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AS and A LEVEL
Teacher Guide

PSYCHOLOGY

H167/H567
For first teaching in 2015

Component 2: Areas and perspectives in a nutshell

Version 1

www.ocr.org.uk/psychology

Introduction

AS and A LEVEL
PSYCHOLOGY

Introduction and aim

This short guide to each area of psychology includes:

- ✓ key terms
- ✓ brief summaries of each area
- ✓ development of each area
- ✓ suggested wider reading and links.

The aim is to give students the bigger picture and an overview of the key concepts they should know.

This resource can also be used in conjunction with the 'A Guide to Relating Core Studies to Psychological Areas and Perspectives' to develop students' use of core study examples in their responses.

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Key words

The following #tag key words can be used in a variety of teaching and learning activities to support students whilst they are developing an understanding of the areas and perspectives.

Area/ Perspective	**#tags**
Social area	Environment, situational factors, group dynamics, conformity, situational factors, social context, obedience, prejudice, peers.
Cognitive area	Cognitive processes, computer analogy, input-process-output, Internal mental processes, problem-solving, memory, cognition, thinking patterns, schema, mechanistic, attention.
Developmental area	Lifespan, typical development, moral development, emotional development, predetermined stages, maturation, systematic changes.
Biological area	Physiological processes, brain function, genetic basis, scientific, hormones, heredity, nervous system, twin studies, EEG, MRI, Nomothetic.
Individual differences area	Unique, personality, measuring differences, idiographic, quantifiable, characteristics, psychological attributes, complex behaviour, case studies.
Psychodynamic perspective	Unconscious processes, childhood experiences, impulses, psyche, id, ego & superego, defence mechanisms, psychosexual stages, conscious, subconscious, neurosis.
Behaviourist perspective	Tabula rasa, nurture, behaviour is learnt, operant conditioning, classical conditioning, social learning theory, vicarious reinforcement, stimulus-response.

Summaries of areas and perspectives

Social area

KEY TERMS
Environment, situational factors, group dynamics, conformity, situational factors, social context, obedience, prejudice, peers.

BRIEF SUMMARY
G.W. Allport is commonly quoted when defining what the social area of psychology encompasses. He defines it as 'the scientific investigation of how the thoughts, feelings and behaviours of individuals are influenced by the actual, imagined or implied presence of others'.

To further understand this area it is important students acknowledge that, whilst we can observe the actions individuals take due to social causes, to understand the social theories underlying behaviour we must analyse the social processes behind the resulting behaviour carefully. This area assumes that our behaviour is determined by the social environment and the roles we have in different situations; this influences us even when we are alone and affects how we relate others around us along with our intentions for future behaviours.

DEVELOPMENT OF AREA
Experimental social psychology is thought to have been founded by Allport in 1924 who focused on the need for clear measurement of behaviour in order to understand social influences. Further research has focused on testing ideas about conformity, social influence and obedience to authority using artificial and highly controlled laboratory experiments.

This specification encourages students to find out more about the shift from just focusing on reasons the majority may conform or obey to reflect the changes in society and higher levels of disobedience and whistleblowing that now merit investigation.

Further to this social psychology has continued to research behaviour across cultures and accept that cultural norms do affect how social processes work and therefore research must be conducted across many cultures to truly understand how people decide on their actions in differing social settings and circumstances.

Key figures students could research include: Stanley Milgram, Muzafer Sherif, Henri Tajfel, Solomon Asch, Erving Goffman and Philip Zimbardo.

WIDER READING AND LINKS
Allport, G. W. (1954) The historical background of modern social psychology. In G.Lindsey & E. Aronson (Eds), Handbook of Social Psychology. (2nd ed) Vol. 1. Pp1-80. Reading MA: Addison-Wesley.

Benson, N., Collin, C., Ginsburg, J., Grand, V., Lazyan, M., & Weeks, M. (2012) The Psychology Book. London: DK Publishing.

Hogg, M. and Vaughan, G. (2014). Social psychology. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.

Cognitive area

KEY TERMS
Cognitive processes, computer analogy, input-process-output, Internal mental processes, problem-solving, memory, cognition, thinking patterns, schema, mechanistic, attention.

