

# Factors impacting trainees' perceptions of diversity in training sites

*Presented by:*

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## *Who is the MDC and what is this survey?*

The VA Psychology Training Committee's Multicultural and Diversity Committee aims to help VA training programs meet their goals with respect to psychology training in diversity as well as retention and recruitment of diverse trainees.

Outline results of survey data collected from psychology trainees about factors most relevant to them as they consider potential internship and postdoc sites.

The aim of this survey was to provide programs with more information in two areas:

1. Diversity initiatives that are most (or least) impactful in terms of recruiting qualified trainees
2. Factors outside of the training programs that take precedence as trainees make decisions about which programs will best fit their training goals and needs.

*VAPTC MDC  
Membership  
2019-2020*

- Angelic Chaison, Ph.D. - Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center (Co-Chair)
- Jamilyah Jackson, Ph.D., ABPP - VA North Texas Health Care System (Co-Chair)
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- Jae Yeon Jeong, Ph.D. - Baltimore VA Medical Center
- Melinda Trujillo, Ph.D. - VA Portland Health Care System
- Sarah Nelson (Intern Member)- VA Portland Health Care System
- Jessica Walsh (Intern Member) – San Francisco VA Medical Center
- Stephanie Wong (Intern Member - VA Palo Alto Health Care System
- Darlene Davis, Ph.D. (Postdoc Member) - Detroit VA Medical Center
- Jessica Jackson, Ph.D. (Postdoc Member) - VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System
- Christine Rosner, Ph.D. (Postdoc Member) – Salt Lake City VA Medical Center

*Current  
Workgroup for  
the project*

- Jamilyah Jackson, Ph.D., ABPP  
VA North Texas Health Care System (Co-Chair)
- Daryl Fujii, PhD, ABPP-CN  
VA Pacific Island Health Care Services (Co-Chair, 2011-2019)
- Jeff Bates, PhD  
VA Central Office, Office of Academic Affiliations
- Jessica Chen, Ph.D.  
VA Puget Sound Health Care System
- Zhen Cheng, PhD  
VA Portland Health Care System (MDC 2017-2018)
- Darlene Davis, Ph.D. (Postdoc Member)  
Detroit VA Medical Center
- Jessica Jackson, Ph.D. (Postdoc Member)  
VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System
- Stephanie N. Wong (Intern Member)  
VA Palo Alto Health Care System

## *Definition of Diversity*

APA Guidelines of Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct SECTION 2.01b:

Psychologists should establish that an understanding of **factors associated with age, gender, gender identity, race, ethnicity, culture, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, language, or socioeconomic status** is essential for effective implementation of their services or research, psychologists have or obtain the training, experience, consultation, or supervision necessary to ensure the competence of their services, or they make appropriate referrals.



## *Method*

- Nationwide online survey conducted in September 2018
- Recruitment emails sent out to:
  - VHA Psychology Internship Directors
  - VHA Psychology Postdoctoral Training Directors
  - VHAMIN Psychology Diversity Discussions listserv
- Reminder about survey on the VAPTC National Meeting/Call
- VACO IRB approved this as a quality improvement study

## Participants (N=237)

Characteristics		N	%
Gender	Female	187	60.1
	Male	44	14.1
	Transgender/Gender nonconforming	2	0.6
	<i>Missing</i>	78	25.1
Race	African-American	12	3.9
	Asian/Pacific Islander	16	5.1
	Latinx	10	3.2
	American Indian/Alaska Native	2	0.6
	Mixed	22	7.1
	White	165	53.1
	<i>Missing</i>	81	26.0
Age	<29 years	74	23.8
	29-30 years	48	15.4
	31-33 years	47	15.1
	>33 years	43	13.8

## Participants (N=237)

Characteristics		N	%
Sexual orientation	Lesbian/gay	11	3.5
	Bisexual/other	25	8.0
	Heterosexual	194	62.4
	<i>Missing</i>	81	26.0
Self-identified disability		48	21.2
Married or partnered		161	51.8
Dependent child or adult		37	17.2
Other financial resources available outside of stipend (e.g., student loans, spouse's income)		141	45.3
Veteran		10	3.2



## *Participants (N=237)*

Characteristics		N	%
Internship year	2016	13	4.2
	2017	78	25.1
	2018	175	56.3
	2019	10	3.2
	2020	13	4.2
	Other (2003-2015, 2021)	11	3.6
Geographical restrictions	No	136	43.7
	Yes	171	55.0



*What drives the initial decision to apply?*

Participants rank ordered the following factors as relevant to their decisions to **APPLY** to an internship or postdoctoral program:

Site related: perceived work load, diversity of training opportunities, perceived strength of program or training

Future work related: Ease of licensure, obtaining a first job, transitioning to postdoc

Geographical restriction / proximity to family

Diversity related factors: diversity of patient population, faculty, and trainees; culture of inclusivity; diversity of local culture; opportunities to engage with issues of diversity in various areas (e.g., psychotherapy, assessment, etc)

Quality of life: extracurricular activities available; convenience of daily living (e.g., ease of transportation)

Financial: stipend, cost of living, cost to move

Research: research mentors or fit; Protected time to work on dissertation/research

