



General Certificate of Education

Psychology 6181

Specification A

Unit 4 (PYA4)

**Social Psychology, Physiological
Psychology, Cognitive Psychology,
Developmental Psychology and
Comparative Psychology**

Report on the Examination

2007 examination - June series

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PYA4 Social Psychology, Physiological Psychology, Cognitive Psychology, Developmental Psychology and Comparative Psychology

General

As has become the tradition with this paper, the majority of answers were concentrated on a minority of the questions. Questions 2, 3, 5, 10, and 11 were the most popular, with question 15 not far behind.

There was also the usual range of quality, with some exceptional scripts reflecting excellent teaching and learning, while at the lower end there was evidence of failure on the part of centres and candidates to understand the demands of the examination. A particular issue in this sitting was the format of questions 3 and 5. Question 3 required an AO1 focus on studies, yet a substantial minority of candidates started with sometimes excellent reviews of models/explanations with little or no link to studies, and so failed to answer the question. Part (b) of question 5 required candidates to **use** the findings of studies of sleep deprivation, and consider implications for theories of sleep. Many candidates were unable to focus their material in this way.

Candidates cannot expect questions always to appear in the same format. Any examination paper requires careful reading and the particular requirements of any question must be understood. Candidates who understand the material they have learnt should be able to apply to it appropriately. It seems clear that some, however, are unable to shape their material successfully if the question is slightly changed in format, reflecting perhaps an over-reliance on pre-prepared answers and/or a failure to fully understand the material.

Question 1

This was not a very popular question, but produced some excellent answers. Some candidates showed the common confusion over the precise links between the components of the co-variation model and attribution, but overall answers covered a range of relevant approaches, and at the top end relevant studies were used effectively. Reference to errors and biases was credited to the extent that it focused on attributions of causality and was linked to theories.

Question 2

This was one of the most popular questions on the paper, with answers varying from the excellent to the extremely weak. The matching hypothesis and the evolutionary approach figured prominently in part (a), with the filter model also mentioned. Answers showed a range of detail and understanding. Matching was often confused with physical attraction, while material on, for instance, proximity was credited to the extent that it focused on interpersonal attraction.

Evaluation of the matching hypothesis generally consisted of experimental support from the studies of Walster and Murstein. A significant minority of candidates failed to appreciate that the first Walster study does not support the matching hypothesis. Evaluation of evolutionary approaches tended to be more general, with issues such as cross-cultural differences and understudied relationships used effectively. Less common was the use of alternative explanations to evaluate the target.

Question 3

This was another very popular question, with potentially a wide range of accessible material available from studies of altruism and bystander behaviour. Unfortunately, as mentioned above, a significant number of candidates did not read the question and instead of studies produced reviews of models, especially the decision models of bystander behaviour. Where there was no reference to studies these answers received no credit.

At the top end candidates were able to describe a variety of studies on empathy/altruism and bystander behaviour. Methodological evaluation was popular, but more effective was the use of findings to support or contradict explanations and models.

Question 4

This was not a popular question but on the whole was answered very well, with answers referring to a range of invasive and non-invasive methods. Unusually, AO2 material was often more impressive than the technical description of methods, with reference to technical limitations and ethical issues particularly popular.

Question 5

This was another of the most popular questions. Part (a) was usually done well, with most candidates able to distinguish restoration from ecological/evolutionary approaches. At the top end answers referred accurately to the ideas of Oswald and Horne on the relative roles of SWS and REM.

Part (b) was more problematic. Most candidates could describe studies of sleep deprivation, although many did not move beyond Randy Gardner and Peter Tripp. However many could not link findings effectively to theories of sleep and instead provided methodological evaluation of the studies themselves. Better answers did provide linkage, and also compared the relative support of such findings for restoration and ecological accounts. Many candidates were clearly unprepared for a question in this format, and could not shape their material appropriately.

Question 6

There were very few answers to this question but the quality was on the whole reasonable, with candidates able to refer to limbic models, the role of the hypothalamus, and more recent work on circuits between the amygdala and frontal cortex. Evaluation was usually in the form of research support.

