



## Approaches

A-level Revision Notes AQA(A)

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## Learning Approach: Behaviourism

### Assumptions (AO1)

- All behaviours are learnt from our environment.
- Focus on observable behaviour (behaviour that can be seen).
- Animals and humans learn in the same ways so behaviourists carry out experiments on animals and extrapolate the results to humans.
- Psychology should be scientific and objective therefore behaviourists use mainly laboratory experiments to achieve this.

### Classical conditioning: learning by association (AO1)



**Classical conditioning** is learning through association and was first

demonstrated by **Ivan Pavlov**. Pavlov showed that dogs could be conditioned to salivate at the sound of a bell if that sound was repeatedly presented at the same time that they were given food.

First the dogs were presented with the food, they salivated. The food was the **unconditioned stimulus** and salivation was an **unconditioned** (innate) **response**.

Then **Pavlov** sounded the bell (**neutral stimulus**) before giving the food. After a few **pairings** the dogs salivated when they heard the bell even when no food was given. The bell had become the **conditioned stimulus** and salivation had become the **conditioned**

response.

The dogs had learnt to **associate** the bell with the food and the sound of the bell and salivation was triggered by the sound of the bell.

Before conditioning

**FOOD  
(UCS)**

**SALIVATION  
(UCR)**



**BELL**

**NO RESPONSE**



During conditioning

**BELL +  
FOOD  
(UCS)**

**SALIVATION  
(UCR)**



After conditioning

**BELL  
(CS)**

**SALIVATION  
(CR)**



## Operant conditioning: learning by consequences (AO1)

[Skinner](#) argued that learning is an **active** process. When humans and animals act on and in their environment **consequences** follow these behaviours. If the consequences are pleasant they repeat the behaviour but if the consequences are unpleasant they do not repeat the behaviour.

- **Positive reinforcement:** is receiving a reward.
- **Negative reinforcement:** occurs when performing an action stops something unpleasant happening. For example in one of Skinner's experiment a rat had to press a lever to stop receiving an electric shock.

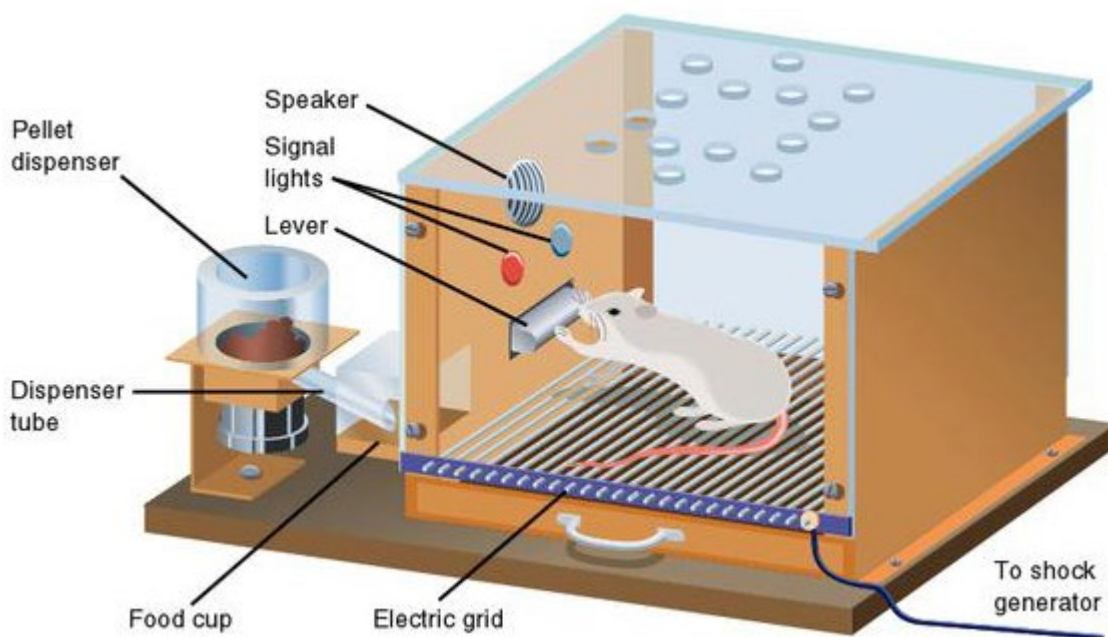
- **Punishment:** this is an unpleasant consequence. For example being grounded for not doing your psychology homework.

## The Skinner Box (1953) (AO1)



A hungry rat was placed in a cage. Every time he activated the lever a food pellet fell in the food dispenser (**positive reinforcement**). The rats quickly learnt to go straight to the lever after a few times of being put in the box

This suggests that positive reinforcement increases the likelihood of the behaviour being repeated.



alt="Skinner Box illustration operant conditioning">

In another experiment, a rat was placed in a cage in which they were subjected to an uncomfortable electrical current (see diagram above) as he moved around the cage the rat hit the lever, this immediately switched off the electrical current (**negative reinforcement**). The rats quickly learnt to go straight to the lever after a few times of being put in the box.

This suggests that negative reinforcement increases the likelihood of the behaviour being repeated.

## Applications AO3

- Behaviourism has increased our understanding of the causes of **phobias** and

attachment.

- It has also given rise to therapies such as [systematic desensitisation](#) and [token economy](#).

