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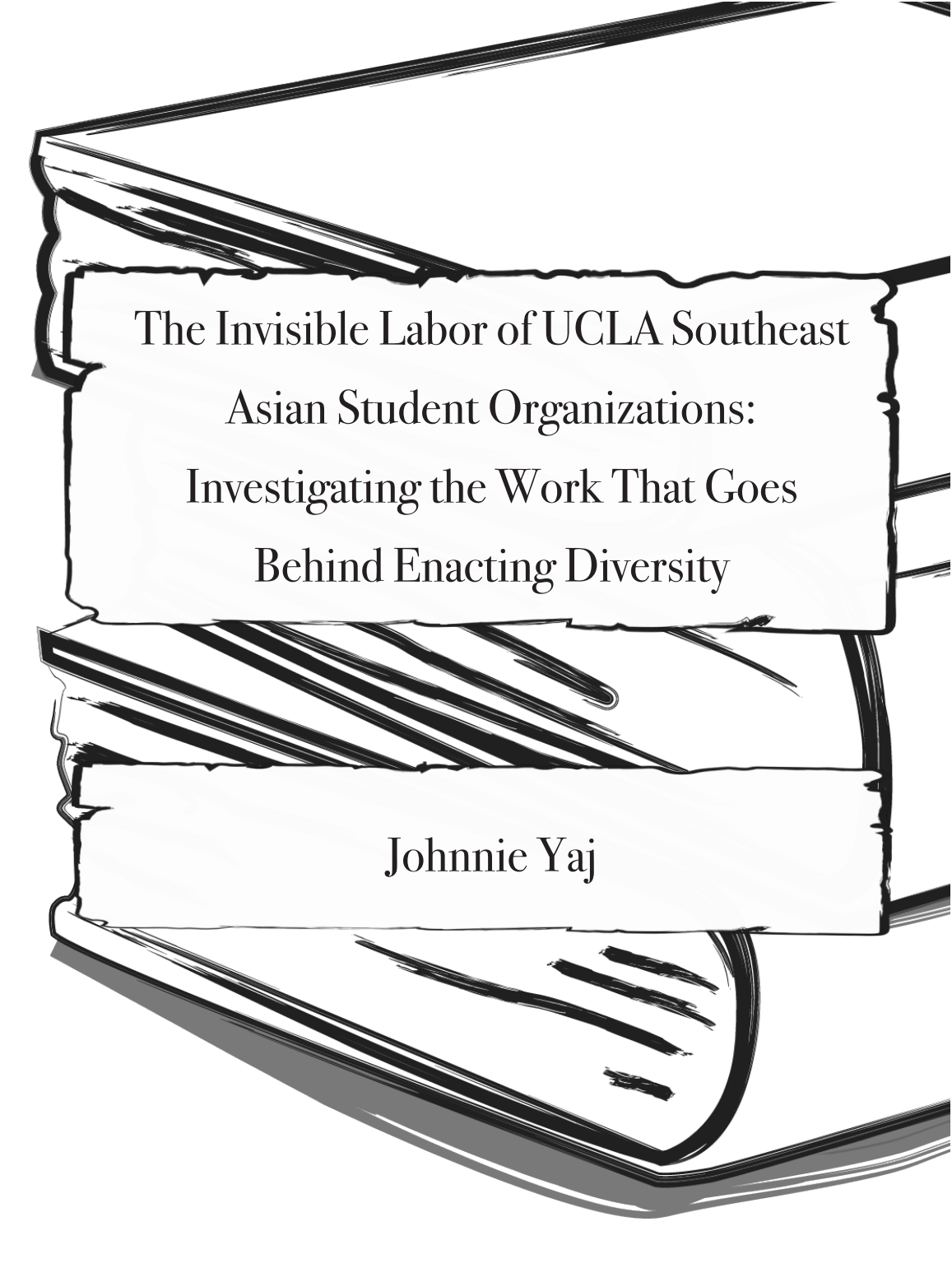
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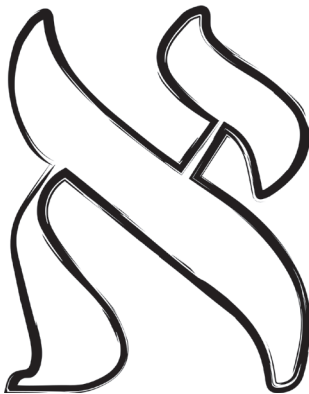
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The image features a stylized, hand-drawn illustration of an open book. The book is shown from a slightly elevated, angled perspective. The pages are represented by simple black outlines, and the cover is also outlined in black. A prominent white rectangular label with a slightly irregular, torn-edge border is positioned on the front cover. The text on the label is centered and reads: "The Invisible Labor of UCLA Southeast Asian Student Organizations: Investigating the Work That Goes Behind Enacting Diversity". The author's name, "Johnnie Yaj", is printed in a smaller font on a white rectangular label on the spine of the book.

