behaviourist approach

behaviourism

- all behaviour is learnt. Only observable behav. should be studied. Animal research is 'allowed' → can then generalise findings to human
- all humans are born 'tabula rosa' (blank slate) → no genetic influence on behav.
- critical of introspection + psychodynamics = too vague / unmeasurable / unscientific.
- involves 2 learning processes:
  - ↳ classical conditioning (learning through association)
  - ↳ operant conditioning = behav. is acquired / maintained based on consequences.

operant conditioning

- positive reinforcement = increasing behav. to receive a reward (doing hw to get praise from a teacher.
- negative reinforcement = increasing behav. to avoid negative conseq. (coming early to avoid detention)
- Skinner's Box (positive reinforcement): hungry rats in box. Accidentally presses lever which triggers a pellet of food into container. Rat learns to pull lever to get more food. Pressing the lever becomes ↑R of behav.
- Skinner's Box (negative reinforcement): hungry rats in box with consistent electric shocks. Accidentally presses lever which stops shocks. Rat learns to press lever to stop shocks (-R).
- positive punishment = decreasing behav. by adding a negative consequences (decrease being late to avoid writing lines)
- negative punishment = decreasing behav. by removing certain favourite/ desired item (confiscating phone)

classical conditioning

- Pavlov's classical conditioning (associating a bell/whistle → salivation)
- food (UCS) → salivation (UCR). Bell (NS) → no salivation (no response
- bell + food → salivation (UCR). Bell (CS) → salivation (CR)
- dogs had learnt to associate the bell/whistle with food.

- Little Albert Study (rat + steel rod)
- steel rod (UCS) → fear (UCR). Rat (NS) → no fear (no response)
- rat + steel rod → fear (UCR). Rat (CS) → fear (CR) ∴ became scared of rats.
- he generalised it to similar white furry objects e.g. rabbits + his teddy.
- but not Watsons beard (discrimination)
- stimulus generalisation = associate 1 thing with others of similar traits.
- extinction = can be unlearned / unassociated
- 1-trial learning = 1 moment to become conditioned (most likely: fear)
- spontaneous recovery = through extinction, the CR can appear again.
- discrimination = if CS is too different from UCS → no CR.

evaluation

- strength = controlled conditions reduce EVs. Increases reliability + internal validity of findings + increases scientific credibility.
- strength = RWA. Led to therapies + devel. of treatment. Systematic desensitisation associates out fear using relaxation to overcome phobias → positive impact on soc
- weakness = ethical issues. Rats didn't consent + Little Albert had psychological harm + wasn't given right to withdraw (cost benefit analysis → studies)
- weakness = animal research. Humans are more complex than animals (emotions, consciousness, thought) Results from animal studies cannot be generalised to humans.
- weakness = environmental determinism. → learning explanation leaves no room for free will + conscious choices. Hard determinism → animal research / behav. but human behav. accounts for emotion, motivation, reasoning skills = limited explanation.