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# Building a Social Justice Framework for Cultural and Linguistic Diversity in ABA

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## Abstract

ABA may be uniquely positioned to have broader impacts with culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) client populations, not only due to its growth and increased social acceptability, but also because a segment of the field practices within the education system. Decades of misinformation have potentially reduced the widespread reliance on learning pedagogies derived from behavior analytic research. Disseminating ABA technologies depends on an advocacy-based approach to close gaps from research-to-practice. Social justice is both an approach and a framework that can be integrated into our strategic planning for the field. This article describes how to apply social justice guidelines when working with CLD students and families. There are culturally relevant considerations that can be included in our research, training, and service delivery, in particular if we want the field to grow in a sustainable fashion. Behavior analysts must consider it an ongoing long-term objective to engage in culturally informed assessment, culturally and linguistically relevant intervention, culturally focused advocacy and collaboration with families, and use self-assessment of their cultural competence.

**Keywords** Cultural and linguistically diverse learners · Social justice · Applied behavior analysis · Dissemination · School-wide positive behavior supports

The professional practice of behavior analysis serves many areas, but a majority of behavior analysts certified by the Behavior Analyst Certification Board (BACB) work in two specialties. In a 2016 survey almost 76% of 7,107 board certified behavior analysts (BCBA) reported working with individuals diagnosed with autism or an intellectual and/or developmental disability, and 12.24% of BCBAs reported working within the education system (BACB, n.d.). Between the years 2012 and 2014, 28% of job postings for behavior analysts were in educational settings (Burning Glass Technologies, 2015), which could indicate this area is undersupplied. There has been insurance, license, and educational reforms accompanied by an increased demand for applied behavior analysis (ABA) services, which could further indicate that, at least in the United States, there is support for the growth

of the field in both clinical and educational settings (BACB, 2018; Burning Glass Technologies, 2015; Deochand & Fuqua, 2016). As the field expands it will encounter more students and clients from culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) populations. We need to strategically support those practicing in the field while demonstrating our core values align with inclusive approaches to culturally competent care. This requires us to be critical and self-reflective of the field of ABA, as well as of ourselves. These efforts stimulate discussion and continuous improvements as we build frameworks that lead to equitable service, research, and training standards.

Growth and dissemination of the field of behavior analysis has been historically difficult, in particular regarding education. In the 1970s, large sets of experimental data showed educational programs derived from, or were similar to, behavior analysis (e.g., direct instruction) were superior to other harmful or ineffective alternative programs (see summaries in Lindsley, 1992; Pennypacker, 1992). Despite the findings from *Project Follow Through*, the U.S. Department of Education did not adopt these programs at an equitable scale, if at all (Pennypacker, 1992). Unfortunately, behavior analytic therapies and procedures have not been completely embraced by any one service domain despite strong evidence for

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effectiveness. This may be due to market forces and scalability (i.e., not enough behavior analysts), but perception of the field may also be a barrier. Self-examination of the field and strategies to enhance equitable practice has been undertaken (see special issue of *Behavior Analysis in Practice* on Diversity and Equity). Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in terms of both the make-up of the field and equitable service delivery is an ongoing discussion that requires actionable steps for the field to advance objectives on this topic.

Public perception of the field is likely affected by misinformation and the interactions behavior analysts have with those outside the field. Behavior analytic training standards regarding "soft clinical skills" are not as systematically targeted when compared to clinical psychology and social work (Taylor et al., 2019). These skills are no doubt useful in providing service in a manner that would retain and attract clients (Taylor et al., 2019). Our "bedside manner" may be especially useful when working with CLD clients, and they potentially could also help with attracting a more diverse practitioner base—both benefits to our field as we continue to try to sustainably scale up and serve more people. However, the BACB has not yet codified cultural competency guidelines as explicitly as the American Psychological Association (Pappas, 2019), despite recommendations that could be adapted and incorporated into our ethical code (i.e., Fong & Tanaka, 2013). This likely presents a further skill deficit that would be useful in disseminating the field and service. In the Special Issue on Diversity and Equity in *Behavior Analysis in Practice* behavior analysts were asked to focus on a data-drive approach to ensure we are not delivering "culturally blind" services, rather culturally tailored ones informed by function-matched assessment (Zarcone et al., 2019). Without considering the social and cultural contexts of our field, we are bound to rediscover effective behavior analytic technologies will be ignored or improperly coopted, regardless of the empirical data and basis, as they have been in the past (Lindsley, 1992). Being color blind in a world of color stifles diversity and contributes to ignoring issues surrounding diversity, equity, and inclusion (Najdowski et al., 2020). Behavior analysts do not use a color-blind approach for reinforcer selection because this would violate our ethical mandate to use function-matched treatments in our mission to see the diversity of personal preferences. Behavior analysts must actively fight the use of group statistics to obscure the richness of one person's story, while simultaneously not allowing one person's story to dictate the policies for all. Perhaps because few members of the public are aware of our ongoing mission to serve and advocate for our clients this has led to misinformation that ABA minimizes individual differences and maintains the power structure of ableism (Shyman, 2016).

Periodically identifying common misconceptions about behavior analysis (Anderson & Romanczyk, 1999) can help create a behavioral systems analysis to examine how our field operates at an organizational level in its efforts to survive and thrive (i.e., Molina et al., 2019). In 1971, when B. F. Skinner published *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*, behaviorism held a different place in the cultural discussion than it does today and was seen as a threat to political freedom and free-will (Rutherford, 2003). At the time it could be easy to appreciate the motivations to engage in countercontrol to the concept of hard determinism, because there was a fear that behavioral conditioning would be used by the government to subvert an individual's autonomy. The fluidic state of politics requires a deeper understanding regarding how our practices are perceived, otherwise despite our best intentions our modus operandi could result in a deterioration of public relations for the field. The parlance and assumptions of the field is now likely to contribute to behavior analysis being less socially acceptable (Becirevic et al., 2016), making way for misinformation (Axelrod, 1996). Fortunately, a success in scaling has come from school-wide positive behavior supports (SWPBS), which, as an approach, opted to use a more consumer-friendly terminology while offering behavioral services cost-effectively with contextually relevant implementation considerations needed in schools (Dixon et al., 2018). However, "old fights" can be reinvented wherever behavior analysis is starting to deliver services. For example, in Europe, cultural differences between what behaviorism seems to represent (hard determinism) and segments of the population have led to a campaign of publishing pseudoscientific articles equating ABA with child abuse *despite* empirical data showing ABA improving the quality of life for its clients (Keenan et al., 2015). The propagation of correlational or poorly methodologically designed studies to damage the reputation of the field does indicate that ABA must do a better job of disseminating accurate information about their services—a problem occurring in the United States, as well (Leaf et al., 2018). Improving the social acceptability of behavioral interventions requires identifying historical barriers to treatment, and dispelling myths and misconceptions where present. It also requires us to look at our historic and ongoing challenges as a field in its struggle to be understood by those outside the field, or those opposed to the field, regardless of whether there are philosophic or linguistic misinterpretations. For example, Chomsky, despite being a linguist, probably did not understand the technical jargon from the animal laboratory in Skinner's *Verbal Behavior* (Palmer, 2006). His misunderstanding of our terminology may have contributed to the slow adoption of a functional account for language.

