

The Pan-Asian Legacy Project: Celebrating the Pan-Asian Professionals in the Social Work Field

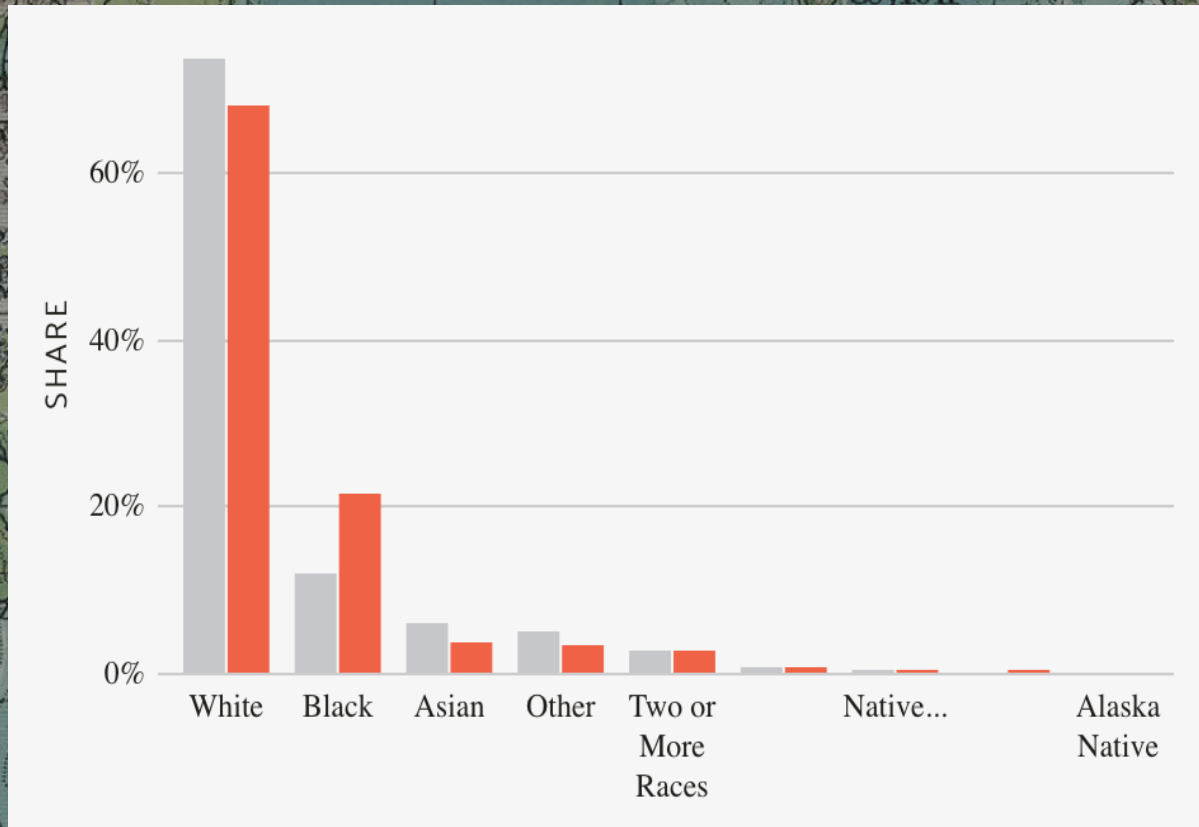
PAN-ASIA



A world map with Asia highlighted in red. A callout box with a red pointer indicates the location of 'our office' in the United States.

our
office

Race and Ethnicity (2017)



67.9%
21.3%
3.57%.



Mission

The purpose of this research project is to raise collective awareness, foster community, and empower the voices and values important to Pan-Asian identifying experience in the Social Work field, specifically in the United States.

Methods

- Interviewed 3 Pan-Asian identifying professionals in the field of Social Work located in Philadelphia, PA.
 - The goal of the interviews will encourage practicing Asian (American) LCSW/LSW professionals to share their personal, professional, and academic narratives.
- Surveyed 25 young professionals in Social Work Master's Program from North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Virginia.

Interview Questions

1. What are some things you noticed within the Social Work field that made you realize that you were different from the rest of your peers? Can you elaborate?
2. In those moments, how did you feel and why?
3. What do you think about the Asian representation in the Social Work Field today?
4. How do you think it has changed over time?

