10.2 Cognitive, Psychodynamic and Social Explanations of Gender Development

AQA 7182 · about 55 minutes · Write-in edition

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions.

1 Explain one strength and one limitation of Kohlberg's cognitive-developmental theory of gender development, with reference to empirical evidence.

(Total for Question 1 is 4 marks)

2 Discuss cognitive, psychodynamic and social explanations of gender development.

(Total for Question 2 is 16 marks)

3 Outline Kohlberg's cognitive-developmental theory of gender development, naming and briefly describing the three stages: gender identity, gender stability and gender constancy.

(Total for Question 3 is 4 marks)

4 Outline Martin and Halverson's gender schema theory and explain the roles of in-group and out-group schemas in shaping a preschool child's toy preferences.

(Total for Question 4 is 3 marks)

5 Explain how social learning theory accounts for gender development, with specific reference to modelling, differential reinforcement and direct tuition in a family context.

(Total for Question 5 is 4 marks)

6 Outline Freud's psychodynamic explanation of gender development, naming the Oedipus and Electra complexes and the role of identification. Refer to the Little Hans case study as an illustration of his method rather than as general support.

(Total for Question 6 is 2 marks)

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7 Read the vignette and answer the question that follows.

Vignette: Four-year-old Erin prefers to play with dolls and often watches her mother style hair on television. When her older brother teases her about dolls, her parents tell him not to tease and praise Erin for sharing her dolls with other children. Erin has recently started copying her mother by pretending to brush a dolls hair. Which explanation of gender development best accounts for Erin's behaviour, and why? Refer to at least two specific mechanisms from the relevant theory in your answer.

(Total for Question 7 is 6 marks)

8 Explain one piece of cross-cultural evidence that challenges social learning explanations of gender development, and explain why this is a challenge.

(Total for Question 8 is 4 marks)

Mark scheme · 10.2 Cognitive, Psychodynamic and Social Explanations of Gender Development

Question 1

strength: developmental sequencing supported by evidence that children's gender-related behaviour changes with cognitive development oe	**M1**
explains why this matters: it supports Kohlberg's claim that cognitive understanding influences gendered behaviour, eg older preschoolers show more systematic same-sex preferences than toddlers oe	**A1**
limitation: evidence for early gender-typed behaviour challenges Kohlberg, as gender-typical preferences appear before full constancy, supporting gender schema theory oe	**M1**
explains why this matters: if children show gender-typical behaviour before achieving constancy, Kohlberg's sequence and the necessity of constancy for modelling are undermined oe	**A1**

Answer: A strength is empirical support that cognitive development relates to changing gender behaviour, with older children showing more consistent same-sex preferences. A limitation is that some children show gender-typed behaviour before achieving gender constancy, which supports gender schema theory and suggests Kohlberg may overstate the role of constancy and the timing of same-sex modelling.

Question 2

Level 4 Knowledge of cognitive, psychodynamic and social explanations is accurate, detailed and integrated. Discussion evaluates strengths and limitations thoroughly, using relevant empirical evidence and methodological critique, including consideration of cross-cultural and developmental sequencing evidence. The answer is well organised and applies material to reach reasoned, balanced conclusions.	**13-16**
Level 3 Knowledge is generally accurate with some detail. Discussion contains evaluation and use of evidence, though some points may be less developed. There is some integration across explanations and a reasonable conclusion, with mostly clear organisation.	**9-12**
Level 2 Knowledge is present but limited. Evaluation is partial or descriptive, with limited use of supporting evidence. Comparison between explanations may be brief or superficial. Answer may lack sustained focus or depth.	**5-8**
Level 1 Knowledge is minimal and largely inaccurate or disjointed. Very limited evaluation and little or no use of evidence. Answer is poorly organised with few relevant points.	**1-4**
Level 0 No creditable content.	**0**

Indicative content:

- AO1: Kohlberg's cognitive-developmental theory: stages of gender identity, gender stability and gender constancy; sequence and claim that constancy is needed before seeking same-sex models.
- AO1: Gender schema theory (Martin and Halverson): schemas formed around gender guide attention and memory; in-group and out-group processing leads to early gender-typical behaviour.
- AO1: Freud's psychodynamic account: Oedipus and Electra complexes during the phallic stage, identification with same-sex parent leads to gendered behaviour; Little Hans as a case-study illustration of Freud's method.
- AO1: Social learning theory: modelling of same-sex role models, differential reinforcement, direct tuition, and influence of media and culture on gendered behaviour.
- AO3: Strength of Kohlberg: links cognitive development to changing behaviour; supported by some age-related patterns in toy choice, but limitation is evidence of early gender-typing before constancy, undermining the necessity of constancy.
- AO3: Gender schema theory strength: explains early gender-typed behaviour and the cognitive mechanisms that operate before full constancy; limitation is that it may underplay the role of social reinforcement and modelling, and experimental evidence can be mixed.
- AO3: Psychodynamic strength: historical influence and emphasis on family dynamics; limitations are lack of empirical support, reliance on retrospective and subjective interpretations, single-case evidence like Little Hans which is not generalisable and is open to researcher bias.
- AO3: SLT strengths: clear mechanisms supported by observational evidence that children imitate same-sex models and respond to reinforcement; limitations include cross-cultural variability which suggests SLT is incomplete, and difficulty isolating modelling from reinforcement in natural settings.
- AO3: Methodological issues: case studies versus experimental and cross-cultural studies, problems of operationalising gender constructs, and ethical limits on experimental tests of psychodynamic claims.
- AO3: Integration and conclusion: possible synthesis where cognitive schemas interact with social learning processes, with psychodynamic ideas historically important but lacking modern empirical support; consider which explanations best account for early emergence, cross-cultural variation and individual differences.