## Evaluation AO3

- Behaviourism has experimental support: Pavlov showed that classical conditioning leads to learning by association. Watson and Rayner showed that phobias can be learnt through classical conditioning in the “little Albert” experiment.
- It introduced the scientific methods to psychology. Laboratory experiments were used with high control of extraneous variables. These experiments were replicable and the data obtained was objective (not influenced by an individual’s judgement or opinion) and measurable. This gave psychology more credibility.
- Many of the experiments carried out were done on animals; we are different cognitively and physiologically, humans have different social norms and moral values these mediate the effects of the environment therefore we might behave differently from animals so the laws and principles derived from these experiments might apply more to animals than to humans.
- It has practical applications for example systematic desensitisation based on classical conditioning is used in the treatment of phobias. Classical and operant conditioning have also been used to explain attachment.
- It does not explain important aspects of human behaviour such as memory and problem solving as these are internal mental events which cannot be observed.
- It does not take into account biological factors such as the role of neurotransmitters, for example a low level of serotonin can give rise to depression or high level of dopamine is involved in OCD.
- It sees people as passive in their learning with little conscious thoughts influencing their behaviour; other approaches recognise the importance of mental events in the learning process.
- It neglects the influence of free will as it argues that our behaviour is the result of previous conditioning. Skinner argues that free will is an illusion.

# Learning Approach: Social Learning Theory (AO1)

**Bandura** agreed with the behaviourists that behaviour is learnt through experience however he proposed a different mechanism than conditioning. He argued that we learn through **observation and imitation of others' behaviour**.

This theory focuses not only on the behaviour itself but also on the mental processes involved in learning so it is not a pure behaviourist theory.

Mediational processes are cognitive factors that influence learning and come between stimulus and response. This includes attention, retention, motor reproduction and motivation.

## Stages of the Social Learning Theory (AO1)

- **Attention:** The individual needs to pay attention to the behaviour and its consequences and form a mental representation of the behaviour.
- **Retention:** Storing the observed behaviour in LTM where it can stay for a long period of time. Imitation is not always immediate.
- **Reproduction:** The individual must be able (have the ability and skills) to reproduce the observed behaviour.
- **Motivation:** Individuals must expect to receive the same positive reinforcements (vicarious reinforcement) for imitating the observed behaviour that they have seen the model receiving.

Imitation is more likely to occur if the model (the person who performs the behaviour) is positively reinforced. This is called vicarious reinforcement.

Imitation is also more likely if we identify with the model. We see them as sharing some characteristics with us i.e. similar age, gender, social status as we identify with them.

## The Bobo doll study - Bandura et al. (1961) AO1



**Method:**

It was a [lab experiment](#). Sample: American children, 36 boys and 36 girls aged between 3-6 years old .

- Group 1: 12 girls and 12 boys were shown a model hitting the doll with a hammer and shouting at the doll.
- Group 2: 12 girls and 12 boys were shown a model shown a non-aggressive model.
- Group 3: 12 girls and 12 boys (control group) were not shown a model.

Then the children were taken to a room with some attractive toys but were told not to play with the toys (aggression arousal).

Then the children were taken individually in a room containing a bobo doll, non-aggressive toys like pencils and plastic farm animals and aggressive toys like a hammer and a pistol.

### **Results:**

The children who had observed the aggressive model (group 1) were more aggressive than the children from the other two groups. Group 1 imitated specific aggressive acts that were displayed by the model. Boys imitated more physically aggressive acts than girls. There was no difference in the verbal aggression between boys and girls.

### **Conclusion:**

This supports SLT as it shows that children imitate behaviour of role model even if the behaviour is aggressive.

## **Bandura and Walters (1963) (AO1)**



The bobo doll experiment was repeated, but this time the three groups were exposed to an aggressive model and saw different consequences for the model:

- Group 1: the model was praised
- Group 2: the model was punished (told off)
- Group 3: no consequences for the aggressive behaviour

### **Results:**

When left on their own to play the children in group 1 showed the most aggression followed by group 3. Group 2 was the least aggressive.

### **Conclusion:**

This shows that imitation is more likely to occur when the model is positively reinforced, demonstrating the importance of vicarious reinforcement.

## Applications (AO1)

This theory is used to explain the influence of the media on behaviour. This has been used in court in the case of Jamie Bulger's murder(1990).

The perpetrators, who were themselves children, claimed that they had been influenced by the film Child Play 3. However these children came from a disturbed family where they might have witness real life violence and social deprivation.

## Evaluation AO3

- Social learning theory is supported by research Bandura at al. (1961) and Badura and Walters (1963) however these were laboratory experiments and the task did not reflect the way the participants behave in their normal life.

At this young age parents would guide their understanding of the situation and moderate their behaviour this was not the case in the studies as the children were on their own. The children were aggressive towards a doll which they know does not feel pain and cannot retaliate; their behaviour might be different towards another child.

Furthermore the children were in an unfamiliar environment they might have thought that they were expected to behave like the model (demand characteristics).

The participants were young children, older children and adults might not have imitated the aggressive behaviour as they have more developed moral values.

