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# Encouraging Multiculturalism and Diversity within Organizational Behavior Management

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**ABSTRACT**

Injustice related to racism and inequality has long plagued business, higher education, and society. Simply stating that one supports the cause of social justice is no longer sufficient – measurable change is now being demanded. In theory, organizational behavior management should be well-situated to help usher in behavior change at the individual and organizational level to achieve powerful outcomes related to social justice. Unfortunately, organizational behavior management has not done enough to address these challenges in either practice or research. There is a pressing need for change if the field is to support and represent the diversity of our populace and this requires the field to examine and address multiple barriers to inclusion. This paper seeks to elucidate some of the issues related to training, financial support, recruitment, retention, measurement of progress, support of emerging diverse voices, and self-reflection. It is proposed that many of the tools and techniques of organizational behavior management could be leveraged to help enact change for both those we serve and within our own community.

Spurred by events such as Black Lives Matter protests and other social justice movements, business and industry has become progressively more vocal about issues related to diversity and multiculturalism (Duarte, 2020). There is a momentous shift in the global dialogue surrounding race and equity. Both customers and employees are increasingly demanding that companies move beyond performative allyship to the critical examination of workplace culture as it relates to racial equity, the promotion of people of color to leadership positions, and the recruitment of a diverse workforce (Bokat-Lindell, 2020; Chen, 2020; Jan et al., 2020; Khaja, 2020; Stern, 2020). In other words, the expectation is that companies cannot simply express platitudes and post images, hashtags, and slogans signaling agreement, but that the executives must change their policies and employees change their behavior to address oppressive procedures and practices (e.g., recruitment and hiring that is overly reliant on white social networks, discomfort and avoidance in providing

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mentorship to those of a different race, racial wage inequality, underrepresentation at senior levels of leadership, executive pipeline positions that are only filled by white hires). This should be of fundamental importance to a field dedicated to changing behavior within organizations, such as organizational behavior management (OBM). Some have already begun to explicitly call for OBM to investigate issues related to diversity and inclusion (Cirincione-Ulezi, 2020).

Defining diversity and multiculturalism is not an easy task in that these are multifaceted concepts derived from philosophy, history, and politics. A common definition of diversity suited for organizations is "the degree to which a unit (e.g., a work group or organization) is heterogeneous with respect to demographic attributes" (Pelled et al., 1999, p. 1). Blaine and Brenchley (2017) defined multiculturalism as "beliefs or ideals that promote the recognition, appreciation, celebration, and preservation of social difference" (p. 9). Unfortunately, diversity and multiculturalism efforts are often couched in vague language which does not easily lend itself to pinpointed behaviors or results that can be achieved by business leaders, researchers, or practitioners. One risk of such imprecision is the possibility of gaining consensus on *what* needs to be achieved while lacking a strategy on *how* to achieve it. The need for culture change to be achieved through an increased focus on pinpointed behaviors and results means that OBM should be one of the most qualified professions to create equitable and just workplaces. Organizations around the world are reconciling with energized calls for reform and increasing uncertainty about what needs to be accomplished (Alemany, 2020). In a time with so many calls for action, we can support by applying our methodology.

Unfortunately, there remains a dearth of application of OBM in this area, so some self-reflection might be in order. This is important because the racial composition of the U.S. has consistently become more diverse and trends show that the percentage of white Americans will likely decline below 50% within our lifetimes (Frey, 2018). The statistical trends suggest that we must be mindful of how our assessments and interventions might interact with and impact people of differing cultural backgrounds, a point frequently noted by scholars (Conners et al., 2019; Fong et al., 2016; Lebbon et al., 2015). These same trends suggest the racial composition of OBM itself should also be changing. Several papers (Beaulieu et al., 2019; Li, 2020) have reported that the field of applied behavior analysis and psychology is largely white in the United States. As of the current writing, only 33.9% of individuals credentialed in behavior analysis (including high school, undergraduate, and graduate-levels of certification) identified as Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) according to the Behavior Analyst Certification Board (n.d.). The percentage of BIPOC declined as educational level increased, with only 19.8% of individuals with a BCBA (master's level) or BCBA-D (doctoral level) identifying as BIPOC. Of course, such data may not be representative of OBM, since 74.4% of credentialed individuals

indicated autism spectrum disorder as their primary area of professional emphasis and only 0.4% of credentialed individuals indicated organizational behavior management as their primary area of professional emphasis.

