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RAPID METHOD OF TEACHING  
PROFOUNDLY RETARDED PERSONS TO DRESS  
BY A REINFORCEMENT - GUIDANCE METHOD

A Thesis  
by  
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Submitted to the Graduate School  
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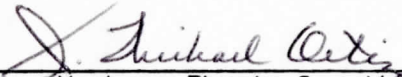
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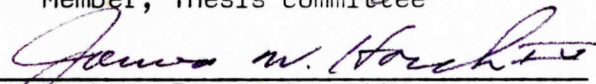
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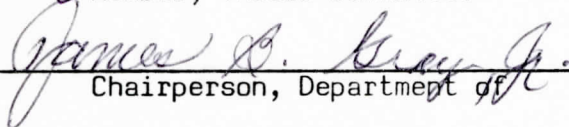
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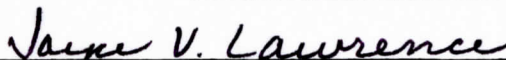


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## DEDICATION

This manuscript is dedicated to Josh for teaching me patience and giving me understanding. Also, it is dedicated to all of those children who need the special attention and patience it takes in order to lead a better life.

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CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION

Since the passage of Public Law 94-142, in 1975, curricula have been developed to include programs for the teaching of the severely/profoundly handicapped. The U. S. Office of Education defines the severely handicapped as those

who, because of the intensity of their physical mental, or emotional problems or a combination of such problems, needs educational, social, psychological, and medical services beyond those which have been offered by traditional, regular, and special educational programs, in order to maximize their full potential for useful and meaningful participation in society and for self-fulfillment (DuBose, p. 6).

Independent living skills for the severely handicapped preschooler are presently being incorporated into the curriculum content. Independent living skills refer to those skills which enable an individual to function more independently in society. Teaching basic self-care skills (feeding, toileting, dressing) have become a high priority for parents and teachers. In the future, this will decrease the time-consuming tasks involved in attending to individuals who have not yet developed some independence in these skill areas (Somerton-Fair and Turner, 1979).



Self-care skills begin early in a normal child's life representing a beginning of independence from parental care. This step from dependence to independence is of equal significance in the handicapped child's life. However, deficiencies in the handicapped individual's mental, physical, or behavioral repertoire as well as environmental expectations may act to slow, limit or indefinitely postpone development of these basic adaptive proficiencies.

Roos (1971) states,

Education is the process whereby an individual is helped to develop new behavior, so as to equip him to live more effectively with his old environment. It should be clear, therefore, that when we speak of education we do not limit ourselves to the so called academics. We certainly include those very complex bits of behavior which help to define an individual as human. We include such skills as toilet training, dressing, grooming, communication, and so on (p. 2).

Although academics are of great importance, dressing should be given a considerable amount of instructional time, not only at school but also at home. However, discouragement in training has often occurred because learning is a time-consuming and difficult process for the severely handicapped learner. Each component of a complex skill must be taught separately and patiently (Adelson-Bernstein and Sandow, 1978). In dressing, as in all functional activities, the aim from the very beginning is to work towards maximum independence within



the child's capabilities.

Programs to teach self-help skills to severely handicapped individuals have involved the use of behavior shaping (Bensberg, Colwell, and Cassel, 1965; Favell and Favell, 1975) and operant and classical conditioning (Martin, Kehoe, Bird, Jensen, and Darbyshire, 1971; Minge and Ball, 1967). These procedures have involved teaching dressing under the traditional method. This method utilizes snacks or praise as reinforcers. Reinforcement is given at the completion of taking off or putting on a garment. A verbal cue is given at the beginning of a new trial for each specific garment and is faded as proficiency increases. A "backward chaining" (See Appendix A) procedure is employed in the training of each garment. In a backward chaining procedure, the subject is trained on one article of clothing to acquisition at a time. Although these combinations of training methods have been successful with the moderately and severely retarded, improvement in the dressing skills of institutionalized profoundly retarded individuals taught by these traditional operant methods has been gradual. Learning has been time-consuming and often temporary (Ball et. al., 1971; Minge and Ball, 1967).

Azrin, Schaeffer, and Wesolowski (1976) attempted to teach dressing in a non-traditional method that utilized three-hour training sessions with seven profoundly retard-

ed adults. Intensive reinforcement and prompting procedures were major components of this method. These procedures were used to decrease the time spent teaching dressing skills.