- The theory does not explain why the boys imitated the physical aggressive behaviour more than the girls. Other factors must be involved such as biological factors like testosterone.
- SLT can explain the difference of behaviour between different cultures as if a behaviour is not displayed it cannot be imitated, this can explain why groups such as the Amish are non-violent.
- SLT can be used to explain the influence of media on aggressive behaviour.
- It is a more complete explanation of human behaviour than conditioning as it takes into



account cognitive factors in learning. However it does not take into account free will and moral values.

## Issues and debates (Behaviourism) AO3

### Free will Vs determinism

Strong determinism of the behavioural approach as all behaviour is learnt from our environment through classical and operant conditioning. We are the sum total of our previous conditioning.

Softer determinism of the social learning approach theory as it recognises an element of choice as to whether we imitate a behaviour or not.

### Nature Vs nurture

Behaviourism is very much on the nurture side of the debate as it argues that our behaviour is learnt from the environment.

The social learning theory is also on the nurture side because it argues that we learn our behaviour from role models in our environment.

The behaviourist approach proposes that apart from a few innate reflexes and the capacity for learning, all complex behaviour is learned from the environment.

### Holism Vs reductionism

The behaviourist approach and social learning are reductionist; they isolate parts of complex behaviours to study.

The behaviourists take the view that all behaviour, no matter how complex, can be broken down into the fundamental processes of conditioning.

### Idiographic Vs nomothetic



It is a nomothetic approach as it views all behaviour governed by the same laws of conditioning.

However, it does account for individual differences and explain them in terms of difference of history of conditioning.

#### Are the research methods used scientific?

The behaviourist approach uses lab. experiments which are highly controlled therefore they are replicable. Furthermore, it measures observable behaviours, therefore no interpretations is required therefore the data is objective.

However the behaviourists use animal experiments as it assumes that humans learn in the same way than animals.

## Cognitive Approach

The cognitive approach is focused on how our mental processes affect our behaviour. It argues that internal mental processes (operations of the mind e.g. perception of memory that mediate between stimulus and response) should be studied scientifically.

**Cognitive psychology** has been influenced by developments in computer science and analogies are often made between how a computer works and how we process information.

Based on this computer analogy, cognitive psychology is interested in how the brain inputs, stores and retrieves information.

This has lead to models which shows information flowing through the cognitive system such as the multi-store model of memory.

## Assumptions (AO1)

- The main assumption of the cognitive approach is that information received from our senses is processed by the brain and that this processing directs how we behave.
- These internal mental processes cannot be observed directly but we can infer what a

person is thinking based on how they act.

## The role of schemas (AO1)

Cognitive processing can often be affected by schemas (a mental framework of beliefs and expectations developed from experience). As you get older, these become more detailed and sophisticated.

A schema is a “**packet of information**” or cognitive framework that helps us **organise and interpret information**. They are based on our previous experience.

Schemas help us to interpret incoming information quickly and effectively, this prevents us from being overwhelmed by the vast amount of information we perceive in our environment.

However it can also lead to **distortion** of this information as we select and interpret environmental stimuli using schemas which might not be relevant. This could be the cause of inaccuracies in areas such as eyewitness testimony. It can also explain some errors we make when perceiving optical illusions.

## The emergence of neuroscience (AO1)

Cognitive neuroscience is the scientific study of the influence of brain structures on mental processes, done through the use of brain scanning techniques such as fMRI.

Neuroscience aims to find out how the brain structures influence the way we process information and map mental cognitive functions to specific areas of the brain. This is done using brain imaging techniques such as fMRI and PET scans.

Examples of brain mapping: Braver et al. (1997) found that when their participants were performing activities involving the central executive while being scanned the prefrontal cortex showed greater activity. This suggests that the central executive is situated in the prefrontal cortex.

## Research methods used by the cognitive approach:(AO1)

**Laboratory experiments:** These are the preferred method of investigation of the cognitive approach i.e. Loftus and Palmer (1974) - [Car Crash Study](#). In these experiments the extraneous variables are tightly controlled so they can be replicated, but they lack ecological

validity as they take place in artificial environments and the tasks are also artificial.

For example, in real life if you were a witness to a car crash you would not be interviewed by a psychologist but by a policeman/woman and you would know that there would be consequences to what you say so you might be more careful about the way you answer the questions. Participants could be influenced by demand characteristics.

**Case studies:** These are used to study rare conditions which provide an insight on the working of some mental processes i.e. Clive Wearing, HM.

Although case studies deal with very small sample so the results cannot be generalised to the wider population as they are influenced by individual characteristics, they allow us to study cases which could not be produced experimentally because of ethical and practical reasons.

**Brain imaging:** fMRI and Pet scans are used to map areas of the brain to cognitive function because the processing of information by centres in the brain to be seen directly. Such processing causes the area of the brain involved to increase metabolism and "light up" on the scan. i.e. Braver et al. (1997).

## Applications (AO3)

- The study of memory has led to the development of cognitive interview which has decreased the inaccuracy of eyewitness memory; this should lead to a decrease of wrongful convictions.
- It also helped us understand the [causes of depression](#) and the approach also proposes a therapy, [cognitive behavioural therapy](#) which has shown to be effective for a range of mental disorders and unlike drugs has no side effects.

## Evaluation (AO3)

- The cognitive approach uses a very scientific method; mainly lab. experiments. These are controlled and replicable so the results are reliable however they lack ecological validity because of the artificiality of the tasks and environment so it might not reflect the way people process information in their everyday life.