Location: weather/climate; physical beauty

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

*For a subset of respondents, "future work related" became more important at this stage.*

*Similar factors drive their desire to train at that site (ranking/selecting)*

Participants rank ordered the following factors as relevant to their decisions to **RANK/SELECT** an internship or postdoctoral program:

Site related: perceived work load, diversity of training opportunities, perceived strength of program or training

Future work related: Ease of licensure, obtaining a first job, transitioning to postdoc

Geographical restriction / proximity to family

Diversity related factors: diversity of patient population, faculty, and trainees; culture of inclusivity; diversity of local culture; opportunities to engage with issues of diversity in various areas (e.g., psychotherapy, assessment, etc)

Quality of life: extracurricular activities available; convenience of daily living (e.g., ease of transportation)

Financial: stipend, cost of living, cost to move

Research: research mentors or fit; Protected time to work on dissertation/research

Location: weather/climate; physical beauty

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

*Minority (non-White) ranked diversity factors higher*

Participants rank ordered the following factors as relevant to their decisions to **RANK/SELECT** an internship or postdoctoral program:

Site related: perceived work load, diversity of training opportunities, perceived strength of program or training

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## *VA vs. non-VA*

- Trainees perceive VA to be different in terms of:
  - Diversity of patients (44% said yes)
  - Diversity training (39%)
  - Diversity climate (30%)
  - Diverse staff (30 %)
- Whether VA was more or less diverse was highly dependent on individual training needs and rural versus urban areas.
  - Urban perceived as more diverse in terms of faculty and patient makeup and perceived as offering stronger diversity training.
- Notable perceived differences about VA versus non-VA sites:
  - Fewer female patients
  - Veteran identity
  - Limited opportunities to work with children
  - Interview experience at VA more “welcoming”
- Recruitment may need counter stereotypes or assumptions made about VA patient population.
  - Women are the fastest growing group of veterans.
  - Racial/ethnic minorities are expected to make up a larger percentage of the Veteran population over time.



*Which diversity variables matter to trainees?*

Participants were asked to rate the importance of the following **diversity variables** when selecting, ranking or choosing between internship/postdoc sites

Culture of inclusivity
Opportunities to engage with issues of diversity in Professional Development
Opportunities to engage with issues of diversity in Psychotherapy
Opportunities to engage with issues of diversity in Didactics
Opportunities to engage with issues of diversity in Clinical Assessment
Diversity of the patient population
Diversity of local culture
Opportunities to engage with issues of diversity in Research/Program Evaluation
Diversity of the faculty
Diversity of trainees



*Which program efforts make an impact?*

Participants were asked to rank recruitment efforts or program factors that made a difference when ranking or choosing between sites

Professional diversity development

Presence of a diversity committee

Diversity statement in the brochure

Diversity journal club or seminar series

Universal Psychology Postdoctoral Directory (UPPD)

Diversity mentorship program

Advertisements on message boards of minority focused organizations

Receiving correspondence via APA Minority Fellowship program

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

*Any  
Comments?*

*Yes, lots of  
comments*

**“What might persuade you to rank/select a site?” = 191 respondents:**

*517 comments for this question*

*(respondents could write up to 6 responses)*

**“What dissuaded you from ranking/selecting a site? ” = 167 respondents:**

*427 comments for this question*



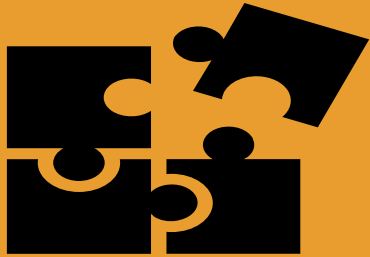
*If a site lacked diversity in staffing or patient population, what might persuade you?*

- Quality of life (e.g., “good pay”, “good location”)
- Quality of clinical/research training (e.g., “specialized training opportunities”, “clinical training excellence”)
- Quality of diversity training opportunities
  - “Recognition by the site of [diversity training] limitations and a plan to address these limitations”
- Supportive training environment (e.g., “feeling as if my voice would be heard despite lack of diverse faculty”)
- Job/employment opportunities (e.g., “will prepare me well for future jobs”)
- Diversity representation (amongst interns, faculty, and patients)
  - “Clear outreach efforts to recruit and retain diverse staff, trainees, and clients”



*What dissuaded you from certain sites?*

- Interview Experience (e.g., microaggressions, disorganization)
  - “Site director made an insensitive comment regarding someone's ethnic background.”
  - “Interviewers were rigid and distant in their interactions with me and with each other.”
- Staff
  - “Poor staff cohesion”
  - “Staff appeared stressed and overworked”
- Training Program
  - “Perceived unhappiness from current interns”
- Quality of Life (e.g., “poor work-life balance”, “did not like geographical area”)



## *Take-homes!*

1. Perceived programmatic efforts make a difference (diversity committee, diversity statement in brochure, culture of inclusion)
2. Opportunities to engage with issues of diversity in professional development, psychotherapy, didactics, and clinical assessment should be highlighted in program brochures.
3. VA trainees perceive VA as different than other sites in terms of diversity training
4. It may be useful to play up opportunities to work with women at VA as well the vast diversity of the veteran population
5. Microaggressions on interview day can make strong and lasting impressions