

THE CASE OF LITTLE ALBERT

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Watson and Rayner set out to find out if fear is innate or learned behavior. The experiment may not have been very scientific and ethical by modern standards, but it has become a hallmark case in the study of classical conditioning (Strycker, 2014). The experiment is similar to Pavlov's psychic secretion experiment done on dogs that showed anticipatory salivation whenever they heard the sound of a tuning fork (Pastorino & Doyle-Portillo, 2011). When little Albert was exposed to white rats and other furry objects at first, she was calm and found pleasure in playing with them. After a while, a steel bar at the back of her head would be hit whenever she touched the objects she had previously been playing with. Later, she showed signs of distress and fear whenever exposed to the objects even without the sound.

The conditioned stimulus in Little Albert's case is the white rat that made her show fear and distress though previously she enjoyed playing with it. The conditioned response is fear and distress. She showed signs of fear whenever exposed to the white rat at the end of the experiment. Unconditioned response is fear in the case with this experiment. Unconditioned stimulus is the loud noise that inflicted fear into Little Albert even in the very first exposure to it. Unconditioned response from the experiment was fear as it occurred naturally even for the very first time she heard the loud noise. The neutral stimulus in the experiment is the white rat that was paired with the loud noise (unconditioned stimulus) to become conditioned stimulus that elicited fear in the toddler.

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## References

Pastorino, E. E., & Doyle-Portillo, S. M. (2011). *What is Psychology?* Cengage Learning.

Strycker, N. (2014). *The Magic and Mystery of Birds: The Surprising Lives of Birds and What They Reveal About Being Human*. Souvenir Press.