For example Baddeley (1966) used lists of words to find out the encoding used by LTM, however these words had no meaning to the participants so the way they used their memory in this task was probably very different than they would have done if the words

had meaning for them. This is a weakness as the theories might not explain how memory really works outside the laboratory.

- The cognitive approach has a wide range of practical applications. For example schemas can be used to explain how eyewitness memories of events can be distorted therefore inaccurate. The study of memory processes such as cue dependent forgetting has lead to a strategy to improve EWT: cognitive interview.
- By highlighting the importance of cognitive processing, the cognitive approach is able to offer an explanation for mental disorders such as depression where Beck argues that it is the negative schemas we hold about the self, the world and the future which lead to depression rather than external events.
- However it does not take into account the genetic factors which seem to be involved in mental disorders such as schizophrenia. Furthermore this approach has lead to cognitive behavioural therapy which is an effective way to deal with depression and unlike drugs has not side-effects.
- The approach is reductionist as it does not take into account emotions and motivation which influence the processing of information and memory. For example according to the Yerkes-Dodson law anxiety can influence our memory.
- However the cognitive approach is less deterministic than the learning approach as although it argues that our thinking is limited by the way we process information it does not deny the influence of moral values and social norms.

## Issues and debates (Cognitive) AO3

### Free will Vs determinism

The position of the approach is unclear as it argues on one hand that we the way we process information is determined by our past experience (schemas).

On the other hand in the therapy derived from the approach (CBT) it argues that we can change the way we think.

### Nature Vs nurture

The cognitive approach takes an interactionist view of the debate as it argues that our behaviour is influenced by learning and experience (nurture), but also by some of our brains' innate capacities as information processors e.g. language acquisition (nature).

### Holism Vs reductionism

The cognitive approach tends to be reductionist as when studying a variable it isolates processes such as memory from other cognitive processes. However, in our normal life we would use many cognitive processes simultaneously, so it lacks validity.

### Idiographic Vs nomothetic

It is nomothetic approach as it focuses on establishing theories on information processing that apply to all people.

### Are the research methods used scientific?

The cognitive approach uses lab. experiments which are highly controlled therefore they are replicable. However, it measures non-observable behaviours; therefore it could be argued that it is not as scientific as the behaviourist approach.

## Biological Approach

### Assumptions (AO1)

The main assumption of the **biological approach** is that our thinking and behaviour are strongly determined by biological factors: structure and functioning of the nervous system. This in turn is influenced by genetic and evolutionary factors.

### Genetic factors (AO1)

The influence of genes: Heredity is the passing of characteristics from one generation to the next via the genes.

Each individual possesses a unique combination of genetic instructions meaning that we differ from each other in terms of personality, intelligence and abilities etc.

Genes code for characteristics such as eye colour but also for the structure of the nervous system and for the functioning of the nervous system i.e. neurochemistry, the amount of neurotransmitters produced and the way they are used.

To determine the involvement of genetic factors we use twin studies. We compare the concordance rate (the presence of the same trait in both members of a pair of twins) of monozygotic twins (MZ twins-same genetic material) to the concordance rate of dizygotic twins (DZ twins- share 50% of their genetic material). For example McGuffin et al. (1996) found 46% concordance for depression in MZ twins compared with 20% DZ twins.

## Genotype and phenotype (AO1)

**Genotype:** is the genetic code that is written in the DNA, i.e., the genetic makeup of an individual (genes present in each of your cells).

**Phenotype:** the physical representation that results from the individual's genotype. For example, the genetic characteristics expressed by an individual (whether they have blue eyes or brown eyes).

A practical example of the difference between genotype and phenotype: phenylketonuria (PKU) PKU is a genetic disorder which affects the ability to break down a substance contained in normal foods (phenylalanine).

If the individual follows a strict diet avoiding this substance his phenotype will be normal intelligence and behaviour however if an individual eats a diet containing the substance then it will accumulate in the brain, this will lead to a different phenotype: severe learning difficulties and behavioural problem.

This shows that the presence of particular genes might lead to different outcome depending on the social environment. This shows that characteristics depend upon an **interaction** between **nature** (the genes) and **nurture** (the environment).

## Evolution (AO1)

Charles Darwin proposed the theory of **natural selection**. He argued that genetically determined characteristics or behaviour that enhances our chances of survival and reproduction will be passed on to the next generation, and become more common in a population whereas traits which do not enhance survival will gradually disappear.

Evolutionary psychology is an approach that attempts to explain mental and psychological traits i.e. as memory and perception as adaptations which increase our chances of survival. An example of behaviour of evolutionary explanation is Bowlby's theory of attachment.

## Applications (AO3)

- The understanding of the role of neurotransmitters has led to the development of drugs which are effective in the treatment of mental disorders such as schizophrenia and depression.

This enables many of the sufferers to lead a fairly normal life.

- However these drugs are not effective for all patients and they can have serious side effects and they do not cure the disorders as if the patients stop taking the drug the symptoms reappear.

## Evaluation (AO3)

- It uses scientific research methods such as EEGs, fMRI and PET scans and twin studies. These produce objective data which can be replicated and peer reviewed.
- It could be argued that twin studies do not separate nature and nurture because twins are raised and live in the same environment and the difference in the concordance rate found between MZ and DZ twins could be due to the fact that MZ twins are treated more similarly by their parents than DZ twins because they look more similar.