It is difficult to quantify the racial composition of OBM due to the lack of official statistics, but even a cursory look at the field's visible leadership positions in academia, practice, and research (JOBM Editorial Board, OBM Network Board of Directors, faculty for graduate training in OBM, Association for Behavior Analysis International's OBM area coordinators, invited OBM speakers, consultants for OBM consulting firms, etc.) should make it obvious that the field does not have a large percentage of BIPOC. Inspired by publications by O'Brien (1990) and Matsuda et al. (2020), we reviewed 40 volumes of the Journal of Organizational Behavior Management to find the number of articles in which the words multiculturalism, diversity, racism, or prejudice appeared in the title. Figure 1 displays the results. A single noteworthy exception (Komaki & Minnich, 2016) found throughout 43 years of literature hardly fills one with pride regarding our field's interest in pursuing social justice. There are several possible explanations as to why OBM has not achieved its diversity and multiculturalism (i.e., geographic location of major schools promoting OBM, predominantly white pioneers, origins in Western philosophy, failure to promote Black scholars within the field, etc.). Ultimately, the reasons for OBM's historical lack of diversity are likely multifaceted, complex, and contentious, but we should be able to hopefully agree that more can be done to improve the situation. By continuously engaging in self-reflection and commitment to multiculturalism, it is possible to offer an individual and systems-oriented platform to understanding and promoting change. Quite simply, we must make OBM itself more
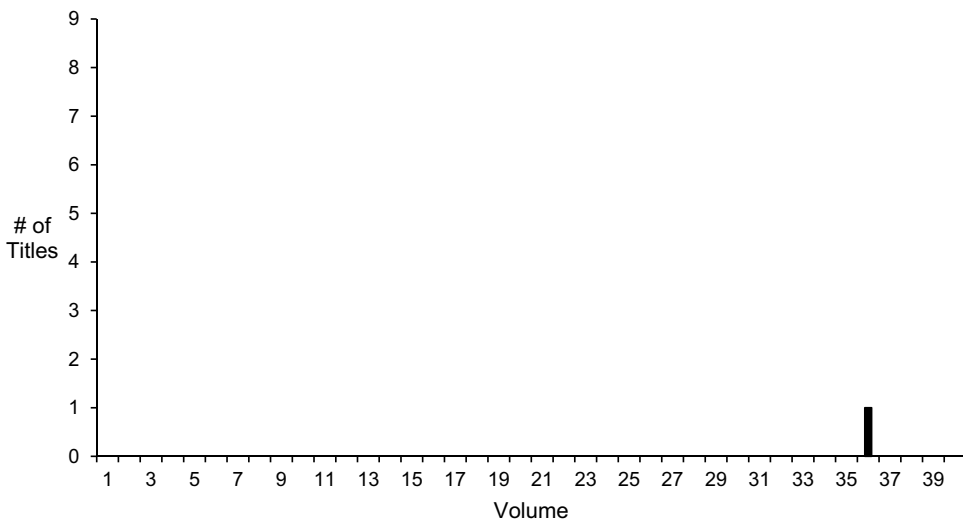


**Figure 1.** The number of articles in the Journal of Organizational Behavior Management in which the words "multiculturalism," "diversity," "racism," or "prejudice" appear in the title.

equitable and inclusive before OBM can help others progress toward equity. Our field has made progress in some areas of representation, such as with women (Gravina et al., 2019; Jarema et al., 1999; McGee et al., 2003), but there is much work to be done when it comes to equitable treatment and access for all marginalized groups. We urge all OBM professionals to commit to personal, professional, and systematic action to create a more racially, ethnically, and culturally inclusive field.

Berry et al. (1977) explained that multiculturalism needs to emphasize both the ethnic and cultural diversity in society as well as the opportunity for equal participation from all cultural groups. Simply having representatives from multiple cultural groups is only a partial step toward multiculturalism. It is essential that we follow up by supporting underrepresented populations. To properly do this, an underlying knowledge of these cultures is necessary. After all, the U.S. is not one culture, but a collection of several cultures (Wang et al., 2019). It can be detrimental to treat individuals from different cultures as the same. Due to a predominantly white presence in higher education and business, it creates an atmosphere of assimilation, such as when BIPOC feel like they must act and speak like white individuals, rather than appreciating and honoring different cultural identities. Such role strain and other conflicts or lack of support associated with racial and cultural status contribute to higher rates of job stress in BIPOC (Mays et al., 1996; Rodriguez-Calcagno & Brewer, 2005), a phenomenon termed "ethnocultural occupational stress" (Comas-Diaz, 1997).

As a field, we have sometimes been guilty of presuming that a practice that works for one should work for others, irrespective of context (Zarcone et al., 2019). Cultural background is a strong context that permeates the existence of an individual. Our behavior is strongly influenced by our learning history, including common learning histories within our particular culture (i.e., various social reinforcers and punishers to maintain local normative behavior). For this reason, culture should be more of a focal point in training and practice for the field of OBM. We must seek to understand how cultural differences can impact people's opportunities, perspective, and performance. We would like to briefly share some personal stories drawn from the authors and individuals the authors have interacted with in an effort to foster understanding and perhaps make some of the struggles more personal and hopefully relatable:

> I've never felt personally targeted, which is likely a product of my own privilege. However, coming from a more racially and culturally diverse field, transitioning into OBM was challenging. The rules, written and unwritten, are dictated by a small few, and I worry that those operating outside of this dominant culture will be punished or pushed out.

> I never heard about the field of Organizational Behavior Management until I visited Western Michigan University. Through a recruiting effort by the university at my HBCU

[Historically Black College and University], I found out about the program and it fit perfectly with my interests. I also got funding to visit the university. I imagine that without this, I would never have found out about OBM or chosen to study it.

In my experience as an organizational consultant, I have hit many roadblocks when trying to interact with a client as well as staff members of the organization which I can in part attribute to being an international student. This conclusion has not been made without proper observation of the interactions between other [white] colleagues and staff members whom I am referring to. One of the most vital tasks for my position is to obtain information from staff members to complete my job successfully. Throughout my time with a particular organization, I noticed countless occasions where staff members engaged with [white] colleagues in a much different fashion than with myself. This included not answering my emails, refusing to share information with me when I asked, and overall ignoring my presence. After observing my white colleagues, even those that had come into the organization at the same time or after me, I concluded that this was due to discrimination based on my race with underlying stereotypes. After six months, I was finally able to create a collaborative working atmosphere, but this was the first time that I truly felt discriminated against in a work environment.

