

Spend 5mins understanding & planning the question – what is it asking you?

Use your knowledge and understanding from across the psychology course to explain how far you agree with the following viewpoint.

“Laboratory experiments are so artificial that we cannot reasonably apply them to real life. The only useful studies in psychology are those conducted outside of a laboratory.”

In your answer you should refer to at least two different areas of psychology you have studied. [13]

Planning: decide whether you mostly agree or mostly disagree with the statement & why.

Planning: identify the debate in the statement (e.g. subjectivity/objectivity; nature/nurture; reductionism/holism; free will/determinism; **lab/field experiments** etc.

Planning: your 2 studies must come from TWO different topic areas from Paper 1 or Paper 2.

Planning: this does not have the compulsory focus BUT as it's about lab experiments, they MUST be studies.

PLANNING: The first 6-8 lines of the lined answer section should be used for planning

1st SIDE OF ARGUMENT (lab experiments being useful.).

1st study – Braun et al.:

- Key point (with note form details)
- Key point (with note form details)

Link to why it's this side of argument

1st study – Braun et al.:

- Key limitation 1 (shows other side of debate)
- Key limitation 2 (shows other side of debate)

2nd study – Cooper & Mackie

- Key points & limitations to support other study

2nd SIDE OF ARGUMENT (e.g. field experiments being more useful.)

3rd study - Bickman

- Key point (with note form details)
- Key point (with note form details)

Link to why it's this side of argument

3rd study - Bickman

- Key limitation 1 (shows other side of debate)
- Key limitation 2 (shows other side of debate)

FINAL points to show which side you agree with most & why.

AO3 – Provides clear statement that shows learner's argument in response to the question & why it mostly agrees/disagrees with the statement

I mostly disagree that laboratory experiments are so artificial that they cannot be applied to real life and are of little use. Lab experiments have more control over variables and can measure cause and effect more effectively. However, they do have limitations and experiments conducted outside of the lab (such as field experiments) are also useful as they give us a better idea of how people behave in a natural environment.

AO3 – Shows understanding of key debate in the question (lab experiments less useful than field experiments)

AO1 – Describes the procedure of the study in detail and with accuracy. N.B. Results not needed for this essay qu.

Braun et al (2002) carried out an experiment in the laboratory where they were able to establish the cause and effect of watching an autobiographical Disney advert on participants' memory of a key event – whether they had shook hands with favourite TV character or not. Those participants who had seen the autobiographical advert as opposed to the control which just gave information, were more confident they had shook hands with a character when they filled out a questionnaire after the event (compared to one they had filled out before). A second experiment showed that this effect happened even when the character was not even a Disney character (Bugs Bunny) so the participants could not even have shook this character's hand at Disney World!

AO1 – Describes the aim and research method of the study.

As this was a laboratory experiment there was a high level of control over extraneous variables which could have affected the findings. For example, adverts were viewed with no distractions and the same set of questions were given to all participants to go through so that they could not be influenced. In addition, timings were standardised – for example, there was a week's gap between filling out the first questionnaire and the watching the advert, and distractor tasks lasted the same time in both conditions. This is because time has an obvious effect on things like memory consolidation.

AO3 – directly answers the question and provides clear reasons for one side of debate

AO3 – directly links to the essay question

However, one problem with lab experiments is that they are so artificial, and findings can lack ecological validity. In this experiment, it is not like real-life to watch an advert in such a controlled environment and, on top of that, the experimenters are telling you to write

AO3 – limitation of lab experiments

AO3 – limitation of research methods that affects study's ability to reflect real life

down what you felt about the advert. Another problem is a lack of construct validity because the DV is often measured very narrowly on experiments to give quantitative data – in this one, it was to a score for how likeliness of shaking a character's hand (a narrow measure of the influence of the advert). Because participants knew there were in a lab doing an experiment, there is also the problem of demand characteristics where they may work out the aim – in this case, to test the effect of an advert on how they answer questions second time around. These limitations show that it can be difficult to apply lab experiments to real life.

AO3 – directly answers the essay question

AO1 – Describes the research method & procedure of the study in detail and with accuracy. N.B. the results are not needed

Cooper & Mackie also carried out a laboratory experiment to test the effect of playing different computer games on levels of aggression. There were three different types of games and their effect was measured in two ways – one was how long they played with different types of toys (one of these was an aggressive toy) and how much they would punish a naughty child in a questioning activity they took part in. Again, there were lots of controls in place to help to establish cause and effect – for example, the children in the experiment were randomly assigned to conditions, and the same set of toys were on offer for the same length of time. Similarly to the other experiment, the game playing and the toy playing took place in highly controlled conditions and so the children may have become self-conscious and behaved differently from normal. Construct validity was low again as aggression was measured using quantitative data – how long each toy was played (not, for example, how it was played with) and how long a buzzer was pressed to show how much a participant would punish another child. In these ways, this study was not able to reflect real life.

AO3 – directly answers the essay question

AO3 – limitations of lab experiment method

AO1 – Describes the aim, research method & context

On the other hand, Bickman's (1974) study into the effects of uniform was a field experiment that took place on the streets of New York and measured how people behaved in their natural environment. Passers-by were asked to do things like pick up litter – sometimes by experimenters in uniforms, other times by experimenters in normal civilian clothes. Bickman found obedience levels were highest when a guard's uniform was used. In this experiment, there is high ecological validity because the setting is not artificial this time. The passers-by had no reason to believe that this was not a real situation. Similarly, because they were not aware of being experimented on, there would have been no demand characteristics. However, construct validity remains a problem because the measure of obedience is still narrow – will you pick up litter or not? This is because it is still an experiment and therefore still has a DV which needs to be quantified in some way.

AO1 – Describes the procedure

AO3 – directly answers the essay question by showing how field experiments reflect real life

AO3 – limitations of field experiments

AO3 – limitations of field experiments

The biggest problem with field experiments compared to laboratory experiments is the lack of control over extraneous variables. For example, in Bickman's experiment, there were many uncontrolled street variables which could affect whether people stopped and did as they were told – like the weather, or the crowds.

AO3 – compares field & lab experiments

AO3 – argument in response to the

To conclude, the idea laboratory experiments are so artificial that we cannot reasonably apply them to real life is probably a little unfair. It is the level of control that allows us to establish cause and effect, and this is what is important to apply to real life. For example, if we are going to use certain types of adverts or ban certain types of computer games, we need to really know that they are having an effect. Studies done outside of the lab are useful too, because they show human behaviour in a more realistic environment. So perhaps the solution is to do both types of studies and to compare the findings to make sure there is some consistency.

AO3 – provides clear argument and reasons in response to the statement. Clearly addresses the value of Freud's research to show other side.