

Diversity sieves:
Cultural centers as sites of successful subject production in higher education

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
BY

Garrett D Hoffman

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Rebecca Ropers-Huilman

July 2017

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Acknowledgements

I stand on the shoulders of giants.

First, I would like to thank my advisor, Rebecca Ropers-Huilman, and the rest of my committee, Tania Mitchell, edén torres, and Roozbeh Shirazi. I have a post-it note taped to the wall in my apartment that I wrote while assembling my dissertation committee. This note is titled “my dream team” followed by your names. I am so glad that I got first pick and you agreed to come on this journey with me. You all have made this work better.

Jeni Hart, I’m not sure what to say other than a genuine and hearty thank you for going above and beyond and serving as my mentor and guiding force. You continue to teach me so much. I would never have pursued this degree if it weren’t for you. This is a direct result of your encouragement to turn my wild ideas as a master’s student into larger scholarly pursuits. And I will always remember, it’s “data are,” not “data is.”

Jonathan Pryor, my conference husband, our relationship has been a complete joy. Our collaborations are the best. We make each other’s work better and it was thrilling to have gotten to race dissertations with you. The best man won!

Emily Cohen, you are my main interlocutor, conspirator, and the most successful failed subject. If you told me at farm house in 2004 that we’d be here today, I would have laughed in your face. Thanks for the alien adventures, for pursuing this friendship, and for reminding me that, in fact, “none of us saves the world.”

Becca Hammond, my best friend and accomplice, thank you for keeping everything in perspective and keeping me going. Your wisdom and validation have been integral to this process. Thank you.

Fernando Rodriguez, you have helped complicate my ideas and have, on many occasions, helped me relax. I'm grateful for going through this experience with you.

Caitlin Gunn, you are so powerful and so smart. I feel very lucky to count you as a pal and colleague. I benefitted greatly from your comradery as I wrote this thing. Your perspective and voice have been so important to this work.

Leah Reinert, thank you for helping me navigate this PhD situation! Your advice, experiences, and friendship have been invaluable.

Kyree Wobbrock, you are the most generous and kind girlfriend. Thanks for putting up with me as I slogged through this! I love you!!

Mom, Dad, and Megan, what can I say? I could never have done this without you all in my corner.

Nancy Hoffman, my Nana, I get my tenacity, smarts, and empathy from you. You are my most cherished elder and I am so immensely grateful for you.

Finally, I am most grateful to the staff and students at LAC whose words and practices ground and shape this study. May you all be successful, *however* you imagine that looking.

Dedication

For Gene D. Hoffman (1927-2015)

The original GDH and my greatest champion

Abstract

Higher education yields individual and collective benefits, to include higher earnings, increased civic engagement, and national economic growth. While social and democratic benefits are included in the expansive lists of positive outcomes, economic benefits, both for the individual as well as for society, remain at the forefront of national conversations about higher education's importance. However, gaps in postsecondary degree attainment and, therefore, related benefits between various demographic groups persist. This dissertation explores how the privileging of neoliberal constructions of success impacts minoritized students' lives and subjectivities. Specifically, I examined how neoliberal discourses of successful college students work through one institution's cultural center to shape the subjectivities of minoritized students. Using a qualitative case study design, and textual, observational, and interview data collected from one institution, I conducted a discourse analysis to understand how one institution constructed successful students. Second, I conducted a narrative analysis to understand how minoritized students negotiated these constructions of success. I show how neoliberal constructions of success produce norms to which minoritized students measure themselves and how these norms support institutional assertions of a multicultural, inclusive campus community while maintaining existing hierarchies of race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation. The cultural center and diversity programming, then, become in service of the institution, which eschews attention to social justice and minoritized students' own goals and constructions of success for themselves and their communities.

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Chapter 1: Here We Are

*decolonization requires acknowledging.
that your needs and desires should never come at the expense of another's life energy.
it is being honest that you have been spoiled by a machine that is not feeding you freedom
but feeding you the milk of pain.*

–the release

Nayyirah Waheed

I say this all the time, we're the anti-LAC.

Marc (Dean of LAC)

The fear of failure is very alive.

Ana (Director of the MC)

I was in a professional staff meeting early in the semester, learning about my research site, Liberal Arts College (LAC), touring the Multicultural Center (MC), and meeting with staff and students. The pride in the MC, while not necessarily for the institution, was palpable. I was heedful of my own presence in the space, the only White person in a clearly sacred sanctuary from the Whiteness of the broader institution. As the meeting progressed, however, I felt embraced. What the staff and students had constructed was special; that I could tell. This was the “anti-LAC”; this was different.

The institution was like a page from a story book. It was snowing as I came to campus for the first time. LAC flanks one of the wealthiest boulevards in the immediate area and while most students I saw seemed, to me, to fit right in, I noticed groups here and there who seemed dwarfed by the looming mansions in the background. I hoped they did not feel that way but I suspected they might, or might have their first weeks on campus. I knew LAC boasted a financial aid policy that met all of the students' needs and a student body comprised of the best and brightest from across the globe; there were

bound to be misfits, both proud and otherwise. The buildings, the architecture, the fenced-in lawns, the material excess did not look inclusive and yet it claimed to be so. I felt curious. Is LAC inclusive? What does that mean?

LAC is a small, private, highly-selective, liberal arts college. The campus is situated in a residential area. As one participant noted as a reason she chose to attend LAC, “it feels like you are really at college when you’re here,” containing everything but a literal ivory tower. Mostly closed to traffic, the campus has sprawling, immaculate lawns with red-bricked buildings with large windows. Residence halls are interspersed between academic buildings. Political and informational messages scrawled in chalk cover the sidewalks when the snow melts. Students wear backpacks and earphones and walk purposefully to their next commitments, academic or otherwise. Hammocks appear, strung between trees in the boulevard once the weather warms. To me, it felt like home. I realize now how much of a privilege that feeling is at a place like LAC. Prestige drips from the tall, black fences separating LAC from the surrounding community. There are gates.

This dissertation is not about stories that have not been told. The stories here have been told over and over again by those from whose mouths they originate in ways far more interesting and authentic than I could ever replicate. I do not claim to hold space for those stories here. In so many ways, the MC already has fulfilled that function. I am grateful for the honor of being given access to these stories so generously to begin to understand how they are influenced by the hegemony of the institution and by its context.

I hope I add a level of analysis here that connects institutional constructions of success and multiculturalism to participants' stories. Here we are.

Origin

This project stems ultimately from anger that began to build when I learned that education was not always about freedom¹ but about the production of obedient subjects. I learned at a very young age that if I worked hard, I would get to be whatever I wanted to be, and my imagination went wild not just with future career prospects but also with fabulous and grand iterations of my adult self and identity. I made it through high school bored and depressed from both the curricular and pedagogical monotony and from realizing that *who I was* was not welcome in most of the spaces to which I had access as a teenager. College, then, became the beacon – the place where I could find my freedom in education. And it was, for a while, where I cultivated my own sense of freedom with my White middle class background providing me comfort and shelter from what many of my peers, I am certain, saw well before I did.

The time I have spent working both inside and outside of academia; the friendships and mentorships that I have cultivated; the work of brilliant scholars, artists, and writers who have come before me; and my own identities have given me a perspective from which I have come to *know* that higher education is seldom about cultivating freedom. I am angered most by the continued insistence that education creates possibilities when the questions of “which possibilities?” and “possibilities for whom?”

¹ I understand freedom here to mean a freedom to question and push against the limits that are placed on us. Freedom is a process, a struggle, wherein individuals interrogate the “conventions, norms and cultural possibilities” that shape subjectivities (Butler & Birulés, 2008, p. 1). Further, freedom includes the willingness and ability to reconstruct, redefine, imagine, and enact new ways of being in relationships with ourselves, with others, and with institutions.

are not often asked. It is from this space that I have conceptualized this project, using the concept of governmentality to understand how minoritized students self-govern in relation to the neoliberal discourses of success perpetuated through cultural centers in higher education. In this way, I offer another perspective on higher education, a system that's promises and outcomes may not be in alignment.

This project draws attention to the ways in which articulated institutional support for diversity and equity in higher education may facilitate the assimilation of students into subjects primed to be producers in the new economy. That is, this project seeks to understand if and how spaces meant to support minoritized college students implicitly or explicitly promote specific ways of being that are more "acceptable" for the work force and for institutions themselves. Are there specific ways of speaking, norms of dress, codes of professionalism, expectations, behaviors, and content of speaking and writing that are equated with "successful" minoritized subjects? How do minoritized students navigate the discourses that may promote some ways of being over others?

I often ask myself, "What is the purpose of higher education today?" While there are several answers to that question, the answers that *I* continually return to are to give students the tools to honor themselves and their cultures, to define for themselves what "success" and "achievement" entail, and to work towards a more just world. In other words, I believe that the primary purpose of higher education is to encourage the development of individuals and collectives into new potentialities of being and doing in ways that honor all lives, cultures, and communities and better the material conditions for ourselves, our neighbors, and our communities. I arrive at these answers because I

believe that cultivating freedom necessarily leads to human flourishing, which I believe to be life's apex. My questions and concerns about higher education diversity programming stem from a disconnect between my beliefs and the realities of higher education, realities which privilege economic opportunity before all else (Giroux, 2014).

Cultural Centers in Higher Education

There has been a national push for increasing higher education degree attainment in the United States since the advent of the President's Commission on Higher Education of 1947 (Gilbert & Heller, 2013). Yet, even 50 years after the passage of the Higher Education Act of 1965, the gaps in degree attainment based on demographic information (e.g., class, race/ethnicity) persist (McLendon & Perna, 2014). Espoused benefits of higher education include higher earnings (Pew Research Center, 2014), increased civic engagement (Baum, Ma, & Payea, 2013), and national economic growth (Perna & Finney, 2014). While social and democratic benefits are included in the expansive lists of the positive outcomes resulting from the proliferation of higher education (McLendon & Perna, 2014), the economic benefits, both for the individual as well as for society, remain at the forefront of national conversations about higher education's increasing necessity. While debate exists about the expansion of college enrollment numbers ("Are too many students going to college", 2009), the combination of national rhetoric urging all Americans to obtain at least one year of postsecondary education (Obama, 2012), continued research on the individual economic benefits of obtaining a four-year degree (McLendon & Perna, 2014), and the emphasis on postsecondary institutions' responsibilities in closing the "achievement gap" (Perna & Finney, 2014) contribute to

the hegemony of the belief that higher education is a necessity to be successful in the world today. It is perhaps these foci that have structured current iterations of university diversity programming.

The past several decades have seen an increase in support for and recognition of minoritized² students on college campuses, often seen in the form of institutionalized programming, centers, and resources that aim to both increase access to higher education for minoritized students as well as promote their success within these institutions. Diversity programming and policies focused on the inclusion of ethnically and racially minoritized students, and more recently LGBTQ students, have existed in some form for decades with mixed results. As several critical scholars have pointed out, diversity programming and policies continue to operate in a context that both defines normative criteria to which all students are measured and situates a diverse “other” against a White, heterosexual male norm; therefore, reinforcing existing hierarchies of race, gender, and sexuality (Iverson, 2007, 2010, 2012; Preston & Hoffman, 2015; Talburt, 2010). Further, research has shown that diversity programming alone does not always change minoritized students’ perceptions of campus as unwelcoming and hostile. For example, Taylor and Iverson (2009) showed that despite the existence of diversity programming and inclusive policies, ethnically and racially minoritized student satisfaction, retention, and

² “Minoritized students” in my usage is informed by Benitez’s (2010) explication of the concept and “refer[s] to the process [action vs. noun] of student minoritization” (p. 131). That is, minoritized populations have experienced systemic exclusion from higher education and the deployment of this term draws attention to the ways in which this exclusion is both historically situated and institutionalized; something that the terms “minority” and “underrepresented” do not address. For the purposes of this study, minoritized students include: students of color, Indigenous students, students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and/or queer (LGBTQ), women, low-income students, and students from minority religions. I include only these identities as minoritized because the MC specifically serves these populations.

completion rates still fell below those for White students. These scholars argued for increased scrutiny of the ways in which power and privilege operate within our institutions to facilitate these outcomes.

In addition to lower satisfaction, retention, and completion rates, it is well documented that minoritized students in higher education can face myriad other challenges, such as discrimination, feelings of isolation, and erasure of identities and experiences, that are not shared by their majority counterparts (Allen & Soloranzo, 2001; Foote, 2005; Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1998; Jones, Castellanos & Cole, 2002; Lozano, 2010; Shotton, Yellowfish & Cintrón, 2010). Institutions tout numerous ways of mitigating these challenges, including providing institutional support in the form of cultural centers, which are shared spaces for the gathering of and programming for people from different minoritized populations (Patton, 2010a; Renn, 2011).

Extant literature on cultural centers³ within higher education emphasizes their importance for minoritized student identity development, leadership development, academic development, recruitment, retention, safety, and comfort (Lozano, 2010; Patton, 2006a, 2006b, 2010a; Renn, 2011; Shotton, Yellowfish & Cintrón, 2010). While scant, some literature is critical of the existence and function of identity-specific cultural centers within higher education highlighting their tendency to ignore intersectionality (Renn, 2011), silo students based on one identity (Renn, 2011), reify hegemonic

³ For the purposes of this study, cultural centers are defined as institutionalized and established centers that include a physical space devoted to center activities and programming, administrative guidance that includes *staff or administrators* with specific oversight over the center's programming and activities, and with a mission that *primarily* serves or caters to a specific, minoritized, student population, no matter the nature of the service (social, educational, and/or otherwise).

categorizations of identity groups (Preston & Hoffman, 2015), and further marginalize certain minoritized populations (Marine & Nicolazzo, 2014). Despite these criticisms, several scholars continue to assert their import for today's higher education landscape, chiefly to ensure students have a space to receive validation and support.

History of cultural centers in higher education

In the early 1960s, thousands of college students traveled to the Southern United States to engage in civil rights work (Rhoads, 1998). The Mississippi voter registration drive occurred during the summer of 1964, during which several volunteers were beaten and killed, homes burned, and churches bombed (McAdam, 1988). Freedom Summer incited a push for human rights, and college students across the United States began protesting corporate takeovers, war, poverty, violence, and inequity. In this context, they also fought to make higher education more accessible for minoritized people (Kezar, 2010; Rhoads, 1998). Participation in civil rights struggles prompted thousands of first-generation Black and Latinx students to apply to and enroll in four-year colleges (Patton, 2005). The increase in enrollment of Black and Latinx students intensified the movement to change the landscape of higher education to become more inclusive of students of color and other minoritized populations.

While there is no documentation of the emergence of the first cultural center on a college campus, several Black and Latinx cultural centers emerged in the late sixties and early seventies (Patton, 2010a; Young, 1991). In addition, the Gay Liberation Front actively fought for LGBTQ inclusion and recognition during this time leading to the

establishment of the Human Sexuality Office at the University of Michigan in 1971 (Bazarsky & Sanlo, 2011).

Early cultural centers were primarily born out of radical grassroots student movements and protests beginning in the 1960s and 1970s (Patton, 2010a) and were often accompanied by the establishment of ethnic studies academic programs. The longest student protest in history, the San Francisco State College strike in 1968 lasted five months and resulted in the first ethnic studies programs in the United States (Umemoto, 1989). The Black Student Union at the University of Minnesota became institutionalized after Black students occupied the administration building demanding an Afro Studies Department, more financial aid for students of color, and the establishment of an African American cultural center (Black Student Union, 2012). Similarly, La Casa Cultural Latina at the University of Illinois – Urbana Champaign was established after students protested the administration, demanding greater inclusion of Latinx students (Loera & Gonzales, 2014). Later years saw the establishment of cultural centers through student petitions and other administrative channels as these spaces became more commonplace and awareness of the hostility of campus climate for minoritized populations grew (Patton, 2010a).

Scholars have, more recently, criticized the institutionalization of grassroots social movements. For example, Messer-Davidow (2002) outlined the transformation of grassroots feminism to feminist scholarship as women's studies became “disciplined” across the country. Messer-Davidow argued that feminism and feminist discourse were changed by the system they initially set out to transform. Specifically, feminist scholars

critiqued academic feminism for being jargonized, inaccessible, and rooted more in theoretical conceptions than in problems of feminist activist communities (Wiegman, 2002). In addition, Roderick Ferguson (2012) detailed how the university student protests of the 60s were institutionalized by the academy leading to the co-opting of a form of “neoliberal multiculturalism” that is used for the benefit of institutions. He argued,

A theorization that takes seriously [student movements’] historical and discursive impacts is crucial to understanding not only the changes within the American academy but also the ideological and discursive shifts that informed power’s clutch on state, capital, and social life in the post-civil rights world (p. 5).

Ferguson argued that minority difference and culture are taken up by dominant discourses within the academy, folded into hegemonic notions of success and achievement, and used by institutions as power - a set of talking points to promote their values and institutional mission. Several studies in the field of higher education tout the importance of “diversity” within institutions for the development of all students, including those in the majority (e.g., Chang, Astin & Kim, 2004; Gurin, Nagda & Lopez, 2004) and institutions have found myriad ways to deliver their “diversity” promise through departments, programs, and cultural centers.

In this study, I explore how the formation of cultural centers in higher education, while fought for by grassroots student movements and protests, may now be working to not only support existing hierarchies but also to limit potentials for student identities, goals, successes, relationships, behaviors, and ways of being. Patton (2011) asks, “How do the majority of campuses in the United States consistently maintain practices and

policies that separate students and reproduce inequitable structures in ways that ensure the continued need for identity centers?” (p. 256). My broad concern revolves around how these *centers* themselves may be implicated in reproducing inequitable structures. In this context, I am concerned with the ways in which institutionalized diversity programming may (re)produce and shape minoritized student subjectivities and define success for minoritized populations in ways that may contribute to educational inequity.

To provide a grounding for my study, I explore how three different bodies of literature frame minoritized student subjectivities. Specifically, I examine literature about academic capitalism; diversity and cultural centers in higher education, including literature on (minoritized) student success; and neoliberalism’s influence on higher education. Through this exploration, I draw new connections between and questions about how neoliberal discourses of success may work through cultural centers to support existing hierarchies and limit student potentials or imaginations. In addition, I begin to explore questions of how neoliberalism, which constitutes the contexts in which our institutions operate, may be forcing higher education to work counter to its mission of promoting equity and diversity given the neoliberal rationalization of governing and self-governing towards optimization (Apple, 2001; Giroux, 2014; Harvey, 2005; Ong, 2006; Peters, 2011). In particular, I will focus on how neoliberal discourses of success within the context of higher education may work through cultural centers to produce particular forms of subjectivity. Specifically, I consider how discourses about minoritized students and their identities within cultural centers create “diversity sieves” or structures through

which students pass and learn to become successful in the broader campus community while contributing to the prestige of the institution.

While several scholars take up the issues of minoritized student access and equity and the influences of neoliberalism on higher education, I seek to systematically examine how neoliberal discourses of success influence the function of cultural centers and how students take up these discourses through their personal narratives. If we as higher education scholars and practitioners are to continue to work towards equity in higher education and create systems that promote justice, freedom, and flourishing for students, it is imperative that we understand how neoliberalism impacts minoritized students' identities. As such, the purpose of this research is to examine how neoliberal discourses of success work through cultural centers to influence the lives and identities of minoritized students on one college campus.

Governmentality

To explore this phenomenon, I use governmentality, or the power⁴ exercised by the state to set up systems of rewards and punishments that shape individual subjects' self-governance (Foucault, Burchell, Gordon, & Miller, 1991), as my conceptual framework. Foucault's (1991) work on governmentality provides an apt framework for analyzing how higher education institutions and policies draw on representations and knowledge to discursively influence students to become successful according to institutional definitions, which are influenced by the political economy. Scholars have

⁴ In this study, power is used in a Foucauldian (and poststructural) sense; that is, "action on others' actions" whereby "it acts upon, and through, an open set of practical and ethical possibilities" (Gordon, 1991, p. 5). In other words, power is not thought of as something that is possessed but rather as a productive force that is exercised and flows through both people and institutions at all social levels.

used governmentality to critique how institutions are part of a network that asserts different aspects of social regulation and rule (Petersen, 2003). As Brockling, Krasmann, and Lemke (2011) explained, “studies of governmentality do not inquire into what pupils do or refrain from doing, but investigate which institutions and persons...induce them to do something and refrain from other things-and in what way and with what intention” (p. 17). I argue here that institutional behavior and policies intentionally construct success through discourses that serve to uphold and indeed advance the power and prestige of the institution at the expense of minoritized students.

Governmentality refers to a technology of power, which operates to shape individuals' behavior and selves (Foucault, 1991). More specifically, Foucault defined governmentality as the mechanisms through which power is exerted within and through a complex system of institutions - or arms of the state such as prisons, hospitals, and schools (and by extension, departments and offices within these institutions). These mechanisms set up a system of choices, rewards, and privileges that create incentives for individuals to govern and discipline themselves and their own behaviors. In this way, power is exercised through institutions and is held up by the presupposition of individuals as agents who make choices based on their own best interests. That is, governmentality refers to a power dynamic between an individual and institutions where individual choices are always made in relation to the state with costs and benefits for both the state and the individual.

Governmentality, then, *uses* the agency and freedom of its subjects to ensure the perpetuation and rule of the state. As Gordon (1991) states,

What Foucault finds most fascinating and disturbing in the history of Western governmental practice and its rationalities is the idea of a kind of power which takes freedom itself and the ‘soul of the citizen’, the life and life conduct of the ethically free subject, as in some sense the correlative object of its own suasive capacity (p. 5).

In other words, the state and the “ensemble formed by institutions, procedures, analyses, and reflections, calculations, and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific, albeit very complex, power” tout the benefits of individuality and therefore assume that each individual will act in their own best interest (Foucault, Senellart, Ewald, & Fontana, 2007, p. 108). The state and its actors set up a system of rewards and punishments where self-regulation perpetuates the rule of the state. Individuals are given a limited range of options based on systems of governance and these options shape how individuals govern themselves. Each individual, then, still theoretically has the agency to choose their behavior but is subject to rewards and punishments based on the system of regulation set up by the state.

In this study, I am interested in the ways in which discourses construct subjectivities and how individuals take up or resist particular discourses. More specifically, I am interested in neoliberal discourses of success and how these discourses are perpetuated through cultural centers on college campuses to construct a successful minoritized subject. In other words, I seek to understand the potentials for being and doing that are constructed for minoritized college students through one college’s cultural center. Further, I am interested in exploring how individual students negotiate the

construction of the successful subject. In this way, governmentality is the conceptual thread that ties this project together; I explore the system of regulation shaped by neoliberal discourse of success through a particular arm of the state⁵ (LAC) and the ways in which individuals shape themselves and their behaviors based on this system of regulation. While, no doubt, power from the bottom up works to shape college culture and more specifically the culture of a cultural center, I am interested in identifying the constraints the top down power structure from the broader institution and its sociopolitical and economic context place on the culture, structure, and function of the center.

Neoliberalism

Scholars define neoliberalism in different ways. Neoliberalism is treated as an ideology (Ball, 2012; Crouch, 2011), a socioeconomic theory (Harvey, 2005; Levin & Aliyeva, 2015; Saunders, 2007), and a form of governmentality (Foucault, et al., 1991; Olssen, 2006; Peters, 2009). According to Crouch (2011), neoliberalism as an ideology asserts the idealization of free markets over states and politics, where individuals can maximize their material wealth and satisfaction. Further, Harvey (2005) discussed the three broad beliefs of neoliberalism: the benevolence of the free market, the necessity to limit state interventions and regulations, and the individual as a rational economic actor. More specifically, neoliberalism as an ideology is defined as,

⁵ Foucault et al. (2007) defined governmentality as the “ensemble formed by institutions, procedures, analyses, and reflections, calculations, and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific, albeit very complex, power that has the population as its target” (p. 108). Therefore, because institutions of higher education have become mechanisms to train the emerging workforce (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004), dominant constructions of success within higher education institutions become tools of the state exercised through institutions of higher education, or arms of the state.

A theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade (Harvey, 2005, p. 2).

Neoliberalism as a socioeconomic theory then highlights individual freedom and choice in unfettered and competitive markets as the key to the generation of material wealth and human well-being (Giroux, 2004; Harvey, 2005; 2007). Finally, neoliberalism as a form of governmentality is a Foucauldian concept that refers to systems of power that organize both conduct and individual subjects (Foucault, et al., 1991; Olssen, 2006). Neoliberalism as a form of governmentality dictates how power is exerted through institutions to shape individuals' self-governance largely through economic rewards and punishments.

Foucault further described how a redefinition of "economics" to concern *all* rational conduct came to allow for a context where the totality of governmental action is, in theory, programmed by a purely economic method (Gordon, 1991). Neoliberalism as a form of governmentality, then, can be thought of as a system of (largely economic) rewards and punishments that span all areas of social life, including education, that shape the ways in which individuals choose to govern themselves and their behaviors. For the purposes of this study, neoliberalism is defined as a pervasive ideology that *shapes* the system of regulation that works through higher education to influence how students within higher education govern themselves.

