

ASSESSMENT REPORT 2020

BHP315116 - PSYCHOLOGY

It is recommended this report be read in conjunction with previous examination reports for BHP315116 and the 2020 examination paper, available on the TASC website.

General Comments

Again this year in all sections of the examination, the more successful candidates were thoroughly prepared to be able to demonstrate a thorough knowledge and understanding of the topics, perspectives, concepts examined, analysing and evaluating stimulus materials, providing relevant human research / empirical evidence as well as reference to classic studies. There was a discernible difference in the length and/or quality of responses from students who had prepared thoroughly for this section of the exam. Candidates must be prepared to go beyond the research given in the stimuli. In general, definitions for concepts could be improved.

Candidates should also remember the questions may address any facet of the syllabus as outlined on the TASC document.

More formulaic prepared responses were used by some candidates with a disregard of question specifics. It is important for candidates to read the exam paper carefully and answer what is asked of them; namely to refer to the stimuli when answering the question, be sure to use correct examples, theories, theorists and supporting evidence. Stimuli were designed to act as a springboard for further discussion regarding concepts referred to and were not meant to be the prime focus of the question.

Legibility of handwriting was of real concern. Candidates must realise that if the examiner cannot read what they have written, the examiner cannot assess the logic and details provided and give adequate reward for effort.

Ethical concerns are still occurring with the Investigation Project and candidate names, school / colleges are still appearing on some reports, contravening confidentiality. These must be removed (redacted) prior to submission.

SECTION A - INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES

General Comments

Many responses were structured well. However, some responses were very formulaic. This led to simple strategies for theory based analysis, but at times did not lead itself to engaging responses which utilised the stimulus and relevant research well.

In stronger responses evaluative strategies were executed well, although candidates are reminded to evaluate the overall question. Some based their evaluation wholly on each theory without referencing the 'big picture'.

Critical evaluation of explanations for both genetic and environmental factors that impact the development within an individual were often relegated to some evaluation of general theories.

Question 1 – Gender

Stronger candidates were able to debate the nature/nurture argument – with relevant theories and appropriate supporting evidences. The question allowed stronger candidates to demonstrate their knowledge of the topic, and integrate the concepts, stimulus items and evidence to provide a logical flow.

Criterion 1

Most definitions were accurate and concise with effective clear definitions of gender identity and sex identity used in most responses.

- There were some inaccuracies between defining gender role and gender stereotype.
- The Biological Perspective overall was explained well. Effective use of brain difference information with both good use of stimulus material and relevant studies was presented.
- Solid responses were able to present biological differences in terms of hormones and brain differences, and go on to discuss social learning theories. Good responses could include three well explained environmental theories.

Criterion 7

- For empirical evidence historical studies are sound when used well and placed into perspective; candidates need to be mindful of over-using some very old research and theories. E.g. Freud; Evolutionary theory. Care needs to be taken describing old case studies – the unusual and the controversial were often highly descriptive rather than dealing with the facts. E.g. David Reimer and the John Money research.
- Animal studies can be used to support perspectives, but candidates need to be mindful not to only rely upon this; where possible the human connection needs to be made.
- With the use of Bandura's research always ensure that more than just a repetition of the general aggression experiment is discussed; it is assumed in a gender response, candidates will focus upon the concept of models specific to gender (same-sex models).
- There was good use made of the stimulus material.

Question 2 - Intelligence

Criterion 1

Answers were predictably sound on this question with the majority of candidates offering well-crafted and solidly rehearsed responses on and around heredity and environment, with select paragraphs on twin studies, adoption studies, enrichment studies and interactionist models, albeit not directly answering the question regarding 'development' of intelligence. Stronger responses showed a solid understanding of the influence that the environment and genetics has on intelligence, and how these two interact.

Candidates managed nativist accounts satisfactorily, though struggled to use correlations to evaluate strengths/limitations and failed to draw theoretical points of intersection with the environmental perspective. The

interactionist perspective was not handled well, with most defaulting to a very superficial account of reaction range, that offered little beyond content in Stimulus 2.

