

## **OCR Report to Centres**

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**January 2013**

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This report on the examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the examination.

OCR will not enter into any discussion or correspondence in connection with this report.

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## General Certificate of Secondary Education

### Psychology (J611)

#### OCR REPORT TO CENTRES

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## Overview

There were substantial entries for both B541 and B543 as Centres took advantage of the last series of January examinations in this qualification. This included a number of candidates re-sitting, especially on the former unit.

Candidates continue to perform well on questions that assess their knowledge and understanding, particularly on key concepts (including research concepts), theories and studies. Evaluation of research methodology continues to improve and this is evidenced across all three units. If performance is to improve further candidates need to be better prepared for questions that assess their ability to apply their knowledge and understanding. This could be something as straightforward as an application of research into a particular topic area (eg care of children, advertising); this includes interpreting sources on all three units, and applying knowledge of methodology when designing an investigation. Candidates need not only to demonstrate what they have learnt from lessons but also need to be able to use it in a variety of situations as they occur in the examination papers.

Centres may also have noticed that both B541 and B542 included questions where candidates had a choice of theories or studies that can be described and evaluated. Some candidates could have been better prepared for making those choices as there was evidence that a group of candidates started responses to these questions without really thinking through how they were going to finish them and earn further marks.

Across all three units, there was evidence that candidates understood key terms, and that they were prepared and able to use them to good effect. It is encouraging to see fewer common sense responses to questions and more that have clear psychological content.

## B541 Studies and Applications in Psychology 1

Candidates' performance on this unit was broadly in line with previous series'. Once again, it was pleasing to see so many candidates attempting all of the questions on the paper, including the most challenging ones. Examiners noted how well candidates scored on questions that required them to evaluate studies. Evaluation of theories received less credit - whether in the context of one of the essays or in questions only requiring this skill. Where candidates understood what applications are, there were some outstanding responses. However, there is still a number of candidates who do not seem to know what is meant by an application and who, instead, often describe a piece of research. Throughout the paper, candidates demonstrated sound knowledge of psychological terms and often used them to good effect in their own extended responses to questions.

- Q1** The vast majority of candidates scored full marks here. Common errors were to include the input stage (even though it had been given in the question) or to include rehearsal as one of the stages.
- Q2** This was answered well in general. The final statement pertaining to the Terry's findings caught out a number of candidates with many choosing 'a primacy and recency effect' for the delayed recall condition.
- Q3** This question elicited the full range of marks and there were few candidates who managed to get all five parts right. In 3(a), although most candidates earned the mark, a number of candidates gave their own answer rather than what was given in the source. In 3(b), there was a tendency for some candidates to quote too much of the source so that they were also offering answers to other parts of the question. 3(c) demonstrated that candidates were clearly confused between decay and displacement, and between availability and accessibility problems. 3(d) was answered correctly more often than the other parts. 3(e) showed that most (but not all) candidates knew what was meant by a process but many wrong ones were offered.
- Q4** Candidates who understood what the question was asking for often scored two or three marks here. Although candidates could give a good account of deep and shallow processing, a significant number were not explicit about which one leads to better or worse recall. A large number of candidates focused on decay and displacement rather than levels of processing and even some potentially high scoring questions muddled the alternative and core theory eg by making references to LTM and STM as part of the response.
- Q5** This question gave many candidates full marks. The most common error was to confuse avoidant with ambivalent.
- Q6** Most candidates did well on this question with many stating the method used and how the questionnaire was administered. Some candidates struggled to earn the third mark – too many quoted the aim, which essentially was already given in the question. There was also some confusion over the sample with candidates quoting the age group that it was aimed at rather than who replied. There were fewer examples of candidates quoting findings rather than, or as well as procedure, suggesting candidates are better prepared for this line of questioning. A significant number of candidates described Ainsworth's strange situation procedure and, of course, received no credit.

