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# Multiculturalism and Diversity within the Field of Applied Behavior Analysis



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# Introduction

Multiculturalism and diversity are important aspects to address within the field of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) and the service delivery model. It is vital for behavior analysts to understand the different dynamics that may exist when working with specific diverse populations and professional concerns or issues that can arise. Therefore, it is important for behavior analysts to have a general understanding of working with different populations as well as be provided with general guidance on various clinical applications when engaging in these tasks. Within this course, there will be various topics discussed that delve into multiculturalism and diversity when providing services to clients and their families. A framework for assessing culture will be delineated so that a behavior analyst can understand the different components that may affect an interaction with other individuals. Additionally, the development of multicultural services will be explored as well as guidelines for providing culturally competent behavior analytic services to both the client and their family.

## Overview

The concept of diversity is ever so broad in nature that it encompasses a variety of aspects. These can range from topics concerning race and ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, age, religious practices, disability, and more. Furthermore, it is vital for behavior analysts to demonstrate cultural sensitivity when working with diverse populations so that an effort can be made to work toward competence while engaging in cultural humility. It has been argued that cultural competence can never be achieved as individuals can always demonstrate growth and effort toward attaining additional information and insight into the lives of others. Therefore, within the field of ABA, it has been suggested to utilize the term cultural humility to indicate that this learning is a process that should occur through one's lifespan with ultimate competence never being fully achieved by one person. Currently, you will see both terms used but understand that the field is providing direction to move toward the use of cultural humility.

Additionally, the field of ABA has also indicated a newer term, cultural competemility, as a more encompassing view of an individual demonstrating cultural competence and cultural humility together in a manner that is improving the practitioner. Cultural competemility is defined as the process that occurs between cultural humility and cultural competence where cultural humility is found among the five components (i.e.,

cultural awareness, cultural knowledge, cultural skill, cultural desire, and cultural encounters) of cultural competence (Connors & Capell, 2020).

With all of this being said, it is important for behavior analysts to understand that becoming completely culturally competent will be a work in progress that will occur throughout the lifetime of a practitioner. A practitioner should work to expand their level of cultural awareness, gaining insight and knowledge that they can use in practice to demonstrate cultural sensitivity while providing high-quality services to populations that are diverse and with varying needs.

## **Section 1: Framework for Assessing Culture**

Understanding behavior through analysis and acknowledgement of various factors that lead to the demonstration or non-occurrence of a targeted behavior is at the forefront of behavior analysis as a science. Within this field, behavior analysts are directed to demonstrate meaningful change for the individuals they work with whether that be on an individual, group, or organizational basis. As behavior analysts work within this capacity, providing meaningful change for an individual requires behavior analysts to work with a variety of individuals. These individuals may exhibit similar behaviors as the behavior analyst does; however, it may also be the case where these individuals are vastly different with varying discrepancies among culture from that of the behavior analyst.

The Ethics Code for Behavior Analysts (2020) has been developed by the Behavior Analyst Certification Board® (BACB®) to guide behavior analysts into demonstrating ethical and professional behavior throughout their practice. Within this document, principles that direct a behavior analyst on how to interact with others in different contexts (i.e., supervisor, clinician, researcher) are laid out in an attempt to influence the success of those relationships by having an understanding of other perspectives and beliefs that may be different from their own. An individual's perspectives and beliefs are formed based on one's learning history known as culture. Social behaviors are maintained by an individual through specific contingencies referred to as Interlocking Behavioral Contingencies (IBC). An individual's cultural norms develop through IBCs and by knowing and understanding this, behavior analysts can have a greater understanding of these processes and an individual's behavior so that they are better apt to serve in various roles (i.e., supervisor, clinician, researcher).

Individuals belong to at least one culture that they identify with, yet many individuals ultimately belong to multiple cultures. These various cultures may have contingencies that either complement or oppose the contingencies of other cultures. These contingencies can lead to the demonstration of a behavior that is reinforced and viewed as being acceptable within a specific culture. On the other hand, the same behavior may be punished or looked at as unacceptable in a different culture. By understanding that different contingencies exist for the same behavior across cultures and that these contingencies may be either the same or different from a behavior analyst's own set of contingencies, this encourages responses that are more in line with the culture that could be in question. This also facilitates positive interactions among others from different cultures.

Interactions among others are a vital component of an effective behavior analytic service delivery model. When a behavior analyst understands their own culture and the learning history that surrounds the development of norms they are accustomed to, this can further assist a behavior analyst when understanding the learning history and its effect on interactions when working and interacting with others. It is important to understand the various components that can contribute to the cultural identification of the individuals that a behavior analyst encounters and works with to promote socially significant behavior change.

Therefore, a model has been systematically introduced into the field of behavior analysis that provides a framework for assessing culture in not only oneself but also in others as well (Connors & Capell, 2020; Hays, 2016). Within this model, there are ten different components of culture that could be identified as having an impact on the interactions that occur between people. These ten aspects of culture include: age/generation, disability (congenital), disability (acquired), religion and spiritual identity, ethnicity and racial identity, socioeconomic status, sexual identify, indigenous heritage, national origin, and gender identity and expression (Connors & Capell, 2020; Hays, 2016).

## **Age and Generation**

When evaluating this cultural domain, there are a few minority groups that could be associated such as children, adolescents, and older adults. After a behavior analyst has determined whether one identifies with either the dominant or the minority group, they should focus on addressing the following questions (Connors & Capell, 2020; Hays, 2016):

- What is one's own age?
- What generation does that put one in, and what are some of the cultural contexts of that generation? How might that be stereotypical? How might it be accurate? How might it impact how one is perceived by others?
- What is the similarity/difference in age between one another?

After a behavior analyst has had a moment to reflect on the answers to the above questions, it is important to understand the differences that may exist as it relates to one's perspective of the cultural context of growing up during different periods of time. For example, a behavior analyst may be considerably younger than the parent of the child diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). This may provide the behavior analyst with contextual factors on addressing the parent training component of a treatment plan and how to guide parents on redirection techniques for challenging behavior.

## **Disability (Congenital)**

When evaluating this cultural domain, it is important to determine if an individual has been diagnosed with any disability that has been present since the individual was born. In an attempt to identify the minority group within this domain, this would include someone who has been diagnosed with a congenital or developmental disability. The following questions could be utilized to determine if an individual identifies with either the dominant or the minority group (Conners & Capell, 2020; Hays, 2016):

- What challenges has one faced since birth?
- Is there a known disability that has been present since birth?
- What impact has that had on one's life?
- How does that impact one's view of self or another's view?

After careful evaluation of the responses to these questions, a behavior analyst may identify themselves as having a learning disability. While reflecting on one's own experiences of navigating different life situations with a learning disability, these experiences may impact an interaction that one has with a child who also is experiencing life with a learning disability. Furthermore, it could impact interactions that one may have with consultants or school administrators. By being aware of how one's experiences may impact various similarities or differences that exist within this domain

during an interaction, context can be provided regarding one's behavior and modifications can be made surrounding the behavior exhibited or allowances made for the behavior to occur.

