Doctor, Lawyer, Social Worker?: Exploring the Experiences of Asian American Pacific Islander (APIA) Social Work Students

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Purpose

APIA students find their way to social work often find themselves on a “nontraditional” path. This study explores the expectations and experiences of APIA students choosing social work as a profession.

Research Questions

- What are some cultural factors that APIA experience?
- What are some perceptions and expectations from friends and family members?
- How is it different between Asians and Pacific Islanders?
- How supportive do students feel pursuing social work as minorities?

Method

- **Participants**
  - BSW, MSW, and Ph.D. students enrolled in SW in the US
- **Data Source**
  - A 44-item survey
  - Convenience Sampling (Council on Social Work Education)
- **Data Analysis**
  - Consented to respond to the questions through a secure online survey host anonymously
  - Obtained results from SPSS descriptive analysis and Chi-Square test

Findings

Chi-Square data suggest that:
1) students from institutions that have APIA faculty/staff in their program tend to rate higher in the importance of APIA faculty/staff ($x^2 = 22.57^*, df = 12, p = .03$), with 78% of respondents;
2) students tend to rate higher in parental support when they are least likely to be influenced by studying in STEM field ($x^2 = 189.79^*, df = 49, p = .00$).

Conclusion

The preliminary findings of this study showed experiences of APIA students are not reflected in the curriculum and field experiences. More research is needed to show the difference between Asian and Pacific Islander students in respect to their perception and experiences in social work.