OCR
Oxford Cambridge and RSA

GCE

Psychology

Advanced GCE A2 **H568**

Advanced Subsidiary GCE AS **H168**

OCR Report to Centres June 2014

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This report on the examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the examination.

OCR will not enter into any discussion or correspondence in connection with this report.

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G541 Psychological Investigations

General Comments:

There was evidence that candidates used their knowledge of research methods and evaluation concepts that they had acquired on their course to good effect to answer the questions on this paper. This indicates centres had done a good job in preparing their candidates and instilling good practice and techniques for the examination. The highest scoring candidates provided lots of detail and used specific examples in response to the higher tariff questions (Q1, Q6, Q7, Q10(b) and Q11(b). Higher marks could have been obtained by other candidates if this strategy had been adopted. Responses of the highest scoring candidates also included a sophisticated and detailed inclusion of context in their answers in response to questions that required a link to the research outlined in the scenario presented (Q1, Q3(b), Q4, Q5(b), Q6, Q7, Q8(a), Q8(b), Q9, Q10(b), Q11(a) and Q11(b). This fulfilled the requirements of the mark scheme for a 'detailed' response, rather than the mere 'token (superficial) use' of key words from the research outlined in the scenario as constituting 'context'. Again, higher marks could have been obtained by other candidates if this strategy had been adopted. Responses that were not detailed and clear were capped at the lower band, whether they were in context or not.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Section A

Question No. 1

This was the only 10 mark question on the paper and in order to obtain top band marks candidates needed to both 'describe and evaluate' a procedure for an observational study. Candidates achieved higher marks when they first described a fully replicable procedure, making reference to 'who, what, where, when and how' the investigation would be conducted. Most importantly (otherwise regarded as 'major omissions') this required specific details of the behavioural categories to be presented and an indication of the duration of the observation period. Candidates achieving the highest marks then went on to evaluate the procedure they had outlined with two or more evaluation points discussed in context of the research outlined in the scenario. Some candidates did not always discuss their evaluation points in context (e.g. simply referring to the research as 'lacking ecological validity because people were observed doing something that they would not normally do').

Question No. 2

Most candidates were aware what time sampling was and provided a clear definition. Some developed their answers with the use of an example which helped clarify/confirm their understanding of the term.

Question No. 3(a)

Most candidates were aware what event sampling was and provided a clear definition. A minority did not make reference to the fact that it involves the use of a specific set of pre-determined behavioural categories. Some thought that event sampling simply referred to making observations at 'an event'.

Question No. 3(b)

Candidates achieved higher marks on this question when they provided a 'detailed' response that was in context by outlining how and why the use of event sampling was an advantage (e.g. *saying ' ... because all relevant behaviours related to resisting the chocolate bar would be recorded and none would be missed, meaning that more data would be obtained about the things that people do when trying to resist temptation which would help increase the overall validity of the study'*). Responses by some other candidates were not as 'detailed' (e.g. simply saying *'... because all relevant behaviours related to resisting the chocolate bar would be recorded and none would be missed'*). Some candidates referred to advantages relating to the use of quantitative data produced by event sampling, which is not exclusive to event sampling alone.

Question No. 4

Candidates achieving top band marks outlined a disadvantage of quantitative data that was detailed and in context by explaining how and why quantitative data was a disadvantage (e.g. say '... *because there would be no insights obtained about the reasons why people behaved as they did when sat in front of the chocolate bar, which could reduce the validity of the research. For example, someone could not eat the chocolate because they are allergic to it, but with only quantitative data this would not be known'*).

Responses by some other candidates were not as 'detailed' (e.g. simply saying '... *because there would be no insights obtained about the reasons why people behaved as they did when sat in front of the chocolate bar'*).

Question No. 5(a)

Most candidates were able to explain how the mean was calculated for the male participants in the study and correctly identify that this was 12. Responses by some candidates lacked clarity, for example simply stating that the median was the 'middle value', rather than explaining that is was the middle value when arranged in numerical order.

