VA Puget Sound-Seattle Psychology Training Program
Diversity Committee

Open Plenary Session
VA Psychology Leadership Conference
May 2021

Presenters:      Kelly Allred, PhD      Yoanna McDowell, PhD      Nicole Torrence, PhD
Why are Diversity and Inclusion Important?

- Greater diversity in the workplace is associated with
  - Greater productivity
  - Greater creativity and innovation
  - Improved decision-making
  - Greater employee engagement and satisfaction

- Cultural competence - the ability to understand, appreciate, and interact effectively with people from cultures or belief systems different from one’s own
  - Associated with improved patient outcomes and reduction in health care disparities for underrepresented groups

Hunt, Layton, & Prince, 2015; Whaley & Davis, 2007
Development of our Diversity Committee

- Fall 2017
  - VA Puget Sound psychology staff and trainees volunteered to create committee
  - Met monthly to develop mission statement, goals, and organizational structure
- Diversity Committee structure
  - Co-chairs (staff member and postdoctoral fellow)
  - Subcommittee leaders (typically staff)
  - Secretary that creates and distributes minutes (typically a trainee)
- Monthly meetings
  - Open to entire psychology service line
The mission of the Diversity Committee is to serve in an **advisory role to the psychology training program** at the **VA Puget Sound - Seattle** and aid in the following accreditation requirements and goals:

- Recruitment and retention of trainees and staff with diverse identities
- Diversity education, namely promoting knowledge of diversity issues and multicultural competence among trainees and supervisors/staff
- Periodic assessment of diversity climate to ensure that the Seattle VA is a positive, inclusive, and supportive environment for trainees with diverse identities
Our Definition of Diversity

- Consistent with APA standards, the Diversity Committee defines diversity and cultural and individual differences as including, but not limited to:

  - Race
  - Ethnicity
  - Age
  - Gender
  - Gender Identity
  - Sexual Orientation
  - Language
  - National Origin
  - Educational Status
  - Religion
  - Culture
  - Socioeconomic Status
Current Projects

Least Resource Intensive
- Intern Diversity Book Club
- Diversity Resources

Most Resource Intensive
- Advertising and Recruitment
- Diversity Cafe
- Diversity Mentorship Program
- Diversity Consultation Service
- Diversity Cafe
Overt vs. Covert Curriculum

- The Diversity Committee aims to infuse diversity into the overt and covert trainee curriculum
  - Overt (Explicit) Curriculum - The explicit, intended lessons in an educational program
  - Covert (Hidden) Curriculum - The unwritten lessons, values, and perspectives learned in an educational program
    - Examples
      - A standing committee makes a statement to staff and trainees about the centrality of diversity (in concert with science and ethics)
      - Diversity Committee provides multiple experiences in learning leadership and administrative competencies, especially for trainees with diverse identities
Intern Diversity Book Club

- Goal: To provide a forum for building multicultural awareness and introspection
- Target audience: VA Puget Sound psychology interns
  - Staff and postdoctoral trainees also encouraged to read the book club selections
- Book club selection examples
  - Past training years
    - *The Center Cannot Hold* by Elyn Saks
    - *Evicted* by Matthew Desmond
    - *Dreamland: The True Tale of America’s Opiate Epidemic* by Sam Quinones
  - 2020-2021 training year - Focus on racial diversity
    - *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents* by Isabel Wilkerson
    - *The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together* by Heather McGhee
Diversity Resources

- Goal: To provide accessible and centralized diversity resources and information for the VA Puget Sound community
- Target audience: VA Puget Sound psychology trainees and staff
- Resources for domains correspond to the ADDRESSING model
- Monthly emails sent about VA and community-based events/didactics on diversity-related topics, which include:
  - Didactics
  - Empirical and theoretical articles
  - Presentations
  - Community events
Advertising and Recruitment Efforts

- **Goal:** To recruit trainees (and staff) with diverse identities
- **Target audience:** Broader psychology community
- **Activities include:**
  - Amending our informational brochures to highlight diversity-related opportunities on each clinical rotation and to describe the role of the Diversity Committee in the training program
  - Recruitment at conferences (e.g., ABCT Conference Internship Fair)
  - Having representatives from the Diversity Committee speak at our internship Open House about diversity-related projects and the culture of DEI at the Seattle VA
Diversity Cafe

- **Goal:** To provide a forum for the development of practical skills to increase multicultural competence and awareness
- **Target audience:** VA Puget Sound trainees and staff
  - Interprofessional: Psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, and physicians are invited to attend
- **Monthly presentations**
  - Presenters recruited from within the VA and other institutions
  - Small breakout groups to foster discussion and self-reflection are encouraged
- **Previous presentation topics include:**
  - Working with patients who are gender diverse
  - Addressing racism in psychotherapy
  - Disability cultural competence in healthcare settings
  - Ethical issues in addressing workplace harassment
Diversity Mentorship Program

- Goal: To provide a supportive, non-judgmental forum for current trainees to discuss diversity-related issues that are private with trusted health care professionals
- Target audience: VA Puget Sound psychology trainees
- Discussion topics can include, but are not limited to:
  - Managing/responding to microaggressions
  - Aspects of identity and intersectionality
  - Professional development related to diversity concerns (e.g., navigating working in VA and with Veterans as a trainee with diverse identities)
Diversity Mentorship Program (cont.)

- **How does the program work?**
  - Trainees can pick an informal mentor from a list of mentors
  - Mentors can be picked based on diversity characteristics
  - Trainees can have as many mentors as they want and meet with mentors on an as-needed basis

- **Who are the mentors?**
  - Seattle VA Staff Psychologists
  - Seattle VA Postdoctoral Fellows
  - Due to dual relationship complexities, fellows are not to mentor other fellows

- **Who are the mentees?**
  - VA Puget Sound - Seattle Division interns and postdocs
Diversity Consultation Service

- Goal: To offer brief consultation for clinical challenges related to diversity characteristics
- Target audience: VA Puget Sound psychology staff
- Collaborated with the psychology service to identify local staff with experience in different areas of diversity
- Compiled a list of those willing to provide ad hoc consultation that is housed on the psychology service server
- When to use?
  - When having a clinical challenge related to a diversity characteristic and consultation would be helpful
- How to use?
  - Open the Consultation Service document
  - Find the diversity area for which you are seeking consultation
  - Email a staff member with expertise in that area
Consultation Service (cont.)

**RELIGION**

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**RURAL / URBAN**

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**SEXUAL ORIENTATION**

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**SOCIOECONOMIC**

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Organized by topic & listed alphabetically

List of individuals available to consult with. Just click their email!

When available, link will be provided to corresponding resource folder
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*Year the Diversity Committee was developed*
Thank You!

- Questions/Comments?
- For more information about our Diversity Committee, please email:
  - Kelly Allred, PhD at kelly.allred@va.gov
  - Yoanna McDowell, PhD at yoanna.mcdowell@va.gov
- Thank you to the Psychology Training Program Diversity Committee at the Seattle VA and the following people who contributed to this presentation:
  - Steve McCutcheon, PhD
  - Michelle Borowitz, PhD
  - Matt Enkema, PhD
  - Julia Bravin, MS