

A Guide to Addressing

DIVERSITY

for Behavior Analysts

Pew Research has estimated that by 2055, the U.S. will not have a single ethnic majority.



For behavior analysts, this means clients will be increasingly diverse and pose unique challenges relating to culture. The following guide will help behavior analysts more deeply understand how to provide culturally competent care.

CHAPTER 1:

OVERVIEW OF DIVERSITY

Today, nearly 14% of the U.S. population is foreign-born, compared with 5% in 1965.

5%
1965

14%
2018

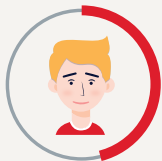


DIVERSITY IN THE U.S.

BY 2065,

The U.S. population will be:

46%



White

24%



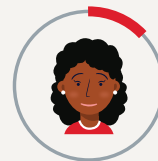
Hispanic

14%



Asian

13%



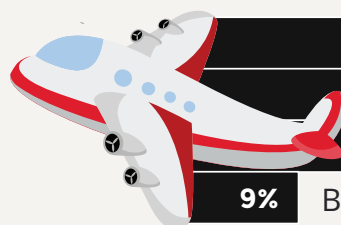
Black

3%



Other

The ethnicities immigrating to the U.S. will be:



38% Asian

31% Hispanic

20% White

9% Black

DEFINING CULTURE AND CULTURAL COMPETENCE

An article published by the Association for Behavior Analysis International (ABAI) defines culture as:

“

the extent to which a group of individuals engage in overt and verbal behavior reflecting **shared behavioral learning histories**, serving to differentiate the group from other groups, and predicting how individuals within the group act in specific setting conditions.

”



Within cultures, multiple variables set individuals apart, including:



Socioeconomic class



Age



Religion



Sexual orientation



Ethnicity



Disability



Nationality



Geographic context

An article published by the *International Journal of Behavioral Consultation and Therapy* defines cultural competence as:



Key elements to promoting cultural competence include:





CHAPTER 2:

UNIQUE OPPORTUNITIES FOR CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS

Working with diverse clients, the challenges can be as diverse as the clients. Nevertheless, behavior analysts should approach each scenario with an unbiased mindset open to learning.

THE UNIQUENESS IN WORKING WITH DIVERSE CLIENTS

 <p>Withdrawn behavior</p>	<p>A student begins to “withdraw” after receiving verbal praise.</p> <table><tr><th>Cultural insight</th><th>The solution</th></tr><tr><td>In some cultures, the community as a whole comes before the individual. The student was therefore not comfortable receiving praise.</td><td>The behavior analyst should advise educators to give praise in private.</td></tr></table>		Cultural insight	The solution	In some cultures, the community as a whole comes before the individual. The student was therefore not comfortable receiving praise.	The behavior analyst should advise educators to give praise in private.
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 <p>Experience at church</p>	<p>The parents of a child with autism asked the behavior analyst to teach their child the skills necessary to participate in the church service, but the behavior analyst (who was not religious) did not consider the request a high priority.</p> <table><tr><th>Cultural insight</th><th>The solution</th></tr><tr><td>Church was as equally important in the child’s culture as other environments.</td><td>The behavior analyst should have understood that the parents’ request was an expression of their cultural values.</td></tr></table>		Cultural insight	The solution	Church was as equally important in the child’s culture as other environments.	The behavior analyst should have understood that the parents’ request was an expression of their cultural values.
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Sleeping arrangement

The mother of a child with a sleeping disorder sleeps with the child while the father sleeps alone in a separate room.

Cultural insight

The sleeping arrangement is preferred by the family and is culturally appropriate.

The solution

The behavior analyst should accept that his or her initial thoughts of judgment are normal but should be committed to a thorough process of assessment.

WHY BEHAVIOR ANALYSTS SHOULD UNDERSTAND CULTURAL IDENTITY

Improving Quality



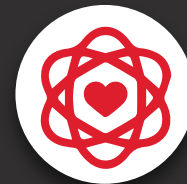
Understanding an individual's cultural identity may help behavior analysts provide better assessment and intervention services.

Reducing Disparities



Acknowledging the value of culture enables behavior analysts to pursue socially meaningful goals, such as improving diverse populations' access to services.

Unique Values



Behavior analysts should recognize the differences between the Westernized model of science and the cultures of their clients to avoid expecting clients to conform to their scientific and cultural values.

CHAPTER 3:

RESPONSIBILITIES OF BEHAVIOR ANALYSTS AND HEALTH CARE ORGANIZATIONS

Behavior analysts work in a variety of settings, including large health care organizations. To provide culturally competent care, behavior analysts should be aware of their responsibilities, as well as those of their organizations.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF BEHAVIOR ANALYSTS

CLIENT CULTURAL IDENTITY

Making an effort to determine a client's cultural identity may help them develop awareness of client preferences, characteristics, cultural values and circumstances.

SCIENTIFIC MINDEDNESS

They can reduce personal biases by collecting and assessing data, and testing hypotheses, rather than relying on personal experiences.

SELF-AWARENESS

They should understand their own cultural backgrounds and be aware of any personal biases.

SENSITIVITY TO CLIENT

They should consider how differences between them and the client might affect the relationship.

TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION

Culturally aware behavior analysts should communicate with the stakeholders to receive input about cultural values and contingencies.



RESPONSIBILITIES OF HEALTH CARE ORGANIZATIONS

QUALITY CONTROLS

Patients should receive care that is respectful, understandable, effective and compatible with their cultural practices, health beliefs and preferred language.

RECRUITING

Staff members, including behavior analysts, should be representative of patient demographics.

TRAINING

Across all levels, staff members should receive ongoing training and education to develop cultural competence.

COMMUNITY

Health care organizations should connect and collaborate with local cultural groups to develop culturally competent care practices.

GOALS

A written strategic plan should clearly outline the organization's goals to improve culturally competent care and detail the role of each staff member, including behavior analysts.



CONCLUSION:

The role of an individual behavior analyst becomes even more critical in the context of national health care organizations and the U.S. health care industry. By understanding the basics of culturally competent care, behavior analysts will be equipped to not only provide quality care to their own clients but also influence growth in colleagues working in other disciplines.

SOURCES:

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