- Q7** The majority of candidates earned two out of the three marks here although the best responses clearly identified a limitation of a feature of the study, explained it and contextualised it by relating it explicitly back to the study. The tendency to lie in questionnaires and the biased nature of the sample were examples of limitations that often earned three marks. Some candidates chose limitations that were difficult to elaborate on and, on occasions, resorted to offering more limitations to compensate. In these circumstances, the Examiner crediting the best one.
- Q8(a)** This question was designed to be a challenging one, but it was pleasing to see a number of candidates rising to that challenge. Most candidates were able to earn at least one of the marks by demonstrating some knowledge of the concepts of deprivation and privation and/or their effects. However, only a minority of candidates earned further marks because only a minority directly addressed the question set. Candidates mostly overlooked the instruction to explain how a psychologist could decide what had happened to Child X and instead tended to make assertions about what had happened – therefore focusing on deprivation or privation rather than both processes.
- Q8(b)** There were some decent responses to this question, with hospitals being the most popular area of application. Candidates who outlined a number of practices were more likely to score full marks than candidates who tried to explain the rationale behind one practice (as explanations tended to be obvious (eg skin-to-skin contact means bonding happens sooner) or were simply wrong (eg if parents can stay with their sick children overnight it prevents deprivation). Common errors were to describe a study (often Ainsworth) rather than an application or to continue to address the Child X.
- Q9** Nearly all candidates earned both marks here, interpreting the source effectively.
- Q10** This question was answered extremely well by most candidates with many three and four mark responses. Candidates clearly know the Bickman study well and can describe it in a way that demonstrates sound understanding.
- Q11** Following on from Q10, another very well answered question with the majority of candidates scoring full marks. It was also pleasing to see a range of limitations covered in candidates' responses.
- Q12** As with previous series, candidates continue to struggle when it comes to evaluating the situational factors as an explanation of obedience with the vast majority offering descriptions of the theory and therefore earning no marks. Those candidates that did evaluate often made it difficult to gain credit because they tried to comment on the positive attributes of the theory. Candidates who essentially adopted the attitude that the theory does not explain obedience well and then outlined a series of criticisms were most likely to earn the three marks. The best responses considered dispositional factors as an alternative explanation as well as questioned the value of the research into situational factors.
- Q13** Prisons and schools were a popular area of application when answering this question. Using these institutions as a starting point, many candidates could give impressive accounts of how different practices and policies are used to ensure obedience. Some candidates limited themselves to three marks by listing practices or policies rather than making an effort to describe them.

- Q14** This question presented few problems for candidates with most of them using 'abnormality' or 'not normal' for their definition. A common error was to define a type of atypical behaviour (most obviously phobic behaviour) rather than giving a more general definition.
- Q15** Most candidates could identify both of the phobias but where candidates earned one mark it was usually for getting social phobia correct. Acrophobia was sometimes confused with other phobias (most notably agoraphobia) or was spelt so poorly that it was not distinguishable enough.
- Q16** This was one of the best-answered questions on the paper, with most candidates scoring both marks.
- Q17** Most candidates could identify a relevant therapy with flooding being the most common one and, indeed, many could go on to offer some detail of their chosen therapy. Candidates need to be careful to show that flooding involves immersing the client in their fear – 'facing their fear' is too generic to convey this. The best answers on flooding did make this clear and then went on to describe the physiological processes involved in the treatment and the outcome with reference to the idea of association. Some candidates made the mistake of using cognitive terminology to describe the outcomes. There was also a significant number of candidates who named one type of therapy and then went on to describe another. A final common error was to try to evaluate the therapy – often at the expense of further description. Candidates should understand that they are not required to evaluate any applications – only to describe or explain them.
- Q18** Candidates who earned marks on this question did cover the range available. The best responses took the Examiner through the stages of classical conditioning with accurate use of terms of clear application to the acquisition of an atypical behaviour – without exception the behaviour being phobias. The response then led on to a series of criticisms often outlining what the behaviourist theory ignores or cannot explain. Weaker responses tended to list key terms without really using them or using them accurately. There were also a lot of answers that used examples of classical conditioning that had little to do with atypical behaviour. A significant number of candidates failed to score any marks on this question and this was often because they mistakenly took behaviourist theory to be the evolutionary theory and so instead described phobias in the context of heritability and survival.
- Q19** Most candidates recognised that each statement was false on this question although fewer did so with 19(b).
- Q20** There were some very good responses to this question where candidates demonstrated sound insight into both the psychoanalytic theory and the source itself. However, too many candidates simply quoted from the source without making any links to the theory itself. Almost as many candidates made the opposite mistake of quoting relevant parts of the theory but not referring back to Theo as an example. Some candidates penalised themselves by being too reticent about Theo's desire for his mother – using words such as 'love' and 'like' to explain his interest in her getting undressed.