The Invisible Labor of UCLA Southeast  
Asian Student Organizations:  
Investigating the Work That Goes  
Behind Enacting Diversity

Johnnie Yaj



# The Invisible Labor of UCLA Southeast Asian Student Organizations: Investigating the Work That Goes Behind Enacting Diversity

Johnnie Yaj



**Abstract:** This research combines the frameworks of campus climate and invisible labor to investigate the annual Southeast Asian (SEA) Admit Weekend program at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). This research explores campus diversity work by asking how the SEA Admit Weekend program contributes to UCLA's campus diversity and how UCLA as an institution continues to overlook SEA student diversity work. By utilizing campus climate, invisible labor, and interviews with UCLA students and staff affiliated with the SEA Admit program, this research uncovers the sociopolitical and cultural implications of student diversity work. The findings show that student diversity work, as demonstrated by the SEA Admit program, dismantles institutionalized racism, while UCLA as an institution overlooks the imposed student labor that this diversity work necessitates. As a result, SEA students face higher levels of academic stress, time constraints, and economic hardship. This research provides suggestions for how universities can further work with underrepresented student groups on campus to meet diversity goals.

**Keywords:** *Southeast Asian, Diversity, Higher Education, Invisible Labor, Campus Climate*

Numerous studies have been conducted to identify and measure the efficacy of diversity and diversity efforts on college campuses across America (Milem, Chang, Antonio, 2005). However, these research studies tend to focus on the efforts of the administration because administrators have the most jurisdiction over campus culture and the student body (Poster, Crain, and Cherry, 2016). This research specifically explores student diversity efforts that impact the campus climate in measurable and tangible ways, specifically at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). To situate the rise of student diversity work at UCLA, this article provides an overview of California Proposition 209 to highlight how it impacted the racial and ethnic diversity in the UC system. Next, the article discusses how a coalition of Southeast Asian (SEA) student organizations at UCLA mobilized to address the issues stemming out of Prop 209. Utilizing the theoretical frameworks of campus climate and invisible labor, this research focuses on the labor of students by investigating the annual SEA Admit Weekend program. The findings uncover how student diversity work contributes to campus diversity in measurable, tangible ways and how the institution often overlooks these efforts.

### **Historical Background**

When California Proposition 209 passed in 1996, it prohibited public colleges from considering race, sex, and ethnicity in admissions. As a result, the University of California (UC) system saw drastic changes in racial and ethnic diversity. Immediately following the passing of Prop 209, the admission rate of white and Asian American students spiked, while the admission rate of black, Native American, Chicanx, and Latinx groups plummeted (Kidder and Gándara, 2015). Predominant Asian American voices largely stemming from more conservative Chinese-American non-profits and news outlets supported Prop 209 because they felt as though considering race, sex, and ethnicity through affirmative action overtly disadvantaged all Asian Americans (Shyong, 2014). Prop 209 produced only a limited increase in Asian American admission rates, considering

the UC system did not collect disaggregated Asian American student data enrollment before 2010. It is very likely that Southeast Asian students were hindered admission at the UC level immediately after the passing of Prop 209 without much concern from news outlets or the UC administration. Several years later at the UCLA campus, Southeast Asian student organizations recognized their decreasing numbers and mobilized to improve outreach, recruitment, retention, and graduation rates by creating the UCLA Southeast Asian (SEA) Admit Weekend program in 2008.

The UCLA SEA Admit weekend is an annual 4-day overnight program initiated and regulated by SEA undergraduate student organizations with the support of UCLA staff and the Office of Admissions. The undergraduate student organizations involved include the Asian Pacific Coalition, Association of Hmong Students, Burmese Student Union, Lao Student Association, Thai Smakom, United Khmer Students, and the Vietnamese Student Union. The purpose of the program is to address the underrepresentation of SEA students in higher education by introducing recent SEA high school admits to the UCLA campus and encouraging them to submit their Statement of Intent to Register. Most of these students come from first-generation, low-income, and non-English speaking backgrounds. To prepare them for success at UCLA, the program provides the admits with opportunities to take early advantage of on-campus retention services such as personal and academic counseling, professional opportunities and internships, and the support of the SEA community. The program also has an extensive agenda packed with various workshops on intersectionality, financial aid, and campus climate; a student and alumni panel; an opportunity to experience dorm-life with a volunteer host; meetings with UCLA professors during office hours; an interactive tour of Westwood and the UCLA campus; and finally, social networking and community-building activities. Although the program started in 2008, it continues to grow in size each year and produce more refined plans for improvement. This program is one of many diversity efforts at UCLA that serve as focal points for diversity research and work. For the purpose of this research, the SEA

student diversity endeavour was chosen for its rich history in student-initiated, student-run efforts on the UCLA campus.