Question No. 5(b)

The best responses here clearly explained how the median was not influenced by anomalous data, or outliers and did this in context.

Question No. 6

Candidates achieving top band marks here wrote detailed responses that made clear suggestions for improving the sample in context. For example, saying that the age range could have been widened, and stating what specific age ranges to widen it to. Candidates who did not do this did not obtain as many marks as they could have done, regardless of including a discussion about why widening the sample would be beneficial.

Question No. 7

Here again, the highest scoring candidates provided a detailed outline of one strength and one weakness of using the self-report method in context. This required some explanation as to why the suggested strength/weakness was good/bad (e.g. saying that … 'people may be prone to

demand characteristics and lie about the number of times they heard the song because they may have felt embarrassed to report hearing the song playing in their head a lot throughout the day in case they were perceived as silly'). Other candidates lost marks by simply, and briefly stating a strength/weakness (e.g. saying … 'a weakness was people may be prone to demand characteristics and lie').

Question No. 8(a)

Most candidates were able to suggest an open question that could be used in the study and present this clearly. A minority of candidates could have achieved more marks by answering in context, rather than stating a generic open question (e.g. simply suggesting ….'did you like taking part in the study?').

Question No. 8(b)

Here again, most candidates were able to suggest a closed question that could be used in the study and present this clearly. Some candidates however, suggested questions that did not have specific, closed, fixed response options, so were not creditworthy (e.g. simply suggesting … did you like the song playing in your head?'). This demonstrates the importance of the need to be explicit.

Section B

Question No. 9

The highest scoring responses provided operational detail when referring to the IV and DV (e.g. stating that it was a … 'film of a teacher yawning'). This was important, as without this there was ambiguity concerning what the study of cause-and-effect was about in this research. Other candidates could have achieved higher marks by adopting this strategy, rather than a brief, vague reference to the variables (e.g. simply referring to the IV as 'the film'). A surprisingly high number of candidates wrote correlational null hypotheses, which were not creditworthy at all. A minority wrote an alternate, instead of null hypothesis.

Question No. 10(a)

Many candidates were correctly able to identify the experimental design as repeated measures. Some candidates however, stated the research method ('laboratory experiment') instead of identifying the experimental design. This had implications for how these candidates then proceeded to answer the next question.

Question No. 10(b)

The best responses here provided a detailed account of how an alternative experimental design could be used, rather than simply naming the design (e.g. 'independent measures'), and just stating that there would be different people taking part in each condition.. These candidates then went on to provide a detailed evaluation, in context of the consequences of using the alternative design.

Question No. 11(a)

Many candidates were able to identify and clearly outline how the independent variable had been manipulated. However, some, incorrectly referred to the dependent variable (stating it was the 'number of times a participant yawned'), and others did not seem to understand what the word 'operationalized' referred to (with some not providing a response at all to this question). Some candidates lost marks by referring to the research method used, rather than outlining the details of how the independent variable had been operationalized.

Question No. 11(b)

The highest scoring responses here referred to two (or more) evaluation issues in context and were focused directly on the manipulation of the independent variable. There were some very sophisticated and very astute responses here that demonstrated a very good understanding of the way the research was conducted in this study. For example, some candidates commented on how not knowing exactly how long the film clip lasted, or how many times the teacher yawned in the clip would prevent full replication and affect the reliability of the research. Other candidates referred to problems related to the length of the passage that was read and the complexity of the writing (type of words included etc) and how this could have affected some participants more than others (such as those with reading problems or language difficulties etc). Some candidates could have achieved higher marks if they had adopted this strategy, rather than making brief and superficial comments that were not even always in context (e.g. simply stating 'reliability was good because all participants got exposed to the same thing in each condition'). It was not possible to award any marks to some candidates who incorrectly referred to operational details of the dependent variable.

A common mistake was for general evaluation of the study to be given as an answer to this question particularly with reference to design and DV

G542 Core Studies

General Comments:

There was little evidence of candidates running out of time and there were very few rubric errors.

