help the child to do a more difficult puzzle but don't do it for them the child soon learns to do it alone.

Comment [RMH79]: Well focused understanding and detail of applications in terms of teacher and student role with some specific examples.

Comment [RMH80]: This is the only bit of research evidence, further evidence might have been creditworthy but the question does not require evidence and there are many alternative ways of "considering the applications ..."

Both Vygotsky's and Bruner's theories combine to develop the widely used of a spiral curriculum. This focuses on the varying ability of children of different ages, explained by Vygotsky's theory and incorporating it into educational systems which repeats topics and tasks in a cycle, gradually building on prior knowledge gained. This method is widely used in schools throughout UK, especially in maths curriculum.

Comment [RMH81]: Competent use of appropriate terminology.

Comment [RMH82]: Relevant application but could have been tied to the theory more explicitly.

Although these theories have led to educational applications one must consider that it has led to ever changing fashions in how children should be taught. Whilst some argue this is a positive thing which benefits children others believe learners should not be used as test subjects for theories, sparking a large ethical debate. In other areas of psychology such as therapies and treatments applications would be tested more rigorously before being introduced. Though overall it is widely believed that change is positive and improves the education system.

Comment [RMH83]: Interesting commentary reflecting good understanding of issues associated with application of research.

One problem is that these applications are derived from theories that are themselves flawed. All three theories are based on research in individualistic western cultures, with Piaget's theory being particularly culturally biased. These theories have been applied mainly in the UK and USA but both have high immigrant populations from non western cultures. It may be that the application of these theories does not help non western learners to learn. It may that in multicultural communities there needs to be a range of different ways of teaching and learning.

Comment [RMH84]: An attempt to use issues and debates that is reasonable though not fully developed.

Examiner's comments

Overall this is a well focused answer. The commentary is appropriately focused on the application to education and has not slipped back into a straight evaluation of research. The candidate has presented a series of reasonably well developed points reflecting breadth and depth of knowledge. Traditional issues and debates have been addressed in a limited way but that of the relationship between policy and practices is addressed most effectively. Competent candidates as in this case can often engage with issues debates and approaches in 'non-typical' but still very effective ways and such responses gain credit. One possible weakness of this answer is the absence of research evidence that evaluates the applications; however candidates have limited time to respond.

Marks: AO2/3 = 15 marks