Distinguished Contribution for Applications in Psychology Award for 1975

The Distinguished Contribution for Applications in Psychology Award was given this year for the third time. This award is presented to a person who has engaged in a program of research which is both systematic and applied in character. This year the award was given to Nathan H. Azrin. He was presented with a check for $1,000 and an engraved citation of his contribution. The award was presented by Harold H. Kelley. Other members of the Committee on Scientific Awards are Dorothea J. Hurvich (Chair), James J. Jenkins, Jerome E. Singer, Walter Mischel, and Richard F. Thompson. The first recipient of this award was Conrad L. Kraft in 1973; in 1974 the award was given jointly to Gerald S. Lesser and Edward L. Palmer.

Nathan H. Azrin

CITATION

"For diligence and imagination in applying learning principles to ameliorate a variety of human problems. His studies show how a bold, ingenious investigator can help others obtain rapid and dramatic changes in behavior. In particular, he has demonstrated the efficacy of multifaceted treatment programs for enuretics, stutterers, alcoholics, and individuals with marital problems and nervous habits. His programs are best characterized by a creative combination of procedures, but of the many procedures used, positive reinforcement, repeated practice, and relaxation appear most frequently. Most important, his efforts provide a model for psychologists indicating that both specific skills and general well-being of individuals now can be markedly improved with innovative applications of established principles and procedures."

BIOGRAPHY

Nathan H. Azrin was born on November 26, 1930, in Boston, Massachusetts. There he grew up and received all of his formal education. He attended Boston University where he received his BA cum laude in 1951, and his MA in 1952.

Like so many others, Azrin was attracted initially to psychology by Freud's writings but quickly saw the necessity of scientific evaluation after his first course in experimental psychology from Leo Reyna. The studies of Sears, Mowrer, and Miller at that time promised an attractive syn-
social problems. After completing almost all of the doctoral requirements, Azrin's desire for even more emphasis on the behavioral approach led him to transfer in 1953 to Harvard to study under B. F. Skinner, who was beginning to extrapolate his behaviorist approach to human problems.

At Harvard, Azrin worked in Skinner's laboratory with animals on aversive conditioning, which was also the topic of his dissertation. B. F. Skinner was formulating the concept of teaching machines and programmed instruction at that time, and Azrin worked as his research assistant in testing out Skinner's initial teaching machine and math program in the public schools. The "Pigeon Lab" weekly meetings were being held at Harvard then and were attended by a small group who later formed the nucleus of the field of operand conditioning. They also founded the Journal of The Experimental Analysis of Behavior. Azrin was one of the charter editors and subsequently the Chief Editor of that publication.

After completing the PhD in 1955, Azrin worked briefly with Karl Pribram, but the relation was terminated by a two-year required term of service in the U.S. Army. Assigned to the Human Engineering Lab at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland, he studied the psychological effects of noise and fatigue.

On leaving the Army, Azrin accepted a position in 1958 as a research psychologist at Anna State Hospital, which is a small mental hospital in rural southern Illinois. The position was part of the new research program established by the Illinois Department of Mental Health. The Superintendent, R. C. Steck, and Israel Goldiamond, at nearby Southern Illinois University, were largely responsible for establishing this research facility.

During the first 10 years at Anna, Azrin's major focus was on basic laboratory research. In his studies of punishment, he is identified with the phenomena of recovery during punishment effect, the punishment contrast effect, the interaction between reinforcement and punishment, positive conditioned suppression, aversive effects of positive reinforcement schedules, schedules of punishment, and conditioned punishment. In his laboratory studies of aggression, he demonstrated the pain-aggression phenomenon and extinction-induced aggression. In a series of laboratory or analogue studies with humans, he developed a behavioral apparatus approach and applied it to the problems of stuttering, posture control, the taking of prescribed medication, and toilet training.

In addition to his laboratory studies, Azrin developed and evaluated many new direct clinical procedures, especially during the past six years. Perhaps the first and best known is the token economy concept and procedure, developed with T. Ayllon for the institutional care of the mentally ill and retarded and since applied to diverse populations and problems.

When profoundly retarded persons began being admitted to Anna State Hospital, Azrin designed many new training procedures for this very difficult population. These new procedures included a rapid procedure for teaching self-initiated toileting, the mini-meal procedure for teaching retarded persons to eat in a normal fashion, a rapid method of eliminating enuresis, the autism reversal method for eliminating the puzzling disturbance known as behavioral stereotypy, a treatment procedure for the urgent problem of self-injurious behavior, the theft reversal procedure for dealing with stealing, and the required relaxation and the overcorrection procedure for dealing with disruptive and aggressive conduct. These newly developed training procedures relied heavily on intensive reinforcement principles.

The high degree of effectiveness of these new training procedures for the retarded encouraged Azrin to design similar methods for use with non-retarded persons with similar problems. The toilet training program initially designed for retarded adults was substantially revised for normal young children. He redesigned the enuresis program for retarded persons to be applicable to nonretarded enuretic children. The autism reversal procedure was redesigned to the habit reversal method for reducing such habits as nail biting, hair pulling, thumb sucking by children, and tics of various sorts. Stuttering has been one of Azrin's continuing research interests. By incorporating a regulated and deep breathing pattern into the habit reversal procedure, he designed a method of eliminating stuttering.

Simultaneous with his interest in these discrete problem behaviors, Azrin began dealing with more complex social problems such as marital counseling, alcoholism, and unemployment. He designed the community-reinforcement method of treating alcoholism, the reciprocity counseling procedure for reducing marital problems, and the job-finding club procedure for securing jobs.

Azrin's current research continues to be outcome oriented and to stress experimental evaluation,

AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGIST • JANUARY 1976 • 73
utilization of psychological principles, and objective measurement.

Currently, Azrin is a member of the Editorial Board of the Journal of the Experimental Analysis of Behavior, Behavior Therapy, and the Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis.

At Southern Illinois University, Azrin is a professor in the Rehabilitation Institute, which offers an MA degree specifically in behavior modification. This position has made possible an integration of the academic role with the clinical research role.

Azrin has been President of Division 25 of the American Psychological Association and President of the Society for the Experimental Analysis of Behavior. Currently, he is President-elect of the Midwestern Psychological Association and President of the Association for the Advancement of Behavior Therapy.

SCIENTIFIC PUBLICATIONS

1956


1957


1958


1959


Some notes on punishment and avoidance. Journal of the Experimental Analysis of Behavior, 2, 260.

Punishment and recovery during fixed-ratio performance. Journal of the Experimental Analysis of Behavior, 2, 301-305.


1960


Use of rests as reinforcers. Psychological Reports, 7, 240.

1961


1962


1963


With V. C. Holz. A well-regulated DC power supply. Journal of the Experimental Analysis of Behavior, 6, 222.


74 • JANUARY 1976 • AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGIST

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Punishment of elicited aggression. *Journal of the Experimental Analysis of Behavior*, 14, 7-10.


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