All sections of this paper assess a candidate's understanding of key psychological terms and concepts and require this understanding to be demonstrated by supporting answers with appropriate evidence from either the core studies themselves and/or the background to the core studies/theories on which the studies are based. There were many instances that suggested candidates did not know or understand the theories and research surrounding the core studies and/or adequate specific details of these studies.

Unfortunately, many candidates loss valuable marks in both questions 17/18c and 17/18d by supporting their identified similarities/differences and strengths/weaknesses with inappropriate evidence. Marks were also lost in question 17/18 d by candidates failing to read the question and instead of discussing strengths/weakness of laboratory experiments, discussing strengths/weaknesses of either the behaviourist perspective or the cognitive approach.

The quality of written communication and writing, as in previous sessions, prevented some candidates from attaining higher marks. Furthermore, there were more instances than in previous sessions of candidates writing below the given lines, sideways in margins, and in additional booklets when there was sufficient space on the extra pages for their extended answers. Candidates should be encouraged to write only on the lines provided and to use the additional pages at the back of the script before moving on to additional booklets.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Section A

Question No.

1. Many candidates scored well on this question though few included reference to the participants having to state, from a forced choice of two mental states, which emotion was shown on each photograph. There were also many instances where candidates either described the Eyes task or gave a description which could have applied to either the Basic Emotions Task or the Eyes Task because they failed to state that the photographs were of whole faces. *This question showed itself to be a good discriminator.*

2a. This was generally well answered though some candidates referred to data being recorded through observation of lexigram usage which was not creditworthy as this was how data was gathered whilst outdoors.

2b. This was again, generally well answered with many candidates giving clear, fully contextualised responses.

3. Another generally well answered question. However some candidates referred to 'schemas' which was not one of the types of information proposed by Loftus and Palmer in this study. Furthermore, many candidates only made reference to the use of leading questions which was an example of the second type of information that forms and individual's memory of an event – information received after the event.

4. Many candidates scored well on this question by referring to (a) by whom and where the children were observed and rated for aggression (b) how they were rated for aggressive tendencies (c) the fact that they were then matched on aggression levels. Few candidates however said that the children were then arranged in triplets and randomly assigned to either one of the two experimental conditions or the control condition. *This question showed itself to be a good discriminator.*

5. This question was not well answered. Many candidates either failed to link findings from Samuel and Bryant's study to Piaget's theory or just gave findings from Samuel and Bryant's study and repeated the strap-line – these results support Piaget's theory. Some candidates also failed to describe *two* ways in which the results of this study supported Piaget's theory of cognitive development. *This question showed itself to be a good discriminator.*

6a. This was a generally well answered question.

6b. As always with any Freud question, there were many imaginative answers! Many candidates scored very well on this question. Some candidates who used the Oedipus complex as an explanation failed to make any link with the giraffe fantasy.

7a. Another well answered question with few candidates referring to 'eye' instead of 'visual field'.

7b. Again, this was generally well answered. There were however some candidates who did not know what 'tactile' meant. The term is used in Sperry's study.

8. Another well answered question. There were however many instances where candidates mis-read the question and described the whole sample, including both the experimental and control groups. Candidates who did not make it clear which group was which therefore gained no marks.

9. Many candidates scored well on this question. However some candidates only scored partial marks as they either gave findings rather than conclusions or ailed to give *two* conclusions.

10a. This question was also well answered with many clear, contextualised responses.

10b. Although generally well answered, marks were often lost through lack of contextualisation.

11. Few candidates actually contextualised their answeres and merely referred to 'participants'. There were also many instances that suggested candidates did not know the difference between 'social desirability' and 'demand characteristics'. Some candidates referred to ethics which was not relevant to the question as set. Even so, many candidates managed to score at least half marks on this question. *This question showed itself to be a good discriminator.*

12. This was generally a well answered question with good candidates going beyond merely giving an example of how participants were deceived by actually showing how they were deceived.

13. Although some candidates provided somewhat muddled answers which referred to both Eve White and Eve Black, there were many excellent responses which gave accurate details in relation to both test results and character features of one named personality.

