

- 5 When commuting to college Sam notices that whichever form of public transport he uses strangers rarely communicate with each other. He notices that people tend to sit alone where possible and avoid eye contact with other commuters whilst listening to music or reading a newspaper.

One morning there is an incident on the bus when he is going to college. Following the event, Sam notices everyone is communicating and making eye contact. Later, when Sam discussed this change in behaviour with his friend, she argued that communication is a learned behaviour and that people are not born to communicate.

Evaluate the extent to which human behaviour such as communication can be explained by learning theories.

JLT
OC
CC

You must make reference to the context in your answer.

(12)

Sam's friend has a view based upon the learning theories that we are all born as a blank slate (tabula rasa) and all our behaviours are learnt through our experiences. One way behaviour is learnt is through operant conditioning which is the idea behaviour is learnt through consequences. People on the bus may have communicated before but been punished for the behaviours such as being told to be quiet or getting judgemental stares. This would ~~then~~^{mean} individuals wouldn't communicate on the bus to avoid the outcome. When the people on Sam's bus ~~don't talk~~^{and avoid eye contact} they don't get ~~stared at~~^{stared at} or judged which is negative reinforcement of the behaviour learnt to not communicate on the bus. Negative reinforcement to remain quiet and just listen to music/read paper. This is supported by Thorndike who ~~was~~^{also} and Miller who

unconditioned rats to press a lever as it took away an electric shock (negative reinforcement). However, this study was conducted on animals so it may not be able to generalise its findings back to the target population so this isn't how people learn beh. just animals //

On ^{the} other hand, behaviour may be learnt through classical conditioning which is the idea that we learn behaviour through association between stimuli and responses. People may associate talking to strangers with being told off by their parents as a child (stranger danger) which means they then pair communication with strangers to a fear response and therefore do not do the behaviour. However, when the incident happened, people then associated not speaking with said incident so then began to speak to not get the incident again. The incident extinguished their ~~their~~ fear response and people communicated again showing behaviour as suggested by Sam's friend. This is supported by ^{was on} ~~was on~~ ^{anybody can be learnt} ~~anybody can be learnt~~ ^{in this way} ~~in this way~~ //

Nevertheless, beh. could be learnt through social learning theory which is the idea we learn through observation and imitation of our role models. Our role models may be our parents or people older than us or of the same sex and seem to have some sort of authority. If role models don't communicate on public transport and it alone/avoid eye contact, people on Sam's bus would copy this behaviour and therefore also



not communicate. This is supported by Bandura Ross & Ross who found children imitated aggression by copying role models. However, ^{showing beh. confid. that} ~~the~~ ^{themselves was a sign of} didn't explain how the beh. shown by role models ^{is a sign of} //

However it could be that Sam's friend is wrong and communication is not a behaviour that is learnt but a behaviour influenced by our social groups environment and societal explanations for example, Socially impact theory ^{Latane (1961)} can explain behaviours like obedience but also can show how people act in social situations. On some bus, people may not communicate due to the number of people not talking (sources) so no one wants to start (target) and the immediately of all the people not talking in the bus so people copy the no communication behaviour to stick to the expectations set by society for how to behave on a bus.

In conclusion, it could be said that communication and other human behaviours can be explained by learning theories however this is not the only and no means complete explanation of how behaviour is carried out. It could be that learning is a factor in carrying out behaviour but there are other factors that also have an impact into the communication people showed on Sam's bus.

(Total for Question 5 = 12 marks)