BRIEF SUMMARY
This area of psychology has developed rapidly over the last century and concerns the investigation of our internal mental processes such as memory, thinking and reasoning that precedes observable behaviour. Researchers use experimental methods to infer thoughts by recording individual's behaviour in cognitive tasks such as memory recall or audio recall tests. Further to this researchers consider the mind as mechanistic suggesting that we process information like a computer and behaviour is therefore highly predictable. Students need to understand that whilst the mind and thinking patterns are a hypothetical construct and cannot be seen they are used to explain the causes of behaviour and create therapies to alter 'faulty' processing.

DEVELOPMENT OF AREA
From the initial idea of the mind 'like a computer', as coined by Ulric Neisser in the sixties, the focus of cognitive psychology on the specific processes in the mind that make up the human behaviour we observe has been consistent. This area has always understood the need for highly controlled research that ensures that inferences made from observations about the mind are as accurate as possible.

It has long been accepted that the processing of information in our environment involves sophisticated processing tools in the mind such as schemas and students should understand how research is now able to investigate very precise processing abilities for skills such as memory recall that highlight how each stage of processing is affected. Due to this, recent cognitive research tends to take a very reductionist approach in breaking down the process even further to assess each element in turn – moving towards some researchers trying to recreate the complex processes of the mind in artificial intelligence.

Key figures students could research include: Frederic Bartlett, Hermann Ebbinghaus, George Miller, Aaron Beck, Albert Ellis, Donald Meichenbaum, Simon Baron-Cohen, Elizabeth Loftus and Paul Ekman.

WIDER READING AND LINKS
Baron-Cohen, S. (2012) Zero degrees of empathy. London: Allen Lane.

Eysenck, M. W. and Keane, M. T. (2010) Cognitive psychology. 6th ed. East Sussex: Psychology Press.

Pinker, S. (1994) How the Mind Works. Great Britain: Allen Lane.

Summaries of areas and perspectives

Developmental area

KEY TERMS
Lifespan, typical development, moral development, emotional development, predetermined stages, maturation, systematic changes.

BRIEF SUMMARY
The developmental area emphasises the importance of understanding the changes in behaviour through the lifespan from birth to death. Students should be able to outline key stage theories that demonstrate how individuals change their thinking and behaviour systematically through crucial stages of development.

This area assumes that development is an on-going process and that changes occur over a person's lifetime as a result of inherited factors and / or lifetime experiences (nature/nurture) and all individuals go through the same stages. Students should be familiar with how these changes that occur within physical, cognitive and psychosocial aspects of their behaviour.

DEVELOPMENT OF AREA
The developmental area has historically been divided into nativist theories and learning theories. John Locke was one of the first to suggest that, like behaviourists believe, children are born as a 'blank slate' and acquire all behaviour through experiences. Researchers have endeavoured to understand the importance of experiences such as parenting, education and the media on child development. Research suggests that during critical stages of development children are likely to be influenced by others, this has led to clinical applications such as health promotion and government strategies to reduce aggressive influences among other behaviours.

Other researchers such as Jean Piaget and Lawrence Kohlberg believed that children progress through universal stages of development and that typical development can be predicted based on the findings of experimental research with children of varying ages. Developmental researchers also acknowledge that environmental triggers may increase the rate of development or hinder it; cross-cultural studies are carried out to see if behaviour is universal and this has found that there is a complex interaction between nature and nurture.

Key figures students could research include: John Locke, Jean Jacques Rousseau, Jean Piaget, Lawrence Kohlberg, Albert Bandura, Mary Ainsworth.

WIDER READING AND LINKS
Rymer, R. (1994) Genie: A Scientific Tragedy. New York: Harper Perennial.

Sigelman, C. K. and Rider, E. A. (2012) Human Development Across the Life Span.7th ed. Wadsworth: Cengage Learning.

Biological area

KEY TERMS
Physiological processes, brain function, genetic basis, scientific, hormones, heredity, nervous system, twin studies, EEG, MRI, Nomothetic.