## **Disability (Acquired)**

In comparison to the previous domain listed, this cultural domain is inclusive of any disability that has not been present within the individual since birth but instead has been acquired by the individual. An individual that identifies as the minority group within this cultural domain would have experienced an acquired disability. The following questions could be used to determine if one identifies with either the dominant or the minority group (Conners & Capell, 2020; Hays, 2016):

- What challenges has one faced since acquiring the disability?
- How has one's life changed?
- How has one's view of self changed or how has the perceived view of another changed?

For example, a behavior analyst may have experienced a traumatic event that as a result of this experience, changed their views on a particular group of individuals. While this change in perception is common for individuals that experience a traumatic event, it could impact how a behavior analyst is able to interact with individuals that share similar characteristics to this group. By being aware of the possibility for one's ability to interact in a sensitive and competent manner as potentially being compromised, this allows a behavior analyst to discuss the option for reassignment of a case if needed or if additional support from management should be provided if the interaction is deemed manageable for the behavior analyst to continue to facilitate.

## **Religion or Spirituality**

Within this domain, an individual's religious affiliation and spiritual beliefs, as well as not believing in any spiritual construct are included. Individuals that self-identify as Christian are considered the dominant group within this domain. This is according to the classification conducted by Hays (2016) through use of the American Religious Identification Survey. The questions outlined below can assist a behavior analyst with determining if one identifies either with the dominant or minority group (Conners & Capell, 2020; Hays, 2016):



- What has been one's experience with religion and spirituality?
- In what ways does religion and spirituality affect one's daily life and interactions with others?
- How might others view one's spirituality and religion?

This cultural domain could impact a behavior analyst if they are asked to provide services to a client with different religious beliefs than their own. For example, a behavior analyst may have been born and raised in a predominantly Catholic home and environment. The behavior analyst is asked to provide services to an individual that does not believe in any spiritual construct. This may become uncomfortable for the behavior analyst as they work through possible discussions on holidays or when working on meal goals and consuming food together. By being aware of one's own religious and spiritual beliefs, this can allow the behavior analyst the opportunity to discuss these differences with each other, determining the best course of action for moving forward while maintaining respect for both parties.

## **Ethnic and Racial Identity**

By evaluating this cultural domain, a behavior analyst is able to determine how they identify with a group that encompasses national or racial origins. Hays's (2016) classification has determined, based on US Census Bureau data, that European Americans are the dominant group as a majority of individuals identify as either white or Caucasian. However, it is important to note that the ethnic makeup of the United States is ever changing and each census report could reveal different conclusions. For example, more individuals are self-identifying with two or more racial groups. Therefore, it is important for a behavior analyst to determine whether or not they identify with the dominant or the minority group. Some questions that a behavior analyst could ask to help determine this are as follows (Conners & Capell, 2020; Hays, 2016):

- What experiences has one had related to his or her ethnic and racial identity?
- How have those experiences shaped the view of self or given insight into how others have viewed oneself?

It is ideal for a behavior analyst to evaluate themselves based on their experiences and exposure to other racial or ethnic groups. For example, a behavior analyst may have been born and raised in a racially homogenous area, with little interaction and exposure to individuals from other racial or ethnic groups. This same behavior analyst may

encounter an individual requiring services that resides in a residential placement that houses individuals from a different racial group than they are familiar interacting with. By understanding that there is a difference, this would allow the behavior analyst the opportunity to explore this culture and gather information so that the behavior analyst can make a determination as to whether or not they can provide appropriate services to this individual or if they would be a detriment to them.

## **Socioeconomic Status**

An individual's socioeconomic status refers to the income, education, and occupation of an individual as it relates to how this person coincides within society. Within the United States and Canada, the dominant group identifies with upper and middle class individuals. As a behavior analyst works to provide services for others, it is important for them to evaluate their own socioeconomic status and how it relates to the socioeconomic status of the individual(s) they are working with. The following questions can be used to guide the evaluation of one's socioeconomic status (Conners & Capell, 2020; Hays, 2016):

- How has one's belonging in this area affected the opportunities and/or interactions one has had?
- How does one view his or her standing in this area?
- Has one remained in the same standing in this area, or has there been change over time?

A behavior analyst should reflect and evaluate the differences that may exist between their own socioeconomic status and that of the individual they are providing services to. For example, a behavior analyst may have been raised in an affluent neighborhood within a family that was considered in the upper socioeconomic class. This behavior analyst has been asked to provide services to an individual that resides with a family whose socioeconomic status is significantly different than theirs and considered to belong to the lower socioeconomic class. The behavior analyst will need to reflect on the different experiences that this individual may have encountered and be considerate of the different cultural norms that may permeate this relationship. While these things may be different or never been encountered by the behavior analyst before, it is important that the behavior analyst is aware of these potential differences so they can seek consultation as needed and ensure cultural sensitivity for the individual they are working with.

## Sexual Identity

An individual's sexual orientation, sexual identity, and expression encompass this cultural domain. Within this domain, the dominant group coincides with identification as cisgendered, heterosexual individuals (Hays, 2016). However, it is important to understand that this dominant group may change as time continues to progress and individuals are self-identifying with different groups. In an effort for behavior analysts to identify themselves with either the dominant or minority group, different questions could be reflected upon to make this determination (Connors & Capell, 2020; Hays, 2016).

- What are one's own views related to sexual identity, orientation, and expression? How has this affected one's own experiences?
- Have these views remained stable over the lifespan or has there been fluidity?

Within this cultural domain, it is important for a behavior analyst to reflect on their sexual identity and how it may impact the services they deliver to others. For example, a behavior analyst may have been raised in a home with two male figures. However, this same behavior analyst may be assigned to provide services to an individual where the family dynamic is rather vocal about their views on homosexuality, adamant that heterosexuality is the only way that an individual should sexually identify with. This may cause great discomfort for the behavior analyst. Therefore, it is important for the behavior analyst to be aware of these competing beliefs and how they may impact treatment for the individual being served. This would allow for an opportunity for the behavior analyst to have an open discussion with their supervisor, determining if this case is an appropriate fit for them or to determine if additional support should be provided so that the behavior analyst can ensure cultural sensitivity is being demonstrated for the individual and the family receiving services.

## Indigenous Heritage

This cultural domain involves individuals being able to identify themselves as the original inhabitants of a certain area (Hays, 2016). In the United States and Canada, individuals that self-identify as American Indian or Alaska Native individuals are considered to be the minority group. Therefore, it is important for a behavior analyst to be able to identify as either the dominant or minority group within this cultural domain. Questions that can be considered to help with this identification are as follows (Connors & Capell, 2020; Hays 2016):

- What are one's own experiences related to individuals of indigenous heritage?
- What stereotypes does one have related to individuals of indigenous heritage?

