

# *the* Behavior Therapist

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### President's Message

## Culture Matters

*Stefan G. Hofmann, Boston University*



Culture, race, and ethnicity have become important issues in research studies and clinical practice. Every grant application instructs the principle investigator to include an Ethnic and Minority Inclusion Table; every reviewer is asked to consider ethnicity issues when reviewing a grant; many journal editors ask authors to provide information on the ethnic background of study participants; and every human subjects committee requires investigators to describe the ethnic composition of the subject sample. Those of us who are in the enviable position of needing to submit progress reports to NIH have to categorize the sample into the various ethnic and minority subgroups, including Hispanic or Latino, American-Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, Black or African American, and White. As has become apparent during our last presidential election, culture, race, and ethnicity are also important political forces in the U.S. in general. According to the 2000 census report, 12.5% of the 281.4 million Americans are Hispanic, 12.3% are Black or African-American, and 4.2% are Asian.

Despite the explicit emphasis on culture, race, and ethnicity by funding agencies, journals, and ethics boards, very few studies exist that have systematically examined cultural and racial difference in the various disorders. In my own experience, it is very challenging to publish papers on these issues, let alone receive grant money to fund such studies. Ignoring those differences, especially in treatment research, is not only a political misstep, but it can also lead to serious misinterpretations of study findings.

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## the Behavior Therapist

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# ELECTION RESULTS

## INSTRUCTIONS for AUTHORS

The Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies publishes *the Behavior Therapist* as a service to its membership. Eight issues are published annually. The purpose is to provide a vehicle for the rapid dissemination of news, recent advances, and innovative applications in behavior therapy.

- Feature articles that are approximately 16 double-spaced manuscript pages may be submitted.
- Brief articles, approximately 6 to 12 double-spaced manuscript pages, are preferred.
- Feature articles and brief articles should be accompanied by a 75- to 100- word abstract.
- Letters to the Editor may be used to respond to articles published in *the Behavior Therapist* or to voice a professional opinion. Letters should be limited to approximately 3 double-spaced manuscript pages.

Submissions must be accompanied by a **Copyright Transfer Form** (a form is printed on p. 35 of the February 2011 issue of *tBT*, or download a form from our website): *submissions will not be reviewed without a copyright transfer form*. Prior to publication authors will be asked to submit a final electronic version of their manuscript. Authors submitting materials to *tBT* do so with the understanding that the copyright of the published materials shall be assigned exclusively to ABCT. Electronic submissions are preferred and should be directed to the editor at [gunthert@american.edu](mailto:gunthert@american.edu). Please include the phrase *tBT submission* and the author's last name (e.g., *tBT Submission - Smith et al.*) in the subject line of your e-mail. Include the corresponding author's e-mail address on the cover page of the manuscript attachment. Please also include, as an attachment, the completed copyright transfer document.



## Obituary

## In Memoriam: Nathan Azrin (1930-2013)

David Reitman, *Nova Southeastern University*

On March 29, 2013, the behavior therapy community lost a trailblazer and friend responsible for the development or refinement of many of the most powerful behavior change strategies available to contemporary cognitive behavior therapists. Spanning discipline practices employed by parents (e.g., timeout and overcorrection), adults suffering with alcohol problems or habit control issues (e.g., trichotillomania), stuttering, unemployment (the “job club”), care of institutionalized persons (i.e., the token economy) and perhaps his best known work in the area of toilet training (i.e., *Toilet Training in Less Than a Day*, 1974, with Foxx), Nathan Azrin attacked clinical problems with remarkable tenacity.

Pioneering “translational” research came easily to “Nate” as he and a small group of young behavior analysts set about applying techniques learned in B. F. Skinner’s laboratory to the “environment” outside of the lab. Indeed, 50 years after the work was completed, Nate’s studies of punishment (and its alternatives) still serve as testament to how basic science can serve clinical practice (see Azrin & Holz, 1966). His many other contributions, summarized in Nate’s own recounting (Azrin, 2005), generally followed a natural science approach characterized by careful observation

of the clinical phenomena via naturalistic observation, establishment of baseline frequencies of the target behavior, and ongoing tests of the clinical procedures until they reliably produced the desired results.