Stronger responses were able to use Stimulus 1 and other theories to help discuss the difficulty with defining intelligence as well as spend sufficient time analysing and evaluating the influence of genetics and the environment on intelligence. Of the intelligence theories, Sternberg's account was the least well handled with only a few attempting to articulate how 'balance' eventuates, nor attempted criticism of Sternberg's imprecise conceptual explanations. Gardner's renditioning was handled by most candidates through a re-writing of content in Stimulus 1, with no evaluation.

Stronger responses provided some critical analysis of Multiple Intelligences Theory in Stimulus 1 and used short quotes to explain key aspects of reaction range from Stimulus 2. Some candidates simply repeated the intelligences listed in Stimulus 1 or only mentioned the stimuli, e.g. 'the eight intelligences are seen in Stimulus 1'. Stronger responses integrated additional terms and concepts to the key terms in 'part a' of the question, such as heredity, deprivation, and enrichment.

Candidates need to understand how and when to use the various terms 'heredity', 'hereditary' and 'heritability'. Some appropriately used Turkheimer's (2003) findings to explain that heritability can vary across groups and explained what might cause these differences. There were few candidates who were able to accurately define heritability.

Criterion 7

Empirical evidence was used broadly across discussion of both biological and environmental influences on intelligence, with most candidates being able to refer to at least one study for each. Stronger responses linked multiple studies and were able to show how they supported either side of the debate through thorough evaluation. Candidates who achieved well on this criterion were able to clearly refer to the stimuli, identifying key components and integrating them into their discussion.

Most candidates were able to make use of Stimulus 1, with stronger candidates evaluating Gardner's theory and compare it to other theories of intelligence. Stimulus 2 proved to be more difficult, with many candidates providing a basic description of reaction range and then struggling to show a thorough understanding of what the stimulus was expressing.

Stronger responses explained what about the environment influenced intelligence, and how the evidence demonstrates this. These responses identified the relevant findings of the empirical evidence (e.g. ".86 correlations of Bouchard and McGue's monozygotic twins reared together as compared to dizygotic twins reared together .60 correlations") and explained what this suggests about the influences on intelligence. The strongest responses demonstrated understandings of the nuances in the findings. E.g. some aspects of Bouchard and McGue's findings indicate genetic influences, whereas others indicate environmental influences. Similarly, identifying that some adoption studies highlight environmental influences whereas others indicate the genetic influences on intelligence.

Question 3 – Personality

Candidates would have benefited from doing more than merely summarising the theories of personality without directly answering the question posed; which was to link these theories to the debate over the influence of genetics and environment in the development of personality formation.

Criterion 1

Answers were predictably sound on this question with the majority offering well-crafted and solidly rehearsed responses on and around heredity and environment and personality, albeit not directly answering the question regarding 'development' of personality.

It is clear that this question appeals to many who approach this as a template response, with many outlining content, theory, and concepts in the same manner, with set paragraphing for each perspective (e.g. twin findings, Allport, Maslow, Bandura, Costa and McCrae, Jung/Freud, Maslow, Rogers) usually in the same ordering. What is encouraged here, is that some effort is taken to clarify the points of theoretical differentiation of these explanations, establishing, essentially, theoretical pros and cons for each approach and any aspects of commonality. Definitionally, most candidates coped well with *personality* and *trait theory*, but faltered in their attempts to accurately explain *heritability*.

Criterion 7

Stronger responses addressed the requisite needs of the question, analysing and evaluating each through alignment/departures from the genetic or environmental frameworks. In structuring argument from this grounding, candidates drew from each stimulus excerpt, though many favoured Stimulus 2 at the expense or omission of the more complex Stimulus 1. Even in these answers, though, throw away statements such as 'as shown in Stimulus 2' with no extended commentary, nor critical unpacking of information in the stimuli, continue to appear in answers. Candidates are reminded that the stimulus content needs some attention beyond a summary paraphrase or cursory mention that does little to showcase competencies on criteria.

Additional evidence through named and explained studies was required, whereas candidates provided responses with concentration being on theorists and perspectives. Linking these theories to the debate over the influence of genetics and environment in personality formation was necessary.

SECTION B PSYCHOBIOLOGICAL PROCESSES

Question 4 – Visual Perception

Overall, there were strong responses from most candidates for this question. Gregory's (Perceptual Interference Theory), Gibson's (Theory of Direct Perception) together with Neisser's theory were adequately analyzed and supported. Most candidates were able to incorporate Neisser's perceptual cycle/Analysis by synthesis. Stronger candidates were able to use this in critically evaluating Top-down and Bottom-up processes.