I was so scared that even though I had been accepted into the OBM program at my school, I would not be able to go because of a lack of funds. While other colleagues seemed to have several options for funding, my options seemed restricted. I received emails from the university about funding opportunities that I qualified for except for the fact that I am not a U.S. citizen. Funding opportunities in my program did not seem very different. When applying for a teaching assistantship, I was not selected due to a lack of language fluency. Of course, language fluency is important to deliver the lecture, but that is not the core ability to be a great lecturer. Colleagues who were offered the position did not seem to have as many experiences as I had. To earn the teaching assistantship, I had to do some free work to show that I was qualified for the position. This experience was very helpful to be a lecturer, but this situation was not very usual to my English as first language colleagues.

At an event with some of my colleagues, a white individual made a culturally insensitive comment. When called out on it, he accused me of being too sensitive and unable to take a joke.

I had an experience with a manager in which I felt targeted. My words and actions were interpreted as defiant or unprofessional, but I was doing the exact same things as my colleagues – our performance was indistinguishable. As a Black man, I felt as though he wanted me to act differently in order to make him feel comfortable. I tried to ask for specific examples and data to show my wrongdoing, but I was chastised for advocating for myself. Ultimately, I had to include his supervisors to protect myself. His supervisor agreed with me, but the damage to my mental health, my reputation, and our professional relationship was done.

I felt as though my skin color and my name were used to market diversity. I wanted to do the work too and I wanted to influence the way the work was done; but, I was shut out of those conversations. It seemed like my job was a nod to how progressive the company was, but my voice and my ideas were actually ignored.

> OBM seems interesting, but honestly it doesn't tackle the issues that are most relevant to me. I want to work for social justice. I want to work for people. Sure, OBM, in theory, has the right tools, but other fields have actually done the work. Plus, in [other departments], the faculty, authors, and students look like me and the community I want to serve. OBM just does not have that.

As illustrated by these stories, BIPOC often face additional barriers to gain access to and operate within a field. When these barriers are ignored, it discourages the participation of diverse voices and leads to a cycle in which multiculturalism and diversity are absent. Fully solving this problem is beyond the scope of any single publication, but we hope to humbly offer some suggestions that may encourage change within the field.

## Cultural training to develop new culturally competent professionals and to guide those currently in positions of power

It is commonly recognized that to foster an environment of cultural acceptance, the members of a culture need to possess the knowledge, skills, and abilities relevant to supporting multiculturalism and diversity. It has been suggested that behavior analytic graduate programs should include cultural training in their required coursework (Fong et al., 2016; Najdowski et al., 2020) and OBM should not be an exception to such a recommendation. This parallels the suggestions found within business and industry, in which the most common diversity initiative is to implement some form of training (Esen, 2005). It has been suggested that such training will achieve organizational goals related to diversity awareness and ultimately improve the performance of employees (Cocchiara et al., 2010). Furthermore, it has also been suggested that diversity in leadership can improve profitability due to greater variety of perspectives in senior management encouraging innovative services and products that would be more likely neglected by a homogenous management team (Reeth, 2020). By conducting diversity training early in the onboarding process, it helps disseminate antiracist information while also setting expectations for conduct of members (Kulik & Roberson, 2008). Furthermore, it establishes a common language for engagement while promoting unique diversity strategies (Gentile, 1998). Ultimately, if done correctly, this will improve the relations among organizational members (Jayne & Dipboye, 2004). These notions should apply equally to graduate training and organizational training.

Despite the continued push for diversity and the best of intentions, there remains speculation as to the value of such diversity training initiatives. Some have argued that diversity trainings are not worth the monetary burden or the drain on time and other resources (Nancherla, 2008). This aligns with some of the perspectives found within behavioral science, such as when Conners (2020) found that faculty members in behavior analysis believed diversity training was unwarranted and did not offer any clear benefits to them. Kulik

and Roberson (2008) discussed how most diversity trainings are completed in the organization without relying on empirical evidence, which raises the concern over whether diversity training programs can actually deliver the stated outcomes for participating employees (L. Roberson et al., 2003). A meta-analysis by Forscher et al. (2019) synthesized 492 studies and found that implicit bias trainings did not translate into sustained behavior change. Dobbin and Kalev (2016) found a similar absence of benefits when examining diversity training data from over 800 U.S. firms. In fact, the authors discovered negative effects from many of the trainings, especially ones that focused exclusively on negative messaging (e.g., everyone has implicit biases and racism is everywhere in society). Some of this can be attributed to normative messages that unintentionally normalize racism (Zimmerman, 2020). In short, many believe that diversity is an important issue to address, but there is pessimism regarding the diversity trainings themselves, which when done poorly may only serve legal, economic, and political purposes related to simply saying that such trainings exist (which leaves companies open to the criticisms raised in the opening of this paper). To put it more bluntly, ineffective and unscientific diversity trainings essentially become organizational propaganda used to avoid tackling the root problems while still claiming to be progressive (Mahbubani, 2020).