The integration of ABA within school systems has helped vulnerable populations in need of additional learning supports. It is regrettable that a racial and ethnic achievement gap has been perpetuated in the United States for over 50 years (Fallon et al., 2012). Behavior analysts should be aware of the historical difficulties the field and the United States has faced with regards to dissemination to the broader community, and

further should be prepared to improve upon previous attempts to scale up. In addition, we believe it is important to be empathetic to the perspective that the education gap has been systematically maintained. Furthermore, it is important to recognize that this gap has perpetuated inequality, and as long as behavior analytic pedagogy remains outside the classroom it will likely continue to do so. When we encounter clients who believe this gap is perpetuated by systematic oppression it is important to empathize with them (see Taylor et al., 2019, for more on the evidence and rationale for empathy and ABA service). The research efficacy of ABA inspired learning pedagogies is not in question, but its mainstream application leaves much to be desired. ABA's slow mainstream acceptance could have been a moment for humility for its behavior change agents to initiate social change, but the human experience can just as possibly lead to some becoming battle hardened and unwilling to yield to competitor fields. Our first reactions to misinformation might be "puzzlement or annoyance" (Palmer, 2006), but these are not conducive to rectifying division. The authors propose that a social justice framework could be a timely addition to increase our ability to engage in practices that continue to enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion. Indicating the field does not require this framework ignores that we have minimal guidelines on this topic in comparison to other psychological disciplines, who have strategically oriented their practitioner base around issues of culturally competent care and training.

As a field, besides convenience for researchers, there is no philosophic doctrine that could be the culprit for why our research participants are homogenous. Unfortunately, there has been a lack of diverse client populations in research, which could result in overlooking areas within cultural competence where we still need to codify best practices. As noted above, other organizations (e.g., APA) have adopted relevant guidelines. Researchers and practitioners in behavior analysis would be wise to develop a framework whereby behavior analysts are readily prepared to deliver culturally competent care, and advocate for the collection of data that guides the strategic management of the field. This can be achieved by evaluating our current training standards and ensure that cultural competency can be maintained through continuing education informed by research and best practices.

The framework that the authors recommend building on is the popular social justice framework, which has a long history with behavior analysis (see the journal *Behavior and Social Issues*). Moreover, three recent articles in *Behavior Analysis in Practice* have also made similar recommendations to apply social or restorative justice within the field of ABA (Mathur & Rodriguez, 2021; Pavlacic et al., 2021; Pritchett et al., 2021). This article focuses narrowly on CLD clients, although this is by no means a reason to exclude other marginalized groups from the discussion. We hope that this article stimulates discussion on how to generalize a social justice framework that leads to action and activism to support all marginalized groups. Behavior analysts might be cautious of lumbering the field with additional terminology that is not empirically developed, therefore, an effort has been made to conservatively take on concepts from social justice that could lead to actionable steps from these values. However, we do argue it is a mistake to require strong empirical grounding for implementation of every aspect of practice, in particular soft social skills, or other clinical skills. The social nature of effectively interacting with people changes faster than a strong empirical science can concurrently validate a method, thus adopting standards and guidelines that are used in other successful human services is appropriate. It is a worthy research pursuit to identify the key functional variables to adapting one's soft skills and advocacy efforts, but in the meantime we shouldn't ignore the use of such skills, in particular while scaling up service delivery so quickly (Deochand & Fuqua, 2016). We will concentrate our discussion to four established domains: practice, training and education, research, and continuing to develop our social justice philosophy. These domains have already been established by the American Psychological Association (APA) in their cultural competency guidelines (Pappas, 2019). The article concludes with a call to action to make an active effort to adjust current research reporting standards, integrate more culturally specific guidelines within the ethics code, increase continuing education related to cultural competency, increase coursework diversity training, and continue to develop operational definitions and objectives for the social justice literature.

## Practice

Researchers have discussed the integration of cultural competence in the professional practice of ABA, however, there remains a lack of specific practice guidelines (Fong et al., 2016). Meeting the needs of a diversifying student population requires continual examination of current competencies, as well as incorporating new skill sets within the competencies of behavior analysts (LeBlanc et al., 2012). Researchers have examined conceptual issues related to culture and the science of behavior analysis (e.g., Glenn, 1988) and a growing number of studies have incorporated issues of language into assessment and intervention in the field of ABA (e.g., Rispoli et al., 2011). The scientific philosophies and ethical guidelines of behavior analysis should help safeguard equitable and culturally responsive treatment approaches. However, it should not be assumed without guidelines, training, or empirical support that the individualized functional assessment ensures culturally competent care.

## Implications for Inequitable Behavioral Referrals

Culturally informed assessment requires an analysis of complex learning histories while appreciating that conditions outside of the control of the analyst contribute to contextual control of clients being referred to, and accepting treatment. Behavior analysts are responsible to assist clients with skills that enrich their lives—and an understanding of how multiple cultures interact is a required skillset given that acculturation versus assimilation is not a binary process and exists upon a social-contextual continuum.

Clients have a right to nondiscriminatory assessment that is individualized and tailored to their specific needs, but because challenging behavior can differ between cultures herein lies the challenge. The distinction may be easier to discern for behaviors where there is a danger to self or others compared to more arbitrary or less severe (anti) social behaviors. The textbook behavioral assessment process can often be problematic in schools, because CLD students are often referred for subjective problem behaviors such as threatening or disrespectful behavior, whereas White students are more likely to be disciplined for clearly observable behaviors such as vandalism and smoking (Skiba et al., 2002). This contributes to the school-to-prison pipeline and education gap. As such, behavior analysts must be concerned with biased referral processes prior to determining if a behavior should be selected for intervention.

Clients have a right to intervention focused on functional skills that are appropriate for their environment (Van Houten et al., 1988) while preventing inappropriate attributions regarding students' behaviors from being a barrier to academic success. School-based professionals may expect students to conform to behaviors and values consistent with the majority culture rather than demonstrating sensitivity to students' unique cultures (Fong et al., 2016). When discussing behavior analytic psychotherapy, Vandenberghe (2008) stated, "Behavioral patterns that may seem dysfunctional to the mainstream clinician may be within expected norms for the client's behavior" (p. 67). Likewise, standardized assessments based on White American protestant values may not appropriately reflect unique aspects of CLD students (Cartledge et al., 2000). Students may need to acquire specific social skills relevant to the cultures they interact with, but this cannot be at the cost of behaviors that relate to being proud of their culture and values, with appropriate contextual control for each set of repertoires. There may be a cusp around relational learning or psychological flexibility (being able to be value-driven in different contexts) waiting to be operationalized in this area. Allowing space for patriotism and cultural humility within a corresponding dialectical continuum is a challenging tightrope to navigate (Wright, 2019).

