

EVALUATING TARGETED HSP GRADUATE PROGRAM VISIT DAYS

EVALUATING TARGETED HSP GRADUATE PROGRAM VISIT DAYS

Evaluating the “Visit Day” Tool for Supporting Underrepresented and/or Marginalized Students in Applying to Doctoral Programs

Stevie N. Grassetti

West Chester University of Pennsylvania¹

Zachary M. Meehan

University of Delaware²

Ryan M. Beveridge²

Bethany A. Teachman

University of Virginia³

Alexis G. Stanton³

Phoenix Jazmine Cooper¹

*Katharine E. Daniel³

EVALUATING HSP GRADUATE PROGRAM VISIT DAYS

*(CCTC 2020 Participant and member of the Moving Toward Socially Responsive HSP
Research Training small group)

STEVIE N. GRASSETTI, PH.D. is a licensed clinical psychologist and Assistant Professor at West Chester University of Pennsylvania. She is also affiliated with the University of Delaware's Center for Training, Evaluation, and Community Collaboration, where she completed a Postdoctoral fellowship. She earned a PhD in the APA and PCSAS accredited clinical science program at the University of Delaware. She is invested in optimizing evidence-based mental health care to serve the needs of marginalized populations and advancing diversity and inclusion in the field. She studies psychological programs implemented in community settings and teaching, mentorship, training, and supervision in health service psychology.

ZACHARY M. MEEHAN is a graduate student in the APA and PCSAS accredited clinical science program at the University of Delaware. background is primarily with children and adolescents, particularly with those who exhibit significant problem behaviors (e.g., drug use, aggressiveness) and psychopathology (e.g., major depressive disorder, conduct disorder). These clinical experiences have influenced his research interests, which are primarily clustered in understanding factors which influence aggressive and violent behaviors among youth (e.g., physiological, psychosocial) and the implementation and evaluation of preventative interventions for said populations.

RYAN BEVERIDGE, PH.D. is a licensed clinical psychologist and Associate Professor at the University of Delaware. He has served as the Director of Clinical Training of the Clinical Science Ph.D. Program, and currently is the Director of the Center for Training, Evaluation, and Community Collaboration. He earned his PhD in the clinical science program at the University of Utah. He is primarily interested in advancing community-academic partnerships that train undergraduate, graduate, and post-doctoral scholars in collaborating with diverse community partners to increase the impact of clinical psychological science on communities.

BETHANY A. TEACHMAN, PH.D., is a Professor and the Director of Clinical Training at University of Virginia in the Department of Psychology, and she is a licensed clinical psychologist. She received her doctorate from Yale University and completed a clinical internship at Massachusetts General Hospital. Her lab investigates biased thinking that contributes to the development and maintenance of anxiety disorders and other forms of emotion dysregulation, and she uses digital mental health assessments and interventions to increase access to care.

ALEXIS G. STANTON, M.P.H., is a doctoral candidate in the Community area in the Department of Psychology at the University of Virginia. She earned her MPH in Health Behavior and Health Education from the University of Michigan. Her research examines how Black women's engagement with the media influences their identity development, psychological well-being, and mental health-seeking behaviors. In addition to her research, she is passionate about promoting institutional equity. She has served as the Graduate Student Director of

EVALUATING HSP GRADUATE PROGRAM VISIT DAYS

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) for the University of Virginia Psychology Department, where she collaborated with faculty to spearhead DEI initiatives and to amplify departmental diversity recruitment and retention efforts.

PHOENIX JAZMINE COOPER, PSY.D., M.S. (she/they) is a postdoctoral fellow and clinical instructor at Montefiore Medical Center and Albert Einstein College of Medicine. She received her doctorate from West Chester University and completed a clinical internship at New York University. Her dissertation research assessed cortisol as a biomarker for toxic stress in historically underrepresented populations. They will continue this research during their postdoctoral fellowship in collaboration with Harvard University's Center for the Developing Child. Her specific interests are Depth Psychology, behavioral health biomarker research, pediatric psychology, trauma-informed healthcare, and holistic health.

Katharine E. Daniel, M.A., is a clinical psychology graduate student at the University of Virginia. Her research uses mobile phone technology and time series methods to investigate the real-world effects of anxiety and emotion dysregulation. She is also interested in mentorship, supervision, and training in health service psychology.

EVALUATING HSP GRADUATE PROGRAM VISIT DAYS

Abstract

The Council of Chairs of Training Councils' (CCTC) 2020 Social Responsiveness in HSP Education and Training Toolkit recommends that training programs host “open houses and information sessions” to recruit a more diverse group of trainees. Aligning with this recommendation, doctoral training programs across the country have been hosting program “visit days” that facilitate opportunities for underrepresented prospective students and HSP doctoral programs to connect. There are no published empirical studies to inform whether such visit days are associated with expected benefits for prospective and current students. Published studies could aid HSP training programs in considering this tool. The current study presents data from three surveys that evaluated visit days held across four clinical psychology doctoral training programs. Participants included two groups—38 underrepresented prospective students who had attended a visit day and 35 current graduate students who assisted with hosting a visit day at one of four clinical psychology doctoral training programs. Prospective students reported that visiting was a positive experience and identified talking with graduate students and faculty members as the most satisfying aspect of visit day. A 1 year follow up survey suggested that 78% of the visitors who applied to graduate school received an offer of admission. Current graduate students also reported benefits of participating in visit day that included enhanced knowledge of both the challenges experienced by and supports available for students from marginalized groups. We conclude by discussing study limitations, identifying visit day implementation challenges, and offering advice to HSP training programs that are considering implementing visit days.

Keywords: doctoral program, inclusion, recruitment, representation, training

Public Significance Statement: This paper presents evaluation data from four doctoral programs that hosted program “visit days” to connect with underrepresented prospective trainees. Data suggest that prospective and current students view involvement in visit days as positive and beneficial.

