**Watson, J. B. and Rayner, R. (1920) ‘Conditioned emotional reaction’, Journal of Experimental Psychology 3, 1–14**

**Synopsis**

**Watson and Rayner (1920)** – successfully managed to condition fear into a toddler using classical conditioning.

**Aim**

Watson and Raynor had four aims:

To see if it is possible to induce a fear of a previously neutral stimulus  through classical conditioning.

To see if the fear will be transferred to other similar objects.

To see what effect time has on the fear response.

To see how possible it is to remove the fear response in the laboratory.

**Method and Design**

A case study using classical conditioning undertaken on one boy: ‘Little Albert’.

Little Albert was a pseudonym given to protect the identity of the child.

**Participants**

One participant. Little Albert, prior to the study there was nothing abnormal about Little Albert, in fact he was quite normal and had no fears, which is why he was selected. He lived in the hospital in which the study was conducted. This was because his mother was a nurse at the hospital.

**Procedure**

Albert’s baseline reactions to the stimuli were noted. He showed no fear when presented with a rat, a rabbit, a dog, a monkey, a mask with hair, or cotton wool.

When Albert was 11 months old the experiments started.

**Session One:**Albert was presented with a rat. Just as he reached for it, a steel bar behind him was hit. This procedure was repeated.

After two presentations Albert was given a week off.

**Session Two:**The following week the rat alone was presented.

Then three presentations were made with the rat and the loud noise.

This was followed with one presentation of just the rat.

Then two more presentations with the rat and the noise were made.

Finally the rat alone was presented.

So far Albert had had 7 presentations of the rat with the noise.

**Session Three:**

Albert was brought back five days later and given toy blocks (a neutral stimulus) to play with.

Presentations were then made of:

The rat

A rabbit

A dog

A seal fur coat

Cotton wool

Watson’s hair

A Santa Claus mask.

**Session Four:**To see how time had affected the response, Albert was presented with the rat on its own five days later.

The dog and rabbit were also presented, and the steel bar was hit each time.

Albert was then taken to a well-lit lecture theatre to see if the response was the same as it was in the small room used up till now.

**Session Five:**One month later Albert was tested with various stimuli. These included the Santa Claus mask, the fur coat, the rat, the rabbit and the dog.

**Findings**

**Session One:**The first time the steel bar was struck when Albert touched the rat, he jumped and fell forward.

The second time he began to whimper.

**Session Two:**After five paired presentations in Session 2, Albert reacted to the rat alone by immediately crying, turning to the left and crawling quickly away from the rat.

**Session Three:**After each presentation of the blocks, Albert played with them happily.

The other stimuli produced negative responses of crying, moving away from the stimulus and crawling away.

Albert showed less negativity towards the cotton wool.

**Session Four:**The fear response to the dog, rat and rabbit were pronounced, with crying and crawling away from the objects.

In the different room the fear reaction was slight, until the bar was hit. Then the fear reaction increased.

**Session Five:** Albert continued to show fear reactions.

Unfortunately Albert was taken out of the hospital on the day of Session five. After session five Watson and Rayner had planned to attempt to decondition Little Albert’s fear.

Watson and Rayner were never able to carry out their aim of trying to find ways of removing a phobia in the laboratory.