

# Assignment brief

## Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria 2018-19

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Sample number: 1

Unit Title: Psychology – PK1/3/AA/11G

### Overview of assessment task

Psychology involves many different ways (perspectives) of looking at and explaining everyday situations such as why people behave aggressively, engage in addictive behaviours, are prejudiced and discriminate against others, suffer mental health problems, engage in criminal behaviours etc.

Your task is to write an essay which explains how two different perspectives view any given situation and critically discuss the limitations of the perspectives.

Select from any two of the following perspectives: Psychoanalytical, Physiological (Biological), Cognitive, Behaviourist or Social approach and apply the principles to one of the everyday situations outlined above.

Ensure that throughout your work, psychological terminology is used appropriately. The essay should be structured and include an introduction, different paragraphs and a conclusion.

### Learning outcomes and assessment criteria

Learning Outcomes	Assessment Criteria
2. Understand difference psychological perspectives	2.1. Explain two psychological perspectives of a given situation 2.2. Critically discuss the limitations of psychological perspectives
4. Understand terminology used in psychology	4.1. Apply psychological terminology appropriately

# Grading Descriptors and Components 2018-19

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GD 1: Understanding of the subject

Merit	Distinction
<p>The student, student's work or performance:</p> <p>c. demonstrates <b>very good</b> understanding of the different perspectives or approaches associated with the area of study</p>	<p>The student, student's work or performance:</p> <p>c. demonstrates <b>excellent</b> understanding of the different perspectives or approaches associated with the area of study</p>

GD 2: Application of knowledge

Merit	Distinction
<p>The student, student's work or performance:</p> <p>a. makes use of relevant</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ideas</li> <li>• perspectives</li> </ul> <p>with <b>either</b></p> <p>b. breadth or depth that goes beyond the minimum required to Pass</p>	<p>The student, student's work or performance:</p> <p>a. makes use of relevant</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ideas</li> <li>• perspectives</li> </ul> <p>with <b>both</b></p> <p>b. breadth and depth</p>

GD 7: Quality

Merit	Distinction
<p>The student, student's work or performance:</p> <p>c. taken as a whole, demonstrates a <b>very good</b> response to the demands of the brief/assignment</p>	<p>The student, student's work or performance:</p> <p>c. taken as a whole, demonstrates an <b>excellent</b> response to the demands of the brief/assignment</p>

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Consider Psychological perspectives of a given situation

This essay will consider two varying psychological perspectives. The Physiological perspective (also known as the Biological perspective), which is the concept that all behaviours and traits are hereditary, and as such predetermined even before birth, as well as the Behaviourist perspective, that idea that nurture (upbringing) is entirely to do with how a person will be as an adult, following the ideas of classical conditioning (learning by association) and operative conditioning (the influence of decisions and behaviour through positive or negative reinforcement). This essay will analyse how these two psychological perspectives would consider the situation of sexual orientation and the limitations of the perspectives.

The first perspective is the Physiological perspective. The base foundation of this is the idea that traits, behaviours and identity are genetically pre-determined, and that it is purely nature, not nurture, that decides the orientations and morals of people. Many professionals have given their own perspectives on the Physiological approach, such as Lombroso who stated that there were physical differences between criminals and non-criminals. Another such approach was by William Sheldon, who believed that people could be classed and their personality and choices could be decided by their body type. Cara Flanagan (2016) mentions Genes (Chromosomes) and Genotype are key features of the physiological approach. (Flanagan, 2016, P.16). A Physiological approach toward sexual orientation would approach the matter of sexual orientation in an entirely scientific and objective way. By trying to identify specific parts of the human body such as the brain or glands that excrete hormones it can identify the part of the body to blame and try to solve the dysfunctions responsible for sexual orientation, followed by explaining their findings and sharing it with their peers to verify the results.

Richard Gross (2014) considers Simon LeVay, a neuroscientist that researched whether homosexuality is genetically determined. LeVay discovers that “Chromosome region Xq28 contains a gene that influences male sexual orientation”. (Gross, 2014, p. 215). Dean Hamer (1993). highlights that markers on chromosome Xq28 was at least somewhat genetically influenced in regards to sexual orientation. (Hamer, 1993, p. 321). This evidence supports the Physiological thesis that a male’s sexual orientation is genetically pre-determined due to a variance in the structure of the DNA in the Xq28 chromosome.

