Recognized ‘couple,’ few can recall the beginnings of this successful relationship. The purpose of this paper is to make a historical account of the foundations of behavior analysis and the beginnings of applied behavior analysis, especially the role of Sidney W. Bijou and others who displayed the modern signs of autism (Harlan, 1976). In 1950, Keller and Schoenfeld wrote the book to provide a fresh basis for studying autistic behavior.

Behavior Analysis: The Foundations

Sidney W. Bijou and the University of Washington

In 1965, Bijou moved out of Washington for another university, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (Morris, 2008). In the same year Baer, Wolf and Risley went to the University of Washington. Lovaas obtained several grants and started studying several autistic children at UCLA Neuropsychiatric Institute and at the nearby Camarillo State Hospital. At the start Lovaas used aversive procedures (Lovaas, Sch third, 1965; Lovaas, Simmons, 1965; Lovaas, Simmons, 1965; Lovaas, Simmons, 1969). Over time, with the advances in research, Lovaas eliminated the program’s uses of aversive conditions (Smith & Lovaas, 1997). In the 1970s, Lovaas started at UCLA the Young Autism Project, which stressed early intervention. The subjects in the study were between the ages of two and four. The curriculum emphasized language development, social interaction, and school readiness skills. After 2 to 3 years of treatment, 47% of the intensive treatment experimental group (9 of the 19 children) versus 2% of the comparison group (1 of 40 children) met the general criteria for autism diagnosis (McClain, Smith, & Lovaas, 1983). A replication done by the Wisconsin Early Autism Project was consistent with those reported by Lovaas and colleagues (Sikora & Lovaas, 2000).

In June 1993, Catherine Maurice published Let Me Hear Your Voice: A family’s triumph over autism, a book for parents of children with autism. In 1999, her 4-year-old son was diagnosed with autism at the University of California-Irvine, where Maurice also worked. In 2001, Maurice published I Was Not Very Enthusiastic about That Project, but It Seemed Better than Doing Nothing. The stunning accomplishments of behavioral procedures in the field of autism started with the application of operant principles in the field of autism. The behavioral procedures included shaping, chaining, and reinforcement and were based on the work of Skinner (1955; 1957).

ABA & Autism: The UCLA Project

In 1959 Sidney Bijou offered a positional doctoral position to Ivar Lovaas at the Child Development Institute. Lovaas accepted the position as an assistant professor at the University of California-Los Angeles (UCLA) in 1959. In 1960 was the era of Kennedy and Johnson, when the federal government was funding research and development in behavioral psychology. One of the major programs was the Kennedy Roundtable, which was established at Kansas State University to start their own behavior analysis program and research labs in the mid 1960s. The stunning accomplishments of behavioral procedures in the field of autism started with the application of operant principles in the field of autism. The behavioral procedures included shaping, chaining, and reinforcement and were based on the work of Skinner (1955; 1957).

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