

Studies of gender stereotyping

You are learning how to...	In the context of...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyse research methodology Analyse the findings of studies to draw conclusions Comment critically psychological research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Studies of gender stereotyping

Seavey et al (1975)

Seavey et al asked adults to interact for three minutes with a baby. The baby was dressed in a yellow jumpsuit. A range of toys was made available including a football, a rag doll and a plastic ring. The adults were observed carefully and how they interacted with the baby was recorded, including the toy(s) they chose and the things they said. There were three conditions. In the first, the experimenter indicated that the baby was a girl. In the second, the participants were led to believe the baby was a boy. In the third condition, the participants were given no information about the baby's sex.

- What experimental design was used?
- How should the researchers have assigned the participants to the conditions?
- Why do you think the baby was dressed in yellow clothing?

When the baby was labeled female, the participants were most likely to choose the doll as a plaything. When the baby was labeled male the ring was chosen more often than the doll or the football as the plaything. Where no gender label was given, the female PPs interacted with the baby significantly more than the male PPs did. In the no-label condition almost all the participants spontaneously decided on a sex for the baby. Their decision was often justified in terms how the baby was perceived physically (e.g. 'it's a boy because he's got a strong grip', 'it's a girl because she's soft').

- What conclusions could be drawn from these findings?
- To what extent do these findings support any of the major theories of gender development?

Urberg (1982)

Urberg designed a task in which children are told little stories that illustrate different types of gender stereotyped traits like bravery and caring. Her child participants were told a series of these stories and, after each, shown two pictures, one of a male the other of a female, and asked whether the trait depicted was typical of males, females, both or neither. Three groups of children did the task: three year-olds, five year-olds and seven year-olds.

- What type of study was this?
- What precautions might the researcher have taken to ensure her study had internal validity?

Overall, the children's responses reflected gender stereotypes. Traits like bravery were associated with males and traits like caring were associated with females. There was a tendency for children to attribute positive traits to their own gender and negative traits to the other, which peaked at five years. Generally, the older children were, the more overlap they perceived between men and women.

- What conclusions might be drawn from these findings?
- To what extent do these findings support any of the major theories of gender development?