COUNT ME IN!: ETHNIC DATA DISAGGREGATION ADVOCACY, RACIAL MATTERING, AND LESSONS FOR RACIAL JUSTICE COALITIONS

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This article presents a case study of the 2006-2007 Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) student-led Count Me In! (CMI) campaign. This successful campaign convinced the University of California (UC) to account for 23 AAPI ethnic identities in its data system. Celebrated as a victory for AAPI interests in discourses over racial equity in education, which are often defined by a Black-white racial paradigm, CMI should also be remembered as originating out of efforts to demonstrate AAPI solidarity with Black students and to counter racial wedge politics. In the evolution of the CMI campaign, efforts for cross-racial solidarity soon faded as the desire for institutional validation of AAPI educational struggles was centered. Our case study analysis, guided by sociological frameworks of racism, revealed key limitations in the CMI campaign related to the intricate relations between people of color advocating for racial justice. We conclude with cautions for research and campaigns for ethnically disaggregated AAPI data, and encourage advocates and scholars to address AAPI concerns over educational disparities while simultaneously and intentionally building coalitions for racial equity in higher education.

The call for ethnic data disaggregation has become a central, contemporary

rallying issue among Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) college student

activists and others interested in addressing AAPI disparities in higher education (Dizon,

2011; Museus & Chang, 2009; National Commission on Asian American and Pacific

Islander Research in Education [CARE], 2013; Teranishi, 2010). Emerging from a

desire to combat an observed invisibility of AAPIs from research and discourse in higher

education (Poon, Squire, Kodama, Byrd, Chan, Manzano, Furr, & Bishundat, 2015),

scholars and advocates have often attributed this research oversight to the population being racially stereotyped as universally high achieving (CARE, 2008, 2013; Museus & Chang, 2009; Teranishi, 2010). Many have asserted that such assumptions, or what they have called the "model minority myth," contribute toward institutional neglect of educational disparities and barriers faced by some AAPIs, especially Pacific Islanders and Southeast Asian Americans (Museus & Chang, 2009; Museus & Kiang, 2009; Teranishi, 2010). Accordingly, scholars and policy advocates often reason that ethnically disaggregated data on AAPIs can reveal educational deficiencies that fit a dominant framework of the characteristics of a racially minoritized population (Nakanishi, 1989; Poon et al., 2015), and thus deserving of additional attention.

Previous research has not focused on the implications of disaggregation campaigns for race relations, particularly between people of color seeking to advance racial equity in education. Therefore, this article explores the racial ramifications of one such campaign through a case study of the 2006-07 Count Me In! (CMI) campaign for AAPI ethnic disaggregation in the University of California, guided by the following question. How did CMI campaign leaders racially frame AAPIs in the public discourse over racial equity in higher education and articulate the need for disaggregated ethnic data? CMI represented a student-led initiative that articulated the positionality and interests of AAPIs in racialized debates over college access. Rejecting racial wedge politics, CMI leaders sought to disprove the image of high Asian achievement by demanding ethnically disaggregated data to show that some AAPIs continue to experience educational deficiencies. These student leaders anticipated that empirical proofs of AAPI disparities would debunk the model minority myth and demonstrate how

their educational needs deserve additional resources and attention. However, because

CMI did not address the ideology of antiblackness and systemic white supremacy,

foundational to the model minority myth, it was unable to disrupt the role of Asian

Americans as a racial wedge.

In the next section, we explain in more detail how antiblackness and systemic

white supremacy are central to the persistence of the model minority myth, and

accordingly frame the terms of efforts aimed at dismantling this myth. Through our

analysis of interview data, we highlight racial implications of how CMI campaign leaders

asserted AAPI interests in public discourses. This paper ends with a discussion of our

analysis of the CMI campaign and presents suggestions for future research and

advocacy for racial equity in higher education.

Conceptual Framework

It is important to understand how the relatively new construction of Asian

Americans as a model minority serves to maintain systemic white supremacy through

antiblackness. The model minority myth discursively perpetuates racial conflict between

Asian Americans and other racially minoritized populations by deploying the stereotype

of monolithic Asian achievement as a *model* to discipline how people of color,

particularly how Black people, should behave. It chastises those who would challenge

racialized structures that sustain white dominance in the U.S. (Kim 1999; Kumashiro

2008; Osajima 2000). Asserting that the possession of sheer grit and determination, or

lack thereof, explains racial inequalities, the model minority trope distracts attention

away from systemic white supremacy, which therefore remains unquestioned and intact.

Appearing during the height of urban uprisings and the Civil Rights Movement in the

U.S. throughout the 1960s, the imagery of the model minority and its racially divisive consequences persist today (Nopper, 2014; Osajima, 2000).

As the model minority, Asian Americans are involuntarily or voluntarily cast in a supporting role to reproduce white supremacy through antiblackness. We argue that they have choices in how they may shape their role and positionality in debates over racialized policies. For example, while Asian Americans have historically defended affirmative action and contested portrayals of the policy harming them, some Asian Americans more recently have voluntarily played a supporting role in advancing racial wedge politics in their efforts to roll back affirmative action in college admissions (Park & Liu, 2014; Poon & Segoshi, in press). Such choices reflect confrontations with questions of "when and where" racially minoritized and engendered peoples can enter "into the American community" and public consciousness (Okihiro, 1994, p. 7). In this case study, we recognize that CMI leaders were confronted with questions of when, where, and we add, how Asian Americans can gain valid entry into public discourses over racial equity in education. As will be seen, student activists in the Count Me In! campaign made noteworthy choices in their struggle to articulate how they and their interests fit in debates over racial equity in college access. These decisions bore implications for policy and race in higher education.