### **Conceptual Framework**

To aid in the investigation, this research utilizes the campus climate framework to analyze diversity on college campuses and the invisible labor framework to unpack the sociopolitical and cultural implications of labor. Both frameworks offer a fresh perspective to understanding how diversity work functions and benefits a college campus in tangible, measurable ways.

Decades of research on diversity issues have helped scholars understand how racial and ethnic diversity within higher education systems yield educational benefits for undergraduates. The vitality, stimulation, and educational potential of an institution are all directly related to the composition of its student body, faculty, and staff (Milem et al., 2005). Furthermore, Chang (1999) found that the compositional diversity of a campus has a positive correlation with the likelihood that students will engage with other students from different backgrounds. This finding is in communication with Kanter's (1977) research on how colleges that lack a diverse student population are more likely to have underrepresented students viewed as tokens, which intensifies the exaggeration of stereotypes and group differences.

Milem et al. (2005) also summarize and argue that the underrepresentation of students of color on predominantly white campuses can lead to heightened negative social stigma and "minority status" stressors that impale student achievement. However, Milem et al. also find that campuses with more diversity often lead to more varied educational experiences that enrich students' learning and better prepare them for civic engagement. In other words, increasing the representation of students from various racial and ethnic groups tends to broaden the collection of opinions, ideas, and thoughts held by the student body, which in turn offers all students a higher chance of being exposed to a new viewpoint, irrespective of their race (Chang 2002; Chang, Seltzer, and Kim, 2001). Additionally, psychologists found that racial and ethnic diversity can lead to an effective social environment,

which can be used as an educational tool to stimulate student learning and development (Antonio, Chang, Hakuta, Kent, Levin, and Milem, 2004). While research on diversity issues shows the positive impacts and patterns of racial and ethnic diversity, these benefits are only realized through the institutional context of the respective campuses where diversity efforts are enacted.

### **Campus Climate Framework**

Thus, Milem et al. (2005) introduce the campus climate framework to synthesize and navigate the forces that inform diversity on a college campus. Stemming out of the foundational contributions of Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, and Allen (1998), the framework acknowledges the necessity to consider both external and internal forces that shape campus climate. External forces might include governmental programs and sociohistorical forces such as financial aid policies, state and federal policy regarding affirmative action, or events like 9/11, which have had profound impacts on the racial climate (Milem et al., 2005). These external forces interact with five key internal dimensions to yield the campus climate which encompasses the (1) compositional diversity, (2) historical legacy of inclusion and exclusion, (3) psychological dimension, (4) behavioral dimension, and (5) organizational or structural aspects (Milem et al., 2005). The framework suggests that these five interconnected dimensions interact with the external governmental and sociohistorical forces to construct the campus climate. Hence, the most effective diversity efforts must intentionally address these internal dimensions with regard to governmental and sociohistorical forces. This framework assists in evaluating how the SEA Admit program's diversity efforts play a key role in maintaining and increasing the diversity at UCLA through a conscious navigation of the five interconnected dimensions.

#### ***(1) Compositional Diversity***

As one of the more dominantly perceived components of diversity, compositional diversity refers to the “numerical and



proportional representation of various racial and ethnic groups on a campus” (Milem, et al., 2005, p. 15). The notion of compositional diversity tends to dominate the diversity discourse because it is what most campus leaders use to communicate a commitment to diversity, usually through programming, marketing, or recruitment strategies. While these practices and attitudes toward diversity are evident in many of today’s college systems, researchers have rebuked the idea of using diversity as a means to achieve a quantity for racial and ethnic representation. Diversity is not a goal or an end in and of itself but a process that intends to yield educational outcomes (Milem, et al., 2005). However, researchers on diversity issues do acknowledge that compositional diversity is likely one of the very first steps that colleges must pursue if they intend to reap the benefits of diversity. The difficulty arises when making decisions regarding how campus leaders should go about enacting diversity and incorporating compositional diversity as a process rather than an end result.