Of course, such issues with training should sound familiar to any experienced OBM professional. There are two major reasons why people do not perform as they should: either they do not know how or they do not want to (Mager & Pipe, 1997). The former requires a training solution while the latter requires a motivational solution (Perlow, 2001). Unfortunately, it is a too familiar scenario in which both academia and industry alike try to solve motivational problems with training solutions. For those cases in which there is insufficient knowledge regarding diversity and multiculturalism, it is critical that the training process follows best practices already established by OBM. Defining the behaviors and concepts related to promoting diversity and multiculturalism in the organization would be the first action necessary for the researchers and practitioners (e.g., developing examples and close-in non-examples of microaggressions; differentiating tribal membership from ancestry). Then, it is critical that training follow effective techniques such as Performance-Based Instruction (Brethower & Smalley, 1998) or Behavioral Skills Training (Barker et al., 2019; Parsons et al., 2012). The common first step of these approaches is that they first provide learners with instruction (such as "Feedback is meant to be a conversation, not a confrontation. Therefore, you should conceptualize feedback about a racist statement you made as an opportunity to better help you to fight racism, not a personal attack. You should listen without interruption and thank the person for investing their energy in you.") and modeling (such as "I hadn't realized how I was unintentionally making assumptions about you when I made that statement. Thank

you for giving me the opportunity to do better."). Unfortunately, for many diversity training (and trainings in general), this is also the final step. However, behavior-based training methods would suggest a critical second step of practicing the newly acquired skills while under observation of an expert (such as a learner making an error while saying "Thank you for teaching me. Why do you think my statement offended you?"). By having individuals engage in the specific behaviors related to diversity and multiculturalism concepts, employees will receive a better understanding of these concepts. Individualized feedback should continue to be provided (such as "The first part of your statement was good in that you expressed gratitude for being held accountable, but then you made the mistake of suggesting that the person was obligated to give you more evidence on why your statement offended them.") until learners can reach the final stage of training, in which they demonstrate a mastery of the skills (e.g., consistently identify novel examples and non-examples of appropriate reactions to feedback on racist statements; fluently respond in an appropriate manner across a variety of feedback situations). Even after training is complete, long-term behavior change should not be expected without ongoing support and maintenance – another step frequently missing after training is concluded (i.e., the motivational solution). Research on successful implementation of diversity trainings supports this point, showing that effective training is integrated into a broader change initiative (Dobbin & Kalev, 2018). OBM has a rich literature on how to apply consequences to motivate and maintain desired behavior.

Before OBM professionals can train others on multiculturalism and diversity, they need expertise in the subject matter themselves (or at least collaborate with a subject matter expert). Therefore, it would be beneficial for all OBM professionals to participate in cultural trainings (even if they are not conducted perfectly) to gain an understanding of issues related to antiracism. Furthermore, OBM professionals should investigate and expand upon some of the successful strategies already discovered by researchers outside of OBM. For example, research by Dobbin and Kalev (2016) found that successful diversity programs non-coercively engaged managers in problem-solving, exposed participants to individuals outside of their typical social circles, and focused on positive messaging (e.g., mentorship development and how diversity can be used to find promising employees with innovative perspectives). Once the content is better known to those working in our field, perhaps then OBM professionals could apply instructional design and training best practices to improve outcomes in their respective organizations and training programs and be more adept at supporting BIPOC populations. For example, OBM professionals could develop diversity training content with a stronger focus on how consequences at the individual level maintain oppressive behavior and an absence of consequences can fail to promote long-term diversity efforts. Rather than just broadly telling people about multiculturalism, the training

content can be informed by a behavioral perspective to help analyze the social environment in terms of antecedent and consequences, with an emphasis on variables that are under control of the audience.

## Financial support to encourage participation by BIPOC, including international participation

One of the first and foremost considerations of any given individual when selecting their higher-education institution is the financial support they would be receiving while completing their degree (Kim, 2004). Given that an international student is inherently out of state, this is especially critical due to the high cost of tuition. In addition, minority populations are often coming from low income households as well as poor K-12 school systems so the need for financial assistance is crucial for attendance (Pew Research Center, 2016). Indeed, Kim (2004) further argued that lower income Latinxs and African Americans made their choice of universities fully dependent on the financial opportunities provided to them. Considering the disparity between underrepresented populations and those of a more privileged background, universities and colleges should place a strong focus on providing financial incentives for this population of students. Although many institutions offer merit-based scholarships as well as private scholarships, research has shown that BIPOC students are less likely to receive these scholarships over white students (Kantrowitz, 2011). BIPOC students also may have fewer opportunities and less time to submit applications for such scholarships. In addition, those scholarships which are exclusively for minority groups are often not enough to cover the cost of living and tuition.

In reference to scholarship distribution, this issue of disparity is just as prevalent in the field of OBM. There are very few scholarship opportunities offered to potential or existing students within OBM programs, so it is unsurprising that there are also rare opportunities for minority groups to receive financial support. To our knowledge, there are no scholarships available for underrepresented individuals to study in OBM, despite the fact many consultants within our field enjoy lucrative positions in business and industry that in theory should enable them to contribute to those less fortunate. This creates a limited population of those who will even go on to apply to OBM programs and therefore contribute to the field. This is problematic for many reasons but most importantly, this creates a less diverse working atmosphere and curbs creativity in research. It is pivotal that programs work to provide additional incentives for BIPOC to study OBM in order to bring greater success to not only the field but also to limit the discrimination which burdens these populations. Possible avenues to financial support could include raising money through local donors, alumni, and those within the OBM Network which may lead more minority members to pursue a career in OBM.

Even if financial assistance is available to BIPOC students, it may not guarantee that students will apply to such opportunities. According to the

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 1 in 5 students do not apply for any type of financial support (Radwin et al., 2013). There are several plausible explanations regarding this situation. First, scholarships are not well advertised to BIPOC students. Most of the financial opportunities are posted through the university website. However, students who recently graduated from high school may lack the necessary skills or abilities to obtain such information. Second, students tend to think that the scholarships are too competitive to win. In this sense, they do not put much effort into the uncertain reinforcement. Furthermore, many deadlines for scholarships fall in the middle of a semester and therefore students have limited time to dedicate to the application process. Third, students think that they are not qualified for scholarships. Finally, many BIPOC students may get overwhelmed when completing the work necessary for scholarship applications considering that they are already struggling with barriers and health obstacles not faced by their white peers (E. O. McGee & Stovall, 2016).

