**Essay 4**

**Title:** With reference to two areas of knowledge discuss the way in which shared knowledge can shape personal knowledge.

**Introduction**

1. **Define the key terms and concepts in the title**: I believe the key terms here are: knowledge, shared knowledge, personal knowledge and shape
2. **Identify the knowledge questions that are central to the discussion**:

**Possible Knowledge Questions**

* Is it really possible to separate personal knowledge from shared knowledge?
* Is the Scientific Method a reliable mechanism to utilise when investigating causation between shared knowledge and personal knowledge?
* If we acknowledge that personal knowledge and shared knowledge are interrelated do we necessarily have complete control over knowledge acquisition?

1. **State a position:**

* I agree
* I disagree
* I agree with reservations
* I disagree to an extent.

It is better to adopt one of those positions that are more nuanced i.e. I agree with reservations. Such a position expresses to the examiner that you have thought deeply about the question, and opens up your discussion to a more analytical focus.

1. **Identify the ways of knowing that are most appropriate to the question.**
2. **Sense Perception** – knowledge we gain through use of our senses i.e physical response of our senses to stimuli.
3. **Emotion** - is a WOK that transcends an accurate definition. Generally emotion is a relationship between your cognitive (thinking) process and a physiological stimulus.
4. **Reason**: it is possible for rationalisation (reasoning) to come about through either passive observation or active experimentation. The hypothetico deductive model (Scientific Method) illustrates this. Inductive reasoning is where observation leads to the discovery of patterns while deductive reasoning sees the researcher generate a hypothesis and test it through active experimentation.
5. **Memory** – a mechanism for carrying the knowledge we have gained – skills; past experiences and the shared knowledge we have gained throughout our life. Through memory we construct our self identity – issues of personal knowledge.
6. **Language**: the WOK of language is very applicable to this question. The discussion here centres around the whole idea of ‘nature versus nurture’ – evolutionary biologists have long investigated whether the formation of our personality is dominated by genetic as opposed to environmental factors. Linguistics have long debated the origins of language acquisition i.e. is language innate or do we need environmental stimuli to facilitate the process of learning? The linguists/ social commentators Noam Chomsky (Theory of Universal Grammar & Language Acquisition Device) and Steven Pinker (The Language Instinct) see language acquisition as a passive process while other theorists like Skinner (Behaviourism), Tomasello and Ambridge & Lieven state that more active engagement in your environment is critical to the development of linguistic skills.
7. **Intuition –** a way of knowing and understanding that relies upon the capacity to read signals, clues and patterns, often based on previous experience. The question here is where does that experience come from; is it solely personal or has shared knowledge been influential? We saw the video about intuition whereby the presenter speaks about experienced American soldiers who know intuitively the location of a bomb is on an Iraqi street – how did they gain this intuition (way of knowing)? The presenter stated that their intuition comes about through the summation of expertise and experience (mixture of personal and shared?)
8. **Faith:** be it a religious faith or a faith in an ideology, faith is a WOK where there is a strong linkage between Personal Knowledge and Shared Knowledge. An individual who has a religious faith often points to certain key people/mentors,who through their actions etc, stimulate faith in that person. However, following the emergence of neuroscience, some neuroscientists believe that the strength of activity in the brain’s temporal lobe can affect the level of religious faith in an individual.

**5: Identify AOKs that are central to the question**

**Human Sciences** (Psychology & Sociology) is very applicable to this question. **Natural Sciences** and how experimenters use the Hypothetico Deductive Method in their research is also important – questions of its reliability in forming shared knowledge. The **Arts** sees the artist constantly innovating and forms new ways of expression (knowledge). Think about ways in which individual artists through their personal knowledge have influenced our conceptions of man’s place in the universe (Da Vinci and Michaelangelo) and how movements like the Renaissance caused a paradigmatic shift in thinking amongst people in Europe at the time paving the way for the Enlightenment movement in the 17-18th centuries.

Possible Themes to your answer:

**How shared Knowledge forms personal knowledge – arguing against the title**

**Human Sciences (Psychology and Sociology)**

**Socialization/enculturation**

From an early age infants are enculturated into the cultural and societal norms of the society in which it lives. This comes about through primary (when a child learns the attitudes, actions and values appropriate to members of their respective culture) and secondary (what is appropriate for an individual being a member of a smaller group within larger society). Applicable studies here include Bandura’s Bobo-Doll experiment, Vygotsky’s Theory of Social Development, and Maccoby’s Sex Role Development.

**Conformity**

Conformity is defined as either behaviour in accordance with certain social conventions or compliance with certain standards, laws and rules in the environment. Philip Zimbardo’s famous Stanford Prison Experiment illustrated how People will readily conform to the [social roles](http://www.simplypsychology.org/social-roles.html) they are expected to play, especially if the roles are as strongly stereotyped as those of the prison guards. Recently, he wrote a book called The Lucifer Effect in which he outlines how ordinary individuals often with a high level of morality can perpetrate terrible acts of savagery and evil.

Stanley Miligram’s Experiment on Obedience illustrates that obedience is ingrained in all of us with the result that we are very likely to follow the orders of an authority figure even if that order contravened our personal beliefs.

Both case studies show that social norms influence individual behaviour.

**Personal Knowledge dominates shared knowledge.**

This argument centres around the premise that inherited personality traits are immune to environmental influence i.e. nature versus nurture debate.

**Human Sciences (Psychology)**

The Sweaty T-Shirt experiment emanated from Evolutionary Biologists’ research on attraction. The sense of smell (sense perception) " may have more to do with mate choice than previously thought. Females sniffing the T-shirts recently worn by males favored the scent of those whose immune response genes were different from their own (is our choice of mate biologically determined?).

A study by Martha McClintock from the University of Chicago showed that the female participants were attracted to a smell that reminded them of their fathers (interrelationship between sense perception and memory).

Both studies appear to point to a genetically driven personalised knowledge that is to a large extent unaffected by shared knowledge.

**Shared and personal knowledge are inseparable**

The idea here is that the process of knowledge production and acquisition is so interrelated that it is impossible to separate out the causal effects i.e. both types of knowledge are mutually influential.

**Human Sciences**

**Carl Jung’s Archetypes** is an attempt to explain the presence of how individuals appear to all share the same understanding of terms like mother, father, God, Devil, wise old man and wise old women. Jung believed that these archetypes exists in the Collective Unconscious and thus every being within a species shares the same archetypes. In other words Jung did not believe in the idea of the mind as a tabula rasa (blank slate). We are all born with access to these archetypes which are the cumulative set of memories for a particular species. Thus Jungian Archetypes are an example of how personal knowledge and shared knowledge are intertwined.

**‘Neuroplasticity**, it refers to changes in neural pathways and synapses due to changes in behavior, environment, neural processes, thinking, emotions, as well as changes resulting from bodily injury’. (Source: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/**Neuroplasticity).** This flies in the face of the argument that your neurological make-up is determined solely by genetic factors and as a result of this could not generate new neural cells i.e. in adulthood the brain’s neurology could not be altered. Thus environmental factors can have an effect on the neural make-up of our brain – shared knowledge can change individualised behaviour & experience. Such changes in personal knowledge will manifest themselves in actions which cause changes in societal interaction – effect of personal knowledge on shared knowledge i.e. giving up a negative habit

1. **Identify the significant claims and counterclaims**

**Claims** – what is your central arguments (perspective/point of view) which should run throughout the essay.

**Counterclaims** – do not fall into the trap of thinking that a counterclaim must be the polar opposite of your claim. A counterclaim can agree with claim but the difference in in terms of intensity i.e. to a greater or lesser extent.