

Little albert and classical conditioning essay

[Environment](#), [Animals](#)



The rat was taken suddenly from a basket and presented to Albert. Two months after pretesting had been done, Albert was shown a white rat and any time when he touched the rat steel bar was banged behind his head (Watson & Rayner, 1920, para 9). When seven trials were over, Albert cried and avoided the rat- this was a situation of conditioned stimulus. Albert had associated the white rat with the disturbing banging sound which changed neutral stimulus to conditioned stimulus. The loud noise was the unconditioned stimulus which caused the child to cry any time he saw the rat. The emotional response by the baby to cry was an unconditioned response to noise which had become the conditioned response to the rat. Watson and Rayner were able to condition Albert to react to different stimuli such as other animals by making a dog bark in the middle of sessions where Albert was being exposed to a rat and a banging sound. This was done for a period of thirty days and the baby showed fear when he touched a sealskin coat, a mask, a rabbit, a dog and other related animals (Watson & Rayner, 1920). The concept of generalization arose because the baby was introduced to many objects with a loud sudden bang each time he touched an object. The banging made him cry and he associated touching objects with the unpleasant banging and as such generalized that it (banging) would happen every time he touched something.

The conditions didn't last over time because as the baby soon stopped touching objects and animals. The experimenters forced him to associate with the animals by for instance placing a rat on the baby's chest. Extinction came in due to the baby's lack of association. He would try and get as far away as possible from the objects he feared and could even fall over as he

got away from those objects.

I do not think that the experiment could be replicated today. I think it is unethical to subject a baby to banging noise and animals. Moreover, it seems unethically wrong to experiment using children regardless of the type of experiment in question. Children protection agencies would deem it to be exploitation of children and the fact that it the consent of children is not sought before they are exposed to such experiments is a violation of human rights.

References

Watson J. B., & Rayner, R. (1920). Conditioned emotional reactions. *Journal of Experimental Psychology*, 3(1), 1-14.