

The Approaches in Psychology

In Section C of the exam you are required to have detailed knowledge about the approaches.

Milgram

Pillavin

Reicher

Social Approach

Assumptions

- All behaviour occurs in a social context, even when nobody else is physically present.
- A major influence on people's behaviour, thought processes and emotions are other people and the society that they have created
- An individual's behaviour is effected by situational factors.

Strengths of the Social Approach	Weaknesses of the Approach
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ Social influences have been shown to have a often stronger effect than dispositional factors ☑ The approach can provide explanation for a great many phenomenon ☑ The approach is useful in explaining prejudice and discrimination ☑ The approach often adopts scientific methods to conduct research. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☒ Underestimates what people bring to a social situation ☒ Provides only superficial 'snapshots' of behaviour and ignores their development over time. ☒ Studies are often using unrepresentative samples ☒ Often conducted in laboratories, therefore lack ecological validity.

Rosenhan

Thigpen &
Cleckley

Griffith

The Individual Differences Approach

Assumptions

- Behaviour which deviates from the norm is considered abnormal.
- Aims to make generalisations about differences between people
- Focuses on the unique characteristics of the individual

Strength of studying Individuals Differences	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ The approach allows us to understand human behaviour and find causes for psychological disorders. ☑ The approach may help us to find causes for prejudice and discrimination and in turn help to reduce it. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☒ The studies in this field often have small samples due to the rarity of the participants and so may lack generalisability. ☒ The studies may be susceptible to ethical problems such as exploitation of the participants.

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Loftus &
Palmer

Savage-
Rumbaugh

Baron-Cohen

Cognitive Psychology

Assumptions

- Behaviour can largely be explained in terms of how the mind operates
- The mind works in a manner which is similar to a computer; inputting, storing and retrieving data.

Strength of the Cognitive Approach	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The cognitive approach used rigorous scientific methods to investigate behaviour ☑ Has many useful applications ☑ Has contributed to our understanding of human phenomenon and has integrated well with other approaches. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☒ Can be over simplistic, ignores other complexities of human functioning compared to that of a computer. Deterministic! ☒ Unrealistic - and studies often lack ecological validity. ☒ Ignores emotion and freewill in humans.

Sperry

Maguire

Dement

Physiological Approach

Assumption

- Behaviour and experience can be reduced to the functioning of physiological systems.
- All that is psychological is first physiological – that is since the mind appears to reside in the brain , all thoughts, feelings and behaviours ultimately have a physical/biological cause.
- All behaviour has a genetic basis

Strengths of the Physiological Approach	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ The approach is very scientific and is grounded in hard science ☑ It provides substantial evidence for then nature in the nature/nurture debate ☑ Helps us to understand behaviour which would not be possible to test any other way. E.g. dreaming. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☒ Reductionist - the approach explains all behaviour as a reaction between chemical and neurons. The approach ignores the interaction of other elements. ☒ Can not explain how the mind and body interact. ☒ Over simplistic -ignores the influence of the environment and simplifies complex human behaviour.

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Bandura

Samuel

The Developmental Approach

Assumptions

- All behaviour in adulthood is affected by experiences in childhood.
- Developmental changes are a result of inherited factors (nature), which include events that occur as a result of maturation, such as puberty.
- Lifetime experiences (nurture), which include interactions with other people.

Strengths of the developmental approach	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ Allow us to understand the effects of childhood, ☑ The area contributes to our understanding of the nature and nurture debate. ☑ The approach allows us to measure behaviour over time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☒ Due to the nature of the investigation the studies can often be based on qualitative data, which is susceptible to bias. ☒ May focus greatly on childhood and in turn be deterministic ☒ The studies may take a long time to conduct and require greater resources. ☒ May lack generalisability due to samples used and may ignore historical and cultural influences.

Freud

The Psychodynamic Approach

Assumptions

- Human development is a dynamic process (i.e. it is driven or motivated by certain forces)
- Early experience is very important for it shapes personality, relationships.
- Different areas of the mind (ID, EGO, SUPEREGO) are in constant conflict, and understanding these will allow us to understand behaviour
- The mind is split into 3 – the preconscious, unconscious and conscious. Dreams are the royal road to the unconscious and it is the conflicts in the unconscious that manifest into phobias and mental illness.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ The approach allows us to recognise that childhood is a critical period and that unconscious influences can affect behaviour ☑ Adopts the idiographic, using one participant, you gain lots of rich data. ☑ Data is qualitative - meaning a greater degree of understanding and elaboration of human behaviour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☒ No actual empirical evidence, no experiments ☒ Based largely on non-generalisable samples - rich upper middle class, European. ☒ Deterministic - predicts behaviour, assumes all will react and act in the same way. ☒ No way of testing whether the assumptions are true.