As mentioned above, understanding and supporting the financial needs of BIPOC is a complicated task. Even though researchers and practitioners in various educational settings have suggested potential solutions, those practices seem to only solve short-term issues. For example, some researchers recommended using platforms such as Facebook or Instagram to advertise the scholarship opportunities. However, this is only a short-term solution to what is likely a complex issue. Perhaps, researchers and practitioners may miss the root cause of the financial support system. Through behavioral systems analysis, we can identify the problems in the financial aids systems at both undergraduate and graduate levels. Such analysis requires extensive work, but it would be beneficial in the long-term.

## Bringing BIPOC into the field through higher education recruitment and retention

Gatekeeping is an important function of higher education. A field and a program's reputation will depend upon the selection and training of highly skilled individuals. Abandoning this duty risks compromising the integrity of a discipline. Alternative forms of gatekeeping, such as certification and licensing, aim to protect the public as well as mark off professional territory (Luke et al., 2018; Weatherly, in press). Although OBM does not typically serve clientele drawn from vulnerable populations, it is still important to remember that OBM professionals are typically being trained to hold positions of considerable power and their decisions often impact large number of people. As such, gatekeeping should not be disregarded or easily dispensed with.

However, one should not forget that historically gatekeeping was often used to deny certain populations access to opportunity and power. For example, many familiar features of graduate school admission, such as personal

statements and letters of recommendation, were originally developed to block "undesirable" demographics from enrolling in prestigious institutions by enabling disproportionable rejections of qualified applicants based on opaque criteria such as "character" (Karabel, 2005). Even now, faculty often struggle with balancing qualifications against the differential impact upon certain cultures and races (Posselt, 2016), although they are often reticent to admit to such facts without the cover of anonymity. The history of legacy admissions and other forms of networking suggests that access has never been equal. Therefore, explicit and proactive steps to recruit BIPOC applicants should be employed (Bocanegra et al., 2016; Rubin, 2011), rather than simply waiting and hoping they apply during the admission process. As an aside, our field would have disdain for "wait and hope" strategies if they were proposed as part of an organizational intervention (Conard et al., 2016; Stokes & Baer, 1977). If we want a racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse future for OBM, we must also shape the behavior of current gatekeepers and others in power.

Left untouched, the homogenous state of our field will likely lead to the same state of affairs. Our respective learning histories often influence the rules we follow about what is possible and for whom. Students from cultural groups with little or no representation in the field's leadership may not receive the same signals about who has permission to participate. Without representation, potential OBM students may decide to participate in other disciplines where multiculturalism is more common and visible, leading to more homogeneity for OBM. Quite simply, a field without a visible history of promoting BIPOC is unlikely to be appealing to BIPOC when considering career options (Cirincione-Ulezi, 2020).

To promote diversity, we encourage establishing a variety of strategies for the recruitment and retention of BIPOC. One simple strategy would be to put diversity statements in syllabi, handbooks, and codes of conduct (Najdowski et al., 2020). Departments should place mission statements about diversity in prominent locations. This helps signal the values of the local culture to potentially interested BIPOC applicants. As noted earlier, simply posting a commitment to multiculturalism and inclusion will not be sufficient and runs the risk of becoming yet another empty gesture if not followed by demonstrable action. However, when implemented systematically (H. M. McGee & Crowley-Koch, 2020), such verbal statements can drive performance and organizational change. As Gilbert (1996) once pointed out, missions can define programs or committees who can work to correct defects in achieving goals (such as increased diversity) by assigning roles and responsibilities. Both short-term and long-term action plans for promoting antiracism within the institution should be explicitly developed (Roberts, 2020). Once assigned, the diversity-related performance needs to be supported through a variety of OBM tools.

Although racially and culturally diverse individuals may not constitute a sizable percentage of our field, we know that some people do defy the odds

and try to pursue careers in this specialization. However, the expectation for our field should not be that the burden is solely on underrepresented populations to train themselves up for a career in OBM. Instead, support and outreach should be encouraged by those in positions of power. Higher institutions should consider providing financial support to talented BIPOC undergraduates to visit their campuses. Leaders who want to increase diversity may want to identify talented candidates from diverse backgrounds and expose those individuals to the field. For example, leaders in education may prioritize marketing to and recruiting from this country's network of HBCUs (Historically Black Colleges or Universities), HSIs (Hispanic-Serving Institutions), or TCUs (Tribal Colleges and Universities). Most universities have a center for diversity and inclusion. These centers can assist leaders with setting up recruitment engagements. Alternatively, many universities support culture-based, undergraduate student organizations. These communities have established processes that foster cooperative interaction between racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse students and individuals who want to recruit them. It would behoove OBM to tap into these established institutions and processes to diversify the composition of the field. Recruiting from the undergraduate population in one's university can also be effective. Conferences and seminars can expose talented BIPOC to the field. Instructors and leaders who identify such individuals in their classrooms or other environments should encourage them to attend OBM conferences and seminars. These conferences are sometimes expensive even with student discounts; therefore, it is beneficial for programs to allocate funds for this purpose. An awareness of the field could be promoted even earlier by reaching out to high schools. Of course, it is not enough to recruit only BIPOC students into OBM, we should also endeavor to recruit BIPOC faculty as well (Najdowski et al., 2020). Research has demonstrated that diversity in both faculty and students positively contributes to improved student learning and ability to work in diverse settings (Hurtado, 2001). However, recruitment of either BIPOC students or faculty may run into strong opposition and one must be aware of the legal obstacles to diversity. For example, the authors' state of Michigan passed legislation in 2006 banning any university supported preferential treatment for BIPOC in employment or education (Mich. Const. art. I, § 26.), a law that effectively rolled back much of affirmative action and was later upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court (Shuette v. Coalition to Defend Affirmative Action, 2014). Such legal barriers can contribute to a climate in which organizations and universities are unwilling to take overt steps to increase diverse representation for fear of being sued by political groups opposed to the promotion of BIPOC. Universities that have admitted to a history of racism as part of a broader set of initiatives to address systemic racism have faced legal investigation and potential financial penalties by politicians decrying affirmative action (Hartocollis, 2020). Such political battles have resulted in 10 states banning affirmative action (Esquierdo-Leal &

