

Issues and Debates (Paper 3)

Alpha bias A tendency to exaggerate differences between men and women. The consequence is that theories devalue one gender in comparison to the other.

Androcentrism Centred or focused on men, often to the neglect or exclusion of women.

Beta bias A tendency to ignore or minimise differences between men and women. Such theories tend either to ignore questions about the lives of women, or assume that insights derived from studies of men will apply equally well to women.

Gender bias The differential treatment or representation of men and women based on stereotypes rather than real differences.

Universality The aim to develop theories that apply to all people, which may include real differences.

Cultural bias The tendency to judge all people in terms of your own cultural assumptions. This distorts or biases your judgement.

Cultural relativism The view that behaviour cannot be judged properly unless it is viewed in the context of the culture in which it originates.

Culture The rules, customs, morals and ways of interacting that bind together members of a society or some other collection of people.

Ethnocentrism Seeing things from the point of view of ourselves and our social group. Evaluating other groups of people using the standards and customs of one's own culture.

Determinism Behaviour is controlled by external or internal factors acting upon the individual.

Free will Each individual has the power to make choices about their behaviour.

Hard determinism The view that all behaviour can be predicted and there is no free will. The two are incompatible.

Soft determinism A version of determinism that allows for some element of free will.

Environment Everything that is outside our body, which includes people, events and the physical world.

Heredity The process by which traits are passed from parents to their offspring, usually referring to genetic inheritance.

Interactionist approach With reference to the nature–nurture debate, the view that the processes of nature and nurture work together rather than in opposition.

Nature Behaviour is seen to be a product of innate (biological or genetic) factors.

Nature–nurture debate The argument as to whether a person's development is mainly due to their genes or to environmental influences.

Nurture Behaviour is a product of environmental influences.

Holism With respect to a behaviour such as memory or mental disorder, perceiving the whole experience rather than the individual features and/or the relations between them.

Reductionism An approach that breaks complex phenomena into more simple components, implying that this is desirable because complex phenomena are best understood in terms of a simpler level of explanation.

Idiographic approach focuses on individuals and emphasises uniqueness; favours qualitative methods in research.

Nomothetic approach seeks to formulate general laws of behaviour based on the study of groups and the use of statistical (quantitative) techniques. It attempts to summarise the differences between people through generalisations.

Socially sensitive research Any research that might have direct social consequences for the participants in the research or the group that they represent.

Relationships (Paper 3)

Self-disclosure: The voluntary sharing of private, intimate thoughts, feelings, and experiences with a partner.

Social Penetration Theory: Altman and Taylor's model stating that relationship development is a gradual process of moving from superficial to intimate levels of self-disclosure (described as increasing in *breadth* and *depth*).

Reciprocity (of disclosure): The expectation that when one partner reveals intimate information, the other will respond with an equally intimate disclosure to maintain balance.

Halo Effect: A cognitive bias where the perception of one positive trait (such as physical attractiveness) disproportionately influences judgements about other traits (e.g., assuming an attractive person is also intelligent and kind).

Matching Hypothesis: Walster's theory that individuals do not simply seek out the most attractive partner possible, but instead look for someone who closely matches their own perceived level of physical attractiveness.

Filter Theory: Kerckhoff and Davis's explanation that relationship formation occurs through a series of progressive filters that narrow down the field of available partners.

Social Demography: The first filter in Filter Theory, referring to variables such as geographic location, social class, and education that dictate the likelihood of individuals meeting in the first place.

Similarity in Attitudes: The second filter in Filter Theory, where partners assess whether they share core values, beliefs, and attitudes, which is crucial for early-stage relationship progression.

Complementarity: The third filter in Filter Theory, referring to the degree to which partners fulfill each other's psychological needs (e.g., one partner being nurturing while the other likes to be looked after).

Social Exchange Theory (SET): An economic theory that views relationships as a series of transactions based on maximizing rewards (e.g., companionship, emotional support) and minimizing costs (e.g., time, stress).

Comparison Level (CL): A standard or benchmark against which we judge our current relationship, based on our past relationship experiences and general social expectations.

Comparison Level for Alternatives (CL_{alt}): An ongoing assessment of whether we would experience a higher net profit (more rewards, fewer costs) by switching to a different partner or by being single.

Equity Theory: An economic model stating that relationship satisfaction depends on perceived fairness, where the ratio of rewards to costs is roughly equal for both partners.

Over-benefitting: A state in Equity Theory where an individual receives more rewards relative to their inputs than their partner, leading to feelings of guilt or shame.

Under-benefitting: A state in Equity Theory where an individual puts in more effort and costs relative to the rewards they receive, leading to feelings of anger and resentment.

Investment Model: Rusbult's framework extending SET, which argues that commitment to a relationship depends not just on satisfaction and alternatives, but also on the amount of investment made.