Keywords: doctoral program, inclusion, recruitment, representation, training

EVALUATING HSP GRADUATE PROGRAM VISIT DAYS

Evaluating the “Visit Day” Tool for Supporting Underrepresented and/or Marginalized Students in Applying to Doctoral Programs

Trainees in Health Service Psychology (HSP) graduate programs are more demographically diverse than ever before, but some groups are still marginalized within HSP contexts and/or underrepresented in HSP when compared to the United States population (US Census Bureau, 2020). To optimize HSP research, clinical work, and training, it is important to continue to diversify the training contexts that lead to a career in HSP. The Council of Chairs of Training Councils’ (CCTC) 2020 Social Responsiveness in HSP Education and Training Toolkit recommends the use of “open houses and information sessions” as a strategy for recruiting a more diverse group of trainees, including those from marginalized backgrounds. Several doctoral training programs across the country have been hosting similar initiatives through program “visit days” that intend to facilitate an opportunity for underrepresented prospective students to learn more about doctoral programs, make connections with faculty and current students in those programs, and gain valuable information about how to prepare a successful doctoral program applications. No published empirical evaluations elucidate which aspects of visit days trainees value most or whether current graduate students find these experience to be beneficial. Accordingly, this study aims to further refine the CCTC “open houses and information sessions” tool by presenting data from three surveys that evaluated visit days held across four doctoral HSP training programs.

Underrepresentation and Marginalization in HSP

America is becoming increasingly more diverse. For example, 5.6% of adults in the United States identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and/or Transgender (LGBT), which is an increase from 4.5% who identified as LGBT in 2017 (Jones, 2021). Similarly, recent estimates

EVALUATING HSP GRADUATE PROGRAM VISIT DAYS

suggest that nearly 40% of Americans identify as one of the following races or ethnicities: Black or African American (13.4%), Asian (5.9%), two or more races (2.8%), American Indian and Alaska Native (1.3%), Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander (.2%), and/or Hispanic or Latino(a) (18.5%) (US Census Bureau, 2020). Collectively, these groups comprise “People of the Global Majority” (PGM; Campbell-Stephens, 2021). PGM comprise a larger proportion of the United States population than ever before; in 1980, 1990, and 2000 PGM accounted for only 20%, 25%, and 31% of the population, respectively (US Census Bureau, 2000). In fact, America is projected to become “minority White” (Non-Hispanic) by 2045 (Frey, 2020). To serve the interests of the population at large, attention to and appreciation for diversity must be infused throughout all aspects of HSP research, applied work, and training.

Despite a diversifying population, HSP training programs have not kept pace. For example, although representation of nearly all racial and ethnic minority groups has increased in HSP training programs over the last decade (APA, 2016), 84% of psychologists in the American workforce identify as White, Non-Hispanic (APA, 2018) (compared to just over 60% of the US population who identify as White, Non-Hispanic (US Census Bureau, 2020). In addition, people who do not identify as women remain underrepresented in some parts of the HSP workforce and in HSP training programs (Callahan et al., 2018). Further, the percentage of HSP trainees who have a disability has *decreased* over recent years (Andrews & Lund, 2015).

Poor representation likely contributes to a myriad of problems. Diversity has frequently been overlooked in HSP research (Rosmarin, 2016) and individuals from underrepresented groups have been understudied, misrepresented, and mistreated in clinical trials (Mendoza et al., 2012; Miranda et al., 2005). In applied settings, poor representation may contribute to reluctance around help seeking. For example, Taylor and Kuo (2019) name cultural mistrust as a factor that

EVALUATING HSP GRADUATE PROGRAM VISIT DAYS

limits Black Americans' willingness to seek help from mental health professionals who are mostly White. Representation alone is a necessary, but insufficient endpoint for the goal of a pluralistic society. Better representation can position clinical researchers and health service providers to advance the field with a broader understanding of the needs and strengths of the full diversity of people and communities who would benefit from mental health services.

The Benefits of a Diverse and Inclusive HSP Workforce

A more diverse and inclusive HSP workforce will be better positioned to advance psychological research, optimize clinical outcomes, and improve training. Researchers' identities, experiences, and backgrounds influence their observations about the world, methods by which they test their assumptions, interpretations of data, and application of findings. A diverse team fills knowledge gaps by approaching problems creatively, confronting researcher biases, and widening the scope of research questions to better serve the public (Gibbs et al., 2019; Labib & Evans, 2021; Page, 2007; Reagans & Zuckerman, 2001; Swartz et al., 2019).

Diversity also benefits mental health services, especially in terms of being responsive to clients' preferences. A meta-analysis demonstrated clients' moderately strong preference for therapists of their own race/ethnicity (Cohen's $d = .53$; Cabral & Smith, 2011). The preference for matching is so salient that clients are willing to sacrifice treatment efficacy for the opportunity to work with a racially/ethnically matched therapist (Swift et al., 2015).

Accommodating clients' therapy preferences, in general, is associated with decreased drop out (Swift et al., 2018) and matching based on identity attributes like language, race, or ethnicity is associated with longer treatment retention for many groups (Erdur et al., 2003; Hall, 2001; Kim & Kang, 2018; Swift et al., 2018, Sue 1991; Sue 1998). Still, a meta-analysis concluded that there is almost no benefit to treatment outcomes from racial/ethnic matching (Cabral & Smith,

EVALUATING HSP GRADUATE PROGRAM VISIT DAYS

2011; Shin et al., 2005) and Zlotnick and colleagues (1998) found no association between gender matching and treatment outcome improvements. In sum, though findings are mixed on the outcome benefits of demographic matching, clients have moderately strong preferences for working with a therapist who shares aspects of their identity and a diverse, representative HSP workforce is needed to honor these preferences.

Finally, representation and inclusivity benefits HSP training programs by embodying the ethical principle of “promoting justice and providing equitable opportunities” (APA, 2017). Underrepresentation in higher education reflects systemic oppression and can contribute to problems like historically underrepresented trainees experiencing tokenism, stereotyping, and hostile training environments (Callahan et al., 2018). Greater representation among HSP trainees helps to build community and avoid common threats to trainee retention, including tokenism and feeling alone in HSP training programs (Erolin & Wieling, 2021). Finally, inclusivity provides richer training experiences for all trainees by facilitating an exchange of ideas based on diverse experiences, perceptions, and world views.