Also we usually do not find 100% concordance rate in MZ twins for mental disorders which indicates that environmental and social factors must be involved in the development of these disorders.

- The approach has real-life applications: based on the understanding of the neurotransmitters psychoactive drugs have been developed which help treat mental disorders such as OCD and depression.



This allows people with these mental disorders to live a fairly normal life. However they do not cure the disorders and when patients stop the drugs the symptoms reappear.

These drugs can have very serious side-effects. Additionally it could be argued that the unbalance in neurotransmitters such as low serotonin in depressed individual is the consequence rather than the cause of depression because the brain is a plastic organ which changes with the way we use it so it could be that the depressed thinking causes the low level of serotonin observed.

Furthermore the imbalance in neurotransmitters is usually not directly observed it is deduced from drug trials where patients are given the drugs and seen to improve so we deduce that it was the lack of the neurotransmitters which cause the disorder but this might not be the case.

For example if we cut ourselves and the cut becomes infected it is not the lack of disinfectant which causes the infection it is the presence of germs.

- The biological approach is determinist as it sees our behaviour as caused entirely by biological factors over which we have no control. This encourages people not to take responsibility for their own actions and blame their genetic makeup.
- It is also reductionist as it reduces our behaviour to the outcome of the actions of genes and other biological processes neglecting the effects of childhood and our social and cultural environment.

## Issues and debates (Biological) AO3

### Free will Vs determinism

It is strongly determinist as it views our behaviour as caused entirely by biological factors over which we have no control.

### Nature Vs nurture

The biological approach is firmly on the nature side of the debate; however, it does recognise that our brain is a plastic organ which changes with experience in our social world so it does not entirely deny the influence of nurture.

### Holism Vs reductionism

The biological approach is reductionist as it aims at explaining all behaviour by the action of genetic or biochemical processes. It neglects the influence of factors such as early childhood experiences, conditioning or cognitive processes.

### Idiographic Vs nomothetic

It is nomothetic approach as it focuses on establishing laws and theories about the effects of physiological and biochemical processes that apply to all people.

### Are the research methods used scientific?

The biological approach uses very scientific methods such as scans, and biochemistry. Animals are often used in this approach as the approach assumes that humans are physiologically similar to animals.

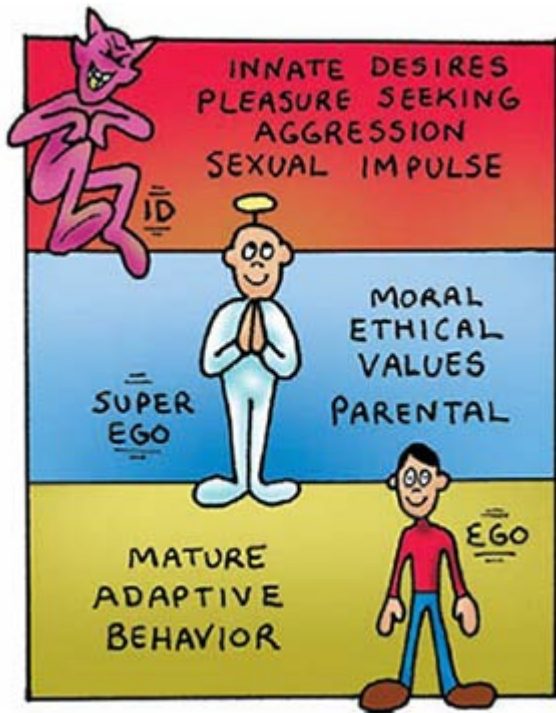
## Psychodynamic Approach

### Assumptions (AO1)

- The main assumption of the psychodynamic approach is that all behaviour can be explained in terms of the **inner conflicts** of the mind.
- Freud highlights the role of the **unconscious mind**, the structure of personality and the influence that **childhood experiences** have on later life.
- Freud believed that the unconscious mind **determines** most of our behaviour and that we are motivated by unconscious emotional drives.

### Tripartite Personality (AO1)

According to Freud our personality is composed of three parts ([tripartite](#)):



- **Id:** it is the biological part (instincts and drives) of the personality. It is present at birth. The Id is motivated by the pleasure principle; it demands instant gratification of its needs.
- **Ego:** develops from 1 - 3 years. It is motivated by the reality principle. It mediates the conflicts between the ID and superego. It uses defence mechanisms to achieve this.
- **Superego:** develops from 3 - 5 years. It is motivated by the morality principle. It punishes the ego with guilt for “wrong doing”.

To be mentally healthy the ego has to be able to balance the demands of the ego and the superego. If the superego is dominant, the individual might develop a neurosis e.g. depression. If the ID is dominant, the individual might develop a psychosis e.g. schizophrenia.

