

Writing Extended Written Responses

Overview:

The purpose of Extended Written Responses (EWRs) is to demonstrate your understanding of content and your ability to think critically about research studies. You will be asked to create and defend a clear argument that is supported by research and critical thinking. (~800-1,000 Words)

Command Terms/Sample Prompts:

Prompts for EWRs will use level 3 command terms that require you to synthesize and apply your knowledge while answering them.

- **Examine one evolutionary explanation of behavior**
- **Evaluate schema theory.**
- **Discuss two errors in attribution.**
- **To what extent do social or cultural factors affect one cognitive process?**

General Outline of an Essay

- I. Introduction
- II. Study Summary #1
- III. Critical Thinking of Study #1
- IV. Study Summary #2
- V. Critical Thinking of Study #2
- VI. Conclusions

*****Note: Each different command term may have a unique structure. For example, a question that asks you to compare and contrast two studies will likely look different from a response that asks you to examine a single theory. However, this is generally a strong general outline to follow.*****

Essential Elements

Planning/Brainstorming:

- **Understand the command term** (Examine: Consider an argument or concept in a way that uncovers the assumptions and interrelationships of the issue)
- **Identify the topic of your response** (Pair Bonding Hypothesis)
- **Identify key terms** (Evolutionary Psychology, Natural Selection, Genetic Inheritance, Dopamine, Oxytocin)
- **Identify studies that relate** (Fisher et al. (2004), Feldman et al. (2012))
- **Determine your main idea/claim**
- **Write your thesis statement with claim and supporting arguments**

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Introduction:

- **Identify and define key terms and concepts**
- **Introduce and identify the studies you will focus on**
- **Provide a Thesis statement that clearly presents your argument and answer to the prompt with reference to the research studies.**

Evolutionary psychology is a subfield of psychology which focuses on developing and researching theories that explain how human behavior has evolved throughout the generations of human ancestors. This field of study relies on Darwin's concept of natural selection which states that organisms whom are best suited to their environment are able to survive and pass on their genes to future generations. This field also assumes that genetic inheritance to some extent determines the behaviors that an organism will display in its lifetime. One example of evolutionary theory discusses why humans form romantic bonds with single partners, sometimes for life. This is the Pair Bonding Hypothesis. This theory, developed by Helen Fisher, states that forming bonds is beneficial to mates because it protects each from the dangers of the world and increases the chances of their offspring, and thus genes, to survive. Humans have evolved a biological system that is specific to pair bonding which is demonstrated in the studies Fisher et al. (2004) and Feldman et al. (2012). The impact that dopamine and oxytocin have on behaviors that support the development and maintenance of long-term relationships supports the Pair Bonding Hypothesis. However, there are limitations to the hypothesis due to its lack of reference to the cultural factors that shape relationships. (211 words)

Body Paragraph #1: Study #1 Summary and Connections

- **Topic sentence with reference to key study.**
- **Identify the study of focus and provide a study summary (Aim, Method, Findings, Conclusions)**
- **Explain how this research study defends your thesis/answers the prompt.**

One study that supports the pair-bonding hypothesis is Fisher et al. (2004) because it shows how the release of dopamine upon the sight of a person's mate leads to goal orientated thinking and behavior. The researchers aimed to determine what happens in the brain when an individual sees their lover. They placed participants from the United States in a fMRI machine and asked them to view a variety of images and to perform a variety of tasks. The researchers discovered that when individuals saw a picture of their beloved, they had an increase of dopamine in the brain. This neurotransmitter is associated with goal orientated behavior and the researchers concluded that the sight of a lover sets off positive emotions and behaviors associated with the goal of being with and protecting this person. This research defends the pair bonding hypothesis because it demonstrates the strong goal orientated behavior that

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occurs upon the release of dopamine with the sight of people's beloved. This evolutionary trait allows humans to focus their attention and desires on a particular mate and encourages them to do what is in their power to ensure their safety and survival, thus increasing the likelihood of the survival of their potential offspring and thus genes. (206 words)

Body Paragraph #2: Critical Thinking of Study #1

Note: Types of Critical Thinking include Application, Discussion of Methodology, Ethics, Synthesis of studies (supporting or conflicting studies), and other specific strengths/limitations of theories and studies.

- **Critical Thinking Component #1**
- **Critical Thinking Component #2**

However, the participants in Fisher's research were not representative of the whole world's population. Yet, this hypothesis considers pair bonding a universal behavior and does not fully account for the cultural impacts on romantic relationships. For example, it is possible that these brain patterns do not occur in polygamist societies around the globe. This is a problem for many evolutionary theories because they must assume that there are universal human behaviors. Still, multiple studies, including Scheele et al (2013) did demonstrate similar results. In this study, it was found that oxytocin, a hormone responsible for creating bonds between individuals, was found to magnify this dopamine reaction. This would indicate that close romantic bonding is in fact a rewarding experience for humans and thus an evolutionary necessity similar to hunger. This would indicate that our feelings of love are very much a natural aspect of our biology. (129 words)

Body Paragraph #3: Study #2 Summary and Connections

(See above for example)

Body Paragraph #4: Critical Thinking of Study #2

(See above for example)

Conclusion

- **Relates to the prompt and builds upon the ideas you have discussed in the essay.**

Despite the inherent limitations of this, and all evolutionary explanations of behavior, the evidence supporting the biological functions within the brain and body associated with love is too strong to fully doubt the validity of the pair bonding hypothesis. It is very likely that humans have evolved the rather unique behavior of creating life bonds with our mates to raise our young as a way of maximizing the likelihood of passing on our genes to future generations. (77 words)