Neoliberal influence on higher education. Throughout my personal educational history as well as my time as a professional within higher education, I have been

fortunate to work with many individuals who both understand how power and privilege operate within our institutions to (re)produce inequitable structures and who actively push against these power structures. I have come to understand that many of the constraints on diversity work in higher education are a result of external forces and obligations. Sara Ahmed (2012), in her scholarship on the institutionalization of diversity, interviewed diversity practitioners in higher education institutions in the UK and Australia. Ahmed's analysis highlights the difficulty of doing diversity work within institutions. In other words, Ahmed's text reveals the persistence needed to engage in diversity work and, as a participant noted, how it is often a "banging-your-head-on-a-brick-wall job" (p. 26). This may explain that, while institutions and individuals tout their commitment to diversity efforts, working tirelessly to advance equity, progress seems elusive as students still report hostile campus climates, minoritized student outcomes still fall below their peers' (Taylor & Iverson, 2009), and inequitable structures still exist (Iverson, 2012; Preston & Hoffman, 2015). It is with this in mind that I seek to explore how neoliberal discourses of success may be contributing to the elusiveness of progress by discursively limiting student potentials.

Several scholars explain the influences of neoliberalism on higher education (Giroux, 2014; Levin, 2007; Levin & Aliyeva, 2015; Peters, 2011; Pusser, Kempner, Marginson, & Orkorika, 2011). Saunders (2010) stated, "throughout the past four decades, the economics, structure, and purpose of higher education, as well as the priorities and identities of faculty and students, have been altered to better align with neoliberal practices and ideology" (p. 42). Due to the rise of neoliberalism, higher

education institutions place more emphasis on private revenue generation (Alexander, 2001), are slowly dismantling the tenure system (Tierney, 1998), are eroding shared governance systems (Ayers, 2005; Eckel, 2000), and are operating more like a private service to be purchased by customers (students) than as a public good (Giroux, 2014; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004; Wellen, 2005). In addition, the unraveling of Keynesian economic policy that valued full employment and an increase in government expenditures when necessary to ensure a healthy economy in favor of a deregulated monetarist policy, as well as budget and tax cuts under the Reagan administration, effectively initiated the neoliberal redirection of state power towards maintaining free markets and economic rationality (Harvey, 2005). Given the pervasiveness of neoliberal hegemony within higher education then, understanding how neoliberalism influences diversity programming, resources, and cultural centers as well as the ways of being an *individual* within an institution is important particularly given articulated values of access and equity that permeate higher education institutions today.

Research Questions

Given the inequities and constraints that persist in higher education for minoritized students, it is imperative that they be given opportunities to access the tools they need to construct their lives in ways that maximize their own agency to develop themselves and their futures in ways that are congruent with their dynamic identities and cultures. Scant literature examines the broader institutional, economic, and political climates and conditions that influence how cultural centers are structured and influence the lives of minoritized students. Therefore, I am interested in exploring how cultural

centers operating within an increasingly neoliberalized context may be working as “diversity sieves.” That is, cultural centers may act as sieves through which minoritized students pass through to learn to be successful according to institutional definitions and be reminded of their resiliency to endure chilly campus climates to be able to attain institutional hallmarks of success. I am ultimately interested in examining how cultural centers may influence minoritized student subjectivities through the construction of a narrowly defined successful subject. Using neoliberalism and governmentality as lenses through which to view my data, this study will address the following questions:

- How does Liberal Arts College (LAC) construct a governmentality of success for college students?
- How does the Multicultural Center (MC) contribute to a governmentality of success for minoritized college students?
- How do minoritized college students negotiate neoliberal discourses of student success?

There is an absence of research on how neoliberalism regulates subjectivities in higher education. Because higher education is becoming an imperative for upward mobility and pursuit of the “American Dream” (Giroux, 2014), the critical question, particularly for those whose identities and cultures are not frequently represented in mainstream America, becomes “what is the cost of assimilation into hegemonic (neoliberal) norms?” In other words, as Talburt (2010) might ask, what potentials of becoming might be limited due to the neoliberalization of higher education? This is ultimately what I seek to uncover.

Dissertation Summary

In this dissertation, I present an interpretation and discussion of data collected at one higher education institution, LAC. In chapter two, I review the literature on student success and diversity in higher education including work on minoritized student achievement and success, campus climate, and the discursive production of diversity. In addition, I review existing scholarship on economic ideology and its influence on higher education focusing on scholars who discuss both academic capitalism and neoliberalism. To set the stage for this dissertation's examination of how minoritized college students navigate LAC's discourses of success, I analyze the literature through a poststructuralist lens and show how I used that literature to formulate research questions and methodology. Chapter three presents my methodology. I define poststructuralism, discourse, subjectivity, and governmentality as they pertain to my project. Chapter four answers the first research question: How does LAC construct a governmentality of success for college students? I show through discourse analysis how LAC constructs a governmentality of success for all students. Chapter four also addresses the third question: How do minoritized college students negotiate neoliberal discourses of student success? I use narrative analysis to show how participants navigate this governmentality.

Chapter five answers the second research question: How does the Multicultural Center contribute to a governmentality of success for minoritized college students? I use discourse analysis to show how neoliberal discourses of success work through the MC to construct an additional governmentality of success for minoritized students. This chapter also addresses how minoritized students navigate this governmentality. Finally, chapter

six shows how the MC operates in service to the institution and operates as a diversity sieve which minoritized students pass through, gaining enough knowledge and truth to endure a sometimes chilly campus climate and succeed according to institutional definitions. Chapter six ends with conclusions, implications, and recommendations for practice.

Chapter 2: There We Were

This project focuses on how minoritized students navigate the idea of a successful LAC subject as constructed by institutional discourses of neoliberal success. Therefore, it is important to discern how the extant literature frames minoritized student identities to understand both the context surrounding my current inquiry and the concepts in the literature this study takes up and critiques. As such, this chapter examines how minoritized student identities are shaped by literature discussing academic capitalism, diversity (including minoritized student success), and neoliberalism's influence on higher education. Through this exploration, I situate my research questions within the existing literature and demonstrate how my area of inquiry will advance current thinking on equity and diversity in higher education.

In this literature review, I focus on three bodies of literature to examine how minoritized student identities are produced and shaped by the structure and function of higher education. Within each section, I provide analyses of how texts position minoritized student identities and offer summaries of each body of literature in relation to my project. In other words, I examine if and *how* various authors discuss and frame minoritized students. First, I discuss literature on academic capitalism and the current economic climate in which higher education institutions operate. Second, I examine the literature about diversity in higher education, including literature on (minoritized) student success, cultural centers, and the discursive framing of diversity. Lastly, to set the stage for further research examining if and how cultural centers, operating in an increasingly

globalized, corporatized, and neoliberalized context, work to (re)produce the successful LAC subject, I examine literature on the effects of neoliberalism on higher education. Importantly, the literature I present here gives a sense of the information that has shaped my study as well as the discursive positioning of minoritized students in this literature. Examining the discursive framing of minoritized students in higher education literature is helpful in understanding how subjects are (re)produced through institutional messaging, discussed subsequently in chapters four and five.

Academic Capitalism

In their germinal works on the concept of academic capitalism, Slaughter and Leslie (1997) and Slaughter and Rhoades (2004) discussed how institutions have come to integrate themselves into the new, increasingly deregulated and market driven economy. The theory of academic capitalism, according to Slaughter and Rhoades (2004), describes how and why institutions of higher education and the actors within them engage with the market and in market-like behavior. They discussed a shift in the structure and function of higher education from one that foregrounds education as a public good knowledge/learner regime to an academic capitalist knowledge/learner regime where knowledge shifts from being conceptualized as a public good accessible to the greater citizenry, to a marketable revenue generator.

Stemming from a shift in federal economic policies such as the Bayh-Dole Act of 1980, which ensures university ownership of intellectual property produced with federal research dollars (Bok, 2003; Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Slaughter & Rhoades, 1996; Zemsky, Wegner, & Massy, 2005); the National Cooperative Research Act of 1984,

which gives university-business partnerships anti-trust status effectively allowing for the use of public funds for private research ventures (Slaughter, 1998); and the rise of the neoliberal state, which shifts public funding from welfare functions towards production functions (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004), the new economy has created a particular context in which institutions are forced to operate. With recent declining state and federal funding for higher education (Giroux, 2014), institutions are forced to pursue alternate venues of revenue generation taking the form of, for example, tuition hikes, the rise of university profit centers, patents, and corporate sponsorship of research activities (Bok, 2003; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004; Zemsky, et al., 2005). Accompanying this shift in the structure and function of higher education may be a shift in how institutions construct the identities of students.

Academic capitalism's framing of student identities. Much of the scholarship on academic capitalism focuses on students as consumers of and producers within the academic capitalist knowledge/learner regime (Mendoza, 2007; Mendoza, Kuntz, & Berger, 2012; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). The construction of students as consumers is a central concept in the theory of academic capitalism as it exemplifies the ways in which engagement in the market and market-like behaviors can work to produce neoliberal subjects. That is, in talking about students in particular ways, the theory of academic capitalism both prioritizes and constrains certain ways of being and doing for students. For example, Slaughter and Rhoades (2004) explained in their theory of academic capitalism how student identities shift from consumer to captive market to output to donor through the institution's engagement with market behaviors. Institutions become

marketers, selling their educational experience as a product to students who become consumers. Slaughter and Rhoades (2004) also detailed the shift of student identities as moving from learners to knowledge producers. For example, the authors discussed a corporation's quest to invalidate a Reed College professor's patent application because much of the information had been previously published in the undergraduate theses of students attending Reed. The crux of the conflict resided in the issue of whether a student thesis that was cataloged in a university library could be considered public domain and therefore unable to be patented. However, this issue also exemplifies how students can be reframed from learners to producers of profitable knowledge to be capitalized upon by the institution and its actors.

Similarly, in Mendoza's (2007) case study on how academic capitalism influences doctoral student socialization, students are variously constructed as learners or knowledge producers. The author found that engagement in markets and with industry positively influences the socialization of doctoral students by fostering a culture that upholds traditional academic values like conducting competent research, building strong student-advisor relationships, winning awards, and getting published in reputable journals, while simultaneously recognizing the benefits of engaging with the industrial marketplace. Mendoza (2007) saw industry-academia partnerships as beneficial to doctoral students if measures are in place to ensure the staying power of traditional academic values. These partnerships can provide students with networking opportunities, job skills, and knowledge of what is and is not relevant to the marketplace.

Mendoza's (2007) study framed students as learners *as well as* knowledge producers. However, discussions of socialization either by industry or academia inevitably shift the focus of student identities to *eventual* knowledge producers and revenue generators. That is, Mendoza reinforced academic capitalism's constructions of students as output (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004) by articulating the goals of education as being to either become a revenue generator for industry or to continue in academia, become faculty, and occupy the role of intermediary between academia and industry. Further, "socialization" suggests a top-down process, which fails to account for the ways in which doctoral students exercise agency to navigate and position themselves in response to multiple expectations and normative contexts. In this way, Mendoza's (2007) article positioned students as passive cogs in the academic capitalist knowledge regime being shaped into producers for the new economy.

Mendoza, Kuntz, and Berger (2012) also examined how institutional practices framed student identities in particular ways. They argued for the use of Bourdieu's (1993) view of the academy as a theoretical framework in analyses of academic departments and academic capitalism and discussed how Bourdieu's text might be leveraged to understand changes in faculty work due to the rise of academic capitalism. Using an analysis of the labor of faculty in four different Engineering departments, the authors showed that within the evolving context of increasing academic capitalism, Bourdieu's concepts of field, habitus, and strategy can illuminate key shifts in faculty work and the evolution of academic department climate. While Mendoza et al. (2012) focused primarily on faculty work, their study includes a discussion of how student identities are constructed and

framed. Faculty discussed how they attempt to construct their work for students in ways that support their identities as learners as well as their identities as knowledge producers and eventual outputs for the workforce. Mendoza et al. (2012) highlighted the dual identities of students in terms of cultural and social capital; faculty stressed the import of students gaining capital in both the arenas of academia as well as that of industry. Students attending institutions with high prestige and a high level of unrestricted funding were better able to attain capital in both the academic and industrial arenas.

As in Mendoza's (2007) article, Mendoza et al. (2012) reinforced academic capitalism's conceptualizations of students as outputs and revenue generators. While the study clearly indicates that faculty participants tend to see students as learners, the structure of industry-based academic departments is such that, despite the best efforts of faculty, students are inevitably constructed as outputs due to their eventual foray into industry. Even in Mendoza et al.'s (2012) discussion of student socialization, despite data supporting faculty insistence on constructing quality learning experiences for students, students were first and foremost framed in terms of their eventual employment in industry. In this way, academic capitalism structures student experiences as, to use Bourdieu's language, avenues to gain cultural and social capital to help them succeed in industry and become revenue generators for both academia and for industry.

Similarly, Slaughter, Campbell, Holleman, and Morgan (2002) complicated the academic capitalist construction of student identities in their study on the exchange of graduate students between the academy and industry. The authors found that, since the increase in academia-industry partnerships, graduate students have been constructed both

as learners *and* as “gifts” or tokens of exchange with industry partners. These exchanges serve many purposes including providing cheap labor for industry, bolstering faculty networks within industry (as many students will continue to work in industry in their field), increasing funding for faculty research (as an exchange for the cheap labor), enhancing the ability for industry to train and shape their own future workforce, and producing new knowledge ultimately under the control of industry.

Interestingly, by framing graduate students as “gifts” and drawing parallels between their work and Rubin’s (1975) *The Traffic in Women* analysis of the relationship between men and women, Slaughter et al. (2002) removed a level of agency that authors discussed previously do not. By framing graduate students as “gifts” to industry, the authors highlighted the symbiotic relationship that academia and industry have developed through the rise of academic capitalism. In this case, the academy (and individual faculty members) and industry profit and the identities of students are limited to a “gift” lacking in autonomy, being traded for the benefits of those holding power and shaped into an eventual mechanism for profit in industry.

Conversely, Mars and Rhoades (2012) argued that, although graduate students are often used as tokens of exchange between academia and industry, this position allows for the development of student entrepreneurship. Their discussion of how academic capitalism constructs student identities added a level of agency, specifically entrepreneurial agency (the ability to access resources and create strategies to incorporate creating social change along with the quest for economic capital) to the positions of graduate students not discussed by Slaughter et al. (2012). Although Mars and Rhoades

(2012) highlighted alternatives to student identity construction through academic capitalism, the goal of social entrepreneurship is still material wealth generation. Students therefore still fall under the broader construction of students as revenue producers regardless of the secondary beneficiaries of their capitalist ventures. Mars and Rhoades came close to a discussion of understanding student subjectivities as more than monolithic. However, their discussion still framed students under a broad category, effectively ignoring identity differences.

Academic capitalism's framing of minoritized student identities. Much of the literature examining the effects of academic capitalism on higher education altogether ignores or narrowly frames student identities. When discussed, students are defined as a singular, monolithic category. In the face of the rapidly increasing diversity of the student body in the United States (Rankin & Reason, 2008), as well as national rhetoric surrounding the need to increase access to higher education for underrepresented populations (Obama, 2012), it is important to understand how the academic capitalist regime influences the identity construction of minoritized students. Because academic capitalism's reliance on competition and engagement with markets favors hegemonic identities, it is possible that the shift towards an academic capitalist knowledge/learning regime may be disadvantaging certain populations. In addition, as Apple (2001) and Whitty, Power, and Halpin (1998) pointed out, increased reliance on the market and adoption of market-like behaviors on the parts of educational institutions force these institutions to adopt White masculinist business practices, which rely on hierarchical

leadership models and privilege competition, risk taking, and the domination of individuals and territory.

Unlike much of the literature about academic capitalism in higher education, Metcalfe and Slaughter (2008) took up the issue of academic capitalism's effects on a marginalized population and examined how a rise in the academic capitalist knowledge/learning regime has created a context within higher education that has benefited men. Specifically, they argued that this context has "allow[ed] men to recapture some of the historic privilege they have derived from higher education" (p. 81). The authors found that, although women have made great strides in terms of salary equity and rank, men still fared better in disciplines tied more closely to markets and market engagement. Metcalfe and Slaughter also discussed how the collective subject of the academic capitalist knowledge/learning regime is, in fact, "men" and that by joining this regime and operating within it, women may be entering a space whereby collective action by women is ignored or impossible. As such, Metcalfe and Slaughter (2008) took up the call Slaughter and Rhoades (2004) made for academic professionals to promote the public good knowledge/learning regime, which women have made great strides within in recent years as seen by increasing employment rates in service/support and administrative/managerial jobs in higher education. Promoting the public good knowledge/learning regime can promote counter-hegemonic spaces that do not inherently privilege hegemonic identities. That is, spaces within higher education which privilege the public good knowledge/learning regime may prioritize people over profits, which may allow for a de-privileging of cut throat, competition-based, and masculinist

practices. While Metcalfe and Slaughter's (2008) analysis focused on faculty and administrators, their results suggest that underrepresented and marginalized *students* may also be differentially influenced by the rise of the academic capitalist knowledge regime.

The academic capitalist knowledge regime decreases *access* to higher education for historically marginalized and underrepresented students by privileging students who are "willing and able to pay more for educational services" (Rhoades & Slaughter, 2004, p. 52), making it increasingly important that scholars and practitioners encourage the proliferation of the public good knowledge regime. To promote higher education as a space to develop students' critical thinking skills and promote liberation, Ross (2009) discussed how the use of Critical Race Theory (CRT) in social justice education classrooms can promote a postmodern conceptualization of race. This, Ross argued, can create environments where White students can learn to accept race relevant curriculum with the end goal of creating inclusive counter-hegemonic educational spaces for the resistance of academic capitalism. Ross (2009) argued for the use of CRT, specifically its utility in helping students understand the fluidity and social construction of racial categories, to promote critical thinking and democratic citizenry in students and to promote the notion of knowledge production for liberation (Freire, 2001) instead of for revenue generation. Although Ross (2009) did not explicitly discuss how the rise of the academic capitalism knowledge regime may influence White students and students of color differently, her work discussed differences in student identities and how their experiences may or may not be reflected in the academic capitalist knowledge regime.

Summary of academic capitalism literature. Extant literature on academic capitalism's influence on higher education includes substantial critique of the infiltration of external revenue streams and profit-seeking behaviors into the academy. This body of literature also includes a comprehensive look at how academic capitalism influences multiple sectors of the academy as well as players within the academy including faculty and both graduate and undergraduate students. Unfortunately, much of the extant literature surrounding academic capitalism treats "student" as a monolithic category, constructing the student as a potential knowledge producer, revenue generator or learner, potentially ignoring the differential effects academic capitalism may have on different populations. Metcalfe and Slaughter (2008) and Ross (2009) recognized the differential influences of academic capitalism thereby resisting the monolithic construction of the identity "student." Given the current emphasis on "diversity" in the academy (Williams, Berger, & McClendon, 2005) as well as the national rhetoric surrounding college access in the US today (Obama, 2012), it is important that scholars understand how academic capitalism may influence students differently and may create barriers to access for some. Therefore, I now examine literature on "diversity" and cultural centers in higher education. In contrast to the literature on academic capitalism, this body of literature constructs student identities as diverse and multifaceted although, as some scholars (e.g. Iverson, 2007, 2010; Preston & Hoffman, 2015) point out, this literature continues to reify existing hierarchies of race, gender, and sexuality by comparing the diverse "other" to the hegemonic norm. That is, literature on "diversity" in higher education, by describing the "other", automatically sets up a norm, who is assumed to be White, male,

and heterosexual. Later, I discuss literature detailing neoliberalism's influence on higher education. I outline how this literature frames minoritized student identities and contrast that body of literature with literature on academic capitalism and literature on diversity and cultural centers in higher education.

Diversity and Cultural Centers

Much has been written about the challenges faced by minoritized students in higher education (Allen & Soloranzo, 2001; Foote, 2005; Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1998; Jones, Castellanos & Cole, 2002; Lozano, 2010; Shotton, Yellowfish & Cintrón, 2010) as well as the programs and services offered by institutions designed to mitigate these challenges (Patton, 2010a). The very first cultural centers in higher education were established out of student protests over hostile campus climates and exclusion of spaces and programs that centered minoritized students' lives and identities. Black student resistance, followed by resistance from students belonging to other minoritized communities, prompted higher education to begin to transform the academic landscape through the development of programs and services catering to minoritized student needs and identities (Benitez, 2010; Patton, 2006b). As the sociopolitical context in the United States has evolved, so have the struggles minoritized students face in higher education and, while certainly programming and services for minoritized students have evolved as well, cultural centers remain important hubs for the delivery of many of these services in higher education.

Today, scholars use campus climate studies (Gurin & Nagda, 2006; Hurtado, 1992; Rankin, 2003; Tierney, 1992) and assessments of diversity programming (Lozano,

2010; Patton, 2006a, 2006b, 2010a, 2010b) to justify the continued existence of both cultural centers and other diversity programming and offices. Scholars are also interested in the differing factors that may influence the “success” or “academic achievement” of minoritized students (e.g., Strayhorn, 2010) and work to ensure these factors are considered in diversity programming and services. Some scholars are critical of the ways in which diversity is discussed, structured, and discursively constructed by cultural centers and diversity programs. These scholars discuss how these institutional resources often silo students based on singular identity categories (Renn, 2011), can create exclusive spaces through naming and labels (Marine & Nicolazzo, 2014), and reify existing hierarchies (Iverson, 2007, 2010, 2012; Preston & Hoffman, 2015). In this section, I examine how the literature about diversity programs and services in higher education constructs minoritized student identities and discuss how diversity programs and services can reify and sustain the systems and structures perpetuating inequity and oppression through their construction of minoritized student subjectivities.

Cultural centers. Patton’s (2006a, 2006b, 2010a, 2010b) research focused on Black Cultural Centers (BCCs) and the benefits of these centers for both Black and non-Black students. She found that BCCs are still necessary campus spaces as they facilitate safe and supportive student learning, create a connection between campus and Black culture, and create an avenue through which Black students can become involved on campus. Patton’s work conveys two broad functions of Black Cultural Centers: first, that they serve as a space to help facilitate the integration of Black students into the larger campus and, second, that they serve as a space where Black culture, lives, and

experiences are central. Patton's scholarship also discussed BCCs as being tenuous parts of institutions with their existence continually threatened by budget cuts and assertions that they have become irrelevant. It is from this space of tenuousness that their need for justification stems.

Patton (2006a, 2006b, 2010b) asserted that Black students often face a hostile campus climate and a lack of inclusion in many areas of campus; a number of campus climate studies have also found this to be true (Alimo, Kelly, & Clark, 2002; Gurin & Nagda, 2006; Hurtado, 1992). However, the ways in which her work constructs the identities of Black students is contradictory to one of the goals of BCCs. Patton constructs Black students as having the same goals as students embodying hegemonic identities. That is, they need leadership experiences, academic credentials, and campus involvement to "succeed" in their education and get a job to contribute to the new economy.

In much the same way as literature on academic capitalism constructs student identities, Patton's (2006a, 2006b, 2010a, 2010b) scholarship constructed Black student identities as revenue producers in a capitalist system. By describing BCCs as springboards for Black students to become involved in other areas of campus and as avenues through which Black students can learn leadership skills they will need to succeed in college and beyond, Patton's (2006a) scholarship assumed that "success" for all students is defined in the same way. The assumption, therefore, is "success" is defined as integration into the wider campus community (Tinto, 1993), graduating from college, and obtaining a job in the capitalist economy where White masculinist culture is

preferred and supported (Giroux, 2014; Whitty, et al., 1998). While Patton (2006a, 2006b) described BCCs as “a home away from home” and a space of community for Black students, the way her work constructs Black student identities as both vulnerable and in need of assimilation, or perhaps acculturation, for success in the wider campus community frames these cultural centers as a solution to a problematic system they are inherently set up to support. While Patton’s scholarship discusses the benefits of segregated spaces for Black students to call home, the underlying assumption in much of her work, by defining success in a hegemonic way, is that at least some acculturation is needed for Black students to exist as leaders in the broader campus culture.

Similarly, Renn (2011) advocated for the persistence of cultural centers as a part of the fabric of higher education. She believed these centers should continue to exist because they are safe spaces for students experiencing a hostile campus climate, they can be spaces for students to develop academic and leadership skills, and they are symbols of support of minoritized student groups. Renn (2011) stated, “I argue that until all students can partake equitably in [the] central academic mission, with equitable outcomes, the need for identity-based support for students remains” (p. 253). Here, Renn constructed minoritized student identities in much the same way as Patton (2006a, 2006b, 2010b) by framing cultural centers as spaces for students to feel fully valued *and* as spaces to learn the skills and knowledge to integrate into larger campus culture.

As with Patton’s work, Renn (2011) neglected to define and delineate the meaning of “success” or, in her words, “the central academic mission” (p. 253). By equating “success” to “the central academic mission,” the underlying assumption is that

“success” means persistence, involvement in extracurricular activities, earning good grades, and degree attainment. Renn therefore constructed minoritized students as needing to be integrated into the new economy through her suggestion that these students need to develop the skills to be able to “succeed” in a system that inherently supports hegemonic identities (Giroux, 2014). Instead of framing cultural centers as consequences of student and community activism or as spaces for the development of activism, where students can work to change the broader system of the academy or even the course of the broader political economy, Renn framed these spaces as sites of refuge, learning, and tokens of appeasement for minoritized students. Their identities, therefore, remain constructed as knowledge producers who will eventually integrate into the new economy; as such, cultural centers are in practice supporting the very problems they are purported to solve.

