

SAQ: Explain the formation of stereotypes making use of one study.

What is this SAQ asking for?

- There should be a clear explanation of how stereotypes may be formed. This should be one clear theory and not several theories.
- There should be one study that reflects the explanation outlined.
- The study should be explicitly linked back to the explanation.

Sample response

This is a rather weak definition of stereotyping. Could be more developed.

Stereotyping refers to the attribution of the same characteristics to a particular group of people.

One way in which stereotyping is formed is known as classical conditioning, which was originally developed and demonstrated by Pavlov (1927). Classical conditioning refers to the pairing of a neutral stimulus with a naturally recurring reflex in order to create a conditioned response. This is built on the premise that an unconditioned stimulus yields unconditioned responses. Consequently, when you pair the unconditioned stimulus with a neutral stimulus over time, the neutral stimulus and the unconditioned stimulus become the conditioned stimulus, which produces a conditioned response. For example, when experiencing pain, people are known to cry. When a child goes to a doctor for the very first time and sees a doctor with a needle, it doesn't cry. However, when the child comes back and sees a doctor with a needle again, it will cry immediately, before the injection it delivered, because it knows that pain is paired with the image of a doctor holding a needle. This means that the child is conditioned and as a result, controlled response, specifically crying, occurs.

The theory is fairly well described. It would have been better to have made the link to stereotyping, rather than to fear of the doctor.

Staats & Staats (1957) conducted a study that addressed the formation of stereotypes using classical conditioning. The aim of the study was to see whether through classical conditioning they could teach people stereotypes they did not have before. In this study, American participants were given a test to measure their level of prejudice and stereotyping. Among the ethnic groups on the test, two cultures resulted in presenting no clear stereotypes - the Dutch and the Swedish. Because the participants had no familiarity with these cultures, no stereotypes were present. The participants were then divided into two groups. The first group was shown pictures of Dutch people with negative images and Swedish people with positive images. The



The description of the study is not completely accurate. Could be more carefully described.

Evaluation of the study is not necessary. What is necessary is a closing statement about how the stereotype was actually formed.

second group, however, was shown the exact opposites. Dutch individuals were paired with positive images and Swedish people were paired with negative images. A week later the participants were called back and given the same test they took initially. The findings showed that the same pairing of negative and positive images with the two ethnicities was detected in the test. Therefore, the first group were now prejudiced against the Dutch, whilst the second were prejudiced against the Swedish. Nevertheless, one limitation of the study is that it is unclear whether the stereotype, which was formed by the participants being conditioned, was long-lasting.

388 words

The student has clearly identified a theory and presented a relevant study. The study and theory could both be more clearly presented. The theory should be more clearly linked to the development of stereotypes specifically - and the study needs to link back to the theory more carefully. Predicted mark: 6 / 8 marks.

How do students lose marks for this response?

- There is a study but no clear explanation of the theory that underlies the development of stereotypes.
- The study is poorly described - that is, the aim, procedure and results are not clearly stated.
- There is no link between the study and the theory.
- The student describes how stereotypes affect behaviour rather than how they are formed.

