

This Week's Citation Classic

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Marks I M. *Fears and phobias*. New York: Academic Press, 1969. 302 p.
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Fears and phobias trouble many people, and scientific observation and experiment in animals and men have demonstrated how this inborn response changes with maturation and learning. Abnormal fears can now be treated effectively by behavioral means. [The *Science Citation Index*® (SCI®) and the *Social Sciences Citation Index*® (SSCI™) indicate that this book has been cited over 240 times since 1969.]

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"This book arose out of collaborative work in behavioral psychotherapy when I joined Michael Gelder in 1965, at the Maudsley Hospital, London. Phobias had been in the limelight for most of this century as paradigms of neurosis. Freud cited little Hans as the exemplar for psychoanalytic theory while Watson's little Albert became a model learned phobia for conditioning theorists. Theoretical castles were built on these quicksands, undeterred by the paucity of relevant data, by the failure of attempts to replicate little Albert's experience, or by the wide gap separating etiology from treatment, whatever the ideal.

"In the 1960s the development of behavioral treatment for phobias gave them even more prominence than previously, and helped clinical psychologists to extend their professional role as therapists. Large series of treated phobic patients and fearful clients were collected at many centres, including the Maudsley. Clinical analyses showed that phobic disorders could be classified into multiple phobias like agoraphobia, which

is commonly associated with many other neurotic problems like depression, anxiety, and obsessions, less diffuse social phobias, and specific phobias which tend to occur on their own. These three groups differed as regards age of onset of the phobia, sex incidence, habituation of skin conductance, and time needed for treatment. That animal phobias rarely began after age seven suggested phylogenetic influences on learning which had been ignored by general learning theorists throughout this century. The biological boundaries of learning which ethologists had long accepted, only received serious attention in the 1970s. *Fears and Phobias* is often cited in this connection. This area is a textbook illustration of fashion in science, of the rise and fall of scientific paradigms, their selective attention to certain details, and their neglect of glaring inconsistencies. Thomas Kuhn's ideas which describe the physical sciences apply equally to the behavioral sciences.

"The book reviewed the literature not only of the phenomenology but also the treatment of phobias which by 1968 was already extensive and has since mushroomed. The popularity and efficacy of behavioral psychotherapy is steadily increasing in scope. The frequency of citations of *Fears and Phobias* can be attributed to its review of (1) the undying phenomenological features of clinical problems which remain the focus of dominant though now outdated psychoanalytic and conditioning theories of neuroses, and (2) a large literature on treatments which became common in the 1960s and whose descendants are widely employed today.

"Interested readers will find more up-to-date practical information about the treatment of phobias and obsessions in my book *Living with Fear*¹ and a discussion of current theoretical issues in my forthcoming book *Cure and Care of Neurosis*.²

1. Marks I M. *Living with fear*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1980. 302 p.

2. *Cure and care of neurosis*. New York: Wiley. In press, 1981.