

PSYCHOLOGY

Paper 9773/01
Key Studies and Theories

Key messages

- Evaluation should always be explicitly linked to the material (theories and/or research) being evaluated rather than a broad discussion of generic evaluation issued.
- **Section B** answers can bring in material from background, key study, further research and explore more sections of the specification.

General comments

Overall the standard of answers was extremely good and candidates have clearly been very well prepared for this examination. The level of detail provided was impressive and candidates were able to use a wide range of evaluation issues in **Section B** although candidates who selected evaluation issues appropriate to the whole topic area produced better quality answers than those who simply offered generic issues or evaluated only the key study.

No rubric errors were identified this year and candidates are clearly familiar with the format of the question paper.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

- 1 The majority of candidates answered this question very well with full marks being awarded to candidates who gave advantage / disadvantage in the context of the study. Those candidates who gave generic advantages / disadvantages were awarded 1 mark out of a possible 2 for each part of the question.
- 2 This question was answered very well by some candidates who were able to explain how the eyes test was a way of testing theory of mind. However some candidates simply gave a definition of theory of mind and did not attempt to explain how the eyes test investigated this.
- 3 This was very well answered with a range of answers being offered. Both specific experimental answers and wider historical / political answers were accepted.
- 4 Good answers to this question with candidates displaying a detailed knowledge of the recruitment process.

- 5 Most candidates were able to explain the concept of diffusion of responsibility although some answers were slightly confused. However answers to part b were more varied. The study does not provide evidence for the diffusion of responsibility and the question is asking candidates to suggest reasons for this. Some candidates simply gave results here with no attempt to suggest a reason why this research does not provide evidence for diffusion of responsibility.
- 6 A range of excellent answers offered here with candidates demonstrating an excellent understanding of the ethical issues raised by this study.
- 7 Candidates offered good answers to this question with a range of problems being discussed, most commonly the role of the father in this study; although a range of other answers demonstrated good understanding of this study.
- 8 Generally good although some answers were so very brief that they were only awarded 1 mark.
- 9 Some answers were a little basic; because it was just one adolescent female is not a limitation in itself – the limitation is that the results cannot be generalised further than this one adolescent female.
- 10 Good. Most candidates were able to offer two clear findings.
- 11 Good, the preference for facial symmetry was well understood and explained by all candidates.
- 12 Good. Candidates have clearly been very well prepared for this study and can explain the aims very well indeed.

Section B

This was a slightly amended format for **Section B** where the questions now focus on a general area allowing candidates to bring in material from background, key study, further research and explore more areas of the specification. It is crucial that candidates understand that they are expected to do more than simply describe and then evaluate the key study. This will not be enough to achieve full marks.

Most candidates chose **Question 14** on body dysmorphic disorder although a small minority did choose **Question 13** on cognitive development.

- 13 Part **(a)** was generally well done although candidates who only described one study were not able to achieve full marks. Part **(b)** was more varied. The stronger answers evaluated the area of cognitive development rather than simply offering evaluation issues applied to a single study (for example, simply saying that the sample is too small) For part **(c)** candidates offered some good suggestions but rarely achieved full marks as they tended to lack information as to why the research would extend our understanding of body dysmorphic disorder, which is clearly asked for in the question and has been raised in previous examiner's reports.

- 14** As with **Question 13**, candidates tended to answer part a very well. Part **(b)** answers which evaluated the general area were awarded more marks than those answers which simply evaluated one study. Part **(c)** answers tended to score a little lower with this section providing good discrimination. Centres are reminded to examine the mark scheme for this section which explicitly requires an 'explanation of how this would extend our understanding'. Candidates have a tendency to suggest an alternative with little attention paid to the second part of the question.

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Paper 9773/02

Methods, Issues and Applications

General Comments

Overall, most candidates seemed well prepared for this paper and were able to demonstrate a good knowledge and application of psychological methods and issues.

Better candidates demonstrated both depth and breadth of knowledge. They selected research carefully and developed convincing arguments when debating or evaluating. Weaker candidates often offered superficial responses that lacked both detail and the application/contextualisation that is required for higher marks.

