

**AS and A LEVEL**  
*Teacher Guide*

# PSYCHOLOGY

H167/H567  
For first teaching in 2015

**Component 2: How the  
contemporary study changes  
our understanding of individual,  
social and cultural diversity**

Version 1



# AS and A LEVEL PSYCHOLOGY

## How the contemporary study changes our understanding of individual, social and cultural diversity

Students need to be able to explain how research can change our understanding of individual, social and cultural diversity. There are already activities on the OCR website that explicitly compare core studies and suggest activities to address the above objective eg:

- **Delivery guide - Component 2 – Psychological themes through core studies** - see 'Learner resource 5.3 Comparing key studies of biological psychology' <http://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/208262-delivery-guide-component-2-core-studies-unit-2.pdf>
- **Lesson element - Core Studies – Milgram and Bocchiaro** [http://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/2687\\_Milgram%20vs%20Bocchiaro%20nwAG\\_FINAL.DOC](http://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/2687_Milgram%20vs%20Bocchiaro%20nwAG_FINAL.DOC)
- **Teacher guide - A guide to flipped learning** - pages 27-29 <http://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/237653-guide-to-flipped-learning.pdf>
- **Lesson element - Component 2 Memory research comparison.** <http://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/237549-memory-research-comparison-lesson-element.docx>

Much of this content may be taught when you are evaluating the core studies in terms of ethnocentrism or when discussing conclusions in relation to the area and key theme the study relates to.

Below are some key points of comparison for each key theme within the different areas.

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Area	Key theme	Core studies	Individual diversity	Social diversity	Cultural diversity
Social	Responses to people in authority	Milgram (1963) Obedience Bocchiaro et al (2012) Disobedience and whistle-blowing	This area of research led to an understanding of terrible historical events such as the holocaust and how individuals may be led to behave in ways they would never predict they would. This has led to the idea that all individuals are susceptible; if they are asked by a figure in authority, to gradually carry out terrible acts they would previously have said were inconceivable. Bocchiaro et al found similar results and extended the evidence to include female behaviour along with male behaviour.	Both pieces of research highlight the need for society to question authority further as obedience levels in both studies were seen to be high.  The contemporary study, Bocchiaro et al, uses students so may be limited in its ability to explain how different groups in society may behave but does look at a different part of society to Milgram who studied volunteers with a range of occupations.	Bocchiaro furthered Milgram's ethnocentric research and showed that obedience is high cross-culturally as well as the importance of considering individual explanations alongside situational ones.  The contemporary study also showed that obedience was similar over time and research in this area suggests that people are inherently obedient.
	Responses to people in need	Piliavin et al (1969) Subway Samaritan Levine et al (2001) Cross-cultural altruism	This area of research has found that individual's responses to people in need do vary and factors such as the judgements of an individual in need and cultural factors do have an effect on helping behaviour.	The classic study suggests individuals use a cost-benefit analysis to decide whether to help those in need; as this includes perceptions of costs and stereotypes of those in need society can improve helping behaviour by breaking down stereotypes. As an example in Piliavin's research people were more likely to help someone of the same race and this issue needs to be tackled however race was not focused on by Levine et al.  The contemporary study found a shift in the helping behaviour of females and contrasted Piliavin's research that showed helpers were predominantly males.	Levine carried out research cross-culturally that suggests that helping behaviour and altruism are affected by more than just situational explanations with countries that practice simpatia found more likely to help.  This furthers the research by Piliavin et al and shows that cultural practices can be embedded to improve helping behaviour.