### Purpose

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of Azrin et. al. (1976) method on the teaching of dressing skills to a severely handicapped child. It will attempt to answer the research question: Is the "rapid method" an effective procedure of teaching dressing to a severely handicapped preschool child when utilizing minor modifications?

### Summary

The extent to which an individual attains independence in the basic self-care skills clearly will influence his or her inclusion in educational programs, social activities, and vocational opportunities. Even though the training of self-care skills is time-consuming, it will increase the amount of time available to the parent and the teacher and will benefit the self-image of the individual. Therefore, it would seem beneficial to the student and those in his environment to teach self-care skills in order to maximize the student's independence and to increase the amount of time available for appropriate interactions, other than educational. It is the responsibility of educational systems to offer self-help

skills in the preschooler's curriculum.

CHAPTER II  
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Self-help behaviors in severely/profoundly retarded individuals should be developed as basic training goals for this population. Self-help skills, or daily living skills, are of primary importance in the initial stages of movement along the continuum from dependence to independence. Self-help skills may be defined as those behaviors which allow an individual to fulfill personal bodily needs and thus be less dependent on others to care for those needs. To approach any degree of normalcy, an individual must be able to demonstrate some proficiency in such areas as self-feeding, toileting, dressing, grooming, and hygiene (Westling and Murden, 1978).

Self-Help Research

Bensberg, Colwell, and Cassel (1965) attempted to improve self-help behavior in six severely retarded children by the principle of behavior shaping. The subjects were seven boys, ranging in age from 8.0 to 15.5 years. Before the experiment began, the following self-help behaviors were non-existent: 1) sitting on the toilet unattended for the length of time required in order to evacuate; 2) dressing and undressing, 3) washing and drying,



4) brushing teeth, and 5) feeding.

Twice daily, each subject was trained in a formal fifteen to thirty minute session. Verbal directions followed by gestures were presented to each subject. Immediate reinforcement was delivered as successive approximations of the desired behaviors were emitted. Reinforcement consisted of cereal, cookies, and candy paired with social praise. The largest and most notable gain in scores occurred during the first month of training. The subjects' ceilings were reached within four months, at which time the food rewards were totally eliminated. Although the food rewards were important during the initial stages of training, going outside and playing was a stronger reinforcer in the latter stages of the study.

Several advantages of teaching self-help skills by behavior shaping were demonstrated in this study. All subjects exhibited substantial improvement in self-help skills. An advantage of the procedure utilized was that minimally trained personnel conducted the behavior shaping procedure. Also, four months of training proved to be a sufficient amount of time for training self-help skills. Finally, as the self-help skills increased, much of the undesirable behavior of the subjects decreased.

Six profoundly retarded residents participated in the study by Minge and Ball (1967) on teaching self-

help skills. The self-help program included eleven skills: attention, coming to the technician, sitting down, remaining seated, standing up, removing shirt or dress, removing pants, removing socks, putting on shirt or dress, putting on pants, and putting on socks. Prior to training, the subjects were non-verbal, were not toilet trained, and dressing skills were minimal.

Self-help training was conducted for two months. Each subject was trained in two fifteen-minute sessions per day. Subjects were trained on an individual basis. For each skill, a simple verbal cue and a gesture or physical prompt was given. Correct responses were reinforced with food plus social praise. As the first steps were mastered, the cues were faded and more complex responses were required of the subject for reinforcement to be given.

When a comparison of the pre-and post-tests were performed, a significant improvement in undressing skills was noted, but there was virtually no improvement in dressing skills. This may have been due to the fact that in a two-month training period, the subjects only acquired skills related to undressing. With a longer allotted period of time, perhaps skills in dressing could have been trained.

Ball, Seric, and Payne (1971) conducted a follow-up study of Minge and Ball's (1967) research on "Teaching

self-help skills to profoundly retarded patients". Ball et. al. (1971) discovered that training gains were lost in undressing as early as two months after return to the ward. An entirely opposite trend occurred in dressing. Here, significant gains were made in dressing but did not appear until the long term follow-up, four years later.

After close examination of the procedure, the researchers demonstrated that dressing items offer many nonverbal cues which are totally lacking in the corresponding undressing items. When told to "Take your shirt off" the child must respond entirely on the basis of verbal instruction. In contrast, the command "Put your shirt on" is followed by the trainer presenting the shirt to the subject with the bottom open and toward him. The presentation of the shirt provides a definite cue to put the shirt on.

