When you are asked to "Evaluate one sociocultural explanation of one disorder," it is important that you remember that you are not supposed to only evaluate the research, but you have to also evaluate the theory.

The first step is often to evaluate research. Below are three studies that support a vulnerability model of depression. For each study, identify at least one strength and one limitation.

**Study 1.**

Hammen et al (1993) carried out a longitudinal study and found that having a dysfunctional family with high levels of stress made children more vulnerable to depression in adulthood. They found that these children failed to develop effective communication and interpersonal skills, had low self-image and had not developed effective strategies for coping with stress.
Study 2.

Hayes, Turner & Coates (1992) found that gay men diagnosed with HIV were more likely to exhibit depression, as well as a faster onset of full blown AIDS, when they were rejected by family members and thus lack protective factors.

Study 3.

Stansfeld et al's (1999) Whitehall II study. A longitudinal, prospective cohort study of 6895 male and 3413 female London based civil servants. Found that an individual's place in the social hierarchy can determine not only their level of stress, but the biological responses to stress which lead to deteriorating mental health. Low social support at work and low decision authority, high job demands and effort-reward imbalance were associated with increased risk of depression.

Preparing for the essay

1. What trends do you see in the strengths and limitations of the research?

2. What does this theory explain better than either a biological or a cognitive explanation of depression?

3. What does this theory not explain as well as either a biological or a cognitive explanation of depression?