

**Discuss the debates of free will and determinism involved when researching perceptual development. (15 marks)**

Free will suggests that behaviour is the result of individual choice, where people have control over their actions. Whereas determinism suggest that behaviour is the result of factors beyond an individual's control. There are different types of determinism; biological (innate factors), environmental (external influences) and psychic (unconscious instincts and experience). One way in which the research into perceptual development could be seen to be free will is that perception is developed through experiences that individuals choose to take. For example, in Gibson and Walk (1960) the infants were placed on the apparatus where they had a choice to respond to the mother calling them from either the cliff side or the shallow side. The researchers were measuring whether or not the infant crawled to its mother; this was the dependent variable. This demonstrates the action of free will as it was illustrated when 27 of the 36 infants crawled off the board to the shallow side. In contrast, some of the infants chose to remain sitting and cried for their mothers. This shows support for the free will side of the debate. One way in which the research into perceptual development could be seen to be deterministic is that behaviour is pre-determined by factors within the environment. This is that individuals have little or no control over their actions. For example, in Gibson and Walk (1960), the apparatus was designed in a way to deliberately test infants' depth perception with the use of a cliff side and a shallow side. The cliff side purposely caused the illusion of a deeper side for all 36 infants and animals involved in the study. The visual cliff apparatus can be inferred as deterministic as it predisposes the visual illusion of a deep and shallow side without the input of the individual being tested. However, depth perception could be argued to be due to free will as two of the infants crawled across the cliff side, despite the visual illusion. Another way in which research into perceptual development can be said to take the deterministic side is looking at depth perception as an innate factor. For example, Gibson and Walk (1960) were interested in determining whether depth perception was due to innate or learnt factors by researching motion parallax with animals. By placing the pattern directly on the glass, they found that animals all reared in the dark, preferred the shallow side which provides evidence that depth perception is innate. This shows that the animals had no control over their perception of depth, and it was due to predetermined factors that influenced their movement to the shallow side to avoid the cliff side. In addition, previous research has shown that depth perception in rats is innate. For example, Lashley and Russell (1934) found that depth perception is out of the individual's control as they found that rats reared in the dark for 100 days, could still discriminate depth by jumping varying distances from a jumping platform with the sufficient amount of force to reach the platform. This tells us that depth perception can be seen as innate as rats reared in the dark could still discriminate depth which shows that it is out of the rat's control and due to predetermined innate knowledge of depth perception. There is research evidence for both sides of the free will versus determinism debate when investigating perceptual development.