14. Although many candidates were able to refer to the 'thinking aloud' condition, many thought the qualitative data was gathered through observation and failed to mention the use of a (lapel) microphone and tape recorder. Only the best candidates were able to refer to both how the data was gathered through the 'thinking aloud' condition and the post-experimental interviews. *This question showed itself to be a good discriminator.*

15. Overall, another well answered question. There were a number of instances where candidates lost marks because they did not make it clear how their evidence related to depersonalisation.

Section B

All three studies were selected though Reicher and Haslam was the least popular.

16a. This was well answered. Good responses were clear and fully contextualised. Weak responses included careless errors e.g. Thigpen and Cleckley – failing to include a reference to treatment when saying the study was conducted because Eve White presented with a history of severe headaches and blackouts; Dement and Kleitman – failing to state that the study was investigating the *relationship* between REM and dreaming; Reicher and Haslam – suggesting that this study was to replicate Zimbardo's study. Those candidates who chose this study struggled to get a reasonable answer.

16b.Here only the more able candidates appreciated that the self-report method was used to gather data in at least two ways in their chosen study e.g. Thigpen and Cleckley – interviews, hypnosis, psychometric testing; Dement and Kleitmen – talking into a tape recorder, the experimenter entering the room to ask additional questions/clarify points; Reicher and Haslam – psychometric tests during the screening process, psychometric tests throughout the study, during the debriefing at the end of the study. Some candidates who focused on the Reicher and Haslam study referred to going to special rooms to talk to the researchers/using video diaries. These suggestions were not deemed creditworthy as they are not referred to in the original study.

16c. Many candidates were able to describe, explain/justify and support with evidence both an appropriate strength and an appropriate weakness of the self-report method. Some candidates however failed to support their answers with adequate evidence and some gave study-specific answers.

16d. This question saw the full range of marks being awarded. Candidates who chose either Dement and Kleitman or Thigpen and Cleckley generally scored better than those who chose Reicher and Haslam. Some answers were very muddled, though there was evidence that some candidates knew their chosen study really well.

16e. Again, a good range of marks was awarded for this question. Many candidates were able to suggest and justify two or more appropriate improvements. Real understanding was shown by those candidates who both explained why their suggestions would improve their chosen study and described how they would implement their suggestions. There were some instances where answers lacked contextualisation e.g. I would improve the sample by having more participants; I would improve the ecological validity by conducting the study in a natural environment. *This question showed itself to be a good discriminator.*

16f. *This also became a good differentiator.* Many candidates, although able to evaluate their improvements failed to contextualise their answers to their chosen study e.g. by increasing my sample size and including both males and females I will get a more representative sample so I can generalise my findings to the whole population. Such a statement could apply to any of the three studies offered in this section. Furthermore, many evaluation points were extremely basic and failed to show any real understanding e.g. having both males and females in the prison would give a better representation of real life.

Section C

Both the behaviourist perspective and the cognitive approach were selected with the cognitive approach being the most popular.

Question 17: the behaviourist perspective

17a. This was generally well answered. Some candidates failed to refer to the fact that this perspective holds that behaviour is learned and therefore gave answers that related more to the social approach than the behaviourist perspective.

17b. Overall, this question was better answered than in previous sessions. Many candidates were able to describe appropriate evidence (Bandura)/ an appropriate example to show how aggression could be learned. Links to the perspective were better than in previous sessions with good candidates making appropriate links to either the social learning theory or operant conditioning.

17c. *This* Many candidates failed to read the question properly and responded in relation to the behaviourist perspective rather than experiments that can be viewed from the behaviourist perspective. Furthermore, many candidates compared inappropriate studies because they did not seem to be fully aware of what an experiment is. Milgram is generally considered a controlled observation conducted under laboratory conditions. An experiment is defined as follows: 'an experiment involves the manipulation of an independent variable in order to see its effect on a dependent variable' (Complete A - Z Psychology by Mike Cardwell). Milgram did not have an independent variable. Use of Milgram therefore resulted in many candidates scoring no marks.

