

I confirm that I have not used any AI tools in the research and creation of this assignment. I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated materials as my own work. I confirm I have copies of my drafts, notes, and other resources I used, which I may be asked to provide in evidence.

Taking us back to the 1920s to talk about John Watson.

John Watson was quite the controversial character, Burrus Skinner another behaviourist felt that Watson was responsible for the negative attention that behaviourist received (Skinner, 1974, 1983, cited in, Strapasson, 2020).

Watson was the behaviourist who carried out the little Albert study, which I will go into more detail in a sec. Watson's academic career lasted 12 years. He wrote books and articles as well as doing talks on human behaviour (Malone, 2014). Watson's goal was to change psychology's focus of the mind to behaviour. This is because feelings and thoughts processes are not visible therefore can never be 100% accurate (Gross, 2010). He published many academic works however his Little Albert study is his most popular work due to the findings and controversy surrounding it (Beck, & Irons, 2011).

Before I go into the controversy of the Little Albert study, I am going to explain what the Little Albert study was. The study was done by John Watson and Rosalie Rayner; they performed the experiment on a baby who they called "little Albert". They introduced a white rat to little Albert which then followed by a loud noise. They did this multiple times (Dillon, 2024). Little Albert then developed a fear of white rats. The fear that little Albert develops confirmed Watson theory that conditioning is one of the factors of developing fears (Powell, et al., 2014). Through the experiment Watson also found that little Albert's fear had generalised to other fluffy objects. You can see this in the video of the experiment where little Albert begins to cry when other fluffy objects are placed in front of him (Van der Steen, 2011).

Now going onto why this study is so controversial. The way this study was conducted it had many ethical issues. The ethical issues involved little Albert, his parent and the animals that were used in the experiment (Zimbardo, 2025). Even though this study is highly controversial, it has become one of the most influential studies in psychology (Hall & Irons, 2011). Hall & Irons (2011) stated that this was not only because of the findings but also due to the fact that little Albert and his parent went missing after the last day of the study. A team of students and researchers spent 7 years searching for little Albert, they finally found a woman who they believed to be his mother. She then disclosed that little Albert had passed away at the age of 6 due to a brain condition (DeAngelis, 2010).

Overall, John Watson was an important figure in the rise of the behaviourists and had influenced many. Marcelina is now going to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the behaviourist approach.

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