Interviewee #1



- 27-year old first-generation Indian-American Social Worker at the Prevention Center
- Born abroad Saudi Arabia
- Moved around a lot
 - ➔ 3-4 years in NY
 - ➔ 10-12 years in NC
 - ➔ 7 years in PA
- Eldest daughter of three children
 - ➔ 1 younger brother in finance

Interviewee #1



- Pressure from parents
- Male- Female dynamic
- College Admission via internet, friends, school librarians, and school counselors
- “It was just not on my radar.”
- “I can’t be a nurse.” → desire to work in mental health field but “culturally - we don’t talk about mental health”
- “very few minorities”
- “drug and alcohol field... there is a lot more diversity than mental health”
- “discussion”
- “most often... theories we were learning were tested on white people in Western countries... so when I tried to apply them to my own family, my audience at the time, it doesn’t hold true in the same way.”

Interviewee #1

- “So some of the discussion that I could’ve had was stunted by it, but the fact that you could tell me about how you applied it and it worked out but I could never contribute to that discussion but there is another aspect to it, the strength.. Learning about theory, I knew it wasn’t about fact
- “I realized that there was a gap between academic and application. I would have to modify it based on where I was and who I was with.”
- Theory can give me a perspective but it doesn’t give me all the tools to help me understand somebody.”
- I have mentors in different ways -- challenge me, support me, professionally do better, but not all of them culturally representative of who I am.
- I personally appreciate different perspective, I think it would be a different conversation if that mentor looked like me and also did what I did-- that would be a different kind of relief.
- “I wouldn't say I didn't have a mentor at all. I have many voices of reason.”

Interviewee #2

- 27-year old second-generation Social Worker at Nationalities Service Center working with human trafficking.
- Parents first-generation and educated; mom is a nurse and teaching nurse at a medical school; dad in radiology department
- Born abroad Northern part of China
- Grew up in China and lived in U.S. for 6 years
- Only Child
- Allow me to do whatever I want
- "Childhood experience led me to who I am and my personality."
- "You are always a people person and leader among kids."

Interviewee #2

- China does not have SW profession and is in early stages.
- Family Impact for Undergraduate education in China - medical school
- “I explored Public Health but very interested in looking for social perspectives and thinking from social science lens.”
- “Even at that time, I didn't have a clear vision.”
- “...learning curves.”
- “Parents... not what they expected to happen.”
- Cultural difference with parents – “They are professionally working in China.”
- Friends
 - ➔ Wow, That's great work.
 - ➔ Before, what is that?
- “International” identity limiting

Interviewee #3

- Mid-50's first-generation Chinese-American Social Worker and Professor at the University of Pennsylvania
- Born and raised in a small town North Carolina during Jim Crow Era
 - ➔ Jim Crow Era: Enforced racial segregation
- Parents immigrated to U.S. with false papers
- First, Dad immigrated to North Carolina and then, brought over mother and second oldest brother and left oldest brother in China with grandmother because of the papers.

Interviewee #3

- “We were kind of in the middle. We were not equal to rights but not negatively treated like African Americans.”
- “We were on the border line of White and Black neighborhood.”
- “School was all White.”
- “We were the only Asians in the community.”
- Family expectations: Law school
- High school → College Summer worked with Anti-Poverty Program
 - Civil Rights Movement
 - Community Organizing
 - Voter Registration
 - Introduction to Social Work

Interviewee #3

- I didn't have mentors. ✨
- "I am a strong-willed person because I had to be."
 - ➔ 3rd grade incident: "chink" and "apple to the head"
- "They tend to look down on first-generation."
- "...you're going to be faced with this and you're going to have to think about how you react. Even though you were not in the wrong, you were faced with a home visit."
- "You're a tree. You have roots. Find out for yourself who your roots are."
- Family reaction: "You don't do that (SW) as a profession. You do that because it's your responsibility as a human being."
- Be aware of bias and practice/ be aware of how you will respond.
- "Deal with your uncomfot because if you don't, it will eat at you."

Survey Findings

- There is not a lot of Asian representation.
- Stigma is still real and prevalent relating to mental health issues.
- There is little support.
- MSW programs are not adequately preparing students to work with ethnically and racially diverse populations.

Advice

- “Regardless of whether you are in this field or not, find one other person that you can talk through things with.”
- “Get to know the community you are working with. Volunteer!”
- “Find what works for you.”
- “Don’t be afraid to ask for help.”
- “You are not alone and your work matters.”
- “We are different. Be aware of implicit bias and buying into it.”
- “Have a response and reaction you are comfortable with.”

