8.10 Applying Issues and Debates to Memory and Eyewitness Testimony Research: 30-minute Pack

AQA 7182 · about 30 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions.

1 Describe one way eyewitness testimony research could be accused of cultural bias, and give one practical implication for the justice system if such bias exists.

(Total for Question 1 is 4 marks)

2 Describe briefly how holism offers an alternative to reductionism when explaining memory errors in eyewitness testimony research.

(Total for Question 2 is 3 marks)

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3 Researchers wish to test whether an adapted interview technique reduces cultural bias in eyewitness reports. Give a fully operationalised, non-directional null hypothesis and state an appropriate sampling method to reduce cultural bias in recruitment.

(a) Write a fully operationalised, non-directional null hypothesis for the study testing the adapted interview technique on eyewitness accuracy across cultural groups. **(3)**

(b) State a sampling method that would help reduce cultural bias when recruiting participants, and briefly describe how it would be implemented. **(3)**

(Total for Question 3 is 6 marks)

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4 Discuss the extent to which research into memory is reductionist. In your answer, refer to the multi-store model and to eyewitness testimony research, and consider alternative holistic accounts and the practical implications of reductionist research for legal practice.

(Total for Question 4 is 16 marks)

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Mark scheme · 8.10 Applying Issues and Debates to Memory and Eyewitness Testimony Research: 30-minute Pack

Question 1

identifies a cultural bias issue, e.g. most studies use Western participants and may not account for cross-cultural differences in attention to faces or social norms oe	**M1**
explains why this is a problem, e.g. differences in recognition accuracy or in responses to authority could change how reliable eyewitness reports are across cultures oe	**A1**
states a practical implication, e.g. police procedures based on such research might be less effective or unfair for witnesses from other cultures oe	**M1**
explains the implication, e.g. misapplied procedures could increase wrongful convictions or reduce confidence in the justice system among minority communities oe	**A1**

Answer: Cultural bias arises when studies use mainly Western participants, ignoring cross-cultural differences in face processing or deference to authority; as a consequence, police procedures developed from this research might be less valid for other cultures, risking wrongful convictions and reduced trust in the justice system.

Question 2

identifies holism, e.g. memory is viewed as an interaction of cognitive, emotional and social factors rather than separate stores oe	**M1**
explains application, e.g. eyewitness errors are explained by interactions between stress, attention, social influence and context rather than a single faulty store oe	**A1**
gives consequence, e.g. holistic approaches suggest interventions should address interview context, emotion regulation and social dynamics as well as memory training oe	**A1**

Answer: Holism views memory errors as arising from interacting cognitive, emotional and social factors. For eyewitnesses this means stress, attention, social influence and context combine to affect recall, so remedies must address context and emotion as well as cognitive processes.

Question 3

(a) states non-directional null hypothesis format, e.g. there will be no difference in eyewitness accuracy between interview techniques or cultural groups oe	**M1**
(a) operationalises independent variable, e.g. interview technique: standard interview versus adapted interview oe	**A1**
(a) operationalises dependent variable, e.g. eyewitness accuracy measured as percentage of correct event details recalled from a standard video, scored by predefined criteria oe	**A1**

(a) Answer: Null hypothesis: there will be no difference in eyewitness accuracy, measured as the percentage of correctly recalled event details from a standard video, between participants interviewed using the standard interview and those interviewed using the adapted interview, across the cultural groups sampled.

(b) identifies an appropriate probability sampling method, e.g. stratified sampling by cultural group oe	**M1**
(b) describes implementation, e.g. identify relevant cultural strata, determine proportions in target population, and randomly sample within each stratum oe	**A1**
(b) explains why it reduces bias, e.g. ensures all cultural groups are represented proportionally, improving generalisability of conclusions oe	**A1**

(b) Answer: Stratified sampling: identify cultural strata relevant to the research, decide target proportions, then randomly select participants within each stratum so all cultural groups are proportionally represented, reducing cultural sampling bias.

Question 4

Level 4 Knowledge of reductionism and holism in memory research is accurate and well developed. Discussion is thorough and balanced, using the multi-store model and eyewitness testimony research as applied examples. Evaluation considers methodological, theoretical and practical implications, including the value of reductionist precision and the limits of over-simplification. Arguments are coherent, well organised and use specialist terminology appropriately.	**13-16**
Level 3 Knowledge is clear with reasonable detail. Discussion evaluates reductionist and holistic perspectives with some balance, and applies points to MSM and eyewitness research. Some relevant implications are considered, though depth or balance may be limited. The answer is generally organised and uses appropriate terminology.	**9-12**
Level 2 Knowledge is present but basic. Discussion is limited or one-sided, with simple application to the MSM or eyewitness studies. Evaluation is superficial, perhaps listing strengths and limitations without full development. The answer may lack clarity in places and use terminology inconsistently.	**5-8**

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Level 1 Knowledge is very limited and answers may be simplistic or descriptive. Discussion/evaluation is minimal or absent, and application to MSM or eyewitness research is weak or missing. The answer lacks structure and specialist terminology is absent or misused. **1-4**

Level 0 No creditable content. **0**

Indicative content:

- AO1: Reductionism defined as explaining complex phenomena by simpler components, versus holism which emphasises interaction of multiple factors.
- AO1: The multi-store model (MSM) exemplifies reductionism by separating sensory register, STM and LTM and specifying discrete functions such as coding, duration and capacity. This allowed clear experimental tests of store-specific predictions.
- AO1: Eyewitness testimony research often isolates variables such as leading questions, post-event discussion or retention interval in controlled studies, demonstrating a reductionist, variable-focused approach.
- AO3: Strength of reductionism: precise hypotheses, controlled experiments and clearer causal inferences, which have produced useful findings such as the effects of leading questions that can inform interview protocols.
- AO3: Limitation of reductionism: may ignore interactions with emotion, stress, social influence, and cultural context that affect everyday memory and eyewitness reliability, reducing ecological validity of laboratory findings.
- AO3: Holistic alternatives include cognitive models that incorporate emotion and social context, and ecological or systems approaches that view memory as situated and distributed across person and environment; these better account for complex eyewitness phenomena but can be harder to test experimentally.
- AO3: Evaluation of practical implications: reductionist research has led to concrete procedural changes, e.g. guidance on question wording and the use of cognitive interviews, showing applied value despite simplification. However over-reliance on simplified lab results risks misapplication in court without qualification about limits.
- AO3: Consideration of issues and debates language: reductionism sits with scientific determinism and nomothetic aims, while holism fits idiographic, contextualised explanations. Also consider gender and cultural bias where reductionist samples (WEIRD) limit generalisability.
- AO3: Conclude with a balanced judgement that reductionism has been highly productive for building knowledge and practical tools, but must be complemented by holistic and field research to ensure applicability to complex, real-world eyewitness situations.

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