

Academic Writing Guide

Sample Annotated Bibliography – Stage 2, Part 1

Arntz, A., Rauner, M., & van den Hout, M. (1995). “If I feel anxious, there must be danger”: Ex-consequencia reasoning in inferring danger in anxiety disorders. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 33, 917-925.

This source outlines details of perceived danger ratings amongst four groups of ‘anxious’ individuals (with spider phobias, social phobias, panic conditions and other general anxieties) in comparison to a control group. The groups were asked to rate their perceptions of safety/danger in a range of scenarios; a significant difference in responses was found between the anxiety groups and the non-anxiety group. The researchers conclude that there may be an individual ‘trait’ or characteristic which might predispose people to develop anxiety disorders. This supports the idea that there is a genetic predisposition to phobic responses, supporting the biological argument in my essay. However, the researchers point out that their findings are just a suggestion that such a trait exists, and more research needs to be done to support this theory. Even though the results are not conclusive, and the discussion section is vague in places, it will still be a useful addition to my essay especially as it is from a relevant journal.

Coelho, C.M. & Purkis, H. (2009). The origins of specific phobias: influential theories and current perspectives. *Review of General Psychology*, 13(4), 335-348.

Coelho & Purkis (2009) have organised their article into sections which look at each perspective on phobias in turn (e.g. classical conditioning, biological perspective, cognitive models etc). They present the key concepts of each perspective including the significant experimental findings, and then dedicate a section to criticisms on each perspective. This article will be a key component of my essay as it explicitly criticises and presents counter-arguments for the various psychological explanations for the acquisition of phobias. In addition, this article has gathered together many key studies, so I will be able to use their reference list to locate other useful sources for my essay.

Merkelbach, H., Muris, P., & Schouten, E. (1996). Pathways to fear in spider phobic children. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 34, 935-938.

Merkelbach, Muris & Schouten (1996) outline the results of their interviews with 22 children between 9-14 years old (and their parents) on the onset and intensity of their spider phobias. The findings strongly suggest that a critical learning experience is required for the development of spider phobias in children. This could be in the form of a negative experience with spiders, or in the form of ‘modelling’ a fear response of another individual (i.e. if a parent shows a fear response to spiders, the child could learn this fear response). The authors stand strongly in favour of a behaviourist approach, and argue against innate (biological) fears. The information from this source will be

important in my essay in supporting the learned behaviour argument for the acquisition of phobias and clearly acts as an opponent of the evolutionary argument. It also includes another key term- 'modelling' - which I will need to research more for my essay, but this will be a valuable addition. However, the sample size is quite small (only 22 participants), and the source does not include a list of the interview questions which were used so it is difficult to judge how objective the researchers were in their line of questioning. The study is from 1996, so there may be more recent studies I could use; however, Muris & Merckelbach are key names in the study of phobias, making the source have more 'authority'. Overall, I think it will be useful to support the behaviourist argument in my essay.

Öhman, A.L. (2000). Fear and anxiety: animal models and human cognitive psychophysiology. *Journal of affective disorders*, 61(3), 137-159.

This source presents details on the neural foundations which underlie phobias, and presents an evolutionary perspective on fear and anxiety. For example, Öhman (2000) argues that there is an underlying predisposition for our phobias which makes it easier to condition fear of certain stimuli (e.g. snakes) more than others (e.g. rabbits). The information in this source is very useful as a counterargument to the behaviourist perspective, which argues that phobias are learned through conditioning (e.g. traumatic events). It is also extremely useful in that it explicitly draws comparisons between empirical evidence from animal studies with that of human experience; such evidence will be of value in supporting the biological arguments in my essay, given the lack of recent data on humans due to ethical reasons. The source is also relatively recent, contains evidence from primary research, and is published in a relevant journal.

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

This article details the well-known 'Little Albert' classical conditioning experiment published in 1920. In this experiment, an infant was presented with a white rat at the same time as the researchers sounded a loud, frightening noise. This led to a conditioned fear response to white rats, even when no sound was made. The infant's fear response then became generalised to other white objects such as cotton wool. This article therefore presents a classical conditioning fear response experiment in humans, which clearly supports the argument that phobias are acquired through association and learned behaviour. It also details another important factor that I should discuss in my essay- generalisation. Although it could be argued that this source is too old to be used (1920), I would argue that such human experiments have not been carried out recently due to ethical considerations; therefore, I feel it is appropriate to use this source to support the behaviourist argument with empirical evidence. For all the reasons outlined above, this source will be extremely useful for my essay in presenting and supporting the learned behaviour argument.