Favell and Favell (1975) conducted a self-help training program with thirty severely and profoundly retarded boys, ranging in age from seven to twenty-one. The program involved training six self-help skills (showering, facewashing, handwashing, toothbrushing, putting on shirt and pants) using positive reinforcement with chaining, shaping, and fading. The program was implemented on a one-to-one basis by regular cottage personnel: nurses, attendants, and special educators. Each child was trained



in one specific skill during training sessions consisting of two fifteen minute sessions per day. Sessions were conducted in settings which resembled the natural environment in which the behavior should occur. Early in training, the experimenter provided extensive assistance by physically putting the child through the behavior but gradually reducing the amount of help while rewarding the child for more and more independent performance. Social or primary reinforcement was given for correct responses. In order to begin maintenance of the skill taught or begin a new skill, the subject had to pass three consecutive tests or three out of four tests. If a child failed two consecutive tests on a maintenance skill(s), training on a new skill was temporarily discontinued and remedial work on the faltering maintenance skill was begun. After seven months of training, each subject had learned an average of 1.6 skills.

In summary, results indicated that regular cottage staff, who were briefly instructed in behavior modification procedures, could effectively train severely and profoundly retarded children in self-help skills. From experimental analysis of the thirty subjects, thirteen demonstrated that the training procedures were responsible for the improvement.

Operant conditioning has been reported to improve performance in teaching dressing skills. Martin, Kehoe,

Bird, Jensen, and Darbyshire (1971) worked with eleven severely retarded girls using the principles of fading, positive reinforcement, extinction, and/or time out on each step in a dressing program. All subjects exhibited the following behaviors: could follow a few simple commands, were toilet trained, could feed themselves, and could partially dress. Sessions were approximately fifteen to twenty minutes in duration and were conducted in the staff room of the cottage with a one-to-one subject/experimenter ratio. Sessions were conducted each day for approximately an hour in the morning and an hour in the afternoon. Thus a maximum of eight residents would receive training on any one day. Data were collected over a nine-month period and showed improvement in dressing skills and increased instances of response generalization to ward situations.

#### Rapid Method of Dressing

Azrin, Schaeffer, and Wesolowski (1976) investigated the procedure of teaching dressing skills through a so-called "rapid method". Seven subjects who resided in a state residential center were chosen for the training. The average age of the subjects was thirty-one years. Twenty-five of those years had been spent institutionalized. None had functional speech.

Azrin et. al. (1976) incorporated the following characteristics into their study. The method used a

forward sequence, long instructional sessions (3 hours). extensive use of manual guidance early in learning which was graduated in intensity to match the subject's responsiveness, systematic application and fading of prompts, continuous use of praise and stroking contingent upon any effort to follow instructions or guidance, the requirement of visual attention to the task, and the initial involvement of two trainers so that praise, stroking, and manual guidance could be provided. Azrin et. al. (1976) employed slip-on clothing without fasteners which initially were two sizes larger than the subjects' regular clothes. After gradually fading physical assistance to touch assistance in performance of the dressing or undressing chain, clothing one size smaller was substituted. Subjects were taught to dress and undress while seated and to use both hands for all dressing movements. Prompts were gradually increased until successful performance occurred. The prompts were increased in the following manner: Verbal cue, visual cue, partial assistance, and total assistance. After manual guidance was faded for a garment, the subject was encouraged to perform with pointing and instructional cues provided every ten seconds as needed. If the response was not completed in one minute, manual guidance was reapplied.

The criterion for learning was that the subject put on each of the five garments without assistance upon on



initial instruction to put the garment on and, when instructed to take the garment off, remove each of the five garments without assistance. All seven subjects were trained to dress and undress themselves. The average time required for mastery was about two training days, each day including five hours of training. A standard test of dressing skills showed less than 10% mastery when administered prior to training. The same test showed almost total mastery after training.

The applicability of the present method to children cannot be estimated directly from the results thus far, since only adults were included in this formal study. An informal attempt to use this method with two profoundly retarded children was most encouraging but indicated that some slight changes in the procedure would be desirable.

#### Summary

Past research has dealt primarily with the traditional method of dressing. The traditional method has been successful with the moderately and severely retarded, but research has shown that profoundly retarded individuals need intensive training and reinforcement. Results of the traditional method indicate gradual success which has often been temporary. Azrin, Schaeffer, and Wesolowski (1976) successfully employed intensive reinforcement and prompting procedures with seven profoundly retarded adults in the area of dressing. This method may prove

to be of benefit in teaching dressing to the preschool  
handicapped.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

This research was an attempt to investigate the effectiveness of Azrin, Schaeffer, and Wesolowski's (1976) procedure of teaching dressing skills to a severely handicapped individual through a so-called "rapid method".