The Model Minority's Reinforcement of White Supremacy. The reproduction of the model minority myth is one way by which systemic white supremacy is able to endure (Kim, 1999; Wu, 2015). White supremacy, according to Mills (1997), is "the most important political system of recent global history – the system of domination by which white people have historically ruled over and, in certain important ways, continue

to rule over nonwhite people" (pp. 1-2). How it operates and persists is often obscured and disguised, and therefore, must be made visible if it is to be confronted and dismantled (Mills, 1997). Concomitant to the conservation of white supremacy is the persistence and centrality of antiblackness, an ideology defining Black people as non-human (Sexton 2010b). We are explicit with our use of the term antiblackness, because as Dumas (2016) explained, "…analyses of racial(ized) discourse and policy processes in education must grapple with cultural disregard for and disgust with blackness" (p. 12). Admission policies are racialized not just through unequal representation of people of color in general, but due to a fundamental "concern with the bodies of Black people...and the threat posed by [Black students] to the educational well-being of other students" (Dumas, 2016, p. 12) including Asian Americans who are often racialized as academically meritorious.

Within the context of the mutually reproductive relationship between the ideologies of white supremacy and antiblackness in education, the model minority myth emerged in the mid-twentieth century as a means to reinforce and advance these ideologies (Wu, 2015). So-called positive stereotypes of Asian American achievement, hard work, and upward mobility only emerged within the last half-century, demonstrating the adaptability of systemic white supremacy (Wu, 2015). Through the construction of a seemingly complementary stereotype of universal high academic achievement among Asian Americans in relation to African Americans, the myth allows a discreet reproduction of white supremacy (Kim, 1999).

Model Minority Myth Misconceptions Obscuring Antiblackness in Higher Education. Insightful and critical analyses of how the model minority myth operates

through a process of racial triangulation can help advance effective interventions for radical racial justice in higher education (Kim, 1999). However, a significant amount of research in higher education has forwarded an ahistoric misconception of the model minority myth, often narrowly defining it as a stereotype of Asian American high academic achievement and other cultural and racial stereotypes (e.g. social awkwardness, subservience and silence in the face of oppression, hardworking) (Poon et al., 2015). Guided by these incomplete definitions and framing of the model minority, there is a common focus on disconfirming stereotypical images of achievement and social deficiencies, which fails to engage in interrogations of antiblackness and white supremacy fundamental to the myth (Poon et al., 2015).

Accordingly, advocacy for ethnically disaggregated data often emerges from a desire to counter the racial generalization of universal academic achievement among AAPIs. The underlying logic relies on a deficit thinking model, which posits "that the student who fails in school does so because of internal deficits or deficiencies" (Valencia, 1997, p. 2). Through deficit thinking, mainstream policymaking discourse defines racial minorities in education as those who lag behind white standards of achievement (Gutierrez, 2006; Nakanishi, 1989). Consequently, through this lens, students of color like AAPIs as an aggregate group who do not exhibit deficiencies (i.e. who are not "at-risk"), according to conventional notions of educational well-being, do not require attention. Although access to ethnically disaggregated data can contest the stereotype of universal AAPI achievement, it does not challenge the dehumanizing and limiting deficit-based definition of students of color, and the underlying anti-black ideology of the model minority myth. Additionally, by narrowly defining racism in

education according to state approved standards of achievement, other ways that racism negatively affects AAPI and other students of color, such as through experiences of racial bullying, mental health challenges, and marginalizing campus racial climates, often go unaddressed (Museus & Park, 2015; Poon, 2011). Therefore, efforts to combat the "model minority myth" that rely on demonstrating pervasive educational disparities among AAPIs fall short of addressing the root problem of systemic white supremacy endemic to U.S. higher education (Poon et al., 2015).

Therefore, informed by critical understandings of the model minority myth we contend that AAPI ethnic data disaggregation advocacy efforts seeking to dismantle the model minority myth without confronting anti-black ideology inherent in the myth will inevitably fall short of advancing a broad agenda of racial justice. Though well-intentioned, disaggregation campaigns aimed at highlighting educational disparities among AAPIs often disregard the need to address anti-black ideology in their desire for inclusion of AAPIs in mainstream discourses over education policy and practices, which are rooted in deficit frameworks. For example, Museus and Kiang (2009) explained that, "although the struggles that various racial/ethnic minority populations face are unique, evidence does suggest that AAPIs face many challenges similar to those other groups of color because of their minority status" (p. 8). Such arguments suggest that disaggregated data can demonstrate educational deficiencies among AAPIs similar to those among other students of color (i.e. presumably Black and Latinx students) and therefore warrant more research and policy attention. Although the call for additional attention on marginalized AAPI populations is important, this analysis relies on dominant deficit notions prevalent in education research and policy as well as

incomplete understandings of educational failure among students of color (Gutierrez, 2006) to counter the model minority myth. Additionally, it overlooks anti-black ideology fundamental to the myth. Furthermore, such analyses and arguments may inadvertently advance what Sexton (2010a) has called "people-of-color-blindness," which disregards material inequalities, in both power and positionality, between people of color in favor of advancing an idealization of racial solidarity through a white and non-white divide at the expense of efforts to clearly confront antiblackness. Accounting for the relationship between the model minority myth, antiblackness, and systemic white supremacy, we examined the Count Me In! campaign to reveal lessons on AAPI data disaggregation efforts particularly related to possibilities in building more effective multi-racial coalitions.