Question 2 proved to be the key differentiator in this paper. Those candidates who had a good grasp of the psychodynamic approach excelled at this question. However, some others seemed unprepared and either confused the psychodynamic approach with other approaches or offered vague responses that made reference to Freud but did not fully address the question.

As with previous sessions, candidates did not utilise their knowledge from other parts of the specification or the 'explore more' section and limited their choice of research to the content of the fifteen key studies. Candidates are again reminded that given the synoptic nature of this paper all relevant research and/or theory is creditworthy.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

- (a) This question was well answered. The majority of candidates achieved full marks by correctly identifying two findings and supporting these with evidence from the given table.
- (b) This question was a good differentiator. The most successful candidates displayed excellent knowledge of the key study by Hazan and Shaver and their suggested improvements demonstrated good understanding of psychological methodology. Weaker candidates provided short descriptions of the sample that often had insufficient detail. Most common characteristics identified included that 'the sample was collected from a newspaper' and that 'the participants were volunteers'. Equally, weaker candidates did not always provide fully explained answers when suggesting ways to improve the sample. Some made reference to increasing participants' age range or selecting a larger sample but these suggestions did not clearly demonstrate how this would improve the study beyond the general statement about making the sample more representative. When improvements were suggested in relation to the sample these often lacked detail and were not fully contextualised in relation to the study. Some candidates suggested improvements to the sampling method so received no credit.
- (c) Most candidates were able to debate the use of quantitative data by providing appropriate strengths and weaknesses. More able candidates described apposite research and linked this well to the debate. Although most candidates chose research from the area of attachment that made use of quantitative data, examples of psychological research can come from any area as long as they are applied well when answering the question. For example, some candidates described research that made use of qualitative data and showed how the use of this data would have extended our understanding when investigating attachment. As per previous sessions, candidates chose research from the fifteen key studies and very few made use of evidence from other parts of the specification. Candidates are again reminded that given the synoptic nature of this paper, examples can come from any area of the specification and not only the fifteen key studies.

Question 2

- (a) There was a variation in response. Some candidates had very good knowledge of the psychodynamic approach and provided detailed assumptions. The assumptions were usually supported by evidence from the key study by Freud. Others had no knowledge of the psychodynamic approach and offered vague and/or incorrect responses.
- (b) This question was answered well. Almost all candidates were able to apply the behaviourist approach when explaining tantrums although those who failed to answer **Question 2(a)** correctly struggled here as well. More able candidates excelled in this question and offered insightful answers that clearly demonstrated psychological imagination and the ability to apply psychology to everyday life.
- (c) Candidates found this question challenging. A number of candidates had limited knowledge of the psychodynamic approach and as a result were unable to suggest any benefits of the approach. For the first time a small number of candidates did not answer the question at all or answered the question incorrectly and did not achieve any marks.

Others misread the question and offered disadvantages of the psychodynamic approach instead of benefits. When benefits were offered these tended to be quite general and not always specifically applied to the psychodynamic perspective. Use of evidence was often sparse and usually related to the key study by Freud.

Question 3

- (a) This question was answered well by the majority of candidates. Most commonly cited research included the key studies by Zimbardo and Milgram. Many candidates also made reference to the dispositional hypothesis, social roles and social identity theory.

Very few candidates utilised research or theories from other parts of the syllabus, limiting themselves to the content of the 15 key studies. Although all scenarios lend themselves to this content, candidates should be reminded again that given the synoptic nature of this paper all relevant research and/or theory is creditworthy.

Candidates are again reminded that in this section they are only required to describe research and theories, not link these to the scenario – as this is a requirement of part **(b)**.

- (b) This question was answered very well. The majority of candidates were able to apply the theories/studies described in part **(a)** to explain the events described in the scenario. Some candidates produced outstanding answers that showed clear insight and excellent understanding throughout.