Taylor and Fisher (2010) noted that targets for intervention with children diagnosed with autism should be based on developmental norms as well as the caregivers' goals. Examining the cultural context leads to a more thorough analysis of maintaining variables consistent with clients' customs, practices, and values (Fong et al., 2016). The contention that objectives within our ethics code like the "pursuit of excellence" by themselves are sufficient to meet a social justice framework, parsimonious as they stand, disregards that even these value-driven objectives were born from a perceived need within the field.

## Culturally Informed Assessment and Intervention

Research on culturally informed functional behavior assessment (FBA) provides steps that practitioners can use and adapt when integrating a social justice approach into their assessment practices. As Salend and Taylor (2002) noted, "Conducting an FBA is like putting all the pieces together to complete a puzzle. However, because existing guidelines for conducting an FBA fail to provide educators with a framework for considering the impact of students' cultural perspectives on their behavior, essential pieces of the puzzle are often missing" (p. 105). As such, Salend and Taylor (2002) recommended that the family should be meaningfully involved in the FBA process, including in the development of functional hypotheses; information about the client's hobbies, interests, preferences, and strengths, should be collected; and the interdisciplinary team should include community members who are interested in the student's best interest. Compliance with a behavioral expert's recommendation alone does not constitute appropriate involvement unless the caregiver actively participates during the informed consent process.

Hidden rules within a classroom regarding appropriate conduct can be elusive to new students from other cultures, and inadvertent differential treatment based on race or culture could require the behavior analyst make this information available to the teacher and the school rather than moving to treatment. A holistic approach can also be used when receiving a student referral, as otherwise focusing solely on the student might lead the behavior analyst to miss certain classroom group variables unless baseline data are collected regarding rates of feedback, appropriateness of instructional material, and how instructions or transitions are delivered (Kestner et al., 2019). When examining what group contingencies (independent, interdependent, or dependent) will function effectively within a classroom setting these often depend on the constituent makeup of the classroom participants (Collins et al., 2018). When applied effectively these interventions can improve the time management for teachers, increased pro-social interactions, as well as generalization of behavioral repertoires when combined with randomization or lottery reinforcement. They also epitomize learning about your individual client in relevant group and social contexts. In summary, we must engage in culturally informed assessment that gathers information relevant to clients' culture, values, and preferences in

combination with a functional account of individual and group contingencies to inform our practice.

## Culturally Relevant Verbal Variables

Language development may affect clinical and special education decision making, as practitioners may not take into account the unique linguistic variables when assessing CLD students' social functioning (Lang et al., 2011). Moreno and Gaytán (2012), citing the rapid increase of Latino individuals in schools and the associated discipline gaps, discussed culturally informed FBAs (including asking questions in both English and the family's first language, having someone who fluently speaks the first language on the FBA team, and asking questions relevant to the specific culture of the client) as a tool to reduce disproportionate discipline referrals for Latino students. Rispoli et al. (2011) found that the language of instruction affected the behaviors seen during a functional analysis, because more problem behaviors were observed in the attention and demand conditions conducted in English than in Spanish. In addition, Tanaka-Matsumi et al. (1996) developed the culturally informed functional assessment (CIFA) interview specifically for behavior analysts engaging in an FBA with individuals from a different cultural background, including explicit points in the interview for the behavior analyst to ensure shared understanding and agreement on operational definitions and to assess clients' cultural identity and acculturation.

Culturally relevant intervention is most closely associated with *access* (discussed below in "Fundamentals of Operationally Defining Social Justice") from a social justice perspective, because students should have access to all of the supports necessary for the educational, social, and behavioral success in schools (Sullivan, 2013). Behavior analytic services are drastically undersupplied, and as the field scales up, it remains the responsibility of the analyst to provide worthy service. School-based interventions should be designed for the client's environment, which requires sensitivity to the student's culture and language preference (Tanaka-Matsumi et al., 1996). For example, certain language learning models might be suited for students needing to retain their first language (L1) if parents are not yet fluent in the second language (L2). Parents may opt to choose developmental bilingual education for a slower transition to a new language to ensure that academic goals do not suffer during the transition (Faulkner-Bond et al., 2012). Two-way immersion is a language model to promote bilingual fluency in two languages for both native English speakers and English language learners (ELLs) while having an environment for cultural sharing. Resurgence of problem behavior may occur when moving between language communities where L1 or L2 mands might be operational. Therefore functional communication training must include tolerance to extinction while the learner switches to the

request that will influence the listener's behavior (Banerjee et al., 2021). Deciding on language models to rely on in a classroom often relate to the experience of the teacher, resources of the school, constituent make-up of L1 and L2 learners, as well as the objectives of the students in the classroom. Unfortunately, there are unintentional side-effects from barriers to *access* where ELLs might access behavior analysis at a later date (Kornack et al., 2019). This means we must be intentional about our hiring of multilingual speakers, as well as our use of language learning models to enhance equitable access to our services for all learners.

Behavior analysts' focus on client-centered, individualized intervention is easily incorporated into a social justice approach. For example, Collins et al. (2018) argued for behavior analytic techniques such as peer-mediated interventions and preference assessment as aspects of culturally relevant intervention delivery in schools. Sugai et al. (2012) presented a systematic, culturally informed approach to school-wide positive behavior support (SWPBS) that integrated culturally relevant practices and a behavior analytic framework, arguing for operationally defining behaviors in a culturally relevant manner, including culturally appropriate posters and intervention materials, and meaningfully involving diverse families. The central thesis of their argument read as such: "In the end, the 'big' question is whether each student reaps the maximum benefit of their school experience because we have considered the cultural and contextual relevance of how we select, develop, and deliver what is taught" (Sugai et al., 2012, p. 202). The focus on intervention fidelity in ABA also allows us to determine that high-quality interventions are delivered as intended, which is crucial to ensuring that culturally relevant interventions are implemented appropriately and consistently (Brodhead et al., 2014).

Some examples of the integration of culture into behavior analytic intervention will highlight the practical significance of a social justice approach. Lang et al. (2011) indicated greater accuracy and fewer problem behaviors when discrete trial training was delivered in Spanish than English for a child from a Spanish-speaking family. Padilla Dalmau et al. (2011) found that functional communication training delivered in both Spanish and English were effective for children with developmental disabilities, and the participants did not indicate a preference for instruction in either language. In another study on language preference, Aguilar et al. (2017) implemented a concurrent operant preference assessment to examine preference for language of instruction in children with autism. The researchers found no preference for easy tasks, but some of the participants indicated a preference for a specific language on more difficult tasks.