**Q21** Most candidates scored at least one mark here with the conclusion of the study being the most likely feature to score a mark. Although many candidates gave clear description of Brenda/David's developing gender, other candidates gave very specific examples rather than an overview of his behaviour. Another error was to outline the findings using vague comments such as 'it worked to begin with' and 'later he didn't feel right' which received no credit. There was still evidence of confusion between sex and gender when describing this study. Candidates should also remember that there is no need to give the background to the study when only the findings are asked for (especially when it was briefly given in the question anyway). They will also only get credit for findings that pertain to gender development – so, for example, David's suicide is not considered relevant in the context of questions like this.

**Q22** Many candidates scored two marks here with the problems of generalising from just one case being by far the most popular limitation offered. Candidates should be aware that, if they are to get credit for ethics, it has to be in relation to the conduct of the researchers not the gender reassignment itself.

**Q23** The vast majority chose to describe and evaluate the biological theory in response to this question. A number of essays were of a high standard, offering a clear and coherent description of the biological processes that occur between conception and birth and relating these to development of gender related behaviours. The very best responses considered the role of evolution alongside this. Evaluation in these very good essays demonstrated both breadth and depth, raising issues such as the rise of androgyny and cultural variations. Weaker responses tended to list biological factors and, indeed, evaluation points to the extent that they were not adequately developed. There was a significant number of essays that exposed candidates' weak understanding of biological processes (eg suggesting gonads developed into ovaries/testes six months after birth, that gonads produce chromosomes, that gender is decided at contraception.).

Candidates that chose to use psychoanalytic theory often did a decent job of describing the theory but did not have the ability to evaluate the theory to the same degree – often just referring back to the biological theory as an alternate. Although it is of course reasonable and feasible for candidates to offer the alternative theory when the essay offers a choice, as this one did, they need to be equipped with a good range of evaluation points too.

A small number of candidates chose the social learning theory for this essay but it seemed as though they had not been formally taught it as part of this topic, and were trying hard to apply it to gender development with little success. As with psychoanalytic theory, there was little evidence that these candidates could evaluate the theory even where they could describe it reasonably well.

There was a significant minority of candidates who defined gender terms and gave examples of how males and females generally differ without actually focusing on why these differences might occur.



## B542 Studies and Applications in Psychology 2

Candidates' performance was broadly in line with previous series' but the relatively low entry for this particular unit made it difficult to identify clear patterns. What was evident is that the vast majority of candidates, once again, made a bold effort to attempt all questions despite some of them only targeting the most able of the entry. Knowledge and understanding of studies was particularly good, as was evaluation of them. Candidates were more variable on their ability to describe and explain applications, and some found it difficult to offer critiques of theories. Overall though, psychological terms and ideas were used effectively and centres should be pleased with the ways in which they are preparing their candidates for this examination.

- Q1** This question caused few problems for candidates. Only some offered a facial expression instead of an example of body language. It was unusual for a candidate to be able to identify an example of body language and then not be able accurately to give the message behind it.
- Q2** In most cases, statements were correctly identified as true or false. The first statement caused more difficulty for candidates than the other two.
- Q3** Those candidates who were able to identify a valid limitation of Yuki et al's study often went on to earn two marks – partly because descriptive statements were back-credited when followed by a clear criticism. However, describing a feature of the study that was problematic was not enough in itself eg 'they used emoticons'. Candidates found it more challenging to earn three marks and those that did often focused on the lack of ecological validity associated with use of emoticons. A common error was for candidates to suggest that the study was culturally biased.
- Q4** The vast majority of candidates were able to place the relevant terms in the correct place in the passage.
- Q5** Most candidates demonstrated good knowledge and understanding of social learning theory, using terms such as role model and vicarious reinforcement with good effect. However, a number of candidates were limited to three marks because they did not contextualise the description by relating it to non-verbal communication. It is worth noting that using the term 'non-verbal communication' was not enough in itself – there needed to be more specific references to terms such as gestures, or even examples eg a child being punished for poking out her tongue.
- Q6** Only a minority of candidates scored both marks here. Those that scored one tended to identify relevant traits associated with the criminal personality but were not explicit enough about the personality type being different from normal. There were many common sense responses that were essentially suggesting it was a set of traits that made people commit crimes.
- Q7** Those candidates who understood this was a question about the measurement of crime often did well with the majority pointing out that not all crimes are reported and supporting this statement with one or more reasons for this. However, a significant number of candidates failed to score marks because they focused instead on the problems of defining crime.
- Q8** Nearly all candidates scored both marks here by correctly interpreting the information in the source. Where candidates scored one mark, they tended not to be able to identify the example of vicarious reinforcement rather than the role model.