Working to somewhat disrupt Patton’s (2010) and Renn’s (2011) framings, Stewart (2011) in the introduction to an edited volume on multicultural student services, discussed diversity programming and centers directed towards minoritized students as ways to build bridges between minoritized students and broader campus culture and as places through which campus community members can re-vision what “community” means. In this way then, Stewart did not frame minoritized students as necessitating skills to integrate into broader campus culture; to be sure, the metaphor of the bridge evokes an image of the maintenance of two sides with more or less free movement between them. Stewart did, however, reify minoritized students as “other,” and by default, held up White masculinist culture as the norm. Further, Stewart, in his call to re-vision the concept of a

campus community, failed to make clear how the institutionalization of multicultural centers and programming may influence how this re-visioning may happen. Through this omission, Stewart framed minoritized students as agents of the institution, albeit ones working towards social justice within institutions. In other words, minoritized students are framed as *a part* of the institution, and while this may be positive in various ways, institutions necessarily influence limits of being and doing for their participants.

In contrast to Patton (2010) and Renn (2011), Jennrich and Kowalski-Braun (2014) highlighted how cultural centers can be constructed as sites of resistance for students and how employing an intersectional theoretical lens, through which to view identity-based work in higher education, can shift the focus of an identity center from merely a shared social space to a space focused on social justice. While these authors gave little detail into how an intersectional theoretical framework is utilized by the three cultural centers in their case study, they did discuss in depth what intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1994) can offer in terms of the creation of progressive and resistant spaces in the academy. In doing so, Jennrich and Kowalski-Braun (2014) put forth a framing of minoritized student identities that complicates those offered by Patton (2006a, 2006b, 2010b) and Renn (2011). In fact, Jennrich and Kowalski-Braun (2014) offered no language regarding the outcomes for minoritized students but instead framed them as being in search of freedom and possibility in their identifications and group memberships by stating, “True freedom for students will occur when individuals have the right to love in and out of groups” (p. 205). While failing to outline what they mean by “freedom” and “emancipatory ways of operating within the academy,” (p. 208) these authors did offer a

rare glimpse into discussions of work in cultural centers as creating *possibilities* for minoritized students rather than funneling them into structures that support hegemonic identities and ways of being.

Research on minoritized student achievement and success. Central to this project are definitions and interpretations of student success. In addition to literature advocating for cultural centers as spaces that contribute to minoritized student success, much has been written about additional factors that can lead to “academic achievement” in college for minoritized students. First, though, I provide a brief overview of research on student success and then discuss literature specific to minoritized student success and achievement.

Student success is a central goal of higher education institutions (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Reason, 2009; Tinto, 2006-2007). Tinto’s (1975) theory on student integration and Astin’s (1975, 1993) work on factors influencing student dropout are foundational inquiries into student retention, persistence, and success. Scholarship in higher education includes many inquiries into factors that influence student retention, persistence, and success. Much of this literature is focused on extra-curricular environments, including residence halls and participation in student organizations, that are shown to be integral to the college student experience (Astin, 1999; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Reason, 2009). For example, Reason (2009) adapts a framework that describes the influence of precollege characteristics and experience, the organizational context, peer environment, and individual experiences on student success. Within Reason’s framework, the student experience centers classroom and out-of-the-classroom

environments, as well as curricular engagement, all of which contribute to student persistence.

Extra-curricular experiences, particularly outcomes of living in residence halls, tend to bolster student success and social development (Pascarella, Terenzini, & Blimling, 1994). Braxton et al. (2014) find significant benefits for students living on residential campuses because of the influence of communal engagement. Community building is framed as integral to persistence, and reflects research demonstrating the importance of a college student peer group (Astin, 1975, 1993, 1999; Braxton et al., 2014; Reason, 2009). Astin (1975, 1999) finds that fraternities and sororities, student government, and other extra-curricular involvement are important for student success. While these foundational inquiries into student success are important to consider, much of this literature, as with the literature on academic capitalism, discusses students as a monolithic category. Further, much of the research on student success and persistence, as Bensimon (2007) articulated, fails to account for factors outside of student behavior, motivation, and effort.

Foundational theories of student success and persistence have been thoroughly critiqued (Bensimon, 2007; Museus, 2014). Museus (2014) discussed the main critiques of Tinto's theory of student integration. These critiques address the cultural and psychological assumptions of Tinto's theory as well as the viability of academic and social integration as predictors of college success across all student populations. In contrast to foundational research on student success, many critiques address specific minoritized populations' unique needs and challenges in higher education. For example,

scholars have proposed several culturally relevant frameworks of student success that challenge earlier foundational models (Guiffrida, 2006; Museus, 2011; Rendón et al. 2000, Tierney, 1992). Tierney (1992) addressed Tinto's use of "ritual," arguing for its misuse without attention to cultural context and Tinto's individualistic stance on integration, ignoring differences based on demographic categories, framing minoritized students as multifaceted. In addition, Guiffrida (2006) argued for a cultural advancement of Tinto's theory to include cultural and familial connections and students' motivational orientations.

Scholars have also theorized about how hostile campus climates, environmental factors, relationships, and mentorship influence academic "success" and "achievement" for minoritized students (Engberg & Hurtado, 2011; Harper, 2010; Palmer & Gasman, 2008; Rankin, 2003; Strayhorn, 2010). The goal of much of this literature is to examine barriers to success and identify factors that positively influence academic "achievement" for these students.

For example, Harper (2010), in his study on academic achievement and African American male leadership, found that keys to success in college for African American men are deep relationships between themselves and their peers. Through these relationships, students can support each other's academic efforts. Harper described same-race peer support as integral to his participants' persistence and success in college. Similarly, Strayhorn (2010) discussed how an increase in social and cultural capital leads to an increase in academic achievement for Black and Latino males. He found that involvement in both majority and minority organizations while in college, participation in

college outreach programs, and conversations with family about college all increase academic achievement for these men. Also, Palmer and Gasman (2008) found that Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) foster environments where different manifestations of social capital can be gained and contribute to the academic success of African American males. The authors found that HBCUs foster supportive relationships between faculty and students, encourage mentorship and peer relationships, as well as provide ample opportunities for students to become involved in campus activities. Palmer and Gasman (2008) emphasized how their findings contribute to the persistence and degree completion for African American males.

Scholars have also called for entirely new theories of persistence and success that better address racial and cultural realities for minoritized students (Museus & Quayle, 2009). To this end, Museus (2014) developed the Culturally Engaging Campus Environments (CECE) Model to better understand student success for racially minoritized populations. This model addresses external factors and precollege inputs that shape individual motivations and connections to institutions, academics, and success. The CECE Model describes a holistic approach to understanding success for minoritized college students.

These studies all frame minoritized students as in need of support structures and services to increase their academic success in college and do not discuss how the persistence of inequities may be due, in part, to the particular structures and frameworks of higher education. While the CECE model does address institutional barriers to, particularly, minoritized students, “success” remains undelineated and undefined. As with

much of the literature surrounding cultural centers in higher education, these studies on college success assume that “success” refers to college completion and subsequent integration into the new economy as producers and wage earners. Therefore, these studies also discursively construct minoritized college students as potential or eventual knowledge and revenue producers as they construct “achievement” as a mediating factor in college completion. This is particularly salient in Strayhorn’s (2010) study where he defines academic achievement as undergraduate GPA, a standardized number that suggests that the learning process can be reduced to a quantifiable measure. The equation of academic achievement with GPA also unilaterally defines the concept of achievement, leaving no room for other outcome measures or alternative conceptions of achieving outside of what can be reflected on an exam or rubric.

In addition, higher education scholars frequently discuss the importance of leadership development for undergraduate student “success” (Astin, 1993). In an analysis of student motivation to lead, Rosch, Collier, and Thompson (2015) found that despite holding fewer leadership positions, Black and Latino undergraduate students displayed more motivation to lead than White, Asian, and Asian American students. While the authors call for more research into the causation of these findings, I question the assumptions that undergird the work and the authors’ definition of “leadership.” Given hegemonic constructions of college student success and achievement, it remains unclear how White masculinist notions of leadership development contribute to the continued marginalization of minoritized students. That is, I wonder how a definition of leadership that may be rooted in White masculinist values such as competition, risk taking, and

domination create standards that may be misaligned with the values of minoritized students and their home communities. Black and Latino students may be *motivated* to develop leadership skills but the extent to which an adoption of these values contributes to these students' assimilation is left unexamined. In addition, this uncritical look at how "leadership" is delineated and defined, like Harper's (2010) and Strayhorn's (2010) studies, frames minoritized students as needing motivation to develop White masculinist notions of leadership for their eventual foray into the new economy as wage earners and knowledge producers. There are numerous definitions of leadership, all of which contain cultural specificities, and remaining uncritical of how this concept is defined contributes to the privileging of White masculinist corporate culture and the framing of minoritized student as eventual contributors to the economy and therefore that culture.

In addition to studies that examine interpersonal factors that contribute to minoritized student success, many authors examine how structural and policy factors can work to help or hinder minoritized student success (e.g., Beemyn, 2003; Rankin, 2006). For example, Beemyn (2003) examined the experiences and needs of transgender college students and offered recommendations to administrators and faculty to create a campus that can meet the needs of these students as well as create a more welcoming and less hostile environment. This list of recommendations includes the creation of educational trainings on transgender issues, policies to prohibit and respond to gender-based violence, the implementation of gender-neutral bathrooms, the creation of transgender-specific programming and services, and the inclusion of transgender identities on forms and applications. Similarly, Rankin (2006) advocated for future research on LGBTQ college

students to discern how to create welcoming environments and meet the needs of this population to ensure their academic success.

In much the same way as the literature surrounding interpersonal factors that are important for minoritized student success does, literature examining structural and policy factors that impact student success construct minoritized student identities as vulnerable and dependent on the institution for help integrating into larger campus culture to gain the skills and knowledge necessary to “succeed” in the new economy. While this literature acknowledges the complex and multifaceted nature of student identities and that blanket interventions and services do not reach all students in the same ways, it still fails to acknowledge a diversity of *potentials* outside of the assumed identity of revenue producer. That is, the policies and structures this literature discusses assume a particular definition of “success,” one that may limit what and how students can be. This is especially apparent in Beemyn’s (2003) work that emphasized how it is necessary to educate the broader campus community on issues transgender people may face to ensure their successful integration into broader campus culture. That is, Beemyn advocated for small adjustments to campus environments and policies to ensure transgender students can have the same experiences as majority students. This both assumes that transgender students want and need the same experiences as majority students, perhaps constructing the majority experience as the ideal.

Discursive productions of diversity. In stark contrast to literature about diversity in higher education, extant literature on the discursive production of diversity in higher education illuminates how institutional policies, programs, and practices frame

minoritized identities to interrupt potentially problematic subjectivity production (Iverson, 2007, 2010, 2012; Preston & Hoffman, 2015; Talburt, 2010). Much of this literature focuses on not only the problematic discursive productions of identities that can occur through policy and campus messaging, but also how these discursive productions can support and sustain hierarchies within our institutions.

Iverson (2007) examined university diversity actions plans and, using Critical Race Theory as an analytic framework, their discursive production of people of color. Through her policy analysis, Iverson (2007) identified four discourses that frame people of color including a discourse of access, disadvantage, marketplace, and democracy. Iverson found that these discourses shape people of color as at-risk, outsiders, commodities, and change agents. She used these findings to illuminate how measuring a diverse “other” against a White heterosexual male norm works through these diversity action plans to support existing racial hierarchies. Similarly, Preston and Hoffman (2015) examined the institutional discursive framing of LGBTQ students. Furthermore, they examined how students “took up” these discourses in their personal narratives to elucidate how campus messaging may produce certain (limited) ways of being. The authors found that institutions frame LGBTQ students as lonely, at-risk, and in need of assistance and position the institution as the solution to students’ problems. In this way, the institution defined a “successful” LGBTQ student; a student who uses the institutional resources to gain access to typical, gendered, student experiences such as prom, an event the authors use as an example. Similar to Iverson’s (2007, 2010, 2012) findings, Preston and Hoffman (2015) found that university LGBTQ centers support existing hierarchies of

race, gender, and sexual orientation by discursively situating the White heterosexual male student as the norm against which all “diverse” others are measured. In addition, by focusing on student narratives measured against dominant institutional discourses, Preston and Hoffman (2015) examined how campus diversity programs and services may be limiting LGBTQ student identity *potentials* by defining “acceptable” forms of identity development. As Talburt (2010) asserted, a discourse that shapes “successful students” by promoting integration, belonging, and involvement (Strayhorn, 2012; Tinto, 1993) limits ways of both being and potentials of becoming.

Unlike previously discussed literature on diversity and cultural centers in higher education, literature about the discursive production of diversity illuminates how institutional messaging constructs minoritized identities as at-risk, outsiders, and in many cases as responsible for educating or changing the broader campus culture to fit their particular difference. Through illuminating these discursive productions, this literature begins to show how the power inherent in language (Foucault, 1977) can work to frame particular ways of being as legitimate to fit the institutional interest of creating “successful students” prepared to become producers and wage earners in the new economy. Iverson (2007, 2010, 2012), Preston and Hoffman (2015), and Talburt (2010) all problematized the institutional discursive framing of “diverse” students as well as offered suggestions to shift the discourses about these students by, for example, introducing a discourse of activism into campus messaging about diversity programming to imagine ways of being outside of victims and educators. Through their suggestions to

shift discourses working to support existing hierarchies, this literature is moving towards legitimating alternative identity potentials for minoritized students.

Summary of diversity literature. The literature on diversity and cultural centers in higher education centers the voices and experiences of minoritized students and recognizes student identities as multifaceted and complex. This literature recognizes that minoritized students may perceive the campus climate and culture differently than majority students, supports the need for narrowly directed spaces and resources, and understands many of the barriers minoritized students face in accessing higher education. Much of the literature, however, continues to frame minoritized students as both inherently at-risk and in need of resources. While the literature surrounding the discursive framing of “diverse” students works to illuminate these often damaging discourses, the end goal remains in many cases the promotion of equity in education. What this literature, for the most part, fails to interrogate are the ways in which student success and achievement are defined, potentially limiting legitimate ways of being for these students. One exception is Talburt’s (2010) work in which she states, “Research must be mindful of the power of discourses to attach subjects to desires for identity, community, and ‘correct’ development” (p. 126). Few of the authors discussed above interrogate the goals of higher education and, by failing to do so, may constrain identity potentials to revenue producer and other narrow identity iterations seen as acceptable for the new economy. While literature highlighting the discursive production of “diversity” within higher education discusses the often-damaging effects of how minoritized students’ identities are framed, it does not interrogate the larger economic and political structures that govern

higher education structure and policy. As such, I will next review literature about neoliberalism and higher education, paying particular attention to how this literature constructs minoritized student identities.

Neoliberalism and Higher Education

As discussed previously, neoliberalism has facilitated the rise of academic capitalism in the United States (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). Neoliberalism, a force proliferated by the Reagan/Thatcher regimes in the U.S. and Britain, has been influential in shaping the current structure of our institutions for the past 20 years (Levin, 2007).

Neoliberalism is defined as:

A theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade (Harvey, 2005, p. 2).

Through its control of educational institutions and social life, neoliberalism has effectively transformed our higher education institutions into spaces that work to assimilate minoritized students into effective and digestible or neutralized subjects suitable for the workforce (Harvey, 2007). In addition, it has created a culture within higher education that is concerned with profits and the creation of a profitable work force above all else, where faculty are expendable and efficiency reigns over critical thought and the development of informed citizens (Giroux, 2014). Here, I examine some of the extant literature on neoliberalism in higher education to understand how this work (re)produces minoritized student identities.

Giroux (2014) presented his relentless critique of neoliberalism's influence on higher education in the United States and Canada. He argued that the shift toward neoliberalism has forced higher education institutions to abandon their status as a service for the public good for one of privatized knowledge where corporate power and culture reign and progressive ideals and critical exchange are all but missing. He also outlined the very real human toll that higher education's reliance on external revenue streams has produced. Employing the Penn State scandal as an example, Giroux explained how the glorification of a masculinist and revenue driven sport led to the creation of an environment that facilitated unfettered sexual abuse of underprivileged children. He also explained that the sanctions handed down from the NCAA failed to punish and masked the fact that the organization responsible for fostering an environment in which schools can insidiously allow and cover up rampant abuse of children is the NCAA itself. Through his critique, Giroux exposed higher education's move toward corporate education that produces complicit workers instead of informed and critical citizens.

Throughout his book, Giroux (2014) not only problematized higher education's tendency to treat all students as disposable, their worth and identity tied inextricably to their purchasing power, but also exposed how neoliberal education frames minoritized students as *more* disposable than their majority peers, "whitewashing" their identities and steering them more and more into the "school to prison pipeline." He stated,

In light of the current neoliberal assault on all democratic public spheres, along with the urgency of the problems faced by those marginalized because of their class, race, age, or sexual orientation, I think it is all the more crucial to imagine a

politics that both challenges and rejects the dystopian “dreamworlds” of consumption, privatization, deregulation, and the neverending search for accumulating profits (Giroux, 2014, p. 52).

Giroux (2002, 2014) explicitly pointed to minoritized students as having more to lose in the current neoliberalized educational context, their access to higher education limited and, when access is granted, their identities either policed or erased. Giroux (2014) stated, “Rather than representing a society’s dreams and hope for the future, young people, especially poor White and minority children, have become a nightmare, an excess, and disposable in the age of casino capitalism and big money” (p. 128). In this way, he framed minoritized students as victims in the process of the corporatization of higher education. However, paired with Giroux’s (2010, 2014) arguments for engaging with critical pedagogy and Freirian (2001) ideals as a form of resistance against neoliberalism’s assault on education, student potentials are transformed from victims to social agents and informed subjects. In fact, Giroux (2010), when speaking of the possibilities inherent in an educational system steeped in critical and progressive pedagogies, opened up infinite potentials of and within student identities by framing students as agents with the ability to wield power if given the tools and progressive educational environments.

Similarly, while their analysis is not situated within higher education but public education broadly, Grady, Marquez, and McLaren (2012) also highlighted forms of resistance enacted by marginalized students. Grady et al. centered their work on queer youth of color and the utilization of dance and performance as resistance to the neoliberal

policing and erasure of their identities. The authors discussed how a performance group, Vogue Evolution, used dance and movement as storytelling modes with which to empower queer youth of color to combat neoliberal capitalism. They foregrounded the importance of community and the public good as vital in the lives of queer youth of color by explaining how often queer youth are left to navigate their lives and culture alone without the support of their families. The neoliberal ideals of individualism and “hard work,” then, become dire for queer youth often left to fend for themselves. Through performance, the authors explained, queer youth of color can explore systems of oppression as well as their own identities in the face of an educational system which forces conformity through the policing of identities (Grady et al., 2012).

In much the same way as Giroux (2014), Grady et al. (2012) framed queer youth of color as victims of the neoliberal takeover of the educational systems in the United States. Grady et al. also noted the disparate effects of neoliberalization on students embodying minoritized identities. Centering their analysis on queer youth of color in particular, they exposed the potential deleterious effects of an educational system centered on commodification and conformity for communities facing multiple marginalizations. By highlighting the use of dance as a space of resistance, however, the authors left room for the proliferation of identity potentials of queer youth of color through the use of movement as storytelling and foundations of community building and activism. In this way, Grady et al. shifted some power in their construction of minoritized students to the students themselves, leaving space for them to create their own identity

potentials and leaving multiple ways of being available for students to create, shape, and occupy.

Shahjahan (2014) also discussed creating space to rewrite narratives toward increasing freedom to be for minoritized students in higher education. In this work, the author used Jeffress' (2008) conceptions of postcolonial resistance to explain possible strategies for resistance of neoliberal influence in higher education. Shahjahan noted that rewriting and undermining colonial narratives through writing counternarratives to the neoliberal storyline, while important, fails to lead to actual social change within the academy. He also noted that resistance as subversion, the working to subvert neoliberalism within the cracks in the academy, cannot overturn some of the power structures central to the persistence of the neoliberal state. In addition, he described resistance as opposition or the utilization of collective protests and social movements as ignoring the heterogeneity of oppressed groups. Finally, Shahjahan advocated for the use of resistance as transformation to undermine the neoliberal influence on higher education. By this he meant resisting the urge to tie our worth as academics to productivity and embracing a practice built on human connection and being our whole selves, suggesting that faculty and administrators embrace community-mindedness, collaboration, art, and other parts of humanity that resist neoliberal logics.

While Shahjahan (2014) did not focus on minoritized students, he advocated for a move from “freedom from” oppressive regimes, including neoliberalism to a “freedom to” through transformational resistance. In the context that Shahjahan imagined in this work, players within the academy, including students, are presented with limitless

possibilities to construct and reconstruct their own subjectivities. In this way, Shahjahan framed minoritized students as constrained by neoliberalism and yet, given the correct context and through working to subvert neoliberalism through transformation, gave them the freedom to construct and shape their own subjectivities. Shahjahan recognized the constraints neoliberal influence has on minoritized student identities, as well as other players in higher education, and imagines a resistance strategy that allows for agency within subjectivity production and a world free from oppressive neoliberal influence and policy.

In this vein, Zepke (2015) explored the concept of student engagement as a neoliberal construct that directly benefits the neoliberal educational agenda by facilitating student learning of practical and economically marketable skills and behaviors. Zepke argued for a participatory and dialogic conceptualization of engagement on a local, classroom level, which can expand the boundaries of curriculum to offer students a chance to be critical of society and work for social justice. In essence, he argued for as much of a break between neoliberalism and student engagement as possible given the curricular control due to accreditation and funding structures. For example, Zepke argued for a privileging of general wellness, speaking back, and engaging in active citizenship in the classroom, all of which are practices that undermine the neoliberal tenets of competition and profit generation. In doing so, Zepke, while not directly engaging with the idea of *becoming*, suggested that students may be able to act with increased agency when in spaces that resist neoliberal control. This suggestion opens the door for students to be more than simply producers in the new economy but people with the agency to

shape the social world around them – a potential that the neoliberal educational agenda leaves, by in large, closes for students. While Zepke did not engage with minoritized student identities directly, his assertion that student engagement can be reframed to encourage development of a critical consciousness and an agenda for social justice suggests that the lived realities of minoritized students and people in general are at the forefront of his analysis.

Summary of neoliberalism literature. The literature on the neoliberal influence on higher education constitutes a broad range of analyses and contexts due to its global influence and pervasive nature (Harvey, 2005). As such, this literature spans a broad range of foci from influence on policy, institutional culture, higher education finance, and influence on identity production. Due to the literature's interrogation of broader political and economic structures that influence higher education, it often fails to ground analyses in empirical data or lived realities excepting Grady et al.'s (2012) work discussed above. The strengths of this literature lie in the treatment of student identities as complex and multifaceted. While literature on diversity in higher education also highlights the heterogeneity of students as a group, the literature on neoliberalism extends this analysis to include identification of the potentials of minoritized student identities that can exist outside of eventual knowledge producer and wage earner. That is, the literature critiquing neoliberalism envisions life outside of neoliberal control of education and frames minoritized students as having expanded and different potentials. Further, much of this literature explores how these potentials can be accessed through resistance of neoliberal influence in educational contexts. It is within these analyses that connections are made

between the oppressive control of an economic and political system and the lived realities of minoritized students where one can ask, “What are the subjectivity potentials that exist within higher education and how much agency do students have to construct and reshape their subjectivities within this space?”

Conclusion

The literature on academic capitalism, diversity and cultural centers, and the neoliberal influence on higher education all frame minoritized student identities in particular ways. Much of the literature on academic capitalism constructs students as eventual knowledge and revenue producers for the capitalist knowledge regime. In contrast, minoritized student identities are honored as heterogeneous and complex by the literature surrounding diversity and cultural centers. This literature, however, fails to interrogate the goals of higher education and therefore assumes a hegemonic definition of “success.” Finally, much of the literature critiquing neoliberalism’s effects in higher education connects the influence of a broad economic and political regime with the lived realities of minoritized students *and* includes potentials for resistance within this pervasive and oppressive system. In other words, the last body of literature often leaves space to interrogate if and how cultural centers support existing hierarchies within higher education. This literature potentially constructs and shapes student identities in particular ways while also opening the potential for resistance and existence outside of these regulating structures and forces therefore creating less rigid definitions of “college success” and “achievement” effectively removing the goals of higher education from corporate control. Through the analysis of the literature, I have set the stage to begin my

study to interrogate how minoritized students negotiate neoliberal discourses of success perpetuated through cultural centers on college campuses.

Chapter 3: How We Go

The purpose of this research is to examine how narrow, institutionally constructed discourses of success and, more specifically, minoritized student success work through cultural centers to construct a successful LAC subject. To explore this construction and how minoritized students negotiate the institutional construction of the successful LAC subject, I conducted a qualitative research study focusing on minoritized students and their subjectivities. Using governmentality as a theoretical framework, I sought to understand how minoritized students self-govern in relation to the successful LAC subject perpetuated through the institution and the Multicultural Center. The questions this study seeks to answer are as follows:

- How does Liberal Arts College (LAC) construct a governmentality of success for college students?
- How does the Multicultural Center (MC) contribute to a governmentality of success for minoritized college students?
- How do minoritized college students negotiate neoliberal discourses of student success?