Researchers have stressed the importance of integrating clients' values and the environmental context of intervention, including stakeholders' views, into the development of effective intervention plans (Slocum et al., 2014). As such,

behavior analysts must ensure that they are communicating with families with understandable and approachable language (BACB, 2014). This requires securing appropriate translation services to communicate effectively with families who speak a different language than the behavior analyst. Recognizing that no crowdsourced opinions were vetted prior to the invention of our behavioral terminology is an essential element to understanding why countercultural reactions could persevere, despite the public relations facelift that behavior analysis now enjoys. Becirevic et al. (2016) assessed the acceptability of six behavior analytic technical terms (escape extinction, negative punishment/reinforcement, chaining, operant conditioning, and reinforcement) with 10 different age groups and populations. They also assessed the acceptability of substitutable nontechnical terms proposed by Ogden Lindsley, and in all cases except reinforcement the lay-term was found to be more acceptable to the 200 surveyed participants. There is absolutely no reason to use the terms of the science when discussing procedures in practice with clients. Scientists require precision in the verbal community, but we can and should change the terms when the audience control shifts.

Critchfield and Epting (2019) referenced the following Skinner (1974) quote, "Nothing is to be gained by using a softer word" regarding "control" despite its unflattering linkage to coerce. They argue this contributed to the early alienation of the field from the general public, and distanced us pragmatically from the behavioral adage the rat/learner/organism "is always right." However, Skinner (1971) first mentioned this quote in *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*, but in reference to how an alternative world like, "influence," could result in a less stringent search for variables that assist in humans being the intentional architects of their own culture. Skinner's concern was with the conceptual consistency of the scientific analysis of behavior and its function on the investigative process, not on how our terminology could functionally alienate layman audiences. The latter is more of a pertinent concern when considering the context of service delivery rather than the experimental analysis of behavior.

Hayes and Toarmino (1995) note critical elements of verbal behavior will be lost in translation without a-priori cultural knowledge of how different cultures respond to arbitrary stimuli. For example, they discuss cultural variables are required to differentiate between the "okay" hand gesture, which traditionally signals agreement to a U.S. listener, but to a Brazilian listener it could be an aversive and obscene gesture. This gesture has even more varied meaning around the world and recently within the United States, where it has been listed as a hate symbol when used by racist groups (NPR, 2019). Therefore, depending on the context, audience, and stakeholder buy-in, a substantial amount could be gained by the use of a "softer word" than "control." Our communications already alter depending on the constituent make-up of our audiences. For example, Fong et al. (2016) indicate that Japanese families

might confuse the term "functional analysis" with mathematical operations rather than a behavioral assessment, and recommend avoiding confusing jargon. Code 1.05(b) of the *Professional and Ethical Compliance Code* states that behavior analysts are to "use language that is fully understandable to the recipient of those services" (BACB, 2014). This ethical mandate requires behavior analysts to consider whether they are communicating effectively with all stakeholders.

## Culturally Focused Advocacy and Collaboration with Families

Communication can be challenging across language divides, and sometimes behavior analysts have to advocate for translators to assist in giving families a voice in the decision-making process. Culturally focused advocacy and collaboration with families are related to the social justice dimension of *respect* (defined below in "Fundamentals of Operationally Defining Social Justice"). In their work with clients and families, behavior analysts must utilize their knowledge and skills to advocate for the most appropriate intervention while meaningfully incorporating the perspectives of clients' families. Incorporating families, community members, and other stakeholders on the treatment team leads to increased sensitivity to the contingencies in clients' many environments (Salend & Taylor, 2002). When designing behavior change programs, it is necessary to consider the contingencies acting upon families, the resources available to them, motivational variables, and social support in carrying out an effective intervention (Taylor & Fisher, 2010). Rather than gauging families' "buy-in" regarding predetermined interventions, behavior analysts should include family members and other stakeholders as valuable members of the treatment team. These stakeholders include the agencies that practicing behavior analysts work for, and they too should be subject to our scrutiny regarding their ethical and best practices (Brodhead et al., 2018a). Influencing organizational behavior could take many forms, but an example could be requesting training for working with CLD families, creating continuing education opportunities for those in the agency, raising funding for families with financial constraints, or recruiting more diverse practitioners in the field. It is not surprising that there is generality in the principles of ABA across people of different genders, ethnicity, and religions, but this is based on a strong empirical grounding to the data, and cultural sensitivity should never be the reason to engage in ineffective therapies (Kauffman et al., 2008).

## Self-Assessment of Cultural Competence

In order to work effectively with individuals from a variety of cultures, one must be aware of their own worldview and cultural identity (Fong et al., 2017), as well as know the cultural practices and preferences of our clients. To this Fong et al.

(2016) have recommended using standard self-checks or self-assessments, which ask pointed questions that relate to our ability to provide effective care. Examples of which could be as simple as asking how to pronounce a name, preferred mode of communication, and the behavior analyst preemptively preparing the families for their ethical values like those surrounding receiving gifts (Witts et al., 2018). These antecedent steps proactively prepare both parties for future interactions without requiring a social faux pas to be the learning context.

Cultural misunderstandings can be an informative process if we interact with our clients while acknowledging in an appropriate way that we are striving toward continuous improvement as are our clients. We should be intermittently assessing (to the point of achieving fluency) whether we are avoiding discussions or interactions related to culture as this can be a form of bias that damages a healthy therapeutic relationship, which predictor of staying in treatment to success (Steinwachs & Szabo, 2016). Therefore, in some contexts, not discussing a sensitive topic might actually be more revealing of a value judgement that could alienate the client from the therapist. Steinwachs and Szabo (2016) suggest that acceptance commitment therapy/training can be used to undermine arbitrary derived comparative relations that are reactionary to our clients' life-style choices. Analysts must assess if this is happening as laid out above. Those authors suggest using a defused stance for our rigid self-categorizations to minimize stigmatizing comments. When engaging in cross-cultural service delivery, it is especially important to be aware of how one's own culture and experiences interact with those of their clients and important stakeholders to influence interactions and intervention effectiveness (Fong et al., 2017). Antecedent strategies are great first steps, but it is important to recognize that we are not immune to causing offense, and that embarrassing moments are more probable when we either do not share or understand the values of our clients. Therefore, one should always prepare by having a way to graciously accept a mistake originating from one's own naivety or accidental prejudice (Steinwachs & Szabo, 2016). This is a lesser offense than justifying or trying to explain the reason for the mistake in most situations. In a discussion about social justice in the related field of school psychology, Shriberg et al. (2013) stated that considering oneself a "perfect" agent of social justice may be debilitating to personal growth (p. 6), indeed, these authors are not, and do not pose as perfect agents. As part of the clinical decision-making model, behavior analysts should have a way to handle a social faux pas when one does occur. To consider oneself potentially at risk of making a misstep allows a person to react proactively rather than reactively.

