

Cultural Influence Impacting Career Exploration of Asian American College Students

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Overview

For career exploration and the career decision-making process, Asian American college students experience multiple cultural factors involving self-efficacy, family and peer pressures, ethnic identity, and racial stereotypes. The overarching impact for Asian Americans is the racial stereotype of the “model minority myth” where “Asian Americans have been portrayed as the model minority for seemingly having achieved socioeconomic success and being free of problems” (Shih, Chang, & Chen, 2019, p. 412). The model minority myth and cultural factors influence the societal, familial, and personal pressures Asian American college students face in career development. One-on-one Zoom interviews were conducted with Asian American college students to discuss and reflect on their experiences. Using the narrative perspectives of Asian American college students from one university, the purpose of this qualitative study is to deepen understanding on how cultural factors influence career exploration.

Results

- ❖ Unfortunately, Asian American college students are limited to the scope of same-race role models due to the lack of visibility of Asian American leaders and professionals in mainstream media and must look to friends and family as sole career role models (Kodama & Huynh, 2017).
- ❖ Parents’ struggles of immigration, poverty, and inequalities provide context in why Asian American college students are raised with high expectations to pursue a career their parents perceive as successful (Poon, 2014).
- ❖ I anticipate the results to be the same from similar studies from the literature review and expect additional perspectives of how an Asian American college student’s racial, ethnic, social, and self identity can impact and influence their career choice.

Significance for Higher Education

In the area of career counseling and advising in a college setting, awareness of varied cultural factors is critical when working with Asian American college students. In an education counseling environment, caution must be taken when working with Asian American students, especially in specific cultural subgroups. (Ma et. al., 2014). To effectively engage with Asian American college students, college student personnel must consider these tenets in order to help them thrive in their desired career path.



Methodology

- ❖ Two Asian American college student participants enrolled at a large, public California university were interviewed via Zoom for 45 to 60 minutes.
- ❖ Participants were asked questions regarding the following factors influencing career choice:
 - ❖ Demographic and major and/or minor
 - ❖ Self-efficacy
 - ❖ Pressure from peers & family
 - ❖ Self-Identity & ethnic identity
 - ❖ Racial stereotypes & the model minority myth
 - ❖ Experiences at their enrolled institution with a career counselor addressing their needs through a cultural lens
- ❖ To analyze the qualitative narrative data, each factor served as themes to explore the diverse and shared perspectives of each participant.

Implications

- ❖ Advisors are encouraged to use a holistic and culturally sensitive approach in advising since Asian American students deal with so many more complex factors culturally, racially, socially, and personally.
- ❖ Counselors can encourage Asian American college students to expand their network of social support and talk to other Asian Americans who went through the same experience (Ma et. al., 2014).
- ❖ In higher education, it is important to keep in mind how Asian American college students are affected by their self-efficacy, family and peer pressure, the model minority myth, ethnic identity, and racial stereotypes by providing a safe and inclusive space to explore their desired career choice.