The limitations of the Physiological approach itself is that it only acknowledges the physical variance in people, their passed down genetics and the structure and functionality of their hormonal glands. Gross states it fails to acknowledge any outside interference such as the influence of family such as parents and guardians, as well as the environmental factors of political climate, religious beliefs, and generally public opinion within the overall perspective of the physiological approach. (Gross, 2014, p. 60) This can be applied to sexual orientation. Another issue of the Physiological approach is that the information it may gather is usually within controlled conditions, and as such it may reduce ecological validity of the information, alongside this, ethical complications arise with the problem that they

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cannot choose groups that their samples belong to, which will affect the outcome of results at least marginally, and that because of this samples what they do acquire that are of use are small and hard to find, potentially making the information redundant due to it being very marginal. Finally looking at a final critique of the Physiological perspective, it can be too simplistic of an outcome to fully explain complex human behaviours and beliefs, and as such it can never give a full picture of the situation inside a person. Hill states that weaknesses to the physiological approach as reductionist and overly simplistic, as well as stating that the approach does not adequately explain how the mind and body interact. (Hill, 2001, p.20)

The second perspective which explains sexual orientation is the Behaviourist perspective, the idea that how people are brought up, both passively and directly, is the main cause of how a person will be as an adult. Following the ideas of classical conditioning, the idea of learning by association such as through negative and positive reinforcement using neutral stimuli, conditioned stimuli as well as unconditioned and conditioned responses, and operative conditioning, which covers the idea that the environment conditions people into a specific way. In Simpler terms, one is taught to associate a stimulus with a response (For example, a dog salivating to the sound of a bell).

Behaviourism is entirely objective unlike the works by Sigmund Freud, in which Freud was subjective, in that this work could not be backed up with scientific evidence. Two notable Behaviourists are psychologist Burrhus Frederic Skinner (1904-1990), a psychologist who followed the operant branch of behaviourism, and Ivan Pavlov (1849-1936) who followed the classical branch. Grahame Hill (2001) states that John Watson, an American psychologist, believed that nurture was entirely responsible for who a person would be seen as an adult, and disregarded different stages unlike Freud, stating that conscience cannot be studied reliably and that people can only be studied through measuring their behaviour. One key assumption of behaviourism is that when people are born their mind is 'tabula rasa' (a blank state) and that humans are no different than animals, and as such all behaviour is learned. (Hill, 2011 p. 17) Behaviourism led to treatments such as systematic desensitisation, and aversion therapy, and these would be considered after considered the environmental or reinforcement responsible for the deviance on sexual orientation.

Before 27<sup>th</sup> July 1967 it was illegal to be homosexual in Britain and was punishable by up to 10 years in prison, the BBC (2017) published the story of Robert and Peter, two gay men that grew up in the 1960s. Peter underwent aversion therapy for the sake of his family to try and 'cure' his homosexuality. Roger was a psychiatric nurse who assisted in the aversion therapy, in which he was also homosexual. (BBC, 2017). This is evidence to show that Behaviourism can certainly be used to interpret the situation of sexual orientation, and that Behaviourists would apply aversion therapy after checking the environmental and taught conscience responsible of the human blank state to be altered in terms of sexual orientation.

Criticisms of the Behaviourist approach are that it ignores thinking, meaning free will is not considered when this approach is used. Tony Malim (1998) states that

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individuals are passive and at the mercy of their environments, and also cannot consider the notion of free will also. Alongside this Malim states that encased lab tests are different to those results taken in nature, and as such some validity to them is lost. (Malim, 1998, p.24). Hill mentions that behaviourism focuses on acquiring all virtually all behaviour via conditioning (Hill, 2001, p.27), which is turn is a clinical focus yielding unreliable results in comparison to nature as well as ignoring the full picture of the human body.

In conclusion, the Physiological approach considers entirely physical attributes, focusing heavily on genetics and hormones. The Physiological approach focuses on abnormalities within the human body and the physical state, ignoring environment, upbringing, free will, while also acquiring little evidence of questionable validity before making conclusions. The Physiological approach would look at sexual orientation as being caused by chromosome variance in the person's genes, and only within the person itself, ignoring upbringing. The Behaviourist approach considers purely upbringing, environmental influences, positive and negative reinforcement. The Behaviourist approach neglects to acknowledge any generically pre-determined causes, free will, and fails to acknowledge the complexity of humans, as well as collecting its data through only one method, thus disregarding other vital information because of this. The Behaviourist would look at sexual orientation, find out environmental factors and upbringing responsible and offer aversion therapy or positive and negative reinforcement to treat a potentially unwanted sexual orientation, ignoring innate sexual orientation caused by genetics.

## Bibliography

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