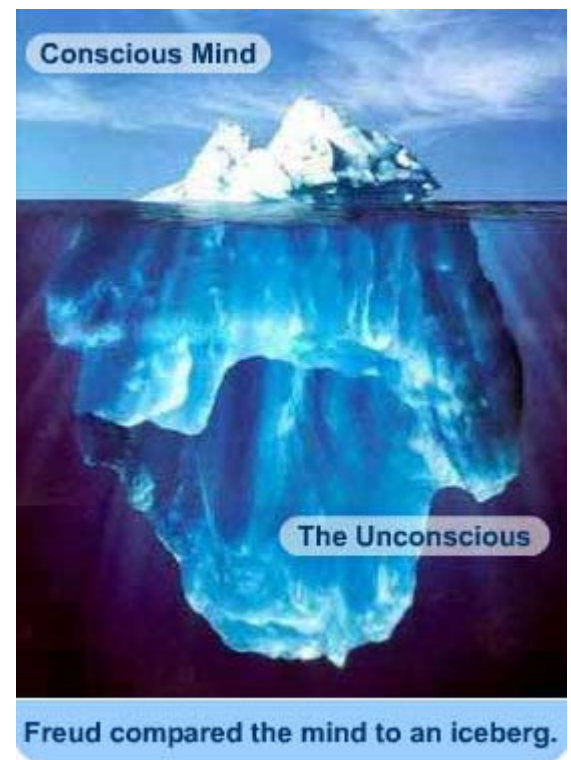
## The Mind (AO1)

The mind is divided in three parts:

- **The conscious:** this is the part we are aware of and can access without any effort. It contains part of the ego.
- **The preconscious:** this a part of the mind that we cannot access without effort. It contains the ego and some of the superego.

- **The unconscious:** this part of the mind cannot be accessed without the help of a trained psychoanalyst. It contains the superego and the Id.

When unconscious conflicts between the Id and the superego cannot be resolved by the ego they create anxiety. To reduce this anxiety we use **defense mechanisms** such as repression.



## Defense Mechanisms (AO1)

- **Repression:** Is used by the ego to keep disturbing memories out of the conscious mind and in the unconscious mind where they cannot be accessed, e.g. sexual or aggressive urges or painful childhood memories.
- **Displacement:** An impulse may be redirected from its original target onto a more acceptable one, e.g. being angry with your father and shouting at your little sister.
- **Denial:** the existence of unpleasant internal or external realities is denied and kept out of conscious awareness, e.g. having lost your job and yet you go to work every day.

## Psychosexual Stages of Development (AO1)

Stage	Source of pleasure	Outcome
Oral (0-1year)	Mouth – sucking, swallowing etc.	If forceful feeding, deprivation or early weaning occur then fixation could lead to oral activities (e.g. smoking), dependency, and aggression.
Anal (1-3 years)	The anus – withholding or expelling faeces.	If toilet training is too harsh or too lax then fixation could lead to obsessiveness, tidiness, meanness; or to untidiness and generosity.

Phallic (3-5 years)	The penis or clitoris – masturbation.	If abnormal family set-up leading to unusual relationship with mother/father then fixation could lead to Vanity, self-obsession, sexual anxiety , inadequacy, inferiority, envy,
Latent (5- puberty)	Sexual drives are repressed.	Fixation does not happen in this stage.
Genital (puberty- death)	The genitals. The adult derives pleasure from masturbation and sexual intercourse.	Fixation at this stage should occur in a mentally healthy adult.

For more information on psychosexual stages [click here](#).

## Applications (AO3)

- The psychodynamic approach has given rise to one of the first “talking cure”, [psychoanalysis](#), on which many psychological therapies are now based. Psychoanalysis is rarely used now in its original form but it is still used in a shorter version in some cases.
- This approach can be used to explain mental disorders such as depression and schizophrenia although these explanations are rarely used by mainstream psychology. One of the very influential concept put forward by Freud is the lasting importance of childhood on later life and development.

## Evaluation (AO3)

- The concepts of Id, ego and superego are very abstract and difficult to test experimentally so evidence is obtained from case studies (Little Hans and Anna O). However, the sample used in these case studies is mainly Austrian so lack population validity.

These case studies used mainly unstructured interviews so yielded qualitative data. The need for interpretation of the material gathered means that it is biased on the part of the researchers as they tend to interpret the data in a way that supports their theory.

Furthermore, the fact that two different researchers can reach completely different interpretations of the same case suggests that the methods lack objectivity.

- The theory is not falsifiable as if people behave in the way predicted by the theory it is viewed as support, if they don't it is argued that they are using defence mechanisms.
- The individual is not seen as responsible for their disorders however as the conflicts which lead to the disorder are unconscious there is nothing they can do about it without an analyst, they are disempowered.
- It cannot explain the biological symptoms observed in some disorders such as enlarged ventricles in schizophrenics.
- It has given rise to one of the first "talking cure", psychoanalysis, on which many psychological therapies are now based. Psychoanalysis is rarely used now in its original form but it is still used in a shorter version in some cases.
- It could be argued that Freud was the first person to highlight the importance of childhood in mental health and this is an idea extensively used today.
- The psychodynamic approach is determinist as it rejects the idea of free will. A person's behaviour is determined by their unconscious motives which are shaped by their biological drives and their early experiences.
- It recognises the influence of social and cultural factors as it proposes that we are driven by innate, biological instincts (nature) but that the way they are expressed is shaped by our social environment (nurture).
- Real world application – Psychoanalysis has been used as a form of literary criticism in literature such as Hamlet where repressed messages are hidden beneath the surface of the text, interpretation allows us to delve into the characters mind – Can be used to explain behaviour outside psychology.

## Issues and debates (Psychodynamic) AO3

### Free will Vs determinism

It is strongly determinist as it views our behaviour as caused entirely by unconscious factors over which we have no control.

