# What Matters to Psychology Trainees When Making Decisions About Internship and Postdoctoral Training Sites: Differences Between Racial/Ethnic Minority and White VA Trainees

Zhen Hadassah Cheng, Daryl Fujii, Stephanie N. Wong, Darlene M. Davis, Christine M. Rosner, Jessica A. Chen, Jeffrey Bates, and Jamylah Jackson

## INTRO

- The demographic landscape of the United States is undergoing a significant shift, with projections indicating that people of color will surpass Whites by 2045 (Frey, 2018). This demographic trend extends to the Veteran population, where the percentage of Veterans from racial/ethnic minority groups is expected to rise from 23.2% to 32.8% by 2037 (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2016). Recognizing the importance of cultural sensitivity in clinical services, the American Psychological Association (APA) has been actively promoting multicultural training and fostering a diverse psychology workforce.

## METHODS

- The researchers collected demographic and professional information from 237 VA psychology trainees, including details on age, gender, racial and ethnic background, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, marital status, and career goals. Additionally, the study explored factors influencing trainees' selection of training sites, such as diversity-related variables, recruitment efforts, and perceived differences in diversity training between VA and non-VA settings, using an online, anonymous survey approved as a quality improvement project exempt from IRB approval.

OHSU

Overall, site related and future work related were the two most highly ranked factors influencing trainees' decision to apply to or select a training site. The site related factor was ranked significantly higher than the future work related factor,$Z=-7.79, p<.001, r=.39$. The future work related factor was also ranked higher than geographical restriction,$Z=-3.44, p<.001, r=.17$. There were no significant differences between geographical restriction and diversity, between diversity and quality of life factor, and quality of life and financial factor. The financial factor was ranked higher than research, $Z=-4.53, p<.001, r=.23$. There were no significant differences between research and location.

Take a picture to download the full paper

## RESULTS

*Comparing Racial/Ethnic Minority and White Psychology Trainees' Factor Rankings*

| Factors | Ethnic minority *M* (*SD*) | White *M* (*SD*) | W-statistics |
|---|---|---|---|
| Site related | 1.96 (1.19) | 1.72 (1.10) | 13008.00 |
| Future work related | 3.33 (1.81) | 3.17 (1.62) | 13273.5 |
| Diversity related | 3.71 (1.92) | 4.91 (1.96) | 3976.00*** |
| Geographical restriction | 4.00 (2.20) | 4.20 (2.63) | 5247.00 |
| Financial | 5.00 (2.09) | 5.12 (1.83) | 5016.50 |
| Quality of life | 5.17 (1.66) | 4.63 (1.67) | 12758.00* |
| Research | 6.08 (2.15) | 6.08 (1.93) | 13122.00 |
| Location | 6.62 (1.42) | 6.10 (1.65) | 12585.00* |

*Note.* Mean and standard deviation of the two samples' ratings are presented above. Lower number indicates higher ranking. Asterisks indicate significance levels for Mann–Whitney/Wilcoxon rank-sum tests.
$^{*}p < .05$. $^{***}p < .001$; two-tailed.

## DISCUSSION

- The study investigated factors influencing VA psychology trainees' selection of training sites, emphasizing both universal and within-group perspectives. Findings revealed that trainees prioritize perceptions of specific sites, focusing on workload, training opportunities, program strength, and future employability. Common preferences included a rich work environment, staff cohesiveness, and partner considerations. Racial/ethnic minority trainees emphasized diversity-related factors, seeking varied training experiences and assessing a site's commitment to diversity. Recommendations for VA training programs include highlighting strengths, addressing location inquiries, and promoting diversity training. The study sheds light on racial/ethnic minority trainees' unique considerations, urging a more inclusive approach in psychology training.