Differences exist among individuals. Therefore, within this cultural domain, it is important for behavior analysts to determine where those differences exist and how to move forward with planning for service delivery. For example, a behavior analyst may have been born and raised in the state of Florida. Once they became an adult and moved into their career, they decided that it would be best to move to Alaska to provide services. In the state of Alaska, it is common for more individuals to self-identify as Alaska Natives than they do in Florida. By being aware of this difference, the behavior analyst would be able to research the culture and history of the area so they are better able to serve individuals in the area while remaining sensitive to their individual needs. A behavior analyst would also have the opportunity to be able to find a mentor from another behavior analyst that identifies as an individual in this cultural group who could provide guidance and support with service delivery and interactions.

## National Origin

This cultural domain encompasses whether an individual was born in the country in which they reside. Individuals that are US-born Americans are considered the dominant group within this domain (Hays, 2016). Within this cultural domain, it is important for a behavior analyst to ask questions to help determine if an individual identifies with the dominant or minority group (Connors & Capell, 2020; Hays, 2016):

- What are one's own experiences related to immigrants, refugees, and other individuals who were not born in the United States?
- What stereotypes does one have related to individuals born outside of the United States and who are currently living in the country?
- Are these beliefs consistent over time, or have they changed?

This domain allows behavior analysts to gather information regarding another culture and an individual's decision to immigrate so that they are better able to provide culturally sensitive services. For example, a behavior analyst may have been born within the United States but assigned to working in a location where predominantly Asian individuals reside that had previously immigrated to this area. The behavior analyst may not be aware of why these individuals decided to immigrate to this location or the experiences that led them to choose this experience. However, after a behavior analyst

has become aware of these factors, it would be vital for the behavior analyst to learn further information concerning the immigration process within the United States and how it specifically concerns the individuals that will be receiving services from this behavior analyst.

## Gender

This cultural domain considers the sex that an individual identifies with. Also, as time continues to progress and more information is learned about gender as well as its expression and identity, this domain also includes those who self-identify as genderfluid or non-binary. Within this cultural domain, the dominant group would be considered individuals that self-identify as male. As a behavior analyst works with others, it is important to consider different questions to help further explore if an individual identifies with either the dominant or minority group (Connors & Capell, 2020; Hays, 2016):

- What experiences has one had related to gender, gender identity, and gender expression?
- What beliefs does one hold about male or female roles and responsibilities?
- How might that impact one's work?

Determining whether an individual identifies with a dominant or minority group within a particular domain is important when determining appropriate services to deliver as well as furthering relationships and interactions among others. In this domain, a behavior analyst that self-identifies as a male works with a child within a school system that self-identifies as non-binary. The behavior analyst has been made aware of this individual's self-identification status and realizes that they are unaware of the appropriate language to use with individuals that identify as non-binary. This awareness allows the behavior analyst to seek out additional information so that the behavior analyst is equipped with the appropriate language to use when conversing with the child. This allows the behavior analyst to engage in culturally sensitive behavior and assist with further developing the relationship between the behavior analyst and the child by validating the child's identity.

Behavior analysts should work to understand that depending on whether you identify with either a dominant or minority group, biases are likely to exist for the parties involved in the interaction. Therefore, it is important to allow oneself to be aware of

how an individual self-identifies as this group membership may also affect one's worldview. If a behavior analyst is unaware or missing information regarding an individual's culture that they are providing services for, then they may be missing vital contextual factors that could drastically impact the interventions that are developed for use within the service delivery model.

When a behavior analyst decides to work with or engage in an interaction with another individual, they should first become aware of the differences and similarities that may exist regarding cultural identification and across the cultural domains previously mentioned. After this awareness has been recognized, more information should be gathered in an effort to expand one's cultural knowledge. This can be done by delving into the cultural literature regarding norms and histories or seeking out supervision or consultation from another behavior analyst that may have more experience regarding the cultural domain where one has identified a gap in cultural knowledge.

## Section 1 Personal Reflection

Which cultural domain have you found yourself having the greatest difference in when providing services to others? What are some ways that you have worked to make yourself aware of the knowledge gap as well as worked to lessen the knowledge gap?

## Section 1 Key Words

Cultural awareness - examination of one's own cultural beliefs and values in an effort to understand how the culture of others influences one's behavior and interactions with others

Cultural competemility - the process that occurs between cultural humility and cultural competence where cultural humility is found among the five components (i.e., cultural awareness, cultural knowledge, cultural skill, cultural desire, and cultural encounters) of cultural competence

Cultural competence - the ability to obtain an awareness of one's cultural beliefs, values, and biases while obtaining knowledge and insight concerning the norms and behaviors of other cultures

Cultural humility - the ability to remain oriented toward others while continually learning about cultural identity of others through knowledge and insight, self-reflection, and personal critique

Cultural sensitivity - the ability of one to understand cultural differences, evaluate how one's cultural beliefs can influence their professional practice, and develop interventions for clients that into consideration the client's own culture

Culture - perspectives and beliefs that are formed based on one's learning history

Interlocking behavioral contingencies - social behaviors that are maintained by an individual through specific contingencies

## Section 2: Understanding the Development of Multicultural Services in Behavior Analysis

ABA was founded as a field and discipline in the late 19th century by predominantly Anglo-American men. These founders consisted of B. F. Skinner, John B. Watson, and Fred Keller along with several others that made significant contributions through their publications in behaviorism. The contributions made by these men are widely accepted and acknowledged throughout the discipline.

During the time that ABA was founded, the demographics of the United States was predominantly white (88.4% of the population) while other groups encompassed the remaining percentage of the population. For example, Negro consisted of 10.9%, Indian consisted of .3%, Chinese were at .1%, Japanese were at .2%, and .1% consisted of other individuals (United States Census Bureau, n.d.a). As time progressed, the dynamics within the discipline also changed as well as the individuals that made up the population of the United States. At the time that the BACB® was created in 1998, the population of the United States consisted of the following groups: 82.6% white, 12.6% black, .8% American Indian or Eskimo Aleut, and 3.75% Asian or Pacific Islander (1998 United States Census Bureau, n.d.b). It is apparent that the demographics of the population within the United States has continued to diversify over the years. According to the US Census in 2018, the population of the United States consisted of the following groups: 76.5% white, 13.4% African American, 1.3% American Indian and Alaska Native, 5.9% Asian, and .2% Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander (2018 United States Census Bureau, n.d.c).

Through analysis of the census data of the United States over the course of years, it is evident that the United States continues to diversify revealing that behavior analysts might be serving different populations nowadays when compared to the founders of our discipline. Furthermore, a behavior analyst might also self-identify with a different cultural group than the original founders. Therefore, it is important for behavior

analysts to continue to grow and learn more about different cultural groups and norms in an effort to remain culturally sensitive and to meet the needs of the diverse population that they are surrounded by.