### Nature Vs nurture

The psychodynamic approach recognises the influence of social factors as it argues that we are driven by innate biological instincts, represented by the Id (nature), but the ways these instincts are expressed is shaped by our social and cultural environment (nurture).

### Holism Vs reductionism

The psychodynamic approach is determinist as it rejects the idea of free will. A person's behaviour is determined by their unconscious motives which are shaped by their biological drives and their early experiences.

### Idiographic Vs nomothetic

Freud argued that human behaviour is governed by universal processes that apply to everyone e.g. the tripartite structure of the mind (nomothetic) however, he also proposed that the ways in which these processes manifest themselves in the individual is unique (idiographic).

### Are the research methods used scientific?

The concepts proposed by Freud cannot be tested empirically. The theory is not falsifiable as if people behave in the way predicted by the theory it is viewed as support, if they don't it is argued that they are using defence mechanisms.

# Humanistic Psychology

## Assumptions (AO1)



Every person has their own **unique way** of perceiving and understanding the world and that the things they do only make sense in this light. Therefore, the aim of this approach is not objectivity as the other approaches; its aim is to **understand people's subjectivity**.

According to this approach, **people are self-determining**, which means that they have free will they can make choices about the way they think and act. These choices are not determined by biological or other external factors.

## Self-actualisation (AO1)

All people have an innate tendency towards growth and the fulfilment of their potential, they have a desire to become everything that they are capable of – self-actualisation.



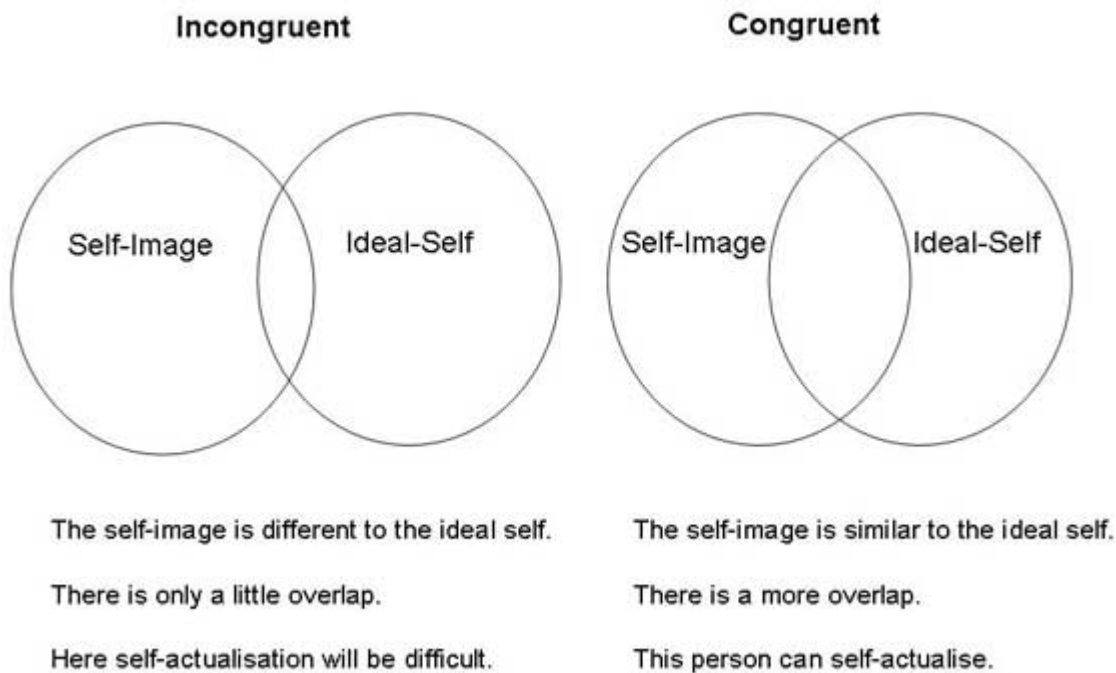
However, according to Maslow, people also have needs which must be met for self-actualisation to be possible. The basic needs e.g. food and water have to be satisfied before the higher.

According to Rogers, people could only self-actualise if they had a positive view of themselves (positive self-regard). This can only happen if they have unconditional positive regard from others – if they feel that they are valued and respected without reservation by those around them (especially their parents when they were children).

However, most people don't perceive the positive regard of others as being unconditional. They tend to think they will only be loved and valued if they meet certain conditions of worth. These conditions of worth create incongruity within the self between the real self

(how the person is) and the ideal self (how they think they should be or want to be).

Self-actualisation is only possible if there is congruence between the way an individual sees themselves and their ideal self (the way they want to be or think they should be).



If there is a large gap between these two concepts, negative feelings of self-worth will arise that will make it impossible for self-actualisation to take place.

## Applications (AO3)

Based on this approach, client-centred therapy aims to increase clients' self-worth and decrease the incongruence between the self-concept and the ideal self.

It is a non-directive therapy in which the client is encouraged to discover their own solutions to their difficulties in an atmosphere that is supportive and non-judgemental and that provides unconditional positive regard.

It focuses on the present rather than dwell on the past unlike psychoanalysis. This therapy is widely used e.g. health, education and industry.

## Evaluation (AO3)

- It has given rise to a new way to look at people's needs, for example Maslow's hierarchy of needs is widely used in health and social work as a framework for assessing clients' needs.