Criterion 2

Stronger responses explained how various perceptual principles and concepts fit within theories of perception. This resulted in clearly structured responses that flowed convincingly and covered the dot points. Weaker responses dealt with the required concepts in isolation of the theories.

Many candidates were able to point out the limitations of theories of perception. However, some relied too heavily on the 'hollow-mask' and infant studies examples to do this. Additionally, some candidates appeared a bit confused as to how this empirical evidence pointed to a potential critique of the theories.

The majority of the candidates were able to cite the various concepts in the stimuli to support their arguments.

Criterion 7

Candidates often cited supporting evidence in isolation from a perception theory.

Most candidates were able to incorporate Gestalt Principles, Depth Cues and Visual Illusions (ambiguous figures) into their response. Stronger responses provided a range of empirical evidence to support application of these ideas to the given stimuli. Similarly, in their explanation of Perceptual Set.

Strong responses were able to relate to Gibson's and Gregory's theories in relation to the stimuli in the question. Weaker responses omitted any reference to a theory of perception and referred solely to stimulus as empirical evidence to address all aspects of the question.

Question 5 – Consciousness

Generally, this question was answered well, although many candidates struggled to cover the breadth of what the question required. The question was relatively demanding as the topics identified in part (a) were substantial in their own right and were not easily integrated. Part (b) was, in itself, a question which required knowledge of significant content.

Overall, it became clear that some candidates had rehearsed essays which were designed to focus on the theories of sleep, perhaps at the expense of other content.

Criterion 2

Strong responses to part (a) were provided by those candidates who defined and discussed the differences between Normal Waking and Altered States of Consciousness. Most candidates defined consciousness, NWC and ASC, but stronger candidates also named and defined other important concepts, such as sleep and dreaming and structured their responses in a logical well organised manner.

Sleep was acknowledged as naturally occurring and stronger responses were written by candidates who comprehensively discussed the stages of sleep and added further key features for each stage including brainwave patterns. Some chose to incorporate methods used to establish levels of alertness into this discussion whilst others dealt with these separately. Weaker responses simply rephrased the stimulus material.

Stronger responses on the effects and impact of sleep deprivation referred to total and to partial sleep deprivation referencing physiological and psychological effects and supported this with empirical evidence. The majority of candidates who discussed sleep deprivation only discussed complete sleep deprivation, using Randy Gardner or DJ Peter Tripp, or, only discussed partial sleep deprivation. Stronger candidates covered both.

Many candidates were well prepared for part (b) of the question and were able to discuss at least 3 theories of dreams and provide some analysis with strengths and limitations.

Criterion 7

While many candidates were well prepared with empirical evidence, this was often lacking in weaker responses. A few candidates seemed ill prepared to discuss dreaming theories; but discussed the theories about why we sleep in its wake or only used the information provided in Stimulus 2. Lack of evaluation was an issue. Many candidates relied heavily on the exam stimuli and brought very little new information to their responses.

Stimulus 1 provided much information on the stages of sleep. Weaker responses simply rephrased the stimulus content whereas stronger responses added further key features of each stage of sleep including brainwave patterns.

Stronger responses included empirical evidence and could link theories to the physiological and problem-solving reasons mentioned in stimulus 2. Stronger responses identified that stimulus 2 provided a springboard into physiological theories of dreaming as well as Cartwright's theory on problem solving. Weaker responses paraphrased the information on Cartwright or limited their discussion to Freud.

SECTION C – REMEMBERING

Overall, this section was answered well, with candidates able to describe and often analyse a number of theories (or models) and respond to the questions by drawing on two or more concepts and drawing links to the stimulus items.

Question 6 – Memory

Criterion 4

Most responses to this question succeeding in addressing its basic intent. Most started with a definition of memory and proceeded to explain the processes of encoding, storage and retrieval of information, and the role of rehearsal in this thus dealing with the first two concepts in part (a) of the question. Most candidates explained at least two different models of memory, in varying degrees of detail. Many explained more models in less detail rather than fewer models in more detail.

Most candidates used the theories for structure and added links to stimulus items and concepts throughout their response.