Constructing the Count Me In! Narrative

What are the consequences of AAPI disaggregation campaigns for complex relations between AAPIs and other people of color? This case study identified racial implications of the CMI campaign on a campus that was confronted with an acute crisis of low Black undergraduate student enrollment. According to Stake (1995), a case study method is appropriate when there is an interest in gaining an in-depth understanding of a contemporary phenomenon within a bounded system over time. Case studies also focus on the relationship of the phenomenon to the environment and produce context-dependent knowledge (Yin, 2009). In this instance, we engaged in a critical study to examine how AAPI student activists at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) framed their campaign for ethnically disaggregated data throughout the University of California system and navigated racial power structures. To support the

reader's comprehension of the narrative, we have provided a list of acronyms used throughout the manuscript in table 1.

Table 1: List of Acronyms

Acronym	Explanation
AAPI	Asian American and Pacific Islander
APC	Asian Pacific Coalition at UCLA
ASU	Afrikan Student Union at UCLA
CMI	Count Me In! Campaign
MRP	UC AAPI Policy Multi-campus Research Program
PISA	Pacific Islander Student Association at UCLA
UC	University of California
UCOP	University of California Office of the President
UCSA	University of California Students Association
UKS	United Khmer Students at UCLA

Data Collection

Data sources for this study consisted of individual interviews with ten CMI student leaders, newspaper clippings reporting on the campaign, a short student-produced video explaining the campaign, and other documents. We primarily used archival materials to understand the political and social contexts of the CMI campaign, and to triangulate interview data. During spring 2009, over a year after the University of California Office of the President (UCOP) announced that it would begin to ethnically disaggregate AAPI data in its data collection systems throughout the ten campus system (Vázquez, 2007), ten individual and semi-structured interviews were conducted with student leaders at UCLA to capture the narrative recollections of their experiences initiating and leading the CMI campaign.

The identification and recruitment of interview participants was facilitated by the authors' personal relationships with CMI student leaders. Our social positions allowed us to use a purposeful sampling technique in identifying and recruiting key CMI student

leaders to participate in this study (Patton, 2002). We also identified and recruited other student leaders for interviews with whom we had no relationships, using a snowball method (Merriam, 2009). Through this approach, we were able to interview a group of student leaders who were both visibly at the forefront of the campaign and those who were more active behind the scenes. The ten student participants represented a range of ethnic identities (see Table 2). Six of the ten subjects identified as women. To protect their identities, we used pseudonyms throughout the manuscript.

Table 2: Interviewed CMI Student Leaders

Pseudonym	Description
Edwin	Third generation, Chinese American male
Elei	Samoan American female
Naoko	Third/fourth generation, Japanese American female
Na-Yeun	Second generation, Korean American female
Nhan	Second generation, Teo Chew American male
Oudom	1.5 generation, Khmer American female
Rachel	Second generation, Filipina American female
Sam	Fourth generation, Japanese American male
Sophea	Second generation, Cambodian American female
Vanny	Second generation, Cambodian American male

We asked participants to describe their development and involvements as student leaders on campus to gain an understanding of the contexts (Creswell, 2007) that led each individual to the CMI campaign. We then asked them to share their reflections on the CMI campaign, recollections of its timeline and progression, personal motivations, and participation in the campaign. We also invited student participants to share any mementos, notes, and other materials from the campaign to help in the documentation of the CMI story.

]Analysis

We deductively analyzed and coded the data for emergent themes related to the guiding research question (Creswell, 2002): how were CMI campaign leaders racially positioning AAPIs in the discourse over racial equity in higher education and articulating the need for disaggregated ethnic data? Guided by a critical understanding of the relationship between the model minority myth, antiblackness, and systemic white supremacy, we analyzed the CMI story to identify underlying racial dynamics in the campaign's development and decisions student leaders made. We coded the transcripts and other texts using an open coding process, guided by the research question to break "…down [the] qualitative data into discrete parts, closely examining them, and comparing them for similarities and differences" (Saldaña, 2009, p. 81). After initially coding the data, we discussed emergent common themes, determined salient thematic codes, and then engaged in an axial coding process (Saldaña, 2009) to surface how CMI leaders discussed race in higher education and particularly in advocating for ethnically disaggregated AAPI data.

Researchers' Positionality

During the 2006-07 and 2007-08 academic years, two of the authors were students who were peripherally involved in the CMI campaign. The first author was a graduate student and president of the UC Student Association (UCSA), which represents UC student interests to the UC Board of Regents, UCOP, and California state legislature. Leading up to and during the UCLA CMI campaign, the first author informally met with key student leaders to offer advice and insights based on knowledge gained from the first author's consistent interactions and formal meetings with key

administrators within UCOP. The second author was an undergraduate student leader at UC Berkeley and supported the CMI campaign at the Berkeley campus.