- Client-centred therapy is widely used in health, social work and industry. This therapy has helped many people overcome difficulties they face in life, which is a significant contribution to improving people's quality of life.
- The approach uses non-scientific research methods. As its aim is to understand people's subjectivity, it uses methods that yield qualitative data such as unstructured interviews or participant observations. These are difficult/ impossible to replicate and the interpretation of the data is influenced by researcher bias.
- It proposes a positive view of human nature, however, it could be argued that this might not be very realistic when considering the everyday reality such as domestic violence and genocides.

Furthermore, the approach's focus on meeting our needs and fulfilling our growth potential reflects an individualistic, self-obsessed outlook that is part of the problem faced by our society rather than a solution.

- The approach is holistic as it does not try to break down behaviours in simpler components, e.g. Stimulus and response – Increases validity when compared to other explanations like the behaviourist approach.
- The approach is non-determinist as it recognises free will but its position on this topic is somewhat incoherent as on one hand it argues that people have free will but, on the other hand it argues that our behaviour is determined by the way other people treat us (whether we feel that we are valued and respected without reservation by those around us).
- The approach recognises both the influence of nature and nurture, nurture- the influence of experiences on a person's ways of perceiving and understanding the world, nature- influence of biological drives and needs (Maslow's hierarchy of needs).
- Cultural bias – Personal growth would be associated with individualist cultures as collectivist cultures such as India emphasise community and interdependence – The approach is a product of the cultural context within which it was developed and an emic approach is more appropriate.

## Issues and debates (Humanism) AO3

## Free will Vs determinism

It is the only approach that explicitly states that people have free will, but its position on this topic is somewhat incoherent as on one hand it argues that people have free will but, on the other hand it argues that our behaviour is determined by the way other people treat us (whether we feel that we are valued and respected without reservation by those around us).

## Nature Vs nurture

The approach recognises both the influence of nature and nurture, nurture- the influence of experiences on a person's ways of perceiving and understanding the world, nature- influence of biological drives and needs (Maslow's hierarchy of needs).

## Holism Vs reductionism

The approach is holistic as it does not try to break down behaviours in simpler components.

## Idiographic Vs nomothetic

As this approach views the individual as unique it does not attempt to establish universal laws about the causes of behaviour, it is an idiographic approach.

## Are the research methods used scientific?

As the approach views the individual as unique it does not believe that scientific measurements of their behaviour are appropriate.

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## Further Information

Approaches Revision PowerPoint(1)

Approaches Revision PowerPoint(2)

## About the Author

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## Exam Question Guides

### Revision Resources

How To Write AQA Psychology Essays for 16 Marker Questions

How To Answer AQA Psychology Short Context Questions

How to Answer 'Design a Study' Research Methods Questions

Research Methods Exam Questions and Answers ☐

Research Methods Exam Questions and Answers (48 marks) ☐

Research Methods Exam Questions and Answers (24 marks) ☐

How to Revise for Psychology A-level

## Revision Notes

### Paper 1: Introductory Topics

Social Influence

Memory

Attachment

Psychopathology
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## Paper 2: Psychology in Context

Biopsychology
---------------

Research Methods
------------------

## Paper 3: Issues and Options

Issues & Debates
------------------

Schizophrenia
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Aggression
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Forensic Psychology
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Relationships
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Gender
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## Past Papers

### AS Paper 1

2017 Exam Paper
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2017 Mark Scheme
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2017 Examiner Report
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2016 Exam Paper
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2016 Mark Scheme
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2016 Examiner Report
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## A-Level Paper 1

2017 Exam Paper

2017 Mark Scheme

2017 Examiner Report

# Assessment Objectives

## AO1

### Demonstrate knowledge

(a) demonstrate knowledge and understanding of scientific ideas, processes, techniques and procedures.

(b) show a knowledge and understanding of psychological theories, terminology, concepts, studies and methods.

## AO2

### Application of knowledge

(a) apply knowledge and understanding of scientific ideas, processes, techniques and procedures:

in a theoretical context

in a practical context

when handling qualitative data

when handling quantitative data

This skill area tests knowledge of research design and data analysis, and applying theoretical understanding of psychology to everyday/real-life examples.



### Analyse, interpret and evaluate

(a) analyse, interpret and evaluate scientific information, ideas and evidence, including in relation to issues, to:

make judgements and reach conclusions

develop and refine practical design and procedures.

### Examples of how you can score AO3 marks

Whether or not theories are supported or refuted by valid research evidence.

After describing a theory go on to describe a piece of research evidence saying, 'X's study supports/refutes this theory...' and then describe the research study.

Contextualising how the topic in question relates to broader debates and approaches in Psychology.

For example, would they agree or disagree with a theory or the findings of the study?

Animal Research - This raises the issue of whether it's morally and/or scientifically right to use animals.

The main criterion is that benefits must outweigh costs.

Animal research also raises the issue of extrapolation. Can we generalize from studies on animals to humans as their anatomy & physiology is different from humans?

General criticisms and/or strengths of theories and studies.

E.g. 'Bandura's Bobo Doll studies are laboratory experiments and therefore criticisable on the grounds of lacking ecological validity'.

To gain marks for criticising study's methodologies the criticism must be contextualised: i.e. say why this is a problem in this particular study.

‘Therefore, the violence the children witnessed was on television and was against a doll not a human’.