In addition to his research and clinical contributions, Nate also served as past-president of both the Association of Behavior Analysis (ABA) and the Association for Advancement of Behavior Therapy (AABT; now ABCT), to name just two of his many leadership roles. Nate’s work on toilet training was probably his best known work to the lay public and is remarkable for its prominent avoidance of any technical jargon or reference to the theoretical foundation that the procedures were built upon. Nate’s assertion that “learning and situational factors can overcome strong biological, societal, family, and medical factors by maximizing learning and situational influences” (p. 42) is especially pertinent today as we face controversial changes in DSM-5 and in NIMH funding for clinical problems that are increasingly being framed in solely neurobiological or genetic (as opposed to epigenetic) terms. Doubtless, we owe much to Nate and can continue to profit from his unique perspective on clinical science and dissemination.

Nate is survived by his wife, Vicky; his daughter, Rachel; and three sons, David,

Rick, and Michael; and their many grandchildren. Nate’s funeral was attended by administration, faculty, and staff colleagues from Nova Southeastern University as well as past students, colleagues, and old friends. Shiva was held in the week following his funeral at the Azrin family home in Fort Lauderdale surrounded by the many awards and memorabilia collected by Nate and his family over the course of his very full lifetime. Indeed, perhaps the most notable thing about Nate, especially in light of his numerous professional accomplishments, is the equally strong commitment he demonstrated to his family and friends. In reflecting on Nate’s personal and professional life, one can only note that this was a life very well lived.

Terrific pictures of Nate, his family, and many professional acquaintances maintained over the years can be found at [www.nathanazrin.com](http://www.nathanazrin.com). Donations to the Nathan Azrin Foundation can be made via the webpage or mailed to: Nathan Azrin Foundation, 2018 Brookwood Medical Center Drive, Professional Office Building #310, Birmingham, AL 35209.

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## Reflections on Nate Azrin

*The loss of Nate Azrin prompted much reflection and discussion among the past presidents of ABCT. Following Nate’s passing, the ABCT past president’s list serve was quite active with wonderful memories of Nate’s work and personality. We asked the past presidents for permission to print their comments in tBT.*

In the 1970s, a group of behavioral/empirical types (Nathan Azrin, Stewart Agras, Walter Mischel, Jack Rachman, Terry Wilson, and I) was assembled for a year at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences (Stanford, CA) to work on our own projects but also to collaborate and assess the status of behavior therapy given its strong and burgeoning evidence base. During that time we worked closely, collaborated, met, and got to know each other and the friendships endured long after the year ended. At the Center, there was some initial confusion of staff between “Azrin” and “Kazdin.” This even led to me being given a pseudonym (Kazrin), which is another story. Yet, to me the confusion was professionally ludicrous. For anyone

who knows me and has had at least a nanosecond of exposure to Nate’s mind, perspective, and creativity, leaving aside accomplishments, there could never be any confusion.

Among his enduring talents was his ability to cut through all sorts of high-falutin theory and move to creative and practical hypotheses about interventions. In the mid-1950s with laboratory work on cooperation with children (with Ogden Lindsley) and then in the early 1960s in hospital work with psychiatric patients (with Ted Ayllon), he already had empirical demonstrations of this type using contingencies to alter behaviors. By the time of the first ever book on the token economy (1968) he was on the steep cumulative

record slope of creative interventions. His intervention research was innovative, his designs often novel, and his thinking cutting-through and cutting edge. I wonder if he was amused at the much later emergence or delineation of evidence-based treatments given he was a one-man anthology of so many of them long before that term was common in psychology.