Commitment: An individual's structural intent and emotional desire to persist in a relationship over time.

Intrinsic Investments: Resources put directly into a relationship that cannot be recovered if it ends (e.g., time, emotional energy, self-disclosure).

Extrinsic Investments: Resources or assets developed or acquired during a relationship that are mutually tied to it (e.g., mutual friends, a shared home, children).

Duck's Phase Model: A model outlining the distinct cognitive and interpersonal stages individuals experience during the breakdown of a relationship.

Intra-psychic Phase: The first stage of Duck's model, where a partner privately broods over their dissatisfaction with the relationship without explicitly confronting their partner.

Dyadic Phase: The second stage of Duck's model, where partners openly discuss their dissatisfaction, leading to confrontations, arguments, and negotiations.

Social Phase: The third stage of Duck's model, where the relationship breakdown is made public to friends, family, and wider social networks, forcing people to take sides.

Grave-dressing Phase: The final stage of Duck's model, where individuals construct a favourable post-relationship narrative to protect their own social reputation and psychological wellbeing.

Online Self-disclosure: The act of sharing intimate information through digital communication channels, which can be altered or accelerated compared to face-to-face interactions.

Deception: The deliberate misrepresentation of oneself or one's attributes online, ranging from subtle digital self-enhancement to total fabrication.

Catfishing: An extreme form of online deception where an individual creates a completely fraudulent digital identity to lure someone into a deceptive romantic relationship.

Absence of Gating: The lack of physical or superficial barriers (such as physical appearance, social anxieties, or speech impediments) that normally limit or restrict relationship formation in face-to-face settings.

Parasocial Relationship: A one-sided, unreciprocated psychological bond where an individual expends emotional energy, time, and interest on a media figure or celebrity who remains completely unaware of their existence.

Entertainment-social Level: The mildest level of celebrity worship, where a media figure is viewed as a source of entertainment and a focal point for social conversation with friends.

Intense-personal Level: The intermediate level of celebrity worship, involving obsessive, deeply felt emotional attachments and private thoughts about the celebrity.

Borderline-pathological Level: The most extreme level of celebrity worship, characterized by uncontrollable fantasies, over-identification, and a willingness to perform illegal or dangerous acts for the celebrity.

Absorption-addiction Model: McCutcheon's theory that psychological deficits or unfulfilled needs cause individuals to become "absorbed" by a celebrity's life, which can escalate into an "addictive" pattern to sustain the mental connection.

Attachment Explanation: The theory that early insecure attachment styles (specifically anxious-ambivalent) predispose individuals to forming parasocial relationships in adulthood as a safe way to seek intimacy without the fear of real-world rejection.

Aggression (Paper 3)

Limbic System: A subcortical network of brain structures (including the amygdala and hippocampus) that coordinates emotional responses and drives, heavily implicated in aggressive behavior.

Amygdala: A critical structure within the limbic system that acts as an emotional alarm bell, processing threats and triggering aggressive or fearful reactions.

Serotonin: An inhibitory neurotransmitter that regulates mood and acts as a "brake" on the brain, preventing impulsive aggression; low levels decrease self-restraint.

Testosterone: An androgen (male sex hormone) associated with status-seeking and dominant behaviors, where higher levels strongly correlate with an increased readiness to act aggressively.

MAOA Gene: The gene responsible for producing the Monoamine Oxidase A enzyme, which cleans up neurotransmitters like serotonin; the low-activity variant (MAOA-L) is heavily linked to severe impulsive violence when paired with childhood trauma.

Ethological Explanation: An approach focusing on the study of animal behavior in natural environments, viewing aggression as an adaptive mechanism evolved to defend resources or territory.

Innate Releasing Mechanism (IRM): A built-in, hardwired neural network in the brain that detects specific external cues (sign stimuli) and automatically triggers a set behavior.

Fixed Action Pattern (FAP): A stereotyped, unchanging sequence of aggressive behaviors triggered by an IRM that cannot be stopped once it has started.

Cuckoldry: The adaptive problem where a male invests time and resources into raising offspring that are not genetically his own, driving male sexual jealousy.

Mate Retention Strategies: Psychological mechanisms and actions (such as direct guarding or negative inducements) designed to deter a partner from infidelity or abandonment.

Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis: A behavioral/psychodynamic theory stating that frustration—caused by the blocking of a goal-directed behavior—always creates an aggressive drive.

Catharsis: The psychodynamic concept of releasing pent-up emotional or aggressive energy through an aggressive act, theoretically reducing internal psychological tension.

Displacement (Scapegoating): Redirecting aggressive behavior away from the original, unassailable source of frustration and onto a safer, defenseless substitute target.

Cognitive Neoassociation Model: Berkowitz's revised theory stating that frustration generates a readiness for aggression (negative affect), but environmental cues (like a visible weapon) are required to trigger actual violence.