Enhancing Credibility

To enhance the study's credibility, we engaged in a peer debriefing process, which was aligned with our critical paradigm and interest in utilizing an external lens for establishing the study's credibility (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Because two of the authors were personally acquainted with several interview participants, the third author served as an external reviewer of the study to bolster its credibility. In peer debriefing, the external reviewer is "someone who is familiar with the research or phenomenon being explored… provides support, plays devil's advocate, challenges the researchers' assumptions, pushes the researchers to the next step methodologically, and asks hard questions about methods and interpretations" (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 129). As an outsider, the third author pushed the first two authors to clarify aspects of the study and interpretations of data, analysis, and implications.

In addition, we reviewed archival documents to provide additional context for the interviews. The archival documents included newspaper clippings, campaign materials, and communications. Reviewing these materials, we compared documented information with interview data to produce a comprehensive narrative of the campaign's inception, evolution, completion, and underlying values.

CMI Campaign Narrative

In this section, we chronologically present the CMI story to highlight thematic interpretations of events. CMI exemplified a project of AAPI student activism to "forge their own place in campus life" (Rhoads, 1998, p. 623) and to articulate when, where,

and how AAPIs should gain entry (Okihiro, 1994) into racialized policy discourses over education equity. CMI tried to reconstruct how AAPIs are understood within the education equity discourse at the UC and to counter being used as a racial wedge in debates over equity in admissions. Although it initially emerged from AAPI student leaders' struggles to show solidarity to Black students whose numbers were in significant decline at the university, the CMI campaign eventually centered AAPI desires to be recognized in broader policy debates over college access. In so doing, there was a displacement of the struggle over how AAPIs could show solidarity for Black student college access.

How do AAPIs fit in Debates over Racial Equity and Admissions?

Entering the start of the 2006-07 academic year, UCLA revealed that less than 100 African American students had enrolled in the incoming first-year class of over 4,800 students. In response, African American student leaders worked with other student organizations representing various constituencies to open the academic year with a campus protest titled the "Day of Reckoning," calling for increased racial diversity on campus (Burke, 2006). Student leaders from the Asian Pacific Coalition (APC), the pan-ethnic coalition of AAPI student organizations, alerted AAPI student leaders and organizations about the rally, calling on them to attend and participate in the action. According to Sam, APC's chair during the 2006-07 year:

> No one showed up, not even [other APC leaders]. The only AAPIs there were me and Nhan. There were a few others, but the only [AAPI] people there the whole time was me and Nhan. It was really sad. We just felt horrible. I think at that point, we realized that we need to figure this out first - where we [AAPIs] fit into [the admissions issue].

Sam struggled to articulate how AAPIs fit within the contentious issue, as APC's representative to the coalition meetings between the chairs and presidents of student organizations including the Afrikan Student Union (ASU) and MEChA. Describing his experiences during these meetings, he explained:

> For me it was awkward to be in that room and organizing on this issue when I had trouble articulating how [AAPIs] felt as a community about this. People would be like, "what does the Asian American community think about this? If we add more Black students, there's going to be some Asian American students who won't get in, the numbers would decrease." But I think in these conversations, I really felt this homogenization of our community and I think I felt that a lot. People in the [coalition] space, really, to keep things simple, thought of [AAPIs] as just one group. I was in meetings with some [campus administrators] and I would feel the same way. They were very concerned with the African American population and numbers. When we wanted to talk about Pacific Islander numbers, they weren't very interested in that. For them it might have been more the media or the press, but I also think they didn't understand … the diversity and the problems specific [AAPI] communities felt.

Sam's reflections revealed a challenge in articulating AAPI interests in matters of admissions and racial equity at UCLA, faced with a specific institutional focus on African American representation defining racial inequalities in college access. His comments also suggested that he felt that the availability of data to demonstrate disparities between AAPI groups could help educate his peers and university administrators, and also help reconcile tensions between AAPI self-interest and desires to contribute to the common good.

On a campus with AAPIs collectively representing nearly 40 percent of the undergraduate enrollment, APC leaders wondered how they could motivate their AAPI peers to participate in protests over the under-representation of other students of color. According to Sam, there was, "…confusion in not being able to articulate exactly what [AAPIs] wanted…. People were like, "What are we asking for? How is this relevant to

us?" I couldn't answer the question." A conservative opinion piece published in the

student newspaper would soon provoke AAPI student leaders to answer these

questions.

"Blame the Asians"

Criticizing the "Day of Reckoning" protest, Jed Levine (2006), a white student and

columnist for the student newspaper, the *Daily Bruin*, called on the UCLA community to

"blame the Asians" for the undergraduate demographics, stating that he:

> [Empathized] with members of the Black Student Union and MEChA who
> spoke at the rally. As a fellow underrepresented minority at UCLA, I agree
> that it's hard to find other white people I can identify with on a campus that
> feels more like Taipei than L.A.