At the beginning of the year with him, it was immediately apparent how quickly and easily he moved to creative ideas often with just little twists of things that were known but made for bigger ideas. I would be sitting across from him at a table with just 4 or 5 other people and he would take a deliberative turn to speak and fairly slowly present a stunning alternative approach to something. After watching him, I was one of his most appreciative fans. I never felt for a moment anything like the thought, "I could have thought of that." No, I could not have, even if aided by the infinite number of monkeys plunking at their tablets or laptops to write all the great novels. Being with him at small meetings would be like watching Picasso begin with a white canvas and quickly stroke some lines, add a few colors, and now there would be a face, a mood, a message, and something truly novel. How did a few lines lead to that? Nate did this with his mind, knowledge, and creative palate. A pleasure to watch in part because he made nothing of it—presumably Picasso did not paint a stroke and stop to say, "Hey did you see that?" Natural talent coupled with disciplined training is such a pleasure to watch. That same creativity smeared into his humor. He could turn a point so quickly and have you expecting one of his genuinely novel substantive hypotheses about how to change a clinical problem or address a weighty professional issue, when the surprise came of some clever quip about a what if this or that—and great humor he sneaked in while you might be waiting for great science.

There will be scores of wonderful stories from his collaborators in praise of his genius and they all deserve to be told. Here is one slightly more personal and of a different nature. One of my daughters was at toilet training age at the rise of then recently published Azrin and Richard Foxx's *Toilet Training in Less Than a Day* (1974). Nate and I just arrived at my home and we were looking at my daughter with parental admiration and joy commonly (and pretty noncontingently) heaped on one's children. I was holding her and thought it would be amusing to ask, "So how do you think we

should toilet train her?" Without hesitating and with a mischievous smile, he said, "Just keep the door open when you and your wife go to the bathroom and that should take care of it." I was stunned and teased him. I said with stunned disbelief, "Mahh-dling? modeling? Are you kidding?!" After all that?!" ("All that" being his book, translations of the book all over the world, most of the people on the planet under 5 being trained in a day, and half of those being trained personally by Azrin and Foxx). He was serious and equally amused and we had yet one more Nate-generated source of joy.

He will be missed. Of all colleagues, I thought it would be so valuable to society and individuals in need of care to begin the process of identifying viable solutions by putting Nate in a room with a few like minds and have them brainstorm on strategies that could genuinely help people. The process might be accelerated by substituting mannequins for the other people so there no interruptions of Nate's enormously creative ideas. What a privilege to have known him and to have been exposed to his mind and wit. The loss as well as his impact will be enduring.

—ALAN KAZDIN

What sad news! I wanted to add a few thoughts to Alan's reflections.

Alan and I were the "youth movement" that started at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences in 1976. It is certainly no exaggeration to say that Nate was at the time one of the most famous "behavior therapists" in the world—so influential in so many different areas of applied behavior analysis. I felt very much like a graduate student in first meeting with this famous man. Yet I quickly learned how humble and friendly a person he was—and how generous he was in sharing his experience and knowledge with our group. Nate and his wife, Vicky, were always very kind to my wife and me.

It was always great to touch base with Nate over the following years—usually at AABT meetings. It was wonderful to reminisce about that year. But then I did not see him for a long period—until two years ago. Lars Goran Öst organized a major CBT meeting in Stockholm. I was one of the participants, and Nate was one of the other keynote speakers. I learned why I had seen little of him for the past 10 years or so. He had been struggling—bravely—with a challenging illness. Yet at this meeting it was the same old Nate! Quintessential Nate—enthusiastic about new develop-

ments, curious about how we might develop even more effective interventions, and always encouraging the various students and colleagues who were eager to talk with him. He gave a marvelous talk, although even in very summary form he did not have enough time to comment on the many innovations he had made. At a dinner one of the nights with me and Lars Goran he explained how as a graduate student at Harvard he had ended up working with Skinner—and the rest is history, as they say. In short, he wanted to help people and promote change. His goal was to take the principles and philosophy of applied behavior analysis and apply them to social behavior.

