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Examiners' Report January 2011

GCE Psychology 6PS01 01

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Introduction

We are now well into the new specification and this was the fifth Unit 1 exam paper.

There were some real discriminators on the paper such as Question 13(b) where a surprising number of candidates were unable to write a clear open question. No problem with the closed question. Lots and lots gave a closed question with “Why” added on the end. Some just gave a closed question. Only better candidates could use terms such as “Explain why” at the start appropriately.

The majority of answers to Question 14 chose Craik and Tulving and on the whole, answers were well written. There was some confusion between results and conclusions with better scripts hedging their bets by giving both and picking up full marks. A small percentage wrote about a study that was not on the list (Hofling and Godden and Baddeley were the most common studies). Many only managed to gain 2 marks as the aim and conclusion were very basic. Those that did receive 3 marks tended to earn the extra mark in the conclusion rather than the aim.

Question 16 also gave the better candidates a chance to demonstrate what they had learned from their cognitive practical. Those who did well on this question often made good use of the suggestions contained in the bullet points and those who took these point by point often did the best. A large number of candidates understood the idea of ‘standardisation’ well. The best answers did understand research design flaws and applied these well to their own study with a handful of answers giving no indication at all that a study had been completed, understood and evaluated.

The essay is always a real discriminator and the majority of answers showed good knowledge for AO1 with the three stages of SIT described. However AO2 for many answers were weak, poor use of examples and descriptions of relevant studies. Good answers included additional studies and applied the findings to the Vamps and Howlers example. Limitations of SIT as an explanation of prejudice were often quite weak, for example students would use throw away comments such as “it does not explain individual differences” or “charismatic leadership could explain prejudice” thus lacking in detail.

On the multiple choices nearly all candidates correctly answered Q1 and Q10. However Q11 which dealt with Tulving and Cue dependent theory was only correctly answered by better candidates, demonstrating their depth of knowledge.

For Question 12a the majority of students did Meussand Raaijmakers and described it well. There were some excellent answers showing a real depth of knowledge and level of detail. Some, of course, did describe Hofling’s study gaining no marks. But it seems lessons have been learned from June 2009 here.

Question 13(d) on evaluating surveys was not done as well as expected considering what a common question it is. Social desirability and demand characteristics were often blurred. Many responses focussed too heavily on administrative difficulties - time, cost etc. Responses discussing interpretive weaknesses and sample bias generally gained highest marks. Most students were able to describe two weaknesses of surveys but few were able to gain the full 4 marks by using technical terms appropriately.

Question 15 was the most poorly answered question on the paper. Some lost marks because they used psychological theories or studies in part (a) and then described the issue part (b). Very few acknowledged the answer was supposed to represent an email even though this was clearly stated. Others just couldn’t resist it even if they were then repeating themselves in part (b). Some still don’t realise they had to make it an issue (question or debate) so just described EWT or Flashbulb memory.

Question 12

Part (a) was generally well answered with many candidates gaining the full 5 marks. However, some did have a tendency to write 'all they knew' about the procedure and hence lost their potential for full marks.

Majority of students did Meeus and Raaijmakers and described it well. Some did Slater (again well)

Answers generally were detailed although aim and conclusions were weaker than the procedure. Many students cite the aim and then repeat this in the conclusion. Procedure was often the most comprehensive section; though frequent misreporting of actual procedure used, particularly in difference between control and experimental groups. Results generally well reported, as were conclusions, though these were often too brief to receive full credit.

The best answers given systematically covered main points of the study's aims, subjects, recruiting method, design factors, results and conclusions. At the lower end of the scale, answers were badly organised and confused the study with Milgram's. Of particular note with more successful answers was the understanding of psychological abuse as opposed to physical harm being a feature of today's society.

In part (b) most responses got at least some credit. Responses usually focussed on standardisation/ replicability, ecological validity and ethics. A large number of answers here made generalised references to weaknesses of any research without particular reference to the study being assessed. Other insufficient answers could identify details from the study but not state what the design flaw was as many did not fully understand terms such as 'ecological validity' or 'standardised procedure' and were using them indiscriminately. Few candidates were able to achieve full marks here for these reasons. Again, the best answers approached things systematically. Few candidates extended both the strength and weakness to achieve 2 marks each. Evaluation was often generic - 'the study lacked ecological validity because it was a lab experiment'/'the study was reliable because the controls meant it could be replicated'. More able candidates would give an illustration of a control which facilitated replicability or a feature of the experimental design which meant it lacked ecological validity but these were rare. A large number of candidates gave the fact that the sample size was too small to be generalisable which is not necessarily true.