17d. There were many good answers with the full range of marks being awarded. As in previous sessions some of the strengths/weaknesses were merely identified, not identified and justified/explained e.g. a weakness of laboratory experiments is that they lack ecological validity – so? Marks were generally lost in either of two ways:
(i) Using inappropriate supporting evidence.
(ii) Producing a response that related specifically to the behaviourist perspective and not laboratory experiments i.e. producing an answer 'I prepared earlier'. *This question showed itself to be a good discriminator*

Question 18: the cognitive approach

18a. This was generally well answered. Some candidates used the computer analogy but failed to link this behaviour thus losing valuable marks.

18b. Overall, this question was better answered than in previous sessions. Many candidates were able to describe appropriate evidence (Baron-Cohen)/an appropriate example to show why individuals with autism have difficulty understanding other peoples' mental states. Links to the approach were better than in previous sessions though many candidates didn't adequately relate theory of mind to the cognitive approach.

18c. Many candidates failed to read the question properly and responded in relation to the cognitive approach rather than experiments that can be viewed from the cognitive approach. Furthermore, many candidates compared inappropriate studies because they did not seem to be fully aware of what an experiment is. Savage-Rumbaugh is not an experiment or even a quasi experiment because the pygmy and common chimpanzees were not reared or tested under the same conditions. The study is generally considered a longitudinal case study. Use of Savage-Rumbaugh therefore resulted in many candidates scoring no marks.

18d. There were many good answers with the full range of marks being awarded. As in previous sessions some of the strengths/weaknesses were merely identified, not identified and justified/explained e.g. a weakness of laboratory experiments is that they lack ecological validity – so? Marks were generally lost in either of two ways:
(i) Using inappropriate supporting evidence.
(ii) Producing a response that related specifically to the cognitive approach and not laboratory experiments i.e. producing an answer 'I prepared earlier'. *This question showed itself to be a good discriminator*

G543 Options in Applied Psychology

General Comments

The forensic and health options proved the most popular. Questions performed reliably throughout the paper with no significant deviations in marks from any one section to another. Candidates' marks inevitably tend towards the middle and the full range was accessed. Knowledge and understanding was well learned but many candidates struggled to *apply* it effectively. The application/evaluation skills were well addressed, well practised and in better candidates they could develop a line of argument in keeping with the injunction in the question. In others, the attempts were more superficial. Candidates appear able to manage their time effectively and a vast majority were able to answer all the questions. Very few rubric errors were found.

Candidates with a good knowledge of the material which was applied well to specifically addressing the question performed best whereas those who took the question as a trigger to write anything in that area, or with gaps in knowledge, found it harder to access the higher marks. Most candidates produced consistent responses, and few performed better on one option than another. More than ever, the ability to respond to the specific question posed was the greatest means of differentiating the range of scores of candidates. Thus, Q1 was about poverty and disadvantage whereas many candidates merely reported the closest study in full which gave broader less specific coverage; in Q2 many candidates reported a study into the effectiveness of the CI whereas the question required a description of its use; Q3 required the description of a cognitive skills programme whereas many candidates gave a more general response about effectiveness; Q5 asks how media campaigns can be *used* whereas many candidates described a study showing whether a chip-pan fires campaign worked; and Q6 asks how work can be a cause of stress rather than whether 'finishers' endure more stress than cleaners.

The general quality of candidate responses in part (b) questions was very varied, ranging from those who could extend their answers and develop lines of argument to quite a poor response to the specific question posed. A particular issue this year was whether the evaluation of research (eg Q2 - Assess the EV of *research* into interviewing witnesses) or whether the evaluation was of the issue itself (eg Q8 - ethical issues in the treatment of dysfunctional behaviour). In the latter example, some candidates referred to withholding treatment to the control group, which applies to research or trialling but not the treatment itself.

