DEBATES IN PSYCHOLOGY

INDIVIDUAL & SITUATIONAL EXPLANATIONS
DEFINITIONS

• This is a debate that runs through psychology

• **Individual (dispositional) Explanation**: this explains behaviour according to some feature or characteristic of the person
  
  (eg; personality, genetic inheritance, etc)

• **Situational Explanation**: this explains behaviour according to wider context of the environment
  
  (eg; upbringing, poverty, peer group, etc)
INDIVIDUAL & SITUATIONAL EXPLANATIONS

• **STRENGTHS:**
  • **Usefulness:** discovering which behaviour is individually determined & which is situationally determined, can influence interventions/treatments
  • **Can direct further study:** discovery of complex interactions between individual & situational factors

• **WEAKNESSES:**
  • **Difficult to separate out** effects of a situation & disposition of a participant
  • **Problems with investigation:** lab settings are low in ecological validity whereas natural settings are difficult to control
  • **Explanations may be too simplistic**
### RESEARCH EXAMPLES:

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<th>INDIVIDUAL EXPLANATIONS</th>
<th>SITUATIONAL EXPLANATIONS</th>
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<td><strong>AS CORE STUDIES:</strong></td>
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<td>Genes &amp; schizophrenia</td>
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Rosenhan: diagnosis of insanity or abnormality due to situation of mental hospital.