Visit Days as a Tool for Recruiting Underrepresented Students to HSP Training Programs

HSP training programs must continue to act intentionally to attract, retain, and effectively train a diverse group of HSP trainees who will become the next generation of HSP. One strategy for recruiting prospective trainees is hosting information sessions or “visit days” in which underrepresented prospective students visit graduate programs, meet with faculty and current students, and learn more about how to prepare successful applications. These visits can disseminate key institutional knowledge, especially for prospective students who do not have existing social capital (e.g., mentors, professional and personal relationship) to gain this information independently. By transparently sharing information tied to funding structures,

EVALUATING HSP GRADUATE PROGRAM VISIT DAYS

program requirements, admissions criteria, the experience of living in that area while holding various identities, and the merits and drawbacks of particular training programs relative to other common HSP training pathways, prospective students will be better informed about where to apply given their unique strengths, interests, values, and goals.

Indeed, the Council of Chairs of Training Councils (CCTC) recommended open houses as one actionable step that programs can take to diversify. In addition to naming several more obvious structural failings, CCTC highlighted that “diverse undergraduates may not consider HSP graduate programs to be a possibility or an HSP career as a viable option” (CCTC, 2020, p. 14). The subgroup argued that the enhanced information-sharing offered through open houses may help prospective applicants gain a clearer idea of what a career in HSP entails, which could increase interest in pursuing graduate training.

Prospective students are positioned to benefit from visit days because they provide an opportunity to learn more about a specific training program and its strengths and weaknesses than is possible to evaluate based solely on materials shared on websites. Prospective students have an opportunity to form connections with potential advisors/mentors and fellow graduate students. Prospective students may ask questions about the program and tour the environment to gain insight about how well the program and community align with the prospective student’s needs and values. Finally, prospective students learn helpful skills to increase the competitiveness of their applications to HSP training programs.

In addition to benefiting prospective students, HSP training programs also stand to benefit from hosting visit days. At the most basic level, hosting a visit day conveys a program’s value for diversity, equity, and inclusion. Value signaling alone is insufficient, but value signaling may increase the likelihood that talented students from underrepresented backgrounds

EVALUATING HSP GRADUATE PROGRAM VISIT DAYS

will apply to the program, considering that PGM students consider a program's commitment to diversity as an important factor in deciding whether to apply (Hsueh et al., 2021).

Further, hosting a visit day provides current students and faculty with a chance to interact with talented prospective students from underrepresented backgrounds, which can further facilitate an opportunity for current students and faculty to better appreciate the valuable contributions these prospective students could make to the program. Finally, the process of planning for a visit day provides training programs with ongoing opportunities to discuss quality improvement for the purpose of creating more inclusive training environments.

Little is known about which aspects of visit day initiatives are valued by prospective students, whether the visit days are associated with benefits for current students who help in planning them, and how visit days can be optimized. Programs conducting their own evaluations may offer useful information for those programs, but individual program evaluations may not offer information about visit days' potential impact on the field as a whole, especially when sample sizes are invariably small. To gain more information about the value of visit days and how to optimize them, it is important to shift the scope to evaluations across multiple programs that host visit days.

The BRIDGE Psychology network

The Building Roads to Inclusion and Diversity in Graduate Education (BRIDGE) Psychology Network (www.bridgepsychology.org) was developed in 2017 in response to clinical psychology doctoral training programs recognizing that their initiatives and efforts to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in their training programs were often being pursued in parallel without opportunities to "compare notes," build on each other's successes, and learn from each other's missteps. We established this network to serve as a space in which training programs

EVALUATING HSP GRADUATE PROGRAM VISIT DAYS

could learn from each other and improve initiatives that nurture inclusivity and diversity in HSP training. During this manuscript's preparation, the growing network consisted of 90 graduate HSP training programs that meet quarterly to discuss visit day and other diversity, equity, and inclusion-focused initiatives. The network collaborated to facilitate the current study.

The Current Study

The current study is a report of a program evaluation that was conducted across four program's visit days. The study had two aims. First, we aimed to inform optimization of the visit day tool through participant feedback. Second, we aimed to assess change among current graduate students who assisted with planning for and hosting the visit day.

Method

The study was approved by the University of Delaware Institutional Review Board and conducted in accordance with the approved protocol. Participants included two groups—38 prospective students who had attended a visit day for underrepresented and/or marginalized students and 35 current graduate students who assisted with planning for and hosting a program visit day for underrepresented and/or marginalized students at one of four doctoral training programs in clinical psychology. All four training programs were early joiners of the BRIDGE psychology network who assisted each other in developing and optimizing visit day. The study consisted of three electronic surveys. Prospective graduate students who visited programs completed an electronic survey to report on their experiences related to attending the visit day (survey 1); about half of those prospective students also completed a follow up survey one year later (survey 2). Current graduate students who assisted with planning for and hosting visit day completed a survey to assess the impact of the visit day on their training experiences (survey 3).

Surveys 1&2. Prospective Students' Visit Day Experiences and Follow Up

EVALUATING HSP GRADUATE PROGRAM VISIT DAYS

Four HSP doctoral training programs hosted visit days from 2018-2019 in which prospective students who self-identified as belonging to an underrepresented or marginalized group visited the program. Programs provided us with a list of visitors' email addresses. We emailed visitors with an invitation to participate in a survey regarding their experience. Thirty-eight visitors agreed to participate by completing a brief online survey about their experiences within two weeks of the visit day. Participants received an electronic gift card for completing the online survey. Participant demographics were not assessed in the initial study, but all participants were prospective students who attended a program visit day that was advertised for "underrepresented students."

All study 1 participants were invited to complete a follow up survey ("study 2") one year later and twenty participants (53% of the original sample) consented to participating in the second survey (85% female; 10% male; 5% declined to respond). In survey 2, participants self-identified as 30% Black/African American, 25% White/Caucasian, 15% Hispanic, 10%, Asian/Asian-American, 5% Multiracial, and 5% White/Native American. 10% declined to respond to the racial and ethnic identity item. On average, participants in study two were 23.88 years old ($SD = 3.64$). Participants in the study 2 subset identified with at least one group that has been historically underrepresented in Psychology graduate programs, with the most common endorsements being: 70% first generation college students (e.g., those whose parents/legal guardians did not complete a bachelor's degree), 62% people of the global majority, 14% sexual and gender minority, 14% physical disability, and 5% citing low income.