I ground this study in poststructural definitions of subjectivity and discourse. Because I understand that what we believe to be true is socially constituted (Foucault, 1978), I find poststructuralism to be particularly useful in examining how subjects are produced, shaped, and constrained by discourses. I used two different processes and two different analytical tools. First, I used discourse analysis (Gee, 2014) to understand how

“successful subjects” are constructed by and through the MC at LAC as well as the institution at large. Using discourse analysis, I paid particular attention to the ways in which neoliberal discourses of success influence the construction of “successful subjects.” Second, I used narrative analysis to understand how minoritized students negotiate their subjectivities in relationship to the successful subject constructed by the institution.

In this chapter, I first discuss the main tenets of poststructuralism paying particular attention to the aspects of poststructural thought that inform the current study. I specifically discuss *discourse* and *subjectivity* as well as outline existing critiques of poststructuralism. While I earlier discussed neoliberalism, here I go into more depth on the ways in which I use neoliberalism in this work and explain neoliberal discourses of success. Next, I discuss governmentality more in depth and detail how I understand this concept operating as a framework for this study. I further discuss the questions and challenges that governmentality poses to the higher education context as well as how I use these questions to frame my study. Finally, I discuss my methods for data collection, analysis, and the ethics of my study.

Poststructuralism

This study is grounded in the poststructural concepts of *discourse*, *subject*, and *subjectivity*. In this section, I give an overview of poststructuralism, define the concepts that inform this study, and present critiques of poststructuralism.

Poststructural theory, while sometimes subsumed under the “postmodern” umbrella, is especially focused on recognizing the power in language and discourse in

shaping subjects, subjectivities, and social realities. Keeping in mind St. Pierre's (2000) warning that "postmodernism [and poststructuralism] does not and cannot provide essentializing answers to questions about its meaning" (p. 26), I outline the tenets of poststructuralism to show how this framework informs my current project.

Poststructuralism is chiefly concerned with the ways in which language constitutes our social realities (Crotty, 1998; Gannon & Davies, 2007; Ropers-Huilman, 1998). Further, poststructural theory recognizes the power of discourse to articulate what we think and do (Foucault, 1997). Therefore, poststructural theory rejects realist claims of truth and reality and focuses on the production of identity, the body, and cultural life through texts and their deconstruction. Postmodernism and poststructuralism are often referred to as deconstructive paradigms because they seek to disrupt the regulatory nature of binary thinking on thought and identity (Cixous, 1986; Gannon & Davies, 2007). Poststructuralism also allows for the analysis of micro level texts and macro level texts that construct discourses, which Allan (2003) defined as "more than simply a group of statements or a stretch of text on paper, discourse can be characterized as a dynamic constellation of words and images that legitimate and produce a given reality" (p. 47). In addition, poststructural theory foregrounds how power operates as a productive force (Foucault, 1978). That is, power is exercised at a local level through knowledge and discourse (Allan, 2010). Power *produces* discourses that shape subjects and subjectivities. Poststructuralism, then, is concerned with how discourses produce subjects and subjectivities and is also concerned with the agency that subjects have to act against or subvert these discursive productions (Davies, 2000; Ropers-Huilman, 1998). The

poststructural concept of the construction of truths and subjects through discourses are central to my current project.

Discourse. Bové (1990) explained that *discourse* provides a, privileged entry into the poststructuralist mode of analysis precisely because it is the organized and regulated, as well as the regulating and constituting, functions of language that it studies: its aim is to describe the surface linkages between power, knowledge, institutions, intellectuals, the control of populations, and the modern state as these intersect in the functions of systems of thought (pp. 54-55).

Discourse, therefore, includes language-in-use and the ways in which this language produces, shapes, and is shaped by the social context in which it operates as well as larger social forces (Allan, 2003; Gee, 2014). In addition to language, discourse includes customs, norms, attitudes, and behaviors. Allan (2003) defined *discourse* as “a dynamic constellation of words and images that legitimate and produce a certain reality” (p. 37). That is, discourses work to construct the ways in which we understand our lived realities. In addition, there is not just one discourse, but “multiple and competing discourses exist[ing] simultaneously, propagating often conflicting subject positions” (Allan, Iverson, & Ropers-Huilman, 2010, p. xiii). Discourse, in forming frames of knowledge and reference, represents how power works to shape individuals, behavior, and the larger society in particular ways (Ropers-Huilman, 1998; Weedon, 1997).

Furthermore, and particularly important for this study, individuals come to understand themselves through discourse (Allan, 2010). It is through the discourses about different subject positions that we learn to recognize our own subjectivities. For example,

individuals learn to be a student, teacher, woman, man, alcoholic, or any other identity through the multiple and competing discursive articulations of these subject positions. We position ourselves within these discourses, which helps us to understand who we are and how we relate to our social worlds. In this research, discourse includes institutional language, practices, theories, rules (written and unwritten), and ideologies created by and through institutions, cultural centers, and their actors. In addition, discourse includes customs, norms, attitudes, language, and behaviors of students and administrators who operate in and around cultural centers.

Subjects and subjectivity. Poststructuralism is also concerned with theories of the self or the ways in which *subjects* and *subjectivities* are produced by and through discourses (Ropers-Huilman, 1998). The self as conceptualized from a humanist standpoint is a stable and autonomous individual who is “endowed with a will, a freedom, and intentionality which is then subsequently ‘expressed’ in language, in action, in the public domain” (Butler, 1995, p. 136). In contrast, the self as conceptualized through poststructuralism is not stable, but is in fact produced and reproduced through multiple, competing discourses and social codes (Butler, 1992). Foucault (1970) theorized that subjects are subjected to the effects of power since power exists in discourse. Therefore, because subjects are constituted by and through power relations, who is subjected, and how one is subjected, creates categories that “function to create and justify social organization and exclusion” (Flax, 1993, p. 96). Both Foucault (1972) and Butler (1992) believed, however, that subjects do have agency in their subjection and can alter practices and shift discourses in order to alter their positionalities. Subjects, then, are unstable,

constantly producing and reproducing themselves through available and competing discourses.

Weedon (1997) defined subjectivity as “the place where our sense of ourselves...is constructed” (p. 21). Subjectivity, then, refers to an individual’s awareness of themselves as a subject. Weedon also noted how subjectivities are never fixed, as articulated by Foucault (1972) and Butler (1992), but are constantly being produced, reproduced, taken up, and left as our social contexts constantly shift and change. For example, a person who understands themselves as a teacher, understands themselves in that identity in ways that are shaped by their social contexts. These understandings are informed by the ways in which the identity of “teacher” is enacted, discussed, defined, and written about from various institutions, individuals, and society at large. In addition, someone who understands themselves to be a teacher may be read as, for instance, a student in certain contexts, for example, while carrying a backpack and walking on campus. Here, multiple and competing discourses of what it means to be a teacher are at play and this individual finds themselves subjected to the ways in which the social context shapes one’s identities based on dominant discourses of teacher professionalism and dress (Weedon, 1997).

Critiques of poststructuralism. Although poststructural thought and methods have been taken up by several scholars in the field of higher education (e.g., Allan et al., 2010; Bloland, 1995; Iverson, 2012; Ropers-Huilman, 1998; Ropers-Huilman, Winters, & Enke, 2013), the paradigm is widely critiqued by those both within and outside of the field. For example, Francis (1999) argued against the use of pure poststructuralism in

education due to its nature as inapplicable in social worlds and therefore its uselessness in a highly praxis-based field like higher education. Further, Francis argued that, in fact, poststructural work cannot be feminists (and by extension, contain any praxis-based qualifier) due to poststructuralism's dismissal of the development of an emancipatory agenda because of the need for deconstruction using this paradigm. That is, Francis critiqued poststructuralism because it deconstructs discursive practices and truth narratives, leaving nothing in their place. Feminism's central tenet, to subvert patriarchy through radical social change, cannot be foregrounded, Francis contended, because of the relativism of poststructuralism. Gannon and Davies (2007) countered Francis' (1999) point by deconstructing the binary between "pure" and "applied" poststructuralism and they grappled with how to bridge the gap between praxis and deconstructive theory.

Ramazanoglu (2002), in another critique of specifically feminist poststructuralism, cited how the jargon, dense language, and inaccessibility of poststructural thought reified hierarchies of knowledge within the academy. She explained, "The difficulties and abstractions of so much postmodern thought have coincided with a period of competitive career pressures in higher education so that only certain kinds of feminist thought are deemed worthy of respect, funding or promotion" (p. 166). Here, Ramazanoglu drew attention to the lack of relevance poststructural and postmodern thought may have to the lives of non-White, non-Western, and non-academic women. Her broad claim was that for many, the jargon and inaccessibility of poststructuralism constitute a paradigm that may be too removed from their lived realities to be accessible and to bring about liberatory change. Lather (1996), however, asserted

that the only way we are to move beyond the established scripts is to learn to think and write differently, which is made possible through postmodern and poststructural thought. Lather's (1996) point was that certainty and clarity create stagnation and writing about social problems from different registers that interrupt the accessible/inaccessible binary necessarily creates space for change.

Although poststructuralism is critiqued for its inaccessibility, use of abstraction, and inattention to praxis, poststructural thought continues to proliferate in the field of higher education. Gannon and Davies (2007) wrote, "Poststructuralism...might be seen as the antithesis of global capitalism and of neoliberalism in which the individual is emphasized and the social is proclaimed dead" (p. 81). That is, poststructuralism and its destabilization of the subject and categories of difference undermine the neoliberal reliance on the individual as the backbone of the development of the workforce and producer of capital. Higher education is one site for the development of these eventual individual contributors to the economy (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004) and the destabilization of the individual subject may be an important strategy to understand how minoritized subjectivities are produced through higher education. In other words, within a field that emphasizes individual achievement, accomplishment, and the development of the self as a contributor to the economy, a paradigm that treats individual identities as dynamic and the individual subject as discursively produced and reproduced may offer new insight into how institutions can create more equitable structures and practices.

The current study seeks to understand the ways in which neoliberal discourses of success construct successful subjects in higher education and, by extension, the

subjectivities of minoritized students operating in and around institutions of higher education. Understanding realities as socially constituted and continually mediated by multiple and competing discourses, I analyze how minoritized student subjectivities are produced and constrained by neoliberal discourses of success operating within and around my research site, particularly the MC. Poststructuralism allows me to ask how neoliberal ideas of “success” are produced through discourses that circulate through LAC and the MC, who can be a “successful” subject, how one is constructed by neoliberal discourses of success, and how minoritized students negotiate those discourses in their own production of their subjectivities.

Governmentality and Neoliberalism

In this project, I use the concept of governmentality to understand how minoritized students negotiate neoliberal constructions of the successful subject. Governmentality refers to the ways in which the government exercises control over its population (Foucault, 1991). Foucault discussed governmentality as a series of mechanisms and rules, or exercises of power, that create rewards and punishments, effectively (re)producing self-regulating individuals. Foucault also discussed governmentality as an exercise of power wherein the state lays out a series of possibilities of conduct, complete with their possible outcomes (Olssen, 2006). In this way, governing becomes less a way of *forcing* a populace into certain standards of being and behaving and more a subtle form of guiding discipline.

Neoliberalism, as discussed previously, refers to the dominant ideology governing political and economic thought in the United States that is characterized by a belief in the benevolence of the free market, the necessity of limiting state interventions and regulations, and the individual as a rational economic actor (Harvey, 2005; Saunders, 2010). Neoliberalism constructs mechanisms that assign capital to all spheres of the social exceeding the economic; that is, constructions such as identities, behaviors, and relationships have monetary value (Gordon, 1991). Subjects learn to self-regulate based on government structures that normalize free market standards across all human behavior and choice. For example, standards of professional behavior are often rewarded by economic advancement. If one fails to adhere (for example, a business person who has visible tattoos), the punishment is understood in terms of capital (being denied a promotion or being terminated). Individuals learn, then, to constantly self-regulate based on systems of rewards and punishments that are often economic in nature (Gordon, 1991; Olssen, 2006). This system is perpetuated through higher education institutions, which necessarily operate in the neoliberal economy in ways that sustain their own economic advancement. Governmentality, then, is a helpful concept through which to problematize the ways in which cultural centers operate on campus. Rather than assuming cultural centers are holistically catering to the needs and wants of minoritized students, I will explore how the MC might contribute to a governmentality for minoritized students that rewards assimilation for adhering to standards that neoliberal discourses of success have constructed and punishes those who fall outside those standards.

To understand how a particular governmentality may be constructed through neoliberal discourses of success, I used discourse analysis and narrative analysis, paying attention to the usage of neoliberal rhetoric and logic. I looked for references to individualism, privatization, elitism, prestige, corporatization, meritocracy, consumption, and professionalism to understand how neoliberal discourses construct success and successful subjects.

Data Collection

In this qualitative study, data collection included individual interviews with four administrators directly involved with the MC and with 16 minoritized students at LAC. Individual interviews are important tools to be able to understand how students and administrators position themselves within or against institutional discourses circulated through the MC and other institutionalized structures. In addition, data collection included observations and obtaining documents for analysis including mission statements, advertisements for events, and promotional documents from the MC and other relevant offices on campus; social media pages and content from the MC and the institution at large; and local and campus newspaper articles that highlight diversity, equity, or the MC. I used discourse analysis (Gee, 2014) to analyze how discourses produced the successful LAC subject and the successful minoritized LAC subject. Collecting data in these ways allowed for an exploration of the complex processes of how discourses of success shaped the institution and more specifically the MC, how these discourses worked through the MC to construct the successful subject, and how these discourses are negotiated by minoritized students. This study used a case study design

(Cresswell, 2007; Yin, 2009) informed by ethnographic methods (Madison, 2005) and data was collected at LAC over the course of one semester.

Observations. I focused observations on the physical MC space as well as social and educational events and programs run out of the space. In addition, I attended MC student and professional staff meetings each week during fieldwork. Observations of the physical space focused on who occupied the physical space and well as how the space was used. Observations at programs and events focused on the purpose, the content presented, attendance, behaviors of all involved, and the tone of the event or program. I particularly noted if and how success is discussed or implied during observations.

Descriptive field notes were recorded during and after each day of observation that included initial impressions, significant or unexpected events, how others reacted to significant or unexpected events, and how actions and activities in the space are organized (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011). In addition, I recorded my personal thoughts, insights, and feelings in my reflexive journal. Each week, I completed a writing memo where I recorded overall impressions of the week's observations, emerging themes, questions, feelings, and ideas. Overall, I completed 53 hours of observations over the course of the Spring 2016 semester at LAC.

Interviews. I conducted open-ended, semi-structured, in-person interviews with 16 minoritized students and four administrators who directly oversee or are involved with the MC (See Appendix A for interview protocol). These interviews were conducted to build an understanding of how each participant constructed themselves and their narrative through institutionalized discourses of success and successful subjects (Gubrium &

Holstein, 2001, 2009). Specifically, I asked open-ended questions about students' identities and experiences such as, "Can you tell me about a time when you felt successful since coming to college?" and "Would you tell me the story about how you came to be a student here?" In addition, individual interviews allowed for an exploration of how students and administrators constructed and made meaning of their experiences and subjectivities (Merriam, 2009).

I conducted one interview with each of the 20 participants and asked seven participants for additional clarifications to their initial interviews as follow-ups and member-checks. Further, I sent complete interview transcripts to the additional ten participants for review as additional member-checks. These ten participants were those who indicated I could maintain their contact information throughout the duration of the study. The interviews covered how each participant understood themselves, their experiences, and their subjectivities in relation to the MC and broader campus discourses of success. Because narrative analysis was conducted on interview data, questions were written to elicit stories or narratives; that is, open-ended questions were asked and probing was used as a tool to generate multiple stories from participants. Further, with administrative participants, interviews covered how they understood the MC operating within broader campus culture as well as more informative questions regarding budget, operation, and organizational structure of the MC to gain a broader understanding of the structure and function as a supplement to the information gleaned from the document analysis.

Interviews were conducted according to the tenets of feminist interviewing (DeVault & Gross, 2007; Ropers-Huilman & Winters, 2011). I operated reflexively paying attention to how my position as a researcher, and the other multiple identities I hold, influenced the interview process, data collection, participant recruitment, and data analysis and interpretation. I kept notes in my reflexive journal following each interview and observation to record my thoughts and feelings about my relationship to the data. The interview protocol served as a guide rather than a strict question set to leave room for follow up questions and probing. Several pilot interviews were conducted prior to the start of data collection and the interview protocol was revisited for revisions after these pilot interviews to ensure the elicitation of rich data.

Interviews with students began with introductory questions regarding their path to college, identities, their definitions of “success,” and interactions with and relationships to the institution. Questions then moved to relationships with peers, faculty, and administrators and their academic and extracurricular work. Finally, I asked questions regarding their hopes and dreams for both their individual and collective futures. Interviews with administrators were similar to student interviews, beginning with questions regarding their professional path to their current position, their identities, definitions of “success” for themselves and their students, and relationship to their institution. I then asked questions regarding their hopes and dreams for themselves, their office or division, and regarding their understanding of LAC in general. Questions were asked about the history of the MC, this history of equity and diversity work on campus, and their knowledge of the current structure and function of the MC on campus. These

questions elicited rich narratives regarding how participants constructed themselves in relation to the institution and the MC in particular.

Document analysis. The documents collected as data for the discourse analysis (Gee, 2014) included: campus-created texts, web pages, and advertisements regarding the MC's operation, events, activities, and structure; local and campus newspaper articles surrounding minoritized students on campus and/or the MC; promotional materials for the MC and LAC in general; campus-created social media pages and feeds; and job descriptions for both student and administrative positions within the MC. These documents were collected to understand how discourses of success influence the institution and the structure and function of the MC. Furthermore, the documents were collected to construct a larger, meta-narratives of the successful LAC subject and the successful minoritized subject at LAC.

Site selection. Data were collected at a highly selective, small, private, liberal arts institution, LAC, enrolling nearly 2,000 undergraduate students. My research site is an urban institution that purposefully has constructed a demographically and internationally diverse student body. In addition, the MC is explicitly grounded in social justice, an approach that makes it unique among small colleges. This focus might suggest that students would be encouraged to develop their individual and collective agency and, perhaps, their abilities to resist neoliberal constructions of success. In this way, the institution I chose is not typical, but rather would demonstrate the ways in which neoliberal influences shape minoritized college student experiences even at an institution that is well-positioned to resist or negotiate those forces. My research site has one

cultural center under which programming and education about minoritized people are located. The cultural center includes programming and educational initiatives surrounding communities of color, feminist communities, LGBTQ communities, and minoritized religious communities. The cultural center employs five staff members and several student staff, houses a programmatic arm of the center, oversees the on campus “cultural” residence hall, and runs the New Scholars college transition program. Access to the research site was facilitated through communication with personal contacts on campus.

Participants. Research participants included 16 minoritized students enrolled as full-time undergraduates at the time of data collection. Research participants also included four administrators and staff who oversee and work within the MC. These participants provided insight into not only the structure and function of the MC but also another level of analysis for the proliferation of identified discourses and their pervasiveness through the MC and its actors.

Participants were identified and recruited through email listservs accessed via MC staff and through purposeful sampling via existing contacts at LAC. I considered a diversity of identities and attempted to ensure that a diversity of identities were represented in the pool of participants. Despite this intention, my sample included no students who identified as cisgender men. Table 1 shows self-reported participant demographic information.

Table 1: Participant Demographic Information

Pseudonym	Gender Identity	Sexual Orientation	Race/Ethnicity	Socioeconomic Status	Year in School
Ana	Female	Heterosexual	Latina	Working Class	Staff
Carla	Cis Female	Heterosexual	Chinese/Korean	Middle Class	Senior
Derek	Cis Man	Gay	African American	Working Class	Staff
Emily	Female	Heterosexual	Asian American	Working Class	Senior
Farrah	Cis Female	Heterosexual-ish	Arab	Middle Class	Senior
Jane	Female	Bisexual	Black/African	Working Class	Sophomore
Joyenn	Female	Heterosexual	Latina	Working Class	First-Year
Jasmine	Female	Heterosexual	Hong Konger Chinese	Working Class	First-Year
Madison	Female	Straight	Korean/Japanese	Upper Middle Class	Senior
Marc	Cis Man	Queer/Gay	Latino	Working Class	Staff
Maura	Female	Heterosexual	Jewish	Middle Class	Sophomore
Micah	Agender	Queer/Gay	White	Working Class	Junior
Pup	Flexible	Queer	Asian American	Working Class	Junior
Rebecca	Female	Heterosexual	Asian/South Korean	Middle Class	Junior
Sam	Male	Heterosexual	Black	Middle Class	Staff
Sara	Female	Straight	Latina	Working Class	Sophomore
Susan	Female	Heterosexual	Asian	Middle Class	Senior
Syri	Non-binary Transfeminine	Pansexual	Native	Working Class	Sophomore
Zeze	Female	Heterosexual	Mexican-American	Working Class	Sophomore
Zoe	Cis Female	Heterosexual	Latina	Poor	Sophomore

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using both discourse analysis and narrative analysis. First, I used discourse analysis to understand how the institution constructed the successful LAC subject. Discourse analysis was also used to understand how the MC constructed the successful minoritized subject. I employed several of Gee's (2014) theoretical tools for discourse analysis. Specifically, I used the concepts of *social languages*, *situated meanings*, and *figured worlds*. *Social languages* refer to the language that one uses to express their identities. *Situated meanings* refer to the range of meanings attached to language and how the meanings can change based on context. *Figured worlds* are defined

as socially constituted “scripts” or generalizations about a particular identity, group, context, or phenomenon. More specifically, for this study figured worlds were defined as,

A socially and culturally constructed realm of interpretation in which particular characters and actors are recognized, significance is assigned to certain acts, and particular outcomes are valued over others. Each is a simplified world populated by a set of agents who engage in a limited range of meaningful acts of changes of state as moved by a specific set of forces (Holland, Skinner, Lachicotte, & Cain, 1998, p. 52).

For example, the figured world of a “good student” likely includes one showing up to class early, sitting in the front row, asking challenging and critical questions, taking notes, completing assignments on time, studying, and earning a good grade. Scholars and practitioners know that there are several ways in which the identity of “good student” can be enacted – notes are not always required, opportunities arise that can cause a missed class, among other things. However, this is the image most commonly elicited when one imagines a “good student” in the higher education context.

For this study, I analyzed both the documents and observation data by constructing larger meta-narratives, or figured worlds, within LAC for what it means to be a successful subject using Gee’s (2014) theoretical tools of social languages and situated meanings. To guide this analysis, I examined the textual data from the institution and more specifically from the MC, to ask the following analytic questions: how is “success” constructed and how?, who is and can be constructed as “successful”?, how does one become “successful”?, where can one be “successful”?, and how are the

consequences of not becoming “successful” articulated? These questions allowed for an examination of the ways in which discourses of success informed the figured worlds for students. From the emerging figured worlds of “successful subjects” and “successful minoritized subjects,” I constructed a coding scheme using relevant descriptors of these figured worlds to use as an analytic framework to examine interview data.

The second phase of data analysis included using narrative analysis to analyze interview data to understand how students and administrators, in their understandings of themselves in and through the institution, negotiated the discourses found in the first phase of the research. Through this analysis, I came to understand some of the ways in which participants’ subjectivities were and were not shaped by discourses of success perpetuated through the institution, the MC, and diversity programming.

Narrative analysis is well-suited for studies focused on subjectivity and identity due to its focus on both agency and imagination (Riessman, 1993). Studying narratives allows the researcher to understand how culture and social life speak through the stories participants tell and how participants construct themselves within and against their social context. Gubrium and Holstein (2001) noted that identities “resonate with our community’s understandings of who and what individuals might possibly be” (p. 9). Narrative analysis, then, allows for researchers to understand how particular discourses may shape individuals’ senses of themselves. In this way, this analytic method was useful in exploring how the figured worlds constructed around minoritized student identities shaped student identities and how students used their agency and imagination to forge

new ways of being that resisted or subverted dominant discourses of what it means to be a minoritized student within LAC.

To analyze interview data, I used open-coding to develop an initial list of thematic codes (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Next, I used the coding scheme developed from the discourse phase of data analysis to identify the intersections between the interview data and textual data. Using this scheme as a guide, I examined how interview participants negotiate the figured worlds of the successful subject and the successful minoritized subject through their narratives. I paid attention to the ways interview participants discussed themselves as being or not being successful subjects and how they conceptualized these ideas in their narratives. In addition, I paid attention to the ways in which participants discussed their self-governing to construct themselves in relation to the MC and discourses of success. This method of data analysis allowed for an in-depth exploration of how neoliberal discourses of success works through the institution and the MC to shape minoritized student identities and subjectivities and how individuals within and outside of the MC negotiated these discursive productions.

Ethics

I believe that we are all constantly constructing and interpreting our truths and realities, which leaves validity in research in a precarious position. I agree with Susan Talburt (2004) when she stated, “[Research] can represent a stance that hints at a ‘real’ and claims one’s own and grants others’ interpretive authority while acknowledging the multiplicity and uncertainty underlying and present in the ‘real,’ and consciously undermining closure and perfection” (p. 97). Given this understanding, I am less

interested in using tools to ensure trustworthiness in ways that can somehow make analyses and conclusions more “true,” and more interested in relying on trustworthiness to ensure that my interpretations of participants’ experiences and higher education environments are held in conversation and perhaps tension with those of the participants themselves.