BRIEF SUMMARY
The biological area suggests that 'all that is psychological is first physiological' as research has suggested the mind is located in the brain, all thoughts, feelings and behaviours ultimately have a physiological cause. Further to this students should understand that physiological differences exist due, in part, to genetics and attributes that are hereditary as they are passed on from one generation to another. Researchers in this area also believe that, despite the genetic information an individual is born with; environmental factors can alter how genetic information is expressed and how an individual matures. Psychologists should study the brain, nervous system and other biological systems, e.g. hormones, chemicals acting on the brain to explain behaviour.

DEVELOPMENT OF AREA
From first ideas about the body and behaviour (Aristotle), which have good links with the general studies curriculum, the understanding of how genetics and the brain influence behaviour has become more precise with the advancement of technology.

Initially research had to rely on experimental methods that made inferences from tests of ability to perform tasks to more recent research that utilises brain scans to understand behaviour. Research can now monitor regions of the brain that are activated during experimental tasks along with recording any changes in the brains neural connections over time which allow much more precise analysis of behavioural changes to occur.

Students should understand that whilst the genetic information we are born with is stable the 'turning on' or 'off' of genes and their consequences for behaviour can be affected by environmental factors. Further to this students should understand that whilst the general structures of the brain remain constant the density of neural networks within these can change due to environmental factors to accommodate for the development of required skills. The use of comparative research with animals is useful in early attempts to understand the development of the brain in critical stages of life.

Key figures students could research include: Rene Descartes, Paul Broca, William James, Oliver Sacks, Roger Sperry.

WIDER READING AND LINKS
Pinel, J. P. J. (2013) Biopsychology. 9th ed. Boston: Pearson.

Genetic Science Learning Center - http://learn.genetics.utah.edu/content/epigenetics/

Washington University Neuroscience Dept - http://faculty.washington.edu/chudler/neurok.html

Summaries of areas and perspectives

Individual differences area

KEY TERMS
Unique, personality, measuring differences, idiographic, quantifiable, characteristics, psychological attributes, complex behaviour, case studies.

BRIEF SUMMARY
This area assumes that our behaviour is due to individual differences and in order to understand human behaviour we need to study how we differ from each other as well as how we are the same. It is assumed that individuals differ in their behaviour and personal qualities so not everyone can be considered 'the average person'.

Further to this students need to understand that all human characteristics can be measured and quantified. The measures gained from one person are different to those gathered from another and are apparent in their behaviour. This area also allows us to understand how abnormal behaviour arises such as phobic behaviours, criminal thinking patterns, intelligence and developmental disorders such as autism.

DEVELOPMENT OF AREA

Individual differences as an area has historically focused on personality and intelligence, often focusing on abnormalities within these behaviours. From older 'talking therapies' that strive to understand the unconscious mind and how it leads to neurosis this area has progressed to utilising experimental tests to compare the differences in targeted groups of people who display a particular trait such as autism.

Further to this the interest in individual differences has led to many attempts to quantify these differences and label behaviour as normal or not. Whilst this area has had a controversial past, where the stickiness of labels has been hazardous, many recent studies focus on utilising psychometric tests and experimental methods to understand specific differences in behaviour that can then lead to real life applications such as cognitive therapies. Students should understand that this area covers many different beliefs about the causes of behaviour and how individual differences develop.

Key figures students could research include: Francis Galton, Lewis Goldberg, Hans Eysenck, Raymond Cattell, Alfred Binet, Robert Yerkes, Robert Sternberg, Carol Dweck.

WIDER READING AND LINKS
Maltby, J., Day, A., & Macaskill, A. (2013) Personality, Individual Differences and Intelligence. 3rd ed. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.

www.personalityresearch.org

Behaviorist perspective

KEY TERMS
Tabula rasa, nurture, behaviour is learnt, operant conditioning, classical conditioning, social learning theory, vicarious reinforcement, stimulus-response.

BRIEF SUMMARY
This perspective assumes that all behaviour is learned and shaped by the environment rather than behaviour being innate. Many researchers quote the concept that we are born as a blank slate or 'tabula rasa' and therefore only behave how we do due to the influence of others around us and the potential of future positive experiences. John Watson in the early 1900's claimed that the aim of a behaviourist is to 'predict and control' behaviour using empirical data collected through scientific means.