Survey 3. Current Graduate Students' Visit Day Experiences

The third survey assessed the impact of the visit day on current graduate students. Faculty representatives of the four HSP doctoral programs that hosted visit days sent open invitations to

EVALUATING HSP GRADUATE PROGRAM VISIT DAYS

graduate students in their department. Graduate students who self-identified as having had contributed to the planning and/or implementation of the BRIDGE visit day hosted by their graduate program were eligible to participate. Thirty-five graduate students (88%) completed the survey (86% female; 14% male). The average age of study 3 participants was 27 ($SD = 2.40$) and these participants identified as 50% White/Caucasian, 25% Black/African American, 11% Asian/Asian-American, 6% Hispanic, 3% Native American, 3% Southwest Asian and North African, and 3% Multiracial. Most participants (60%) self-identified with at least one minoritized group. On average, participants volunteered for approximately 6 hours either in preparing or implementing their program's visit day ($SD = 6.10$; Min = 1; Max = 25). Participants received a gift card for completing the survey.

Measures

Visitor Visit Day Satisfaction, Plans to Apply to Graduate School, Suggestions for Future Visit Days

The BRIDGE Psychology Network Visitor Experience Survey (Appendix 1) is a visit day evaluation questionnaire designed by members of the BRIDGE psychology network. The survey measures visitors' satisfaction, plans to apply to graduate school, and suggestions for future visit days. Participants used a 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 5 (*Strongly Agree*) scale to rate their agreement with 12 satisfaction items. These 12 items were summed to create a "total satisfaction" scale ($\alpha = .81$). Participants used the same 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 5 (*Strongly Agree*) scale to rate their agreement with two items that assessed their retrospective versus current plans to apply to the graduate program that they visited.

EVALUATING HSP GRADUATE PROGRAM VISIT DAYS

Participants responded to 5 open response items to provide feedback to consider for future visit days. Thematic analysis is a research method designed to identify, analyze, describe, and report common themes between participants' written or oral responses. We conducted the thematic analysis for the five open-ended questions using an established protocol consisting of six phases (Nowell et al., 2017). The six phases include: (1) becoming familiar with the data (e.g., document thoughts); (2) generate initial codes (e.g., document team meetings); (3) search for themes (e.g., diagramming), (4) review themes (e.g., allow other team members to vet themes); (5) define and name themes (e.g., team consensus); and (6) produce the report. The result includes tallies of participants who endorsed the identified themes for each item. Because the open-ended questions did not have space limits, participants often endorsed more than one theme; thus, tallies sometimes outnumber participants. Due to a large number of themes—participants identified 13 aspects, for example, that they found important when choosing to apply to a graduate school—we report the top three most often cited for each of the qualitative prompts.

Visitor Graduate Applications

On the follow up survey (survey 2), prospective students reported whether they applied to graduate school between 2017 and 2020, provided information about the number of applications they submitted, and reported the number of interviews and admission offers they received.

Current Graduate Students Experience

The current student participation survey consisted of three sections. For the first section, we adapted the Volunteers Functions Inventory (VFI; Clary et al., 1998) to assess the benefits of volunteering with people of underrepresented groups. Because the VFI inquires about

EVALUATING HSP GRADUATE PROGRAM VISIT DAYS

motivations to volunteer more generally—in all aspects of life—a panel of five individuals from different sociodemographic and educational backgrounds modified two subscales of the VFI to reflect motivations specific to volunteering for programs to support people of underrepresented groups. After several revisions, the final version used in this survey consisted of 10 items that assess whether participants perceived volunteering to benefit their knowledge, interactions, and awareness with people of underrepresented groups. Responses on this measure ranged from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly Agree*) and resulted in a total summative score with higher values denoting greater benefits. An example item includes “Volunteering enhanced my knowledge about the support for people from underrepresented groups.” Internal consistency reliability was acceptable for the modified version in this sample (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011; $\alpha = .73$). Nonetheless, we conducted an item-level analysis to provide a more specific interpretation of the benefits of volunteering.

The second section of the survey assessed participants’ involvement in conversations and celebrations with cultural groups other than their own, before and after volunteering for BRIDGE Visit Day. We used the Personal Involvement subscale of the Cultural Competence Self-Assessment Questionnaire (Mason, 1995). This subscale consists of four question pairs assessing contact with people of underrepresented groups before and after volunteering for BRIDGE Visit Day. Specifically, the items inquired of how often participants (1) interacted socially with people of underrepresented groups, (2) discussed supports and/or challenges faced by people of underrepresented groups, (3) attended school-based meetings that impact people of underrepresented groups, and (4) attended cultural or racial group holidays/functions within communities of people of underrepresented groups. Responses on this measure ranged from 1 (Not at all/Never) to 5 (Often/Daily), with higher values indicating more involvement.

EVALUATING HSP GRADUATE PROGRAM VISIT DAYS

The third section of the survey included items inquiring about their cultural knowledge and awareness. Sample items include: *White, non-Hispanic, cis-gender, heterosexual, non-immigrant/refugee people in American society carry certain advantages and Institutional barriers inhibit minorities from applying to and/or attending graduate school*. Responses on this measure ranged from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree), with higher values indicating greater knowledge/awareness.

Results

Surveys 1&2. Prospective Students' Visit Day Experiences and Follow Up

We analyzed data from surveys 1&2 to answer these questions: (1) Which parts of the visit day did visitors find most and least satisfying?; (2) Did visitors report changes in their plan to apply to the programs they visited?; (3) What did visitors most frequently recommend to improve visit day?; (4) In the year following visit day participation, how many visitors applied to HSP graduate training program?

Before testing these questions, we conducted a one-way analysis of variance to determine whether participants reported differences in overall satisfaction based on the program they visited. Visitors reported average overall satisfaction values above 4 ($M = 4.41$), with no differences between the programs, $F(3) = 1.51, p = .23$. A paired-samples t -test demonstrated that, as expected, participants retrospectively reported a difference in their plan to apply from before ($M = 3.37, SD = 1.15$) to after ($M = 4.13, SD = 1.04$) their respective program's visit day $t(37) = 4.37, p < .001$. Then, we explored mean agreement ratings on items that asked how well the general goals or specific foci of visit day programming were achieved. Total agreement with positively keyed items was high across all items (above 4 on a 1-5 scale). Prospective students

EVALUATING HSP GRADUATE PROGRAM VISIT DAYS

endorsed the highest mean level of agreement on items indicating that faculty and current students made them feel welcome (see Table 1).

