

Statement to ASWB Licensure Pass Rates Report
October 2022
Thompson School, Department of Social Work

In August the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) released a report containing data detailing the licensure pass rates for the profession. We at the Thompson School were not surprised, though the results were still alarming. The data showed that several groups, including but not limited to adults over 50, those for whom English is not their first language, and especially those who have been historically marginalized and oppressed like Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC), passed at a much lower rate than their younger, English-speaking, white counterparts. The Thompson school, like representatives from ASWB, are clear that this disparity in no way reflects the competence or capacities of these groups, but instead reveals a problematic exam system that repeats patterns of oppression historically rooted and sadly still present in the moment. The glaring differences in passing licensure rates within race brings to question the current examination system and how competence is assessed. Previous studies have shown that standardized tests are not good predictors of knowledge and competence for minorities (Hoffman et al, 2005; Madaus & Clark, 2001).

The ASWB report also brings to bear an issue of concern on diversity inclusion. Social Justice is a core value in which cultural and ethnic diversity are recognized. Thus, inclusion of racial groups regardless of their respective size should be a requirement in National reports of the field of Social Work. In the ASWB report, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders (NHPI) were not specified in the ASWB report nor was any mention of where they were included or why they were not separated out. This renders a racial group invisible and thus reflects social injustice.

Next steps include a close review and analysis of the data by social work researchers and open discussions amongst faculty, students, and community stakeholders about the findings. Three areas of focus given our aforementioned concerns: First, access to the raw data for SW researchers to further examine the data on other relevant factors, and omissions (i.e., inclusion of NHPI). Representatives from the Thompson School have been asking for this data for some time and now that it is here, nothing short of full transparency will suffice. Second, advocating and assuring social justice for NHPI groups by recognizing them as a distinct racial group in SW education. Third, while the Thompson School has strived to prepare social work students for the licensure exam with test-taking prep-courses and ensuring test preparatory material is available at our libraries, preparing for a flawed exam has its own set of problems. It is therefore all the more relevant to hold in-depth discussions to examine the current method of testing for SW licensing, and develop strategies and approaches for testing and assessing competence for SW licensure that acknowledges the diverse learning.

What we know with certainty is that our students are difference makers and are committed to the health and well-being of those they serve. Please know that social work faculty and staff at the Thompson School are committed to providing an environment focused on deep learning and real life practice opportunities anchored in social justice.

Bibliography

- Hoffman, J.L., & Lowitzki, K.E. (2005). Predicting College Success with High School Grades and Test Scores: Limitations for Minority Students. *The Review of Higher Education* 28(4), 455-474. [doi:10.1353/rhe.2005.0042](https://doi.org/10.1353/rhe.2005.0042).
- Madaus,G.F.,&Clarke,M.(201).The adverse impact of high stakes testing on minority students: evidence from 10 years of test data.In G. Orfield and M.Kornhaber (Eds.), *Raising standards or raising barriers? Inequality and high stakes testing in public education*. NewYork: The Century Foundation.