To reach the top band in the part (b) responses proved challenging for many. The skill required is "application of knowledge and understanding" which has a different emphasis to simply "evaluate". The very best candidates would develop the answer a stage further, such as with a challenge, an extension or a legitimate comparison. These go beyond absolute statements which overlook the degree of judgement which would suggest better appreciation of the issues. Effectively addressing the injunction was a key differentiating aspect and was broadly interpreted by examiners. As ever, an extended demonstration within an answer would be sufficient to award a higher band mark even where the whole answer may not have maintained this level. Weaker candidates made general points without the necessary application/contextualisation which was needed to take answers to higher bands. Part (b) responses improved when candidates went beyond being overly descriptive and points were well expressed in the context of the question. Some evaluation issues still remain elusive for many candidates, most notably when asked to discuss reliability or validity. These terms may be being over-complicated and a simpler understanding may be acceptable for this level.

Candidates from some centres have clearly been taught to add a 'however' ('on the other hand') between paragraphs even though the information does not follow on or connect to the paragraph above it. Legitimate links are readily credited.

Comments on specific questions

Q1a. The candidates demonstrated a good grasp of the key studies reporting Farrington, Wikstrom and Tafel. Better candidates effectively responded to the 'how' command highlighting that upbringing didn't necessarily cause criminality but it did provide exposure to risk factors, more so for those from impoverished and disadvantaged backgrounds.

Q1b. Candidates demonstrated a good grasp of the main points with some more able to make clear precise points than others. A few candidates confused the longitudinal and cross sectional methods and not everyone acknowledged the attrition issue with longitudinal studies. Some made reference to the objectivity of official records. Only a few though mentioned ethical considerations, which was surprising as this would be quite an interesting topic to discuss.

Q2a. The candidates seemed to have good knowledge but there was variability in terms of ability to describe the stages. Many candidates were more comfortable describing the research where the CI had been used therefore not always directly addressing the question but still may have provided some relevant information.

Q2b. The majority of candidates responded well to the question focusing on ecological validity and not confusing this with other forms of validity. There was much variability in their ability to focus on the specific factors that contribute to EV though e.g. Emotion, study design etc but overall good responses.

Q3a. As above, better candidates responded to the describe part of the question whilst many discussed the utility of cognitive skills training with offenders. Too few really focused on the question and described a specific programme in detail including modules and course content etc. Candidates did tend to grasp why CST is used with offenders.

Q3b. The responses here were less focused so whilst many candidates were able to describe a few types of offender treatment programme, an exploration of the various factors that would indicate usefulness was less forthcoming.

Q4a. The majority of candidates were able to provide a good description of the Eberhardt study however few referred to any additional evidence e.g. Antonio. The key outcomes of the study were documented frequently but many candidates did not describe specific details which conststute 'Looking Deathworthy'.

Q4b. Candidates responded well to this question describing RJ, probation and the death penalty all as viable alternatives. The ability of the candidates to consider the validity of the research however varied more widely. The majority of candidates did however tend to remain focused on considering the validity of the research rather than the usefulness of the alternatives.

Q5a. The majority of candidates were able to describe the Cowpe study in good detail and the better candidates could link it to the theory of planned behaviour etc. Better candidates responded well to the 'how' command.

Q5b. Responses varied but many candidates remained true to the question and focused on the research rather than the methods. A few misunderstood the question. The better candidates were able to describe the different methods initially e.g. Fear arousal etc and then evaluate the research. Some however struggled to deconstruct the question and therefore whilst there was some creditworthy material the structure sometimes was lacking.

Q6a. Another popular question which candidates generally responded well to. A good description of the research was often provided mainly focusing on the Johansson study. Little variation offered, eg Marmot was seldom used.

Q6b. Some good points made regarding statistical testing, good evaluation of the use of quantitative data in the various studies used. Some tendencies to focus on methods at times but not to the discredit of the valid points made regarding QD. A few candidates confused quantitative and qualitative data but overall a good level of understanding and good evaluation linked to relevant studies.

Q7a. Some really excellent and well detailed responses to this question alongside some very poor and sparsely detailed responses drawing upon anecdotal information. A couple of responses confused the different symptoms from the different sources.