To understand how to improve visit days, we conducted a thematic analysis of participants' open ended responses. Participants made 49 statements about what they found most satisfying about their visit day. Overwhelmingly, the three most often cited themes were (1) talking with graduate students personally and/or on panels ($n = 17$; 35%); (2) talking with faculty members ($n = 15$; 31%); and (3) the helpful and welcoming atmosphere ($n = 6$; 12%). Participants made a total of 38 statements about what they found least satisfying with their visit day. The three most often cited themes were (1) busy schedule ($n = 9$; 24%), (2) desiring more time for meetings ($n = 7$; 18%); and (3) desiring opportunities to explore the campus and surrounding area ($n = 4$; 11%). Participants provided a total of 36 recommendations for improving future visit days. The three most often cited themes were (1) making it a two-day event with longer sessions ($n = 10$; 28%); (2) no recommendations for improvement ($n = 5$; 14%); and (3) advanced notice of the itinerary ($n = 4$; 11%).

Finally, we turned to the follow-up survey to answer the question, "*In the year following visit day participation, how many visitors successfully applied to a HSP graduate training program?*" Of the 20 participants who completed the follow-up survey, 9 participants (45%) applied to graduate programs in 2019 following their visit day. Participants applied to an average of 5 programs (Min = 1, Max = 13) and received approximately .7 interview offers (Min = 0; Max = 3). On average, participants received approximately 2 offers for admission (Min = 0; Max = 8). The counterintuitive difference between number of interviews offers ($M = .7$) and number of admission offers ($M = 2$) is because some graduate programs make admission offers without conducting interviews. Of the 9 participants who applied, 7 participants (78%) received offers

EVALUATING HSP GRADUATE PROGRAM VISIT DAYS

for admission. The following is a breakdown of graduate programs to which the participants matriculated: Psy.D. in Clinical Psychology ($n = 1$); Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology ($n = 1$); Ph.D. in Psychology – Cognitive Science ($n = 1$); MA/MS in Applied Behavior Analysis ($n = 1$); M.Ed. in Clinical Mental Health Counseling ($n = 1$); and Masters in public health ($n = 2$).

Survey 3. Current Graduate Students' Visit Day Experiences

We explored two main research questions pertaining to current graduate students' experiences related to the visit day: (1) To what extent do graduate students report benefits of participation in their visit day? and (2) Do graduate students report that their behavior changes during the course through the process of organizing a visit day for underrepresented students? To answer whether graduate students reported benefits of participation, we calculated the frequency that participants somewhat agreed, agreed, or strongly agreed with various benefits. Current students reported that volunteering benefited them in most of the assessed domains: an enhanced knowledge of the challenges experienced by prospective students from marginalized groups (82.4%); enhanced knowledge about the supports for prospective students from marginalized groups (75.7%); increased awareness of how research within their program considers diversity and the experience of marginalized groups (69.6%); increased awareness of how clinical work conducted by people within their program considers diversity and the experience of prospective students from marginalized groups (45.5%); increased conversations about prospective students from marginalized groups (76.5%); increased awareness of aspects of peers' multicultural identities (70.6%); increased awareness of aspects of one's own multicultural identity (58.8%); and felt proud of aspects of their multicultural identity (61.8%).

We conducted item-level analyses with paired-samples *t*-tests to assess graduate students' behavior changes. Graduate students reported significant changes in three of four question pairs.

EVALUATING HSP GRADUATE PROGRAM VISIT DAYS

First, graduate students reported increasing day-to-day social relations with people of underrepresented groups, from before ($M = 4.37$) to after ($M = 4.63$) volunteering, $t(34) = -2.17$, $p < .05$. Second, graduate students reported increasing the frequency of discussions about supports and/or challenges faced by people of underrepresented groups, comparing before ($M = 3.66$) and after ($M = 4.00$) volunteering, $t(34) = -2.97$, $p < .01$. Third, graduate students reported increasing attendance at school-based meetings that impact underrepresented groups, comparing before ($M = 2.77$) and after ($M = 3.14$) volunteering, $t(34) = -2.13$, $p < .05$. Graduate students did not report changes in their attendance to cultural or racial group holidays/functions within communities of people of underrepresented groups, comparing before ($M = 2.46$) to after ($M = 2.57$) volunteering, $t(34) = -1.44$, $p > .05$.

Discussion

The current study summarizes program evaluation data collected from prospective and current graduate students who were involved in attending, planning for, and/or implementing visit days at four HSP doctoral programs. Prospective students reported a high level of satisfaction with visit day initiatives, citing interactions with welcoming faculty and students to be the most satisfying aspects. Among visitors who completed the follow up survey, more than three quarters of those who applied to graduate school in the year following visit day gained an offer of admittance. Furthermore, current graduate students found participating in visit days to be beneficial in increasing their knowledge about the experiences of members of marginalized groups. These findings provide support for the idea that visit days are beneficial for prospective and current students. In determining the value of visit days, it is important to look beyond the simple counts of how many visitors matriculate into the specific doctoral programs that they visit. Programs should clearly define their goals for visit days and collaborate on how to measure

EVALUATING HSP GRADUATE PROGRAM VISIT DAYS

successful outcomes based on their specific objectives. If a goal of visit days is to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion *in the field*, we must work together (Borrego Jr, 2018) to test the impact of visit days and we must endeavor to understand if attending a visit day at one program may help encourage underrepresented students to prepare competitive applications to other graduate programs. Additionally, in the long-term it will be important to evaluate whether visit days may serve to build community and social support systems for participants who may stay in touch with host programs and each other after the visits. Likewise, we must not overlook the potential benefits to current students of organizing, planning for, and implementing visit days. With more opportunities to talk with peers about specific ways that systemic oppression impacts the pursuit of graduate education, trainees may gain awareness about the wide range of hardships experienced by minoritized students. Continuous opportunities for faculty-student engagement focused on how to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion, may create a context where students feel supported in proposing creative solutions that may change specific systems (e.g., specific HSP training programs) to be more inclusive. Thus, an initiative that has a focus on new student recruitment may also be an asset for current student training and promote improvements in HSP training programs.