Area	Key theme	Core studies	Individual diversity	Social diversity	Cultural diversity
Cognitive	Memory	Loftus and Palmer (1974) Eyewitness testimony Grant et al (1998) Context-dependent memory	Our understanding of how individuals behave due to the increasingly detailed models of behaviour that explain specific elements of memory processing and how memory can be improved or distorted. As an example Grant et al found that, further to Loftus and Palmer's conclusion that post-event information can affect memory recall, the ability to recall information is also affected by cues and the setting in which material has been processed in the first place.	The accuracy of memory is a concern for society as the criminal justice system often relies on testimony of people and the accuracy of memory processing has been questioned through this pair of core studies. This has led to changes to the criminal justice system such as those outlined in the Devlin report.  The contemporary study doesn't further our understanding of social diversity as both pieces of research use university students from America and does not specify further sectors of society.	This pair of core studies can explain cultural differences by investigating the factors that may influence memory recall. Although these studies are both ethnocentric they suggest a nomothetic explanation of behaviour that can be applied to different cultures where the culturally specific factors can be applied. Further research would need to be carried out in other cultures to establish if these models are nomothetic.
	Attention	Moray (1959) Auditory attention Simons and Chabris (1999) Visual inattention	The contemporary study does allow us to see how individuals process stimulus in their environment differently and this results in individual differences in the ability to pay attention to background stimuli. This extends the classic research into auditory information to visual information also.	Both pieces of research utilise students for their sample and therefore may not explain groups in society who do not share characteristics that are similar to these.	The contemporary study studied participants from Harvard university which allowed research to be applied to American culture as well as English culture that was previously studied by Moray.
Developmental	External influences on children's behaviour Moral development	Bandura et al (1961) Transmission of aggression Chaney et al (2004) Funhaler study	Bandura showed that males and females imitate behaviour differently and are affected more by same sex role models. Chaney et al furthered the understanding of how males and females learn behaviours but did not differentiate between them as Bandura did.	The classic study Bandura et al explained the causes of behaviour and Chaney et al furthered an understanding of how behaviourist theories can be used to improve behaviour.	Chaney et al carried out their research with Australian children which furthers Bandura's research in America and suggests that all children, regardless of culture, are able to learn and acquire behaviour using the principle of reinforcement.

Area	Key theme	Core studies	Individual diversity	Social diversity	Cultural diversity
	Moral development	Kohlberg (1968) Stages of moral development Lee et al (1997) Evaluations of lying and truth-telling	Lee et al was able to study females and males and explain how both genders develop morally, based on cultural factors. This was an improvement to the classic study as Kohlberg only studied males.		Lee et al reinforce Kohlberg's idea that morality is developed over time as they found both Canadian and Chinese children shifted their attitudes to truth-telling as they got older.  Lee et al did show that moral development is not purely down to age and progression through moral stages but also due to cultural factors that affect a person's understanding of whether lies should be told.
Biological	Regions of the brain	Sperry (1968) Split brain study Casey et al (2011) Neural correlates of delay gratification	Sperry already suggested that individual differences in the brain lead to observed differences in behaviour and Casey et al furthered this understanding by focusing on more specific regions of the brain that contribute to individual differences. They found that the ventral striatum is associated with a lack of self-control.		The contemporary study focuses on American participants like the class study did and therefore is limited in its ability to explain cultural differences.
	Brain plasticity	Blakemore and Cooper (1970) Impact of early visual experience Maguire et al (2000) Taxi drivers	Maguire et al's research was able to show that brain plasticity does not only apply to animals such as cats but to humans as well. Maguire et al showed that excessive use of navigation skills led the brain to adjust and for grey matter in the posterior hippocampi to develop to accommodate this demand.	The contemporary study doesn't tell us more about social diversity but it does show great improvements in the ability to measure human brain activity and allow for future research to now explore this.	

Area	Key theme	Core studies	Individual diversity	Social diversity	Cultural diversity
Individual differences	Understanding disorders	Freud (1909) Little Hans Baron-Cohen et al (1997)	Both studies develop an understanding of individual differences and why behaviour may differ among people. Baron-Cohen et al were able to analyse specific characteristics that lead to changes in behaviour over a more sustained period of time whereas Freud was explaining the reason some individuals experienced phobias for a relatively shorter period of time.	The contemporary study does not give further information about social diversity, nor does Freud's.	The contemporary study was carried out in the UK and suggests that Aspergers can be explained in the same way across other cultures however, like Freud, this research only focused on one culture.
	Measuring differences	Gould (1982) A nation of morons – Bias in IQ testing Hancock et al (2011) Language of psychopaths	Hancock et al was able to demonstrate that it is possible to measure behaviour to establish factors that cause individual differences fairly. This contemporary study allowed more specific behaviours to be measured to understand abnormal behaviour rather than Gould's focus on typical intelligence.	Hancock et al focused on 52 men who were in prison for murder and was therefore not necessarily able to tell us more about social diversity as a whole but about a particular group of individuals who are likely, given research into offending, to have similar backgrounds. This did enable Hancock et al to explain an important issue in society and potentially reduce future offending.	The contemporary study focused on prisoners in Canada and therefore does not offer further insight into cultural diversity overall, it does extend our understanding from America in the classic study but could be improved by considering the behaviour of individuals in further cultures.



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