First, confidentiality in this study was maintained through chosen pseudonyms and the masking of the name of the research site throughout data collection, analysis, and in any publication that comes from this research. Further, all audio recordings, notes, and documents were kept either in a locked filing cabinet, for hard copy items or on a password-protected computer on a secure server for digital items, to which only I have access. A consent form (Appendix B) was used to ensure participants have sufficient information to allow for an informed decision about participation in the study.

I utilized member checking via e-mail after interviews were transcribed and sent completed interviews for review to ten participants. These participants responded and each indicated their transcript was accurate. Further, I contacted seven participants for clarification on parts of their interviews and asked specific questions about their particular narratives. These member checks were used to *complicate* my reading of the data rather than to ensure validity, adding another layer for analysis in participant responses to their initial narratives. In addition, I kept a reflexive journal throughout data collection and analysis to document my own thoughts on my positionality and the power dynamics and biases I noticed as this project proceeded (Hesse-Biber & Piatelli, 2007). This journal was my attempt to operate transparently in all phases of the research process

including during data collection, analysis, and during the writing process and was used to provide transparency, where appropriate, during the analytic and interpretation phases of this project.

Positionality. Important in any research process is the continual grappling with the ways in which researchers' own selves and identities are positioned in the research. As such, I offer here a statement of my own background and identities and encourage the reader to engage with how my positions influence my analytic choices and interpretations of the data.

I am a White man from a middle-class background. I grew up in a suburban community in the Midwest. As a child, I recall my disinterest in what we were learning in school but my fascination with the ways in which teachers and students interacted with each other and the material. I realized I was queer and transgender in high school and this realization led me to more interesting (to me) educational experiences outside of formal schooling: conversations with other queer people, attending drag shows and book talks, introductions to literature that challenged the status quo, and a questioning of how I was operating in the world. This realization also brought with it an understanding of injustice I had not experienced previously. I understood what it was like to be dependent on people and systems that do not acknowledge your existence, let alone your needs. This realization continues to influence how I interact with the world as well as the work that I do.

I have been involved in higher education for most of the past decade as a student, researcher, teacher, and administrator. I see the potential for higher education to provide

students a critical lens through which to view their worlds and yet I also see that potential threatened almost daily. I come to this work with the intent to preserve this potential.

Limitations

There are several limitations to this study. First, data were collected at only one institution and while I believe that findings can provide important insight into how neoliberalism works through cultural centers to construct successful minoritized subjects, it is important to note that these discourses may be different or challenged at other institutions employing different structures and language about diversity programming and cultural centers. Second, this study involves a highly interpretive analytic procedure. While I believe that we are all continuously constructing and interpreting our social worlds and I see this project as merely a more systematic expansion of that creation and interpretation, what I put forward in this project is constructed from my own perspective as a researcher. This project represents a snapshot of both the context of LAC as well as of myself as a researcher and scholar and will remain so despite my best efforts at ensuring trustworthiness and employing the techniques discussed above, in my data and my analysis. I worked to be as transparent in my research, analytic process, and writing as possible during this project.

Chapter 4: The Successful LAC Subject

The remainder of this dissertation is organized into three chapters. This chapter, chapter four, shows how LAC constructs the successful subject through institutional messaging, thereby answering the first research question: How does LAC construct a governmentality of success? Chapter five answers the second research question: How does the Multicultural Center (MC) contribute to a governmentality of successful minoritized college students? Following the explication of how LAC constructs a governmentality of success for *all* students, chapter five shows how the Multicultural Center constructs an *additional* governmentality for minoritized students. In addition, both chapters four and five address the third research question: How do minoritized students negotiate neoliberal discourses of minoritized college student success? I weave student narratives throughout these chapters to give accounts of the many ways students negotiate the discourses of success at LAC. Finally, chapter six shows how the Multicultural Center, through using its discursive construction of success as a normalizing technology, operates in service to the broader institution, serving as a space to “fix” minoritized students so they can attain success within the broader campus community.

More specifically, chapter four details the results from the data analysis, showing that a successful LAC subject is discursively constructed as in the process of “becoming a scholar.” The successful LAC subject follows a linear trajectory where they arrive at LAC; involve themselves in a vast array of both curricular and extracurricular activities, emblematic of the liberal arts; develop a sense of belonging and become integrated into

the “multicultural” and “international” community at LAC; develop analytical, critical thinking, and communication skills; achieve academically; use skills developed at LAC to engage with an outside community; obtain a degree; and use their unique skills and accomplishments to both “better” the world around them and advance on a career trajectory.

Chapter five details the analysis of institutional texts and observation field notes, demonstrating that the MC discursively constructs a successful *minoritized* subject as in the process of “becoming a scholar” and positions the institution as the guarantor of access to the resources needed to carry out this transformation. While every LAC student is framed as in the process of attaining success by becoming a scholar, assumptions that undergird the MC’s messaging about minoritized students is that they need to do *extra* work to attain this status. That is, the governmentality for successful minoritized subjects includes an additional set of rewards and punishments that exist to normalize minoritized subjects’ behavior and identities. In this way, institutional messaging positions minoritized students as outsiders to the institution who need to “perform” to be included in the MC community as well as the broader institutional community.

Successful minoritized subjects perform by giving voice to their identities and their experiences stemming from those identities to educate the broader LAC community on their particular difference(s) while also doing their part in contributing to the broader institution’s articulated value of “multiculturalism.” A transaction is constructed wherein the college extracts and uses minoritized students’ stories and experiences in exchange for access to an elite education. Performance also includes “giving back” to the broader

communities in which LAC is situated and to the institution (in the form of volunteer hours for the college, leadership in various culturally-based organizations, and eventually robust alumni engagement). “Giving back,” however, is not coded as working to change the system but as having one’s voice and labor included in what already exists.

The discourse analysis presented in these chapters also demonstrates that the institution positions itself as the answer to minoritized students’ needs, acting as a catalyst for resources, social support, safe spaces, and sometimes connections to outside communities. In short, minoritized students are positioned by the institution as in need of extra support and resources to become successful and as resources themselves who must share pieces of their struggles and differences in specialized settings to gain entrance to the LAC community and have a chance at “becoming successful.” Further, by positioning itself as *the* space that contains resources to meet the assumed needs of minoritized students, the MC in fact works in service of the institution operating to rehabilitate or “fix” minoritized students, ensuring they attain institutional hallmarks of success and that their stories can be used by the institution to demonstrate the social benevolence and multiculturalism on which LAC prides itself.

Analysis of interview data reveals that nearly all participants readily “took up” the identity of educator and/or performer on their paths to success, inclusion in the MC community, and inclusion in the LAC community at large. Further, while sometimes remaining critical of the ideals of success LAC espouses, students continue to uphold those ideals *through* their involvement with the MC.

The final chapter, chapter six, draws conclusions from chapters four and five, articulating how the MC, contrary to assertions that the MC is the “anti-LAC,” acts in service of the institution. Chapter six shows how the MC functions as a “diversity sieve,” operating to ensure minoritized students attain institutional hallmarks of success in all areas of the broader campus community. The MC serves as not only a space where minoritized students get support, but also as a space where they are “fixed,” given just enough truth about their positions relative to the institution and ample reassurance of their resiliency to endure chilly campus climate conditions and become successful subjects. Further, chapter six illustrates how the MC operates as a space wherein minoritized students share their identities and struggles in service of the education of students in the majority, ensuring that all students at LAC benefit from the presence of “multicultural” and international students. Finally, chapter six draws connections to extant literature and offers implications for practice and interventions toward disrupting “business as usual” and building more just higher education environments.

The Successful Subject: LAC’s Governmentality of Success

This section shows how institutional messaging constructs the successful LAC subject, addressing the first research question: How does LAC construct a governmentality of success? Data show that the successful LAC subject attains espoused hallmarks of success in academics, in community service and volunteerism, and through their engagement with internationalism and multiculturalism. This section is written according to these themes in the data. Each sub-section also includes student narratives,

addressing the third research question: How do minoritized students negotiate neoliberal discourses of minoritized college student success?

LAC's mission, under the heading "6 Steps to Educational Success" states that LAC students' futures are self-directed and that each student will receive a "transformative" education. Upon first interacting with LAC's website, it is apparent that the institution promises its students an international and multicultural education that is rigorous, unique, and concerned with the social good. The first page of LAC's website boasts a student body representing 88 countries. The website also cites that 21% of US citizens attending LAC are students of color, 60% of all students study abroad, 60% pursue advanced degrees within six years of graduation, and 96% engage in community service or applied research during their time at LAC. Further, promotional materials note the myriad prestigious fellowships and scholarships students have received including Rhodes scholarships, Fulbright awards, and National Science Foundation fellowships.

While the institution's educational success statement promises a self-directed LAC experience with ample resources for students to shape their own education, institutional messaging constructs a successful subject that is narrowly defined. The successful subject is one who excels academically, earning grants and fellowships, conducting original research, interacting with faculty, and pursuing internships directly related to one's chosen career. The successful subject also embraces an international and multicultural education by studying abroad, seeking to understand privilege and oppression, and creating community with a diverse group of students. Further, the successful subject dedicates oneself to volunteer efforts within a community that is

external to LAC and maintains that focus throughout their career. A successful LAC subject then carries the skills and experiences gained at LAC into their graduate education and, later, their professional career where they maintain service to the public good and social justice and, importantly, credit LAC with the foundation of their continued success. In this section, I use promotional materials, social media feeds, and institutionally-created webpages, to show how institutional messaging constructs the successful LAC subject. I also deploy student stories to show how the idea of a “successful subject” acts as a normalizing technology, shaping students into graduates who reproduce and reinforce LAC’s image as an elite, multicultural, and international institution entrenched in the neoliberal economy.

Academics. Much of the discourse LAC creates surrounding its institutional identity is focused on its status as an elite academic institution that shapes students into successful scholars. Each student I spoke with discussed the rigorous academic environment, noting their frequent sleepless nights, the pressure to earn a high GPA in a school that has resisted grade inflation, and publishable manuscripts they completed as their final projects across disciplines. For example, while informally chatting with a participant, Sara, during my fieldwork, she noted her exhaustion and frustration with her coursework. I inquired further, knowing she had missed a few days of class to go home to attend to an immigration issue as her parents were undocumented and spoke little English. “How long does it usually take you to get a paper published?” she asked. I told her that it depends, but my last paper took nearly two years from the conceptualization of the project to the final acceptance of the manuscript. Wide-eyed she muttered, “My

professor wants our papers to be publishable by the end of the semester.” She nearly started to cry and went on to tell me that her academic advisor (also a faculty member) had advised her to “just sleep less” to complete her work on time and get it to the “level expected of [LAC] students.” This story exemplifies how LAC constructs the successful subject as one who puts their academics first, sometimes sacrificing their health and family obligations to attain institutional hallmarks of success.

Institutional messaging constructs the successful subject as attaining academic success because of the pedigree and support of the professoriate. LAC’s promotional brochure states, “Our faculty earned their advanced degrees from some of the best schools in the world, and they remain thought-leaders in their fields. You’ll have direct access to them since nearly 70% of classes have fewer than 20 students.” This message positions LAC faculty as possessing the ability to develop scholars specifically through their own elite educational backgrounds and hierarchical status as “thought-leaders.” Further, while promotional materials assert that students’ LAC experience is “largely up to [them],” nowhere are career paths lauded outside of attending prestigious graduate and professional schools, working for high profile technology companies, and working in the social justice or non-profit leadership sector. Here, the successful LAC subject is constructed as continuing into elite and prestigious careers because of LAC’s elite and prestigious professoriate.

Further defining LAC’s construction of a successful subject as an academic elite, LAC’s website states,

LAC students enjoy a wealth of resources for research on and off campus...often students undertake research that makes real contributions to their discipline. They publish papers in scholarly journals, participate in conferences, and provide analysis for policy makers and real world use.

Supporting this assertion, Ana, the Director of the MC, offered her perspective on the successful LAC subject stating,

The profile of that student is they come in not just as undergraduate students but undergraduate students really being challenged academically and being master's level students, so the expectations for greatness are incredible, almost unattainable. They come in taking five classes, having a fellowship, going abroad, competing in the [overnight music competition], and whatever other big things they do. They do all of that keeping a 3.5 GPA and are able to say that they're going to go to a top-level PhD school or law school. There's this to-do list about what an [LAC] student does: the fun, the fellowship for this, congressional office for whoever, and they talk about that stuff. They're overly scheduled, they're not getting sleep, but they also not only have to do that but they also pretty much must have a 3.5 GPA and they better be getting into a Georgetown or a Yale or whatever. You open the [LAC] magazine and see such and such running a big-time social entrepreneurship business or being a Yale professor so there's this set of expectations that keep being communicated to students about what that looks like. You couldn't possibly go to [the small, local college] to go to law school!

These passages further support the successful subject as one who not only performs well academically but also may apply their academic skills to the production of texts that solve applied problems. Further, the successful subject attains the academic pedigree to be used to promote the prestige of the institution. As Ana states later in her narrative, “Prestige is critical to the sustenance of the culture here.” The language in the first passage above supports Ana’s discussion of the undergraduate who is being challenged academically to gain the credentials to gain admission to a top graduate or professional program. Again, while helping students attain hallmarks of success is not inherently problematic, how the institution defines success may foreclose on students’ own ideas of success, goals for their own education, or alternative ways to impact the world around them. To exemplify how students negotiate LAC’s construction of the successful academic subject, I turn now to student narratives as they discussed the ways in which institutional constructions of success in the academic realm influence their lives and realities.

Emily.

I would not have picked [LAC] if I could have gone to the [state university] but the [state university] didn’t give me as much financial aid. I just wanted to get a degree, get out, and start working. When I first came here, I just thought that people were so privileged to be able to think about their own identities, to study anything they want, to not have to think about jobs but now I do realize that these things are important. I appreciate [LAC] but it has still been difficult.

Emily’s story exemplifies how LAC’s construction of the successful subject can influence a student’s own educational goals and career aspirations. Emily immigrated to

the United States from China with her parents when she was nine-years-old. Ethnically Chinese, she identifies as a working-class cisgender woman. Her parents grew up in China during the cultural revolution and because of the tumultuous state of their country, neither parent attended high school. Because of her family obligations, Emily, an only child, knew she needed to stay close to home for college. She applied to two institutions, the state's flagship university and LAC. LAC's financial aid package was far better than the state institution's, so she ultimately decided to attend LAC. She worked as a medical scribe to earn the \$2,250 yearly expected family contribution for her to attend. Working to support oneself, she noted, is unique at LAC. Emily was drawn to STEM fields and ultimately decided to pursue nursing school due to the availability of jobs in the area so she could be sure to support her family's financial obligations. I asked Emily to describe a successful LAC student. She explained,

Success in my department, the Biology department, it's very much med school based so nobody could even tell me about nursing school. I had to seek out people who had gone to nursing school. It's a new path for me and they couldn't tell me anything about it. They also think people who can do research are very successful. I haven't done research at all. I've only done internships in hospitals where I was a medical scribe. I'm not doing what's normal at LAC but I am still really successful. I just went a different way.

Here, Emily defined her understanding of a successful LAC subject, noting that despite her inability to measure up to LAC's construction of a successful subject, she still defined herself as successful. A senior, Emily had already gained acceptance into the nursing

school of her choice, one of the top programs in the country, and was preparing to begin shortly after her graduation from LAC.

While Emily sees herself as successful in achieving her own academic goals, she discussed her inability to measure up to LAC's definition of success. She stated,

I am not successful in my academic field at LAC. My GPA is only 3.15, but I do feel successful because I have learned about myself. I feel more confident in myself because I know who I am...you can only allocate your time in certain areas, you know? My GPA reflects, ok maybe I'm a bad student. It also reflects that my parents didn't go to college. I had to figure things out on my own so my GPA reflects that I didn't have the help that my peers had. LAC is more academically rigorous than the [state university] and I wasn't prepared for it.

Also, my first year, I had a really hard time transitioning. I was worried about my parents even though they lived close and I lived in a very loud dorm and therefore couldn't sleep very well...It would have been nice if the college could look at my background and place me in a situation where it would help me be academically successful.

Here, Emily noted that her ability to measure up to LAC's construction of a successful subject is partly dependent on things outside of her control. She explained how her identity as a first-generation college student impeded her ability to become a successful LAC subject. Emily had attained her own academic and career goals, earning admission to her top choice nursing school and graduating from LAC. However, she failed to meet an unwritten yet discursively constructed academic standard (presumably a higher GPA

than 3.15) indicative of a successful LAC subject. In addition, Emily's choice of nursing school over going to medical school does not constitute a choice lauded by LAC faculty. Nevertheless, Emily chose to attain her own ideals of success, which included fulfilling family and financial obligations, regardless of the lack of institutional and departmental support for her own ideals of success.

Again, I am reminded of Ana's above comments regarding the necessary attainment of prestige in LAC students' academic pursuits and the unspoken standards to which these students are held. Emily's story shows how she navigated her failure to meet these expectations and the injustice that can indirectly occur through discursively hierarchicalizing academic pursuits. To be clear, Emily was not met with faculty and staff who directly condemned her career choice. Emily's career choice was marginalized through its lack of visibility in institutional discourse. By omitting support structures for students looking to pursue nursing, her department failed to present nursing school as an option for their majors, implicitly positioning medical school as more successful than nursing school. While Emily could navigate LAC's construction of success and attain her own career goals, she was required to do additional labor to seek out folks who could help her to apply to nursing school. Many minoritized students already face barriers to higher education and the discursive construction of success that limits potentials for these students can create additional hurdles, as in Emily's case.

Maura.

I guess what LAC defines a successful student as is someone who is solid in different areas of their life. It doesn't necessarily mean you have an internship or

not. You don't have to have an internship to be a successful LAC student; people just feel like they're expected to. It isn't written down anywhere. LAC is full of a lot of go-getters that do have things like that, people feel like they're almost expected to have that as well, even though that's not true...I want to get an internship eventually. I do feel like there's pressure. There are so many opportunities out there and everyone is trying to jockey for position to get them. There's pressure to be productive with your time, whether that is getting an internship or a job, something that is good for your experience and your major – something that looks good on a resume. There's pressure to rack up credentials, experiences, or things that look impressive or give you certain experiences that will help you later on.

Maura is a sophomore and a White, cisgender woman who identifies religiously as half Jewish and half Lutheran. Maura's complex and contradictory narrative exemplifies how LAC's discursive construction of the successful subject influences students navigating the institution. Here, Maura articulates the problematic aspects of LAC's institutional messaging, which at face value does not necessarily require specific hallmarks or credentials be met to attain success. Yet, the discursive construction of the successful subject as one who gets one or more internships gets taken up so readily as to become necessary for success. As part of this process, Maura suggests, the discursive construction of success gets taken up by students who "jockey for position" so that particular experiences become unspoken yet necessary hallmarks of a successful subject.

I am, again, reminded of Ana's comments regarding the unspoken "to-do list" for LAC students. Maura articulates items on this to-do list as wants of her own while also denying their necessity for success. Maura's narrative, then, shows how the discursive construction of success, while not expressly articulating the lack of getting an internship as failure, creates a governmentality where she is rewarded for getting an internship through institutional and cultural mechanisms that allow her success to be interpreted as such by the LAC community. Maura's narrative stands in contrast to Emily's, where Emily's admission to nursing school is constructed as not successful through its erasure from institutional discourse; Emily's career choice does not include cultural legibility as success. While only a sophomore, Maura already recognizes LAC's construction of the successful subject and has identified a path to pursuing this way of being while denying its necessity.

Zeze. Zeze also articulated her perspective on how the successful subject is discursively constructed through institutional messaging at LAC. Echoing Ana's articulation of LAC's unspoken to-do list, she defined a successful LAC subject as,

Someone who held leadership positions in at least one or two student orgs and maybe another initiative, has a 3.5 GPA or higher. They're coming out and they already have a couple of jobs lined up – not just any job, too. It needs to be *really* prestigious or they did a fellowship, did some research, and did two internships over the summer. Oh! And maybe they did one internship during the school year. That is, to me, what the image of success for an [LAC] student looks like. They're doing a whole bunch of stuff already and again, jobs lined up. Or they applied to

jobs and they have to choose between option A and option B but it's really hard because both options are really good and will help them advance in their future career plans. They network, they studied abroad or did some type of travelling while at LAC.

Zeze is a sophomore and identifies as a Mexican-American cisgender woman and a first-generation college student from a working-class background. At LAC, she is double majoring in Sociology and Psychology with the intent of pursuing a graduate degree in Education so she can work in the field of higher education access.

Following this explication, I asked Zeze if she felt like she felt successful at LAC. She stated,

I feel anxious because I don't have a summer internship or anything lined up, or some sort of prestigious internship, something that is directly connected to Psychology or Sociology that's going to somehow help my education or my career prospects. I mean, I'm going to be working for [an office on campus] for a little bit but then I'm going home and I won't have anything lined up for when I get home. I am constantly battling the fact that I don't necessarily need an internship but I do need one to be successful – I know that I do.

Here, Zeze articulated the internal conflict she experienced between her own ideas of success and how success is discursively constructed by the institution. For her career goals, Zeze did not necessarily think that she needed to pursue an internship, echoing Maura's narrative above. However, Zeze understood that to live up to LAC's construction of success, she does need to get an internship. The fact that she has yet to

secure a position for the summer caused her anxiety. This anxiety is not because she will not be well positioned in her field upon graduation but because not securing an internship will mean that she has not measured up to LAC's discursive construction of success. Because LAC constructs success in particular ways, through what Ana calls the "to-do list," potentially unwarranted pressure is placed on students to attain certain hallmarks like getting an internship. Zeze noted in her narrative that she "doesn't necessarily need" an internship to meet her own professional goals, yet the pressure exists because institutional messaging and its reproduction in student culture equate internships with success. Zeze's narrative exemplifies how LAC's promotion of the successful subject can be taken up by students to create unnecessary pressure to conform to a way of being that may not be beneficial to the educational and career needs and goals. Zeze, then, negotiated the discursive construction of the successful LAC subject by battling the dissonance between what she believed would benefit her and how the institution constructed success.

Rebecca. Rebecca also discussed how she navigated the construction of the successful LAC subject. Rebecca is a junior Psychology major from South Korea. She is an international student, coming to the United States specifically to study at LAC. She identifies as a straight, cisgender woman from a middle-class background. Rebecca talked at length about the academic pressure she feels at LAC and how she understands the impact of this pressure on herself and her friends. I asked her about the last time she felt successful while an LAC student. She stated,

I never feel successful in the middle of the semester. When I look at my grades and if it looks good, like all A's for example, then I feel successful for a very short period of time. Then I'll forget and I'll start another semester. The process is always very painful and I don't know why I'm working hard. I'm just working hard because of the pressure that comes from myself, [LAC], and family expectations that I need to get the most out of college because it is really expensive.

Rebecca articulated how the LAC environment operates to keep her "working hard." Rebecca's story contains a narrative break (Riessman, 1993), where she signals the boundary between herself and external pressures, including her institution. That is, Rebecca noted that she is working hard but she does not know why. The narrative break shows how the institution's construction of the successful subject can get taken up and folded in to students' conceptualizations of self and of their success. Rebecca's narrative shows how institutional constructions of success can become part of students' definition of success for themselves, sometimes in ways they do not understand. This can position any construction of success that does not meet the institution's definition as a failure.

Rebecca also noted that, from her perspective, this issue is systemic and influences much of the LAC community. She continued,

I haven't really felt successful that much. Maybe when I'm juggling everything really well. Maybe for a week I'll feel very successful. I'll think, "I'm really good at having close friends and doing homework and getting an internship." Then, right after that, the next week, I'll feel shitty about myself. I think most [LAC]

students don't really feel successful that much. I think their self-esteem is low because they think everyone else is smarter than them.

Here Rebecca discussed how students take up LAC's construction of success and sometimes fold their self-esteem into attaining that success. To be sure, several students discussed their low self-esteem being tied to their academic performance. Sara, for example, while discussing her educational path stated that, "transitioning [to LAC] as a college student was bad and my self-worth is dependent on my grades so I didn't have any self-worth for my first year of college." Exemplified again here is how LAC's construction of the successful subject can serve to limit potentials for students and can be detrimental to students' mental health and stress level. Rebecca navigated LAC's construction of the successful subject by taking up and measuring herself against that discursive construction creating pressure for herself to attain standards that Ana characterizes as unattainable. For Rebecca and Sara, this manifested as low self-esteem.

Micah. Micah is an outlier; they are cognizant of the ways in which LAC constructs the successful subject and they actively resist this construction. Micah and I spoke at length about my research, LAC's construction of a successful subject, and how they navigate their disinterest in institutional constructions of success. Unusual in their self-awareness and analysis of their college context, Micah quickly identified themselves as a "failed LAC subject." While they certainly had hopes and dreams for their career and life beyond LAC, they viewed themselves as an outsider to the LAC community due to their gender and their class background. Micah identified as a White, queer, agender person who grew up in extreme poverty. From a small town in Mississippi, Micah's lived

experience, they noted, is quite unlike any of their peers at LAC. I asked Micah to describe a successful LAC student. They said,

[A successful LAC student is] definitely doing an internship and -- I'm trying to say something and I'm realizing how many upper-class coded things that are about to come out of my mouth. I was just about to describe a wealthy person, basically. They have a lot of things going on. Their schedule is booked, they don't have time for themselves but they're happy about it, and they are just so devoted to these various community engagements they have and various responsibilities. I'm thinking of a wealthy extrovert.