#### Subject

The subject was a three year old male functioning at the severe/profound level of mental retardation. The diagnosis was based upon The Bayley Scales of Infant Development and The Vineland Social Maturity Scale. He was ambulatory and had no physical disabilities. He preferred to play alone, avoided eye contact, did not attend to adults, and engaged in stereotypic behaviors. He could take off his socks and would raise his arms to be dressed.

#### Setting

Training occurred at Western Carolina Center, where the subject was in respite care for twenty days. Respite care serves as a temporary relief or rest for the parents. A child may be admitted to respite for one of several reasons: medical observation and treatment, intensive training and therapy, or extended assessment. The subject

was admitted for intensive training and therapy.

During the subject's stay in respite, he resided in a day room and was not isolated from others.

#### Assessment

Prior to training, the subject was given an informal assessment on two occasions to determine the level of functioning in the area of dressing. The subject was unable to dress (putting on socks, putting on pants, or putting on shirt) and resisted manual guidance.

#### Procedure

The subject was seated in a chair and taught to use both hands in the handling of each garment. Three types of garments were used: socks, pants, and shirt. All were the slip-on type with no laces, buttons, zippers, belts, or snaps. The subject began with a garment which was two sizes too large. When the subject required no more than touch assistance, the trainer then used the next smaller size. The subject was trained to dress by the normal forward sequence. Once the subject demonstrated he could manage a particular garment without manual guidance, further guidance was delayed on subsequent trials. The instruction and pointing was repeated in approximately 10 second intervals for a one minute period before manual guidance was employed again.

#### Verbal Cue

The subject was given a verbal cue for each garment.



Verbal cues proceeded from the most general, i.e., "Get dressed", to the more structured and specific, i.e., "Pull up your socks". This allowed the subject the opportunity to follow the more general instruction, if possible.

#### Correction Procedure

If a few seconds passed with no action, the trainer pointed at or touched the garment. After a few seconds, the instruction was repeated and the trainer molded the subject's hands around the garment. If the subject was still not participating, the trainer then described each movement he was to make as the trainer guided his hands through the necessary steps. The trainer's touch was lightened as the subject began to respond more independently.

#### Resistance and Attention

If the subject resisted guidance, he was never forced. A brief period of relaxation was provided until the subject was relaxed at which time, training began again.

If the subject was not paying attention, the instruction was preceded by calling his name and if necessary directing his head toward the task.

#### Reinforcement

Walking, rocking, and playing outside were identified as reinforcers in the subject's environment. Snacks, praise, and back stroking were also identified.

Praise and back stroking were given continuously

throughout the procedure. Snacks were given at the completion of each article of clothing (socks, pants, or shirt). Walking, rocking, or playing outside was given at the completion of the entire dressing sequence (socks, pants, and shirt).

Reinforcement was given contingent upon any effort to follow instructions or guidance. The subject was given an explanation each time he received reinforcement and regularly shown a mirror and praised for his appearance.

#### Intensive Training

Intensive training began on garments with which the subject experienced difficulty. The intensive training trials were alternated with the complete sequence in order to keep within the context of dressing-undressing.

#### Data Collection

Data were collected on the steps that were independently completed in the task analysis (See Table 1.0). A task analysis is the means by which an instructional task is broken down into various competent subtasks. A task analysis may be obtained from either the logical or empirical approach. The logical approach is the means by which one goes through the behavior themselves and lists in sequence, each single behavioral component. The empirical approach is the means by which one observes others and lists each single behavioral component (Horner,

TABLE 1.0  
TASK ANALYSIS

SOCKS

1. Pulls sock from below the ankle to the ankle.
2. Pulls sock from arch of foot to above the ankle.
3. Places foot in sock and pulls sock to above the ankle.

PANTS

1. Pulls pants from hips to waist.
2. Pulls pants from thighs to waist.
3. Pulls pants from knees to waist.
4. Pulls pants from feet to waist.
5. Places one foot in pant leg and pulls pants to waist.
6. Places both feet in pant legs (one foot at a time) and pulls pants to waist.

SHIRT

1. Pulls shirt from mouth to neck.
2. Pulls shirt from nose to neck.
3. Pulls shirt from eyes to neck.
4. Pulls shirt from head to neck.
5. Places one arm in sleeve.
6. Pulls shirt from head to neck and places one arm in sleeve.
7. Pulls shirt from head to neck and places both arms into sleeves.
8. Pulls shirt from over the head and places both arms into sleeves.