12 (a) Describe one study of obedience which is from a different country than Milgram's (USA).

(5)

Name of study Meeus and Raaijmakers

Meeus and Raaijmakers (M+R) conducted an experiment to test destructive obedience in the real life setting of a job interview. The study was conducted in the Netherlands. Participants (P's) were asked to interview people for a job and were told that the job required the ability to deal with stress. So, P's were told to make 15 cutting comments ranging from, "your answer to question nine was wrong" (the mildest) to "according to the test results, it would be more appropriate for you to apply for

lower functions" (the harshest). The interviewee was actually a stoge working for M+R, and showed increased signs of anxiety throughout the interview. 92% of P's made all 15 cutting comments. When a variation of this experiment was done, the experimenter was not in the room with the P's. Because of this, obedience levels dropped significantly. M+R concluded that even in a more liberal culture, people were willing to psychologically abuse a stranger in response to an authority figure, and in the real life setting of a job interview.

(b) Outline **one** strength and **one** weakness of the study you described in (a).

(4)

Strength

The study has a high reliability. This is because it was conducted in a lab setting which meant the variables could be controlled, and the procedure was standardised.

Weakness

The study had many ethical issues. Deception was involved and because of this, it was impossible to get informed consent.

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Examiner Comments

This answer gets 7 marks altogether

Part a gets five marks.

One mark for the aim - there is mention of destructive obedience and real life setting (and what that is).

There is enough for the max 2 marks for the procedure so two marks there.

The 92% result is clear (see mark scheme) for one mark.

The control condition result about levels dropping significantly is part of the study and the words 'dropped significantly' are exact from the study (see mark scheme) so one mark for a result here.

If 5 marks had not already been given, there is also a conclusion mark about the more liberal culture and so on (one mark)

Part b gets two marks

One mark for the strength and one mark for the weakness. In both cases they are generic and not elaborated (e.g. strength needs mention of replicability...). So two marks.

Question 13 (a)

The majority of candidates were unable to elaborate in order to achieve both marks here. Others gave far too generic definitions or just simply wrote about surveys being questions you asked people. Better candidates talked about different types of questions / interviews.

(a) What is meant by a survey?

(2)

A survey is a collection of open and closed questions, collecting ~~open and~~ quantitative and qualitative data to allow a researcher to gather information on a certain subject.



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Examiner Comments

This answer gets one mark

The point about open and closed questions gets towards a mark (the mark scheme includes 'questionnaire' - see second marking point) and adding qualitative and quantitative data makes it one mark at that point. Adding about gathering information is like 'getting opinions about a topic' which on its own does not get a mark. So just the one mark.

Question 13 (b)

Too many candidates gave a closed question with 'why' added on the end. Others just gave a closed question. The better answers allowed a free response and usually started the question with 'explain why'.

(b) Write an **open** question you might ask participants in this survey about healthy eating.

(1)

Why do you think children now are eating more junk food?



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Examiner Comments

This answer gets one mark

It is clearly an open question asking why - which does not restrict the respondent - so one mark. And clearly about junk food/healthy eating so no problem there.

Question 13 (c)

Answered well, much better than the open questions. Clearly most students know the difference but are unable to write an open question in exam conditions. Some novel and creative answers given, all creditworthy if they elicited a restricted response.

(c) Write a **closed** question you might ask participants in this survey about healthy eating.

(1)

Do you think you eat alot of junk food?
Yes No



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Examiner Comments

This answer gets one mark

There is a clear intention to restrict the answer to 'yes' or 'no' and this is closed, so one mark.

Question 13 (d)

This question seemed to challenge many candidates, methodological evaluations were weak such as 'surveys are expensive and time consuming' or 'surveys lack generalisability because there are not enough participants'. Few responses lacked sufficient development to be worth two marks each. Candidates who made use of the stimulus material and made reference to the issue of healthy eating often did well as they used this to give illustrative examples of the evaluative points they were making, thus providing extended responses worth two marks. For example, 'people who respond to surveys may not tell the truth as they may wish to appear better than they are (social desirability) e.g. they might lie about how often they eat fruit'.

Also, some answers, again, rolled out generalised statements with no understanding indicated or application to the issue of weaknesses of surveys. Better answers achieving more marks could distinguish between closed and open questions and the implications for data collected.

(d) Outline **two** weaknesses of surveys in general.