Here, Micah provided their own analysis as to how LAC codes their successful subject as one from an upper or upper middle class background. They continued,

In some ways. I feel like there's kind of a standard, or an expectation of how to succeed. Something that comes to mind is that you go and do an internship at the [local health clinic for low-income folks], which is a great thing to do. I would be happy to do that. Or you go and you work with some people on a big sustainability project. Again, that's a great thing to do. But there is an underlying sense that, if you're not out doing things like that, you're not performing to the LAC standard. There are all these buzzwords that [LAC] loves to throw around about how to be a good, successful [LAC] student or like what makes us [LAC] students. The school is so great and you know, involvement and being active in the community and this and that and it clashes with the things that I'm more invested in doing. I like writing and that's what I'm more interested lately in

spending my time and energy [doing]. Writing is an internal and mostly a solitary activity and it's not civic engagement in the sense that going out and doing an internship is and I feel like that kind of activity or that kind of work isn't respected as much as the other forms of work. I wouldn't say it's disrespected but it's not uplifted.

Much like Emily, Micah noted that they are interested in scholarly pursuits and activities that are not part of LAC's discursive construction of a successful subject. Here, Micah noted how they are conscious of some aspects of LAC's construction of a successful subject and how they actively resist the institutional and systemic rewards that may come with normalizing to LAC's construction of the success. In this way, Micah resists the governmentality LAC establishes, noting that their work is not highlighted or recognized as successful.

Also in the above passage, Micah called attention to a central theme in the data; that the successful LAC subject, and all that construction entails, is highlighted and framed as success and that which is not included in LAC's construction of the successful subject is not referenced. To use a previous example, Emily's choice to attend nursing school, for instance, was not disrespected by her department. Rather, her choice was not legitimized through institutional mechanisms that highlighted this choice as a point of pride or supported by departmental structures that reinforced the value of this choice. Had Emily chosen to pursue medical school, that choice would have included ample support from her department, including faculty and staff who had experience supporting students along that career path. Micah articulated here how institutional constructions of success,

while not foreclosing on possibilities that lie outside of this construction, can influence student experiences.

Interestingly, in addition to articulating how LAC's construction of success is coded as upper class, Micah articulated how their personality and struggle with mental illness impacted their ability to measure up to LAC's ideals of success. Micah stated,

I think over the past year or so, I've shifted more towards kind of an abstract, internal sense of success because, as a result of growing up with the pressure from my parents to go to college and all of the messages saying yes, college is a good thing and that turning into my own desire, after all of that, I've finally gotten tired of it because I'm in college. I'm almost done with college, which is weird and now I'm wondering, "Well now what?" This is all I've envisioned for my whole life and I'm about to graduate and I have no idea, have I succeeded? Am I succeeding if I didn't maintain a 4.0 GPA? Because I didn't. So, have I failed? If I say that I haven't failed just because of a number on my transcript, then what is my definition of success? Is it what I do afterwards or is it just having the experience at all? I don't know. And so, all the external measures that I have for success have collapsed or faded away slowly over the years. I've started to see success more as, am I content? And am I feeling satisfied with my everyday life? Do I feel like I'm doing the things that I want to be doing? Am I seeing the effects of those things on the people around me and my immediate family? Am I having a good time being alive? And, with the various mental health issues that I have, I feel like that's maybe a sad standard for some people but for me, it's necessary to

go and look at that baseline of, am I happy to exist? And I think regardless of what I end up doing, if I'm happy just existing that's a kind of success.

Micah actively resists the normalization of LAC's successful subject in service to themselves, their definitions of success, and their own educational goals. Here, it is clear Micah understands how LAC constructs the successful subject, which gives them little room to attend to their mental health related needs. While defining LAC's academic- and career-related constructions of success, Micah reconceptualizes these to meet their own needs, drawing attention to the ways in which the institution has *assumed* what those are and offered resources in service of only those needs. Interestingly, in follow-up communications where I asked Micah how they found the agency to resist LAC's normalizing technology of success, they wrote, "Honestly, I think it's because of my identities as working-class, agender, and queer. I already didn't fit in the box. I failed before I started." Micah's narrative, then, shows how they navigated institutional constructions of the successful subject by identifying precisely who fits this construction and, then, claiming themselves as external to this construction.

In the next section, I outline the second theme within LAC's construction of the successful subject, which focuses on commitments to serving society and volunteerism. I show how service to society and volunteerism are discursively constructed through institutional messaging and how participants understand and navigate these constructions.

Service to society and volunteerism. In addition to excelling academically, a successful LAC subject selflessly dedicates themselves to community service and "makes a difference" in the world. Here, I show how service to society often is taken up as a

perceived moral imperative, rewarding students who perform this service in specific ways while questioning the morality of those who do not normalize to this type of service. Promotional and branding materials for LAC state, “Your learning experiences will get you out into [the local community] and beyond. As you explore our surroundings, you must understand how to contribute to communities as partners, respecting and appreciating differences and ultimately enhancing these communities.” This statement asserts that communities served by LAC students will be better precisely because LAC students serve them. This statement allows the reader, prospective LAC students and their parents, to reaffirm both their potential goodness as servants to surrounding, presumably less privileged communities, as well as the institution’s goodness as the entity which promotes and facilitates this service.

While community service and volunteerism no doubt can include myriad benefits for students and the communities in which students work (Soria, Mitchell, & Nobbe, 2016), the way selfless service often gets promoted and taken up can result in a narrowing of how community service and volunteerism are defined and who can and should perform this service. Further, LAC’s brand emphasizes community *partnerships* and yet continues to uphold the hierarchy wherein students, with the resources, skills, and privileges bestowed upon them by the institution, use this capital to enter under-privileged communities and extract skills and experiences that will benefit them academically and professionally. This largely ignores these communities’ forms of capital.

For example, while the office dedicated to community service touts a “spirit of respectful reciprocity,” social media posts and campus newspaper articles detailing student experiences engaging with the community neglect to showcase connections to privilege, power, and the ways in which these external communities actually benefit from LAC students’ engagement. A 2016 feature in the student newspaper solely mentions how students have “broadened their array of skills” working with under-privileged communities. Further, while promotional materials state LAC’s commitment to connecting social justice with community service, several reports published by LAC note the number of hours students spent volunteering and the outcomes these students experience, neglecting to mention outcomes and benefits for communities and community organizations and connections to social change, distribution of power, and authentic relationships emblematic of engaged and critical service-learning (Mitchell, 2007, 2008, 2016). While neglecting to mention outcomes for community organizations does not mean there were no positive outcomes, the institution centers itself through its messaging rather than centering the community organizations, which would exemplify how social justice was being enacted through the community service of its students.

I asked Sara how she understood the ways in which service to society played out in her life at LAC and how she sees this concept extending into her future beyond college. She stated,

How does a poor person have the time to be able to do social justice and community service work in the sense of...how do I put it? The more elite you are, the more resources you have. The poorer you are, the less resources you have to

be able to do social justice work and volunteer so a lot of the times the social justice sphere at [LAC] involves a lot of kids living off their parents' money. I don't know if you notice for example, Teach for America [TFA], the kids that go to work there are often upper middle class. I would not be able to work for TFA because I still support my mom so I need to get a good paying job. Even though I want to do social justice work and community service, it's not actually possible. I can do it on a small scale, but on the scale that [LAC] wants? Forget it. I'm not upper middle class. It's hard.

Sara articulated her understanding of how the successful LAC subject enacts their service to society. She also noted her inability to achieve what she perceived as LAC's standard for community service, social justice work, and volunteerism. She noted that work on the scale at which "LAC wants" is unattainable for working class students like her. She continued,

At [LAC] it's possible to do social justice and community service work because we have the resources to, as students. We have the [multicultural center] and we have the [civic engagement center]. We don't have to do much. We can get fully funded to be able to help [an organization] or something because [LAC] has the money. But, if we were to try to do that on our own outside of [LAC], not even being in this institution, trying to do that as a regular person that's out of college, I couldn't. I still have to pay student loans. That's real, so community service and social justice work become a lot harder. [Students] can't do that unless they have the resources to. Working class students tend not to have the resources because,

even though they have a college education, you're still trying to work yourself up that ladder to become middle class. So, it's always in a circle, everything's a cycle. I know that sounds bleak.

Again, Sara articulated her inability to achieve LAC's articulation of social justice and community service work due to her lack of resources. She made a distinction between inside and outside of LAC, marking inside LAC as a privileged space where she can do more of the social justice and community service work she wants to because of the resources LAC provides.

Micah had a similar perspective on the ways in which the successful LAC subject necessarily includes commitments to social justice and community service that, by and large, are accessible to students from more privileged backgrounds. Micah stated,

I'm very introverted and low energy which is one reason that I tend towards things like writing rather than going out and volunteering. I feel that there's an implicit moral judgment sometimes. If you're not engaged in the community, it's because you don't care. I care, I don't have 50 hours in the day and I don't have the energy to do all the things I have to do to live and also go out and do whatever 15 volunteering activities you have lined up for the day.

Micah called attention to the morality that is engrained in LAC's construction of the successful subject. They noted that they may be perceived as immoral because they did not measure up to the ways in which LAC constructs civic and community engagement and therefore success. Micah continued,

When I am really busy, I will stay up absurdly late and get two hours of sleep just so I can have awake time just for myself. The image of the ideal [LAC] student is someone who doesn't really do that. Or maybe they're staying up really late but it's not for themselves. There's kind of a selflessness to the point of just abandoning all self-preservation almost. It's like you exist for this cause of civic engagement.

Here, Micah expressly stated that their perception of LAC's successful subject is one who is civically engaged just so that one can be civically engaged. This statement suggests that LAC uses the engagement of its students to further its own prestige and pedigree as an institution that prepares students to be in service to society. This is shown through institutional messaging by centering the goodness of the institution rather than the outcomes for community service organizations or the articulations of the systemic issues that necessitate community service work in the first place. Micah's statement can be read as LAC justifying the promotion of its pedigree and prestige by encouraging its students to use it for the "public good." Instead of recognizing multiple avenues through which students can be engaged in the community, Micah pointed to the promotion of the institution's image above the caring for the wellbeing of its students, noting how the strategies they used to maintain their own mental health contradict LAC's construction of success. In addition, Micah called attention to how LAC may allow students to evade or deny their own privileges that may allow them to sacrifice themselves, their goals, and their responsibilities in favor of devoting their service to the institution and external communities. Solidifying their point, Micah added,

I think [LAC's emphasis on service to society] comes from a good place but also from a point of very strong neoliberal politics where there's a certain way to enact change through certain existing systems and you need to be performing in very particular ways and following particular narratives of how to better yourself and the world.

Again, Micah demonstrated their inability to attain this hallmark of success, drawing attention to the ways in which LAC upholds a particular, narrow narrative about social justice and community service that serves to reproduce LAC's prestige and normalize the successful LAC subject as one who subscribes to this narrative.

Sam added his administrative perspective of the construction of the successful LAC subject. Sam is an administrator at LAC and identifies as a Black, straight, cisgender man from a low-income neighborhood in the South. While he never attended a liberal arts institution as a student, Sam has worked as an administrator in various capacities for over 20 years, most recently at LAC in a joint role with the academic success center and the Multicultural Center. I asked Sam to detail how he understood the institution's community service and volunteerism playing out for students at LAC. He explained,

By in large, students who come to [LAC] come from a pretty homogenous class background. They've been to decent schools. They have had access to certain levels of healthcare and some quality education and so the focus on social justice, then, will take us to those who did not have that and how we live in harmony and peace and reciprocal relationship with people who didn't have exactly what you

had. Even for those of us who come from marginalized backgrounds and experiences, once you come here, you go through [LAC], you graduate, then you become one of *them*, the very people in which you were harping against, and that becomes an awesome responsibility to shoulder. You could be into second semester of your junior or senior year and you go back into the community and you begin to talk with those in the community, and they are looking at you like, you're one of them!

Here, Sam articulated the differences that Sara and Micah discuss above; however, Sam identified that receiving an LAC education may psychically separate minoritized students from their communities, the very communities that the successful LAC subject commits to serving. While Sara understood her positionality as one that is unable to enact the types of social justice and community service work expected of LAC students, discursively separating herself from the successful LAC subject, Sam noted that becoming a successful LAC subject may create such a separation from communities of origin that one becomes privileged and therefore able to serve their home communities because of that privilege. Sam continued,

I had a student working over in [a low-income and predominantly Black community] and all she did was pull out her lunch and the response from those in the community was like, “Oh look at you all hoity-toity and high and mighty!” She was like, “I’m just trying to eat my lunch,” and that lunch said a lot with association to class. I guess I could have said it this way; many of us get into the work and the programs and discussion and activities around social justice and

community service because we have been harmed. What I like about [LAC] is that not only do those who have been harmed get involved in conversation, but those who have privilege also get involved in conversation knowing that, between the places where you have what Janet Mock calls access, and the ways in which we are exiled, and it's between those two and more positions in life, you're trying to make sense of it all and that's what I think the programming contributes to. Is it perfect? No.

Here, Sam articulated the very divide that Sara and Micah call attention to above. Sam, however, focused on how his role as an administrator is to help minoritized students understand how to bridge the gap between the privileged position that LAC affords these students and the minoritized communities from which they come. What Sam's narrative assumes, however, is that minoritized students will ultimately become successful subjects. Both Micah and Sara suggested that their LAC education may give them additional experiences and knowledges but will not necessarily afford them opportunities and resources to enact the expected level of community service and social justice work emblematic of a successful LAC subject.

LAC's construction of the successful subject includes bringing their community service and volunteerism to their lives after LAC. Exemplifying this aspect of the construction of the successful subject is an award given out by the institution during reunion each year. The Distinguished Citizen Award is given to,

Alumni who have demonstrated outstanding leadership, achievement, and active involvement with their local community through their lifetime. It is given because

the [alumni association], Board of Trustees, and faculty believe that a college education should be the training and inspiration for unselfish and effective service.

The criteria for nomination for this award include, “leadership or significant accomplishment in civic, religious and/or professional activities, college education the source of inspiration and training, unselfish and effective service in their lives and work to the community, the nation and/or the world.” By including the statement that LAC was the “source of inspiration and training,” this award implies that successful LAC subjects are distinguished citizens *because* of the institution. LAC is positioned as *the reason* students can unselfishly and effectively serve communities, which reinforces the goodness of the institution.

After LAC. The successful LAC subject is discursively positioned as necessarily maintaining their community service and volunteerism after graduating from LAC. In addition, the successful LAC subject enters a career field that is consistent with the values of the institution; that is, one in which alumni are “making a positive difference in the world,” contributing to multiculturalism and internationalism, and pursuing their scholarly interests either in graduate school or through their professional career. During fieldwork, many of the discussions during professional and student staff meetings, as well as many programs advertised during data collection through the MC and student news bulletin, referenced “transitioning out of [LAC].” While some programming was career oriented, much of the focus was on living by the *college’s* values after graduation. This

emphasis prompted me to explore more how the institution discursively constructed the successful LAC subject after graduation, detailed in this section.

The phrase universally touted by promotional materials and LAC's mission states that the college prepares graduates to "make a significant and positive difference in the world." While this phrase seems, at the surface, to encompass infinite possibilities, the phrase's situated meaning seems to narrow the possibilities that this statement includes. Consistent with the institution's stated interest in "developing scholars," LAC heavily promotes the rates at which their alumni pursue graduate degrees. To be sure, nearly all available promotional brochures and webpages during the time of data collection cite that "Sixty percent of [LAC] graduates pursue or obtain an advanced degree within six years of graduating." Further, LAC's branding cites the various graduate programs alumni have completed, including first, programs at Ivy League and other highly rated institutions. This positioning serves to elevate the prestige of the college, particularly cited alongside institutional messaging that serves to position the institution as the reason for students' successes.

Exemplifying how the institution serves to promote itself as *the* catalyst for success, the institution discursively positions itself as such in nearly every instance of institutional messaging through their web and social media presence. For example, LAC's marketing for a specific program for college seniors transitioning out of LAC states, "With the education and experiences they gain here, [LAC] alumni have excelled in every imaginable field." This statement serves to reaffirm seniors' resiliency and abilities to pursue their own goals and potentials post-graduation. This statement also

serves to reify the institution's role in catalyzing alumni success, emphasizing solely the "education and experiences" as necessary precursors to excelling in professional and scholarly pursuits.

Further exemplifying how LAC positions itself as the catalyst for the success of its graduates, the institution gives out various alumni awards each year. Each alumni award states as a criterion for nomination that their "college education is the source of inspiration and training," positioning the successful LAC subject as one who credits their success to their LAC education. Emphasizing the statement that LAC alumni make "significant positive difference[s] in the world," the institution highlights the Service to Society award. During my data collection for this study, LAC promoted this award, soliciting nominations for deserving alumni. The award was billed as honoring an alumnus of color,

who has used their [LAC] education to distinguish themselves in service to community. The award was established in memory of...the first African American graduate of [LAC]. She had an admirable career as a physician, in the military and as a medical missionary, and served children and the poor around the world. [The award recipients] demonstrate a practical acceptance of these obligations in their lives and work.

Here, not only does the institution position itself as the reason for the successes of the award recipients, it creates a standard to which current students measure their success through their community service and volunteerism. As Micah and Sara noted above, the successful LAC subject is often perceived as one who does community service work at

the expense of their health. The description of the Service to Society award positions its namesake as having their career because of their LAC education. Again, the institution uses this award as an affirmation of its goodness, giving students and alumni the resources and capital to be able to make a “significant and positive difference in the world.”

Interestingly, during fieldwork, student affairs staff shared an “unofficial” online document. This document was created by student affairs staff who were concerned about the mental health of LAC students. These student affairs staff members began an informal initiative, which they named the “[LAC] SHOULD project,” which echoed Ana’s statements above regarding the unspoken “to-do list” for LAC students. The LAC SHOULD project gathered concerned student affairs professionals to perform a cultural audit wherein these professionals aired concerns regarding how students voice the ways in which they “should” be and act. The outcome of this project is to, ideally, investigate where these unspoken cultural obligations originate and how to interrupt these obligations to create a healthier student body with more and different potentials for their time at and after LAC.

The underlying stated issue for this project is that student affairs staff members are concerned with the “increasing frequency of anecdotes shared by students conveying that they perceive a lack of support and judgement regarding their career path choices.” Examples of these anecdotes include statements such as, “I know I’m supposed to work at a non-profit and save the world, but...”, “Can any job be [LAC] enough?”, and “I need to make money but I have to keep that quiet in my friend group/department/classes.” This

project exemplifies the pervasiveness of the construction of the successful LAC subject.

This project also shows how the institution may be aware of the ways in which the successful LAC subject gets produced and taken up, oftentimes causing harm to students. Yet, the institution continues to perpetuate the construction of the successful subject for its own gain. Further, this project neglects to center the student, focusing on how the institution and its actors can address why *students* think they should act in certain ways instead of investigating how the institution may perpetuate ideals of success that may be detrimental to not only students' mental health but also students' own conceptualizations of success and goals for their futures.

Zoe. During data collection, students shared with me how they believe they will navigate LAC's construction of success post-graduation. Zoe is a senior and a Latina woman who grew up in poverty. She noted that, "'working class' does not describe my life. We are poor, like poor poor." Zoe came to LAC because she was recruited from her high school in New York City, which she attended on scholarship. Zoe explained that she was used to being around "privileged white kids," whom she noted described typical LAC students. Zoe discussed how she personally measured success, particularly what she thought success as an alumnus might look like for her. She said,

Because of my background, because we're immigrants and we're very poor, I think I have been successful. I think being here and staying here is super successful. I have my first job where I'm not doing manual labor. This is my first job where I am part of a movement, a social justice movement and I have a desk

job. My job isn't to clean the toilets and paint the buildings. I think I'm pushing myself and I think I'm going to do better for my family. That's being successful.

Here, Zoe noted that her conceptualization of success for herself is different from the successful LAC subject. While she did note that her job is part of a social justice movement, the emphasis of her narrative is on obtaining a "desk job" with her LAC education. Zoe's motivation is to "do better" for her family rather than obtain a prestigious job or attend a prestigious graduate school. Discussing her success at LAC, she continued,

I didn't fail a class. I haven't had to withdraw from a class. But then again, that's shitty that I'm measuring my success by those kinds of things because people withdraw from class all the time, you know? They do it for a lot of really good reasons, not because they're just tired of going to class but because they can't keep up in this environment. Keeping up. Why do you have to keep up? What are you keeping up to? That's so stupid. That's kind of where I'm at. It's cool, and I didn't drown. I'm like, yeah, that's successful.

Again, Zoe noted her awareness of the successful subject, one who meets the discursively constructed standards for success at LAC. Here, she grappled with how she measured her own success and how that sometimes is dictated by standards that she saw as arbitrary and discriminatory.

Zoe drew attention to the ways in which the construction of the successful LAC subject can marginalize individuals by creating unrealistic or arbitrary standards that may exclude other, legitimate ways of being and doing. The question that undergirds Zoe's

statement grapples with who can “underachieve” and the consequences of such underachievement. Through her narrative, Zoe asserted her definition of success and outwardly critiqued the construction of the successful LAC subject who tries to “keep up” with arbitrary standards that may or may not have benefits that outweigh the sacrifices required to “keep up.”

Jane. Jane also discussed how she navigated the construction of the successful LAC subject, particularly how she thought about LAC’s expectations for success after graduation. Jane is a sophomore from a city in the southern United States. Her family immigrated from Kenya a few months before she was born. She is a Black, bisexual, cisgender woman from a working-class background. I spoke with Jane about her successes at LAC and what she was thinking of doing after she graduated. Jane discussed herself in relationship to the “typical LAC student” who, she explained, was financially comfortable and held majority identities. Jane is high-achieving academically and, in many ways, exemplifies the successful LAC student. For example, Jane worked for the MC as her student job, held two internships during the semester we spoke, joined LAC’s slam poetry team, and worked as a resident assistant on campus. Despite her close identification with the successful LAC subject, Jane noted how her identities often made it difficult to attain some of the discursively constructed ideals of the successful LAC subject and, particularly, the institution’s expectations for her post-graduation. She said,

[Other students] don’t live in a place where they need to have the initiative or...have to think about some of the things like...my identities. There are some people who just don’t have certain identities so they don’t even have to think

about the things I think about a lot, especially financial concerns. I have a lot of family members back home but also here in the US that I help support. We're working class so I'm constantly thinking about different things that matter to my family that also make me think more far in advance than some of the other students have to think about if they are living comfortably financially. I need to think about jobs that have 401(k)s when I leave and some people don't even know what that is. I have to do my taxes in a specific way in order to get the most benefits out of the system, just those things that they don't need to think about, which also intimidates them because they don't think about until later and then it's like, why didn't I think of this sooner? Or sometimes teachers or people on campus, especially faculty or staff, are sometimes like, you're thinking about that too early. It's like, if I don't think about it now, what am I going to do when it happens?

Here, Jane discussed how her concerns, like making enough money upon graduation to continue to support her family, may clash with the ways in which LAC constructs the successful subject. Jane noted how she needs to think about obtaining a job with a 401(k) and needed to do her taxes a specific way, things her peers with little or no financial concerns could afford to ignore. Further, she discussed how institutional actors, like her professors, did not take her concerns seriously, implying that they may not have understood the extent of the pressure she was under regarding her finances. Jane's narrative suggests that the successful LAC subject does not need to be as concerned about practical financial matters as she is. Jane noted that, "while studying Japanese is fun, I'll

need to get a job that pays when I'm finished here, whatever that is." While Jane completely embraced her LAC education, she discussed how the construction of the successful LAC alumnus is impractical for her, given her family and financial situation. Jane's narrative suggests that the successful LAC subject is coded as White, straight, and upper middle class since these are the students who have enough privilege to be able to meet institutional ideals of success.

Micah. Micah and I sat in an empty conference room in the dark basement of the student center at LAC. They leaned forward in their chair and looked contemplatively at the carpet, quickly tapping their thumb against the outside of their thigh as their brain skipped them into visions of their possible futures,

I think I followed the path that I was supposed to according to my parents and my scholarship foundation and my mentors and all of these people who had been pushing me towards this my whole life. I don't know how I feel about that lately. I wanted this and I am happy that I am here. I enjoy being a student and I enjoy a lot of aspects of the so-called [LAC] community. I feel like it means that I'm following along this trajectory of the traditional model of going through higher education and coming out with a degree and getting a good job doing something stereotypical like entrepreneurship or working for a non-profit. I don't know how much I'm into that, or if that's what I want to do. I'm at a point where I don't know what I want to do after I graduate, there are just too many options that are just so radically different from each other, I'm not sure which one I should go for. So like, what does being a student here mean? It means I'm doing something at

least, and that I have people I can talk about it with. I feel like I have options that are floating around me and [I am] grasping at them but kind of indecisively.

Micah identified stereotypical career choices for LAC graduates, noting that they have followed a pre-determined path that has been both rewarding and frustrating for them. Unlike other participants, Micah took space to consciously problematize the construction of the successful LAC subject and contemplate which pieces of this construction have served them well and which have not. Here, Micah broached indecisiveness, something other participants avoided. I wondered whether the culture of success at LAC left room for students to be undecided about their futures. To be sure, a liberal arts education provides students with broad knowledge and transferable skills and is typically non-vocational (Schneider, 2004). However, LAC's construction of the successful subject may not leave space for students to remain undecided as they approach graduation.