1975). The researcher utilized the logical approach in developing the task analysis in Table 1.0.

Data were collected for sixteen sessions, with each session consisting of two two hour blocks of time. Six trials were completed in each block. Probes were taken every third trial.

### Research Design

A multiple probe design was used to analyze data. Multiple probe designs are a combination of multiple baseline design and probe procedures. In a multiple baseline design, baseline measures are stabilized with two or more behaviors that will be modified sequentially with the same treatment procedure. Data are collected at the completion of each trial. Probes are infrequently scheduled, short-duration changes in conditions at various points during an investigation (Murphy and Bryan, 1980). Multiple probe designs have many potential uses, one of which is an alternative to the extended baseline measurement characteristic of multiple baseline designs.

The multiple probe design was chosen because the intermittent probes provided a method for establishing stable baselines when continuous measurement during extended multiple baselines might have proved impractical, unnecessary, or reactive. In this study, reactivity (boredom and fatigue) might have occurred because of the young age of the subject and the intensive training involved. The



multiple probe design was also chosen for the reason that once the training procedure had begun and progress was made, true baseline conditions could not be reinstated.

Data were collected over three behaviors: putting on socks, putting on pants, and putting on shirt. The same treatment was applied over the three behaviors and the same reinforcers were used with each. Three types of reinforcers were used: (a)snacks, (b)praise and back stroking, and (c)playing outside, going for a walk, rocking, or swinging.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

This study examined the Azrin, Schaeffer, and Wesolowski (1976) procedure of teaching dressing using a severely retarded three year old male. The purpose of this research was to determine if the procedure was effective with a severely handicapped preschool child.

#### Reliability

Interobserver reliability was conducted for three nonconsecutive sessions. A total of nine trials were observed, during which time, the observer recorded steps in the task analysis that were independently completed. This record was then compared with the record maintained by the experimenter for agreements and disagreements.

Of the nine reliability observations taken, reliability was calculated at 100%.

#### Data Indications

The overall results indicated a slight improvement in the subject's dressing skills. The largest gain was made in "putting on a shirt" where the subject reached criterion on six of the eight steps involved in the task analysis. The subject experienced the most difficulty with "putting on pants".

Data were collected for putting on socks (Figure 1.0), putting on pants (Figure 2.0), and putting on shirt (Figure 3.0). Baseline data were collected for nine trials with stable baseline conditions remaining at zero across all three behaviors.

Figure 1.0 (putting on socks) had a total of three steps in the task analysis (See Table 1.0, Chapter 3). Criterion was reached on Step 2 (pulls sock from arch of foot to above the ankle) on trial 27. Data remained stable for five nonconsecutive trials.

A total of seven steps were involved in the task analysis of Figure 2.0 (putting on pants). The subject only reached criterion at Step 1 (pulls pants from hips to waist) and did not acquire this skill until trial 30.

Figure 3.0 (putting on shirt) reached the highest criterion level of all the behaviors. The task contained eight steps. The subject reached criterion at Step 6 (pulls shirt from head to neck and places one arm in sleeve). Data remained stable for five nonconsecutive trials.

### Summary

Results of the study indicated only slight improvement in the subject's dressing skills, utilizing the Azrin, Schaeffer, and Wesolowski procedure of teaching dressing.



