**1 Veale and Riley (mirror gazing) used a questionnaire to investigate the beliefs and behaviours of patients with BDD in front of mirrors. An alternative way to investigate this problem would be to conduct a field experiment in which participants who have or do not have BDD were observed out shopping to see how frequently they looked at themselves in plate glass windows and in mirrors in shops.**

**(a) Describe the field experiment as a research method. [5]**

**(b) Describe how this alternative study could be conducted. [10]**

**(c) Evaluate this alternative approach to studying this problem in psychology in practical and ethical terms. [10]**

Sample answers to Paper 2 questions on Specimen Paper 2012

1. (a) The field experiment is normally conducted in a natural environment, not in a controlled laboratory as is the case with most psychological experiments.  The participants usually don’t know they are being observed and therefore behave in normal ways.  Information is recorded by trained observers and is often compared for inter-rater reliability.  The sample involves whoever happens to be in the observed location at the time of the study.  Quantitative and qualitative data can be obtained and compared for each trial period, however it is difficult to control the independent variable and, therefore, difficult to establish any causal relationship between the IV and the DV.  Outside variables are virtually impossible to control.

(b) Trained observers could be stationed in several shopping malls during busy shopping times (like Saturday afternoon, for example).  At least two observers could be positioned where they are likely to see the same shoppers.  A stopwatch could be used (or other timing device) to determine how long a shopper spends looking at his/her reflection and how often they do this. A checklist could be used for each observer with information such as age, gender, ethnicity, etc.  In this way, inter-rater reliability could be established.  Pre-determined guidelines for “long sessions” and “short sessions” could be used for quantitative data.  Communication devices (cell phones, for example) to signal researchers positioned at both ends of the mall corridor could be used to stop the shoppers and debrief them.  At this point, qualitative data could be collected from those participants willing to participate, as well as informed consent. This procedure could be repeated over several week-ends to assure a representative sample.

(c) There are several practical and ethical problems with conducting field research in any study, Veale and Riley (mirror gazing) being one example.  Informed consent is supposed to be obtained before the experiment and this would be practically impossible.  The only way to avoid demand characteristics would be by covert observation.  Even after debriefing, this is after the fact, and participants might resent having been observed without consent and threaten to take legal action. There is no way to control which shoppers might be present during any observation session, therefore a truly representative and generalizable sample would be practically difficult.  Another practical problem would be the amount of time needed for the observers and the debriefers to watch and wait long enough for enough participants to make it a large enough sample to be representative of the population.  Additionally, shoppers at any particular mall might not represent any other population of shoppers.  If more than one mall was used, the cost would become a factor, especially if malls were used in different parts of the state or country.  Also, BDD is often a private matter, occurring in the home, where covert observation would be practically and ethically impossible.