Themes



Impact on Family

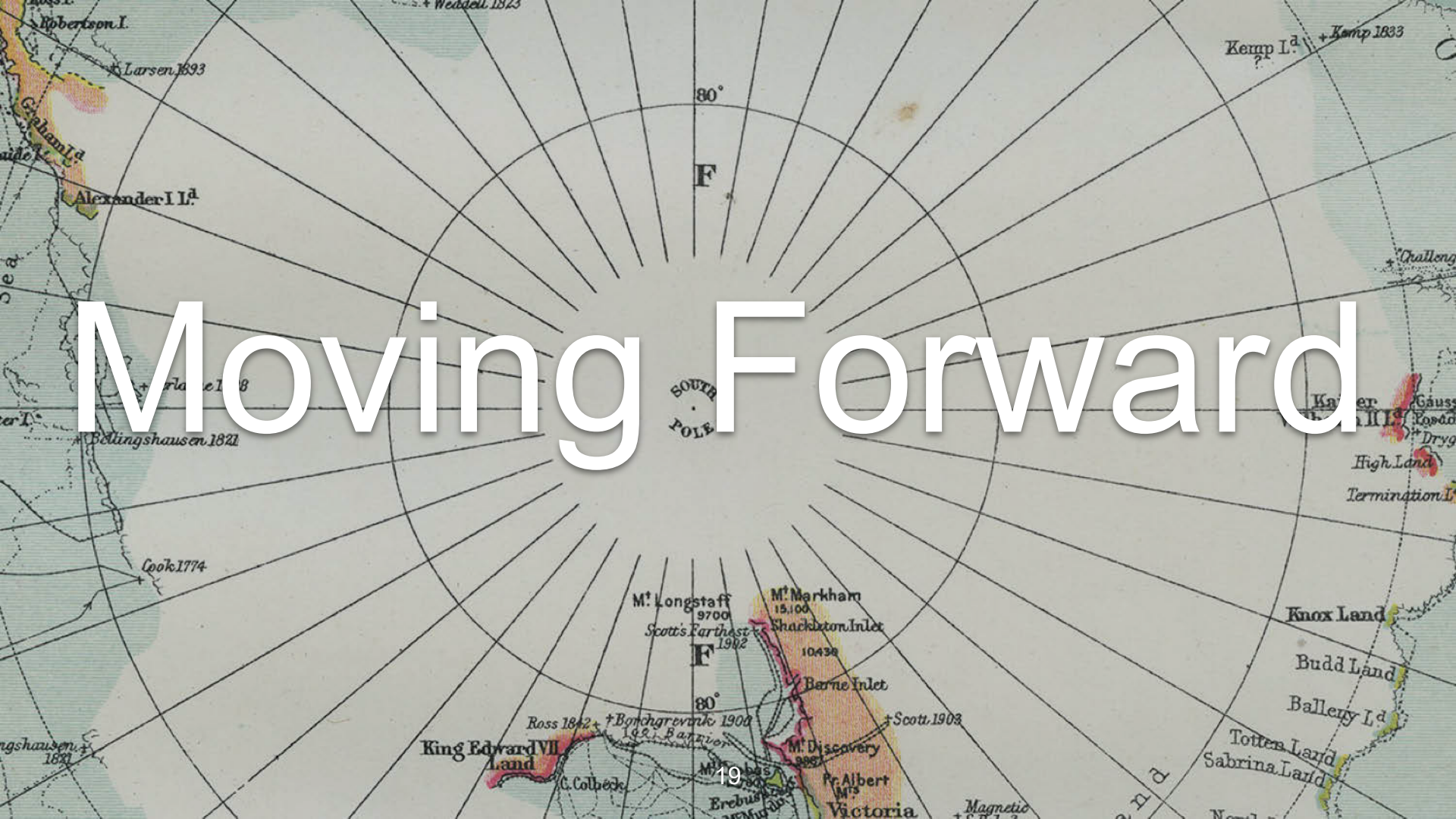
Unique and Different Experience

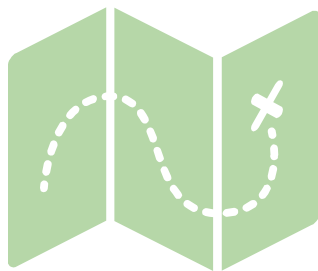
What is Social Work?

Limitations

- Participant population is very small.
- Participants not representative of all Pan-Asian experience.
- Lack of sufficient qualitative data (statistics)

Moving Forward





Any questions?

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