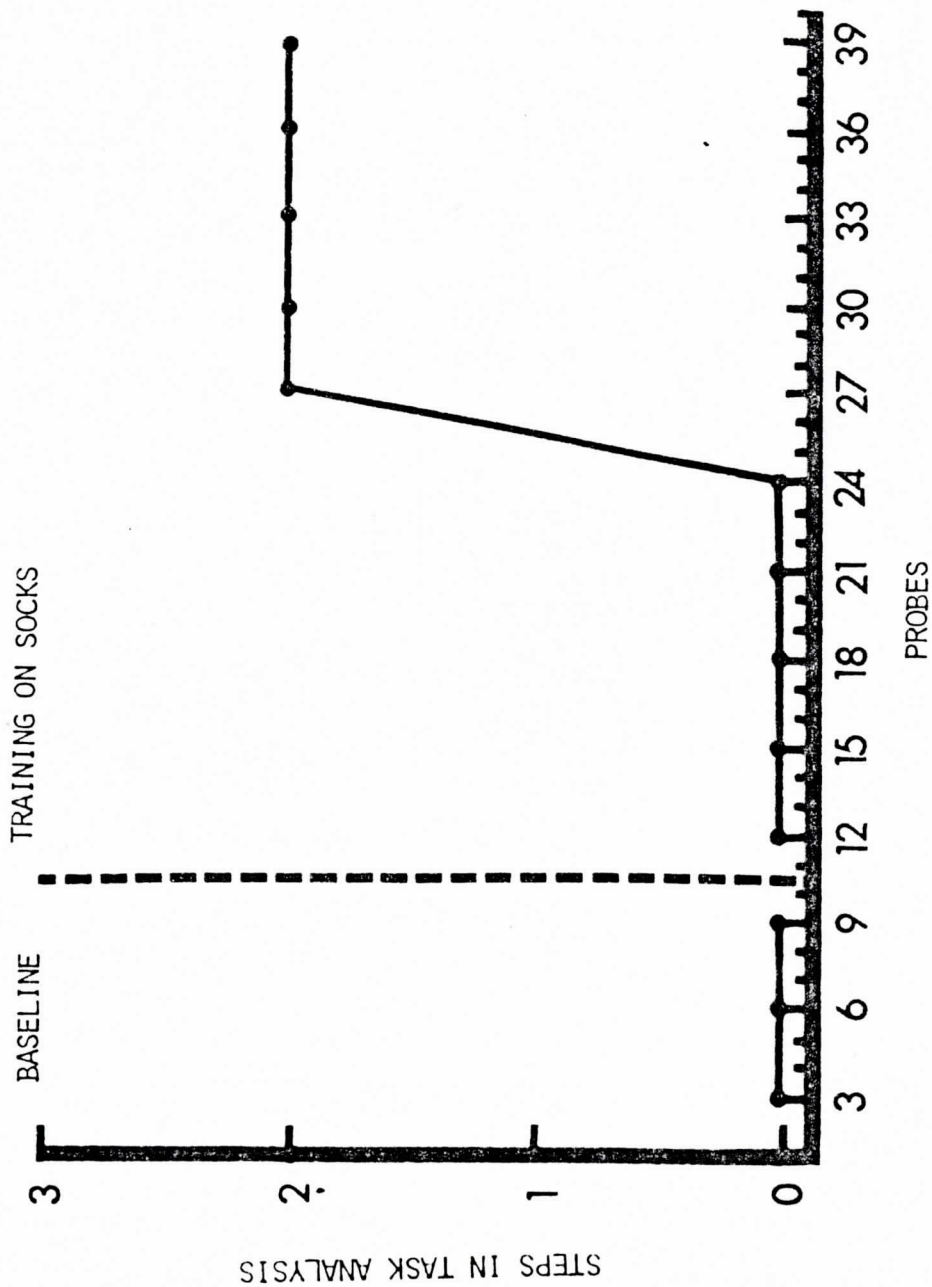


FIGURE 1.0: PROBES COLLECTED FOR TRAINING ON ACQUISITION OF PUTTING ON SOCKS.