- Q9** The most popular responses to this question focused on either cultural bias or gender bias and this tended to earn the candidates both marks in a straightforward way. There were also some good responses focusing on the contamination effect but candidates struggled more where they tried to raise the issue of the reliability of records – not making it clearly relevant to the study.
- Q10** Most candidates successfully identified three facial features associated with criminals. Common errors were to focus on features that would not be genetic eg beards, scars and broken noses.
- Q11** This question elicited the full range of marks and proved to be a good discriminator. Most candidates demonstrated some knowledge of the criticisms of the theory but some did not make good choices – opting for criticisms that were difficult to expand on for a second mark – such as the point that not all criminals show evidence of brain dysfunction. A significant number of candidates made the point that the biological theory ignores the effect of learning or environment but then were not sure how to elaborate on this so that they often ended up just repeating the point albeit using different terms. The best responses had two clearly distinct points that were expanded on through explanation or effective use of evidence/examples.
- Q12** Most candidates scored both marks here although, overall, they found it easier to give a trait associated with extraversion rather than neuroticism. A common error was to assume that neuroticism was introversion.
- Q13** This was one of the most challenging questions on the paper for candidates, and was designed to be. Although a number of candidates showed impressive knowledge of humanistic theory in their answers, they failed to apply it adequately to the source or, in some cases, did not attempt this at all. Where candidates did score a mark it was usually for relating Tina's need to be a 'super-mum' to her ideal self. Some candidates also made a clear link between Tina's husband's conditional affection and lack of unconditional positive regard – however too many were not explicit enough on this. Weaker responses just explained how Tina's situation would lead to low self-esteem but this was already established in both the source and the question itself.
- Q14** This question seemed to challenge a number of candidates. A significant number of candidates did not attempt it or were only able to offer one criticism. Common errors were to suggest that it ignored concepts it does not (eg the individual) or to make statements about the theory rather than criticising it (eg that it believes in free will). Some assertions were also simply wrong (eg that it believes everyone can self-actualise regardless). There were also some good responses however, and these tended to focus in on issues to do with the lack of scientific rigour associated with the theory.
- Q15** This question also elicited the full range of marks but there was a tendency for candidates to do well on it. As with previous series, a common mistake was to omit findings and/or conclusions from the description of the study, which automatically limits the candidate to three out of four marks. In weaker responses candidates were not clear about who was investigated or what they were actually measured on. However, the vast majority demonstrated some knowledge of the study.