(4)

Surveys such as questionnaires can have low response rates which can affect the representativeness of the study. They also often yield mainly quantitative data, which can be very superficial. The validity of surveys is also questionable because participants can easily mask their true opinions to give what they think are politically correct answers. This means they are not totally truthful, so can be less valid.



This answer gets 3 marks

There are more than two weaknesses here.

The first weakness is about a low response rate and affecting representativeness - which gets one mark

The point about quantitative data being superficial is not elaborated enough so does not get a mark.

Then another weakness is about validity and giving politically correct answers, which gets two marks as the answer mentions lack of validity, the reason for that, and being untruthful - two marks here

Question 14

In part (a) responses were almost always either Craik and Tulving or Peterson and Peterson. For the former a few forgot to mention recall while in the latter a few forgot to mention STM. A number of students described divers cue dependency study instead of levels of processing when citing Tulving. Aims on levels of processing rarely gained full credit due to lack of elaboration of semantic/structural/phonetic processing. Aims on Peterson often quite confused about what was actually being tested. Some students would state the aim and then repeat the aim as the conclusion. Good answers used correct terms e.g. trigrams for Peterson and Peterson. A minority unfortunately evaluated Meuss and Raaijmakers from Q12.

In (b) weaker answers repetitively ran through general research study weaknesses with no reference to the study in hand and no indication of understanding. Better answers could identify IVs and DVs and indicate strengths and weaknesses and most answers were able to identify an application to real life and excellent answers could successfully refer to arguments surrounding whether 'deeper processing' is actually being measured at all by the methods used. Most answers to Peterson and Peterson understood the difficulties of applying 'trigrams' to real life but little else in the majority of cases. Issues of reliability and validity of the studies were well written and in many cases these were fully explored with good use of specific examples of controls/setting issues. Application to real life was better addressed by candidates using Craik and Tulving, some managing responses worth two marks for this point. Some candidates just randomly evaluated Meuss and Raaijmakers in this question, despite having outlined the aims and conclusions of an appropriate cognitive study in 14a, as if they had perhaps turned over two pages and thought they were answering an extension of Q12. A small number of candidates wrote about Craik and Tulving in 14a and then evaluated a totally different study (one that is not on the list) in this section.

(a) Outline the aim(s) and conclusion(s) of **one** of these studies.

(3)

Name of study Craik and Tulving

Aim(s)

to test the different levels of processing to see which - Semantic / phonetic / structural - would be the 'deepest'.

Conclusion(s)

Structural is the shallowest form of processing and the quickest to recognize while semantic is the deepest as it looks at the meaning of words, and therefore helps information to stay in your memory.

(b) Evaluate the study you have used in (a).

You might want to consider issues of:

- reliability
- validity
- application to real life.

(5)

Craik and Tulving's (1975) study was a lab experiment where there were a lot of controls. This makes the study reliable as there is less of a chance of an outside condition affecting the results.

It is not, on the other hand, ecologically valid because the participants were in an unfamiliar environment and may have acted differently because of that.

I think despite the fact ^{participants} they were in an unfamiliar place, the application to real life could be good. By this I mean for students who are constantly learning new things, they would need to know more than the ~~look or sound~~ look or sound of a word for them to memorise it, they would need the meaning. This is what Craik and Tulving proved.



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Examiner Comments

This gets 6 marks

Part a gets 3 marks

One mark for the aim - there is not enough for two marks (not as much as the third marking point in the mark scheme)

The conclusion gets 2 marks - see third marking point in the mark scheme - this is a bit different but there is depth in the answer that means there are two marks. One point is about structural being shallow and quicker, the other point is about semantic being deeper because of meaning so information stays longer. There is quite a bit here, so two marks.

Part b gets 3 marks

There is one mark for the first point about lab experiments, controls, there being other factors...there is no mention of replicability but enough elaboration to get the mark. There is one mark for the second point about ecological validity being low as the setting was unfamiliar. There is one mark for the last paragraph - that meaning helps memory - see first marking point (first half of it) on the mark scheme.

Question 15

The vast majority of candidates addressed the question of reliability of EWT as their cognitive key issue and many described this quite well. However, there are still a significant number of candidates who do not pose the key issue as a question, just stating Eye Witness Testimony or Cognitive Interview as their issue. There was also a great deal of theory being used in the description of the issue.

A few students chose to write about other cognitive issues such as the computer analogy and multi-store model of memory or forgetting which did not receive any credit. There were inevitably those who wrote about a social key issue. Few answers could identify an issue and where this was done, it was more in the form of a statement than a question. Answers that did identify the right question were mostly based on EWT with very few scripts choosing another topic at all. Where answers chose another issue, none were done successfully and there was clearly great confusion between what constitutes an issue and what is a theory or a study. The few better answers could indicate research that suggests EWT produces too many 'false' accounts and erroneous convictions.