Most candidates explained the required terms (encoding, rehearsal and long-term memory) and referred to Stimulus 2 to discuss rehearsal. Weaker responses only discussed maintenance rehearsal, as explained in the stimulus, but did not discuss elaborative rehearsal. Stronger responses provided a detailed explanation of both, and the implications of each type on retention of material in memory.

Most candidates used Stimulus 1 to discuss long-term memory quite thoroughly. Those who chose to answer parts (a) and (b) of the question together generally integrated their discussion of LTM with an explanation of the Atkinson-Shiffrin MSM of memory.

The vast majority of candidates discussed the Atkinson-Shiffrin MSM of memory, and either Baddeley & Hitch's WMM or Craik and Lockhart's LOP model, or all three. Semantic Network Theory and/or Spreading Activation Theory were also mentioned. There were a number of strong responses which thoroughly evaluated and compared these models, providing evidence for them as well. Weaker responses described the models in a basic overview only, with minimal

or no evaluation of them. This was an area where polarisation of strong and weak responses was apparent. Candidates are reminded that they should at least attempt to note the strengths and limitations of the theories they discuss, and possibly compare them for similarities/differences.

Criterion 7

Weaker responses did not provide any empirical evidence beyond what was offered in the stimuli and inferred from their mention of theories. Stronger responses referenced multiple studies including those of Peterson and Peterson, Murdock, Miller, Sperling, HM and so on, explaining how these studies demonstrated specific concepts and/or provided evidence for specific theories or models.

Generally, both stimuli were well-utilised, providing candidates with information to discuss and being integrated into the discussions of stronger responses as support for statements/explanations of LTM and rehearsal. Weaker responses tended to simply quote the stimuli or briefly reference them, compared to stronger responses which integrated stimuli into their responses.

Question 7 – Forgetting

Criterion 4

- Candidates need to spend time planning their answers, otherwise they are inclined to spend too much time on one concept to the detriment of other parts of the question.
- Candidates needed to cite more than one theory to address the question.
- Some candidates confused state with context dependent cues.
- Candidates were confident in their description of organic forgetting and made the link to Alzheimer's disease, Korsakoff syndrome and amnesia.
- Candidates who chose to answer the mnemonics question were well versed in all aspects of the question and were able to cite real life examples to support their answer.
- Some candidates omitted any reference to either of the stimuli.

Criterion 7

- Stronger responses extended the explanation of retrieval cues by including context dependent cues together with appropriate evidence.
- Where a candidate chose amnesia and mnemonic devices for part (a), they often omitted any reference to Stimulus 2.
- Stronger responses were able to demonstrate their knowledge of the concepts by citing real life examples, as well as a variety of appropriate empirical evidence. Weaker responses relied solely on the stimuli for their evidence or supporting evidence was poorly explained and sometimes incorrect.

INVESTIGATION PROJECT – HUMAN LEARNING

General Comments

Overall, the standard of folios was very good. The module on Human Learning afforded candidates a broad range of potential topics upon which to focus, across the three major learning perspectives. There were many interesting studies on unexpected topics that were still relevant and based on some interesting research. Others did more basic studies that were well researched and administered. These were excellent reports to read. Candidates were able to explain relevant human learning concepts and theories, and present relevant research on their topic. Stronger folios had more sources in total, and weaker folios relied on less sources.

In general, topics were simple and connected to the area, although there still seems to be an issue with the memory recall/ learning concept which teachers should be mindful when guiding candidates. Candidates were able to develop topics that were an interesting exploration of human learning. However, candidates need to be wary of interconnecting other modules (such as memory, gender or intelligence) into an investigation into learning. There were a small number of projects that appeared to focus more on memory recall. If choosing to test variables such as the effect of sleep, gender etc. candidates are reminded to focus on learning theories and concepts throughout their projects.

Some candidates struggled with the terms 'negative reinforcement' and 'punishment', confusing them in their experiment and or definition. Candidates in a number of reports appeared to be attempting to modify behaviour via the use of lollies as reinforcers. There was some confusion regarding the distinction between negative reinforcement and punishment in examining the impact on behaviour in a number of these studies. What they appeared to be doing was motivating the person to perform the task more quickly to avoid losing the lollies they had been given (hence the response they appeared to be explaining was a negatively reinforced avoidance response), whereas they suggested they were punishing the person by taking away their lollies.

