15.2 Ethological and Evolutionary Explanations of Aggression: 10-minute Pack

AQA 7182 · about 10 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions.

1 Outline what is meant by a fixed action pattern (FAP) in ethology, and give one clear example relating to aggression in a non-human species, explaining why it counts as a FAP.

(Total for Question 1 is 2 marks)

2 Outline one piece of cross-cultural evidence that challenges a simple evolutionary account of aggression, and explain why it poses a problem for universal genetic explanations.

(Total for Question 2 is 3 marks)

3 Explain one methodological problem with extrapolating from animal ethology studies of aggressive fixed action patterns to human aggression. Give a specific reason why the generalisation may be limited.

(Total for Question 3 is 3 marks)

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Mark scheme · 15.2 Ethological and Evolutionary Explanations of Aggression: 10-minute Pack

Question 1

defines FAP as an innate, stereotyped sequence of behaviour that, once triggered, runs to completion oe — **B1**

gives an aggression-related example, e.g. a species-typical threat display or ritual fight with a predictable sequence of actions, and links it to the definition oe — **B1**

Answer: A FAP is an inherited, stereotyped sequence of behaviour that once triggered runs to completion; for example many bird species perform a fixed threat display of raised feathers, vocal call and approach-retreat movements, a predictable sequence that qualifies as a FAP.

Question 2

identifies genuine cross-cultural evidence, e.g. societies where rates or forms of aggression differ markedly from the patterns predicted by a simple evolutionary account oe — **M1**

explains why this challenges universality, e.g. cultural norms, social structure or resource distribution can change the expression of aggression and so a purely genetic explanation is insufficient oe — **A1**

may give an example such as lower rates of lethal male violence in certain egalitarian or matrilineal societies, undermining a claim that male violence is universally inevitable oe — **A1**

Answer: For example, some societies show low rates of lethal male violence or different forms of conflict resolution, which suggests cultural norms and social organisation shape aggression. This challenges a universal genetic account because it shows the expression of aggression varies with culture and context rather than being fixed across humans.

Question 3

identifies a methodological or conceptual problem, e.g. differences in cognitive complexity, social learning, language and conscious decision making in humans compared with animals oe — **M1**

explains why this limits extrapolation, e.g. human aggression is often mediated by culture, moral reasoning and complex social institutions that animal models do not capture oe — **A1**

may give a concrete example, e.g. ritual displays in birds are innate and stereotyped, whereas human displays and violence are context-sensitive and subject to norms and laws oe — **A1**

Answer: Animal FAPs are useful models, but humans differ in cognitive complexity, social learning and language, so human aggression is more influenced by culture, moral reasoning and institutions. Therefore simple extrapolation from animal ritual displays to human violence can be misleading.

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