As the need for culturally competent services continues to rise, the development of resources, training, and guidelines are delineated so that appropriate standards are achieved. The BACB® has developed a set of standards for behavior analysts that are similar to those that are upheld by the American Psychological Association. Although these guidelines are not all encompassing, they do provide a general framework for working toward practitioners providing culturally competent services. However, further development will need to continue to occur as the population continues to diversify in an attempt to provide multiculturally sensitive services.

When individuals engage in culturally sensitive practice, they are working to be aware as well as use and apply information (i.e., race, culture, gender) as they provide services to individuals. Culturally sensitive practice can include a multitude of concepts. For example, ensuring that appropriate communication occurs within interactions is considered a culturally sensitive practice. Within this, a behavior analyst should ensure that eye contact, body language, and body contact are all acceptable within the culture that they are communicating with. By not ensuring that culturally sensitive practice is maintained, the relationship between the practitioner and the individual providing services can be impacted and directly result in difficulties with implementing various interventions and programs.

## **Development of Multicultural Guidelines within the Field of Behavior Analysis**

In an effort to develop multicultural guidelines within the field of behavior analysis, a special interest group (i.e., Multicultural Alliance of Behavior Analysts) was formed as a group within the Association for Behavior Analysts International (ABAI). The mission of this group was to connect behavior analysts that show an interest in or have experience working with individuals within minority populations. Additionally, they wanted to develop guidelines that would be beneficial for behavior analysts when providing ethical and culturally sensitive services. In an effort to establish a set of standards for behavior analysts to guide their service delivery, seven standards for cultural competence were suggested (i.e., ethics and values, self-awareness, cross cultural application, diverse workforce, language diversity, professional education, referrals) (Connors & Capell, 2020). In 2019, the Multicultural Alliance of Behavior Analysts was renamed to Culture



and Diversity Special Interest Group and this group adopted this set of standards for behavior analysts.

Furthermore, the ABAI Task Force on Diversity, Respect, and Inclusion has previously held a diversity panel discussion at the ABAI annual conference. This allowed an opportunity for behavior analysts to discuss what has been completed in an effort to increase respect and inclusion and provide a method for answering questions from individuals in attendance at the conference. As a result of this panel discussion that was held in 2018, a task force for inclusion and development was created as an avenue for making recommendations to the ABAI Executive Council regarding this topic. Furthermore, the ABAI Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Board was created to develop an inclusive and equitable environment within the science and practice of behavior analysis.

Although a set of multicultural guidelines established for the field of behavior analysis is a work in progress, there are challenges that exist when establishing these guidelines for implementation. One challenge that exists is that there is not a formal committee created that addresses multiculturalism specifically in the field of behavior analysis. Without this committee, an agreement may not be able to be made regarding the multicultural guidelines that should be created. There could be disagreements that arise regarding what is to be included without the consensus of a committee in place. Additionally, a clear definition of multiculturalism and culturally sensitive practice does not currently exist as it is related to both practice and research within the field of behavior analysis. There are times when multiculturalism includes race, gender, ability, religion, and socioeconomic status (Connors & Capell, 2020). However, a clearer definition would need to be agreed upon so that it can be delineated as to what is actually included within the definition of multiculturalism. It is also unclear as to what culturally sensitive practice looks like within research. Some studies include client demographic information when reporting social validity measures. However, this reporting has been found to be inconsistent within the literature. Without this information, it is difficult to fully know or defend if a study was ethical or to know the extent of the generalizability of the intervention being examined.

Despite all of the challenges mentioned to establishing a formalized set of multicultural guidelines, there are some strengths to the current methods and standards that are currently in place for behavior analysts. Some of the codes that are already in existence are a good starting place for further development of standards and guidelines on concerns regarding multiculturalism and diversity. The American Psychological

Association has guidelines that are centered around the need for psychologists to pursue training, experience, consultation, and experience to help direct professionals into being competent professionals when providing services to individuals from diverse populations (American Psychological Association, 2017). This language could act as a foundation for behavior analysts when developing a set of multicultural guidelines.

## Section 2 Personal Reflection

What are some components that you believe should be considered in the development of a set of multicultural guidelines for the field of behavior analysis?

## Section 2 Key Words

Behavior Analyst Certification Board® (BACB®) - organization established to meet professional credentialing needs identified by behavior analysts, governments, and consumers of behavior-analytic services

Culturally sensitive practice - individuals that are working to be aware as well as use and apply information (i.e., race, culture, gender) as they provide services to individuals

## Section 3: Cultural Incompetency within Service Delivery Models

When evaluating information from other related fields, it has been found that having a shared identity can aid rapport building between two individuals. For example, an individual that has a Vietnamese background may be more apt to share private information with a therapist that identifies as Vietnamese. By having this shared identity, relationship building becomes a much smoother process. There are several factors that could contribute to this smoother process. These factors include a shared knowledge of a common language, cultural norms, religious practices, and traditions (Conners & Capell, 2020). There is also a sense of ease that comes with a shared identity as the individual does not have to spend additional time explaining different components of their own culture in order for the therapist to understand their upbringing and cultural values. While this is key to a therapeutic relationship, the same could hold true for professionals within the field of behavior analysis. Clients that are seeking out services from a behavior analyst may be more inclined to access and

maintain these services if they share a similar identity to that of their ABA professional that will be working with them. While there are great benefits to having a shared identity between a client and professional, the same type of relationship can also be developed among individuals with different backgrounds.

While it is important for a behavior analyst to understand the culture in which they are a part of, it is equally as important to understand the culture of the clients that they will be providing services to. It is vital to the practice of a behavior analyst to become a culturally competent behavior analyst in an effort to provide sound and effective treatment to a variety of individuals. However, as time progresses, it is noted that a lack of professional training exists in the area of cultural competence within ABA. Ideally, learning how culture shapes humans should be integrated into behavior analytic training and coursework.

Although there is a lack of professional training that exists within the field of behavior analysis, it is also important to note that there is a lack of diversity within the professionals that are in the field. From research conducted on the demographics of behavior analysts, it has been shown that behavior analysts are predominately white females (Conners & Capell, 2020; Conners et al., 2019). This raises ethical concerns as to how behavior analysts that receive limited, if any, training on multiculturalism are able to provide culturally competent services to individuals from a different culture.

The first step in the process of remedying the lack of cultural awareness that occurs within the field of behavior analysis is to become self-aware. There are several strategies that have been identified as methods for gaining cultural self-awareness (Fong et al., 2016). One strategy that has been suggested is for behavior analysts to discuss the diverse client interactions that they have been a part of with other members of the professional community. These opportunities for discussion could be within group discussions, various forums, during meetings, with a mentor, and through feedback. When these experiences are discussed with other professionals in the field, it allows the behavior analyst to work on identifying their own behavior that may need to be changed. It also allows for a behavior analyst to gain further insight from other professionals on their experiences with different cultures that the behavior analyst may not be as familiar with.