Aside from his own immense contributions to the field, he inspired countless colleagues and students around the world. What a lovely and brilliant man!

—TERRY WILSON

In the late 1960s when I first became interested in behavior therapy I subscribed to *Behaviour Research and Therapy* and was astounded how in every issue there was a seminal article by Nate. I particularly was impressed by the broad range of issues that he tackled with ingenuity and absolute methodological rigor. I didn't know him personally at that time but realized what a seminal thinker he was in our fledgling field. Later on between 1992 and 1997 I was privileged to be a colleague of his at Nova Southeastern University. I think that the field of behavior therapy owes him an enormous debt of gratitude for how he relentlessly developed, advanced, and perfected so many therapeutic modalities. He was our quintessential pioneer.

—MICHEL HERSEN

Michel's post reminded me of a time among basic behavior analysts, before he moved into the applied arena, that Nate was so powerful, creative, and hardworking that people practically quaked when they were working in areas he was involved in. Nate was there first, over and over again.

He practically owned the area of punishment and aversive conditioning in animal operant work (until he moved on to applied work). When a new issue of JEAB came out, you could be certain Nate would have something groundbreaking in it. I've never seen anything like it since—in which a single individual so towered over an area that everyone was in his shadow. Despite his productivity, he cared about the work

more so than the praise ... it wasn't a big ego thing with him. He was just more creative and harder working than anyone else.

You saw those same qualities after he entered into the applied arena. Over and over again he came up with creative ideas that have withstood the test of time. To this day, many of them are gold standards.

The word "giant" is not overblown in his case. The guy truly was a giant.

—STEVEN C. HAYES

Well, what remains to be said after the eloquent comments offered by so many of you? Although I was somewhat later to arrive on the AABT scene than some of you, I recall with great admiration his early work. At that time in the mid to late 70's, I was at Western Psychiatric Institute in Pittsburgh and working with developmentally delayed and highly aggressive children and adolescents. I was actually trained in the psychodynamic tradition, and I remember thinking we could and must do more for these youngsters. Every time we set about establishing a program, Nate's name came up and whatever we sought to do, he had already done it! And, we were able to "replicate" his work! That was very rewarding, both for us and the youth we served. Like Alan Kazdin, I remember talking with him about toilet training—only in this instance about training some of the youngsters on that unit at WPIC. You might recall he wrote a book on that topic with Dick Foxx based on their work at Anna State Hospital in Southern Illinois. Nate always suggested a positive reinforcement approach, followed if necessary by a reductive approach including overcorrection and other forms of "mild" punishment. Yes, his early work was seminal. Moreover, his work over the years continued to be cutting edge, yet he rarely used a razor to get his points across. He influenced us by his behavior. Echoing what Steve Hayes had to say, he was truly a giant in our field—no, he was a gentle giant. We owe him much in the evolution and application of applied behavior analysis and behavior therapy, and his work has had a lasting impact on us and those we serve. His shoes will be very difficult to fill.

—TOM OLLENDICK

One lasting memory for me was our joint service on the ABCT board in the 1970s. Nate came in with an already well-established international reputation for scholarship and creativity and yet his demeanor

was at all times humble and soft-spoken. This set a great example for me and probably for all of us as we dealt with the controversial issues and occasional outright attacks we occasionally endured as we tried to establish a science of behavior change. Nate was not only present at the creation, he was a large part of creation.