Question 7

This question was rarely answered. The Bruce & Young model provided the basis of virtually all answers, which varied in the accuracy and depth of detail of the description. Studies on normal and neuropsychological patients were used as evaluation in better answers, with occasional reference to more recent scanning experiments on face recognition.

Question 8

Although this question was not popular, there were some excellent answers to it, with candidates able to describe accurately classical and more recent studies of the development of perceptual abilities in infants and neonates. This is also an area where methodological evaluation is highly relevant and was often used effectively, as were references to the nature-

nurture debate. A few candidates took the opportunity to present their prepared cognitive development essay as an answer to this question. These only received credit to the extent that the material presented was made explicitly relevant to perceptual development.

Question 9

Chomsky and Skinner provided the basis for answers to this question, with substantial variation in the degree of accuracy and detail provided. Better answers gave clear accounts of the two explanations. Evaluation tended to be more general with little reference to empirical studies. Relevant commentary included issues such as how well explanations handled characteristics such as the rate and stages of language acquisition and the existence of linguistic universals.

Question 10

This popular question provided a range of answers. At the top end candidates provided accurate and detailed accounts of the work of eg Kohlberg, Gilligan, Eisenberg and Piaget, with some very effective evaluation in terms of empirical support, methodological limitations, gender bias etc. Weaker answers contained confused and inaccurate accounts of theories, or introduced irrelevant material. A minority of candidates presented their general Freud essay here, where it usually received few marks unless there was some explicit focus on moral understanding. Others confused moral and cognitive development and answered in terms of Piaget's and/or Vygotsky's theories of cognitive development.

Question 11

Candidates often have a range of potentially relevant material available for this question. This includes the work of Erikson, Coleman, Marcia and even Freud and SLT approaches. The major issue is how well this material is shaped to the specific question asked. Much of Freud's work was on early childhood and the relevance to identity in adolescence has to be made explicit for marks to be earned. SLT may have a role to play, but again the outline and discussion has to be focused on the question for much credit to be given; the Bobo dolls are not automatically relevant. Another key discriminator was the use of psychologically-informed material rather than frequent reference to anecdotal observations/personal experience.

Question 12

Although this was not a particularly popular question, there were some very good answers. These referred to stage models of the bereavement/grieving process and evaluated them in general terms of individual and cultural variations/differences. Cross-cultural studies were sometimes used very effectively, especially their relationship to particular belief systems. There was rarely discussion of specific effects on individuals, beyond male/female differences in the potential impact of bereavement; these included illness outcomes and differences in coping strategies.

Question 13

Although this was a very straightforward question, there were clear centre effects in candidate responses. Some provided clear and detailed accounts of classical and operant conditioning, extending basic outlines into generalisation, discrimination, backwards conditioning, schedules of reinforcement etc. There is still widespread confusion between punishment and negative reinforcement. Weaker answers provided only confused and muddled accounts.

Part (b) was clearly more demanding, and many candidates failed to move beyond the basic paradigms of Pavlov and Skinner and/or anecdote. Better answers referred to taste aversion learning, spatial cognition, imitation etc and considered the role of conditioning in animal learning in this general context.

Question 14

Again there were marked centre effects in answers to this question. Although there are a large number of accessible studies in the areas of navigation and foraging, the key discriminator was the extent to which findings were discussed in the context of memory. Better answers focused particularly on spatial memory and foraging and were able to use research findings extremely effectively to evaluate the role of memory. Weaker answers tended to be general accounts of navigation or foraging with little or no explicit focus on the role of memory.

Question 15

This was an extremely open-ended question with a wide range of potentially relevant material. The task for the candidate was to select and organise material around the specific issue of brain size and intelligence. However a number of candidates were distracted into focusing on the evolution of one or the other rather than their relationship. At the top end, however, there were some excellent reviews of brain/body weight issues, encephalisation quotients and neural complexity, all related to brain size and intelligence. Material on the role of, for example, social complexity in the evolution of intelligence was credited insofar as it was explicitly linked to the evolution of larger brains as well.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.