Another strategy that could be used to gain cultural self-awareness is through the use of a self-assessment tool. These tools could assist a behavior analyst with identifying their own cultural biases, values, and understanding. One tool specifically that could be utilized is the *Diversity Self-Assessment* (Fong et al., 2016). This tool has eleven

questions that one is asked to respond to which is designed to examine an individual's understanding of diversity. Another tool that could be used is the *Multicultural Sensitivity Scale* (Jibaja et al., 2000). This tool is designed to measure multicultural sensitivity. There are other self-assessments and tools available to behavior analysts that can assist with gaining insight into one's cultural self-awareness. It is ideal that these tools be used during the intake process of working with an individual in an effort for the behavior analyst to reflect on their biases to determine the best course of treatment for the individual seeking services. This could mean that further mentorship may be needed, or a referral may need to be made so that the client and clinician's cultural beliefs can be respected.

A third strategy that has been identified as a method for gaining cultural self-awareness is through private events (Conners & Capell, 2020). By analyzing one's private events while observing them, this can allow a behavior analyst to reflect on their own emotions that occur. In order to analyze private events, the behavior analyst should use mindfulness techniques to make objective observations of a client's behaviors and any interactions that may occur. Using mindfulness will encourage the behavior analyst to be more aware of and active during an observation as well as allow the behavior analyst to reduce any biases that exist toward a culturally diverse client or their family.

### **Section 3 Personal Reflection**

What are some methods that you have used or witnessed others using to gain cultural self-awareness? Are there any tools that you would be interested in exploring further that were mentioned in the information previously?

### **Section 3 Key Words**

Cultural self-awareness - awareness of how culture has influenced the self

Mindfulness - awareness that is brought forth by purposefully paying attention in the present moment in a nonjudgmental manner

Private events - behaviors that happen internally to an organism

## Section 4: Clinical Practice that is Culturally Competent

As time progresses and services continue to expand to various parts of the world, it is evident that behavior analysts within organizations are providing services to more diverse populations than previously encountered. Services are often provided to individuals through use of a tiered model, meaning that a behavior analyst often oversees or supervises others (i.e., technicians, registered behavior technicians) that are providing direct services. In these situations, it is key that the provider is aware of the care and experience that the client receives from all parties that are involved in the delivery of services for this individual.

Throughout the experience of the client, known as the patient lifecycle, they encounter a range of service delivery experiences that encompass the time from diagnosis until they are discharged from services. ABA organizations are found to interact with clients throughout their patient lifecycle; however, few of these organizations truly understand the impact that each component of the patient lifecycle has on the overall patient experience of services. These components of the patient lifecycle range from intake to billing, as well as delivery of direct services, parent training, and discharge from services.

The rapport and relationship that is developed is an important factor to the success of the individual that is receiving services. Although the relationship that is built between the individual receiving services and either the behavior analyst or technician that are providing the direct services is important, the interaction that the organization has with the individual is also important to consider. Business sustainability is important, particularly in a service industry that often provides care for several years to an individual. Therefore, it is ideal that services are provided with cultural competence in an effort to dissipate the disparities that exist with individuals from diverse backgrounds.

As populations become more diverse and the demographics of the individuals requesting services change, ABA organizations will need to look for ways to adjust to the needs of these individuals. These adjustments will not only affect the long-term sustainability of their organization and the services they provide that mitigate the disparities that exist among diverse populations, but it will also work to help ABA organizations to gain the upper hand within the marketplace for the services that they provide. Secondly, individuals that have a diverse background often have had a longer road to travel in obtaining services. Therefore, by expanding services to encompass a culturally competence approach to service delivery, this will further ensure that these individuals are able to receive services that are clinically appropriate for their needs.

Thirdly, ABA organizations intend to have a socially significant impact on the outcomes of the individuals that receive their services. The outcomes can be greatly impacted with significantly better improvements if an ABA organization is able to fulfill the needs both culturally and ethnically of the individuals that they provide services for (Connors & Capell, 2016). Additionally, ABA organizations should also meet the regulatory requirements that are outlined for operation and that are correlated with providing culturally competent services to individuals. ABA organizations that attempt to fulfill this requirement will greatly decrease the likelihood that claims are filed against them for liability concerns and malpractice claims. It is important to not only the ABA organization but also to the individual receiving services that they encounter knowledgeable individuals that are able to answer questions regarding various situations throughout the course of the patient lifecycle along each step of the way.

## **Prior to the Start of Services**

Prior to an individual receiving services from an ABA organization, an intake process often occurs to obtain information regarding the individual seeking services. Often, the individual and their family are asked to define the type of services they are in search of, the problems that the individual wants to work on, identification of any ancillary therapies or services that the individual may be receiving, and how payment will be taken care for the services that are delivered to the individual. The gathering of this information is important as well as providing this information to other individuals that will be a part of the care and treatment team for the individual requesting services. This allows for consistent care to be maintained and for the individual to not have to repeat information multiple times that has already been asked of them.

At the onset of an individual searching for a provider to facilitate services, contact is typically initiated through a phone call or via accessing a contact form on a website. Multilingual options should be made available in an effort to reduce any communication barriers that may exist. It can be difficult for an individual that was not originally born in a country to be required to speak and understand the native language. Additionally, it can be even more challenging to navigate the process of obtaining services when an individual is not fluent in a native language. Therefore, it is important to not add to these life stressors and instead eliminate these barriers as much as possible to further facilitate a relationship between the individual and the organization.

Members of the ABA organization that are part of the intake process for new clients should be familiar with the demographics of the population within the surrounding

community. This includes understanding and knowing the racial and ethnic makeup of the population, the various languages that are spoken, and information involving the different religions that are being practiced. These members should also learn how to answer questions from various individuals (i.e., foster parents, social workers) that may try to obtain information for individuals they know need services. It may also be beneficial for ABA organizations to keep a list of community resources that are available for individuals that are linguistically diverse who may need services that the ABA organization is unable to provide.

Furthermore, members of an ABA organization should be aware that clients may be more apt to ask to work with therapists or behavior analysts that have similar cultural or linguistic backgrounds. An organization should be prepared for these requests and know how they will respond to address the concerns of the client and their family.

## **Conducting an Assessment**

Assessments contain several components and various methods that can be used to gather information concerning a client and their needs. Indirect (i.e., checklists) and direct (i.e., observations) methods can be utilized when assessing various behaviors targeted for reduction. Skill acquisition programs may require the use of criterion-based tools or norm-referenced measures to determine the areas needed for growth and development. A behavior analyst should work to understand the impact that culture and language may have on the ability for one to properly and accurately interpret assessment results.

For example, individuals seeking services from multilingual households may demonstrate skills differently when the request is made in one language versus being asked in another language. If an ABA organization is able to offer the services of staff that are multilingual, this may assist with overcoming many barriers that may be present. If an ABA organization is unable to provide staff that are multilingual, it may be beneficial for the organization to consider referring the client and their family to an organization that is able to offer staff with this expertise.