—DAVID H. BARLOW

Yes Alan your description of Nate was excellent. Being in Champaign Illinois when Nate was an Anna State, he had an influence on many of us there in the late 60s, and my advisors/profs Becker, Ullmann, Bijou, and Paul all had great respect for Nate for his JEAB and animal work, even before he designed the token economy for patients with Ted Allyon. But as Alan said once he moved to the applied areas, he amazed us all with his truly diverse contributions, *Toilet Training in Less Than a Day*, changing marital discord, enhancing work skills and employment, etc., etc., and all with humility. Fortunately for many of us, Nate was instrumental in getting JABA started with some other great contributors like Todd Risley and Mont Wolf. And, with all due respect to statistical modeling, odds ratios, and other ways of parsing data (which I use), I still remember Nate saying if we need all those stats to make our point, do we really have much of an effect, and when I see manuscripts with statistically significant effects for some variable with a very small amount of variance accounted for I think of Nate and am reminded of what he might say. He definitely was one of our greats!

—K. DANIEL O'LEARY

Nate was the eye of a ripple effect. He was able to strip away the irrelevant and articulate the dynamics of human behavior at its simplest level. He demonstrated the essence of the goal of science: replicatable parsimonious explanation.

My first indirect contact with him was through his token economies work with Ted Ayllon. I had psychoanalytic training and just started teaching at the University of Michigan and was doing some consulting at Ypsilanti State Hospital. As such I was stupidly (though I didn't realize it at the time) trying to identify early infantile fixations in chronic schizophrenics. I was skeptical about what Nate and Ted had written so I wrote to him. To my amazement he responded by challenging me: why dismiss any idea that had a chance of

being credible without testing it? Because what I was doing was getting nowhere I tried to crudely replicate what he was doing and saw some immediate changes. So I tried the same logic with the obese women and couples I was working with at the time and the results made me an analyst no more.

That was the kind of impact that the sharpness of Nate's thinking had on me—and a great many others. We have lost one of the prime movers of applied behavioral analysis, a man who played a key role in spawning an intellectual revolution in mental health. The best way to honor his memory is to critically analyze all of our core beliefs, find ways to simplify them and expand their impact, measure the results, and disseminate what we have learned so others can do better. As I got to know him over the years, it was always Nate's hope that someone would outdo his thinking and take the field another step ahead. And as he liked to say, the measure of impact was the extent to which people used your ideas without citing you because they had become axioms. By that standard Nate's impact is in everything we do today.

—DICK STUART

His work and that of Wolpe and Lazarus inspired me in the early years. And we still benefit daily from his genius.

—ROBERT L. LEAHY

Yes, he will be missed . . . a major pioneer and thinker! Very, very sad.

—DICK SUINN

A major loss to the field. A great scientist who also was just a very decent human being. He will be missed.

—STEVE HOLLON

Major loss. Nate was one of the most creative of our pioneers. A great and mischievous wit and a thoroughly nice person. A mensch.

—JERRY DAVISON

ABCT has lost a pioneer and a past president. Nate Azrin, whose career includes creative and influential work in basic and applied behavior analysis, passed away on Friday, March 29.

—LINDA SOBELL

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# ABCT WEBINAR

**Friday, July 26**

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9:00 A.M. – 10:30 A.M. Mountain  
8:00 A.M. – 9:30 A.M. Pacific

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**Outpatient CBT for Alcohol and  
Other Substance Use Disorders:  
Challenges in the Real World**

*Barbara McCrady, Ph.D.*



**Barbara S. McCrady, Ph.D.** is a Distinguished Professor of Psychology and the Director of The Center on Alcoholism, Substance Abuse, and Addictions (CASAA) at the University of New Mexico. Dr. McCrady has focused her career on the development and testing of effective treatments for persons with substance use disorders. She created one of the first substance abuse treatment programs based on CBT principles and tested the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of this treatment model. She has developed an original, conjoint treatment model for substance abusers and their spouses, and has conducted programmatic research on this treatment model. Dr. McCrady also has been active in bringing scientific attention to Alcoholics Anonymous, and has conducted controlled research evaluating alternative women's treatment models for women with alcohol and other substance use disorders, with a special focus on women in poverty. Her work has been funded by the NIH since 1979. Dr. McCrady has published more than 235 scientific articles, chapters, and books, and has lectured widely on her work in the United States, Canada, and Europe.

**Registration opens online Friday, June 21**