## Training and Education

At present, there is no requirement for a stand-alone course in cultural competence by the BACB in the verified course sequence, however, this does not prevent programs from adopting cultural diversity curricula as part of their elective courses, or embedding existing course modules with relevant content. Unfortunately, it is not easy to access data on behavior analytic programs offering coursework centered on cultural diversity. The BACB received feedback that our ethics courses within the VCS did not embed enough culturally competent practices (BACB, 2019). Even if the validity of those concerns have yet to be determined, this feedback at the least constitutes social acceptability data regarding our certification standards or lack thereof. Therefore, behavior analytic training programs should incorporate up-to-date multicultural competency guidelines to ensure newly certified behavior analysts are considering these topics.

There has been a dearth of commentary on cultural competence within behavior analytic practice, but many behavior analysts consider themselves moderately or extremely skilled at working with CLD learners even when a majority have had minimal coursework training or employer trainings on the topic (Beaulieu et al., 2019). Despite 78% of the 670 sample indicating that they have received little or no continuing education on working with CLD learners, a disproportionate number consider themselves well-versed with such populations. The concept of humility in our practice might be something to aspire to if we are to solve the issue of those that overestimate their cultural competence (Wright, 2019). Supervision in the field does not guarantee that each behavior analyst will gain experience with CLD, but it was hoped in code 1.05(c) of the *Professional and Ethical Compliance Code for Behavior Analysts* when variables surrounding serving CLD learners affect service delivery, behavior analysts are to seek relevant "training, experience, consultation, and/or supervision." Now the updated ethics code more explicitly addresses this topic in 4.07 by asking supervisors to incorporate topics that address diversity (BACB, 2020a), which is a proactive step to better prepare our future analysts for working with CLD learners.

When teaching a class on cultural diversity the concept of affirmative action as a sort of racism is periodically espoused, with something akin to the "best person for the job" as the rationale. As educators it is our goal to teach our students and future practitioners to see a broader picture. Affirmative action asks us to consider the systematic oppression of a group when there are two equally qualified candidates, and to consider the unfair market forces where the opposite hiring bias has occurred (i.e., recruitment practices that have disproportionately favored the majority group are prevalent through bias, nepotism, and in-group preferences). These practices are merely a placeholder until we can develop better solutions to target income inequality, but discovering better solutions could be challenging when even affirmative action appears to be controversial in the United States (Esquierdo-Leal & Houmanfar, 2021).

It is assumed that much of diversity training will be discussed and modeled during supervision. However, many students do not get explicit training on working with CLD families. For example, 71% (474) of a 667 sample of BCBAs indicated that they received little or no employer-offered training on cultural diversity (Beaulieu et al., 2019). Those in the field might find themselves working with a CLD family for the first time with little to no training and minimal support. Given these data, those who are supervising individuals working toward certification, or offering support for newly certified behavior analysts, should integrate training opportunities for those to learn about working with CLD clients and families.

The *Professional and Ethical Compliance Code for Behavior Analysts* (BACB, 2014) indicates that analysts are to seek the necessary training/experience or supervision "where differences of age, gender, race, culture, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, language, or socioeconomic status significantly affect behavior analysts' work" (p. 5). This was expanded in the future BACB Ethics Requirements (taking effect 2022), in which analysts are to actively seek continuing education on the topic and evaluate their own personal biases as well as biases of those they supervise regarding diverse clients, and the list was expanded to include gender expression/identity, immigration status, marital/relationship status, but language was removed (BACB, 2020a). This update places the onus on practicing behavior analysts to be intentional in how they seek learning opportunities prior to encountering culturally diverse clientele. It is important for behavior analysts to continually assess their scope of competence regarding all areas of responsibility and obtain the necessary training to deliver effective services (Brodhead et al., 2018b).

Our ethical standards are continually evolving, which requires us to update our training as new standards emerge. A prime example of a recent change is with the standard surrounding gift giving. Witts et al. (2018) indicate that the client culture, the function of the gift, and the monetary amount of the gift should be included in the consideration regarding acceptance. Refusing a gift with no monetary value (e.g., a drawing) might be compounded by cultural factors, which has the potential to harm the therapeutic relationship (Witts et al., 2018). These considerations align to multicultural practice and although this was acknowledged in a BACB newsletter, the old ethics code and Bailey and Burch (2016) indicate that "behavior analysts do not accept any gifts from or give any gifts to clients because this constitutes a multiple relationship" (BACB, 2014). This conflicting message regarding what is occurring in practice (e.g., accepting nonmonetary gifts like pictures) has since been resolved in the updated ethical code where a gift (of no more than $10) "is acceptable if it functions as an infrequent expression of gratitude and does not result in financial benefit to the recipient" (BACB, 2020a). Fortunately, behavior analysts have antecedent strategies in their declaration of practice to be able discuss gift giving and ensure that they stay within culturally competent practice while avoiding frequent gift acceptance.

Even if a behavior analyst has minimal experience with a CLD client or family, it is incumbent upon them to differentiate between a potential professional learning experience intended to expand their scope of practice, and a mismatch between the client and analyst. Prior to referring a client to another behavior analyst we should consider client barriers (i.e., the challenges for the client to find effective treatment), and that even if the client and therapist are culturally mismatched there may not be a "perfect match" available for the referral.

## Research

In 2017, the American Psychological Association (APA) renewed its 2003 "Race and Ethnicity Guidelines," and made additions to its general guidelines on training and education, practice, and research. Recognizing that there is not only an inequitable distribution of psychological services but that 84% of psychologists in the United States are White, and that most psychological research uses samples that are Western, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic (WIRED), has galvanized the APA to develop aspirational goals surrounding social justice (Pappas, 2019). Unfortunately, there are historical precedents that may cause CLD communities to distrust medical researchers (Brandt, 1978), which can lead to barriers to recruiting participants from diverse populations. If psychology researchers rely on convenience sampling instead of using targeted recruitment scripts, they will continue to receive homogenous participant samples (Sugden & Moulson, 2015; Trimble & Bhadra, 2013), which will obscure meaningful and relevant population data. Although researchers have argued for a systematic integration of culture within behavior analytic practice, they have also cautioned against an overreliance on culture to explain clients' behavior. Hayes and Toarmino (1995) referred to "the new prejudice" (p. 23), which involves treating all individuals from a specific culture as monolithic. "Ethnic gloss" is a more common term in psychology and refers to this overgeneralization process of ignoring relevant cultural variables by using labels or stereotypes (Trimble & Bhadra, 2013). A popular social justice term is "Latinx" when referring to Latino communities, but many within the community do not identify with this term for cultural and linguistic reasons (Noe-Bustamante et al., 2020). Terms created by academics within the social justice arena should be vetted by those they are purported to identify. A label by itself does not capture data related to language, food or music preference, political affiliation, or religion, and it is important for researchers to determine when to unpack broad demographic labels like Asian American to better assess a

cultural variable of interest (Trimble & Bhadra, 2013). It is necessary to avoid sweeping overgeneralizations and stereotypes, which would be akin to losing the trees in the examination of the forest (Kauffman et al., 2008).