During the assessment, a behavior analyst is able to ask the client and their family about their values, preferences, beliefs, and expectations. Behavior analysts should use this time during the assessment to discuss with families the importance of relaying this information as it has a significant impact on the design of effective treatment plan that will be designed to meet the needs of the client receiving services. Notes should be

taken during observations of how family members interact with one another as well as their adherence to various rituals that surround routines. For example, some families may have different routines surrounding hygiene tasks or meal preparation and consumption that should be understood in order for a behavior analyst to design a treatment plan that coincides with the client's and family's cultural preferences.

Goals used to develop behavior change interventions or skill acquisition programs are developed based on the results of the assessment, concerns brought forth by parents and caregivers, and observations that are conducted by the behavior analyst. Variables, as they relate to the cultural needs of the client and family, are integrated into the goals that are developed for the individual seeking services. For example, meal time consumption skills may need to be developed around the client not using their left hand while consuming food as individuals from certain parts of India view this as being unclean. It is important for a behavior analyst to understand and know of these cultural norms prior to developing goals for an individual so they can ensure they are respecting cultural beliefs when teaching new skills to individuals.

## **Training for Parents of the Individual Receiving Services**

Parent training is an important aspect of goal development for individuals with disabilities. By training parents on the implementation of interventions to use with their child, generalization can occur within skill development and parents can know how to respond consistently regarding behavior reduction strategies. Therefore, it is equally important to ensure that families from different cultural backgrounds receive parent training that they understand and is inclusive of their cultural norms and practices.

Parent training for families of parents from different cultural backgrounds should include the following considerations (Conners & Capell, 2020):

- The ability of each parent to be able to actively engage in parent training. Some gender roles are specified within different cultures that prohibit one family member from participating while the other parent takes an active role in participation.
- Measures of discipline that are influenced by norms and practices within a culture.



- Deficits that may exist within the parents that affect their ability to understand the information presented. Parents may not be able to read and would then be unable to access materials that are provided to them.

By integrating these considerations, an ABA organization can provide parent training based on a systematic approach that is effective for the families involved in the training. Parent training should be individualized so that the needs of the family are able to be met. Training should include opportunities for providing instructions, modeling, rehearsal, and feedback (Conners & Capell, 2020).

## **Fading and Discharge of Services Provided**

When an individual enters into an agreement to receive services, a behavior analyst should discuss a plan for fading and discharge of services toward the onset of the relationship. The client and their family should be made aware of contingencies in place that concern the length of treatment that an individual can receive services as well as how the process for discharging a client from services occurs. Furthermore, plans should be considered as to the resources that are available within the community that could provide support to the client and their family once an individual is discharged from services. While this may not have to be delineated exactly for how services will look possibly several years down the road, possibilities should be explored and resources available should be considered.

Individuals from diverse populations may find it difficult to delineate resources that are available to them within the community once an individual is discharged from services. Therefore, it is important to start the identification process early within an individual's course of treatment. The behavior analyst can help guide families toward finding community resources and programs that are inclusive and work to support families from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Community programs can be designed to help support generalization of skills attained and allow for additional training to occur for an individual that has received services. In order to ease the transition for a client receiving services into a community placement, it is vital that the timeline of both fading and discharge of services is thought through and discussed with the client and family. Important dates should be reviewed, and checklists created to ensure the family has the support they need after discharging from services. Also, the behavior analyst should provide resources on how to access additional services

such as behavioral support if the need arises for these services once a client has been discharged from an ABA organization.

## **Framework Regarding Diversity**

Behavior analysts, upon certification, agree to abide by ethical standards that govern the field of behavior analysis. Therefore, it is important for behavior analysts to integrate concepts surrounding diversity into their practice. To begin with, the field of behavior analysis does not allow for discrimination to occur and in fact seeks to be a field that is composed of professionals from various ages, races, ethnic groups, religions, abilities, and sexual orientations.

In an effort to uphold this, ABAI has a SIG entitled Culture and Diversity SIG that acts to create a network of behavior analysts with different cultural backgrounds. This SIG promotes members by encouraging them to publish information surrounding different cultural backgrounds and service delivery, mentor students by teaching and providing guidance and support to them as it relates to cultural competence, and improve service delivery by advocating for the needs of individuals from different cultural backgrounds. This group works to diminish the barriers that exist and instead works towards creating awareness and encouraging others to be diverse in their thoughts.

Within the field of behavior analysis, the BACB® acts as the regulatory body for behavior analysts. This regulatory body provided behavior analysts with different ethical codes to abide by to ensure that behavior analysts are aware of the need to be culturally competent when working with individuals from diverse populations. It is important for ABA organizations to provide continual training opportunities for behavior analysts regarding cultural differences and the cultural needs of the individuals that they provide services for within their organization.

Organizations that provide behavioral services have the opportunity to be accredited through the Behavioral Health Center of Excellence®. This organization is an accrediting body that provides direction for organizations that provide behavior services to individuals. This accrediting body ensures that organizations provide appropriate training to their staff regarding cultural competence. They also work to ensure that parents are involved in planning treatment for the individual receiving services. Lastly, the accrediting body ensures that these organizations that do have accreditation follow any federal, state, or local laws regarding employment within the organization.

## An Organization's Commitment to Diversity

An organization that provides services to individuals should commit to requiring the use of a statement that shows a regard for the organization's commitment to diversity (Conners & Capell, 2020). This statement should be jargon free and use simple language to increase readability. It should also coincide with the organization's mission statement.

Organizations should exhibit behaviors and develop systems that promote diversity within their company. The environment within an organization should be focused around creating an inclusive culture. In an effort to ensure cultural competency is promoted within the staff in an organization, some suggestions should be considered (Conners & Capell, 2020):

- The organization should work to develop hiring practices that are diverse.
- An individual that is receiving services should be aligned with staff that have similar ethnic or cultural backgrounds.
- During a new staff member's onboarding process, cultural competency of this staff member should be evaluated.
- An organization should provide training as it relates to cultural competence.
- Relationship building and consistent communication should be encouraged so this occurs across a variety of groups within an organization's community.
- Staff members should be taught how to engage in active listening so they can use this tool when engaging with clients, family members, and team members.
- Staff members should be taught to engage in cultural sensitivity when examining any language barriers or linguistic concerns.
- Staff members should engage in cultural sensitivity when discussing concerns related to religion, customs, and norms.
- An organization should ask for feedback from staff members to ensure the validity of the training that has been offered and recommended.
- Continued support and mentoring should be provided to staff members.

When a practitioner explores various job opportunities, it can be difficult to fully know if an organization implements and engages in opportunities that promote diversity,

inclusion, and cultural competence. Therefore, it is important that practitioners that are seeking a job ask different questions that help identify an organization's practices surrounding diversity and inclusion. The following questions are a good starting point to ask an organization when searching for a job (Conners & Capell, 2020):

- What practices are put in place to ensure that the organization promotes a culturally sensitive workplace?
- Are there opportunities for staff members to attend cultural competence training that the organization offers?
- Does the organization interact with members of different cultures? What are some of the different cultures that the organization provides services to?
- How do you assist staff members with ensuring that they are adequately prepared to interact with individuals from different cultures?