Study findings should be considered in the context of the study's limitations. Our sample was small, we did not collect demographic data from all visitors, and more graduate programs are needed to offer information about the overall utility of visit days. The lack of a control group in the current study prevents making inferences that attending a visit day played a causal role in either prospective student matriculation *or* current student benefit. Retrospective reports like the ones gathered here (e.g., asking students to recall their past plans for applying to graduate school and past behavior before volunteering) are prone to bias (Sibthorp et al., 2007) and longitudinal

EVALUATING HSP GRADUATE PROGRAM VISIT DAYS

designs would improve our confidence in prospective and current students' reports of change. Further, we know little about how hosting visit days impacted other stakeholders like faculty members, who have considerable power within admissions. We encourage additional researchers to work together to evaluate visit days so that we may combine data to better understand how to optimize this potentially valuable tool. It will also be important to follow visitors for a longer period of time as it has become standard for aspiring clinical students to gain additional post-baccalaureate years of research and other experiences before applying to graduate school so an assessment at the one-year mark likely misses many people who will ultimately apply.

Future Implementation Directions: Challenges and Recommendations

Challenges.

Although visit days may offer benefits for prospective and current students, there are also considerable challenges to successfully implementing these visit days. We aim to highlight these challenges so that others can strategize to overcome them:

1. Planning for a visit that improves access without compromising opportunities for individual connection. One goal of visit days is to promote inclusion by pulling in students who may not otherwise have sufficient information about the program or access to resources for how to successfully apply. Another goal is to build meaningful connections between prospective students and current students and faculty members. Logistically, these goals can come into conflict. For example, smaller visiting group sizes may facilitate more meaningful opportunities to build connections with prospective students through individual or small group meetings, yet smaller groups may exclude some of the prospective students who wish to visit. Similarly, offering virtual visit days may reduce the financial and time barriers to accessing information—

EVALUATING HSP GRADUATE PROGRAM VISIT DAYS

making the visit opportunity more inclusive—yet in-person events may allow richer networking opportunities for prospective students.

2. Selecting visitors. Follow-up survey data (survey 2) from visit day attendees indicate predictably good success in reaching marginalized and/or underrepresented students, including PGM, LGBTQIA+ students, low income students, and those who are first generation college students. In considering which visitors to invite, it may be helpful to consider whether to define “underrepresented” broadly (and by students’ self-identification), as we have done here, or to design visit experiences for specific affinity groups. While underrepresented students may share some common experiences, there also may be unique challenges among subgroups of underrepresented students. For example, a student with a disability and a student who is a PGM are both underrepresented, but may have different needs as they prepare for graduate education. Lumping these and other underrepresented subgroups of people together in one visit day may omit a needed, more nuanced focus on a given individual or specific group’s needs. It is important for programs that are hosting visit days to have early, frequent, and systematic discussions about the goals of their visit days with multiple stakeholders. Agreement about goals helps ensure that visitor selection and visit design decisions align with these goals.

3. Challenges for students assisting with visit day. We have observed that many current students who volunteer to assist with visit days are often students from underrepresented groups. Although we value and appreciate this service work, we also aim to protect underrepresented students from taking on a disproportionate amount of service work that may detract from their other training opportunities. Graduate programs that are hosting visit days should ensure that volunteers are compensated and meaningfully recognized for their service (e.g., annual evaluations should include a “service” category). Further, programs should

EVALUATING HSP GRADUATE PROGRAM VISIT DAYS

explicitly mention their expectations for people in over-represented groups to contribute, noting not only that allies have a social responsibility to contribute to DEI-efforts, but also that all members of the department stand to benefit from this work.

Implications: Lessons Learned and Recommendations for Future Visit Days

Visitor feedback provided helpful information to inform future visit days and some of this feedback has already been adopted. Based on lessons learned in hosting visit days, we offer the following recommendations to HSP graduate programs that are planning to host visit days:

1. Design visit days to facilitate maximum opportunities for relationship building.

Interactions with current students and faculty were among the most valued aspects of visit days. Thus, future visit days, whether virtual or in person, should continue to prioritize opportunities for prospective students and current faculty and students to connect. This can be accomplished through a wide range of formats—visitors could be matched with faculty one-on-one or in very small groups so they can talk more directly about their interests and ask more questions than typically feels possible in large group settings. Visitors can also be invited to less formal meetings (e.g., group meals) where they can speak with current graduate students and faculty members about a wide range of topics, such as the local culture of the university and town. Of course, packing more events into the visit also has a downside: multiple visitors noted that a single day that is entirely booked with meetings leaves many prospective students feeling exhausted and unable to take in all the information or fully engage. As such, planning some breaks and/or spreading the visit across two days may be helpful. Obviously, if the program decides to spread the visit across two days, they will need to consider whether they are sufficiently resourced to support a longer visit (e.g., offering overnight accommodations for visitors).

EVALUATING HSP GRADUATE PROGRAM VISIT DAYS

2. Recruit strategically. Programs followed different recruitment strategies that were based on the budget available for supporting visitors. When programs had resources for fully funding visitors' flights and stays in hotels, they recruited from national listservs for professional organizations. When programs could not provide travel support, they focused on local recruitment by sending announcements to department chairs of nearby public universities and minority-serving universities (Historically Black Colleges and Universities). One training program strategically improved its advertising and recruitment approach by posting the event announcement on a Twitter account with relevant organizations tagged, posting directly to organizations' websites that serve underrepresented communities (e.g., sacnas.org), writing directly to department chairs with a large population of underrepresented students (44 department chairs contacted), and directly contacting student group leadership (e.g., fraternities, sororities, honors society, Psi Chi) at institutions with particularly diverse student bodies. These direct contacts with individuals in leadership positions helped to foster personal connections that facilitated a better response to the advertisement. An additional recruitment strategy was to reach out to institutions that were closer geographically to the hosting university. Data suggest that program location continues to be a salient factor for prospective trainees (Hsueh et al., 2021).