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Paper 9773/03 Key Applications

Key Messages

- It is noted once again that candidates tend to choose the Key Study question in **Section B** rather than the alternative broader question. Extended answers to questions asking for a description of a key study (**Section B**, part **(a)**) should focus on that study. There is no need for candidates to provide background material or additional studies in such answers. Candidates are not penalised for including such information but should be advised that this is unnecessary.
- Evaluation (particularly **Section B**, part **(b)**) should always be explicitly linked to the material (theories and/or research) being evaluated rather than a broad discussion of generic evaluation issues.

General Comments

The overall standard of scripts was once again very good and centres are to be congratulated on the performance of their candidates.

There were not enough responses for the sport, abnormal or health options to draw general conclusions on performance in these areas.

No rubric errors were noted.

Comments on specific questions

Psychology and Abnormality

Question 1

Candidates demonstrated an impressive knowledge of schizophrenia and examiners were particularly impressed with those candidates who made reference to the very recent changes in diagnostic manuals.

Question 2

Candidates answered this question very well indeed and showed an excellent understanding of the strengths and limitations.

Question 3

Well answered (by a small number of candidates)

Question 4

This was the more popular **Section B** question and was answered very well by candidates who showed an impressive ability to evaluate this study.

Question 5

Answers were well designed and well explained showing a strong grasp of research methods. A range of well selected evidence was offered by most candidates for part **(b)**.

Psychology and Crime

Question 6

Candidates had a good understanding of the WHAT to WHY to WHO model and could explain this in detail. A range of weaknesses were offered and candidates showed a very good understanding of the holism debate in relation to this study.

Question 7

Candidates gave good descriptions of the Enhanced Thinking Skills programme and explained the theoretical basis of this programme well. They also showed impressive knowledge of the research in suggesting why this programme had not been effective.

Question 8

This was answered by a number of candidates who impressed the examiners with the range of their answers. Candidates were able to describe a range of explanations and to offer focussed evaluation.

Question 9

Candidates who selected this question showed a detailed knowledge of this study and the evaluation issues raised. As with other questions, where evaluation is focussed on the study / area, candidates achieve more marks than where the evaluation is generic.

Question 10

A range of answers offered here with the stronger answers demonstrating an impressive knowledge of research methods. Weaker answers tended to lack detail of conditions, controls etc. although most candidates designed appropriate studies and offered suitable evidence to support this.

Psychology and Environment

Question 11

Most candidates had a good knowledge of these studies and were able to give three differences. They also showed a good understanding of the questions used and the strengths and weaknesses of asking this type of question.

Question 12

Excellent understanding of stage theories and the alternatives were offered by most candidates. Good knowledge and discussion of issues raised by the quote in part **(c)**.

Question 13

This was slightly less popular than **Question 14** but was answered very well. Candidates are clearly being prepared well to offer well selected and carefully considered evaluation of whole topic areas rather than simply generic evaluation of studies.

Question 14

This was the more popular question and candidates impressed with both their knowledge of the topic area and their ability to evaluate.

Question 15

Candidates offered a range of interesting studies here and showed a clear understanding of the appropriate research methods. These suggestions were backed up well with appropriate evidence.

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Paper 9773/04 Personal Investigation

General Comments

The quality of coursework produced was excellent with the majority of candidates achieving high marks. A wide range of topics was selected from various parts of the syllabus.

Most reports stayed within the recommended word limit. When the word limit was not adhered to, it was because either the introductions and/or the discussions were too long or candidates investigated more than one hypothesis. Candidates are reminded that both the introduction and discussion sections require concise description of material. Equally, candidates are advised to avoid investigating more than one hypothesis since this often leads to complicated results that are often not presented adequately.

Most investigations adhered to the ethical guidelines and there was clear evidence that participants were treated ethically throughout the investigations. In a few cases signed consent forms were included that breached participant confidentiality.

All Centres within tolerance and the majority provided helpful annotations allowing the Moderator to understand the rationale of Centres when awarding marks.

Comments on individual parts of the report

Abstract

The majority of abstracts were concise and clear, including all necessary elements.

Introduction

Most introductions were excellent and included a range of relevant research. The research was well organised and in most cases the rationale followed clearly from the review. In a few cases introductions were overly long. As a result, these introductions did not meet the criteria for 'concisely described' and failed to reach the top band.