Organizations can increase their understanding of cultural sensitivity and competence in training by employing some of the strategies that have been discussed. It is important for organizations to value these items to ensure culturally competent care is provided within the services delivered and for the employees that are delivering the services.

## Section 4 Personal Reflection

Within organizations that you have worked for, what practices have been put in place to ensure that culturally competent care is provided for individuals receiving services? What methods have been promoted to increase cultural competence for employees of the organization?

## Section 4 Key Words

Indirect assessment - methods such as rating scales, questionnaires, and interviews that can be utilized when assessing various behaviors targeted for reduction and is not a direct measure of behavior

Direct assessment - direct measurement of the target behavior that includes standardized tests, criterion-referenced assessments, and direct observations

Patient lifecycle - a range of service delivery experiences that encompass the time from diagnosis until they are discharged from services

## Section 5: Caregiver Training Accommodations

Caregivers are a vital component to the service delivery model. To ensure that skill acquisition programs and behavior reduction strategies are employed across environments and consistently implemented across situations, caregivers are needed to ensure that generalization of skills and procedures are implemented for an individual receiving services. Caregivers are inclusive of parents (i.e., biological, adopted), extended family members, and legal guardians of an individual.

In an effort to identify socially significant behavior and treatments that are to be utilized within the delivery of services for an individual, it is important to evaluate the cultural contingencies that are in place that affect the family unit involved with the individual receiving services. Cultural preferences are thought of as conditioned reinforcers as they have gained value by being paired with primary reinforcers throughout the lifetime of an individual. Therefore, it is also ideal that cultural preferences are evaluated through cultural accommodations in an effort to provide evidence-based parent training interventions (Conners & Capell, 2020). Cultural accommodations refer to access to an interpreter, materials that are translated, staff that are bilingual, and a determination that is made for culturally relevant content that can be used for training.

Interventions that have been developed for use in caregiver training have been successfully used to train caregivers to implement different antecedent and consequence-based strategies. Although these interventions have been proven successful, it is important to understand that some of these strategies that are used may reflect the goals and values that are held by the majority population and in fact could go against the cultural contingencies that are in place that guide the parenting values of minority parents (Conners & Capell, 2020). Behavior analysts should keep in mind that individuals may belong to different cultural groups and within each of these cultural groups various contingencies could be in place within an environment. An individual that a behavior analyst is providing services to may come in contact with contingencies within the dominant culture that is found in their educational settings. This same individual may also come in contact with a different set of contingencies that are maintained by the caregivers that are in their home environment.

Therefore, it is important for behavior analysts to understand that the same individual can come across different contingencies depending on the environment and individuals they are exposed to. When determining a course of action for how training should proceed, a behavior analyst should ask the following questions (Conners & Capell, 2020):

- Is a problem behavior defined in similar or different ways across groups? How is the behavior defined across the different groups?
- When evaluating the intervention or the parenting skill that is being trained, is it appropriate to the style of parenting that the caregiver engages in?
- Does the child respond similarly to parent behaviors when compared across groups?

## **Accommodations**

When developing interventions for providing services to individuals, it is ideal for a behavior analyst to ensure that any treatments proposed are individualized for the person receiving the services. Caregiver training courses should also be adapted so that they are designed based on an individual family basis.

Furthermore, the language that a behavior analyst utilizes should be fully understandable to the individual receiving services. This may include the need to provide and offer language assistance services (Fong et al., 2017). These services may require the need for bilingual staff members and interpreter services at no cost to the individual or their family. This may also be needed for both vocal and written communication.

When evaluating the legislation that exists that focuses on the language access in health care environments, it is important to know that Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 states that no individual should be excluded from participation or discriminated against concerning any program or activity that receives federal financial assistance (Title 42, 2019). Within this legislation, language access is included under funding such as Medicaid or Medicare payment. Therefore, it is federally mandated that language access services be provided and is also an organization's as well as behavior analyst's responsibility for becoming familiar with the federal and state mandates concerning language assistance services for individuals (Conners & Capell, 2020).

Behavior analysts should always be mindful of making cultural accommodations as these may be necessary in order for inclusion of the client and their family in the treatment planning and goal setting process. However, the personal biases of a behavior analyst may get in the way of developing appropriate cultural accommodations. In an effort to identify the potential limitations that may exist, social validity measures may need to be increased.

Social validity is the social significance and acceptability of an intervention within various populations and among groups of people (Wolf, 1978). There are three different components that are attributed to social validity: the social significance concerning the treatment goals that are developed, how the treatment procedures are accepted among various people, and evaluating the significance that the treatment goals have for someone (Wolf, 1978). By adding cultural accommodations, these may provide an opportunity for social validity in behavior analytic treatments to increase as well as the effectiveness in the outcomes aligned for treatment.

Behavior analysts should work toward increasing the social validity of treatment interventions by placing an emphasis on an individual's cultural beliefs and avoiding any biases that may be present. This can be done by recognizing one's cultural identity and the stimulus and response classes that are associated with values, preferences and characteristics that are different from other people. Cultural awareness can be increased through the use of self-assessments as a way of measuring one's level of cultural competency. Professional networks can be established so that dialogue can be encouraged regarding cultural and diversity issues as well as obtaining feedback from colleagues. Cultural trainings can be attended by behavior analysts to encourage professional development and as a way of increasing cultural competence.

## **Section 5 Personal Reflection**

How have you personally worked to increase your level of cultural competence when working with other individuals? How have organizations in which you have worked promoted your professional development in the area of cultural awareness and cultural knowledge?

## **Section 5 Key Words**

Caregivers - inclusive of parents (i.e., biological, adopted), extended family members, and legal guardians of an individual.

Cultural accommodations - access to an interpreter, materials that are translated, staff that are bilingual

Cultural preferences - conditioned reinforcers as they have gained value by being paired with primary reinforcers throughout the lifetime of an individual

Social validity - social significance and acceptability of an intervention within various populations and among groups of people

## **Section 6: Socially Significant Caregiver Training**

Behavior analysts should work with parents in a collaborative manner as parents often spend the most time with their children. Meaningful change can be conducted through the use of effective parent training regarding skill acquisition and behavior change programs. This collaborative process can have benefits for those involved including improvements in behavior for the individual receiving services and a decreased level of stress experienced by the parents who are receiving the training on the individual's skill acquisition and behavior change programs.