Houmanfar, 2020). The unfortunate outcome of these legal changes has been a persistent decline in BIPOC enrollment at major universities in the affected states (Long & Bateman, 2020) and the perpetuation of inequity. In short, recruitment of BIPOC students and faculty will face systemic resistance across individual, organizational, political, and legal forces. Of course, none of this should be taken as an excuse for inaction, but rather an honest appraisal of the challenges involved in advocacy.

Even if successful, recruitment will be a short-sighted strategy if BIPOC do not remain in our graduate programs, academia, or are uncommitted to the field after graduation. Evidence suggests that people find comfort in being in a group that includes people who look like them. Several empirical studies have shown that minorities often feel isolated when attending predominantly white colleges (Harpalani, 2017) and they run the risk of continually feeling like they are the only BIPOC within their professional world (Cirincione-Ulezi, 2020; Roberts, 2020). The phenomenon of feeling like the "only one" can be quite isolating and deprive a person of many social reinforcers from their professional community. The climate fostered by academic institutions may play a large role in retaining BIPOC. For example, Komaki and Minnich (2016) demonstrated how using a behaviorally-based survey could be developed to provide feedback to university administrators in order to guide the retention of BIPOC and female faculty. We would suggest that an adaptation of their survey, such as the one outlined in Table 1, be used to measure climate for BIPOC students (as well as faculty) at higher education institutions. Like the original survey, we would recommend the usage of a dichotomous format to facilitate the ease with which the form is completed. Respondents simply indicate their agreement or not, with checked positive items and unchecked negative items each being scored with 1 point. The minimal time and labor will permit more frequent assessments, which in turn allows one to see how retention efforts are faring on an ongoing basis. As noted by the original authors, it is important to make sure the perceptions of the majority do not average out the experiences of the minority. Therefore, a median-split approach is advocated, in which only scores from the bottom half of respondent ratings are used in calculations. This permits BIPOC to be given a greater voice while still protecting their privacy. Without such an approach, you either risk the ratings of a disengaged and dissatisfied minority being lost when averaged in with the ratings of a content majority or you must ask BIPOC to self-identify in order to assess their evaluations separately, which might engender hesitation due to fears of being ostracized or retaliated against. Although the generated solutions in practice may vary across institutions (since climates may differ program to program), regular data should result in more informed and adaptive decision-making. Of course, a systems-oriented approach (H. M. McGee & Crowley-Koch, 2020) also needs to be enlisted to ensure the entire organization is properly aligned toward

**Table 1.** Behaviorally based brief climate survey for higher education (adapted from Komaki & Minnich, 2016; for a more comprehensive survey focused exclusively on faculty experiences, see original article).

- I find the atmosphere or climate to be supportive.
- I feel left out of things here.
- People in this department take the time to get to know each other.
- I find it difficult to study and/or work here because of its poor climate.
- People in this department enjoy studying and/or working together.
- My opinions do not matter here.
- I fit in with other students and/or faculty in this department.
- People here are rude to each other.
- Morale has improved over the past year.
- If I had to do it all over again, I would still have enrolled in this program or accepted my position in this department.
- I would be happy to spend the rest of my education or career in this department.
- If I could leave this department right now, I would.

improvement of diversity outcomes, or else you risk decision-makers hiding the results of survey outcomes for fear of punishment due to poor performance. Part of what made Komaki and Minnich (2016) approach successful was not that they simply constructed a survey, but rather their effort to improve representation through retention included clear support of upper administration, offered incentives for survey completion, sent social praise to units performing well, shared best practices from top performing units for retaining underrepresented groups (e.g., recognition, social activities, etc.), developed collaborative workshops on how to handle the negative survey findings, and sent pinpointed feedback to the agents of change. It was not a simple antecedent manipulation done once, but instead included several measurement and positive consequence strategies repeated over time. Underscoring the point made earlier regarding training, it is important that recruitment and retention initiatives are part of a multipronged and comprehensive systemic change plan. This also echoes a point made by Esquierdo-Leal and Houmanfar (2020), in which they discuss the importance of wielding several leadership and communication strategies to enact change. The need for progress extends beyond the halls of academia and beyond the construct of climate, leading us to consider the potential of OBM to pinpoint relevant measures for our field in its entirety.

## Precision in measuring important outcomes related to equity and revisiting results on an ongoing basis

In order to achieve an antiracist, equitable, and inclusive environment, organizations must identify and select valid, reliable measures by which to evaluate progress of that goal. Individuals who want to increase diversity in their field or industry have a limited breadth of preestablished measures to utilize in their pursuit, and limited research exists on how to pinpoint and shape behavior for equity. Komaki and Minnich (2016) provide evidence to suggest that

organizations can, in fact, define, measure, and influence amorphous concepts like climate. If progress is ever to be made, then we must embrace defining what progress is, measuring it, and monitoring it regularly. Below is a process guide for establishing measures related to equity and inclusion.

Organizations must first start by identifying the outputs of their organization which are hindered by inequity or inaccessibility. Outputs are defined as the products of a process or organization that contribute to organizational goals (Rummler & Brache, 2013). Said another way, outputs are the value-adding products of a person, process, or system. Indicators of inequity or lack of access include: consistently disparate results for clients or employees based on race or ethnicity, disproportionately high or low inclusion of a particular group of people, pay or compensation structures in which particular groups of people earn more/less, etc.

Next, organizations can then identify the performances and/or processes that contribute to those outputs. Change managers will want to identify the necessary qualities of those performances/processes. Necessary qualities are the distinct dimensions of a performance or process which contribute to a valuable output (e.g. cost of production, rate of adoption, speed of process). To identify these qualities, organizations should invite and listen to the input of internal and external stakeholders. Internal stakeholders are the employees, faculty, staff, and administrators who work within the organizational system. External stakeholders are both the direct consumers of your organization's outputs and the external systems which contribute to your organization's process or performance goals.

The necessary qualities identified by stakeholders will provide insight into relevant measures. For example, if BIPOC applicants at a university identify "financial support" as a necessary quality of the "degree" output, then universities know to measure performances and processes related to financial support opportunities offered to BIPOC students. In this case, relevant measures may include financial support (loan, assistantship, scholarship, grant, etc.), number of credits paid by program per semester, scholarship dollars per student, and so forth. Another important financial consideration is whether any funds have been earmarked in the budget (at the organizational, department, or program level) for increasing diversity.

After the necessary qualities of a process or performance are captured, organizations can develop performance standards or goals to track progress. This step is of fundamental importance. With performance or processes well-defined and measures established, managers can more easily shape behavior with specific feedback and positive consequences; two necessary components of lasting behavior change in organizations (Komaki & Minnich, 2016). Organizations must ensure that their chosen measures contribute to the desired outputs of the organization or process. For example, it would be arbitrary to measure the percentage of BIPOC students receiving financial

aid while ignoring the number of BIPOC students who graduate within six years. Abernathy (2014) describes a system of cascading objectives in which organizations first design organizational standards (using established categories of measurement) and then work down through the organization creating interlocked objectives. A change manager may identify measures and standards for the organization and then work through assigning cascading objectives at the various levels of an organization to contribute to the organizational or process goal. The measures selected by organizations should integrate across all levels of a system, and all individuals in a system should have performance standards which contribute to the desired outputs and results (Rummler & Brache, 2013).

Deciding to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion in an organization is not the end; it is the beginning. Much of the history of OBM has focused on financial measures to determine whether value has been added to an organization; however, social measures are equally as important (Esquierdo-Leal & Houmanfar, 2020; Houmanfar et al., 2015). Above, we have laid out a summary of what it may take for an organization to devise measures relevant to the racial and cultural diversity of their system. This process must be ongoing. We must regularly revisit the measures we establish to determine whether (1) the measures are valid and reliable, and (2) the organization is moving in the desired direction. Some results may be measured frequently (e.g. % of BIPOC invited to interview per opening) while others must be measured over time (e.g. % growth of BIPOC in leadership). Regardless, we highly encourage revisiting results on an ongoing basis. Table 2 has a list of potentially relevant measures for organizations to track.

## Amplifying voices of the underrepresented in OBM training

At a professional level, we urge investing in racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse people. It is difficult to identify singular barriers which have caused the current homogenous state of our field and/or respective industries, but we can more easily identify the racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse individuals in our own institutions and actively pursue investing in their success. Investment can be mentorship, recruitment, promotion, and/or patronage. This investment is not to be confused with a monthly or annual charitable donation. We are endorsing a continuous investment of time, effort, and cash to create more equitable and inclusive professional circles.

As the aphorism "publish or perish" can attest, publications are essential for new professionals at research universities. More experienced scholars can mindfully reach out to and collaborate with early career BIPOC to promote them as authors or coauthors for publications and submitted grants (M. L. Roberson, 2020). Conference planners involved with ABAI and the OBM Network could reach out to BIPOC scholars to diversify the lineup of

**Table 2.** Potentially relevant measures for organizations to track.
- Leadership that fosters environment of multiculturalism
- % of BIPOC applicants hired vs. BIPOC applicants
- Ratio % of BIPOC applicants and BIPOC hires
- # of BIPOC on board
- # of customers or clients of customers vs number of employees/professionals working
- Salary comparison between BIPOC and white employees
- # of conversations about racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity within workplace per (month, year, etc.)
- % of racially, ethnically, and/or culturally diverse employees on staff
- Voluntary turnover rates for people on of race, ethnicity, gender identify, sexual preference
- Involuntary turnover rates for people on of race, ethnicity, gender identify, sexual preference
- # of BIPOC in leadership/managerial pipelines
- Rate of promotion/raises for various BIPOC within organization
- Ratio of customers/BIPOC students to employees/teachers
- Class, duration, and frequency of "mentorship behaviors" from leadership

presenters (Roberts, 2020), perhaps by even reaching outside of the strict OBM field. BIPOC consultants can be encouraged to participate on panels or to present findings from their organizations. Those in the current positions of power can do much to give a platform to voices often unheard and such increased visibility may encourage the participation of neglected populations.