### ***(2) Historical Legacy of Inclusion and Exclusion***

A campus’ historical legacy of in/exclusion recognizes the vestiges of segregation and inequality that continue to play a role in the campus climate (Hurtado, et al., 1998). For instance, many predominantly white institutions across the United States have had to grapple with many buildings or monuments that were named in honor of academics who contributed to knowledge while also perpetuating and practicing racism, sexism, ableism, homophobia, or other forms of exclusion. While many of these buildings or monuments remain on campuses, some campus leaders have taken initiative to rewrite history by renaming buildings to redefine the values that college campuses want to adopt. By understanding these components of a campus’ historical legacy of in/exclusion, campus leaders may account for the integrity of their institution’s future.

### ***(3) Psychological Dimension***

It is important for colleges to gauge the views, attitudes,

and paradigms of the individuals on their campuses, as well as how they perceive intergroup relations, forms of discrimination, racial conflict, or people from differing racial or ethnic backgrounds. According to Hurtado, et al. (1998), people's positionalities—who they are and where they are from—within an institution influence the ways that they experience and perceive the institution. By being critical of the ways people perceive themselves and each other on a campus, campus leaders may take a more interactive approach to advancing the perceptions of diversity and the outcomes of these interactions.

#### ***(4) Behavioral Dimension***

Similar to how the psychological dimension dissects the perceptions of the people on a campus, the behavioral dimension looks at the interactions between them. This dimension consists of “the status of social interaction on the campus, the nature of interactions between and among individuals from different racial and ethnic backgrounds, and the quality of intergroup relations” (Milem, et al., 2005; Hurtado, et al., 1998). By understanding how differing racial or ethnic groups interact within or between other groups, campus leaders may grasp the quality of race relations and culture at their institution. This dimension is crucial to higher education because “students who have the opportunity to engage peers from different racial backgrounds in regular, structured interactions are more likely to show growth in a number of critical educational outcomes” (Milem, et al., 2005).

#### ***(5) Organizational and Structural Diversity***

This dimension slightly differs from the historical legacy of in/exclusion in the sense that it refers to organizational and structural aspects of a college which do not always have historical ties to exclusion. These aspects include, but are not limited to, a college's curriculum, budget allocation decisions, reward structures, hiring and admissions practices, and tenure decisions (Milem, et al., 2005). For instance, studies have shown that a faculty search committee comprising of a racially homogenous

group is less likely to consider candidates of a differing racial background unless intentional efforts are taken to encourage the committee to recognize candidates from other racial backgrounds (Smith, et al., 2004). The necessary and deliberate steps to seriously consider candidates while being racially conscious is part of a college's organizational and structural diversity.

According to Miley, et al. (2005), "These dimensions are interconnected, but at the same time each dimension is unique and must be intentionally addressed if the benefits with diversity are to be realized" (p. 18-19). To better understand how the Southeast Asian Admit Weekend contributes directly to diversity efforts at UCLA, this framework will be used to assess the effectiveness with which the program intentionally addresses the five interconnected dimensions of campus climate for racial and ethnic diversity.

### **Invisible Labor Framework**

Daniels (1987) coined the term "invisible work" in the 1980s to substantiate the gendered character in the household and the work that women were often associated with but not valued for. Since then, the term has expanded into a field of inquiry to understand how society values work and why some forms of work are invisible. The field attempts to uncover patterns and forces that inhibit employers, consumers, and employees from recognizing impactful work and block policymakers and regulators from addressing those impacts. Poster et al. (2016) defines visible labor as readily identifiable work that typically comes with monetary compensation, occurs in the public sphere, and has historically been full-time, long-term, and state regulated. Invisible labor, on the other hand, encompasses work that falls inside employment relationships and outside of the legal structure. Such work is often associated with leisure, consumption, or volunteerism (Poster, et al., 2016). In order to unpack the racial and class inequalities, this discourse explores how these categories of visibility and the act of seeing itself are socially-constructed.

Cultural studies theorist E. W. Said (2014) notes that levels of visibility may serve to obscure or even misrepresent

those being viewed, especially when underrepresented or marginalized groups are objects of the visible. Said (2014) further explains the ways in which visibility can be a tool for understanding how patterns of inequality within representation reflect patriarchy, classism, heterosexism, and imperialism. This rhetoric links invisible labor with the idea of racial tasks (Wingfield, 2010), color-blind racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2006), whiteness as management (Roediger and Esch, 2012), and racing for innocence (Pierce, 2012). More specifically, racial inequality within higher education continues to thrive in part because of the belief that racism is no longer an issue, thus making the diversity work associated with racial justice invisible. Only by continuing to acknowledge the historical implications and causes of racial inequality can we scrutinize how racial inequality persists in society. In other words, we must uncover the invisible efforts that are necessary for diversity to thrive in order to redress and resist color-blind racism or the belief that racial inequality is a myth.