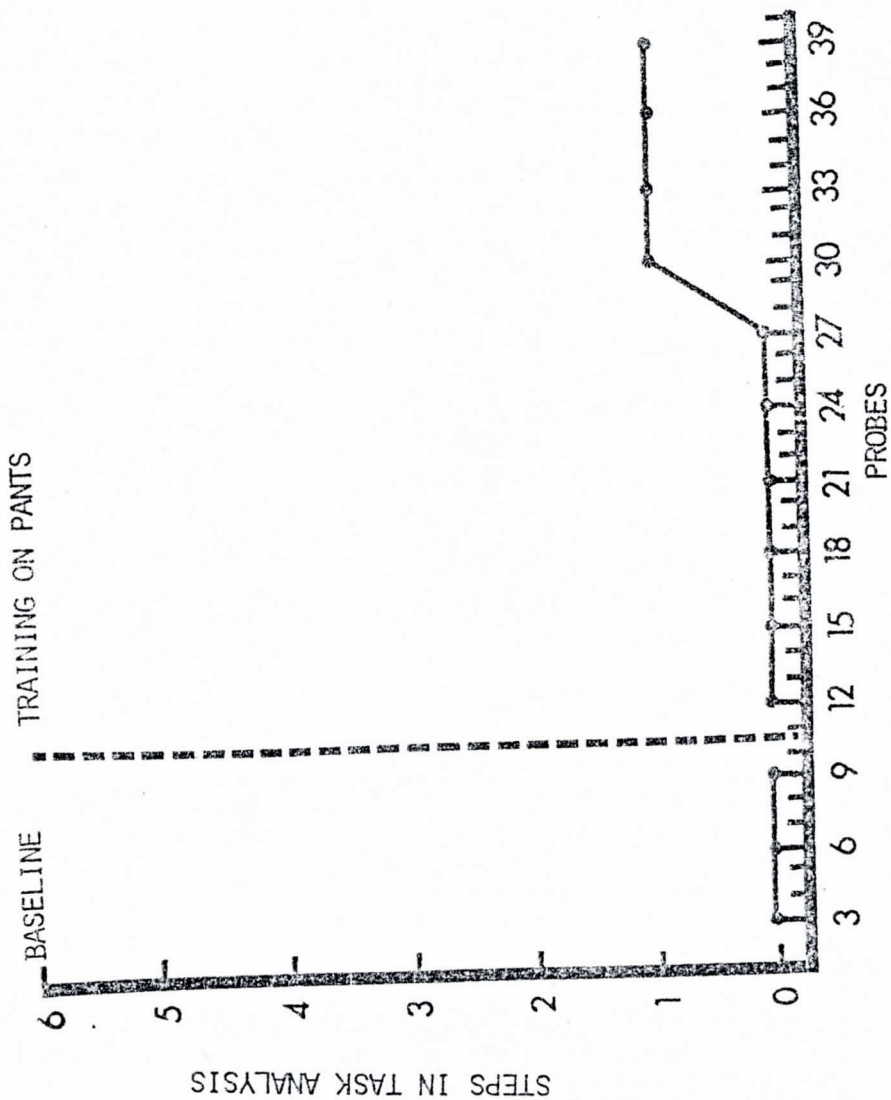


FIGURE 2.0: PROBES COLLECTED FOR TRAINING ON ACQUISITION OF PUTTING ON PANTS.

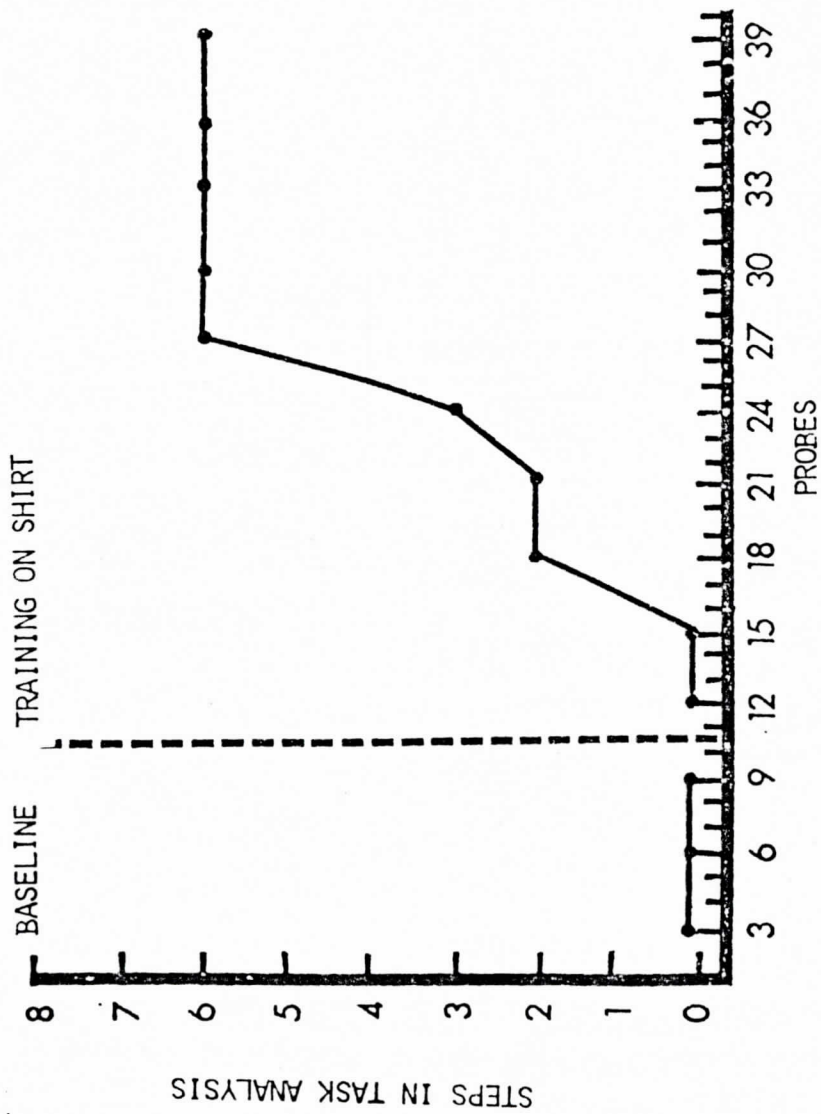


FIGURE 3.0: PROBES COLLECTED FOR TRAINING ON ACQUISITION OF PUTTING ON SHIRT.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