3. Widen the scope of programs to facilitate cross-area research opportunities. Some HSP training programs decided to extend the visit day to the entire department, rather than only the clinical psychology area, given many students and faculty have crosscutting research interests. Allowing students to visit laboratories and faculty outside of the clinical area was fruitful for forwarding that department's emphasis on cross-cutting research, and simultaneously engaged the whole department in efforts to enhance diversity and inclusion.

EVALUATING HSP GRADUATE PROGRAM VISIT DAYS

4. Consider virtual formats to extend the reach of visit day. In addition to considering how to optimize visit days to emphasize the most valued parts of programming, considering how to extend the reach and impact of visit days is key. Virtual programming that allows more students to attend at a low cost to the program is one potential solution.

In summary, the CCTC2020 tool kit provides HSP training programs with an array of options for promoting social responsiveness. To our knowledge, the current study is the first published empirical evaluation of visit days. Data suggest that visit days offer a valuable opportunity for prospective and current graduate students. Of course, one study alone precludes reaching a conclusion about the potential benefits of visit day and, so, we encourage future research to build upon this study by continuing to assess the impact of visit days on prospective students, current students, faculty members, and the HSP field as a whole. Further, visit days are only one tool in the CCTC toolkit and should not be considered a standalone strategy for promoting social responsiveness in HSP education. Programs hosting visit days should also continue to evaluate, critique, and possibly change their admission criteria and processes to ensure that visit days are not performative. To advance social responsiveness in the training contexts, workplaces, and larger society in which health service psychologists are embedded, we must take on the challenge collectively by sharing program evaluation information that will help us to continue to optimize our approaches.

EVALUATING HSP GRADUATE PROGRAM VISIT DAYS

References

- American Psychological Association. (2016, December 1). *Summary Report, Graduate Study in Psychology 2017: Student Demographics*. <http://www.apa.org/education-career/grad/survey-data/2017-student-demographics>
- American Psychological Association. (2019). Demographics of the U.S. Psychology Workforce. <https://www.apa.org/workforce/data-tools/demographics>.
- Andrews, E.E. & Lund, E.M. (2015). Disability in psychology training: Where are we? *Training and Education in Professional Psychology*, 9, 210-216.
- Borrego Jr, J. (2018). It takes a village for meaningful and sustainable change in diversifying psychology. (2018). *Training and Education in Professional Psychology*, 12, 297-300.
- Cabral, R. R., & Smith, T. B. (2011). Racial/ethnic matching of clients and therapists in mental health services: a meta-analytic review of preferences, perceptions, and outcomes. *Journal of counseling psychology*, 58, 537.
- Callahan, J. L., Smotherman, J. M., Dziurzynski, K. E., Love, P. K., Kilmer, E. D., Niemann, Y. F., & Ruggero, C. J. (2018). Diversity in the professional psychology training-to-workforce pipeline: Results from doctoral psychology student population data. *Training and Education in Professional Psychology*, 12, 273–285. <https://doi.org/10.1037/tep0000203>
- Clary, E. G., Snyder, M., Ridge, R. D., Copeland, J., Stukas, A. A., Haugen, J., & Meine, P. (1998). Understanding and assessing the motivations of volunteers: A functional approach. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 74, 1516-1530.
- Erdur, O., Rude, S. S., & Baron, A. (2003). Symptom improvement and length of treatment in

EVALUATING HSP GRADUATE PROGRAM VISIT DAYS

- ethnically similar and dissimilar client-therapist pairings. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 50, 52-58.
- Erolin, K. S., & Wieling, E. (2021). The Experiences of Couple/Marriage and Family Therapists of color: A Survey Analysis. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 47, 3-20
- Frey, W.H. (2020). The nation is diversifying even faster than predicted, according to new census data. Brookings. <https://www.brookings.edu/research/new-census-data-shows-the-nation-is-diversifying-even-faster-than-predicted/>
- Gibbs, K. D., Han, A., & Lun, J. (2019). Demographic diversity in teams: The challenges, benefits, and management strategies. In *Strategies for Team Science Success* (pp. 197-205). Springer, Cham.
- Hall, G. C. N. (2001). Psychotherapy research with ethnic minorities: Empirical, ethical, and conceptual issues. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 69, 502-510.
- Hsueh, L., Werntz, A., Hobaica, S., Owens, S. A., Lumley, M. A., & Washburn, J. J. (2021). Clinical psychology PhD students' admission experiences: Implications for recruiting racial/ethnic minority and LGBTQ students. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 77, 105-120.
- Jones, J. M.(2021). *LGBT Identification Rises to 5.6% in Latest U.S. Estimate*. Gallup.com, Gallup. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/329708/lgbt-identification-rises-latest-estimate.aspx>.
- Kim, E. & Kang, M. (2018). The effects of client–counselor racial matching on therapeutic outcome. *Asia Pacific Educ. Rev.*, 19, 103–110.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s12564-018-9518-9>
- Labib, K., & Evans, N. (2021). Gender, diversity, and the responsible assessment of researchers. *PLoS Biology*, 19, e3001036. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pbio.3001036>
- Mason, J. L. (1995). Cultural Competence Self-Assessment Questionnaire: A Manual for Users.

EVALUATING HSP GRADUATE PROGRAM VISIT DAYS

- Mendoza, D. B., Williams, M. T., Chapman, L. K., & Powers, M. (2012). Minority inclusion in randomized clinical trials of panic disorder. *Journal of Anxiety Disorders*, 26, 574–582. doi: 10.1016/j.janxdis.2012.02.011
- Miranda, J., Bernal, G., Lau, A., Kohn, L., Hwang, W. C., & LaFromboise, T. (2005). State of the science on psychosocial interventions for ethnic minorities. *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology*, 1, 113–142. doi: 10.1146/annurev.clinpsy.1.102803.143822
- Rosmarin, D. H. (2016). Diversity Science: New dawn in a golden age. *Clinical Psychological Science*, 4, 701–703. doi:10.1177/2167702616647926.
- Shin, S. M., Chow, C., Camacho-Gonsalves, T., Levy, R. J., Allen, I. E., & Leff, H. S. (2005). A Meta-Analytic Review of Racial-Ethnic Matching for African American and Caucasian American Clients and Clinicians. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 52, 45-56.
- Sibthorp, J., Paisley, K., Gookin, J., & Ward, P. (2007). Addressing response-shift bias: Retrospective pretests in recreation research and evaluation. *Journal of leisure research*, 39, 295-315.
- Sue, S., Fujino, D. C., Hu, L. T., Takeuchi, D. T., & Zane, N. W. (1991). Community mental health services for ethnic minority groups: a test of the cultural responsiveness hypothesis. *Journal of consulting and clinical psychology*, 59, 533-540.
- Sue, S. (1998). In search of cultural competence in psychotherapy and counseling. *American psychologist*, 53, 440-448.
- Swift, J. K., Callahan, J. L., Cooper, M., & Parkin, S. R. (2018). The impact of accommodating client preference in psychotherapy: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 74, 1924-1937.
- Swift, J. K., Callahan, J. L., Tompkins, K. A., Connor, D. R., & Dunn, R. (2015). A delay-