So many students ignored the "imaginative" bit of the instruction in part (b). Only a few candidates achieved full marks for this reason. Flashbulb memory was the second most popular issue raised but few were able to tackle this well with almost no answers actually defining either what a flashbulb memory is or what the issue with them is. Even those who did fulfil the email brief struggled to get 3 marks using one concept to explain the issue.

15 (a) You will have studied a key issue from the Cognitive Approach.

Describe **one** key issue from the Cognitive Approach.

(4)

How reliable is eye witness testimony?
Many people have been wrongly convicted of crimes on the basis of eye witness testimony suggesting its not particularly reliable. It is used by police and in court to question someone who has seen a crime or incident for them to write a statement. However different people may have slightly different memories of what they saw and recall it very differently. Leading questions have been shown to affect the way people recall an incident so it is not particularly reliable.

(b) Imagine there has been a TV programme about the key issue you have described in (a). You receive an e-mail from your friend about the programme.

Write a short e-mail that you could send to your friend to help explain this key issue using **one** concept (idea, theory or research) from the Cognitive Approach.

(3)

Using the cue dependency theory, ~~etc~~ eye witness testimony may not be reliable as they are not in the same place they were when the incident happened when they had to write the statement, so they would be lacking context cues to give them an accurate recall of what happened. This would mean they could 'forget' parts of what happen because they don't have the right cues to retrieve the information. (Total for Question 15 = 7 marks)



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Examiner Comments

This answer gets 6 marks

Part a gets 4 marks

There is the ID mark at the top and then the point about being wrongly convicted gets a mark. There is an elaboration mark for the point about being used by police and another mark for the last two sentences - if there were 5 marks available these would be achieved.

Part b gets 2 marks

One mark for writing about not being in the same place when they wrote the statement. One mark for lacking context cues because of this. The last point is repetition. Note there would not be three marks in any case as no link to it being an email so max 2 (see mark scheme).

Question 16

Too many candidates tended to describe the problems they had encountered rather than evaluating them.

However the majority were attempting some evaluation even if at times poorly expressed.

A number of students referred to the social practical and so received no marks. Problems with use of opportunity sampling often discussed in relation to generalisability, use of standardised measures in relation to replicability generally well done, though frequent reference to time, temperature, tiredness etc were superfluous. Research design and operationalisation of variables rarely discussed in any detail. Ethics usually just described gaining consent and offering right to withdraw rather than any examination of potential ethical difficulties in study. Better responses referred to use and justification of deception. The best answers did understand research design flaws and applied these well to their own study with a handful of answers giving no indication at all that a study had been completed, understood and evaluated. Candidates who did well on this question often made good use of the suggestions contained in the bullet points and those who took these point by point often did the best.

SECTION C

Answer ALL questions. You are advised to spend approximately 25 minutes on Section C.

16 As part of the course requirements for cognitive psychology you will have conducted a practical using an experiment.

Evaluate your experiment. You may wish to look at:

- your sample
- how you controlled variables
- your research design decisions
- any ethical issues.

(5)

In our experiment we used the ^{Repeated} ~~independent~~ measures design with 20 participants in ~~each~~ the group. therefore 20 participants is a small sample size so therefore our study could not be generalised as they were all sixth form students and doesn't have population validity. Repeated measure design means the participants could have either got practice at the task or satiate both ~~of~~ these would have affected results even though there were no participant variables. Each of the controls took place in a classroom and is the

music was played it was at the same volume
 each time. To stop participants talking through
 out the experiment we brought a teacher in and
 each control had the same time to learn + recall
 the words as we had standardised instructions so
 our experiment had reliability. We did not get
 informed consent as when we got consent they did not
 know what the experiment was about to reduce demand
 characteristics.

(Total for Question 16 = 5 marks)



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Examiner Comments

This answer gets 3 marks

The point about population validity is suitable though it could do with more explaining by reference to the study.

The point about design is also suitable, though rather general, and shows understanding of methodology (remember here that there is the list of four points that are suggested in the question, and if a point is general it may come from candidates following the list, which is fine, but to get more credit the point needs to link to the study itself).

The point about controls...leading to reliability is also creditworthy and is well linked to the study.

So there are three points (though rather general and some description of what was done as well). This is not Level 3 as the answer is not 'thorough', the points are not 'very good' and there is some irrelevance. So bottom of level 2 and 3 marks.

