The author interviewed Drs. Mechner and Sidman by email in the spring of 2011 as part of a project for a History of Behavior Analysis class at the University of North Texas. The information below is derived from those interviews. PDFs of the actual interview with Dr. Mechner can be found on his personal page on this website, with links to the 1940s and 1950s sections of the ‘When’ page. Dr. Sidman responded to the interview questions with two previously published journal articles, which are listed on his personal page on this website, again with links to the 1940s and 1950s sections of the ‘When’ page. Finally, a journal article by Hefferline, and two others that he co-authored, are listed on his personal page and linked to the 1950s section of the ‘When’ page. It should also be noted that Dr. Mechner mentions in his interview that during the 1940s and 1950s, Behavior Analysis was referred to as “learning theory”. All articles can also be found listed under the ‘References’ section below.

1950s

Recollections of Important Areas of Research

Individual features of and effects of reinforcer presentation for operant responses

Avoidance behavior and free operant studies

Biofeedback (developed in large part by Hefferline)

Quantitative models of learning

Conditioned reinforcers and stimulus-response chains

Skinner’s teaching machines and “verbal summators”

Behavioral pharmacology

Stimulus control – with pigeons, with electrical resistors, and with the U.S. Navy (a study on radar-watching behavior in sailors)
Scientific ethics

**Recommended Readings**

Keller, F.S. & Schoenfeld, W.N. (1950). *Principles of Psychology: A Systematic Text in the Science of Behavior*, New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts. (This was an introductory psychology textbook that became one of the first textbooks in Behavior Analysis.)


**Interviewee Recollections of Important People**

B.F. Skinner (*Mechner, Sidman*)
Bill Cumming (*Sidman*)
Bob Schuster (*Sidman*)
Charles Crocetti (*Sidman*)
Charles Ferster (*Sidman*)
Clarence Graham (*Sidman*)
Claude Shannon (*Mechner*)
Connie Mueller (*Sidman*)
Donald Blough (*Sidman*)
Donald A. Cook (*Mechner, Sidman*)
Fred Keller (*Mechner, Sidman*)
J.R. Kantor (*Sidman*)
Jim Dinsmoor (*Sidman*)
Jim Holland (*Sidman*)
Joe Antonitis (*Mechner, Sidman*)
Joe Brady (*Sidman*)
Mike Kaplan (*Sidman*)
Murray Sidman (*Mechner*)
Nat Schoenfeld (*Mechner, Sidman*)
Ogden Lindsley (*Sidman*)
Peter Dews (*Sidman*)
Phil Bersh (Sidman)
Ralph Hefferline (Sidman)
Thom Verhave (Sidman)
W. Winnick (Sidman)

References


Schoenfeld, W.N. (1950). *An experimental approach to anxiety, escape and avoidance behavior*. In P.H. Hoch & J. Zubin (Eds.) Anxiety (pp. 70-99), New York: Grune & Stratton.