Hypotheses

In most cases both the alternative and null hypotheses were clear, concise and included all relevant aspects. The dependent variable was not always fully measurable. In some cases, candidates presented and commented on the results of more than one hypothesis but omitted to state all hypotheses in this section. This produced both inconsistencies in their overall report but also often compromised the word limit of the investigations.

Method: Design

The majority of candidates correctly identified the independent and dependent variables in their investigations, although the dependent variable was not always fully operationalised. As with previous examination sessions, although the experimental designs were almost always correctly identified, they were not always fully justified. Candidates are reminded that they are required to demonstrate full understanding of methodological terms and concepts in order to access the top band in this section. Explanations need to be detailed for understanding to be fully evident.

In almost all cases, candidates correctly identified two extraneous variables and attempted to show how these would be controlled. In many cases, details of extraneous variables were presented in the appendices of the report. Although this is acceptable, candidates are encouraged to include this information in their main report.

Method: Participants and Apparatus

The characteristics of the target population were correctly identified to include geographical location. The sample was almost always selected using an appropriate method but this was not always fully justified. Full participant details such as number of participants, age range and background were clearly stated.

The list of apparatus used was detailed and included evidence in the appendices. Candidates are reminded that the absence of materials can deem the investigation non-replicable and compromise the marks awarded both in this section and the following section.

Method: Procedure

Procedures were generally detailed and allowed full replication. There was always clear and full evidence that participants have been treated ethically and it was pleasing to see that all Centres submitted all Personal Investigation titles to Cambridge for approval before work was commenced. This ensured that the Personal Investigation complied with the syllabus regulations. In a few cases candidates included participant consent forms in the appendices of their report. These forms often contained names of participants and as a result confidentiality was compromised.

Candidates did not always make reference to the controls employed, or the way participants were allocated in the conditions of the experiment. As a result, they did not reach the top band.

Method: Data Analysis

This section was generally answered well, although some candidates did not justify the inferential statistical test with full reference to the data collected.

To achieve full marks in this section candidates will need to provide justifications for all three required elements, i.e. choice of descriptive statistics, choice of visual displays and choice of inferential statistics.

Results

There was variability in responses. Most candidates used inferential and descriptive statistics correctly and provided all their calculations in the appendices. Some candidates used statistical packages to analyse the results. This is acceptable, but candidates often forgot to include this in their references.

Visual displays were not always fully labelled and headings were vague. Candidates are reminded that headings making reference to conditions A and B are not acceptable unless a key is available that clearly outlines what these conditions are.

Visual displays need to be directly relevant to the hypothesis. Often candidates included visual displays that were not explicitly linked to their aim and hypothesis. These neither added to the overall report nor showed understanding.

Discussion

The quality of discussions was very high. They almost always demonstrated understanding, insight and a thorough knowledge of methodology.

The results were explained thoroughly and were clearly related to the introduction. The quality of background research presented has inevitably affected this section. Candidates are required to comment on whether the findings from their investigation are comparable to previous research findings and explain any differences. Candidates often find it difficult to do so if the findings of their background research are not presented in the introduction.

Evaluation of methodology was thorough and balanced; depth of argument reflected a high standard of analysis.

Suggestions for improvements and further research were better than previous sessions but once more candidates are reminded that generic statements such as 'increasing the sample size' or 'replicating the study in a different culture' cannot gain much credit unless they are explicitly related to the aim of the study. Suggestions for improvement need to be detailed and show exactly how they will be implemented. Equally, suggestions for further research need to be presented as a testable hypothesis and include a clear rationale to show how this suggestion will further extend our understanding of the research area.

Some discussions were overly long. Candidates are reminded that to score higher marks here they are required to present information concisely.

Conduct, Presentation, References and Appendices

Most reports stayed within the recommended word limit.

Communication skills were excellent and the standard referencing format was followed. Appropriate appendices were always included.

As with previous examinations, Centres are reminded that candidates are required to include all references in alphabetical order, not just a bibliography. The source of their statistical test or the computer program used needs also to be referenced.