Understanding perceptions those outside of the field of ABA requires not only using surveys and other tools, but systematically targeting recruitment to gather samples from representative groups of interest (Becirevic et al., 2016). In addition, for researchers to better serve the growing demands of the field they must conduct "needs assessments" prior to developing products and instructional resources for the field to use (Deochand et al., 2020). Behavioral researchers adhere to a strict ethical code and undergo rigorous scrutiny in ensuring that their methods and procedures are improving the quality of life of those being served. However, special consideration should be given during the consent process to CLD populations, as well as strategies to recruit diverse participants if there are going to be active efforts to translate that research to an applied setting. In terms of methodology, group research can suffer from issues from homogenous samples that can lead to limiting the external validity of that research (Sugden & Moulson, 2015), and single-subject research is not immune to this issue. Unfortunately, publication trends in behavior analytic research have revealed a dearth of research on individuals from CLD backgrounds.

Brodhead et al. (2014) indicated that only 9 out of 103 articles on verbal behavior with individuals with disabilities included the ethnic or cultural background of the participants. Likewise, Li et al. (2017) suggested that behavior analytic researchers underreport additional demographic characteristics besides gender. For example, 90.6% of articles in five behavior analytic journals between 2013 and 2015 reported the sex of participants, but only 69.1% reported ability status, 10.7% reported race or ethnicity, and 2.8% reported socioeconomic status (Li et al., 2017). The ineffective reporting of cultural and linguistic backgrounds of participants is an oversight that cannot easily be chalked up to a lack of reporting standards, because behavior analytic articles traditionally go into exemplary detail regarding environmental factors such as room size, relevant stimuli features, etc. It is possible that published studies may have included individuals from a variety of backgrounds, but this lack of reporting limits our ability to determine whether these interventions are appropriate for different populations, as well as what considerations were made by the researchers for CLD participants. At the least demographic reporting standards in behavioral journals should aspire to report participant cultural and linguistic data.

Behavior analysts and psychologists alike are challenged to collect data on hidden populations to better inform professional practice of behavior analysis when they contribute to their social justice framework. This is especially important when historical social contexts or when a dominant groups determines what constitutes a challenging behavior. When analysts use standards of a majority social group rather than considering the needs for cultural change within a society, it will limit the range of acceptable human behavior using a narrow lens (Barlow & Agras, 1973). Therefore, special considerations should be given to the surrounding religious, sexual, and cultural behaviors practiced by vulnerable or underrepresented populations. To better serve our field and our clients, data on diversity is needed, as well as the common challenges encountered to disseminating effective treatments. Revealing data on cultural variables within single-subject functional analytic research will further inform metacontingencies at the macro level. Social commentary on racial bias in the classroom is prevalent by those outside behavior analysis, but just because experimental examinations on this topic are challenging to conduct does not mean behavior analysts have to stay silent on the topics of race and diversity. The field should have a voice on these topics if only to clarify its position to those outside the field.

## Fundamentals of Operationally Defining Social Justice

The first step within building a social justice framework is providing adequate operational definitions from which to build, and acknowledging the need for an explicit social justice framework. In Peggy McIntosh's (2004) article "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack," she writes: "To redesign social systems we need first to acknowledge their colossal unseen dimensions. The silences and denials surrounding privilege are the key political tool here. They keep the thinking about equality or equity incomplete, protecting unearned advantage and conferred dominance by making these taboo subjects." (p. 181) If the definition of social justice remains elusive, it is vital to understand that there may be reasons why data opacity exists at the political level, and that when socioeconomic disparities persist, we recognize that we belong to a system that could perpetuate inequity even if we are trying to be a corrective element. In such cases a behavioral systems analysis is a needed organizational tool to model the interlocking mechanisms present at the macro level to determine how to allocate resources to influence these systems (Molina et al., 2019). It is essential that behavior analysts tackle these topics by providing guidelines for how to avoid institutionally racist policies (Najdowski et al., 2020). No single person is going to understand the extent of the harms to racially, linguistically, and culturally diverse communities from institutional, cultural, and individual racism, but an empathetic and therapeutic stance is required to build bridges. It must be admitted that there is unlikely be a universal metric to quantify racial disparities, but this does not mean we should avoid trying to better conceptualize disparities.

Sander et al. (2011) defined social justice as "an advocacy-related construct that includes three specific, but not always distinct, ecological system qualities that promote education success and psychological well-being: *access* to necessary and appropriate resources, experiences of being treated with *respect*, and *fairness*" (p. 311; emphasis in original). Practitioners utilizing a social justice approach to service delivery endeavor to ensure that all of their clients are treated with dignity and respect will be aware of their own cultural identity and cultural biases that may affect their interactions with clients and colleagues. Shriberg and Desai (2014) describe social justice as an aspirational goal that can be considered both a *lens* with which a field can view its history and priorities, as well as a *verb* describing actionable steps that practitioners should incorporate into their practice. As such, the social justice approach can provide the impetus for actionable competencies that behavior analysts can develop to serve CLD students in schools. Translating these concepts into actionable steps for behavior analysts requires both outlining and formalizing these competencies for practicing behavior analysts. Social justice applied to practice and training in behavior analysis requires us to strive toward increasing educational opportunities on cultural competence to ensure that all have access to quality services regardless of cultural or racial differences. It also requires behavior analysts to lobby for change at the legislative level given the racial disparities in how funding is delivered for behavior services both in Medicaid and insurance coverage (Smith et al., 2020). Researchers must strive to report racial and linguistic variables in their research of their participants, and recruit purposefully instead of using convenience sampling that could further lead to racial disparities. Social justice requires the domains of ABA practice, training, and research to collaborate toward correcting inadequacies in the social systems we have inherited.

From a behavior analytic perspective, culture can be defined as "verbal behavior reflecting shared behavioral learning histories, serving to differentiate the group form other groups, and predicting how individuals within the group act in specific setting conditions" (Sugai et al., 2012, p. 200). As such, individuals' cultural backgrounds influence the environments in which they operate (i.e., the metacontingencies and rule-governed behavior that affect their sociocultural environment), as well as their perceptions of others, behaviors, and values (Fong et al., 2017). Determining the function(s) of behavior will often require an understanding of the individual's cultural context, which should include aspects such as race/ethnicity, language preference, and gender (Kauffman et al., 2008). What unites the field of behavior analysis together under a common banner is in part our verbal behavior and some of our philosophic assumptions.