Micah, the self-proclaimed failed subject, nervously discussed their lack of plans post-graduation yet broke into a smile during the latter part of their narrative. While Micah had support from their family and mentors prior to attending LAC, they began to smile when discussing mentors who have supported them in their indecisiveness about their future while attending LAC. It was clear from our conversation that Micah found support at LAC to help contemplate their next steps and, while clearly conscious of how LAC constructs the successful subject, found the freedom both within and outside of the institution to stray from this construction while remaining confident of their own successes and self-worth. Micah's narrative shows how their ways of being do not

intersect with the ways in which LAC constructs success for its students. This incongruency, however, does not mean that Micah was without support.

Micah's self-awareness allowed them to problematize LAC's construction of the successful subject and navigate their college experience according to their own identities and goals for their future. In Micah's case, this meant spending most of their time and living off campus, a privilege afforded to only a select few upperclassmen each year. Micah's narrative suggests that remaining on campus and immersed in LAC's culture could limit students' abilities to conceptualize themselves and their accomplishments outside of how LAC constructs success both within and beyond LAC's walls. Even while LAC touts ample opportunities to engage in community service work, those experiences are still under LAC's framework of success as they are typically completed through the civic engagement office on campus or for an academic course. It seems that Micah's success was found in removing that framework from their experiences and decentering the institution in favor of themselves.

Multiculturalism and internationalism. The final theme in the construction of the successful LAC subject is that success includes embracing multiculturalism and internationalism. The institution asserts five distinguishing values,

Involvement of students with faculty in the pursuit of learning; creation of a diverse campus community; incorporation of an international perspective in the curriculum and campus life; involvement of the College in the life of the metropolitan area; and espousal of service as a way of life.

Supporting these values, the institution promotes their Global Citizenship Center (GCC) and the Multicultural Center as hubs for scholarship and programming about internationalism and multiculturalism, although these terms are never specifically defined by the institution. Further, the institution heavily promotes its graduates' high profile accomplishments in the areas of internationalism and multiculturalism, including providing a review of several alumni who have worked for the United Nations, in international ambassador roles, and in major non-governmental organizations abroad. LAC also flies the flags of the United Nations, a stated point of institutional pride that was cited by half of this study's participants as a factor in their college choice.

In addition to touting the number of international students who attend LAC, the institution cites that 60% of students study abroad during their time as a student.

Institutional promotional materials state,

Study abroad at [LAC] means both high academic performance and an acute awareness of diversity that is uniquely fostered by international experience. It enhances education in the liberal arts by engaging well prepared students in rigorous and stimulating learning experiences in a variety of countries outside the United States.

Similar to the statements about the LAC's global community, this statement assumes that merely having an experience in a country outside of the United States will create an "acute awareness of diversity." Institutional messaging promises engaging learning experiences while neglecting to mention who is expected to teach. While faculty attend certain LAC-specific study abroad trips and certainly do facilitate learning experiences

for students, program-specific intricacies make it difficult to assess if and how minoritized students who study abroad are relied on or discursively expected to educate their White American peers. Nevertheless, institutional messaging constructs the successful subject as a student who studies abroad to gain an “international perspective” and an awareness of global diversity by including it as a large piece of most students’ LAC experience.

Promoting the institution’s multicultural and international community is a significant recruitment tool used by the institution. Online promotional materials cite as a benefit of the LAC experience the “global neighborhood in your dorm,” promising that “before your first class begins, you will have already started learning by sharing the college experience with new friends from around the world.” This statement assumes that mere proximity to students from different countries and cultures constitutes actual engagement with those countries and cultures. Further, this statement implies that the burden of educating White American students lies with their international student peers, as they are providing what is different from the omnipresent White American culture. While international students are exposed to many American students at LAC and are immersed in White American culture, they very well may be the only student from their home country. Therefore, undergirding the institution’s statement is an assumption of a dichotomy where students either *are* the global community or they are learning from the global community and the successful subject embraces one of these positions. This assumption positions White students as continually needing to learn about the “global community” and it positions international students as those who are perpetually teaching.

Further, beyond just international students, the institution positions minoritized students in general as educators while it positions students with majority identities as needing an education surrounding multiculturalism.

Farrah. Many students I spoke with discussed how they navigated LAC's construction of the successful subject as one who embraces internationalism and multiculturalism. One of these students, Farrah, is an Arab-American woman from a small town in the Midwest. She came to LAC because of its multicultural institutional image. Farrah was given similar financial aid packages from LAC and from a small Catholic school near her home town. She ultimately chose to attend LAC due to what she perceived as a greater emphasis on internationalism and multiculturalism. A senior at the time of our interview, Farrah understood LAC differently than she did when she applied. She stated,

[LAC] has so many statistics like, "These are the number of international students we have and here are the countries they come from," and "This is the number of students of color we have each year." They always have pamphlets but each year, every time they've already sent out the acceptance letters for the new class that's going to join us, they bring out statistics and talk about international students and students of color so they'll be like, "we have 30% students of color," and I'm like "wow, so that means 70% are White and it's funny that no one adds *that* to the catalogs." Sure, it's helpful, but at the same time it's gross for me to think some White kid from California looking at this pamphlet saying, "Wow mom and dad, look at all these international people and all these brown people, oh

my god I get to mingle with the different people and go to the school.” I don’t want to think about that happening. I know it has a good intention behind it but, at the end of the day, I still say that it’s tokenizing. I’m not sure how that can change as long as institution remains predominantly White.

Farrah noted the heavily cited statistics that detail the number of students of color and international students who attend LAC. She draws attention to how, by promoting the numbers of minoritized students who attend LAC, the institution effectively tokenizes minoritized students by making attending school alongside them a point of institutional pride. Farrah’s narrative demonstrates how a student’s perspective can shift from being an outsider to the institution to becoming a piece of the institution’s statistics. Farrah came to LAC because of the institution’s emphasis on multiculturalism and became disillusioned by the promotion of the very thing that enticed her to attend the college. As Marc, a Dean at LAC, stated in our interview, “Students know the percentage [of students of color] before they come, but nobody knows what a percentage *feels* like until they get here.”

I asked Farrah about the shift in perspective from when she applied to now. She stated, “I guess I thought those statistics were for me but I found out they were mostly for White people, so they could come here and say they were friends with an Arab girl.” As Farrah noted, embracing multiculturalism presumably entails befriending peers from different cultures than one’s own and, to do that, one must be in the presence of folks from different cultures. To facilitate this, the institution markets demographic information about their student body to both recruit students of color and international students *and* to

showcase how White students can get a multicultural and international education. Maura, who is White, came to LAC because she, “really liked [LAC]’s pillars, multiculturalism and internationalism. These are the things that [LAC] embodies and is really strong in.”

In discussing how she experienced these pillars, Maura stated,

With my friends that I have on campus, two of the ones that I spend the most time with are international students... The other ones have at least, wow, I didn't even realize this; of the people I spend the most time with, two of them are international students, and the others have at least one parent that was not born here. I'm the only one in the friend group who was born in the United States with both of my parents born in the United States, with my grandparents born in the United States.

Maura’s and Farrah’s comments exemplify how embracing multiculturalism and internationalism get taken up by White students as a condition for success. By constructing embracing multiculturalism and internationalism as a component of the successful subject’s behavior, LAC effectively tokenizes students of color and international students, positioning them as a necessary component of 70% of the student body’s education.

Zoe. Adding to the discourse of multiculturalism at LAC, Zoe’s narrative addresses how she sees multiculturalism as a part of LAC’s campus as well as how she experiences multiculturalism on campus. She began,

Multiculturalism? I don’t know. I see it as, there are the [people of color] (POC), ok? And they are all like, “this is fucked up. This place wasn’t meant for me.” We

really express this in our circles and in the MC. And then there are the White kids, the in-betweeners, who are with it but you wish they would just shut up sometimes, you know? And then there's a big section of the LAC population that no one ever really talks about, but they are so fucking there. Honestly, it's the White kids who just don't give a fuck and who think gender inclusive language is stupid and who are always making jokes about the POC kids and about being politically correct. They say stuff like, "are you PC enough, bro?"

I asked Zoe to detail how she understood the accountability mechanisms on campus to address the viewpoints, attitudes, and behaviors of the latter group of White students she described above. She continued,

They don't have to look at the world around them. For them, race doesn't matter. We are all the same, that kind of rhetoric. A lot of the athletic spaces are like that, so are STEM spaces and Political Science and Econ. Those spaces are so unwelcoming to anyone that is not hetero, White, and upper middle class. Those spaces become so toxic because people don't talk about it. Those spaces, they stay the way they are, you know? That goes back to how this institution wasn't built for multiculturalism; no institution was. No higher education institution was built for people of color; for anyone who wasn't White, male, cis, hetero, uppity, you know?

Zoe detailed how she sees multiculturalism as being siloed on campus. Directly contrary to LAC's statement that students will "understand the different experiences and identities, understand privilege, and be aware of how to create a comfortable environment for all

members of our community,” Zoe described how students are able to avoid conversations on multiculturalism, privilege, and oppression by sequestering themselves in spaces on campus that are resistant to change. In fact, Zoe’s narrative suggests that the institution continues to exclude minoritized students while building spaces, like the MC, that center minoritized student experiences. Zoe discusses how some students do not learn to understand privilege nor do they learn to create a comfortable environment for minoritized students. Here, Zoe clearly cited how, while multiculturalism is a stated value of the institution, it is not necessarily a concept that is embraced by the entire student body.

I asked Zoe how she understood the Multicultural Center as being able to intervene in spaces that were exclusive. She stated,

If you’re trying to make inclusive spaces happen on this campus, there’s going to be a lot of resistance. It’s going to have its building. It’s going to have its section and if people decide to walk into that building, that’s their decision but no one is going to make them. Nobody is going to make them be in spaces that make them uncomfortable. They are not going to put themselves there. However, [people of color] have to. We are constantly in spaces that make us uncomfortable. Our narratives aren’t important to them. They don’t have to be important to them. Multiculturalism here is important if you want it to be important. It’s like, they’re trying to make spaces for us but not. In the end, it doesn’t matter. It doesn’t matter if people don’t want it to matter. No matter how much we want it to matter to them, no one is making them do it.

Zoe described how, despite embracing multiculturalism being part of the construction of the successful subject, students can choose to ignore this aspect of success at LAC.

Again, Zoe raised a question regarding who is expected to educate the LAC community about multiculturalism, particularly if MC programming and spaces are easily avoided.

While the institution touts multiculturalism as one of its primary values that is “infused throughout the campus community,” students come to LAC and often experience a toxic environment. Zoe’s narrative complicates the governmentality that rewards adherence to LAC’s construction of the successful subject. While minoritized students like Zoe may need to seek out spaces where multiculturalism is embraced to avoid toxic environments, some students do not experience similar consequences for avoiding these same spaces. In fact, students may be rewarded for avoiding spaces that embrace multiculturalism by not experiencing the discomfort that often comes with conversations about privilege and oppression. Zoe draws attention to the ways in which adherence to the construction of the successful LAC subject rewards individuals unequally, effectively making it more important for minoritized students to attain this ideal than for students in the majority.

Syri. Syri also shared her thoughts on multiculturalism at LAC, problematizing the ways in which it gets enacted on campus and how she navigates these aspects of campus life. Syri identifies as non-binary, transfeminine, queer, and as Native American. She is from a small, rural town in Tennessee, is a Classics major, and was a sophomore at the time of the interview. Thoughtful in her approach to my questions, she stated,

I think multiculturalism is probably the more marketable spin on the word “diversity” and I think that plays out in the ways that LAC offers very pointed and very specific programs designed to highlight voices that are definitely not the majority. That’s very prevalent in the MC certainly, but also prevalent in the academic departments. Most of our electives follow a paradigm of highlighting marginalized identities. In the Classics Department, we have Women, Pagans and Jews, courses like that. I think that’s one way in which [LAC] engages with multiculturalism. The question is, how much is multiculturalism made into an anthropology compared to actually engaged with? For me, [LAC] feels like a very multicultural place because there is a wealth of students from diversity of backgrounds, so many international students, so many students of color, so many queer and trans students compared to everything that I know, but I think that’s a relative scale and if I wasn’t from a town of 200 people that was 96% White, I might not be so convinced on the multicultural nature of LAC.

Syri identified how multiculturalism is often seen as simply the bringing together of people from different cultures, backgrounds, and experiences. She highlighted this by noting how multiculturalism can be articulated as an academic exercise rather than focusing on the actual materiality of living in a multicultural environment. Further, Syri discussed how she understands LAC as containing great structural diversity, stating she has experienced more difference at LAC than she experienced in her hometown in Tennessee. Her narrative brings to light how “multicultural” is a relative term.

Syri's narrative uncovers an important consideration; to what end does multiculturalism function at LAC? Syri grappled with whether building a multicultural community simply functioned to meet learning outcomes for students from the majority or whether it existed for something more. Her narrative questions the meaning of "embracing multiculturalism," which gets folded into the construction of the successful subject. Does "embracing multiculturalism" entail simply the consumption of other cultures, such as in programs like the International Festival, where domestic students consume food from other cultures? Does multiculturalism entail engaging with other cultures as anthropologies? While the institution, in its messaging, fails to define multiculturalism, Syri's narrative highlights the vastly different manifestations of this term and how problematic these may be. If multiculturalism is engaged with as an anthropology, then minoritized students exist, partly, as curiosities be studied.

Rebecca. Rebecca, an international student from South Korea, also detailed how she experienced multiculturalism at LAC. She discussed her fantasies about having American friends at her American school, a large motivator for her to study in the US, before she came to LAC. She said,

The institution can't really force people to mingle. I had a lot of fantasies about American culture and I thought [American students] would be very interested in me because I come from a totally different background, but there's a lot of diversity here. Coming from a different background doesn't mean anything. That was how I felt my first two years. Now, I don't really strive to be closer to domestic students. My first year I really tried hard to hang out with domestic

students and learn their culture, but it was tough for me because I just don't have fun with them. We're just so different, different senses of humor, and different way of having fun. I thought, "I don't have to change myself to fit into the culture here. I just want to be myself and hang out with people who share similar values". So, now I only hang out with domestic students who are interested in Asian culture or who take same classes as I do.

Rebecca highlighted, again, that proximity does not necessarily mean engagement. She noted how the presence of different cultures necessarily means there are gaps in experiences and her narrative suggests that many domestic students did not strive to close those gaps, to learn her culture as she learned about US American culture. Again, Rebecca showed how the lack of a consistent definition of multiculturalism on behalf of the institution created an environment where students may consume pieces of different cultures rather than engage with them in a more holistic sense. The successful LAC subject, then, may embrace multiculturalism through cultural consumption and tokenization or through more complex and nuanced engagement with material realities and concepts that influence material conditions such as privilege and oppression.

Micah. Micah also provided nuanced commentary about how LAC enacts multiculturalism as a stated value and how they navigate this value on campus. I asked Micah about how they saw multiculturalism on campus, and where they saw potential to improve the ways in which the institution engages with difference. Micah answered,

There needs to be a lot of analysis and questioning and challenging of just how things work and how the structures in place are made up and who's running them

and to what end they're functioning. There was an initiative on campus to hire more faculty of color, like stop having this be your rich White people club, offer better aid if you can, do more outreach to communities that aren't represented here. And, in addition to bringing in people who aren't here, I feel like there needs to be a lot of effort to just change what they find when they get here. It's very in line with the idea, diversity and multiculturalism or whatever, to go out and find all different types of people and make sure they can all be together here in the happy [LAC] community but it's not going to work out that way. If we still have professors who are straight up refusing to use peoples' correct pronouns, which is a thing unfortunately, or professors who are blatantly racist, blatantly misogynistic and you can't call them on it because they're tenured or whatever.

Here, Micah critiqued LAC's enactment of multiculturalism. They discussed how the institution needs to move beyond just bringing people from different cultures together, which directly challenges the false assumption that undergirds much of LAC's messaging about multiculturalism, which is that proximity begets engagement. Further, Micah noted the discrepancy between LAC's messaging about multiculturalism and the actual lived realities of minoritized students at LAC. Later in their narrative, Micah detailed experiences with faculty who refused to use Micah's correct pronouns and who had created hostile environments for people of color in the classroom. Micah's commentary on multiculturalism, then, adds complexity to what it means to embrace multiculturalism and become a successful subject.

Perhaps Micah, in their narrative above, draws attention to the ways in which LAC creates avenues through which students can consume multiculturalism rather than embrace it. Micah shows how the creation of a multicultural environment does not necessarily address the oppression minoritized students face from other students as well as faculty. They articulated here the “add diversity and stir” approach, noting how bringing minoritized folks to campus does not automatically mean that privilege and oppression are even discussed. This provides evidence that, while the successful LAC subject does embrace multiculturalism, this means very little in terms of how material reality is experienced by minoritized students once they arrive at LAC. This also shows how minoritized students are often responsible for the education of students in the majority.

This section detailed the construction of the successful LAC subject, highlighting how a governmentality rewards achieving academically, performing community service, pursuing specific career paths, and embracing multiculturalism and internationalism over other ways of being. The next chapter shows how the MC creates an additional governmentality for minoritized students that influences their self-governance *on top of* the discursive construction of success discussed above. The next section also details how students navigate this additional governmentality during their time at LAC.

Chapter 5: The Discursive Construction of Success for Minoritized Students

This chapter addresses the second research question: How does the Multicultural Center contribute to a governmentality of successful minoritized college students? In addition, this chapter continues to employ student narratives to answer the third research question: How do minoritized students negotiate neoliberal discourses of minoritized college student success? This chapter first shows how the MC constructs a governmentality of success for minoritized students through its programs and messaging, positioning these students as needing extra support to attain articulated hallmarks of success expected of all students. Next, this chapter shows how the MC constructs success for minoritized students as contributing to multiculturalism, expecting these students to perform their differences and teach majority students about both their struggles and their culture. Finally, this chapter employs student narratives to illustrate how minoritized students navigate the discursive construction of success from the MC and take up the identities of performer and educator to contribute to multiculturalism as well as to interrupt violence.

Becoming Scholars: Minoritized Students and Hallmarks of Success

Institutional messaging from LAC's multicultural center positions minoritized students as needing extra support and resources to gain access to the broader institutional community of scholars-in-the-making. Although the front page of the MC's website emphasizes its mission to "foster and promote a welcoming and pluralistic environment that is inclusive of the *entire* college community" (emphasis added), minoritized students

are clearly positioned as requiring help to access institutionally and societally articulated markers of success that majority students are assumed to already possess.

The MC has several programs in place to assist minoritized students in accessing the skills and capital necessary for entrance to the broader community at LAC. The New Scholars Program is a college transition program for first-year students designed to “increase the number of historically under-represented students at [LAC] who are selected to participate in and receive opportunities for study abroad/away, internships, fellowships, and scholarships, and to increase their application and admittance to graduate and professional schools.” The program articulates its primary goal as “assist[ing] students during their transition to college as they are entrenched in the important intellectual project of becoming a scholar.” This description implies that “becoming a scholar” is a full-time job in which all students are engaged, and that minoritized students need *more* help than majority students in attaining the pre-defined, institutionally-articulated hallmarks of success, such as receiving an internship, listed in the program description.

Minoritized students may very well need additional help to attain institutional hallmarks of success because, as Zoe stated in the previous chapter, institutions of higher education were not built for minoritized students. What is troubling, however, about how the MC positions minoritized students is that it assumes that these students need to attain these specific hallmarks to be successful as an LAC student. Further, students may internalize that they need this help rather than thinking through how they might need help

to attain success for themselves. This positioning marks minoritized students as deficient in measuring up to an arbitrary ideal, that is, institutional constructions of success.

The Lavender Reception, held each fall semester, is another MC program designed to assist minoritized students in attaining hallmarks of success. The Lavender Reception “celebrates the queer community at [LAC] and is an opportunity for LGBTQ students to learn about resources and support networks on and off campus.” As with the New Scholars Program, LGBTQ students are framed as needing extra or specialized support to attain institutionally-articulated hallmarks of success. In this description, resources and support are separate from identity recognition and celebration effectively coding those resources and support as tools to assist LGBTQ students in their acculturation to institutional norms. That is, instead of including identity recognition and celebration as resources or support, their enumeration here implies that their identities mark them as in need of extra support to acculturate into norms of the institution.

Interestingly, the Gender and Sexuality Resource Center (GSRC), a student-run arm of the MC, states on its webpage its mission to “create a stronger culture of resistance against all forms of oppression by making resources more accessible and by bringing people together through empowering, transformative, and revolutionary meetings, discussions, and events.” Here, resources are not coded as the extra help minoritized students need to acculturate and succeed but as tools of resistance for students to employ against institutionally articulated norms. This counter example exists perhaps because the GSRC lacks staff or administrative oversight and institutional funding. The mission statement on the webpage is student-authored and student

volunteers run their programs and activities. While the GSRC is technically under the arm of the MC, the MC's practical oversight is relegated to maintaining the physical space. This counter example may be an indication of the ways in which the broader institutional culture at LAC disciplines minoritized students, actively silencing resistance to maintain existing structures while providing resources to minoritized students for their acculturation into normative ideals of success at LAC.

Contributing to “multiculturalism”: Exchanging experience for education. In addition to accessing institutional resources to help with their acculturation into the scholarly community at LAC, the MC's messaging positions successful minoritized students as needing to “perform” their struggles to contribute to the institution's value of multiculturalism and to educate the campus community on their particular difference(s) in exchange for access to an elite education. Several programs from the MC emphasize the importance of contributing one's voice and experience as a minoritized person for the benefit of oneself and the community at large. In this way, the MC positions success for minoritized students as performing identities to be included within the MC and the broader LAC culture.

For example, the MC hosts a discussion-based program for first-year students, which meets for discussions and community engagement activities twice a month during the school year. The program is described as,

An opportunity to build strong and effective relationships within and across racial, ethnic, national, and cultural backgrounds...the [program] is an excellent opportunity to be part of what makes [LAC] so special – students, staff, and

faculty from many different parts of the world; the varied cultural backgrounds that each person brings; and the college's location in a major metropolitan area in the United States. **Whatever our backgrounds and identities are, we all have important stories to tell and important things to learn from one another** (emphasis in original).

This program is marketed to all students on campus and, situated within the discourse of multiculturalism on campus, marks it as an opportunity for majority students to learn about minoritized identities. To be clear, the ways in which the institution positions embracing multiculturalism as a hallmark of success create the conditions where majority students must seek out opportunities to learn from minoritized populations to be successful. This program, then, while marketed as a space where all students share their stories, becomes an avenue through which minoritized students are tokenized for their struggles and experiences.

Minoritized students need to be experts in majority culture to survive within it. As Sam noted during our interview, "I, necessarily, have a PhD in White culture." While this program, no doubt, provides space for minoritized students to learn from people minoritized in different ways than their own and share stories with each other, by marking it as an educational opportunity for all students, it positions minoritized students as needing to perform their identities for the broader LAC community as part of the college's mission of multiculturalism.

The discussion program cited above articulates benefits of involvement in their programs that are consistent with those touted in the New Scholars Program discussed

above. The webpage states, “Alums of [the discussion program] have become outstanding leaders in many campus organizations and have completed internships and off-campus student employment at various local elementary schools, high schools, and nonprofit organizations.” While the programmatic aspects of this program center learning and discussion – hallmarks of success at LAC – this advertisement includes benefits that appeal to hegemonic ideals of success tied to civic engagement and employment. This can be read as incentivizing the program for students by appealing to extra-institutional ideals of success.

In addition, the Cultural House, the residential arm of the MC, hosts a program called “An(other) Story Circle” that is described as a program where,

A group of students are asked to share their experiences, or stories, with the campus community around a particular theme on identity, self, and society. The Story Circle program aspires to encourage the [LAC] community to talk across difference and get to know each other through sharing personal narratives.

This program is explicitly described as one where minoritized students are expected to share their stories for the benefit of the majority community at LAC yet, no students I spoke with who participated in the story circle found it meaningful or educationally useful. By framing this as a space where majority students gain the skills to talk to minoritized students, the implication is that these contributions are pleas for inclusion to the normative community where access is only granted based on majority students’ willingness and ability to include minoritized students’ identities and experiences. This program sets up the expectation that minoritized students must speak, must give their

stories and experiences, and are responsible for their and others' educations. The very students who are framed by MC programming as *lacking* skills and responsibility are here responsible for educating others about difference.

Although I did not purposefully choose students who were involved with the MC, nearly every participant indicated some level of involvement with the office. One participant, however, noted that she had never been involved with the MC and tried to avoid those spaces because she felt like they were not for her despite her holding minoritized identities. Madison is an immigrant from South Korea who moved to New York City with her parents when she was young. She attended one of the most prestigious high schools in New York, which her affluent parents funded. When I asked Madison about her lack of involvement with the MC, she stated,

When I talk to people of color like me, it's just like I have such difference life experiences from them. I feel like I am a lot more privileged and I shouldn't encroach on their space when they talk about their struggles. Because most of the time they come from lower income families who don't have the resources from their parents to support them financially or mentally when that wasn't exactly the case for me. My struggles seemed more miniscule than theirs, so I just didn't go to [MC programs] because I felt like it wasn't my space to talk about my struggles.