Furthermore, it is also crucial to consider forms of opposition to this type of work, otherwise known as racing for innocence. Pierce (2012) coins this as the influence of dominant white voices obscuring the realities of white privilege and portraying people of color as undeserving of various forms of aid. The backlash to people of color receiving aid from the government continues to be a topic of debate in higher education; thus, some view the SEA Admit Weekend as a controversial allocation of services. By investigating the actual work that goes behind the SEA Admit Weekend and the measurable outcomes that it yields, the invisible labor framework helps us dismantle the systems and institutional forces that make these types of programs invisible on a diverse campus.

Racial hierarchies are perpetuated through structural and organizational patterns. This can be seen by examining the racial tasks that are associated with minority positions in order to promote whiteness within the workplace (Wingfield, 2010; Poster et al., 2016). In this instance, whiteness does not mean white people or individuals but, rather, the culture and system for which whiteness is normalized and treated as the standard through culture, language, and self-presentation. Moreover, Acker (2006)

argues that “decisions about goals, locations, technologies, and investments are made at the top,” giving the dominant racial group more power to influence organizational culture, diversity, and norms (Wingfield 2010; Poster et al. 2016). This research utilizes the invisible labor framework to investigate the implications of diversity work at UCLA with regard to the racial hierarchies that students of color navigate.

## **Research Questions**

This study investigates the SEA Admit program to answer two essential questions: (1) How does the SEA Admit program contribute to UCLA’s campus diversity? and (2) How does UCLA as an institution continue to overlook SEA student diversity work?

## **Methods**

### **Participants**

From a pool of about 100 to 200 potential student participants affiliated with the SEA Admit program, the sample frame included one UCLA employee and four well-known student leaders who were contacted via email or social media to participate in the study. Two students did not respond or were unavailable due to time constraints. Due to the high turnover rate of student leaders in these organizing positions (which are typically one-year or semester-long positions), this study conducted snowball sampling. Snowball sampling refers to the act of requesting research participants to recruit other participants to join the research study. This method of identifying and locating research subjects helped connect this study with a pipeline of committed Southeast Asian student leaders and alumni, a group which would not have been readily available otherwise. Using this method of snowball sampling, the final group of participants included two current Southeast Asian students with a major role in SEA Admit 2018, one Southeast Asian alumnus who formerly chaired SEA Admit, one full-time staff member who manages programs like SEA Admit at UCLA, and one full-time administrator from the

UCLA Office of Admissions who works closely with SEA Admit organizers. All participants were split into two categories based on their standing at UCLA as a student or full-time employee. See the *Interview Methods Table* for the breakdown of interviewees. The saturation of each category indicates whether the opinions of the respondents aligned.

*Interview Methods Table:*

| INTERVIEWEE  | STATUS                         | SOURCE                  | SATURATION | FORMAT          | LENGTH | RECORDING  | TRANSCRIPT                |
|--|--------------------------------|-------------------------|------------|-----------------|--------|--|---------------------------|
| <b>Category 1:<br/>Students</b>                        |                                |                         | <b>NO</b>  |                 |        |  |                           |
| <i>Alumnus</i><br>Chao Thao                            | Conducted in person, 3/5/2018  | Sample frame            |            | Semi-structured | 39:04  | Audio recording  | Confidentiality requested |
| <i>Alumnus</i><br>Bianca Lin                           | No response                    | Sample frame            |            |                 |        |  |                           |
| <i>Student</i><br>Kevin Tang                           | No response                    | Sample frame            |            |                 |        |  |                           |
| <i>Student</i><br>Anna Nguyen                          | Conducted in person, 3/18/2018 | Referred by Chao Thao   |            | Semi-structured | 22:45  | Audio recording  | Confidentiality requested |
| <i>Student</i><br>Thuy Ngo                             | Conducted in person, 4/20/2018 | Referred by Anna Nguyen |            | Semi-structured | 14:23  | Audio recording  | Confidentiality requested |
| <b>Category 2:<br/>Full-time UCLA employees</b>        |                                |                         | <b>YES</b> |                 |        |  |                           |
| <i>First-year Experience Department</i><br>Cindy Wells | Conducted in person, 2/22/2018 | Sample frame            |            | Semi-structured | ~35:00 | Concurrent and supplementary notes w/1 hr                              | Confidentiality requested |
| <i>Office of Admissions</i><br>Rosetta Jones           | Conducted in person, 3/15/2018 | Referred by Cindy Wells |            | Semi-structured | ~45:00 | Audio recording (10:52 with concurrent and supplementary notes w/1 hr) | Confidentiality requested |