Q7b. Some candidates handled the question really well and many others still covered key points. Many candidates seemed to find it hard to provide evidence to support their points and often only discussed one study at most. Candidates also seemed to find it hard to differentiate different aspects affecting reliability e.g. Inter rater reliability versus symptom overlap and co morbidity. I think many candidates knew the point they wanted to make but possibly struggled to convey it precisely.

Q8a. Many candidates would correctly identify method, most commonly the use of drugs, but often struggle to explain how. Some explained the action of the drugs which fulfilled the 'how' command nicely. There were a few who provided very good detailed descriptions of for example drug treatment and then also outlined in brief ECT and psychosurgery.

Q8b. Again a difficult question for some candidates however the majority had a good attempt describing ethical issues or embedding them in research and so indirectly answering the question. A few excellent candidates provided a good focused response with a range of ethical issues.

Q9a. Fewer candidates opted for this question and many struggled to provide support. Research studies tended to focus on extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, in such cases many were well answered and applied to the sporting context whereas others failed to link to sport.

Q9b. Candidates attempted to remain focused on the sporting context and there were a few who provided a very good targeted response to the question.

Q10a. Variable responses with many covering Bandura but some linking it better to the sporting context than others. Again many would cover the four components well therefore indirectly linking it to the sports context but others were less successful.

Q10b. Many candidates had an attempt at evaluating the research and its application to SC in sports. Some were more successful than others in this.

Q11a. As previously, many candidates would refer to the research e.g. The Chelladurau study. Many addressed the interplay of factors well, while others seemed to get confused. Their knowledge was at times imprecise.

Q11b. Some applied the studies well and produced an engaging argument. Others found this more challenging.

Q12a. Those candidates who did quote studies focused mainly on Maganaris. The psychological impact was attended to but less consideration of the harmful impacts. Anecdotal accounts were evident.

Q12b. The few candidates who did answer this question focussed on the limitations of the research and many covered the ecological validity as well as population validity. A lack of studies was referenced in the answers. Less consideration of ethical issues but again true of many questions that candidates don't always seem think of ethics.

Q13a. A handful of candidates covered this but those who did linked it to education and were able to discuss extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. Linking the two seemed harder for a few candidates but there were a few references to Claxton but less discussion of his four characteristics.

Q13b. The few candidates who answered this question discussed usefulness in the broadest manner i.e. whether it could be applied to SP. A few discussed methodological issues.

Q14a. Good attempt at the question by a few candidates focusing on SP and the original Seligman studies but not necessarily exploring further research.

Q14b. More limited responses to the question here, few issues considered but linked to education and relevant research.

Q15a and b A very few attempted this question, but those who did were well versed in the relevant research.

Q16a The few that answered did seem to understand differences in brain structures and their functions.

Q16b Generally well addressed but maybe the opportunity to delve deeper.

G544 Approaches and Research Methods in Psychology

General Comments

The overall standard of performance of the candidates was good and candidates were well prepared for the style of questions and the format of the paper. In section A most candidates described a feasible investigation in detail which was both practical and ethical. There are a few candidates who suggested unethical research including replications of Bandura's work on the imitation of aggression, other studies inciting aggression or using under 16 year olds as participants. Some candidates were confused about the injunction to 'measure observable behaviour' and so carried out an observational study rather than an experimental one. Some candidates did not gain full credit as their description of their sample did not include how participants were allocated into their groups or how they obtained the 'audience'. However, many candidates gave imaginative and carefully thought out descriptions of a practical project based on the options. Popular choices were mathematical skill, food choices and sport performance. Candidates used their knowledge and skills appropriately to respond to the short questions on research methods. Some candidates did not answer these questions in the context of their own practical project. In section B, most candidates showed understanding of the questions under discussion but sometimes their points were not fully elaborated or their examples described in much detail. There were few rubric errors: in Section A candidates usually chose one of the research questions on which to base their practical project; in Section B they selected one out of the two questions. Most candidates were able to complete the paper in the allocated time but some appeared to be short of time as the parts d and e on section B could be very brief. Although there is not a requirement to include research from the A2 options unit many candidates were over-reliant on AS studies which limited the scope of their answers. However, the AS studies were used to good effect in the candidates' responses.

