Behavioral Observations

Why Include Them?

Provides explicit, concrete examples of different clinically relevant behaviors

Can often provide information that self-report or testing data cannot

Can collaborate or disconfirm hypotheses about a person’s difficulties

Types of Observations

Different settings
  One-on-one testing
  Interviews
  Naturalistic settings

Different methods of recording
  Objective
  Subjective
During the Assessment

Usually a highly controlled environment
Attempts to elicit maximum performance
More personal and focused

May not be representative of a person’s typical behaviors
Obtain collaborative information and compare to typical home / work / school behaviors

Critical to understanding and interpreting test performance

During the Assessment

Be very comfortable with the test, so you can focus on the person rather than the mechanics
Pay attention to comments, responses, and actions

Take notes on the record form during testing
Behaviors or quotations from the examinee can be very useful

Even those behaviors that seem initially irrelevant may be important later

During the Assessment

Behaviors alone are not informative on a report, so you should interpret those behaviors for the reader

If any contradictions occur, attempt to account for or explain them

Many different topics fit into a Beh Obs sections, but emphasis will vary depending on the case
Beh Obs Topics

Physical appearance
  Height, weight, build
  Grooming

Rapport
  Ease of establishment
  How person relates to you
  Ease of maintaining it

Beh Obs Topics

Communication
  Speed, pitch, volume, and rhythm of speech
  Ease of conversations
  Any word finding difficulties
  Quality of speech

Response to failures
  Frustration level
  Confidence level

Beh Obs Topics

Response to Feedback
  Verbal and nonverbal responses

Attention
  Vary across the evaluation
  Vary across task
  Length of sustained attention
  Amount of redirection needed
  Level of distractibility
Beh Obs Topics

Activity level
- Mannerisms and movements
- Interpreted based on developmental appropriateness
- Posture

Mood and temperament
- Affect and influences
- Easy, slow-to-warm-up, or difficult

Beh Obs Topics

Problem-solving strategies
- Approach to task completion
- Self-talk

Attitude toward self
- Facial expressions or statements
- Subtle (blushing) or non-subtle ("I should know this") behaviors and speech

Unusual mannerisms or habits

Objective Observations

Several tools are available to assist with objective observing during test situations

Many newer tests incorporate observations into the test itself

There are also separately developed systems for use with specific tests (e.g., K-WIII)
### WJ-III-COG

#### Test Session Observing Checklist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain of Comprehension Proficiency</th>
<th>Self-confidence</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Very shallow</td>
<td>- Poorly oriented and self-assessed</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Advanced</td>
<td>- Appearance of purpose and control appropriate for age level</td>
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<td>- Typical for age group</td>
<td>- Appearance appropriate for age level</td>
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<td>- Limited</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain of Attention</th>
<th>Cognitive Responsiveness</th>
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<tr>
<td>- Exceptionally cooperative throughout the examination</td>
<td>- Motivation</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Cooperative for age group</td>
<td>- Interest</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Motivated from the outset of the examination</td>
<td>- Initiative</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain of Activity</th>
<th>Behavioral and Communication</th>
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<tr>
<td>- Disorganized</td>
<td>- Personality tendency</td>
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<td>- Typical for age group</td>
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<td>- Disturbed</td>
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<td>- Oftentimes involved in more than one activity</td>
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### Behavioral Observations

#### Optimal Summary of Qualitative Indicators

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<th>Enabling Behavior</th>
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### Behavioral Observations

#### Notes:

Make a check mark in the column(s) for the group(s) of subtests on which the level of behavior were observed. Alternatively, make a check mark in the “Total or Overall” column for behaviors that characterized the test session.

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Writing Assessment Beh Obs

Determine the behaviors to describe
Describe specific behaviors and provide examples
Give interpretations of those behaviors
Support these interpretations with specific examples
Organize your thoughts logically around different types of behaviors

Writing Assessment Beh Obs

Take special note of any behaviors that may influence test data or results
Include a statement indicating if the results are reliable and valid, and state why

Let’s try some out!
Outside the Assessment
Should supplement in-session observations whenever feasible
Easier to obtain for children and adolescents, but can often be obtained for adults
Helps to verify parent, teacher, or self-reports of behavior outside testing environment

Outside the Assessment
Examiners can design an observational system to meet their own needs, or rely on premade ones
Either way, there are numerous types of ways to conduct structured observations in naturalistic environments

Operational Definitions
Before any behavior can be recorded, make sure that you have a sufficient OD of it
Usually topographical, but can also include duration or intensity of the behavior
To develop one, take descriptive data (from teachers, parents, etc.) and mold it into a specific, concrete behavior
Event Recording

Simplest recording method

Record the number of times a target behavior occurs during a set period of time

Best for behaviors with discrete starts and stops that are brief and low-frequency

Duration Recording

Provides information on how long a behavior occurs

Again, best with those behaviors that have discrete beginnings and endings

Can be easily combined with event recording to measure duration and frequency

Time Sampling

Also called interval recording or sampling, this records presence of absence of behavior within specific intervals

Three types of time sampling:
- Whole-interval records behavior that takes place during the entire time
- Partial-interval records if the behavior happens at all during an interval
- Momentary recording record the behavior if it is present at the end of the interval
Narrative Recording

Provides a running description of the person’s natural behavior

No specific time frame or coding criteria

Can include direct observations and inferences of behaviors

Narrative Recording

Daily communication logs
  Track progress or communicate with others who work with a person
  A short, general description of how someone behaved that day

A-B-C analysis
  Records descriptions of the antecedents, behaviors, and consequences

Published Systems

Most widely used are BASC and CBCL forms

Structured observational systems, but have no published norms to accompany them

Can use them as templates to build a system that is tailored to a particular client, or as-is
Peer Observation

Useful to obtain a “baseline” for normal behaviors in a situation that you can compare to a client’s behaviors

Use the same type of Beh Obs with 2-3 of the person’s peers