EVALUATING HSP GRADUATE PROGRAM VISIT DAYS

discounting measure of preference for racial/ethnic matching in psychotherapy. *Psychotherapy*, 52, 315–320.

Swartz, T. H., Palermo, A. G. S., Masur, S. K., & Aberg, J. A. (2019). The science and value of diversity: Closing the gaps in our understanding of inclusion and diversity. *The Journal of Infectious Diseases*, 220 (Supplement_2), S33-S41.

<https://doi.org/10.1093/infdis/jiz174>

Taylor, R. E., & Kuo, B. C. (2019). Black American psychological help-seeking intention: An integrated literature review with recommendations for clinical practice. *Journal of Psychotherapy Integration*, 29, 325-338.

U.S. Census Bureau. (2000) https://www.censusscope.org/us/chart_race.html

U.S. Census Bureau. (2020).Quick facts.

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045218>

Zlotnick, C., Elkin, I., & Shea, M. T. (1998). Does the gender of a patient or the gender of a therapist affect the treatment of patients with major depression? *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 66, 655–659. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-006X.66.4.655>

EVALUATING HSP GRADUATE PROGRAM VISIT DAYS

BRIDGE Psychology Network Visitor Experience Survey

Please indicate how much you agree with each statement:

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

Please type the name of the graduate program that you have recently visited during a BRIDGE visit day (e.g., visit day or recruitment event geared toward students who have been traditionally underrepresented in graduate programs in psychology): _____

Satisfaction:

1. The information presented about the PROGRAM ITSELF was helpful (Helpful Program Info) _____
2. The information presented about how to PREPARE for graduate school was helpful (Helpful Prep Info) _____
3. I had sufficient time to meet with faculty members (Sufficient time with Faculty) _____
4. Faculty members made me feel welcome here (Welcoming Faculty) _____
5. Graduate students made me feel welcome here (Welcoming Students Grads) _____
6. I felt like I this program would be a good fit for me (Program Fit) _____
7. I feel like I would be well supported in this program (Feeling Supported) _____
8. I see myself as being similar to graduate students in this program in terms of career interests, training goals, etc. (Career Goal Similarity) _____
9. I see myself as being similar to graduate students in this program in terms of social identities, viewpoints, and values (Social Identity Similarity) _____
10. I feel that this program would be a safe place to learn (Safe Space) _____
11. I will recommend the visit day event to a friend or colleague (Recommend) _____
12. I am satisfied with the visit day overall (Overall Satisfaction) _____

Plans for Graduate Education:

13. Before attending the visit day, I planned to apply to scientifically rigorous graduate programs _____
14. After attending the visit day, I plan to apply to scientifically rigorous programs _____
15. Before attending the visit day, I was planning to apply to this graduate program _____
16. After attending the visit day, I plan to apply to this graduate program _____

Open Response Items:

17. What did you like most about your visit?
18. What did you like least about your visit?:
19. How can we improve the visit for future visitors?:
20. What additional/alternative activities would you recommend for future visit days?
21. What aspects of a program are most important to you in deciding whether or not to apply (research fit, resources, geographic location, etc.)?

EVALUATING HSP GRADUATE PROGRAM VISIT DAYS

Table 1. *Prospective Student Agreement with items on the BRIDGE Psychology Network Visitor Experience Survey (higher scores indicate higher agreement)*

Survey Item*	Program1	Program2	Program3	Program4	Total
	<i>M</i> (SD)	<i>M</i> (SD)	<i>M</i> (SD)	<i>M</i> (SD)	<i>M</i> (SD)
Helpful Program Info	4.75 (0.50)	4.90 (0.32)	4.62 (0.51)	4.56 (0.73)	4.68 (0.53)
Helpful Prep Info	3.75 (0.50)	4.90 (0.32)	4.77 (0.44)	4.67 (0.50)	4.63 (0.54)
Sufficient time with Faculty	4.00 (1.40)	4.00 (1.20)	4.15 (0.90)	4.56 (0.53)	4.13 (0.96)
Welcoming Faculty	4.50 (0.58)	4.50 (0.53)	4.85 (0.38)	4.78 (0.44)	4.71 (0.46)
Welcoming Students	4.25 (0.96)	4.70 (0.68)	4.92 (0.28)	4.78 (0.44)	4.71 (0.61)
Program Fit	3.50 (0.58)	4.30 (0.82)	4.15 (0.56)	4.00 (1.00)	4.11 (0.76)
Feeling Supported	4.00 (0.82)	4.60 (0.52)	4.62 (0.51)	4.56 (0.53)	4.55 (0.56)
Career Goal Similarity	4.00 (0.82)	4.40 (0.70)	4.31 (0.63)	4.67 (0.50)	4.34 (0.67)
Social Identity Similarity	3.50 (1.30)	4.20 (0.79)	4.23 (0.83)	4.00 (0.87)	4.08 (0.88)
Safe Space	4.25 (0.50)	4.60 (0.52)	4.46 (0.66)	4.67 (0.50)	4.50 (0.60)
Recommend	4.50 (0.58)	4.90 (0.32)	4.77 (0.60)	4.78 (0.44)	4.76 (0.49)
Overall Satisfaction	4.75 (0.50)	5.00 (0.00)	4.77 (0.44)	4.56 (0.73)	4.76 (0.49)

*Please see full item wording on included measure