- Q16** Most candidates understood the demands of this question with nearly all offering counselling as their chosen area of application – this earned a mark in itself. Thereafter candidates needed to identify the aim or outcome of counselling along with some key features of the process. Not surprisingly, candidates did this with varying degrees of success but it was noted that there were fewer common sense or generic responses compared to previous series' where counselling as featured.
- Q17** There were some very good responses to this question that demonstrated a clear knowledge of the concept of the zone of proximal development. A number of candidates had got the gist or understood one of the features and therefore could earn one of the marks. A common error was for candidates to make reference to potential without relating it back to where a child is at now.
- Q18** Most candidates could identify at least one of the right phrases from the source with the one referring to fixed order being the one they scored on more.
- Q19** A large number of candidates scored full marks on this question with object permanence and conservation being the most common features offered for the stages with gaps on the table. Candidates do need to be careful to use full terms when referring to the stages of cognitive development ie 'formal operational' rather than just 'formal'.
- Q20** Most candidates scored full marks here with the majority focusing on the rigid nature of Piaget's stages and then expanding on this point in some way. However, candidates who suggested that children could somehow skip early stages or follow them in a different order did not get credit. Although relatively rare compared to previous series, some candidates evaluated Piaget's research rather than his theory.
- Q21** There was much variety in the standard of responses. Most candidates knew something about Piaget's research and the vast majority opted to describe (and sometimes evaluate) his experiment into the conservation of number. Some candidates gave clear descriptions of studies but limited their marks by offering no evaluative commentary. Others were limited to middle band marks because of vague or inaccurate content. The best responses detailed Piaget's sample (focusing on different age groups), his procedure and his findings, and then often followed this up with two distinct criticisms of his methodology.
- Q22** This question presented few problems for candidates with nearly all making three correct matches between depth cues and examples.
- Q23** The vast majority of candidates scored two or three marks here, demonstrating sound knowledge of the limitations of the Haber and Levin experiment. Common errors were to offer descriptive comments (eg all of the participants were male) rather than making it evaluative (eg only males were used, it was gender biased). Limitations that focused on the nature of the sample sometimes overlapped so examiners could not double-credit. Candidates who wanted to make points about the artificiality of the set-up, or the subjective nature of 'familiar' objects often did not do this well enough to get credit.
- Q24** Candidates struggled to earn full marks on this question but many earned two or three. Some candidates started with quite specific examples (eg subliminal advertising or use of context) and then found they did not have enough content to describe for the marks available. Candidates who took a broader approach and focused on how a particular product might be advertised tended to be more successful in earning marks.

**Q25** There were some very impressive responses to this question, especially in terms of the evaluation. In these cases, candidates did not just question the role of experience in perception but were very precise about how it could not apply in the example of new born babies perceiving aspects of the world; or in the example of illusions which constantly fool us; or in the example of common perception despite individual experiences. Sometimes description of the constructivist theory suffered because candidates were making relevant statements about the theory but not relating them to each other in a coherent way. Very weak descriptions tended to list key terms with no real understanding and therefore explanation. At the lower end, there was an almost inevitable muddling of concepts associated with constructivist theory and those associated with nativist theory eg top-down and bottom-up processing. In this series, there was also a number of candidates who were limited to a middle band mark of seven because the quality of their written communication was not to a high enough standard.

## B543 Research in Psychology

A significant number of candidates showed a good level of knowledge and understanding of conducting research in psychology.

A very high proportion of candidates attempted all the questions on the paper demonstrating the paper was accessible to almost all candidates. It was pleasing to see a high number of candidates using a good level of psychological terminology in their responses. Candidates are encouraged to pay particular attention to the method requested in section B as candidates are still seen to be designing alternative methods to that requested (for example, observations or correlations when the experimental method has been asked for).

In section A, candidates are encouraged to utilise the source material more effectively. Key features of the source can be used to illustrate responses and to demonstrate a good level of understanding throughout. Application is a key feature of this paper and as such candidates are encouraged to pay particular attention to those questions which demand contextualisation.

In section B, candidates are encouraged to focus on continuity between the questions to avoid muddled or contradictory designs. Candidates are also encouraged to avoid repetition in their responses across questions. Credit for one aspect of a design can only be achieved once.

Candidates need to be able to encompass entire psychological concepts and go beyond just learning a definition of them. For example, in this paper, candidates were able to demonstrate what concepts such as ecological validity and gender bias meant by giving a definition, but very few candidates could explain fully the concepts when asked to apply them to the source material.

Candidates are also encouraged to pay particular attention to the command words in questions and go beyond the mere identification of a concept or evaluative point, when a description, level of interpretation or explanation is required. Likewise, the use of circular definitions should be avoided.

### Section A

- Q1** The majority of candidates scored full marks here, successfully stating that a hypothesis is a prediction of the outcome of a study.
- Q2** Candidate responses ranged on this question. Whilst a number of candidates scored full marks, correctly stating that a case study is an in-depth study of one individual or small group, many responses confused the method by referring to experiments or observations.
- Q3** A well-answered question with almost all candidates identifying the correct definition of unstructured interviews.
- Q4** This was a well-answered question with the majority of candidates matching the correct definition with each sample.
- Q5** Although this was a well-answered question, some candidates either identified an appropriate ethical issue but failed to contextualise to the source or described appropriate evidence without identifying the ethical issue. Some candidates answered in relation to how ethical issues should be applied and made no reference to the source at all. Candidates are encouraged to utilise the source material where applicable.