Levine invoked hackneyed racist imagery throughout his satirical editorial,

particularly in misrepresenting affirmative action admissions policies:

> By keeping the Asian-American student numbers under control and more
> accurate to their representation in California, we can free up 26 percent of
> the student body for members of underrepresented groups. The result is
> a win-win situation: fewer rolling backpacks, more diversity. These
> overflow Asians could then be funneled into a new UC campus where they
> can be free to explore their identities. Indeed the UC system has a brand
> new campus that fits the bill perfectly. Say hello to the UC Merced
> Pandas.

Levine mocked people who questioned test scores and high school grades as the best

measures of academic potential. Deliberately engaging in racial wedge politics, he

painted Asian Americans as academic achievers and suggested that Latinx and African

American students were undeserving of admission to UCLA, stating:

> I agree with the chair of MEChA that the UC Regents are using unfair
> means to admit UC students. Using grades and test scores as a measure
> of academic success is clearly just a way to show preference to Asian-
> American students, who are better at both, and thus promote the status
> quo. Why else would they focus on such erroneous admissions criteria as

grades and test scores? What is this, an academic institution? I certainly hope not.

The incident galvanized APC leaders to publicly respond with a critical letter to the editor in the *Daily Bruin*. Co-signed by the presidents of the ASU, MEChA, and the Pacific Islands Student Association (PISA), most of the published letter challenged the contention that Asian Americans were over-represented at UCLA. It explained that AAPI students included many ethnic identities with some groups struggling to gain admission to UCLA:

> With so many people included under the term "Asian American," of course we are entering the university at high rates. But are we really? After 24 Pacific Islander students entered UCLA this fall, their grand total has come to about 50 students. Hmong students were happy to welcome three new students this year: a freshman, a transfer and a grad student. They're finally up to a whopping 18 students at UCLA, according to the Association of Hmong Students (Conde, Johnson, Osajima, & Riesch, 2006 para. 7-9).

The central contention of the published letter, which was edited by newspaper staff, was that Levine wrongly erased the educational disparities found among AAPI ethnic groups. However, the original letter contended that Levine not only dismissed these realities, but that he was wrong to pit Asian Americans against other students of color in advancing his agenda against racial equity in college access. The substantial edit of the letter silenced its primary intent to counter Levine's engagement in racial wedge politics and his criticism of student protests for diversity.

Consequently, APC gained a clearer perspective on the need for AAPIs to engage in debates over racial equity on campus. As a result, they began planning for a comprehensive campaign to meaningfully assert, and have AAPI voices counted in campus debates of racial justice. Referring to the *Daily Bruin* editorial, Nhan explained,

"We used that article a lot to illustrate what others' perspectives were on the AAPI community. If we don't represent ourselves, other people are going to define us."

Centering AAPI Interests

Although APC leaders initially struggled to encourage AAPI students and organizations to support actions addressing the stunningly low African American enrollment at UCLA, the resulting CMI campaign had no trace of this original intent. Faced with the challenge of articulating an AAPI perspective on the admissions controversy, Nhan recalled that APC:

> decided to have a leadership roundtable. They brought together the presidents of all [the AAPI] organizations and… and talked about how to have a long term campaign that wasn't just reactionary [to the admissions issues], but something that would be beneficial to these communities. What do these organizations want? What can APC do to bring together the community? Everyone wanted more funding. This idea actually originated from a Taiwanese student. Domestically you could argue that Taiwanese students tend to be the most privileged because of their access to resources. But it makes sense because they want to be recognized as Taiwanese not Chinese.

Nhan suggested an interest in increasing institutional funding directed toward AAPI student outreach and desires for distinct ethnic identities to be institutionally recognized. Sam also discussed a shared concern over access to institutional grants distributed to address the needs of student populations demonstrating educational needs:

> [A student] from [the United Khmer Students (UKS)] was like we want to start an outreach program. We want to apply to this grant, but we have no way of knowing how many Cambodians there are on campus. We just go to the Registrar's office and say, "this name sort of sounds Cambodian." We were like this is a problem. How can they really cater to the needs of [AAPIs] on campus when they don't even know how many of us there are?

Naoko, APC chair during the 2007-08 academic year further explained the

community self-empowerment and ethnic pride motivations behind the CMI

campaign:

> Students on campus who were serving these [AAPI] communities didn't
> have data to do concrete things like justify funding for their organizations.
> They would have to track themselves on campus. Just to have that data
> would be helpful, like on a funding level but just for them to have that
> information. Also, it would promote better understanding, break the Asian
> stereotype that's around and show how diverse the community is…We're
> not all the same. Asian doesn't just mean Chinese, Japanese, [and]
> Korean.

These sentiments demonstrated desires for accurate representations of diverse

AAPI identities, their distinct educational needs, and the ability to advocate for

increased institutional supports targeting AAPI students. Thus, the CMI campaign

quickly transformed into an advocacy effort for disaggregated AAPI data showing

educational disparities faced by AAPIs that could be leveraged into arguments for

institutional support and resources. Centering the interests of AAPI students, APC

leaders implicitly shelved concerns over Black student enrollment in constructing the

CMI campaign.

