**Writing Exam Answers**

**Application and Topic Sentences**

**Problem:** Many students lose marks for making the following mistakes:

1. **Not introducing studies in topic sentences**
   1. Most students forget to state how a study is relevant to the question and simply start describing it. Having a clear topic sentence that clearly states how the study is going to help you answer the question will help keep your answer focused.
2. **Not explaining conclusions of studies**
   1. Most students end their description of a study with the results and then move on to the next point. This means you haven’t shown you understand the study or can apply it to the question. Drawing conclusions from studies as they relate to the question being answered can be the difference between a mediocre answer and an excellent one.

**Activity:**

* You are going to be given the same summary of a key study in the biological approach – Luby et al.’s study on correlations with environmental factors (socioeconomic status, stress and parenting) and brain development (in the hippocampus and the amygdala).
* Your task is to write different topic sentences and conclusions for this study depending on what topic you are applying it to:
  + Neuroplasticity (Bio approach)
  + Techniques to study the brain (Bio approach)
  + Etiologies of disorders (Abnormal Psych)
  + Prevalence of disorders (Abnormal Psych)
  + Brain development (Developmental Psych)
  + Cognitive development (Developmental Psych)

Imaging you’re about to use this study in an essay on the following topic. How would you introduce the study and what conclusion would you draw. The first has been done as an example.

**Topic: Cognitive Development (Discuss research related to cognitive development).**

*One study that can be used to show how environmental factors may affect cognitive development is Luby et al.’s study*

In this study they used MRIs to measure correlations between poverty, stressful events and parenting styles with hippocampal and amygdala volume in 145 children over a 10 year period. The results showed a negative correlation between lower socioeconomic status and hippocampal volume (poorer kids had smaller hippocampi). Socioeconomic status was also positively correlated with amygdala volume (lower status = smaller amygdalae).They also found that parenting and stressful life events were mediating variables in this relationship. That is to say, poverty increased stress levels and affected parenting which had an effect on the hippocampus.

*Because the hippocampus is important for learning and memory, we can see from this study that environmental factors like SES, stress and parenting styles could influence our cognitive development because they affect our brain development.*

**Topic: Neuroplasticity (Question: Discuss neuroplasticity making reference to one or more studies):**

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**Topic: Techniques to study the brain (Evaluate the use of one or more techniques used to study the brain):**

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**Topic: Etiologies of disorders (Discuss one etiology of one disorder):**

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**Topic: Prevalence of disorders (Discuss prevalence rates of one or more disorders).**

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**Topic: Development as a learner (Discuss the biological approach in relation to developing as a learner)**

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Extra Space: