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Survey of Faculty Perspectives, Actions, and Barriers to Culturally Responsive Mentorship

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Abstract

Behavior analysts have recently increased efforts toward providing culturally responsive clinical practice. Although the emphasis on culturally responsive practices when providing behavior analytic services to clients is important, it is also relevant when training and mentoring future behavior analysts. Culturally responsive mentorship practices can have a great impact on the success and growth of students in behavior analysis, especially those from historically marginalized groups (HMGs). The current study summarizes a survey of 44 faculty providing mentorship in Verified Course Sequences (VCSs) and accredited behavior-analytic programs. The survey identified the faculty's reported (a) skill level, importance, and confidence in culturally responsive mentorship, (b) training in culturally responsive mentorship, and (c) current and desired participation in various activities related to recruitment, retention, wellness, and persistence of students from historically marginalized groups (HMGs). Results of the survey and implications for using culturally responsive practices while mentoring future behavior analysts from HMGs are discussed.

Keywords Cultural responsiveness · Diversity · Equity · Inclusion · Mentorship

The need for behavior-analytic positions is growing and will continue to grow by four times the national average by the year 2031 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022). This growth is exciting as there are many communities who could benefit from behavior analytic services and many families who are currently on long wait lists to receive services. This marked increase in the demand for master's and doctoral level behavior analysts, with no stability or reduction in sight, centers the importance of

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providing high quality training and experiences for the professionals in the field. High quality training experiences could allow behavior analysis to withstand some of the growing pains currently occurring.

There are many components that make a good quality training program, but one of the many essential components is mentorship. Mentorship is at the heart of the adoption, evolution, and success of behavior, and can be incredibly effective for the success of an individual's experiences in a graduate program (LeBlanc et al., 2020). A good mentorship experience can make a huge difference in a students' success and well-being. However, while mentorship is often celebrated as a critical component of higher education, the degree of cultural responsiveness mediates the effectiveness in serving students from historically marginalized groups (HMGs).

Mentorship is defined as a mutual relationship between one individual who is early in their career (i.e., the mentee) and another individual who is more experienced or at a later point in their career (i.e., the mentor) in which the shared goal is personal and professional growth (McCoy et al., 2015). Mentorship is different from supervision or academic advisement in that the latter two aim to reach a specific certification or requirement, such as when a Board-Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) supervises an individual to meet that individual's supervision requirements toward certification or when a college advisor helps a college student meet their graduation requirements. In contrast, a mentorship relationship is a collaborative and bi-directional relationship that is meant to foster the development of both the mentor and the mentee and allows for opportunities for social support, professional development, reflection, sharing of ideas, and personal growth (Han & Onchwari, 2018; McCoy et al., 2015).

Culturally responsive mentorship (CRM) refers to the incorporation of cultural orientations and experiences in all aspects of the mentorship relationship and can involve many different components and activities (Fong et al., 2016; LeBlanc et al., 2020). For example, one of the first steps a mentor should engage in is to identify their own culture and evaluate how it intersects with their mentee's culture, which was shaped by potentially differing beliefs, perceptions, and judgments. Next, the mentor must adjust their mentorship techniques to create a carefully constructed environment responsive to both the mentee and the context of training. That is, the mentor must adjust their mentorship to integrate the individual needs and values of both their mentee and the populations they serve in their immediate community. The mentor should continue to repeat the process and reevaluate the mentorship relationship throughout its course. Finally, the mentor should respond to inequities and engage in actions that promote a safe learning environment.

Many benefits arise for both students and faculty when mentorship is culturally responsive. For example, a culturally responsive mentor can provide safe social networking opportunities that may not always be available for students from HMGs. These opportunities allow the student to feel a sense of community and are extremely beneficial and necessary for their success in their academic program (Han & Onchwari, 2018; Whittaker & Montgomery, 2012). A culturally responsive mentor can also help protect their mentee against microaggressions and other types of discrimination. While the mentor could never prevent these incidents from happening to the mentee, they could speak up and call out these events on

behalf of the student and/or provide a safe space for the student to share stories and receive guidance from their peers (Han & Onchwari, 2018; Zygmunt et al., 2018). Another benefit for the student is the opportunity for building leadership skills. When a student from an HMG feels safe and secure in a mentorship relationship, it allows for that student to feel more comfortable seeking out leadership building opportunities, such as teaching and presentation skills (Byars-Winston et al., 2011; Whittaker & Montgomery, 2012; Zygmunt et al., 2018). Culturally responsive mentorship also allows the student from an HMG to have role models who not only reinforce skills that will promote success in their career goals, but also help them maintain their cultural identity, which is often lost and/or questioned in predominantly White spaces (Byars-Winston et al., 2011; Whittaker & Montgomery, 2012; Zygmunt et al., 2018). Having a strong cultural identity is well documented in the literature as a protective factor promoting retention. When these components are in place during a student's graduate training, it makes room for a safe environment that fosters growth and development for a successful and sustainable career and where the individual's values-based actions in response to aversive situations is positively reinforced (e.g., safely and securely calling out instances of microaggressions; Byars-Winston et al., 2011; Whittaker & Montgomery, 2012; Zygmunt et al., 2018). Although "safe" is a subjective term, we can operationally define it as operating in positively reinforcing environments rather than negatively reinforcing or punishing environments.

Culturally responsive mentorship is also beneficial for universities and programs. For example, when students are in a culturally responsive mentorship relationship, they are more likely to stay in a program, and as a result, universities are more successful in not only recruiting students from HMGs, but more importantly, retaining them (Byars-Winston et al., 2011; Whittaker & Montgomery, 2012). This in turn allows for the development of safe spaces to meet the growing diverse student population and, as a result, the overall climate of the university begins to improve (Byars-Winston et al., 2011; Whittaker & Montgomery, 2012).

Finally, culturally responsive mentorship has promising implications for larger systemic social problems in our society at large. Specifically, as university climate improves and student populations become more diverse in behavior analytic programs, both students and faculty research and clinical interests will also become more diverse. As a result, issues directly affecting marginalized communities, such as access to education, poverty, racism, discrimination, and health disparities, will become prevalent in behavior analytic research and practice.

Despite these benefits, several barriers also exist to practicing culturally responsive mentorship. For example, one is that faculty and university programs may feel inclined to blame the individual students if they are not successful instead of looking at institutional and systemic barriers that historically and largely affect students from HMGs. Another barrier is the commitment to and comfort with traditional mentorship practices, particularly when those mentorship practices appear to work for many mentees. A final barrier is a lack of commitment to support the implementation of culturally responsive mentorship, especially when the implementation of these practices requires change and, subsequently additional effort, time, and financial resources with perhaps minimal or delayed reinforcers from administrators.

Although there is a large body of literature on culturally responsive mentorship outside of behavior analysis, up until recently, few behavior analysts have discussed the topic. Therefore, we constructed a survey to gather preliminary information from faculty who self-identified as mentors in behavior analytic training programs. Specifically, our goals were to identify faculty's perceived competence and experience with culturally responsive mentorship and current and desired actions around culturally responsive mentorship with respect to student recruitment, retention, wellness, and persistence.

Method

Participants and Setting

Participants for this survey were recruited via email. We first identified all programs in the United States that were either verified course sequences and/or were accredited programs through the association for behavior analysis international (ABAI). We then gathered the emails of all faculty teaching in those programs via online websites and contacted them directly. The email was sent to a total of 502 faculty teaching in a verified course sequence and/or an ABAI accredited program. We also distributed the survey through a behavior analysis teaching listserv and shared it on social media platforms. A total of two attempts were made through the mediums described above.

An informed consent form was administered prior to beginning the survey in alignment with the authors' institutional review boards. If a participant consented to participate in the study, they were immediately directed to the survey. If the participant did not consent, they were immediately directed to a termination page. No identifying information was collected for any of the participants. The survey was anonymous, and the participants were allowed to exit out of the survey at any time. The response rate for the survey was 9%. This response rate was calculated by diving the total number of survey responses (44) by the number of emails sent to faculty (502). While the average response rate for online surveys is 34% (Daikeler et al., 2022), we are confident in the validity of our survey results for a couple of reasons. First, our sample consisted of 502 faculty across 205 programs with the number of faculty per program ranging between one and 14. Given that a number of faculty in these programs may not mentor or train students for various reasons (e.g., part-time or adjunct faculty do not usually mentor students), a 9% response rate may very well represent the opinions of faculty in our sample who do mentor or train students as part of their regular job responsibilities (Holtom et al., 2022). Second, our sampling strategy consisted of targeting a very specific population (i.e., behavior analysis faculty who mentor students in behavior analytic programs). As a result of this sampling method, a lower response rate is more likely to accurately represent the opinions of the larger target population (Daikeler et al., 2022; Lammers & Badia, 2004).

Materials

The survey consisted of 60 questions and took approximately 30 minutes to complete. Participants were given 2 weeks to complete the survey. Specifically, participants were able to stop completing the survey at any time and come back to it within 2 weeks of starting. Because the survey was anonymous and no identifying information was collected, we could not send a reminder email to participants who partially completed the survey. If the participants did not complete the survey within the 2 weeks, their data were not included.

The survey required faculty to respond about their own actions and the actions of their program. For the former, they were asked to consider what they had personally done (e.g., in their practicum, research lab, etc.) with respect to mentorship practice. For the latter, they were asked to reflect on what their program (i.e., academic unit) was doing with respect to mentorship practices.

Results

Participant Characteristics & Demographics

Table 1 and 2 depict participant demographics and characteristics. Most of the participants were doctoral-level board certified behavior analysis faculty (77%) working in the field of applied behavior analysis (67%) in a 4-year public university (60%) and had over 15 years of experience (57%) in the field of applied behavior analysis. Most of the participants worked in either the Midwest (34%) or Southern (34%) part of the United States and most had been in their academic appointment for 1–6 years (50%). When asked whether they were first generation scholars, 48% reported being the first in their family to have a Ph.D., 33% were first to have a masters, and 19% were first to have a bachelor's degree. Exactly 75% of participants reported their gender as cisgender female and 23% as cisgender male. Finally, 79% of participants identified as White and 21% identified as an individual from an HMG (Black/African American, Indigenous, Asian, Middle Eastern, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander).

Mentorship Characteristics

Mentorship characteristics are summarized in Table 3. Approximately 26% of respondents mentored undergraduate students, 41% of respondents mentored master's students, and 26% mentored doctoral students. Many respondents mentored individuals across multiple roles, including research (30%), academic (20%), clinical (20%), and employment mentorship (19%). A small percentage (9%) mentored individuals in a formal mentorship program or role, such as when an organization designates or compensates an individual as a mentor for another individual. Respondents who mentored individuals in a clinical role worked primarily in the areas of autism

Table 1 Participant demographics

Variables	n	%
Age		
20-29	1	2
30-39	18	41
40-49	15	34
50-59	7	16
60-69	2	5
70-79	1	2
Total	44	100
Gender		
Cisgender female	33	75
Cisgender male	10	23
Transgender	0	0
Nonbinary	0	0
Self-describe	0	0
Prefer not to say	1	2
Total	44	100
Sexual Orientation		
Heterosexual	38	87
Gay	1	2
Bisexual	1	2
Asexual	1	2
Pansexual	2	5
Self-describe	0	0
Prefer not to say	1	2
Total	44	100
Race		
Indigenous	1	2
Asian	1	2
Middle Eastern	1	2
Black or AA	5	11
NH or PI	0	0
White	37	79
Self-describe	2	4
Total	47	100
Ethnicity		
Hispanic or Latina/o/e	3	7
Not Hispanic or Latina/o/e	41	93
Self-Describe	0	0
Total	44	100

Note. AA = African American, NH = Native Hawaiian, PI = Pacific Islander

Table 2 Participant characteristics

Variables	n	%
Field of Study		
Applied Behavior Analysis	29	66
Psychology	5	11
Education	1	2
School Psychology	1	2
Special Education	3	7
Other	5	12
Total	44	100
First Generation Degree		
Bachelors	14	19
Masters	25	33
Ph.D.	36	48
Total	75	100
Certification Status		
Board Certified Behavior Analyst	4	9
Board Certified Behavior Analyst - Doctoral	34	77
No Certification	6	14
Total	44	100
Employment Setting		
Public 4-Year University	30	60
Private 4-Year University	10	20
Medical Center	2	4
Hospital	1	2
Clinic	4	8
Other	3	6
Total	50	100
Years of Experience		
4-6	2	5
7-9	4	9
10-12	10	22
13-15	3	7
>15	25	57
Total	44	100
Geographical Location of Employment		
Northeast	7	16
Midwest	15	34
South	15	34
West	7	16
Total	44	100
Duration of Academic Appointment		
<1 year	3	7
1-3 years	13	30

Table 2 (continued)	Variables		
		n	%
	4-6 years	9	20
	7-9 years	5	11
	10-12 years	3	7
	13-15 years	3	7
	15 years >	8	18
	Total	44	100
	Appointment Rank		
	Visiting Assistant Professor	1	3
	Assistant Professor	17	39
	Associate Professor	12	27
	Professor	9	20
	Other	5	11
	Total	44	100

spectrum disorders (50%), intellectual disabilities (11%), and special education (11%). Respondents who mentored individuals in a research role worked in a variety of populations, including autism spectrum disorders (35%), intellectual disabilities (14%), special education (9%), emotional or behavioral disorders (7%), mental health (3%), general education (2%), and other (19%). Finally, we asked faculty an open-ended question on how many students from HMGs they have mentored in their careers. Responses to this question ranged from 1 to 200, with a mean, median, and mode of 24, 10, and 10, respectively.

Importance, Confidence, and Skills Related to Culturally Responsive Mentorship

Figure 1 depicts data on the faculty's reported importance, confidence, and skill level related to culturally responsive mentorship. Overall, most faculty reported receiving training on culturally responsive mentorship as either extremely important (68%) or very important (16%). However, a lower percentage reported feeling confident or skilled on culturally responsive mentorship. Specifically, 3% reported being extremely skilled and 11% reported being very skilled.

Program and Personal Activities Related to Recruitment and Retention of Students from HMGs

Figure 2 depicts data for the actions related to recruitment and retention of students from HMGs. Faculty were asked to report on the actions taken by both themselves and their programs. Specifically, we asked faculty to report on a rating scale how much work they and their programs had done toward recruitment and retention. We also asked faculty to report on a rating scale how successful they and their programs

Table 3 Mentorship characteristics

Variables	n	%
Student Mentee Level		
Undergraduate	26	26
Master's	43	41
Doctoral	26	26
Post-Doctoral	7	7
Total	102	100
Mentorship Type		
Research	42	30
Academic Advising	28	20
Clinical Supervision	27	20
Professional	26	19
Formal	13	9
Other	2	2
Total	138	100
Clinical Supervision Population		
Autism Spectrum Disorder	14	50
Intellectual Disability	5	18
Special Education	3	11
Emotional Behavioral Disorders	2	7
Mental Health	1	3
Other	3	11
Total	28	100
Research Mentorship Population		
Autism Spectrum Disorder	15	36
Intellectual Disability	6	15
Special Education	4	10
Emotional Behavioral Disorders	2	5
Mental Health	1	2
General Education	1	2
Typically Developing	3	7
Employment/Organizations	1	2
Sport, Health, or Fitness	1	2
Other	8	19
Total	42	100

were in their efforts toward recruitment and retention. A similar percentage of faculty reported that they (28%) or their program (26%) took a lot or great deal of actions toward recruitment of students from HMGs. However, for retention activities, faculty reported personally taking more actions than their programs (61% and 36%, respectively). Although the majority of faculty reported that they personally (73%) and their programs (59%) remain dedicated to recruitment and retention of
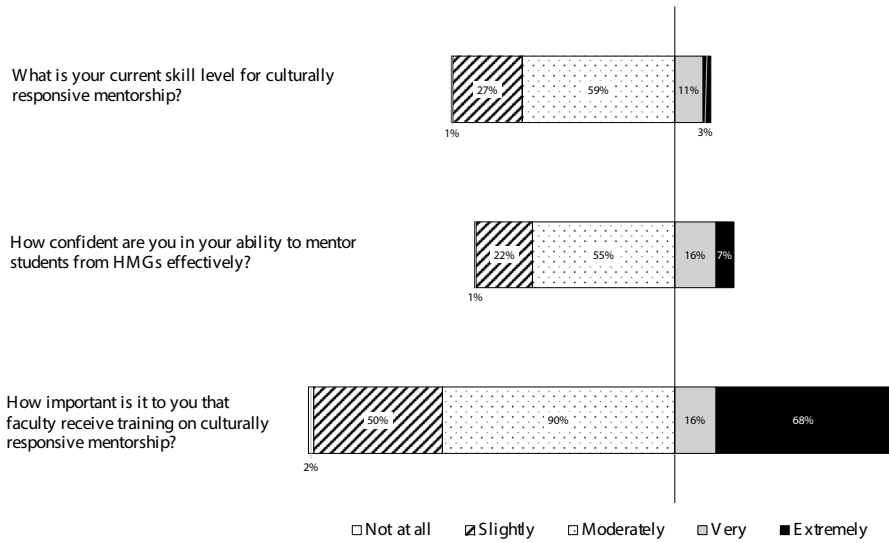
Fig. 1 Skill Level, importance, and confidence in culturally responsive mentorship
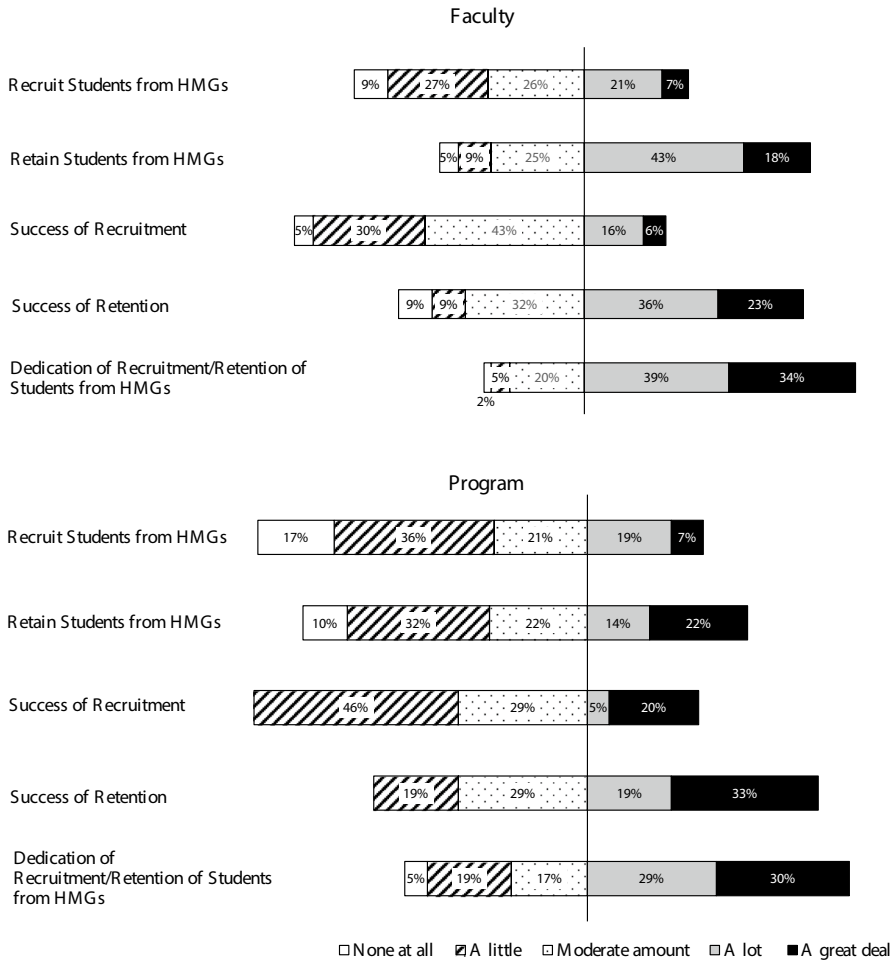
students from HMGs, a majority also reported moderate to little success in recruitment (73% of faculty and 75% of programs).

Specific Activities Related to Culturally Responsive Mentorship

After asking faculty about general actions, we asked them about specific activities that they and their programs had taken related to seven categories: (a) recruitment, (b) admissions, (c) retention, (d) academic and scholarly work, (e) faculty development, (f) campus climate, (g) financial aid, and (h) measurement. It is important to note that data on program activities were collected from faculty and not directly from program administrators. Given that faculty take on many roles in their departments, they may not always know what their programs are doing or are planning to do in the future. For this reason, we added an additional option of "Do not know" when reporting program data.

Recruitment

Figure 3 depicts data for specific recruitment activities taken by both faculty members and their programs. The activities that the majority of faculty and their programs were reported to have had already taken included publicizing commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI; 70% and 77%, respectively), displaying images of students from HMGs (55% and 73%), and spotlighting accomplishments of students from HMGs (64% and 68%). The activity that most faculty (80%) reported personally taking was expanding their professional networks to those doing work in DEI.

Faculty

Recruit Students from HMGs
9% | 27% | 26% | 21% | 7%

Retain Students from HMGs
5% | 9% | 25% | 43% | 18%

Success of Recruitment
5% | 30% | 43% | 16% | 6%

Success of Retention
9% | 9% | 32% | 36% | 23%

Dedication of Recruitment/Retention of Students from HMGs
2% | 5% | 20% | 39% | 34%

Program

Recruit Students from HMGs
17% | 36% | 21% | 19% | 7%

Retain Students from HMGs
10% | 32% | 22% | 14% | 22%

Success of Recruitment
46% | 29% | 5% | 20%

Success of Retention
19% | 29% | 19% | 33%

Dedication of Recruitment/Retention of Students from HMGs
5% | 19% | 17% | 29% | 30%

□ None at all   ▨ A little   ⬚ Moderate amount   ▨ A lot   ■ A great deal

Fig. 2 Recruitment and retention of students from HMGs

Activities that the majority of faculty and their programs reported as either not taken or not taken but would like to take included providing language translations for brochures and informational materials (93% and 40%, respectively), bringing in experts outside of behavior analysis to assist in recruiting and retaining students from HMGs (81% and 39%), building strategic partnerships with Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Hispanic Serving Institutions (83% and 52%), and attending a career or graduate school fair for large communities of underrepresented students (77% and 32%).
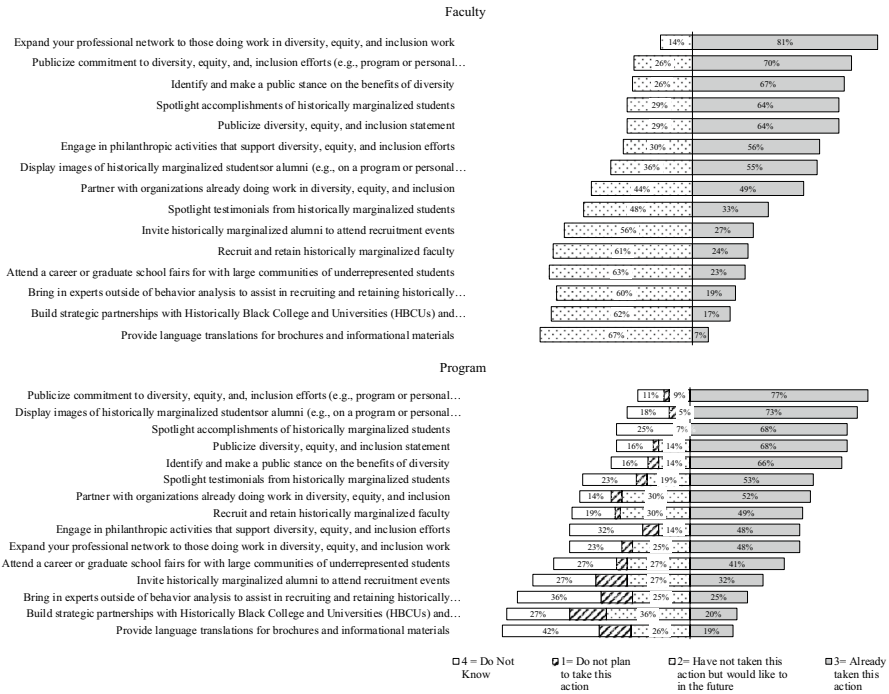
Faculty

Action		
Expand your professional network to those doing work in diversity, equity, and inclusion work	14%	81%
Publicize commitment to diversity, equity, and, inclusion efforts (e.g., program or personal…	26%	70%
Identify and make a public stance on the benefits of diversity	26%	67%
Spotlight accomplishments of historically marginalized students	29%	64%
Publicize diversity, equity, and inclusion statement	29%	64%
Engage in philanthropic activities that support diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts	30%	56%
Display images of historically marginalized students or alumni (e.g., on a program or personal…	36%	55%
Partner with organizations already doing work in diversity, equity, and inclusion	44%	49%
Spotlight testimonials from historically marginalized students	48%	33%
Invite historically marginalized alumni to attend recruitment events	56%	27%
Recruit and retain historically marginalized faculty	61%	24%
Attend a career or graduate school fairs for with large communities of underrepresented students	63%	23%
Bring in experts outside of behavior analysis to assist in recruiting and retaining historically…	60%	19%
Build strategic partnerships with Historically Black College and Universities (HBCUs) and…	62%	17%
Provide language translations for brochures and informational materials	67%	7%

Program

Action			
Publicize commitment to diversity, equity, and, inclusion efforts (e.g., program or personal…	11%	9%	77%
Display images of historically marginalized students or alumni (e.g., on a program or personal…	18%	5%	73%
Spotlight accomplishments of historically marginalized students	25%	7%	68%
Publicize diversity, equity, and inclusion statement	16%	14%	68%
Identify and make a public stance on the benefits of diversity	16%	14%	66%
Spotlight testimonials from historically marginalized students	23%	19%	53%
Partner with organizations already doing work in diversity, equity, and inclusion	14%	30%	52%
Recruit and retain historically marginalized faculty	19%	30%	49%
Engage in philanthropic activities that support diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts	32%	14%	48%
Expand your professional network to those doing work in diversity, equity, and inclusion work	23%	25%	48%
Attend a career or graduate school fairs for with large communities of underrepresented students	27%	27%	41%
Invite historically marginalized alumni to attend recruitment events	27%	27%	32%
Bring in experts outside of behavior analysis to assist in recruiting and retaining historically…	36%	25%	25%
Build strategic partnerships with Historically Black College and Universities (HBCUs) and…	27%	36%	20%
Provide language translations for brochures and informational materials	42%	26%	19%

4 = Do Not Know   1 = Do not plan to take this action   2 = Have not taken this action but would like to in the future   3 = Already taken this action

Fig. 3 Specific actions for the recruitment of students from historically marginalized groups

Admissions

Figure 4 depicts data on the specific activities related to admission processes for both faculty and their programs. Results for both faculty and programs were similar. First, the majority of faculty reported that they and their programs adhere to equitable admissions processes (73% and 68%, respectively). Additionally, over 50% of faculty reported that they and their programs were restructuring their admissions processes to eliminate exclusionary gatekeeping practices. Finally, when asked about requesting information on commitment to diversity during interviews, a majority of faculty reported that they and their programs had already taken this action or would like to in the future (80% and 73%, respectively).

Retention

Figure 5 depicts data on the specific activities related to retention for both faculty and their programs. Activities that the majority of faculty reported as having taken toward retention included responding appropriately and with compassion to concerns of students from HMGs (93%), encouraging social support networks (68%), and creating safe spaces for students from HMGs (59%). Activities
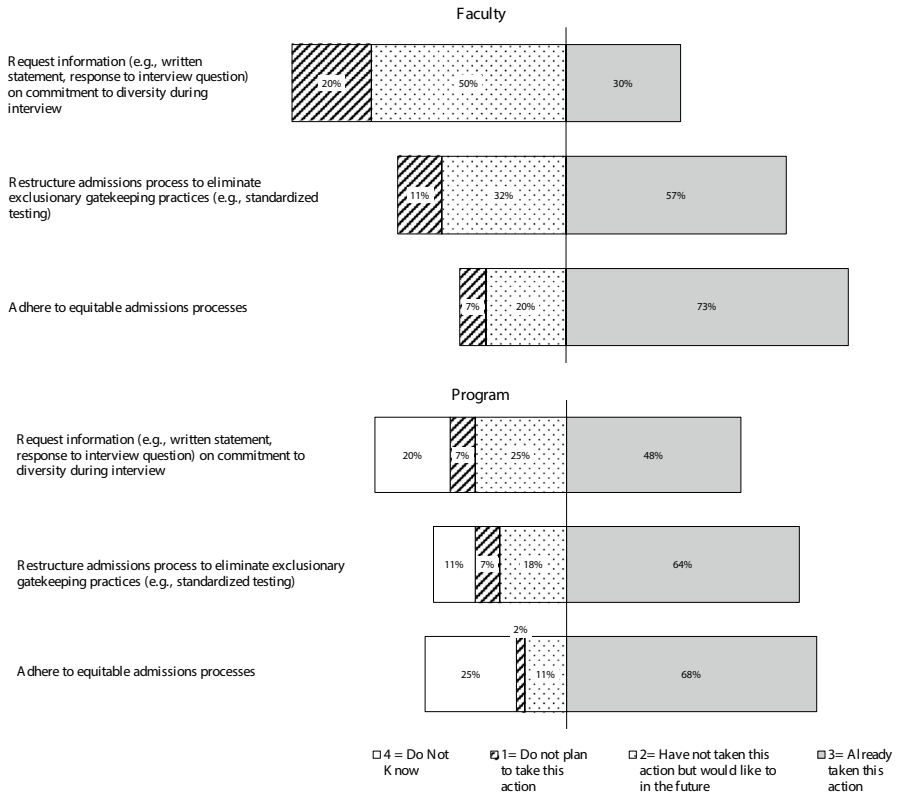
Faculty

Request information (e.g., written
statement, response to interview question)
on commitment to diversity during
interview
| 20% | 50% | 30% |

Restructure admissions process to eliminate
exclusionary gatekeeping practices (e.g., standardized
testing)
| 11% | 32% | 57% |

Adhere to equitable admissions processes
| 7% | 20% | 73% |

Program

Request information (e.g., written statement,
response to interview question) on commitment to
diversity during interview
| 20% | 7% | 25% | 48% |

Restructure admissions process to eliminate exclusionary
gatekeeping practices (e.g., standardized testing)
| 11% | 7% | 18% | 64% |

Adhere to equitable admissions processes
| 25% | 2% | 11% | 68% |

□ 4 = Do Not
Know
◩ 1= Do not plan
to take this
action
▣ 2= Have not taken this
action but would like to
in the future
■ 3= Already
taken this
action

Fig. 4 Specific actions for admissions processes

that most faculty reported not having taken but would like to take in the future included providing counseling or training focused on empowerment and self-efficacy for students from HMGs (51%), offering mentoring programs for students from HMGs (63%), and organizing specific events for students from HMGs to build social support networks (60%).

The activity that most faculty reported their programs as having taken was encouraging social support networks (68%) and responding appropriately and with compassion to the concerns of historically marginalized students (70%). Most program activities in this category were reported as either "do not know," "not taken but would like to in the future," or "do not plan to take." For example, for organizing specific events for historically marginalized students to build social supports or networks, 32% of faculty reported that their programs have "not taken this action but would like to in the future." Thirty percent of faculty reported that their programs "have not taken…but would like to" provide counseling or training focused on empowerment and self-efficacy. Of all actions listed, the one with the highest percentage of faculty reporting "do not plan to take this action"
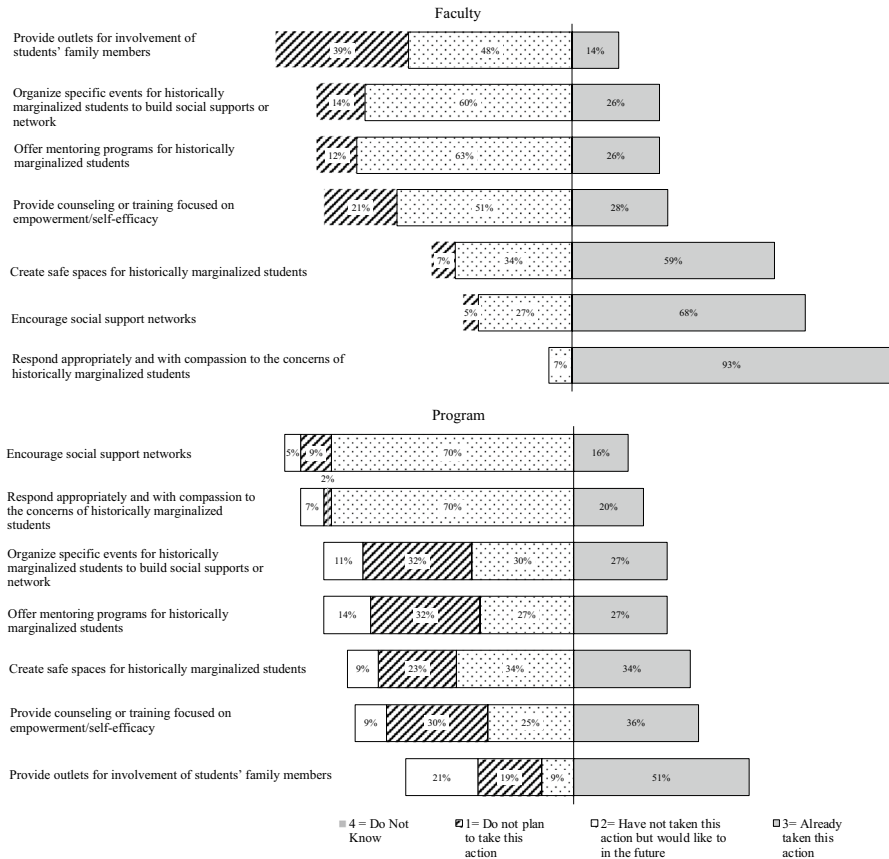
Fig. 5 Specific activities for retention of students from historically marginalized groups

themselves (39%) and on behalf of their program (21%) was providing outlets for involvement of students' family members.

Academic and Scholarly Work

Figure 6 depicts data on academic and scholarly activities. Most faculty reported that they recognize the importance of nonacademic circumstances to the students' academic success (86%). Most also reported providing research opportunities for students from HMGs (74%). Other activities that a majority of faculty reported taking included providing educational opportunities for faculty about diversity, oppressive systems, and privilege (60%); providing coursework in culture, diversity, equity, and inclusion (58%); and decolonizing curricula (57%). Many additional activities were reported by faculty as "not taken but would like to take in the future," including creating collaborative learning communities targeted at students from HMGs
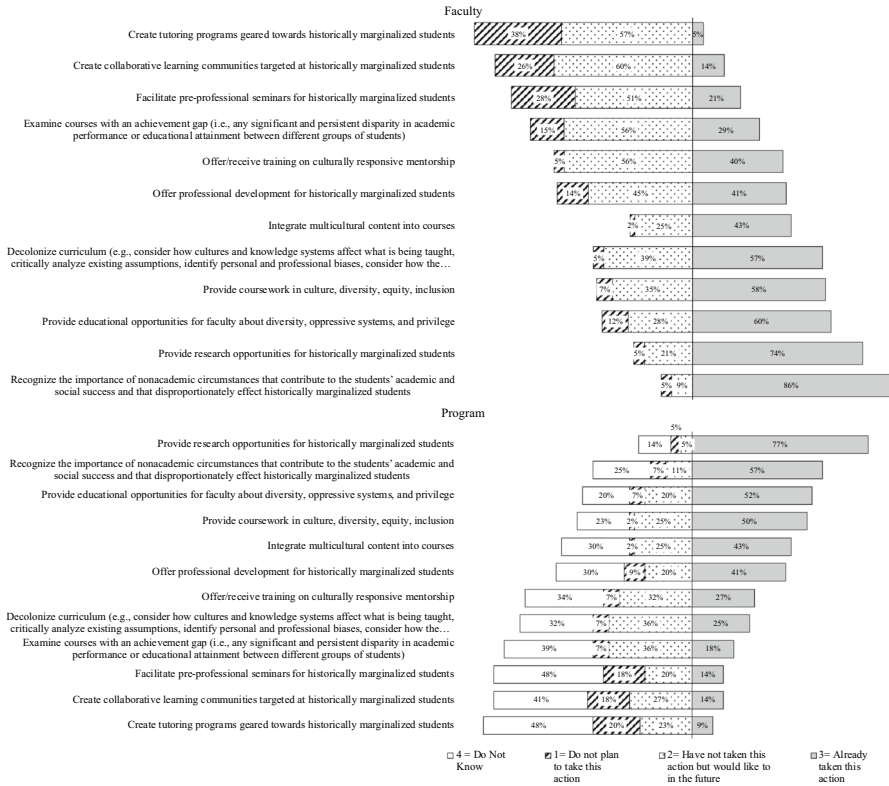
Fig. 6 Academic and scholarly work related to culturally responsive mentorship

(60%), creating tutoring programs specifically for students from HMGs (57%), and examining courses with an achievement gap (56%).

For programs, the most common activity reported by faculty was providing research opportunities for students from HMGs (77%). Other actions that were reported as "already taken" for the majority of programs included providing educational opportunities for faculty about diversity, oppressive systems, and privilege (52%); recognizing the importance of nonacademic circumstances that contribute to students' academic and social success (57%); and providing coursework on DEI (50%). There were several activities reported as "do not know" for programs, including creating tutoring programs for students from HMGs (48%), facilitating pre-professional seminars for students from HMGs (48%), and creating collaborative learning communities targeted toward students from HMGs (41%).

Faculty Development

Figure 7 depicts the data for activities related to faculty development for both faculty and programs. The two activities that were most reported as "already
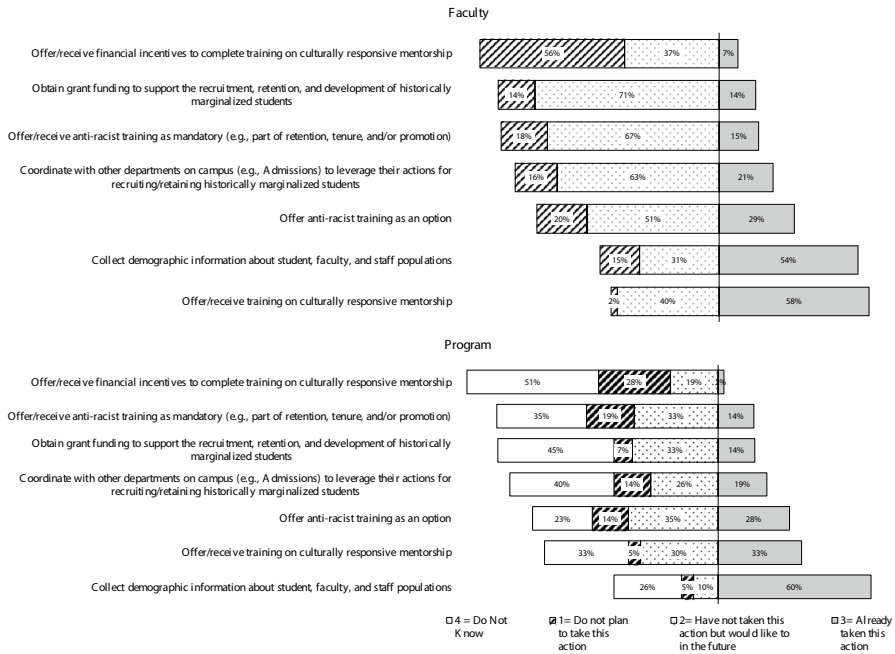
Fig. 7 Activities related to faculty development

taken" by faculty were offering/receiving training on culturally responsive mentorship (58%) and collecting demographic information about students, faculty, and/or staff populations (54%). Actions that were reported as not taken but would like to in the future included obtaining grant funding to support the recruitment, retention, and development of students from HMGs (71%); offering/receiving mandatory anti-racist training (67%); and coordinating with other departments on campus to leverage their actions for recruiting/retaining students from HMGs (63%). Finally, over half of faculty reported not planning to receive or offer financial incentives to complete training on culturally responsive mentorship (56%).

The activity most often reported for programs as "already taken" was collecting demographic information about students, faculty, and/or staff populations (60%). A little over half (51%) of the faculty reported that they "do not know" if their programs are offering and/or receiving financial incentives to complete training on culturally responsive mentorship. Additionally, 45% of faculty reported that they "do not know" if their programs are obtaining grant funding to support the recruitment, retention, and development of students from HMGs. Forty percent reported that they "do not know" if their programs are coordinating with other departments to leverage their actions for recruiting and retaining students from HMGs.

Faculty

Program

□4 = Do Not	☑1= Do not plan	□2= Have not taken this	□3= Already
Know	to take this	action but would like to	taken this
	action	in the future	action
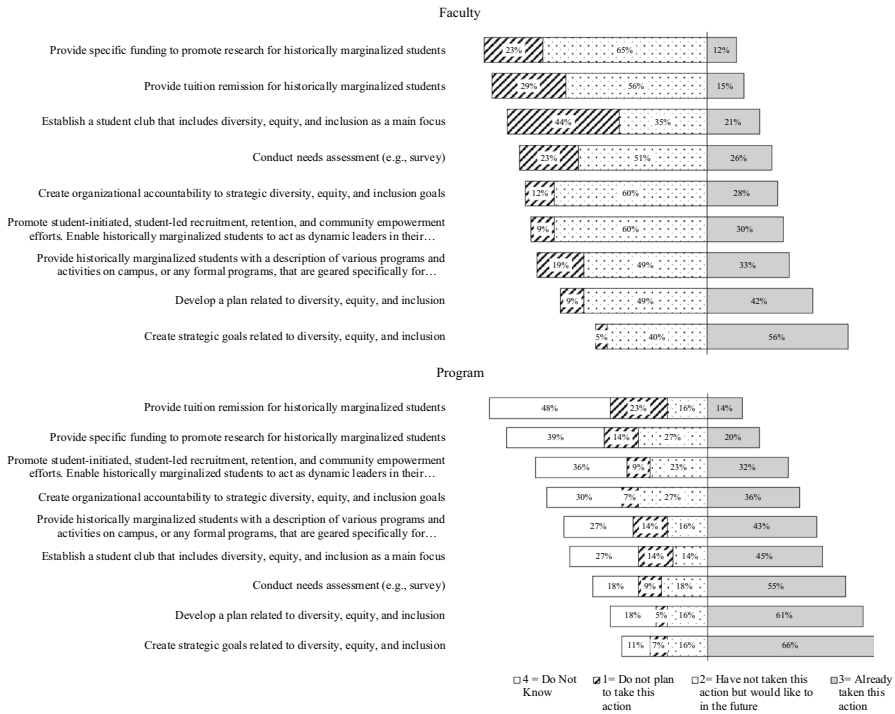
Fig. 8 Activities related to campus climate

Campus Climate

Figure 8 depicts data for activities related to campus climate. For faculty, the activity reported most as "already taken" was creating strategic goals related to DEI (56%). For all other activities, the majority of faculty reported them as "have not taken but would like to in the future." These activities included providing specific funding to promote research for students from HMGs (65%); providing tuition remission for students from HMGs (56%); creating organizational accountability to strategic DEI goals (60%); conducting needs assessments (51%); promoting student-initiated, student-led recruitment, retention, and community empowerment efforts (60%); and providing students from HMGs with a description of various programs and activities on campus (49%).

Three activities were reported by the majority of faculty as "already taken" by their programs. These activities included creating strategic goals related to DEI (66%); developing a plan related to DEI (61%); and conducting a needs assessment, such as a survey (55%). Creating organizational accountability to strategic DEI goals, as well as providing specific funding to promote research for historically marginalized students, were both reported by 27% of faculty as "have not taken but would like to in the future." Finally, the action with the highest percentage in the "do not plan to take" category was providing tuition remission for historically marginalized students (23%).
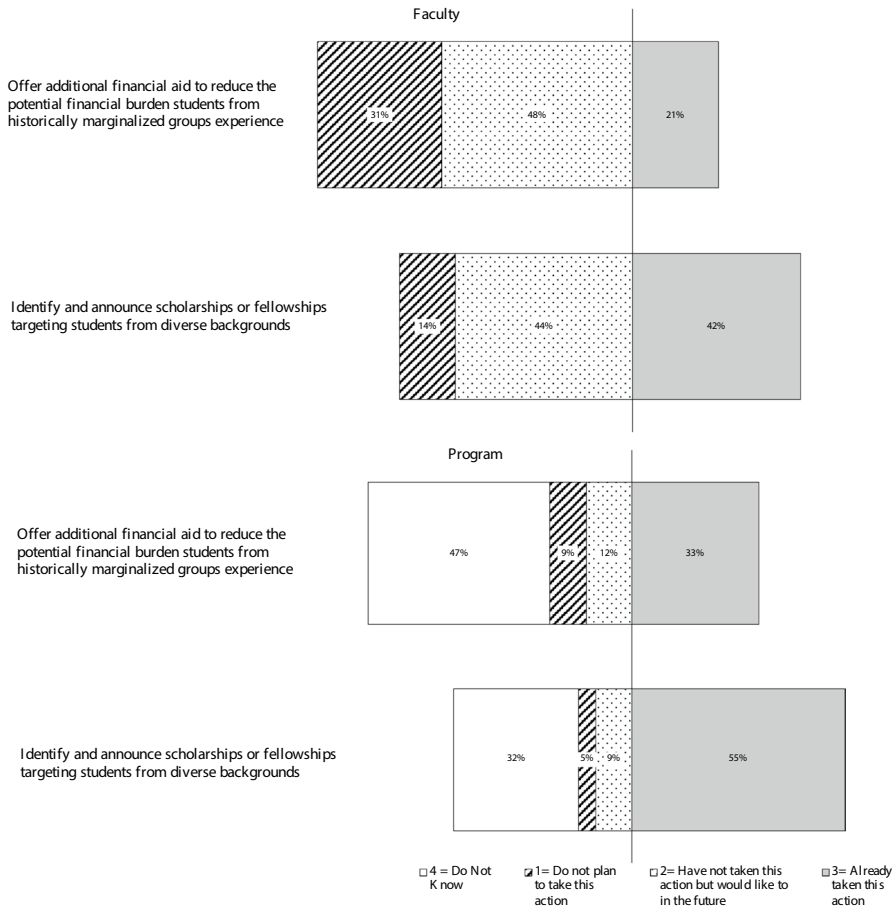
Fig. 9 Activities related to financial aid

Financial Aid

Figure 9 depicts data for activities related to financial aid. There were only two activities listed for this category in the survey. These activities were identifying and announcing scholarships or fellowships targeting students from diverse backgrounds and offering additional financial aid to reduce the potential financial burden students from HMGs often experience. For the first activity of identifying and announcing scholarships, 42% of faculty reported having already taken this action and 44% reported wanting to take the action. In contrast, faculty reported that 55% of their programs have already taken this action. For the second activity of offering additional financial aid to students from HMGs, many faculty (48%) reported personally wanting to take this action in the future. For this activity, 33% of faculty reported that their programs had already taken this action, 12% reported that their programs had not yet taken this action but would like to, 9%

reported that their programs do not plan to take this action, and 47% reported not knowing.

Measurement

Figure 10 depicts data for activities related to measurement for both faculty and programs. Overall, the majority of faculty reported that they personally (74%) and their programs (80%) document retention rates as a measurement activity. Other activities that faculty commonly selected as "already taken" on behalf of themselves and their programs included conducting performance measures (73% and 70%, respectively), documenting drop-out percentages (62% and 77%, respectively), and documenting the awards and recognitions received by students from HMGs (65%, 66%, respectively).

Activities that were reported as "not taken but would like to in the future" by faculty included conducting focus groups (63%), distributing student surveys to report on equity and inclusion (64%), calculating achievement gaps in courses (63%), tracking the post-graduation success of students from HMGs (58%), and considering individual context for each student when evaluating post-graduation success (56%). Similarly, several faculty reported that their programs would like to consider conducting focus groups (30%) and calculating achievement gaps (27%). Finally, the majority of faculty reported that they "do not know" whether
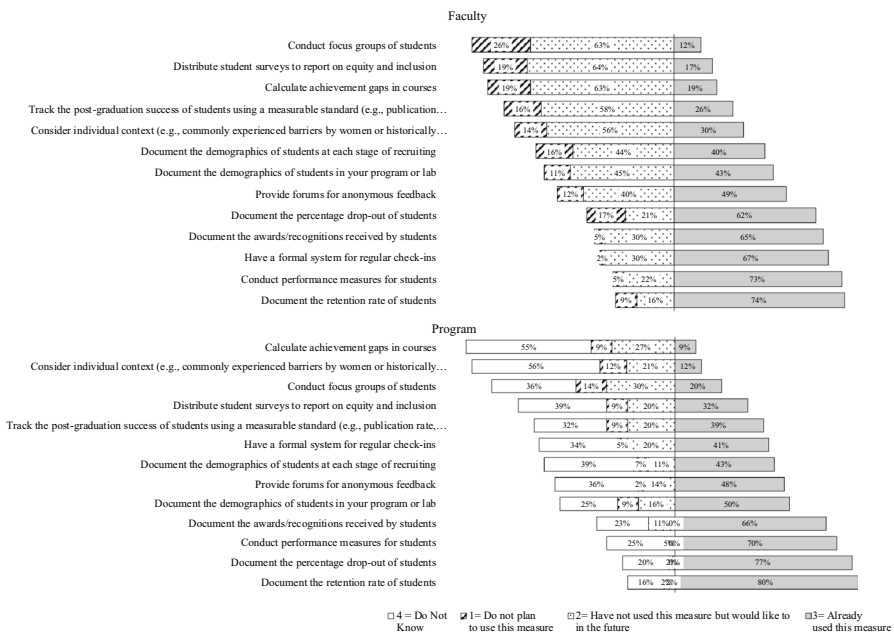
Fig. 10 Activities related to measurement

their programs calculate achievement gaps (55%) and consider individual context of each student when evaluating post-graduation success (56%).

Perceived Barriers to Culturally Responsive Mentorship

After asking about activities related to culturally responsive mentorship, we then asked respondents about perceived barriers to the activities (Fig. 11). Out of all the potential barriers listed, financial support was the most common barrier reported (14%). Knowledge and administrative support were the second and third most reported barriers (11% and 9%, respectively). Other barriers that were selected included the underrepresentation of students from HMGs in behavior analysis (9%) and experience (10%). Time was listed as another barrier and was reported as a barrier for 10.7% of faculty.

Discussion

It is undisputable that individuals from HMGs are underrepresented in the leadership of the field of behavior analysis (BACB, n.d.; Cirincione-Ulezi, 2020). Much of the success of a leader comes from the training and mentorship they receive throughout their careers, such as in their graduate training. As a result, culturally responsive mentorship could be a key factor in increasing the future number of individuals from HMGs who are in leadership positions in behavior analysis (i.e., clinical directors, faculty, board members, and presidents of large organizations). Leaders also have a huge influence on the issues and topics that are addressed by the larger scientific community. More diverse leaders who come from different marginalized communities will result in researchers and clinicians shifting their attention to larger systemic issues that affect marginalized populations, which in turn contributes to the growth of our science. The goal of the current study was to gather information about current mentorship practices in behavior analytic training programs. Overall, the results of the survey helped identify areas where faculty and training programs are seeing progress, as well as areas for improvement.
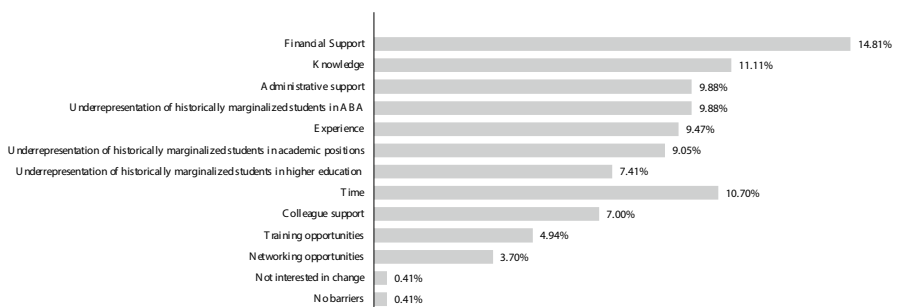
Barrier	Percentage
Financial Support	14.81%
Knowledge	11.11%
Administrative support	9.88%
Underrepresentation of historically marginalized students in ABA	9.88%
Experience	9.47%
Underrepresentation of historically marginalized students in academic positions	9.05%
Underrepresentation of historically marginalized students in higher education	7.41%
Time	10.70%
Colleague support	7.00%
Training opportunities	4.94%
Networking opportunities	3.70%
Not interested in change	0.41%
No barriers	0.41%

Fig. 11 Perceived barriers

Table 4 Coursework in culturally responsive mentorship

	No Academic Courses	Some	A Great Deal	Not Applicable
Master's Level	82%	18%	0%	
Ph.D. Level	82%	14	2%	2%

Table 5 Training and continuing education units in culturally responsive mentorship

	None At All	A Few	Many
Employer Offered Training	48%	41%	11%
Continuing Education Units	27%	50%	23%

Values and Need for Training on Culturally Responsive Mentorship

Most faculty (84%) reported that it was very or extremely important to receive training on culturally responsive mentorship. However, when asked about their skill level or confidence related to culturally responsive mentorship, most faculty (70%) reported being either moderately or slightly skilled and confident. This outcome is in contrast with the results of a survey of culturally responsive practice conducted by Beaulieu et al. (2019), which showed that practitioners generally reported high levels of confidence in their culturally responsive practices despite receiving little to no training. In reflecting on this outcome, Beaulieu and Jimenez-Gomez (2022) noted that practitioners may "not know what they don't know" (p. 346) and may be over-representing their skill level. It is encouraging to see that Beaulieu et al.'s study may have had a meaningful impact on the field, and faculty may be more accurate in their self-assessment of their skills related to cultural responsiveness.

Considering that 59% of respondents in the current study reported feeling moderately skilled and confident, it is important to acknowledge the potential sources of those reports. The majority of respondents said they had no coursework (82%; see Table 4), so that was unlikely the source of reported skills and confidence. By contrast, 48% reported having no employer-offered training and 27% reported having no continuing education training related to culturally responsive mentorship (see Table 5). Others reported experiencing non-CEU training, workshops, and other unstructured activities (e.g., listening to podcasts, conversations with colleagues, and accountability groups) in an open-ended response option. This suggests that post-degree training, both formal and informal, has been a critical source of skill-building with respect to culturally responsive mentorship. Unfortunately, only 11% and 22% reported having over 10 hours of employee training and over 5 CEUs on the topic, respectively. Collectively, these data show a clear need for more formal training on culturally responsive mentorship practices.

One reason why some faculty may feel moderately skilled and confident with culturally responsive mentorship even though they have had no coursework and minimal post-degree training hours in this area may be related to a culturally homogenous approach to mentorship. That is, effective mentorship practices suggest that a

good mentor is universal and effective across all mentees, regardless of their identity. However, this neutral approach to mentorship is problematic when a mentor and mentee are from two culturally different backgrounds, especially when the mentor is from a dominant cultural group and the mentee is from a nondominant group. A well-intentioned mentor may be unknowingly causing harm to a mentee when the mentee's cultural identity is not considered in the mentorship relationship. In this regard, we echo the sentiment by Beaulieu and Jimenez-Gomez (2022) that mentors "may not know what they don't know."

Additionally, if a mentor is used to navigating certain environments as a member of a dominant group, they may require substantial adjustment to consider the needs of their mentees from HMGs in those same environments. In that situation, the mentor may be benefiting from privileges that their mentee may not have access to because of their cultural identity. We posit that negative events that students from HMGs experience in academia often come from individuals who are well-intentioned and do not mean harm. For example, a mentor may tell their mentee that they "don't see color" to convey the message that they treat everyone equally. However, in telling the mentee that they "don't see color," the mentor is essentially erasing the mentee's identity as a marginalized individual (McCoy et al., 2015). This is problematic because the race and/or ethnicity of students from HMGs, especially Black or African American students, is very much a part of every aspect of their lives, from shopping at the grocery store to working with clients. They cannot separate themselves from that identity and, as a result, their identity (e.g., race/ethnicity) always plays a factor in their experiences. If a mentor ignores this fact, they miss opportunities to support the student when they encounter negative or discriminatory events.

Perhaps related to some of the factors mentioned above, most faculty reported that both they and their programs had moderate to little success in recruiting students from HMGs but were more successful in retaining them. One reason why retention may be more successful than recruitment is because contingencies (e.g., financial, educational) supportive of completing a program (i.e., retention) may be sufficiently powerful to mask the harm done in a program. That is, retention success does not automatically confirm the safety of a program for students from HMGs. Instead, students from HMGs may be completing a program while experiencing a large toll on their mental and physical health. In a field as small as behavior analysis, programs are likely to gain reputations based on student experiences, and a reputation of inequity is surely going to drive down interest from highly qualified students from HMGs, thus contributing to low success of recruitment. Thus, we next discuss themes that emerged across the specific activities included in the survey related to recruitment, retention, and success of students from HMGs.

Specific Activities Related to Culturally Responsive Mentorship

The recruitment activities reported by most faculty as already taken by themselves and their programs consisted of some form of public display (i.e., public statements on commitment to DEI, spotlighting accomplishments of students from HMGs,

displaying images of students from HMGs on websites, etc.). One reason faculty and programs are engaging in these public-facing activities more so than other internal activities may relate to the relatively lower effort and resources required. Other activities, such as bringing in experts outside of behavior analysis to assist in recruitment and retention related activities or providing language translations for brochures and informational materials, may require more time, effort, and resources for both faculty and programs. Additionally, engaging in the public-facing activities may result in more immediate social reinforcers or avoidance of public scrutiny, whereas engaging in more time-consuming activities may result in immediate punishers (e.g., red tape from university, lack of program commitment) and the reinforcers may be delayed (e.g., improved success of individuals from HMGs). However, as mentioned earlier, recruitment of students from HMGs should never be a standalone goal for faculty and training programs. Diversifying the student population in behavior analytic programs does not guarantee that those programs will be safe. It is unethical to recruit students from HMGs into behavior analytic programs without having a plan for retention of those students. For this reason, it is extremely important that faculty and programs focus on inner-facing activities to retain, support, and protect their students from vulnerable populations.

Creating strategic goals related to DEI was reported as already taken by the majority of faculty and programs. Additioanally, faculty reported that most of their programs have already conducted needs assessments and developed plans related to DEI. We see this as a great start toward retention and support for students from HMGs while also acknowledging that systemic and sustainable progress toward culturally responsive mentorship will require faculty and university programs to engage in activities that more directly affect students from HMGs. For example, some activities that were reportedly less prevalent included providing tuition remission for students from HMGs and providing specific funding to promote research for students from HMGs. It is unclear whether any of these activities were included in the plans that faculty often reported their programs had made, but we reiterate that each of these activities would more directly impact students than some of the actions reported as "already taken." In addition, we note only approximately one-third of faculty reported that their programs already had organizational accountability toward DEI goals. Goals and plans without organizational accountability may result in minimal actual change for students.

A positive finding from our survey was that over half of faculty reported creating safe spaces for students from HMGs. However, it is important for faculty and programs to be mindful when talking about creating safe spaces. Specifically, a "safe space" must be defined as such by the people who are being protected in that space (e.g., students from HMGs). Therefore, when trying to create safe spaces for students, it is important for faculty and programs to get input from those same students they are trying to protect. Only those students can determine whether a space is safe for them. To improve the efficiency of our survey, we did not ask faculty to disclose the evidence they used to make a ranking, so unfortunately, it is unclear whether faculty respondents who deemed their space safe were responding to personal or student opinions. However, a closer look at some of the reported measurement activities by both faculty and programs gave us some information on the potential evidence they used to deem their environments safe. That is, 67% of faculty reported

using regular check-ins with their students. We may hypothesize that only students who feel safe would regularly check in with their mentors (although some mentees may still feel unsafe and withhold info or avoid the regular check-ins for their safety). Additionally, a little under half of faculty and programs reported using anonymous feedback mechanisms for students. Finally, focus groups, another indication of a potentially safe environment, were reported as rarely used by faculty (12%) and programs (20%). Thus, we encourage faculty and programs to expand on their measurement of student safety and success by going beyond regular check-ins and offering multiple outlets (some anonymous) for student feedback.

An additional measure that was reportedly underutilized from our survey, but that may impact retention, was the calculation of achievement gaps in courses. Specifically, identifying disparities in academic performance between different groups of students allows for faculty and programs to minimize disproportionate learning between different student groups, which in turn helps increase student success. Therefore, we strongly recommend that university programs start to consider identifying achievement gaps in their courses. By doing so, programs can identify additional resources and supports for the student and faculty teaching the course to ensure that maximum student potential is reached. Some universities already have a way to calculate gaps (referred to as achievement, equity, opportunity, and performance gaps) in performance between different groups of students and may offer this information on a secure website for faculty and programs to use. We encourage faculty to find or request these resources from their university administrators.

Research shows when students from HMGs have supportive and safe mentorship from faculty, their success in a program greatly increases (e.g., Girves et al., 2005; Jeste et al., 2009; Plunkett et al., 2014). Although mentorship of students falls on individual faculty, support at the university level would help alleviate some of the burnout that faculty sometimes encounter when mentoring students. In the current survey, 63% of faculty reported that they already offer mentoring programs for students from HMGs, but that only 27% of their programs offer known mentorship programs. Encouragingly, faculty reported that 32% of their programs do not yet offer mentorship programs but would like to in the future. We encourage this additional growth of mentorship programs at the university level. Individual faculty in applied behavior analytic programs have substantial contract obligations (typically, a combination of teaching, research, service, clinical duties, and supervision), and mentorship of students can (and should) take considerable time and effort beyond that. Thus, in addition to providing more training to faculty on culturally responsive mentorship, we encourage universities and programs to consider adopting formal mentorship programs that supplement that provided by individual faculty.

It is also crucial to acknowledge that additional labor is experienced when the faculty mentor is themselves part of an HMG. Specifically, faculty from HMGs must exist and work in systems that are inherently built to exclude them. These faculty must navigate environments where they might experience microaggressions, feel excluded, be the only person of color, or experience blatant racism and discrimination, in addition to performing their regular job duties and mentoring students. When universities do not support and acknowledge this labor, faculty, and especially faculty from HMGs, will quickly burnout and leave. Having support from the

university for the mentorship of students from HMGs, such as collaborators to share the mentorship load, credit toward promotion and tenure, financial incentives, or a decrease in workload, can significantly decrease feelings of burnout and ultimately help support students from HMGs.

With respect to admissions, most faculty reported that they (72%) and their programs (63%) adhered to an equitable admissions process. However, the specific activities that were deemed equitable by respondents were not prompted in the survey. The fact that racial homogeneity increases as training becomes more specialized (e.g., RBT to BCBA to BCBA-D) casts doubt on reports of a completely equitable admissions process; however, we also acknowledge that these disparities relate to a number of other factors explored in this survey as well. Thus, we encourage faculty to view their admissions process along a continuum of equity and not at an endpoint. The fact that bias can enter at every step of the process is well-documented (Woo et al., 2022), and strategies to minimize it are still being debated (e.g., Gómez, 2023; Kuncel & Worrell, 2023). For example, for students pursuing behavior analytic masters or doctoral training, universities may be required to submit Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores. Because standardized tests, such as the GRE, operate in a discriminatory manner (e.g., socioeconomically, racially) against students from HMGs (Callahan et al., 2018), some programs have removed the requirement. However, many scholars have "cautioned about the futility of simply removing the GRE without other systemic changes in graduate-school admissions and beyond" (Gómez, 2023, p. 33–34).

In addition to these measures that hold inherent biases, other biases can occur during the interview process. For example, one common characteristic that committees look for during interviews is whether an applicant fits into the "culture of the organization." For example, faculty may measure or assess a student applicant on whether they are a "good fit" for the department and/or program. However, these terms (e.g., "good fit", "culture of the organization") often are based on Western, White, and patriarchal ideals and values. For example, a Latina from Los Angeles, California may have very little to relate to or talk about with other students and faculty when interviewing at a university in the Midwest that is predominantly White. As a result, when opportunities arise during the interview to be social and/or talk about other things besides the graduate program, the applicant may come off as "not being a good fit" or "not fitting in with the culture of the department" simply because they may not have much to contribute or talk about in those situations. Although not objective, these "soft" skills are incredibly important during any interview process, especially when committees must decide between two or more student applicants who are equal in terms of their qualifications.

It may not be surprising that financial support was reported as the number one barrier to adopting the culturally responsive mentorship activities included in the survey. This highlights the importance of structural and systemic support when it comes to issues related to DEI. Specifically, faculty and training programs could be incredibly dedicated to working on being culturally responsive and providing culturally responsive mentorship for their students, but without the structural support (such as financial support) from the university, these efforts will not create sustainable and lasting changes. If we want to increase the number of students and future

behavior analysts from HMGs in our field, it is imperative that behavior analytic training programs start to invest in these students and their mentors financially. Systemwide changes will never happen without structural and sustainable supports.

Limitations and Future Directions

Although our survey shed light on a wide variety of factors related to the success of students from HMGs and expanded an area of research that is understudied in behavior analysis, we close by acknowledging its limitations and important directions for future research. An inherent limitation of all survey studies is the subjective nature of the data, which would be greatly enhanced by objective measures of actual activities taking place in faculty labs and university programs. We see this survey as a launching point for future research on strategies used by faculty and programs and their impact on students from HMGs. We also acknowledge that our return rate was low (9%), and likely skewed toward individuals who are actively engaged in work related to DEI. Some evidence of this sample bias exists in our results. For example, although respondents reported that 25% of programs have decolonized their curricula, 57% of them reported having personally taken this action. Readers are cautioned to interpret the outcomes with this potential bias in mind. Notwithstanding, although these data may present a more progressive picture, we feel that our outcomes revealed several areas for improvement, even for those who are already committed to this work.

Although our survey was quite lengthy, it failed to capture many nuances that were of interest to our research team. For example, we did not ask follow up questions on specific steps taken to accomplish each of the items endorsed as "already taken," and that left some ambiguity in our interpretation of the reports. To return to our example of decolonizing the curricula, we acknowledge that decolonizing curricula that is housed in and based on colonized institutions, ideas, and values is a very difficult task. In fact, many argue that there is no such thing as decolonizing curricula in academic institutions like colleges and universities because the systems in place in those environments are based on colonial values and ideas (Andreotti et al., 2015). Truly decolonizing would mean doing a complete dismantling and restructuring of a system. Thus, in future research, it would be interesting to learn what steps have been taken to decolonize curricula by those participants who reported having done so.

An additional limitation of our survey was that we included a "do not know" option for the program activities but not the personal activities. We assumed that faculty would know what activities they were personally taking without considering that some of the activities may be unfamiliar to respondents. In the future, we recommend including a "do not know" option for both program and faculty activities. A final but important limitation is that we developed our list of activities through an unsystematic review of literature on culturally responsive mentorship. Much of the literature is still emerging, and concrete evidence of the efficacy of each of the activities is not yet available. However, as more research becomes available, we encourage behavior analysts to conduct a systematic literature

review or meta-analysis to understand the relative contributions that each of the activities included in our survey have on student outcomes. We also hope that our preliminary data will serve to motivate individuals to seek support for future adoption and evaluation of the activities included in the survey.

Our field cannot grow without representation of racially and ethnically diverse behavior analysts at the master's and doctoral level. To shift our attention to larger systemic social issues, we must increase the number of individuals from HMGs in leadership positions in our field. Achieving this goal starts with ensuring we are investing in the growth and success of students from HMGs in our training programs. While the results of the current study show a clear step in the right direction, there is still work to do to keep the momentum going. Students from HMGs continue to be harmed in academic settings. As faculty, it is our job to ensure we are protecting them. We hope this paper serves as a call for behavior analysts to adopt culturally responsive mentorship in their supervision and training of future clinicians.

Author Note We have no known conflict of interest to disclose.

Data Availability The datasets generated during and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

Declarations

Conflicts of interest On behalf of all authors, the corresponding author states that there is no conflict of interest.

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