

**ECHOES FROM MORGANTOWN:  
MEMORIES OF LEARNING WITH ANDY**

*ECOS DE MORGANTOWN:  
RECUERDOS DE APRENDIZAJE CON ANDY*

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To honor Andy's role as a teacher and mentor, I have curated a series of memories from my history as a graduate student in the Behavior Analysis graduate program at West Virginia University (WVU) from 2003–2008. This sort of epilogue aims to highlight the broad, general, and flexible nature of conducting research and learning with Andy at WVU. As shown by the wide range of topics covered by Andy and organized in this special section —such as delay of reinforcement and the history of behavior analysis —his instruction and mentorship were equally broad, general, and flexible.

When I first met Andy, he asked me a question that heavily influenced my decision to accept the offer to become a graduate student at WVU and to work with him as my primary advisor. I think now that that question accurately reflected Andy's mentoring style. The question went something like this: How can we at WVU help you achieve your goals? I learned then that, it was not about Andy's set research agenda, it was about the students as human beings and their professional development. Sifting through papers and talking about research, during that meeting, Andy made me feel like a colleague.

Andy is the Arts & Sciences Centennial Professor of Psychology at WVU where he has been a faculty member since 1972, served as coordinator of the Behavior Analysis Doctoral training program from 1982 until 2012, and as Director of undergraduate training from 1975 to 1981 (K. A. Lattal, personal communication, May 1, 2024). During my time as a graduate student, Andy's laboratory was populated with undergraduate, graduate, and post-graduate students with a wide variety

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1.- Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Mirari Elcoro, Department of Psychology and Philosophy, Framingham State University, Framingham, MA 01701, United States. Email: [melcoro@framingham.edu](mailto:melcoro@framingham.edu). I thank many of Andy's former graduate students, especially Tom Critchfield, Chata A. Dickson, and James W. Diller, for having conversations and corresponding with me about their experiences of working and learning with Andy in Morgantown, that helped rekindle some of the memories shared here.

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of backgrounds. Andy created a vibrant environment, rich with a diversity of perspectives, which made for a productive and fun learning experience. To provide some context, I was born and raised in Caracas, Venezuela, Spanish is my native language, and I completed an undergraduate degree in Psychology in Venezuela. During my time at WVU, I witnessed Andy's active investment in learning about of his students' identities and cultural backgrounds (Elcoro, 2023).

From Andy, I learned the principles of behavior and the rigors of working in the laboratory. Conversations with Andy and his students often revolved around the broader implications of our laboratory work. Andy masterfully connected basic laboratory experiments to everyday life, making our meetings and classes dynamic and engaging. He also intentionally infused his teaching with history, providing a rich context for the foundations of behavior analysis. This breadth of knowledge and approach influenced my scholarship and diverse interests.

Each section below highlights themes and experiences of working with Andy. While there are many other topics that I could have included, I have taken inventory and curated five sections that encapsulate impactful memories of working and learning with Andy. These stories are evidence of Andy's role as a caring and effective mentor who, in line with his expertise in single-subject research design, truly focuses on the behavior of each of his individual students. While many are personal experiences and memories, from what I have gathered from Andy's former students, these are generalizable.

### **Meetings with Andy**

You never knew what to expect when you visited Andy's office. The meetings were varied and always constructive, without strict agendas. Sometimes, research wasn't even mentioned. Conversations could start with inquiries about the origins of my last name, or discussions about learning new languages—Andy was studying French when I was a graduate student, eventually obtaining a Bachelor's degree in French from WVU. Topics ranged from philosophy, etymology, and history to art, and somehow, occasionally, within the same meeting, we would eventually discuss data analysis and brainstorm experiments that neither of us had time to run. When I thought I had a novel idea for an experiment, Andy would often reference a similar (or same) experiment already published in the *Journal of the Experimental Analysis of Behavior (JEAB)* or another journal, making it frustrating to think of anything original. But eventually, it happened. There was laughing involved in many meetings, even when difficult conversations were had. Andy always helped me find ways to move forward.

### **Passion for History**

One of the most influential courses I took as an undergraduate in Psychology in Venezuela was Philosophy of Science; my professor emphasized the history of science. From Andy, I reaffirmed my interest in the history of science and specifically in the history of behavior analysis. Andy is passionate about history in general. He took me and other international students to a trip to Gettysburg to share and educate us about part of the history of the United States. During this trip and any time that Andy shared his interest and knowledge about history, he was intentional about asking and learning about the history of the regions or countries and cultures of where his students were from. This reciprocal learning process is at the core of Andy's mentoring style (Elcoro, 2023).