Behavior analysts have been trained to avoid mentalistic explanations, and we can use this skillset to further

operationalize social justice. Otherwise, we tether ourselves to unclear definitions without achievable metrics for success. Moore (2003) posits that "pervasive mentalism" within society has blunted the impact of a scientific examination of behavior, because labels offering explanatory fictions can supplant further behavioral investigation. He further states that unless a science of behavior is "brought to bear on social problems . . . our culture will not be able to move down the path of social justice and ensure that all citizens are well educated . . . and provided with the behavioral equipment that is necessary for us all to survive. . . ." (p. 184) Social justice requires us to consider interventions for society as another strategy to support our clients, and meaningfully contributing and learning from that literature. Our field not only rejects mentalism, it epitomizes the ideology that the "student is always right" and the system must be designed to enhance learning for all students, rather than leading to a culture of blame. In philosophical terms, radical behaviorism discriminates between verbal behavior that tacts empirically derived mechanisms under which learning occurs, from verbal behavior that misdirects society on the sources of control. The latter leads to circular reasoning that perpetuates harmful stereotypical caricatures, or at the least diverts resources away from empirically supported strategies. We must know details regarding our own community and share relevant resources to support their continued growth as they learn more about diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Behavior analysts belong to a community that has until recently not shared relevant racial demographic features of its members (Beaulieu et al., 2019). Fortunately, the discussion of race, equity, and inclusion has likely prompted the BACB to provide demographic data of its constituent members. As of December 2020, approximately 56% of BACB certificants, including RBTs, report to be White, 21.47% report to be Hispanic, 7.99% report to be Black, 5.94% identified as Asian, 0.59% identified as Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and 0.35% identified as American Indian or Alaskan Native (BACB, 2020b). According to U.S. Census Bureau (2019) data, our overall recruitment is above representative population percentages for Hispanic/Latinx (18.5%), Asian (5.99%), Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander (0.2%) populations. Overall, there may be underrepresentation of African Americans (13.4%), American Indian and Alaska Native (1.3%), and curiously there may be a possibility that there is underrepresentation of those that identify as White (76.3%). However, a more troubling pattern emerges when these data are divided into certificant type. Representation of minority groups generally decreases when the education level for the certificant type increases (with some exceptions; see Table 1). There is decreased representation for BCBAs and BCBA-Ds of those that report to be Hispanic or Black. On the other hand, there is an increase in representation of those that report to be White when comparing the BCBA or BCBA-D

with other certification levels. It is interesting that there may be an increased representation of BCaBAs that are Asian or Hispanic (see Table 1). The first caveat of these data is that not all the certificants responded, and some that did respond provided no answer regarding their racial demographic. Therefore, it could be difficult to conclude that there is underrepresentation of White practitioners at the BCBA and BCBA-D level if more than half of those that did not answer were White. It is important to identify factors that influence entry into the field, and make sure those opportunities are equitably offered to all demographics. Using this snapshot we can periodically assess representations of stakeholders over time.

The currency of oppression is to keep education away from marginalized groups while creating racial prejudice through labels and false narratives that prevent further investigation of the diversity of other groups. ABA strategies can and should be employed to reduce educational disparities in academic achievement, punitive discipline, special education classification, and other educational outcomes for traditionally marginalized students in our schools (Sullivan, 2013). Racial disparities exist in the educational system and influence correctional disciplinary action, academic achievement, and disproportionate representation of minority students in special education settings (Sullivan, 2013). School-based professionals implement services in educational settings that are undergoing rapid changes with regard to cultural and linguistic diversity. For example, the Children's Defense Fund (2017) reported that, in the 2013–2015 school year, nearly one in four children in U.S. schools were immigrants or children of immigrants. The report also indicated that approximately 49% of 73.6 million children in the United States were children of color (e.g., 25% Latino, 14% Black, 5% Asian, 4% multiracial), and that children of color are predicted to outnumber White students in U.S. schools by 2020. As the student population evolves, so does the need for behavior analytic services.

The field of ABA has historically been committed to addressing the unique needs of individuals with developmental disabilities and psychological disorders. In fact, the field heavily correlated with terms such as "autism spectrum disorder" in the perspective of the general public (Poling, 2010).

Behavior analysts are poised to utilize the behavioral principles and practices that have so richly improved outcomes for individuals with disabilities (e.g., individualized and contextually relevant interventions, preference assessment) in an integrated social justice approach that would be applicable to a wider variety of diverse populations and settings. A social justice approach to school-based service delivery requires reducing and eliminating educational disparities in academic achievement, punitive discipline, special education classification, and other educational outcomes for traditionally marginalized students in schools (e.g., African American students, Latino students; Sullivan, 2013).

Toward the integration of a sociocultural lens when serving clients, Malagodi and Jackson (1989) noted that behavior analysts often miss the "forest" in their focus on the "trees." In particular, behavior analysts focus on providing strong individualized support for individual clients (i.e., the trees) without a systematic approach to considering the larger social, cultural, and linguistic context (i.e., the forest) in which they work. A thorough examination of the "forest" of schools would require the delivery of ABA services within the context of ever-present educational disparities, as well as a focus on the various cultural factors affecting the contingencies acting upon students. Malagodi and Jackson (1989) described the metacontingency as "the unit of analysis that describes the functional relations between a class of operants, each operant having its own immediate consequence, and a long-term consequence common to all of the operants in the metacontingency" (p. 21). A cultural analysis (akin to a function analysis at the sociocultural level) requires the practitioner to examine the metacontingencies that form the environment in which individuals' contingencies function (Glenn, 1988).

Clients have a right to effective treatment, and "a physical and social environment that is safe, humane, and responsive to individual needs is a necessary prerequisite for effective treatment" (Van Houten et al., 1988, p. 111). Behavior analytic services often include a focus on client preference and age appropriateness of interventions in an effort to individualize interventions to students' needs (Van Houten et al., 1988); however, an integrated social justice approach also requires cultural considerations of the environments in which clients

**Table 1** Reported demographic data by certificant type

| Certification Type (Response rate) | Reported Racial Demographic | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Asian | American Indian/ Alaskan Native | Black | Hispanic/ Latino | White | No Answer |
| RBT (61.5%) | 5.73% | 0.39% | 11.12% | 28.78% | 46.4% | 6.84% |
| BCaBA (77.5%) | 8.65% | 0.14% | 3.74% | 29.2% | 50.78% | 6.93% |
| BCBA & BCBA-D (79%) | 5.99% | 0.3% | 3.6% | 9.34% | 71.82% | 8.57% |

In 2020 there were 89,122 RBTs, 4,729 BCaBAs, and 44,025 BCBAs and BCBA-Ds.

function. Kauffman et al. (2008) noted, "In our opinion, it is impossible for educators to be sensitive to the needs of a student while being insensitive to that student's culture" (p. 256).