There was also an over reliance on animal studies in the background theoretical discussion (in the introduction). There are a huge number of experiments, studies and examples which involve human applications available on the internet that would have made the reports much stronger.

Most folios were well worded and grammatically correct. However, it is important that Psychological vocabulary be used throughout the report. E.g. experimental conditions to describe 'groups', participants – as well as general sophistication of writing. E.g. 'effective' rather than 'good', hypothesis is 'supported' rather than 'proved'. Overall written expression could be improved with a better proofreading process. Many candidates did not specify the experimental design.

Questionnaires may appear to be an 'easier' research method, but it is difficult to meet the requirements, or a depth of study using this tool, compared with an experiment or case study.

Some studies would have benefitted from more secondary research beyond Grivas and Simply Psychology. Others found some excellent secondary studies which contributed to the overall quality of their report.

Criterion 3

This criterion was often quite strong. Candidates planned research reports which defined learning, identified a theory that related to their experiment and supported their hypothesis with different research studies. There was often a logical flow of information to arrive at the aim and hypothesis of the investigation. Stronger reports were able to discuss the underpinning perspectives of the theories under consideration, providing these candidates with more opportunities for evaluation of the ideas they were presenting and testing.

The drawing of appropriate inferences from primary data and the connecting of these to research/evidence and theoretical perspectives, is an area within this Criterion that candidates/and teachers need to scrutinise and critically assess more carefully.

Most candidates selected appropriate topics for their research. However, there were quite a number of IPs on the topic of learning that did not adequately apply and discuss psychological concepts on human learning relevant to the course. For example, examining the effects of music on learning could equally be about the effects of music on attention or memory, depending upon the methodology and the analysis/examination of the results. Candidates are reminded that the focus of their literature review, the nature of their methodology, and their discussion should clearly link to specific aspects of learning; not merely 'learning' in a broad sense.

Several reports read a little too sociological, rather psychological with a few resorting to survey investigations outlining gender differences/stereotyping (Individual Differences) or sporting competence, removed of any extensive commentary/application of relevant psychological theory. While clearly drawing to an 'environmental' perspective, the absence of any discussion of learning theory was a concern.

Candidates need to be more thoughtful around the origins of the resources they are providing to link to their theories. There were many theories that were linked to blogs and opinion pieces which lack peer review. It was troubling that many candidates only had minimal secondary sources which were also not peer reviewed or connected to theories. Stronger responses conducted research outside of what is provided in the textbooks, finding studies published in research journals to support their responses.

Criterion 6

Task design was stronger when it was clearly about learning rather than memory. Stronger design often had repeated trials, demonstrating learning. Weaker design often involved presenting a stimulus, then asking participants to recall once.

Stand out responses were able to link their research design to the chosen hypothesis. Most were able to set out a very clear research design and generally this was explained well. Listing the steps of the procedure as numbered dot points can be quite effective and candidates who used this often did it well. Candidates who only opted for an Aim experienced difficulty in identifying their independent and dependent variables.

The vast majority of candidates identified sampling method, size, and population; as well as the independent and dependent variables. Many did not identify the research design (for example, independent groups, repeated measures, etc.). Where there are experimental and control groups or conditions, these also need to be specified. There was often insufficient explanation of the rationale for the materials and procedure used.

Many experiment designs were not clear and what was undertaken was hard to understand. Candidates should be mindful of what research methods they have used – some incorrectly labelled experiment; survey and case study.

The use of survey in some cases was used well but candidates should be mindful of not only the construction but also the way in which data is produced from such an instrument and how it can be used for this type of project. The role of Survey Monkey should be reviewed.

Some candidates struggled to apply IV and DV correctly to their investigation. Formulation of an operationalised hypothesis is important and should be well practised before the project begins – this will support the understanding of the IV and DV (confused in some cases).

Many candidates use the term 'random' incorrectly when explaining subject selection and design. Several experiments were difficult to comprehend where the candidates were often vague as to how they undertook their research.

The methodology was often not as detailed as it needed to be. Candidates are reminded that the method does not count in the overall word count: the method should detail procedure in a way that could be easily replicated by the reader.