Students should understand that through observable behaviour we can scientifically measure this learnt behaviour and explore the impact of theories such as classical conditioning, operant conditioning and social learning theory. Students should be aware of behaviourist treatments and interventions that can be used to treat disorders and improve health behaviours.

DEVELOPMENT OF AREA
Research traditionally took advantage of comparative research and strict behaviourists would argue that, as behaviour is the result of a stimulus, humans will behave in a similar way to animals. Research has typically used very strict experimental methods to assess the behaviours that occur to a systematic variation in the stimuli given.

Further research into behaviourism has worked to apply the principles of behaviourism to new therapies and treatments from aversion therapy in the sixties to treat homosexuality to more recent therapies that encourage the adherence to medical regimens.

Key figures students could research include: John Watson, Ivan Pavlov, Edward Thorndike, Burrhus Frederic Skinner, Albert Bandura

WIDER READING AND LINKS
Slater, L. (2005) Opening Skinner's Box. Bloomsbury Publishing

Skinner, B.F. (1988) About Behaviorism. Mass Market Paperback.

Pryor, K. (2002) Don't Shoot the Dog!: The New Art of Teaching and Training. Ringpress Books Ltd

Summaries of areas and perspectives

Psychodynamic perspective

KEY TERMS
Unconscious processes, childhood experiences, impulses, psyche, id, ego & superego, defence mechanisms, psychosexual stages, conscious, subconscious, neurosis.

BRIEF SUMMARY
This perspective assumes that behaviour is caused by unconscious processes and the ongoing conflict of the tripartite personality. Many researchers look back to Freud's belief that our unconscious, the part of our mind we are unaware of, causes our behaviour. Freud believes most of our thoughts, feelings and many memories that may threaten us are locked away in our unconscious mind. Students should understand that due to this individuals employ defence mechanisms to protect themselves and their conscious minds.

Beyond this students should understand the development of personality as described by Freud through the psychosexual stages of development that detail the typical behaviour a child will display at each stage as well as how a fixation at each stage may impact behaviour in later life.

DEVELOPMENT OF AREA
Sigmund Freud is seen as the father of the psychodynamic theory and his work in the late 19th century inspired future researchers to strive to understand the unconscious motivations that cause behaviour. Researchers today still focus on his key principles that many of our thoughts are unconscious and that these are shaped through past experiences; 'talking therapies' have been developed to help people explore the conflicts that may be causing their observed behaviour.

Students should understand how this perspective differs from the behaviourist perspective along with how the psychodynamic perspective utilises a multitude of methods to help people deal with their anxieties and neuroses.

Key figures students could research include: Sigmund Freud, Anna Freud, Erik Erikson, Carl Jung, Alfred Adler.

WIDER READING AND LINKS
Webster, R. (1996) Why Freud Was Wrong: Sin, Science, and Psychoanalysis.

Freud, S. (1987) The Pelican Freud Library. Penguin Books.

Freud, S. (1899) The Interpretation of Dreams

Suggestions for teaching and learning activities

Below is a selection of activities to help students explain research in the context of the areas in psychology. Students need to be able to understand and explain:

- The defining principles and concepts of each area/ perspectives
- How each core study relates to the area/perspectives of psychology it is placed within
- Strengths and weaknesses of each area/ perspectives
- Applications of each area
- How each area is different from and similar to the other areas/ perspectives.

1. Use the areas in a nutshell #tags to create a sentence or two to define each area of psychology.
2. Give students a variety of #tags and challenge them to sort them into the appropriate areas/perspectives.
3. Give students a 'wordle' with the key terms for a given area, such as the cognitive area, then challenge them to describe the conclusions of a piece of research in that area using those key terms.
4. Ask students to write a tweet as if they are a researcher and justify why they explain behaviour under a given area.
5. Get students individually to research a key psychologist in the area they are studying to bring into class and create a timeline.
6. Allocate students to one area and ask them to present the key assumptions and development of the area to the rest of the class.
7. Ask students to research the real life applications for an allocated area and explain how these relate to the defining principles.

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