Social Learning Theory (SLT): Bandura's model stating that aggression is learned from the environment through observing role models and imitating their behavior.

Vicarious Reinforcement: Learning by observing the outcomes of another person's actions; if a model is rewarded for aggressive behavior, the observer is highly likely to copy it.

De-individuation: A psychological state occurring in crowds or behind masks where a person loses their individual identity and self-awareness, removing inner restraints and boosting aggression.

Institutional Aggression: Violations of social rules and violent behaviors that occur within organized, formal contexts such as prisons or military institutions.

Dispositional Explanation (Importation Model): Irwin and Cressey's model stating that inmates bring their pre-existing subcultural values, aggressive personalities, and past histories of violence into the prison system with them.

Situational Explanation (Deprivation Model): Clemmer's model stating that prison aggression is a direct product of the stressful environment and the "pains of imprisonment" (such as deprivation of freedom, safety, autonomy, and material goods).

Desensitisation: A process where continuous exposure to violent media lowers a person's physiological and emotional arousal to real-world aggression, reducing empathy for victims.

Disinhibition: A shift in psychological standards where regular engagement with media violence normalizes aggressive behavior, steadily wearing down social taboos and inner behavioral restraints.

Cognitive Priming: The concept that viewing violent media provides individuals with cognitive "scripts" or blueprints for aggressive behavior, which are stored in memory and automatically activated by real-life triggers.

Stress (Paper 3)

Stress: A state of physiological and psychological arousal produced when internal or external stressors exceed an individual's perceived ability to cope.

Sympathomedullary Pathway (SAM): The bodily response to *acute* (short-term) stress; the hypothalamus activates the sympathetic nervous system, triggering the adrenal medulla to release adrenaline and noradrenaline.

Hypothalamic-Pituitary-Adrenal Axis (HPA): The bodily response to *chronic* (long-term) stress; the hypothalamus releases CRH, stimulating the pituitary gland to release ACTH, which signals the adrenal cortex to release cortisol.

Cortisol: A primary glucocorticoid hormone released during chronic stress that boosts steady energy supplies but suppresses immune system function over time.

General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS): Selye's three-stage physiological response to prolonged stress, consisting of the **Alarm reaction** (mobilizing resources), **Resistance** (coping/adapting), and **Exhaustion** (depletion of bodily resources leading to illness).

Immunosuppression: The reduction in the efficiency of the immune system caused by prolonged stress (specifically high cortisol levels), leaving the body vulnerable to infections.

Cardiovascular Disorders (CVDs): Disorders of the heart and blood vessels (such as hypertension or coronary heart disease) that can be worsened by the physiological strain of repeated SAM pathway activation.

Life Changes: Significant, infrequent life events (both positive and negative, like marriage or bereavement) that disrupt an individual's normal routine and require substantial psychic readjustment.

Daily Hassles: Minor, frequent, and mundane irritations of everyday life (such as losing keys or traffic jams) that can cumulatively cause high levels of stress.

Daily Uplifts: Small, positive everyday experiences (such as receiving a compliment or relaxing) that act as a psychological buffer against daily hassles.

Workplace Stressors: Factors within the professional environment that cause stress; specifically, **Workload** (having too much to do) and **Control** (the degree of autonomy an employee has over their tasks).

Social Readjustment Rating Scale (SRRS): A self-report questionnaire developed by Holmes and Rahe that measures life changes over a set period by assigning Life Change Units (LCUs) to various events.

Hassles and Uplifts Scale (HSUP): A self-report assessment developed by Kanner et al. that quantifies both the daily negative micro-stressors and positive micro-buffers an individual experiences.

Skin Conductance Response (SCR): A physiological measure of stress that detects sweat gland activity controlled by the sympathetic nervous system, measuring changes in the skin's electrical resistance.

Drug Therapy: A biological method of managing stress using medication, primarily **Benzodiazepines (BZs)** to boost the inhibitory neurotransmitter GABA, or **Beta-blockers** to block adrenaline receptors and lower physical arousal.

Stress Inoculation Training (SIT): A cognitive-behavioral method where clients are psychologically "vaccinated" against stress through three phases: **Conceptualisation** (understanding stress), **Skills acquisition** (learning coping strategies), and **Application** (testing skills in real life).

Biofeedback: A behavioral technique where individuals learn to exert voluntary control over involuntary physiological functions (like heart rate) by monitoring real-time bio-data on a screen.

Gender Differences in Coping: The distinction between **Problem-focused coping** (directly altering the stressor, more common in men) and **Emotion-focused coping** (regulating the emotional response to the stressor, more common in women).

Social Support: Resources provided by other people to help an individual cope, categorized into **Instrumental** (practical help), **Emotional** (empathy and comfort), and **Esteem** (boosting confidence) support.