This research replicated the Azrin, Schaeffer, and Wesolowski's procedure of teaching dressing in a so-called "rapid method". The subject was a three year old male functioning at the severe level of mental retardation. Three behaviors were taught: putting on socks, putting on pants, and putting on shirt. Three types of reinforcers were used across all three behaviors. Reinforcers included: (a)snacks, (b)praise and back stroking, (c)playing outside, walking, swinging, or rocking. The major components of the training procedure were as follows: used a forward sequence, taught the entire sequence of dressing, used larger sizes of clothing initially, used praise and back stroking on a nearly continuous basis, gave instructions continuously, used manual guidance as a major component, and used sessions of two hours duration.

Results of the study indicated only slight improvement in the subject's dressing skills. This may have been due to the fact that much of the training time was spent in gaining compliance of the subject. The subject engaged in stereotypic behaviors (rocking back and forth and staring) and resisted guidance in the initial stages of training.

Due to time constraints, training had to stop at session 42. Session 42 was not documented because the subject became ill and a decrease in performance was noted. It was impossible to determine if the subject would have returned to the level which had been attained prior to his sickness.

Performance in "putting on a shirt" may be attributed to the many visual and verbal cues that this skill involves. Visual cues refers to seeing the shirt in the correct position and seeing the shirt placed in the hands. Performance may have increased because the subject's vision was hindered when the shirt was on his head, a position which he disliked.

#### Limitations

Although increased performance was noted, there were many problems and limitations in the replication of this study. Azrin et. al. (1976) did not state whether their subjects were compliant. A limitation of this research is that time had to be spent in gaining compliance of the subject.

Also, a daily data collection method or research design to follow was not included. This presented a problem due to the fact that Azrin et. al. (1976) may have taken data on a daily basis and used percentage or rate measures instead of probe data. Their research design may have been different; therefore, replication and exact results were not possible.



The standard measurement, used by Azrin et. al. (1976), to assess the subject's ability in the area of dressing was not stated. Therefore, the experimenter used an informal assessment of the subject's ability as a basis for the study. The initial research was conducted on adults and only stated that an informal attempt was made to work with children. It was stated that slight changes were to be made if the procedure was conducted on children but these changes were not given.

#### Future Research

Programs to teach severely/profoundly handicapped children are becoming more and more a part of the educational system. Curricula should consider the teaching of self-help skills a major area in the curriculum content. While the areas of self-feeding and toileting are well researched, dressing skills have received only a minimal amount of research. Dressing should be considered as one of the basic primary goals for the preschool handicapped population. As preschoolers, if they are not taught the essential self-help skills, they will become unnecessarily dependent adults.

#### Summary

In summary, the so-called "rapid method" of teaching dressing did increase performance. It was found that the time limit should be extended for the younger subject. Improvement in the area of dressing was gradual but this may have been due to the initial non-compliance.

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APPENDIX A  
DEFINITIONS



## DEFINITIONS

Behavior Shaping - Reinforcement of successive approximations of better and better attempts of the target behavior.

Extinction - Intentional withholding of positive reinforcement by the teacher as a consequence to an individual's response.

Fading - Gradual changing of the stimulus, controlling an organism's performance to another stimulus, reinforcer or contingency usually with the intent of maintaining the performance without loss or alteration, but under new conditions.

Positive Reinforcement - Presentation of rewarding consequences made contingent upon a behavior, leads to an increase in performance of that behavior.

Time Out - Removal of positive reinforcers, generally in the form of teacher and peer attention.

Backward Chaining - The last step in the sequence is taught first and teaching proceeds by adding new steps in reverse order, ending when step one is taught.

## VITA

Billie Marie Gilley was born in Spruce Pine, North Carolina on February 3, 1958. She attended elementary school at Micaville Elementary and was graduated from East Yancey High School in June 1976. The following August she entered Appalachian State University and in May 1980 she received a Bachelor of Science degree in Special Education. In the fall of 1980 she accepted a graduate assistantship at Appalachian State University and began study toward a Master's degree. This degree was awarded in 1982 in the field of Special Education - Severe/Profound.

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