Successful outcomes regarding parent training relies on several factors. First, the parents will need to be able to integrate behavior analytic interventions into various contexts in which a problem behavior is exhibited. This could be challenging for parents as it may be difficult to consistently implement behavior analytic interventions while out in the community or when attention is diverted to other tasks or children in the home. Secondly, parent engagement also depends on the behavior analyst's ability to effectively communicate with the parents of the individual receiving services. A parent's engagement in therapy may be increased if the behavior analyst demonstrates understanding of the client and family's history, culture, and values (Conners & Capell, 2020). By knowing this information, a behavior analyst should select skill acquisition and behavior change programs that align culturally with the client and their family in an effort to ensure the success of the interventions implemented.

Behavior analysts strive to integrate behavior analytic interventions that work on concerns of social significance for a client and their family. Behaviors that are socially significant could include any behavior that increases an individual's independence and their ability to adapt to the environment in which they live. This is accomplished through the manipulation of environmental variables so that skill deficits that are associated with behavioral exhibition are eliminated or decreased to acceptable levels as deemed by the client and their family. For example, a behavior analyst may work to teach an individual various ways of communicating their wants and needs so that the exhibition of aggressive behaviors is lessened and no longer used in a manner to communicate to others. As a behavior analyst understands an individual's and their family's culture, goals can be selected to align with cultural values. For example, the



language in which goals surrounding communication are taught, should be selected to align with the culture of the family and the environment in which the individual spends a significant time in.

There are several factors that contribute to the likeliness that a behavior analyst will provide services for individuals in another part of the world. The first factor involves the projected growth for the field of ABA. The number of Board Certified Behavior Analysts® has increased over the years and continues to grow the longer the field continues to be in existence. Secondly, individuals continue to immigrate into the United States from other countries. This allows for opportunities to arise where individuals from different backgrounds will need access to behavior analytic services. Thirdly, the rates of ASD continue to increase. With all three of these factors, it makes it extremely likely that behavior analysts will at some point, within their professional experience, provide services to an individual from a different culture. Therefore, it is extremely important that behavior analysts address cultural awareness within their practice.

At times, evidence-based interventions may need to be adapted to align with values and norms of an individual from a culturally diverse population. There are several steps that can be considered when determining if a cultural adaptation should be considered (Kuhn et al., 2019):

- Both the needs and interests of the individual receiving services and their family should be identified
- A community partnership should be formed so that the different characteristics of the families being services can be learned
- A literature should be conducted so that relevant beliefs and values of a culture are identified and it can be determined how these values affect the behavior of the individual receiving services
- The curriculum of a specific intervention that will be used should be translated or adapted for the individual receiving services
- Feedback should be obtained from community members regarding a culturally adapted intervention
- Modifications should be made based on the feedback received from community members regarding the culturally adapted intervention

- Implement the culturally adapted intervention with the individual and family that are receiving services
- Gather feedback from the individuals that experienced the culturally adapted intervention
- Make modifications based on the feedback provided from the individual that experienced the culturally adapted intervention

Behavior analysts are obligated to implement interventions in a culturally competent manner so that the individuals that are receiving services are receiving the best services that are possible for them and that the services provided are housed within the field's ethical standards. When considering the use of an intervention with a cultural adaptation made to it, the family of the individual receiving services should be involved in the planning of the intervention. By doing this, the programs that are implemented with the client will be able to be individualized and specific adaptations can be made based on the family's culture, beliefs, and values. Not only is this beneficial for the families that are receiving services, it is also useful for the field of behavior analysis as this works toward dissemination of behavior analytic principles and procedures. The more evidence-based interventions are adapted to meet the needs of different cultures, the better able behavior analysts will be at providing information regarding behavior analysis to other parts of the world.

## **Becoming a Culturally Competent Behavior Analyst**

There are several avenues that one can take when working toward becoming a culturally competent behavior analyst (Connors & Capell, 2020). Although each avenue is important to consider, these recommendations can serve as a useful guide for when one provides culturally appropriate services.

### ***Defining Culture***

Behavior analysts work endlessly to define the behaviors that they are working to either increase or decrease for the benefit of the individual receiving services. Significant time and effort are spent in developing clearly and objectively defined behaviors so that interventions can be replicated and research within the field can be extended. Therefore, it is equally important to identify a definition for culture when one is attempting to work within the field of behavior analysis. Culture can be viewed as a set of rules that a specific group outlines and puts into place so that this specified group acts

in a manner that is in accordance with these rules. These sets of rules are what set one group of people apart from other groups of people.

### ***Accepting that Culture is Important***

As a behavior analyst is able to accept that culture is important, they will then be able to delineate norms associated with their clients and goals that are appropriate to put in place when delivering services. This will also allow a behavior analyst to determine appropriate reinforcers that can be used to increase acceptable behaviors. A behavior analyst can learn further information regarding a client's culture by asking questions specially about their culture as well as conducting research regarding the client's cultural beliefs, values, and norms.

### ***Development of One's Own Cultural Awareness***

Prior to a behavior analyst developing cultural awareness regarding their clients, the behavior analyst should consider identifying their own cultural norms, beliefs, and values. This will allow a behavior analyst to understand and delineate any differences that may exist between their culture and that of the client they are providing services for. This development of one's own cultural awareness can be done through interacting with other professionals in the field, examining one's own private events, and completing self-assessment tools.

### ***Development of Other's Cultural Awareness***

Once a behavior analyst has been able to develop an awareness of their own culture, then they are able to outline the differences that exist between their own culture and that of the client they are providing services for. This can be done by talking with members of the same culture so that questions can be identified that can be asked of the client either prior to or during the intake assessment. Additionally, a behavior analyst should work to identify the family's level of acculturation.

### ***Assessments that are Culturally Aware***

A behavior analyst should only provide assessments that are culturally aware. This may mean that a behavior analyst will need to change assessments that they typically use so that the focus can be on the client's specific needs. It might be ideal to ensure that assessments are translated into the primary language used by the family.

### ***Interventions that are Culturally Aware***

Interventions that are used should be culturally aware and deemed important for the client and their family. These interventions should also work to incorporate the norms that are experienced by the client and their family. This will allow for an increase in social validity to be examined for families that have diverse cultural backgrounds.

### **Section 6 Personal Reflection**

Why is it important to become a culturally aware behavior analyst? How can you adapt a behavior analytic intervention for a client?



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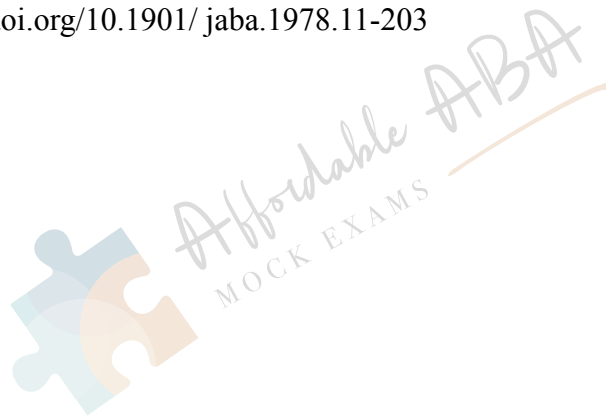
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