Shortly after I started the behavior analysis graduate program at WVU, Andy published an article in *JEAB* about the history of the cumulative recorder (Lattal, 2004). I recall reading this article and thinking: "Wow, behavior analysts can also write papers like these?" I was fascinated by the writing style and approach to research, which I thought were very different to what I was learning at the time. I thought, well, maybe one day I can do that too. And I did, with Andy's support, years after graduating from WVU. Andy helped me understand the value to contribute to the scholarship of the history of behavior analysis. Actually, it was in a recent conversation with Andy that I learned that he doesn't see historical research as different from the research that we do in the laboratory (see Concluding Remarks of *K. A. Lattal: Collector, Curator, and Historian of Behavior Analysis* by Elcoro, in this volume).

Working in Andy's laboratory became a lesson in history of behavior analysis. Andy's choice of maintaining a "curious marriage of old and new technologies" promoted interactions with instruments and the history of behavior analysis (Elcoro, 2024; Escobar & Lattal, 2014; p. 105). Relatedly, Andy once called me to assist him with retrieving an item for his collection of instruments—a room referred to as "the museum" in the Life Sciences Building at WVU—that was being delivered. When I asked what it was, Andy simply replied: "An air crib". I thought: "Wait, what? How often does one get such a phone call?" It was a surprising moment, typical of many stories from Andy's laboratory.

### **Running**

During my time working with Andy as a graduate student, another surprising development was my adoption of running. As a dedicated

long-distance runner, Andy, takes the jargon of “running experiments” to a different level. He convincingly shared with his students how running enhanced his research and allows him to sort through problems and gain clarity. That was very appealing to me and his other students. Although I have never run with Andy, adopting running in my life was a way to relate more to him and to learn from him. I know about some of his former students who took up running as a way to gain more access to Andy and to expand research and build networks. Through running, Andy also taught me to value and care for good health.

### **Writing**

Andy showed tremendous patience teaching me how to write scientific papers in English. We had frequent and long one-on-one writing sessions. Andy is understanding and empathetic about his students who are not native English speakers. As mentioned earlier, he was studying French while I was a graduate student, so he knows firsthand what it is to learn to write and speak a language other than your native one. We spent hours sharing how to express ideas in English, Spanish, and French and he is genuinely interested in the differences and commonalities across languages. His feedback on papers was overall and predominantly constructive and motivating. His lessons continue to resonate with me as my journey as a writer continues.

He shares books with his students such as *The elements of style* by Strunk and White (1959) that he frequently refers to when addressing writing elements such as clarity of expression. He taught me that reading carefully and frequently are key to becoming a better writer. Providing multiple exemplars (from behavior analysis and other fields) and masterfully applying differential reinforcement, Andy teaches his students the value of language, communication, and dissemination of the science of behavior.

### **Laboratory Research with Global Impact**

Andy’s influence is evident in the accomplishments of his former students across the United States and around the world. Andy’s laboratory often hosted a diverse array of international graduate and post-doctoral students (see Figure). His enthusiasm for languages intertwined with his mentorship, created a welcoming environment for students beyond the boundaries of the United States. Andy’s teaching extended from the traditional classroom and the lab, including memorable lunches at a local restaurant where experiments were drafted on paper mats, evening classes held in his basement, and trips

**Figure 1**

*Photograph of Andy's Laboratory taken by Laurent Madelain (France) in 2008 outside the Life Sciences Building in Morgantown, WV*



*Note.* From left to right back row: Alicia Roca (Mexico), Megan Meginley, Raquel Aló (Brazil), Andy Lattal, Chata A. Dickson, David Jarmolowicz. From left to right, front row: Rogelio Escobar (Mexico), Carlos Cançado (Brazil), Mirari Elcoro (Venezuela), Nora Giezek (France), Toshikazu Kuroda (Japan).

such as the one to Gettysburg where he shared his deep passion for U.S. history with his students. Even while traveling, which he does frequently, his guidance and approach remain.

Andy taught us the distinction between the terms relation and relationship. The former is used to refer to more abstract connections, while the latter involves people. Andy maintains lasting relationships with his students. I am one of many with whom, after graduating from WVU, he maintains research collaborations, other professional activities, and a friendship. I am eternally grateful for having Andy as my academic advisor, mentor, colleague, and friend. Along with Andy, and because of Andy, I am grateful to have my Lattal lab mates also as mentors, colleagues, and friends.

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