Question 3

identifies stage 1 as gender identity: child labels self as boy or girl, around age 2-3 oe **M1**

identifies stage 2 as gender stability: child realises gender is stable over time but may be confused by external features, around preschool years oe **M1**

identifies stage 3 as gender constancy: child understands gender is consistent across situations and over time, typically by age 6 oe **M1**

explains that understanding progresses cognitively and that constancy is needed before children seek same-sex models according to Kohlberg oe **A1**

Answer: Kohlberg proposed three stages: gender identity (child can label self as boy or girl from about 2 to 3 years), gender stability (child realises gender is stable over time but may still judge by appearance), and gender constancy (by around age 6 the child understands gender is constant across situations and time, which then leads to seeking same-sex models).

Question 4

outlines gender schema theory: children form mental schemas for gender that guide processing of information about themselves and others oe **M1**

states in-group schema: information about one's own gender is attended to and remembered more, guiding behaviour towards same-sex activities oe **M1**

explains out-group schema reduces attention to information about the other gender, so children may dismiss or forget counterstereotypical behaviour, reinforcing toy preferences oe **A1**

Answer: Gender schema theory says children form mental frameworks for male and female behaviour. An in-group schema leads children to notice and remember information about their own gender and to prefer same-sex activities and toys. An out-group schema reduces attention to the other sex, so counterstereotypical examples are overlooked and existing toy preferences are reinforced.

Question 5

states that social learning theory emphasises imitation of role models, reinforcement and direct tuition oe **M1**

explains modelling: children imitate same-sex models, such as a father or mother, because they identify with them oe **M1**

explains differential reinforcement: parents praise or reward gender-typical behaviour and discourage atypical behaviour, so gendered actions increase oe **A1**

explains direct tuition: parents or carers explicitly teach gender-appropriate behaviour, eg telling a boy that certain toys are for boys, which shapes gendered preferences oe **A1**

Answer: Social learning theory explains gender development via imitation of same-sex role models, differential reinforcement where parents reward gender-typical behaviour and discourage atypical behaviour, and direct tuition when adults explicitly teach children what is appropriate for their sex. These processes in the family encourage children to adopt gender-typical behaviours and preferences.

Question 6

states that Freud proposed children pass through psychosexual stages and that gender develops via the Oedipus (boys) and Electra (girls) complexes during the phallic stage oe **B1**

states that identification with the same-sex parent resolves the conflict and leads the child to internalise that parent's gendered behaviour oe **B1**

Answer: Freud argued gender develops during the phallic stage through the Oedipus complex in boys and the Electra complex in girls; the child resolves the conflict by identifying with the same-sex parent and internalising their gendered behaviour. The Little Hans case illustrated Freud's case-study method rather than providing generalisable evidence.

Question 7

identifies social learning theory as the best-fitting explanation cao **B1**

explains modelling: Erin imitates her mother and copies grooming behaviour she observes on television oe **M1**

explains differential reinforcement: parents praise Erin for sharing dolls and tell her brother not to tease, reinforcing her doll-play behaviour oe **M1**

links imitation and reinforcement to the increase in Erin's doll-play and grooming role play, showing how these mechanisms produce gender-typical behaviour oe **A1**

mentions direct tuition or vicarious reinforcement: Erin may see her mother rewarded by social approval, making the behaviour more likely to be imitated oe **M1**

explains why other theories fit less well: for example Kohlberg would predict stronger same-sex modelling after constancy, not at age four, and psychodynamic accounts rely on unconscious conflict which is not illustrated here oe **A1**

Answer: Social learning theory best accounts for Erin's behaviour: she models her mother and televised role models by pretending to brush a dolls hair, and her parents praise her sharing while discouraging teasing, which differentially reinforces the doll-play. Vicarious reinforcement from seeing approval for feminine grooming also increases imitation. Kohlberg and psychodynamic accounts are less directly supported by these observable modelling and reinforcement processes at age four.

Question 8

identifies cross-cultural evidence: eg some studies find variation in gender-typed behaviour between cultures, or some cultures show less rigid gender roles than others oe **M1**

explains that if social learning was the sole mechanism, similar modelling and reinforcement should produce similar gender behaviour across cultures, but it does not, showing other factors matter oe **A1**

offers a specific example: eg research showing that in some cultures children engage in gender-typical tasks earlier or later, or that men and women share roles in certain societies oe **M1**

explains why this challenges SLT: cultural variations suggest that social institutions, economic structures or broader cultural schemas shape gender beyond simple family modelling, so SLT is incomplete oe **A1**

Answer: Cross-cultural studies show that the degree and form of gender-typed behaviour vary between societies. If social learning alone determined gender, similar modelling and reinforcement should produce similar patterns, but differences between cultures suggest that wider cultural structures and social institutions also shape gender development. For example, in some societies both sexes share caregiving roles early, which cannot be explained solely by identical family modelling.