## Materials

Semi-structured interviews were conducted in person with each participant in a private office setting using a 2017 MacBook Pro to take notes during the interview or an iPhone X's

voice memo feature to record. Each interview lasted between 14 minutes and 45 minutes. Google Sheets and Documents were also used to transcribe each interview and perform coding procedures. Furthermore, public online information about SEA Admit was used for data analysis. Such materials included websites, UC student enrollment data, visual evidence, social media, and other documents provided by participants — planning manuals, lists of workshops, and planning meeting minutes.

## **Procedure**

Prior to each interview, participants read and signed a “Consent to Participate in Research” form (a template for which was provided by the UCLA Institutional Review Board) and were assigned a pseudonym. Each interview addressed three core questions: (1) What were your responsibilities for the SEA Admit program and how did you go about them?; (2) How has the SEA Admit program influenced you, others, and the overall diversity at UCLA?; and (3) What measures would you identify and use to describe the impact of the SEA Admit program? Each interview was transcribed and coded using descriptive, initial, and in vivo coding, as well as emotion and values coding. Based on the coding results and supplementary material, the findings were split into three components (labor, perceptive, and statistical segments of the SEA Admit program) to engage more attentively with the discourse of the theoretical frameworks.

## ***Findings***

### **Labor Components of the SEA Admit Program**

Each student respondent reported spending approximately 10 hours to 20 hours per week for preparation, which includes scheduling and attending meetings, strategic planning, staffing, training, development, workshops, hearings, phone-banking, management, grant writing, and cultural sensitivity and accountability procedures. The program’s vision, planning, and implementation are mostly regulated by the students. The

students are not hired or paid by the university, and they are to supervise all high school admits for the duration of their visit to the UCLA campus. All UCLA employee respondents assisted student groups in accessing and addressing further administrative support, funding opportunities, contact information, safety policies, outreach, campus timelines and deadlines, credibility, and recruitment.

A 14-page manual created and provided by Thao (2018) dictates how to run the program. According to the manual, students' responsibilities include financing, logistics, housing, food, participant outreach, transportation, tours, workshops, mentoring, entertainment, publicity, and alumni and professional outreach. In addition to being responsible for the planning and implementation stages of the SEA Admit program, Thao (2018) reported having one part-time job and commitments to two health organizations. Ngo (2018) similarly reported taking 25 academic units, and Nguyen (2018) stated, "There's constantly stuff to do. Even if you wanted to take like a 2-hour break and just watch Netflix, there will be messages constantly popping up from [other UCLA students]."

All student respondents collaborated with the UCLA Afrikan Student Union, Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán, Queer Alliance, Samahang Pilipino, and Muslim Student Association to organize a diversity luncheon that created a space for the admitted students to interact with individuals from different racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. According to Ngo (2018), the program workshop coordinators designed and implemented workshops to create spaces of intergroup dialogue about race, identity, cross-racial interaction, stereotypes, and financial aid.

Jones (2018) noted that in the admissions office, "Our emphasis has changed to enrollment management, which is really looking at the numbers, looking at the pipeline in terms of who you attract to introduce to UCLA, who you actually do outreach to, who you actually recruit, who you admit, and then who you get to come." SEA Admit reaches out to communities that UCLA would normally neglect, which includes low-income communities, first-generation students, and other students of color.



## **Perceptive Components of the SEA Admit Program**

All student respondents perceived their role in the program as volunteer or service work. In contrast, UCLA employee Wells (2018) noted, “It’s not volunteer work by any means. It makes campus community stronger, more well-rounded, diverse. Students put in a lot of work.”

When asked if respondents would accept monetary compensation for the type of work that they do for the program, Ngo (2018) responded with “I think money would definitely be nice just because ... people are giving up a lot sacrificing all their hours.” In contrast, Thao (2018) explained, “I wanted to advocate for class credits because I feel not like giving them money, but more like giving them some incentive because that’s a lot of hard work.” All respondents felt that the job of planning and implementing the SEA Admit program would make a great internship through which students could receive academic credit.

As former UCLA students themselves, all UCLA employee respondents acknowledged support and appreciation for how the UCLA campus had normalized the efforts to recruit and retain students from underrepresented backgrounds. These respondents also recognized how the campus had diversified racially and ethnically since their graduation. Furthermore, they acknowledged students’ feelings of burnout due to overwhelming responsibilities with other jobs, suffering grades, and stress.