## Building an ABA Social Justice Approach

Effectively serving vulnerable populations, many from culturally and racially diverse communities, requires going beyond being able to describe the metacontingencies that have led to the inequality, but integrating an advocacy framework to be able to lobby for change—this is a "social justice approach." This article's purpose was to catalyze discussion regarding areas in we can incorporate a social justice approach into service delivery, education, and research standards as it relates to CLD populations. Other articles have outlined broader applications of social justice and extended the discussion toward other marginalized groups (Mathur & Rodriguez, 2021; Pavlacic et al., 2021; Pritchett et al., 2021). The idea that social justice is not aligned with ABA's core values is folly, because our history is rooted in serving the broader community and righting wrongs where communities act without studying the principles of behavior (Sadavoy & Zube, 2021). It is beyond the scope of a single resource to cover all the domains that could be touched by social justice, but topics like police brutality and other social injustices are within the purview of our science, and other authors have offered their positions on these topics (Esquierdo-Leal & Houmanfar, 2021; Gingles, 2021; Morris & Hollins, 2021). There are racial biases in languages and it probably requires us to listen to the voices of those who are psychologically affected to understand the insidious principles in play (Gingles, 2021).

A large portion of this article was devoted to practice recommendations because research and training cultural competence are still in their infancy in our field. Even when behavioral research does not provide a clear path for political advocacy, there are groups within the field trying to provide a platform for discussion on the subjective definitions within social justice. Perhaps alternative outlets like podcasts, membership to special interest groups, listservs, blogs, or social media websites will become fertile grounds for contributing qualitative data on these topics where there is a dearth of quantitative data. For example, the "Beautiful Humans: The Social Change Cast" discusses activism for behavior analysts, and forums like uncomfortablex.com offer a place for behavior analysts to discuss ideas on these topics. The need for this approach has been felt by the field as evidenced by Sadavoy and Zube's (2021) book *A Scientific Framework for Compassion and Social Justice: Lessons in Applied Behavior Analysis*. These efforts are to be commended because they prevent the field from shying away from polarizing topics. Reading about these topics from multiple sources, regardless

of whether we agree with the content, is likely one of the first steps to informed activism.

A social justice approach centered around serving CLD populations requires behavior analysts to investigate the social acceptability of their services, while trying to reach those that are underserved. Understanding that certain linguistic communities might react differently to our philosophic assumptions (and language) is at the heart of rebuilding therapeutic rapport with historically disenfranchised populations. For service delivery, discussion of determinism, and other topics necessary for the basic science, as well as the technical behavioral parlance tied to that science, may well hurt the acceptance of the service. Behavior analysts can be driven by many philosophic principles, but there may be reason to add other ideas from other disciplines to advance the field from "relative social obscurity" (Dixon et al., 2018), especially if they lead to increased transdisciplinary partnerships. Radical behaviorist behavior analysis may be a Western science, but those therapies founded on its roots (e.g., acceptance and commitment therapy or ACT) incorporate Eastern philosophy into their therapeutic processes (Fung, 2015), and ACT has reaped mainstream dissemination from diversification of its philosophic assumptions. E. O. Wilson, the father of biodiversity, used the term "consilience" to favor those scientific principles that coalesce or unify with other theories derived from independent fields compared to theories that are mutually exclusive (Wilson, 1998). Adopting this philosophic tenet has pragmatic value if we were to integrate it into our scientific assumptions. Behavior analysts can do more good by collaborating with other disciplines rather than isolating. If common ground cannot be achieved in the steps of serving others, then the fault is ours in how we are explaining our mission to "do good" onto others.

One of our first hurdles is attracting clients from all demographics and preventing an increased diversity gap in service delivery to those with intellectual and developmental disabilities (Smith et al., 2020). There will be populations that reject ABA services due to misinformation, but rather than accept this as an aspect of the current political climate, behavior analysts should be prepared to learn and understand the counterclaims to their evidenced-based work in order to be active change agents to achieve client buy-in for an effective treatment plan. The public may have read that there is a higher value to intrinsically motivated behavior, regardless of the flaws of that research line (Reiss, 2005; Levy et al., 2017). Not only is this research methodologically flawed (Levy et al., 2017), even if it was not, the optimum goal of behavior analytic therapy is to shift to natural reinforcement paradigms whereby the client is self-managed and behavioral services are faded. Moreover, these authors argue that these types of attributional biases lead to reification of labels as causal, which is at the heart of racial prejudices. Behavior

analytic philosophy is diametrically opposed to these types of mentalistic explanations and seeks to find variables that do not terminate the investigative process prematurely. Still, it is incumbent upon behavior analysts to interact with others that may not share our philosophic underpinnings. When we learn to interact with individuals we do not agree with, we are learn to generalize needed skills to interact with clients that are different from us. Parents watching tangible reinforcers being used in a discrete trial may be unaware of the early benefits and may see ABA services through an unappealing lens, unless they have a-priori knowledge that this is a temporary stop-gap to generalize responding to more naturalistic reinforcers found in the social environment.

Each of the aforementioned areas (i.e., culturally informed assessment, culturally relevant intervention, culturally focused advocacy and collaboration with families, and self-assessment of cultural competence) are related to ensuring that all our clients have access to the resources they need to be successful, are treated with respect, and are subject to fair practices. The social justice approach requires consideration of the "forest" (e.g., systemic issues of marginalization and oppression such as the achievement gap, disproportionate discipline practices, special education and gifted education decision-making, the school-to-prison pipeline) integrated into our individualized and contextualized work with the "trees" (e.g., clients and families). A "color-blind" approach ignores client racial identity and institutional racism (Najdowski et al., 2020), and invalidates different learning histories even when intended to be coming from a place of compassion (Sue et al., 2007). Behavior analysts are part of a global community, and there are continuing efforts to support the international growth of behavior analysis. However, there will be setbacks, like only being able to offer the BACB's certification exams in English and the BACB no longer being an international credentialing agency. Social justice can be expanded beyond the scope discussed in this article toward activism against injustice, preventing ableism, eliminating religious persecution, gender disparities, etc. We encourage behavior analysts to demonstrate intentionality in learning more about a variety of cultures, incorporating clients' and families' values into their work, and continually assessing and improving their cultural competence, even if the material is not within the typical behavioral literature. When we ignore differences that matter we move further away from function-based treatment, and when we focus on differences that are irrelevant to treatment these become the trappings of discriminatory practices. Social justice is an evolving framework that would welcome the support from the ABA community to help change the world using our mentalistic-free philosophy. The "river of science" will flow (Palmer, 2006) and it will flow with "infinite diversity in infinite combinations" (Long, 2021) before behavior analysis becomes mainstream.

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