Question 17

A high proportion of students gave accurate descriptions of categorisation, identification and comparison, with better responses also discussing why these processes occur e.g. boost own self-esteem. Weaker answers gave general description of people wanting to be in groups with reference to discrimination/prejudice with no reference to how or why this occurs. Evaluations were generally fairly weak, with some description of minimal group and/or robber's cave studies. Better responses included real world applications - most often football violence or Abu Ghraib, with the best responses including weaknesses of the theory, particularly in terms of individual differences and other factors, e.g. historical, competition for resources as reasons for inter group hostility. Virtually all candidates were able to engage with the source and apply SIT to it. Very good, sound, descriptions of SIT on the whole, the evaluation not as strong. Where Sherif was used, a large number of candidates focused on the competition that is needed for prejudice to occur. Many treated this question as a 'ways of reducing prejudice' question, restricting their time/ability to evaluate the theory as an explanation for prejudice. Almost all candidates made good use of the 'vamps' and the 'howlers' in their description of the three processes of SIT.

***17** After the release of a popular vampire film some teenagers have split into two groups. One group loves vampires ('The Vamps') whilst the other group loves werewolves ('The Howlers').

This situation is causing tension and college staff are concerned about the amount of name-calling and hostility between the groups. This prejudice between 'The Vamps' and 'The Howlers' can be explained by Social Identity Theory.

With reference to the case above, describe and evaluate Social Identity Theory as an explanation of prejudice.

(12)

The Social Identity Theory says that prejudice occurs through the formation of in-groups and out-groups. In-groups are groups of which we are a member and out-groups are all other groups of which we are not a member. These groups are formed and prejudice occurs in a three stage process. The first stage is social categorisation and is when we classify people, including ourselves as part of particular groups. This leads to social identification which is when we identify with our group and adopt the behaviour and values of that group. This then leads to the final stage, social comparison. This is where we compare our group with other groups.

In the case described above, the teenagers have categorised themselves and each other into a group which loves vampires a group which loves werewolves. They have identified with their group and compared themselves with the other group. Tajfel proposed the social identity theory and he says that the formation of 2

groups alone will cause conflict. This is what has happened in this case, 2 groups have been formed and now there is natural conflict between them.

Support for this theory comes from Verkoijen who conducted a survey in which 6,000 Danish teenagers were asked about their sub-cultural affiliations with drugs. He found that any teenagers who identified themselves as part of the hippie or skater groups were most likely to take drugs, and those who identified themselves as religious or nerdy were least likely to take drugs. This shows that they have adopted the behaviour and values of their groups as proposed in the social Identity Theory. More support comes from Poppe and Linseen who conducted a survey in eastern Europe about national stereotypes.

Overall, each country thought that their country was the best. This shows in-groups favouritism. The final piece of support comes Levine et al. who conducted an experiment which involved taking participants to a secluded part of the university

and witnessed a football fan fall and hurt himself. There were 3 conditions; the 1st is where the man was wearing the team colours that the participants supported, the 2nd is where the man was wearing neutral colours and in the final condition, he was wearing rival team colours. Participants were more likely to help if the man was wearing team colours. Evidence against the theory comes from Dobb's and Crane who conducted a minimal group study where the participants had to explain why they had allocated points in the way they had. As soon as they had to explain, in-group favouritism dropped significantly. More evidence against the theory comes from Platow who conducted an experiment which proved that individual discrimination depends on how competitive the person is.

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Examiner Comments

This answer gets 11 marks

Description: This answer is very nicely set out and logically explained using the three parts of the theory. There are not many examples, but the description is clear. The answer does link to the stimulus material towards the end of the first page and brings Tajfel in too when linking to the two groups. So description is sound and Level 4

Evaluation: Then there are studies in support and 'against' (these come from the 'Angles' textbook that goes with the course). The findings of the studies are used to evaluate the theory and there is detail.

With an essay at this level it is important to note why it has still not scored the full 12 marks. Here the studies are not linked in detail to the theory in each case, to show how they explain or do not support the study (e.g. Dobb's and Crane) (though the reader can deduce how the studies link to the theory). So 12 marks are not achieved in this case.

So Level 4 but not top marks - it is clearly a good answer, so 11 marks.

It's pleasing to note that candidates and centres are showing continual improvements for questions with specific requirements and responding well to issues raised on previous examiner reports. Overall candidates appeared to understand the nature of the paper and the areas of the course drawn through the questions. Generally most candidates had a good attempt at all questions, which was very pleasing.

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