- Q6 (a)** Overall this was a well-answered question with many candidates correctly identifying the strength of using an interview to collect data. Candidates who failed to achieve marks commonly gave generic strengths of the self-report method without specific reference to the interview technique.
- Q6 (b)** This was a well-answered question with a large proportion of candidates successfully giving a weakness of using an interview to collect data.
- Q7** Whilst many candidates were able to identify qualitative data as being descriptive or words, very few candidates were able to go beyond this simple identification and explain fully why the findings from the source were examples of qualitative data. Candidates are encouraged to use the information in the source to evidence their responses where required.
- Q8** Responses varied greatly on this question. Whilst some candidates showed a good understanding of the concept of ecological validity and used the source material to evidence how the case study was ecologically valid, these were in the minority. Many candidates failed to show understanding of the term and fewer still were able to explain why the identified case study had ecological validity. Candidates who did show an understanding of the term often tried to relate it to the interview situation rather than the hostage situation, as required. This was a common error.
- Q9 (i)** Generally this was a well-answered question.
- Q9. (ii)** Generally this was a well-answered question.
- Q9 (iii)** Few candidates could give one reason why gender bias was a problem for the study in the source. Many candidates referred back to gender bias or repeated answers given in 9(i) or 9(ii).
- Q9 (iv)** Generally this was a well-answered question. Common errors included stating experimenter/experimental bias as an alternative bias found in case studies.
- Q10** Overall this was a well answered question with the majority of candidates achieving full marks.

## **Section B**

- Q11(a)** The majority of candidates could demonstrate their understanding of the nature of a hypothesis by predicting either a difference or no difference. Fewer candidates achieved full marks for failing to correctly identify the independent and dependent variables. Where errors were made, candidates were seen predicting a relationship or correlation between the variables, or giving questions or aims.
- Q11(b) (i)** This was a very well answered question with the majority of candidates identifying an appropriate sample of participants for use in their investigation.
- Q11(b) (ii)** This was a very well answered question with the majority of candidates giving an appropriate reason for their choice of participants in (Q11b(i)). A minority of candidates offered reasons to benefit the participant as opposed to the researcher.
- Q11(c)** Responses to this question varied. Although some candidates were able to identify both conditions of the independent variable and outline how the independent variable would be manipulated, many only referred to one condition and many failed to show how it would be manipulated thus only achieving partial marks.

- Q11(d)** This was one of the lowest achieving questions in section B. Many candidates failed to demonstrate knowledge of controls or offered controls that were inappropriate or not feasible in their investigation.
- Q11(e)** A high number of candidates achieved full marks here by including at least three relevant features and referring to the allocation of participants to the conditions of the independent variable. However, despite there being some very good answers, many candidates failed to show an understanding of the experimental method. Responses referring to conducting a correlation, carrying out covert/overt observations were frequently seen. Candidates need to be careful not to give details of the procedures that have been assessed in previous parts of the questions (ie controls (11(c)), ethical considerations (11(f)) or to how their findings would be analysed (11(g)). Candidates were often seen giving justifications for their procedure or identifying experimental designs that did not reflect the design of their investigation.
- Q11(f)** This was generally a well answered question with many candidates showing good knowledge of a range of ethical issues. Where partial marks were achieved it was due mainly to candidates not going beyond merely identifying an ethical issue. Candidates are encouraged to pay attention to the command words in questions and to elaborate on responses where outline, explain or describe are the command words used.
- Q11(g)** Overall this was a well answered question. Some candidates gave responses that went beyond the demands of the question providing detailed descriptions of the use of descriptive statistics and visual displays of data and how these could be used to draw comparisons in the findings between conditions. Those candidates not achieving full marks tended merely to identify a way of analysing data (stating the use of a bar chart or drawing a comparison between the two conditions). There was frequent use of a scatter-graph and responses focussing on *why* the data would be analysed as opposed to *how*.

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