After nearly a year of dialogues with AAPI student leaders, APC launched the

CMI campaign during the spring 2007 quarter with the following three goals: 1) Enhance

UC admission policy to include data collection on students of Bangladeshi, Cambodian,

Hmong, Indonesian, Laotian, Malaysian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, Taiwanese, and Thai

backgrounds; 2) Separate Pacific Islander into a new racial category within admissions;

and, 3) Provide financial support for outreach projects that specifically target AAPI

groups facing severe educational inequity. The initial interest in asserting AAPI

solidarity with African American students to address the under-representation of Black students was notably absent in the eventual stated campaign goals.

Campaign Strategy

To achieve their campaign goals, CMI leaders identified key targets and developed a strategic plan. The first challenge in developing a campaign strategy was to identify a primary target, which is the organizational unit possessing power to make the desired policy change. Nhan remembered:

> First, we thought it would be a UCLA policy change but that became unrealistic because when you apply to UC, it's a common application. It's logistically not possible to change the application for one school [within the multi-campus University]. It had to be a system-wide method, which changed our targets.

At first, CMI leaders focused their efforts at the UC Board of Regents. After a conversation in August 2007 with the President of the UC Student Association, CMI leaders decided that the Regents would not be the best campaign target. Convincing UCOP's Vice President for Student Affairs, Judy Sakaki, to make administrative changes would be more expedient (Dizon, 2011). After learning that the data system changes students wanted could be achieved more efficiently through an administrative decision rather than through a potentially controversial Regent vote, CMI leaders chose to target Vice President Sakaki, who had already verbally expressed a desire to support the CMI campaign goals to the UCSA President.

CMI leaders then designed its strategy to be primarily educational. The hallmark tactic of the campaign was to raise general awareness and accumulate hard evidence of public support for ethnic data disaggregation by asking students to sign postcards. Nhan explained:

> That was how we were going to get our members actively engaged in this campaign, to get them talking to folks. The postcards were really straightforward. You signed the back. The front had the three goals. It was an effective tool because it got folks talking to individuals. And it wasn't just talking to AAPI students. It had to be the entire campus.

During summer 2007, CMI leaders also began to talk with students from other UC campuses about the campaign. According to Naoko, "We made close connections to Irvine and Berkeley, and a little bit with San Diego. So we still felt united that way." Through social networks, the campaign quickly spread to UC Irvine, UC San Diego, and UC Berkeley, which became the primary site for student organizing in the northern half of the state. Also, students from all nine undergraduate campuses participated in the postcard campaign.

In addition to numerous individual conversations facilitated by the postcards, CMI organizers held press events, which educated the public and presented important displays of public support. At UC Berkeley, student organizers coordinated a week of teach-ins about ethnic disaggregation and held a rally in November 2007. That same month, UCLA hosted the "Out of the Margins" Conference organized by the newly established UC AAPI Policy Multi-Campus Research Program (MRP) – a coalition of more than 50 UC faculty whose research addressed questions of policy and AAPIs (Dizon, 2011). Working with CMI leaders, the MRP conference organizers invited UCOP Vice President Sakaki to attend the conference and allowed CMI student leaders the opportunity to publicly articulate their campaign goals.

For the "Out of the Margins" conference, CMI leaders wall papered the conference space with thousands of signed postcards and prepared a press conference to highlight their efforts and the need for ethnically disaggregated data. At the end of

the conference, Sakaki announced that the following year's UC admissions application would include 23 AAPI ethnicities with which applicants could identify. "Pacific Islander" became its own racial category and was further disaggregated to recognize Native Hawaiian, Guamanian/Chamorro, Samoan, Tongan, Fijian and Other Pacific Islander identities (Vázquez, 2007).

Reflecting on the campaign success, CMI leaders recognized the power of building AAPI panethnic student coalitions, and importance of working with other students of color toward common goals. UKS leader Vanny shared, "[CMI] recognized my group and my circumstances, and said, 'we know you guys have problems and we want to work on this with you.'" In addition to panethnic coalition building, CMI students recognized the importance of working to develop alliances with other students of color at UCLA. Nhan explained that,

> [CMI] had to get other students of color involved, not just Asians. It's one thing when AAPI students ask for this, but it's another thing when it's a rainbow coalition of folks, so we were really fortunate that other organizations understood the issue.

According to CMI leaders, asking students from all racial identities to sign postcards and to learn about the need for disaggregated data expanded was an effective strategy.

A Campaign for Racial Mattering and Defining Ethnic Identity

The CMI campaign was a fight for the mattering of AAPI populations in institutional considerations of racial equity in college admissions. To answer questions of when, where, and how AAPIs should enter racial equity debates over higher education, it focused on combatting stereotypes of universal AAPI academic success by calling for disaggregated data, guided by the belief that demonstrations of educational deficits among AAPI groups would counter the institutional neglect of AAPI educational

experiences and needs, and increase access to resources for outreach. For example, Sophea, a Cambodian American student leader, shared "[We need to] get statistics for the 'Other Asian' categories. We need evidence for funding." Without adequate data from the University to support their recruitment and retention efforts, student leaders like Christine Santos from PISA, "… [resorted] to guessing through last names" in student directories and other lists (Truong, 2007).

