

# Issues

# Debates

## Gender bias

**Alpha** — Overestimates gender differences  
**Beta** — Ignores/underestimates gender differences  
**Androcentrism** — Normal = male

### Examples

Alpha bias — Freud's psychoanalytic theory  
 Beta bias — Asch conformity research on males only



## Cultural bias

**Ethnocentrism** — Assume our own cultural perspectives are universal  
**Cultural relativism** — Norms and values are only meaningful when considered in cultural context

### Examples

Ethnocentric — Research method designed in one culture and used in others, e.g. Strange Situation  
 Cultural relativism — Defining mental disorders requires reference to local social norms



## Ethics

**Socially sensitive research** — When there are potential consequences for participants/groups in the research

### Examples

Research that strengthens stereotypes, e.g. research showing gender differences  
 Research that suggests something unpleasant about human nature, e.g. Milgram's obedience research



# Issues and debates in psychology

## Nature vs nurture

**Nature** — Inborn but not necessarily present at birth  
**Nurture** — Experience, learning  
**Interactionist** — Virtually everything is a combination of nature and nurture

### Examples

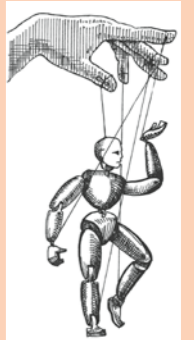
Abnormality — Nature (genes) + nurture (early life experiences)

## Free will vs determinism

**Hard determinism** — There is no free will  
**Soft determinism** — Within certain constraints on our choices we have free will  
**Free will** — We have conscious control over our choices

### Examples

Biological determinism, e.g. genetic influence on abnormal behaviour  
 Environmental determinism, e.g. reinforcement  
 Psychic determinism, e.g. unconscious thoughts  
 Free will, e.g. personal responsibility



## Reductionism vs holism

**Reductionism** — Explanations at a lower level  
**Holism** — Studying the whole system

### Examples

Biological reductionism, e.g. role of neurotransmitters in depression  
 Environmental reductionism, e.g. stimulus-response explanation of phobias  
 Holism, e.g. humanistic therapy



## Idiographic vs nomothetic

**Idiographic** — Studying the unique individual  
**Nomothetic** — Creating general laws about behaviour

### Examples

Idiographic, e.g. emphasis on human uniqueness in humanistic approach  
 Nomothetic, e.g. standardised tests, universal explanations (behaviourist, psychodynamic, biological approaches)



## Issues and debates

Understanding of the issues and debates can be used as part of your evaluation in any exam answer — but you must clearly relate it to the context/question

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