Ethics was well handled by most participants, with stronger reports providing a more detailed explanation of how specific aspects of ethics applied to the design of their task. Weaker responses were those where candidates opted to briefly mention their use of a disclaimer included in their Appendix, or simply stated that consent had been given by their participants. This criterion warrants that candidates clearly explain ethics as well as justify their design in this section. Stronger responses clearly linked the ethical considerations underlying psychological research specifically to their own primary investigation.

Ethical concerns were still occurring, particularly in relation to candidate, educational institutes and teacher names appearing in submitted folios. The ethics of the choice in sample space was highly concerning with some candidates seeking minimal consent to test on quite young children without stating a reasoning for this. It is not sufficient to rely on verbal consent from the child without considering school and parental permissions. Evidencing the consent given (by the child, their parent, their teacher, the school principal, etc.) is important. It would only be useful to provide a copy of the blank consent form template as this is available on the TASC website, if this has been edited in a tangible manner.

As the guidelines indicate, graphs should provide descriptors explaining what is shown. It is not the role of the examiner to interpret the graph to ensure the candidate's use of the data in the analysis/discussion is accurate. Graphs should be titled, have clearly labelled axes and only be included if relevant to the analysis/discussion. The results section should not contain raw data. Cautious use of figures is recommended, and these should be manipulated - **not** individual (raw). Raw data has its place in the Appendices, but only if referred to in the analysis and discussion.

Data from self-reports, such as techniques participants adopted in learning tasks, should be summarised in a table in the results section. Data not provided in the results section should not be referred to anecdotally in the analysis/discussion.

Criterion 8

Many folios were technically accurate reports that were within the word count, although some candidates did not include 200 word count in the left hand margin. Most reports were in the 800-1200 words range. Reports that were closer to 1200 words were generally of a higher standard as the Discussions were more detailed, allowing for better connections to secondary findings to be made. Stronger projects incorporated some good secondary research, often

an excellent range of sources including journal articles which supported their topic and enabled comparison with their primary findings. These responses provided a comprehensive analysis and discussion without too much detail on limitations.

Strong contributions extended a sophisticated and coherent analysis of data through links to existing empirical background secondary resources, thereby establishing some sense of credible investigative outcome.

Some very polished writing demonstrated in the introduction was not always replicated in the analysis and discussion. In these instances, candidates were unable to analyse their findings and provide links to their secondary research.

Better responses were able to integrate research throughout both the introduction and discussion sections. Some folios did not have a balance between sections and some folios that started so well fell short towards the end of their report by not including in their discussion previous research presented in their introduction. Candidates should be cautioned that balance is still noteworthy.

Candidates should also prioritise their graphs in order of most relevant. Unfortunately, many candidates were providing raw data as their graphs. As such, candidates should be encouraged to have their graphs using percentages/averages as much as possible. Manipulation of the data was important.

It was rare for a pie chart to adequately provide the representation of the primary research in an effective manner. However, line and bar chart graphs were often used well. Candidates should be careful not to include unnecessary graphs that don't link to the hypothesis being tested.

Some candidates only reported their results, rather than analysing them, discussing them, drawing appropriate inferences from their primary data and linking their findings to their cited empirical evidence.

Referencing was quite problematic. Candidates struggled to sustain implementation of a referencing model and accuracy here should be aimed for. Please do not list items in the reference list that are not cited in text. Also, **please cite items in the reference list if you mention them in text.**

Candidates also seemed to struggle with sources. There needs to be a level of consideration given to which sources are more valuable; Wikipedia pages, Google Dictionary items, blog articles, etc. are not recommended. Too many candidates relied on sources such as *Simply Psychology* and *AlleyDog*, which aren't reliable, peer-reviewed sources. If candidates are looking for more accessible sources, the various textbooks would be a more useful source.

In-text referencing presented problems for many candidates who increasingly relied heavily on online sources, but failed to accurately cite these. Direct quotations warrant quotation marks and a page number if available (taken from a book or journal).

Appendices are an area for candidates to give some attention. Some folios did not include all relevant materials. Candidates should be reminded that the report should stand alone from the Appendices, so having mentioned ethics in the report means that it should also be included as an Appendix. The Appendices should include all materials used in the investigation. For example, the ethics script read or presented to participants, instructions for the task, the instrument used (e.g. test, puzzle, video), recording sheet, de-briefing statement, and raw data.