Section A

1. Most candidates framed an appropriate null hypothesis; operationalising both the independent and dependent variables. Some candidates had difficulty wording the null and suggested that there will not be a difference between the independent and dependent variables.

2. This question was marked out of 13 +6. 13 marks were given for the description of the practical project and its replicability and appropriateness. 6 marks were given for the design and its feasibility. The full range of marks (13) and (6) was awarded. Many good responses contained a clear description of their practical and how it could be carried out; they gave details of the sampling method and sample, the behaviour that was being observed and the testing conditions including timing. Others needed to describe their sampling more clearly and make it clear how participants are allocated to the two conditions. Some candidates were unable to get into the top band for design as their practical either lacked feasibility or was unethical suggesting the use of young participants under the age of 16. Some candidates did not make it explicit that an independent measures design was used. Candidates should be encouraged to carry out their own practical investigations in preparation for this examination so that they are not tempted to give partial replications of unethical research such as Bandura's or Piliavin's.

3. This question was answered well by candidates and they commonly used a high degree of control as an advantage of the experimental method. To get full marks candidates need to link their answer to the topic.

4. a) The majority of candidates were good at identifying the advantage of the Independent Measures Design normally giving lack of order effects or demand characteristics. Some candidates were unable to explain why this would impact on their project and might state order effects and then explain demand characteristics.
b) The most common weakness of the Independent Measures Design was correctly identified as participant variables and this was well explained and mostly in context.

5. Many candidates were familiar with the statistical tests used to analyse data and could correctly identify this with appropriate reasons.

6. Many candidates correctly identified a practical issue that could have arisen in their project although some candidates gave ethical or methodological issues which gained no credit.

7. Many candidates gave appropriate alternative ways of manipulating the independent variable although some candidates changed the dependent variable and this gained no credit.

Section B

8. a) Most candidates gave good answers and showed they clearly understood the psychodynamic perspective. In a few instances, there was a lack of detail in the description.
b) Candidates could describe two 'psychodynamic studies' appropriately using Freud and Thigpen and Cleckley. Answers that described the studies without explaining why they were from the psychodynamic perspective could not achieve top marks.
c) There was some clear evidence of structure to these answers with a balance of strengths and weaknesses. Better answers evaluated the individual explanation and used evidence effectively to support the points made. Weaker answers gave evaluation of the studies cited rather than directing the points towards the individual explanation.
d) Many candidates were able to make some distinctions between the psychodynamic perspective and the physiological approach and support this with appropriate evidence, commonly Freud for the psychodynamic perspective and Sperry or Maguire for the physiological approach. Weaker responses focused on a comparison between the two areas with little or inappropriate evidence.
e) Most candidates could discuss a few points relating to the usefulness of individual explanations of behaviour and present a balanced argument. Many candidates were overly descriptive, giving a series of examples, rather than developing their answers into a coherent discussion.

9 a) The question produced good answers with identification and description of two ethical issues. Some candidates confused deception and informed consent but most had a good understanding of the issues.
b) Most candidates chose appropriate studies to describe; popular choices were Milgram, Bandura, Watson and Rayner and Piliavin. Some candidates chose inappropriate research or focused on the ethical issues arising in the research with little description of the research itself.

c) Many candidates discussed a range of at least two strengths and weaknesses of using the observational method and supported their points with appropriate evidence. Candidates need to ensure that their points are discussed fully and supported with relevant evidence. Some candidates became confused when using research that incorporated observation within an experimental framework.

d) The majority of candidates made one point of comparison, focusing on how the observational method differs from one other, commonly the experimental method. The best answers gave a similarity and a difference between the two methods and supported the comparison with appropriate evidence. A few candidates compared observation with more than one other research method.

e) Most candidates have a good understanding of ethics and of the case study method but struggled to link the two. Some candidates gave list like response with examples of where aspects of case studies were or were not ethical. The best responses gave a balanced discussion of the ethical nature of the case study method without describing different examples in detail.

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