When asked if someone without a Southeast Asian background could effectively undertake their role in the program, Ngo (2018) stated, “I don’t think they could do it ... They don’t have some kind of personal investment, [which] makes it really hard for it ... to reach its full potential.” On the other hand, Thao (2018) noted, “I don’t think it should only be for a Southeast Asian. It’s for everyone who knows how to advocate for Southeast Asian communities.”

## **Statistical Components of the SEA Admit Program**

The program reaches about 600 SEA-identified UCLA admitted students through phone-banking and retains about 150

in the program largely due to limited space and funding. From the program's first year in 2008 until today, UCLA sustained a constant average of student undergraduate enrollment from those who identify as Southeast Asian — Cambodian, Hmong, Laotian, Thai, and Vietnamese. Since 2016, the program has managed to encourage about 60-70% of attendees to submit their Statement of Intent to Register each year. Many of these students are also choosing between UC-Berkeley, Ivy Leagues, and/or colleges closer to their home.

The program costs approximately \$22,000 per year, including food, transportation, programming space, outreach, supplies, honorarium, printing, decorations, gift bags, equipment, and other miscellaneous items (Thao 2018; Nguyen 2018). It receives a baseline funding of approximately \$8,000 from the university.

## **Discussion**

This study asks: (1) How does the SEA Admit Weekend Program contribute to UCLA's campus diversity? and (2) How does UCLA as an institution continue to overlook SEA student diversity work? The findings contribute to the discourse on diversity by reflecting, intersecting, and challenging the ideas of the campus climate and invisible labor frameworks.

The SEA Admit program enacts diversity because it explicitly addresses the five interconnected dimensions of the campus climate framework. Firstly, the program makes an effort to increase the number of students at UCLA who identify as Southeast Asian, which addresses the compositional diversity dimension or “the numerical and proportional representation of various racial and ethnic groups on a campus” (Milem et al. 2005). Since SEA Admit began in 2008, UCLA has experienced a constant average increase in the number of students who identify as Southeast Asian. Moreover, the program has consistently succeeded in encouraging more than 60% of attendees to submit their Statement of Intent to Register at UCLA. Research suggests that more diversity often leads to more varied educational experiences that enrich students' learning and better prepare

them for civic engagement (Milem et al., 2005). Therefore, it is worth noting the significance of the time and resources allocated to increase the presence of students from underrepresented backgrounds. The SEA Admit program is one source of labor that continues to contribute to this diversity effort.

Secondly, the SEA Admit program actively works towards securing spaces of inclusion for Southeast Asian students who often come from low-income and first-generation backgrounds. This effort addresses the historical legacy of inclusion and exclusion at UCLA as a predominantly white institution. Hurtado et al. (1998) notes:

Campus leaders should not assume that members of their community (particularly incoming students) know these histories, nor should they assume that teaching about these histories will lead to dissatisfaction. By being clear about an institution's past history of exclusion and the detrimental impact that this history has had on the campus, colleges and universities may garner broader support for their efforts to become more diverse through affirmative action programs and other programs and services designed to improve the climate for diversity.

Hurtado et al. (1998) details the ways in which predominantly white institutions sustain fraternities and sororities, organizations which institutionalize exclusive access to campus activities, resources, political power, academic benefits, and legal protections. This limited access has played a profound role in the distribution of wealth, inequality, and exclusion within higher education; scholars are urging schools to broaden their access to educational opportunities within higher education. While we can see the SEA Admit program expanding access to underrepresented communities, we should continue to question the cost and labor that it necessitates, how a school warrants these efforts, and how these efforts play out in the larger scheme of the campus climate.

Thirdly, the SEA Admit program intentionally stimulates

dialogue among the recently admitted students through workshops about identity, intergroup relations, perceptions of discrimination, and racial attitudes (Thao, 2018; Ngo, 2018; Nguyen, 2018). These programs directly influence the psychological dimension of the campus climate framework. Gauging, interacting with, and influencing perceptions of race and ethnicity is not an easy task. It requires extensive and strategic planning to create spaces for productive exchange of thoughts, opinions, and ideas. These workshops help assess the ongoing dialogue about race, campus climate, and diversity (Thao, 2018; Ngo, 2018; Nguyen, 2018). Hurtado et al. (1998) emphasize the important role of ethnic student organizations and that “campuses must ensure that these services and organizations have enough staff, funding, and resources to serve students successfully.” While many other campus efforts may influence the psychological dimension of campus climate, “peer groups are critical in students’ educational experience” (Hurtado, et al., 1998). Hurtado et al. (1998) suggest that institutions of higher education should “incorporate these groups into the formal educational process ... make peer groups a deliberate and positive part of the educational process in colleges and universities.” While we can see UCLA subtly including the SEA Admit program as part of the educational and admissions process, the student labor and resources it requires should be more explicit.