It is also important to give underrepresented voices a means, including anonymous options, to safely voice concerns over behaviors they observe. Many students and junior faculty within our community have spent years observing those in positions of power trading in cultural stereotypes and using racist conceptualizations without visible consequences, so it is unrealistic and unfair to hold them responsible for calling out discrimination. After all, reputations take a lifetime to build and only a moment to destroy, so individuals may be hesitant to voice concerns for fear of retaliation or being branded a "problem person." Are there mechanisms in place to raise issues about the various OBM programs, departments, networking organizations, and consultancies? If not, anonymous e-mails and surveys can easily be created. The results from such data should go to more than one designated person to prevent a situation in which the offending person and the person responsible for equity are the same individual. Part of this means not only promoting BIPOC voices, but also listening to them when they speak.

Amplifying the voice of the underrepresented may also mean speaking for them when they are not being heard by others. For a graduate program advisor, this can mean raising concerns voiced by BIPOC students to leadership. For colleagues, this can mean drawing attention to what a BIPOC colleague is saying or if necessary, repeating their points while intentionally giving them credit for it. Individuals with English as a second language often find it difficult to express themselves in English. Amplifying their voices can mean asking questions to help them expatiate, and patiently listening.

## Ongoing reflection at a personal and professional level

At a personal level, we suggest continuously engaging in reflection and dialogue about one's own prejudices, privileges, biases, and blind spots. This challenging task includes examining the rules that govern our behavior, the contingencies that maintain it, and the ways in which those environmental relations may disproportionately help or hinder specific groups of people. Self-assessment should also incorporate seeking feedback, asking questions, and seeking accountability (as opposed to reacting defensively or making excuses). We encourage continuous self-assessment because, as individuals, we hold power and influence that we can exercise to affect more equitable and inclusive environments. As Li (2020) suggested, it is not sufficient to simply try to eliminate one's own racist behavior, but it is imperative to actively work toward equity. Simply being "not racist" is a state (which is incongruent with a behavioral conceptualization and unlikely to ever be truly attained) that fosters inaction and therefore complicity, whether intentional or not (Najdowski et al., 2020). Racism is not a dichotomous or categorical variable – no one is perfect when it comes to racist behaviors and our learning history inherently makes us susceptible to a variety of positive and negative biases. Antiracism on the other hand, implies action (behavior) on a continuous basis to promote equity. In other words, it is not just an outcome to be achieved and then displaced by other priorities. It should be seen as a career-long commitment (Roberts, 2020).

In the presence of injustice and inequity, apathy, silence, and inaction actively harm oppressed individuals. We encourage examining the distinct aspects of the systems we operate in and their relationship with racially and culturally diverse populations. We must continuously examine the inputs, outputs, processes, policies, procedures, and people who operate in these systems that maintain the "status quo". Proclaiming anger and denouncing prejudice is no longer sufficient. We can use our skillset to identify and flatten barriers to diversity, equity, and inclusion. A science of behavior can better understand the cultural contingencies that maintain the behavior of those in charge and develop effective forms of countercontrol (Rogers & Skinner, 1956). Only by understanding the ways in which we individually contribute to systems of injustice can we make the necessary changes in our own personal and professional circles. Not only can we encourage others to join our professional circles, but we can also seek out other professional circles to provide support and to increase our own level of awareness (Li, 2020; Najdowski et al., 2020). This includes joining organizations such as Black Applied Behavior Analysts (BABA) or the Latino Association for Behavior Analysis (LABA). Humbly, we acknowledge that the systems of oppression which have driven the disparate opportunities and outcomes for BIPOC will not simply be eradicated by identifying our own personal biases. As behaviorists, however,

we understand that in the beginning of any behavior change, active work needs to be done and this work cannot be achieved without exposing ourselves to new stimuli and continually monitoring our progress.

## Summary

This paper was not intended to provide all the answers to solve issues related to racism and equity, nor could it ever realistically be expected to. However, it is hoped that it could help serve as an impetus by giving some ideas regarding steps that individuals could take within our field. Whether through training, mentorship, professional events, or consultation, the application of both positive and aversive consequences can prove powerful in driving systemic change. We should recognize and celebrate achievements for allyship behaviors with the same ardor we recognize teaching effectiveness and innovative research within our community. We should call out inequities when we see them (Roberts, 2020), but without appointing ourselves as the "savior" of our organizations. Shaping at the individual and collective level is a gradual process that cannot be achieved by sitting on the proverbial sidelines. Many of the issues raised in this paper could serve as research lines for our emerging and established scholars to investigate and our existing research should be extrapolated to provide insights on the best practices for diversity and inclusion (Cirincione-Ulezi, 2020). Although not the focus of this paper, many of the best practices derived from OBM in support of BIPOC could also be used to support members of other marginalized groups (e.g., LGBTQ+, women, people with disabilities) and those from overlapping marginalized groups (Crenshaw, 1989).

There is a legacy of racism built into the systems of higher education and society at large. At times, combating this can feel overwhelming, as the odds of any individual enacting change may seem daunting, if not futile. As Rummler and Brache (2013) once put it, "if you pit a good performer against a bad system, the system will win almost every time" (p. 11). However, their admonishment was not meant to demotivate people into accepting the status quo. The very next line after their famous sentence was about how we need to spend our "time fixing organization systems that are broken" and their career was dedicated to outlining tools to accomplish such feats. Furthermore, individuals can band together so that their collective action has the potential to persuade or overpower existing systems (Esquierdo-Leal & Houmanfar, 2020). It is incumbent upon OBM to dedicate our tools toward dismantling racist systems and repairing systems for equity within our field, within the organizations we work with, and within the broader culture. Each individual performer has something that they can and should contribute to the cause for justice.

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## Disclosure statement

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