

Lubow R E. Latent inhibition. *Psychol. Bull.* 79:398-407, 1973.
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The latent inhibition literature, concerning the decremental effects of nonreinforced stimulus pre-exposure on subsequent learning, was reviewed. Latent inhibition was found to be a broadly based phenomenon appearing across a variety of species and tasks. The stability of latent inhibition, as well as its stimulus specificity and the effects of number of pre-exposures, were examined. Current explanations of latent inhibition were discussed, and the need for a theory that combined learning and attentional constructs was suggested. [The *Social Sciences Citation Index*® (SSCI)® indicates that this paper has been cited in over 140 publications since 1973.]

question has a somewhat hollow sound and admittedly even in the late 1950s, its significance was beginning to fade. Nevertheless, to keep myself from following the assigned course of our animals into a "neurosis" (the major conceptual variable for producing experimental neurosis was monotony), I thought it would be useful to try to demonstrate latent learning, not in a maze as all of the previous studies had done, but in a purely classical conditioning situation. Thus, Ulrich Moore, who was the manager of the laboratory, and I set about using simple pre-exposure of the to-be-conditioned stimulus in search of a facilitatory effect on subsequent learning. To my surprise and chagrin, the effect of such nonreinforced stimulus presentations was to retard subsequent conditioning. We tried a number of variations of the procedure and still produced poor learning. We published our findings in 1959, and in that paper¹ the term "latent inhibition" was first introduced. Five years later, after a stint with General Electric, and with the help of a National Institutes of Health Career Development Award, I returned to the problem and have devoted myself to that seemingly very simple phenomenon ever since. In 1971, I moved to Israel. While organizing my new laboratory, I had the time and need to review and integrate the 50 or so studies that I had found to be related to the latent inhibition effect. This work culminated in the *Psychological Bulletin* article for which, I might add, the editors required considerable abbreviation. Much of the omitted material, plus a more up-to-date summary and a theoretical analysis of the latent inhibition phenomenon, have appeared recently.²

To answer the question as to why the paper has been widely cited is to ask why latent inhibition has become a topic of importance in learning theory. The answer, very simply, is that the older boundaries of learning as an associative bonding of two or more elements, S-R or S-S, had broken down. Thus, it was now possible, at least conceptually, to learn something from the repeated presentations of a single or unpaired stimulus—thus, in the current literature we have such phenomena as learned helplessness, learned irrelevance, and, of course, latent inhibition.

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In 1957, while a graduate student at Cornell University, I worked in the laboratory of Howard Liddell as an assistant. As some of you may remember, Liddell was a pioneer of classical-conditioning methodology in the US, and he, as Pavlov before him, was also interested in experimental neurosis—a term applied to laboratory-induced maladaptive animal behavior. Our subjects were sheep and goats, very convenient for conditioned defensive leg-flexion studies, but, to my mind, not a likely source for inspirational science, at least not in the service of psychopathology.

My own interests, since undergraduate days at New York University with Howard Kendler, had always been in the area of learning theory and, in particular, in some of the classic Hull-Tolman controversies such as latent learning. Can an organism learn anything without reinforcement? Today the

1. Lubow R E & Moore A U. Latent inhibition: the effect of nonreinforced pre-exposure to the conditional stimulus. *J. Comp. Physiol. Psychol.* 52:415-19, 1959. (Cited 85 times.)
2. Lubow R E, Weiner I & Schaur P. Conditioned attention theory. (Bower G H, ed.) *The psychology of learning and motivation*. New York: Academic Press, 1981. Vol. 15, p. 1-49.