



COMPARING THE APPROACHES

EXAMPLE ESSAY

OUTLINE THE BEHAVIOURIST APPROACH. COMPARE THE BEHAVIOURIST APPROACH WITH THE BIOLOGICAL APPROACH. (16 MARKS)

A01 (6 MARKS)

OUTLINE THE BEHAVIOURIST APPROACH

The main idea of the Behaviourist Approach (BHV APP) is that all behaviour is learned from the environment, specifically through classical and operant conditioning, which emphasises the role of stimulus and response associations.

Classical conditioning is learning through association. This is where a neutral stimulus is paired with an unconditional stimulus to produce a conditioned response. For example, Pavlov taught a dog to salivate at the sound of a bell (neutral stimulus) by pairing the food (unconditioned stimulus) with the sound of the bell.

Operant conditioning is learning through consequences. This can involve reinforcements where a consequence is given which strengthens the behaviour and makes it more likely it is going to be repeated. Or it can involve punishment, where a consequence is given which weakens a behaviour and makes it less likely it is going to be repeated. For example, B.F. Skinner trained rats to push a lever. One way he did was to reward the rat with a food pellet (a reward) each time the rat pressed the lever. This was an example of positive reinforcement where something was added (a food pellet) which strengthened the behaviour of pressing the lever.

A03 (10 MARKS)

COMPARISONS

One comparison between the two approaches is with the nature vs nurture debate. The BHV APP falls on the nurture side of the debate because they explain behaviour in terms of environmental factors that are involved - behaviour is the result of learning. According to Behaviourists we are tabula rasa, Latin for blank slates; we come into the world with no inborn ideas. It is our experiences in this world that shape us. In contrast, the Biological Approach (BIO APP) falls on the nature side of the debate because they explain behaviour in terms of innate factors - it is our biology that explains our behaviour. Therefore, it could be argued that both the BIO and BHV APP can be criticised for over emphasising one side of the nature and nurture debate and fail to explain how both can be involved. Research today points to the fact that human behaviour is about the relative contribution of both.

Another way the BHV APP can be compared with the BIO APP is with the free will and determinism debate. The BHV APP is environmentally deterministic because they state that behaviour is caused by the conditioning you have received, what B.F. Skinner called your reinforcement histories. Similarly, the BIO APP is biologically deterministic because they state that human behaviour is caused by innate biological factors that include genetics and neurotransmitter levels. Therefore, this means we can criticise both the BHV and BIO APP for removing moral responsibility from a person because if a person's behaviour truly is caused by factors outside of their control, then their behaviour cannot be their fault!

Finally, one way we can compare the approaches is by considering the Research Methods they use to study behaviour. Both the Approaches adopt highly scientific research methods such as lab experiments. This means they avoid the subjective interpretation of behaviour by only studying objective behaviours they can directly observe. Also, their lab-based research means that they have high control of the variables which enables them to replicate their research to check the reliability of the findings, as well as being able to establish cause and effect. Therefore, both the BHV and BIO APP can be praised for their research methods which give psychology scientific credibility.

TIP 1 - USE 'COMPARISON WORDS' TO MAKE IT CLEAR YOU ARE COMPARING E.G. IN CONTRAST / ON THE OTHER HAND / WHEREAS / SIMILARLY ETC.

TIP 2 - TO SAVE TIME IN THE EXAM HAVING TO WRITE OUT THE "BEHAVIOURIST APPROACH" AND THE "BIOLOGICAL APPROACH" EACH TIME ABBREVIATE THEM AFTER THE FIRST USE.