While Asian American students, who identified with ethnic subgroups lumped together by the "Other Asian" category at the University questioned the appropriateness and meaning of the label, Pacific Islander students participated in the CMI campaign to establish an altogether separate racial category to represent their unique population. Elei, who identifies as Samoan American, was clear about the role of the Pacific Islander student community in the campaign for disaggregation. She recounted, "We're Samoan and Chamorro, we're [Pacific Islander], but then according to the University and state we're [Asian Pacific Islander]. It's something that always bothered us and we know it bothered a lot of people in PISA too." As Kauanui (2008) argued "The problematic terms 'Asian-Pacific American' (APA) and 'Asian Pacific Islander' (API) not only offer no recognition that Pacific Islanders already constitute a pan-ethnic group that is distinct from Asian Americans, they also efface Pacific political claims based on indigeneity" (para. 4).

The campaign was motivated by a desire to have a range of AAPI ethnic identities and experiences recognized by the university. This sentiment is illustrated by the name of the campaign itself. According to Sam:

> We all thought [Count Me In!] was a really cool name when we first heard it. It was Nhan's idea. It was going to be [called] the AAPI Admissions

Coalition. Then Nhan comes in, "how about Count Me In?" It resonated with a lot of people. You know, a lot of people felt like the African American community was getting all of this media attention, all of this money was being poured into scholarships, [AAPIs] weren't being counted in. [AAPI student groups] couldn't even apply for a [recruitment and retention project] grant because they didn't have the numbers [demonstrating educational deficits] to justify their program.

Sam's comments also suggested that some AAPI students' motivations for the CMI campaign were informed by a resentment or envy toward the institutional attention received by African Americans. As the desire for ethnic recognition and access to limited institutional resources fueled more AAPI students to participate in APC's call for action, CMI's focus on Black student enrollment at UCLA fell to the wayside. The collective desire for disaggregated data and access to limited institutional resources led CMI to overlook the context of antiblackness central to the model minority myth that the students believed they were combatting.

Discussion

We examined the Count Me In! campaign as a case study of an advocacy effort for AAPI ethnic data disaggregation in higher education. The study was guided by the question: how did CMI campaign leaders racially frame AAPIs in public discourses over racial equity in higher education and articulate the need for disaggregated ethnic data? Guided by a critical recognition of the fundamental nature of antiblackness to the model minority myth in maintaining white supremacy, our findings revealed complex racial politics over how some AAPIs have vocalized their interests in racial equity debates through advocating for ethnic data disaggregation. Underlying the CMI campaign for ethnically disaggregated educational data is a desire to spotlight educational deficiencies among AAPI populations to access limited institutional resources available

to communities of color that stereotypically fit a problematic deficit framework. Although

access to more data is invaluable to understand a fuller picture of AAPI educational

access, a narrow focus on demonstrating how AAPIs also experience failure compared

to state defined standards of middle-class whiteness implicitly serves to accept a

hegemonic framework grounded in white supremacy. While CMI should be

commended for successfully transforming the University of California systemwide data

collection system to include 23 AAPI ethnic group categories, the campaign failed to

advance a more expansive critique of the various ways systemic whiteness

marginalizes students of color.

Although the CMI campaign originally emerged from concerns over declining

African American student enrollment at UCLA coupled with the student newspaper

depiction of Asian Americans as a model minority to dismiss demands for the university

to increase racial diversity, the desire to deepen solidarity between AAPIs and African

Americans was soon lost. By the time the CMI campaign was launched, APC student

leaders' concerns over forging solidarity with African American students to combat

Black under-representation had faded from the campaign's goals and messaging. In

fact, there may have even been some resentment or jealousy over what seemed to be a

sustained institutional and mainstream media focus on African American interests. The

eventual campaign exclusively centered AAPI interests and advocacy for more

resources to address AAPI concerns within a context of limited resources provided to

students of color.

Consequently, the narrow focus on accessing data to combat stereotypes of high

achievement overlooked the centrality of antiblackness in the reproduction of the model

minority myth and ultimately systemic white supremacy. While CMI achieved a change

in the university's data enumeration processes, UC admissions policies and practices

were preserved. CMI successfully met its tangible campaign goal; however, the project

of combating the model minority myth, and its anti-black ideology, was incomplete. In

the end, an important lesson to draw from the CMI campaign is that ethnically

disaggregated data is not enough for advancing racial justice in higher education.

Just as APC leaders were challenged at UCLA to articulate how AAPIs matter

and care about racial equity in college access, AAPI education advocates and

researchers elsewhere continue to be so challenged. Movements for racial justice in

higher education and beyond need to contend with the ways that AAPI populations

complicate and challenge conventional notions of how students of color are affected by

racism. While some AAPIs suffer from severe educational barriers, some Asian

Americans exhibit high achievement levels according to hegemonic standards of

academic success. Campaigns like CMI demand the state produce ethnically

disaggregated educational statistics, so educational disparities among AAPIs fitting

deficit-based notions of educational attainment can be identified and used to justify

increased institutional resources and investments. However, standard measures of

educational attainment fail to highlight the ways systemic white supremacy continues to

marginalize AAPIs, and other students of color, in various ways (Museus & Park, 2015;

Poon, 2011).

Implications

This case study presents scholars and activists interested in AAPIs and racial

equity in education three key lessons for future research and campaigns. First, by

applying a critical framework of the model minority myth and its relationships with

ideologies of antiblackness and white supremacy to our analysis of CMI, we revealed

the limitations of campaigns for ethnically disaggregated AAPI data to combat the myth.

