



How to explain studies

This activity is designed to help you get better at explaining studies, which is an easy way to instantly boost your marks.

Why are we doing this?

One of the most common mistakes IB Psychology students make is they don't *explain* studies, i.e. they don't show how the study is relevant to the question. Instead, students summarize aims, methods and results and that's it.

What to do...

- Read the following summary of Cohen et al's "waitress-librarian" experiment and then write 1-3 sentence explanations that show how it is relevant to the listed topics.

Schema, stereotypes and confirmation bias by Cohen (1981):

One aim of this experiment was to test the effects of prior knowledge on the processing of new information. In this study, 96 college students watched a video of a woman having dinner in a restaurant with her husband. Half of the participants were told she was a librarian and the other half she was a waitress. After watching the video they were asked to recollect details of the video. The results showed that participants were more likely to remember schema-consistent information. For example, the waitress condition increased memory of the fact she'd spent the day reading and she liked classical music, whereas those in the waitress condition were more likely to remember she was drinking a beer and eating a hamburger.

Mr Dixon's Best Exam Tip:

You can cut down your exam revision massively if you use studies for more than one topic.

However, you have to understand how they are relevant to each topic and be able to explain their relevance clearly.

- *Use this study to explain an important concept relate to one of the topics on the reverse side of this worksheet (1-5 sentences).*



What does this study show about:

Schema theory: _____

One bias in thinking and decision-making (confirmation bias): _____

Stereotypes (Effects of): _____

Example explanation: *Research methods:* From this study, we can see how using experiments can be useful when studying cognitive processes because they allow researchers to manipulate variables (in this case schema-activation) and see how that can affect other types of cognition (in this case memory), without the influence of other confounding variables. This lets us get a better understanding of cognitive processes, such as schematic processing and memory, as we can draw causal relationships between variables and cognitive processing.