Fourthly, the SEA Admit program encourages direct social interaction with other students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds through the program’s diversity luncheon and campus resources (Nguyen, 2018), which contributes to the overall behavioral dimension. The SEA Admit program stimulates an environment that encourages cross-racial interaction but also reveals racial hierarchies in its organizational design. Wingfield (2010) and Poster et al. (2016) suggest that racial hierarchies are perpetuated through structural and organizational patterns, specifically by looking at the racial tasks associated with positions that minorities occupy in order to promote whiteness within the workplace. Similarly, labor is subscribed to the students of the Southeast Asian community at UCLA who feel a passion, obligation, or mere commitment to serve UCLA by helping with

the implementation of the SEA Admit program. As volunteers, students spend nearly 10-20 hours per week to design workshops, phone-bank, obtain funding, and create a sense of community for historically underrepresented communities at UCLA — all at the cost of their own personal resources (Thao, 2018; Ngo, 2018; Nguyen, 2018). These activities perpetuate structural and organizational patterns that assign racial tasks with positions only to be filled by Southeast Asian students to promote the predominantly white institution. The passion, obligation, or mere commitment to serve is not a substitute for the compensation of diversity work. In order to stray away from these hierarchical forces within the institution, Hurtado et al. (1998) suggest:

Given the importance of these organizations in affirming a sense of identity for students and in their role of encouraging students to become involved in other aspects of campus life, campus leaders should vigorously support these organizations for all students, communicating their importance as essential educational resources.

In other words, the SEA Admit program itself is an essential educational resource that stemmed from student organizing, coalition-building, and activism. It should become institutionalized in a way that does not trivialize diversity work, but, instead, compensates it, honors it, and acknowledges the student labor it necessitates. By understanding the behaviors amongst students and between students and administration, the SEA Admit program serves as a lens for institutional diversity work and goals.

Lastly, the SEA Admit program plays a subtle role in the educational and admissions process at UCLA, which impacts the organizational and structural dimension. After years of advocacy and student coalition-building, the SEA Admit program was able to secure baseline funding from the university to further institutionalize their role as an organized resource for underrepresented communities at UCLA (Thao, 2018). While the approximate costs of the program exceed their yearly \$8,000 baseline funding (Thao, 2018), much progress can be done to


further realize and institutionalize the SEA Admit program efforts. Hurtado et al. (1998) recognizes that “campuses are complex social systems defined by the relationships between the people, bureaucratic procedures, structural arrangements, institutional goals and values, traditions, and larger socio-historical environments.” Further support for this type of diversity work and the success of these efforts will rely on “leadership, firm commitment, adequate resources, collaboration, monitoring, and long-range planning” (Hurtado, et al., 1998). Based on these findings, campus stakeholders and administrators must involve student voices more deliberately in their decision-making processes regarding allocating funding and resources to improve the campus climate and diversity goals through intentional and inclusive means. While diversity work and labor come at a high cost, it should operate in a manner that protects the communities it intends to serve — not exploit them.

Overall, the SEA Admit program intersects with the UCLA campus climate in ways that contribute to diversity efforts and goals. While the SEA Admit program crucially contributes to diversity at UCLA, it is not void of invisible labor sentiments. When diversity is intended to provide opportunities for historically underrepresented and underserved communities, it should proceed in a manner that resists racial hierarchies. The SEA Admit program unveiled ways in which Southeast Asian students specifically were more prone to conducting invisible labor and experiencing academic stress, time constraints, and economic hardship through their own educational experiences (Thao, 2018; Ngo, 2018; Nguyen, 2018). This critically important yet taxing work should not go unnoticed.

### **Limitations & Future Directions**

The SEA Admit program is only one of many diversity efforts at UCLA that is run and initiated by the student body in measurable and effective ways. This research only explores one effort made specifically by the Southeast Asian community due to their unique history of exclusion from predominantly white institutions. Future research may focus on additional communities’

unique historical ties to exclusion to understand *their* methods of navigation in predominantly white institutions. As universities across America become more racially and ethnically diverse, campuses will need to learn how to enact diversity in intentional ways that do not perpetuate racial hierarchies. Instead, universities must value all laborers who conduct measurable and effective diversity work, especially those representing communities of color. Future research should also gauge the opportunities that students may or may not have to access the funding and resources specifically related to the diversity goals that an institution intends to pursue.



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