When such campaign efforts exclusively focus on tackling the high achieving Asian

American stereotype, they can overlook the fundamental need to address the

antiblackness that is core to the myth, and thus implicitly allow systemic white

supremacy to go uninterrogated. In the case of CMI, calling for disaggregation

decentered initial interests in expressing an AAPI perspective and solidarity with African

American struggles for access to UCLA. Although access to accurate, disaggregated

data can help dispel myths of universal Asian American high achievement, the

availability of such data is inadequate for countering the model minority myth, which

relies equally on racial stereotypes of Asian Americans and anti-black ideology.

The second lesson drawn from this analysis of the CMI campaign highlights the

need to intentionally invest in and tend to cross-racial coalition building. Although

racialized discourse over the Black enrollment crisis in fall 2006 was what prompted

APC leaders to begin identifying how to coherently insert AAPIs into equity and access

conversations, the resulting CMI campaign did not address the precipitating issue of

barriers to Black enrollment at UCLA. APC leaders constructed the CMI campaign

based on dialogues with AAPI student leaders and organizations. However, there was

little evidence to suggest that they directly involved ASU, MEChA, and other

organizations and student leaders in a sustained fashion as they shaped, launched, and

carried out the campaign, beyond the co-authored letter to the editor published in the

Daily Bruin. Perhaps such dialogues could have led to a more inclusive campaign,

representative of other students' concerns as well. In both research and advocacy, it is important to prevent a decoupling of the Asian American stereotype of high achievement from antiblackness in combatting the model minority myth.

CMI's focus on gaining access to disaggregated data in order to advocate for AAPI needs leads to a third lesson drawn from this case. Both scholars and advocates for disaggregated data should be cautious of how calls for such data can adopt a deficit thinking framework, which limits how the experiences of students of color are understood. Many calls for disaggregated data essentialize Southeast Asian Americans and Indigenous Pacific Islanders as educationally deficient to make claims of panethnic AAPI privation, paradoxically rendering Pacific Islander and Southeast Asian American experiences invisible (Poon et al., 2016). A key concern articulated by CMI leaders about the need for disaggregated data emerged in response to the lack of institutional attention paid to educational disparities faced by AAPI groups. The third campaign goal articulated the intended use of disaggregated data in order to shift university resources to include AAPIs. The campaign, therefore, was a response to the lack of resources available to provide services targeting AAPIs. Sharon Lee (2006), for instance, has noted how the "de-minoritized status" of Asian Americans has led to a diversion of resources away from AAPIs and aided in diminishing resources for other student of color-specific services and programs through wedge politics.

Unfortunately, instead of working with other students of color to advance various interests and goals, CMI was unable to sustain cross-racial solidarity in leading a more comprehensive racial justice campaign. This surfaces the question of how AAPIs can successfully assert their interests in education equity debates without displacing the

concerns and advocacy efforts of other people of color. Examples of such sustained collective cross-racial efforts do exist. For instance, a student campaign for racial justice that strengthened and benefited from cross-racial solidarity can be found at UC Davis, where AAPI students in the late 1990s and early 2000s successfully worked with other students of color to demand the expansion of the Cross Cultural Center, the establishment of student affairs officer positions in Asian American Studies and Native American Studies[1], among other demands to improve campus climate (NAPALC 2000).

Future research should continue to shed light on the challenges and intricacies of race relations between people of color to highlight possibilities of stronger multi-racial solidarity for racial equity, which successfully subvert and reject racial wedge politics. Such efforts, as Ture and Hamilton (1992) have noted require a depth of thought, intentionality, and honest communication of shared and divergent interests. Research on other successful campaigns, such as the one at UC Davis, can illuminate strategies for developing short and long-term coalitions for racial justice inclusive of a range interests.

Conclusion

Alicia Garza (2014), a co-founder of the #BlackLivesMatter movement, has stated emphatically that "When Black people get free, everybody gets free" (para. 12). This quote reflects the need and call for cross-racial solidarity to advance broad racial justice goals. The lessons offered by the CMI campaign case are especially valuable given the fragility and complexities of cross-racial coalitional work (Ture & Hamilton, 1992). Toward this end, a critical reflection on AAPI desires for ethnic data

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[1] African American Studies and Chicana/o Studies already had these positions established several years prior.

disaggregation and work for racial justice is needed (Chang, 2016). Are AAPI

campaigns for ethnic data disaggregation seeking disruptions of racial wedge politics or

an acceptance and affirmation of AAPI mattering within education policy debates

defined by deficit frameworks? It is important to remember that ethnically

disaggregated data is a valuable tool that can be used for a variety of purposes, but

insufficient for effectively combating the model minority myth, which fundamentally relies

on anti-black ideology in the maintenance of white supremacy. AAPI advocacy efforts

for racial justice in higher education must extend beyond desires for proof of AAPI

educational failure, because such desires can contribute toward a reinforcement of a

hegemonic, white supremacist deficit framework of how racism operates in education.

A more radically transformative analysis for racial equity is needed, to account for the

varied ways through which white supremacy works to dehumanize and oppress people

of color, and to cultivate and sustain cross-racial coalitions for justice.

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