Madison identified a central aspect of the MC, which their messaging also identified; that the MC is a space for students to share the struggles with holding minoritized identities. While certainly Madison discussed her struggles with racism on campus, she did not think that her struggles measured up to the levels of other people of color. Madison's

narrative shows how the MC's focus on the sharing of stories for the education of majority students might exclude some minoritized students, giving students the impression that only certain types of narratives and experiences are appropriate to share to be included in the MC community.

Giving back. Successful minoritized students are framed as “giving back” to both the LAC community and outside communities while they are students and alumni. In fact, minoritized students are discursively constructed as having the ability to “give back” precisely because of their elite education and the privileges gleaned from it. For example, the MC gives out several awards each year to students who “throughout their work on campus, both in and out of the classroom, embody the mission of the MC and the legacies of the MC’s namesakes and [LAC] alums, [Namesake 1] and [Namesake 2].” The legacies of each of the MC’s namesakes include substantial contributions to their respective local communities as well as to the LAC community at large. The first namesake is described as the first African American graduate of LAC who later went on to become a medical doctor, serve those with limited access to medical care, and create an endowed scholarship at LAC. The second namesake “came to [LAC]...from a Japanese detention camp...where she was released specifically because of her acceptance to [LAC].” After becoming a social worker, the second namesake served on LAC’s Alumni Board and volunteered for the college.

Interestingly, in these two descriptions, the college is positioned as the savior of these women, most explicitly in the second story above. LAC was, after all, the *specific* reason the second namesake was released from the detention camp. These awards,

although not explicitly coded as such, are discursively constructed as being awarded to minoritized students who have, through their service and their performances of their identities, given back to the broader LAC community. By positioning the college as the savior of the namesakes of this award, the college is discursively constructed as *deserving* of the service the two namesakes provided. Further, these awards are framed to recognize LAC's goodness as much as their recipients. In this way, successful minoritized students are coded as being expected to give back to the institution for providing them an elite education and for accepting them into an elite community that carries lifelong rewards.

In addition, several student programs run out of the MC include community engagement components wherein minoritized students are given opportunities to volunteer in local communities surrounding LAC. For example, the discussion-based program description states that students will, in addition to discussion components of the program, “participate in community engagements that will connect their learning to ‘real world’ interactions at [LAC] and with the culturally and ethnically diverse neighborhoods and communities that make up [the surrounding area].” Here, minoritized students are positioned as having the tools necessary, either from being from a minoritized group or by learning from minoritized peers, to be able to “give back” to the local, culturally and ethnically diverse, communities. In this way, successful minoritized students are constructed as exporting the skills they take from LAC to outside “diverse” communities as well as remaining an engaged member of the LAC community as a volunteer and an alumnus, continuing to contribute particular forms of difference to the broader community.

Student experiences. Addressing the third research question, this section shows analysis of interview data detailing how minoritized students take up the discourse discussed above, framing them as needing to perform their identities and contribute to multiculturalism to attain success. Nearly every participant spoke of needing to perform and educate to gain acceptance to the LAC community. Some participant narratives demonstrate an implicit acceptance of the role of educator while others explicitly name the unspoken expectations placed upon them while also noting how they continue to meet these expectations to attain success. Participants also described taking up identities as educators and performers to interrupt violence they themselves experience, indicating that it is often minoritized students' jobs to create a welcoming, inclusive, and multicultural environment.

Joyenn. Several participants implicitly or explicitly took up an educator role to feel included in the LAC community by contributing to multiculturalism. For example, Joyenn, a first-year, first generation, Latina student, takes up the discourse of giving back to LAC by contributing to the institution's articulated value of multiculturalism through educating the broader campus community about her story and identities. Talking about her experiences both in the classroom and in programs through the MC she states,

I feel a bit isolated here in terms of my identity. There are so few of us who identify as being first generation and Latina...but one of the things I realized is that I could bring my identity forward and make it known that this is an identity here at [LAC], one of many. So, in a way, I feel proud that I'm letting people

know that this exists and what this is and what the different components of that are.

Here, Joyenn implicitly takes up the identities of educator and contributor to multiculturalism at LAC. Interestingly, Joyenn notes a shift in the way she frames herself in relation to the institution, moving from feeling isolated as an outsider, to a contributor to the multiculturalism espoused by the MC and the institution at large. Readily taking up the identity of a contributor to multiculturalism, she moves away from her outsider status towards integration into the MC and broader LAC communities. For Joyenn, this shift functions to allow her access to communities and resources she would not otherwise have however, this access, while readily granted to White students, requires that she perform labor for the institution in the form of educating her peers. She takes up the identity of educator in this shift, further outlining the ways in which she gives back in exchange for acceptance into the institution where she is receiving her “elite” education.

Farrah. Farrah provides another example of a minoritized student taking up the identity as educator. Farrah is an Arab and Muslim woman and a senior at LAC. When asked about how she came to be a student at LAC she stated,

Sometimes I think, when [LAC] accepted me, did they have some kind of agenda behind it, or some kind of specific intentions? My friend told me, “You add diversity to this place.” I said, “Well, that’s true but I don’t think of myself as a [LAC] project or something for the benefit of White people. I just exist. I’m here.” I’ve never thought that I was going to be entertainment or provide an educational lesson to White people. I don’t see that as my function. I am asked for

my perspective a little bit in academic settings but I will say that because I'm comfortable here, I'm a little bit more willing to talk about it and also point out incorrect things that people say.

Here, Farrah explicitly rejected her role as an educator for the benefit of White people; however, she went on to describe how she does share her perspective in the classroom and corrects her peers' statements thereby effectively performing the *function* of an educator. Further, she questioned the reasoning behind her acceptance to LAC, wondering if she might have been admitted solely for her minoritized identities.

Within this context, Farrah's narrative has multiple interpretations. Farrah is from a small town in the Midwest and clearly feels a sense of belonging at LAC. Her statement of her comfort and therefore willingness to educate may be an indication of her intentions to help her peers with whom she has good relationships but not to exist as an educator for the institution. In her individual specific classroom experiences, Farrah may experience an invitation to add her perspective. Situated within the broader LAC discourse of multiculturalism, however, this invitation becomes an expectation. The discourse of multiculturalism at LAC positions minoritized students as educators who must perform this function to become folded into the fabric of the institution. Even with an awareness of how LAC may be expecting her to perform and explicit rejection of her purpose as an educator, Farrah offers her story and experiences in the classroom.

Zoe. Zoe, a Latina student from New York City, also articulated how she sees minoritized students as needing to contribute to multiculturalism to attain success. She stated,

[Tokenization] happens a lot at [LAC]. They don't support us. There are a lot of barriers but when we do something that's excellent or cool, it's exploited. There was a dance piece that was coordinated by two men of color...Of course, all of a sudden the school wants to use their dance piece to put on their website to show to funders being like, "look at these people of color. Look at them dance. We're so with it." Really? Really?! Any achievement you do becomes something to put on a website but only when...it's good enough and you're being "POC" enough. Just making it through this college isn't good enough. Why do I have to enact my identity? Why do I have to put my identities out there for them to be recognized and valued? I either have to be excellent excellent or I'm nothing. That's just how [LAC] works.

Zoe's nuanced commentary first asserts that people of color face barriers to articulated hallmarks of success for all students at LAC. She then discussed LAC's exploitation of particular hallmarks of success that are "POC enough" to fit the "multicultural" image on which LAC prides itself. Here, Zoe specifically named the pressure she feels to not only attain LAC's articulated hallmarks of success *but also* perform her identities in such a way that LAC deems worthy of recognition as "multicultural." Further, Zoe articulated the stakes of not attaining success as complete erasure, stating she is "nothing" unless she is viewed as a successful student and contributor to multiculturalism.

Syri. Participants also spoke of educating the broader community about their differences to interrupt violence and microaggressions. Syri is a non-binary transfeminine

sophomore who identifies as Native American. She discussed her experiences at LAC stating,

I've realized more and more that, by virtue of having diverse identities, I'm more expected to speak upon my own identities than actually get to have the space to engage with others. I took a course on Native Americans a semester ago and I thought that would be an incredible way for me to engage with my own identity as Cherokee...but throughout the entire class, there was such a reduction of what the identity meant that...I was like, "this is not actually a way to talk about people, this is a way to talk about mostly White guilt." The people we talked about in class were all dead and it felt like we actually didn't have to talk about them as people anymore. I think that I, and the other student who had native identities, had to spend more time in class reminding people that people still live who have Native American ancestry compared to actually engaging with diverse cultures in the academic setting.

In this example, Syri explicitly named that she is *expected* to share her identities and perspectives and noted how this gets in the way of her own articulated goals for her education, effectively impeding her ability to explore issues around her own identities and lived experiences. Syri's narrative reflects, then, a hierarchy wherein ideals of success that LAC espouses, that is, the expectation for Syri to educate and for her peers to embrace her perspective, are placed above Syri's own articulations of success for herself. Further, she noted how her class on Native cultures centered White feelings at the expense of the humanity of Native folks. Syri and her classmate, then, needed to take up

the role of educator to interrupt the potentially erasure of their ancestors and themselves in this academic setting.

Jane. Jane, a Black, bisexual sophomore, also took up the identity of educator in order to interrupt microaggressions. She talked about her experience,

You know when you've been microaggressed sometimes you just freeze and are like, "did I just experience that?" And then the moment is passed and you can't talk about it anymore or at least you think you can't talk about it anymore.

Sometimes, after a point you're like, "you know what? It's happened. Hopefully it doesn't happen again." But then if it does happen again you give yourself the talk like well it's actually not my job to educate these people but also, I don't want to live in a violent environment.

Jane articulated that it is not her job to educate; however, her comment that she doesn't want to live in a violent environment assumes that if she fails to do the education, she will continue to face violence. The implication in her narrative, then, is that it in fact *is* her job to educate her peers despite LAC's assertion that their community is inclusive and welcoming. In this instance, the labor of creating an inclusive and welcoming community fell on Jane through her role as an educator and the consequences of her failing to take up this role are that the LAC community, for her, remains unsafe.

This section addressed the second research question, showing how the MC constructed a governmentality of success for minoritized students, positioning them as performers of their differences, contributors to multiculturalism, and educators for their peers. Minoritized students took up this discursive framing in various ways and for

various reasons including to interrupt the violence they experience in their community.

The final chapter ties together findings from chapters four and five, draws conclusions from these analyses, and offers implications for practice.

Chapter 6: Diversity Sieves: The MC as a Servant to the Institution

In this final chapter, I first connect the governmentality of success constructed by the institution and by the MC to neoliberalism, showing how the discursive environments constructed by LAC and, more specifically, the MC operate to (re)produce the conditions that neoliberalism has created in higher education environments. Second, I summarize my findings and present conclusions that articulate how the Multicultural Center functions as a “diversity sieve” to ensure that minoritized students are equipped to attain hallmarks of institutionally-defined success. Third, I present implications for practice based on what I learned from the research questions. Finally, I offer insights into what I have learned from the research process and the writing of this dissertation and conclude with thoughts on how a poststructural approach to understanding higher education cultures and environments can offer unique insights into our work as scholars and practitioners.

Neoliberalism and Success at LAC

When I started my career as a student affairs practitioner, I became obsessed with student success. What is it? What do we mean when we say that student success is our goal in higher education? What did I mean when I told students who worked with me that I was invested in their success? This obsession was fueled, in part, by fears that students articulated to me. In a course that I was teaching in which I started conceptualizing this project, I asked students to write a paper about their individual leadership style. One of the prompts asked, “What are you afraid of?” Over one hundred students came through this course and only a handful of them did not mention that they were afraid of *not being*

successful. I would note on the margins of their papers, “What do you mean not successful?” This was a question I did not mean rhetorically, although most of them took it as such. I keep coming to this question in much of my research because I, too, have been afraid of not being successful. I was told since I was young that I would be successful and I assumed based on how my educational environments constructed success that there were very specific ways to attain it. Prestige and power became synonymous with success because those are the representations I continually saw. Now, looking back, I wonder why I had such difficulty imagining myself outside of these constructions. Why was/are discourses of success so powerful?

There came a point in my own educational journey where I grappled with how my “hard-earned success” was serving me. I followed a typical trajectory that was constructed by my undergraduate institution, one eerily like that which LAC constructed. I was interested in gainful employment. I envisioned comprehensive health insurance for my future. I envisioned resources to construct a comfortable, middle-class existence. But beyond these material benefits, I had little inspiration to imagine my life outside of being an institutionalized professional and, while I continue to exist, more or less, within institutions, poststructuralism has allowed me to construct knowledge outside of these institutions. It has taught me to see the possibilities that these institutionalized systems do not readily foster. I ask myself questions about how I want to *feel* instead of what I want to do. I remind myself of my worth regardless of my productivity and, while dominant narratives of success still seem enticing (I realized being profiled in my alumni magazine was an item on my unconscious to-do list for success), I know that these check boxes are

unimaginative, laden with privileges I possess, and, in many ways, set harmful precedence for those who come up after me. I know all of this and could lecture about it in my sleep; however, I still find myself influenced by the rewards of adhering to dominant constructions of student success that I still carry from before I can even remember. We have apotheosized a particular kind of student success.

In the literature, scholars talk about “measures of success”; examples include retention, persistence, degree completion, and employment post-degree attainment (e.g., Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Reason, 2009; Tinto, 2006-2007). Scholars also talk a great deal about factors that contribute to student success including strong relationships with faculty, peer relationships, and mentorship (e.g., Harper, 2010; Strayhorn, 2010). However, given my own experiences with education and speaking with students, I kept thinking about how student success seemed to, often, be associated with White, masculinist corporate culture. In these ways, particular definitions of student success, what many of our institutions tout as a primary goal of higher education, have implications for equity.

In my study at LAC, I found that dominant constructions of student success do have implications for equity in many ways. Foucault’s (1991) work on governmentality posited that the state (which Foucault noted includes educational institutions) imposes systems of rewards and punishment that influence individuals’ self-governance. Student success as constructed through institutional messaging, laden with institutionalized rewards, becomes a normalizing technology. Further, success for minoritized students at LAC includes an additional system of governmentality to normalize minoritized student

behavior. As Foucault asserted, these systems exist to perpetuate the rule of the state or, in this case, the power and prestige of the institution. I have resisted judgement of the systems of governmentality described in this dissertation as they certainly have aspects that are both good and bad. However, these systems serve to limit the potentials for students. As Spivak (1993) warned, we are limited by that which we cannot imagine. With pre-defined measures of success bearing great material and psychic reward and the consequences for not attaining that success dire, the institution leaves little room to imagine outside of what it has constructed.

The existence of the form of governmentality described in this work is problematic for two reasons. First, a system that requires more labor from minoritized students for the same benefits contributes to persistent inequity. While minoritized students often chose to conduct themselves according to institutional standards of success, these standards remained unspoken. In fact, students are promised by institutional messaging that their educational needs will be met and, in fact, the institution merely meets the *presumed* needs of minoritized students at a costlier price than their majority counterparts. Our goals as educators should be to not place the burden of educating about differences on students. Second, the governmentality of success for all students at LAC required such investment of time and energy that participants were nearly always left with time for little else beyond a few hours of sleep each night. Again, while students choose to work toward attaining institutional definitions of success, this choice came with important rewards and recognition.

Neoliberalism's functioning within higher education is related to LAC's constructions of student success. As the 1960s ended following a decade of student protests and the institutionalization of ethnic studies programs across the country, the early 1970s saw the unraveling of Keynesian economics and the rise of free market ideology (Harvey, 2005; Melamed, 2011). Higher education in the US, then, found itself among the public social institutions and programs facing declining state support (Giroux, 2014; Melamed, 2011). This declining state support and the rise of market ideology forced higher education institutions to shift to keep up with the economic recalibration toward training a workforce to capitalize on the global industrial and information economies (Melamed, 2011; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). This shift, in combination with increasing awareness of the import of training a "diverse" workforce, found higher education in the business of managing minority difference (Ferguson, 2012; Melamed, 2011). At LAC, the discursive production of success for minoritized students included this very function, socializing them as multicultural subjects, their cultures and bodies marketed to meet an essential function of the institution; that is, providing a multicultural education. Ferguson (2012) termed this phenomenon "neoliberal multiculturalism," or the cooptation of minority differences used to bolster the power and prestige of the institution.

As reviewed earlier, neoliberalism has become the dominant doctrine to organize economic, political, and social life in most nations across the world (Couldry, 2010; Duggan, 2003; Melamed, 2011; Ong, 2006). And while neoliberalism does not govern all political and economic rationale, globalization has meant that opting out of neoliberal

ideology has become increasingly difficult (Ong, 2006). Neoliberalism is complex, dynamic, and is not universally applicable across different contexts, even in the US, which is to say that neoliberalism may work to implicitly define success differently based on context. Duggan (2003) stated, “Neoliberalism is not a unitary ‘system,’ but a complex, contradictory cultural and political project created within specific institutions, with an agenda for reshaping the everyday life of contemporary global capitalism” (p. 70). Further, neoliberalism organizes biological and social life under the belief that “the market is better than the state at distributing resources and managing human life” (Melamed, 2011, p. 39). Viewing neoliberalism as a form of governmentality or biopolitical power, then, can help us interpret how systems of power organize conduct and individual subjects, rewarding subjects for acting as the proper *homo economicus* (or rational economic actor) and rendering some bodies as inherently “other” because of their inability (due to race, class, sexuality, and/or other form of difference) to become a proper *homo economicus* (Ong, 2006).

At LAC, data show us how institutional definitions of success act as normalizing technologies to socialize all students toward the successful LAC subject. The successful LAC subject excels academically, selflessly devotes themselves to community service and volunteerism, embraces multiculturalism and internationalism, and carries these values into their professional career path. Further, successful minoritized subjects adhere to the aforementioned standards as well as perform their differences to educate the majority campus community, contributing to multiculturalism and giving back to the institution in exchange for their elite education. Since neoliberalism organizes social and

political life and imagination, its interest in efficiency and streamlining “narrows understandings of what it means to be human and the possibilities for community” (Simpson, 2014, p.187). In other words, ways of being successful become constrained by economic rationality. What it means to be human under neoliberalism, then, is to focus on individual advancement and economically productive solutions to social problems. Neoliberal institutions, including institutions of higher education, “define success and even regulate acceptance by insisting on a specific way of being human, one that is consistent with the discourse and practices of privatization” (p. 190). The successful LAC subject then, is a specific way of being human, one which ensures the economic advancement and continual reification of the prestige of LAC as an institution.

Simpson (2014) argued that equality under neoliberal ideology is measured by the recognition minoritized communities are granted on the dominant group’s terms under the dominant group’s framework. At LAC, the institution touts its multiculturalism through the achievements of minoritized students that are legible as success by dominant groups. One example of this lies in the promotion of the dance routine choreographed by men of color that Zoe discussed above. The promotion of this dance routine bore appropriate (according to the institution) levels of recognition as both successful and “multicultural” as the group competed in a prestigious dance competition. The visual nature of the achievement allowed the college to reify their multiculturalism through promotion of a video showing Black bodies performing on stage.

Simpson (2014) also argued that “communities and all other groups that in any way transgress neoliberal norms receive a place at the table only through rigorous

mechanisms of objectification” (p. 190). At LAC, minoritized students are granted full acceptance into the community and the full benefits of an LAC education if they are successful. Importantly, the discursive construction of success suggests that this occurs partly through objectification of their differences and the struggles that go along with them. The MC does not position minoritized students as change agents who transform institutional culture but rather as needing to perform their stories, to be objectified, to add to and educate the broader campus community. For example, the men of color who won the dance competition were objectified for their (racialized) dance piece and for their Blackness.

With much of the literature on neoliberalism focused on privatization and economic policy (e.g., Harvey, 2005), neoliberal constructions of success manifest in unexpected ways at LAC. This is perhaps because of the institution’s structure and focus on producing scholars rather than corporate professionals. Most notably, one hallmark of minoritized student success is “giving back” to the LAC community, which includes alumni donations. Motivations for minoritized alumni giving specifically include a sense of obligation to the next generation of scholars through financially and otherwise supporting their alma maters (Gasman & Bowman, 2013; Smith, Shue, Vest, & Villarreal, 1999). Capitalizing on this sense of obligation, the neoliberal definition of success constructs the ideal minoritized subject as one who gives their labor and financial resources back to their institution as well as to their community to fulfill the institutional values of providing a multicultural education. “Giving back,” then, is reified as a practice

that minoritized students must fulfill because they were given so much by their institution, which provided the ticket to an elite, scholarly community.

Institutional messaging also discursively constructs minoritized students as future scholars who are positioned as needing tailored resources to be included within the scholarly community at LAC. Minoritized students are therefore framed as always already failed subjects and the institution positions itself as their savior, prepared with ample resources to help them attain articulated hallmarks of success and the lifelong benefits of an LAC education. While there are several examples from these data that equate success with skills and capital needed to acquire a job post-degree attainment, explicit mention of economic ideals of success, such as prospected earnings upon graduation and privileging job attainment, were notably absent from these data. Instead, the campus messaging constructs minoritized students as deficient in some way, requiring extra resources to undertake the project of becoming a scholar. Scholars, and the norms around this term, are LAC's ideal outputs and minoritized students are disciplined into norms of being a scholar through resources positioned on campus. Furthermore, LAC's focus on becoming scholars sidelines the needs of, particularly, low-income students. For example, Jane discussed needing to think about the financial outcomes of her education because her family, both in the US and abroad, relied on her for part of their income. The assumption that undergirds LAC's discursive focus on becoming scholars is that students' academic pursuits should not be constrained by earning potential. This assumption ignores the very real financial needs of some minoritized, particularly low-income, students.

Neoliberal constructions of success also manifest to bolster the academic prestige of the institution, which is directly tied to the institution's economic advancement. This is particularly salient in the discursive equation of minoritized students' success with contributing to multiculturalism. Delgado and Stefancic (2001) defined multiculturalism as the reflection of multiple cultures in social institutions. As Sam noted in our interview, "multiculturalism just is" and yet, higher education institutions have sought to deculturalize (Spring, 2007) minoritized students for centuries. Recent research has shown that a multicultural education has myriad benefits particularly for those in the majority (Bowman, 2011; Denson & Bowman, 2011) and as such, multiculturalism has become a marketing tool to attract students. In an era where marketization has taken over higher education institutions, offering a multicultural and international education for students to consume requires that there is a consumable product. In the case of LAC, the consumable products are neatly packaged stories, struggles, accomplishments, and actual bodies of minoritized students. Success for minoritized students, then, gets constructed as making oneself and one's culture available for consumption through performances of difference, education, and giving back to the institution.

Further, the discursive construction of success for all students is laden with neoliberal logics. When discussing how LAC constructs success as necessarily including community service and volunteerism, Micah stated,

I think it comes from a good place but also from a point of very strong neoliberal politics where there's a certain way to enact change through certain existing

systems and you need to be performing in very particular ways and following particular narratives of how to better yourself and the world.

Melamed (2011) argued that as higher education privileges individualism, egoism, self-enterprise, and the benevolence of service, institutions teach students to “do good, feed the poor, uplift women, and presume responsibility for near and distant others” while learning who is worthy under a neoliberal regime and who is to remain disconnected from wealth and value (p. 156). At LAC, avenues through which students “do good” are reified while the prestige and power of the institution and its actors are upheld.

Melamed’s (2011) argument is compelling given the missing language of activism and praxis within the institutional discourse at LAC. This omission is stark and may limit students’ abilities to see themselves as change agents or as belonging to communities outside of LAC while students. Instead, the energy of “difference” in an elite institution gets channeled in very specific ways such as storytelling, helping, and donating money. Interestingly, while the MC is specifically grounded in social justice language, with “social justice” as an overarching goal of the center, the language of social change is notably missing from much of the institutional messaging of both the MC and LAC at large. Instead, the messaging is rather rife with language of “inclusion” rather than “transformation.” One notable exception is the mission statement for the Gender and Sexuality Resource Center, which includes making resources available for resistance to oppression rather than to aid in acculturation.

The MC as a Servant of the Institution

Alarming, minoritized students take up the identities of performer and educator despite many of them articulating their awareness of how LAC exploits them and their stories. Particularly salient is Zoe's assertion that she is "nothing" unless she meets LAC's hallmarks of success. Further, LAC's construction of success often usurped minoritized students' own educational desires as Syri discussed above, spending her time in a class on Native identities educating her peers rather than engaging with her own Native identity. These data show how, despite administrators' assertions that the MC and its functions constitute the "anti-LAC," the MC in fact operates in service to the institution. Noted by nearly all participants as an integral piece to their undergraduate experience and a space where minoritized students find community, acceptance, love, and support, the lack of institutional change initiatives noted by administrators and some students exemplifies how the MC serves minoritized students who, in turn, serve the institution. The MC effectively operates to "fix" minoritized students so they can overcome their discursively constructed deficiencies, be reminded of their resiliency, and be given just enough truth about their oppressive surroundings to attain the articulated hallmarks of success for all students as well as those for minoritized students.

Ana articulated her concern about the positioning of the MC within the broader campus community. She stated,

Because the prestige is carried through the academic excellence piece that has been over inflated...so much of the expectations are of perfection so that leaves a culture in which the faculty, when they have a student who somehow is

struggling, they don't know what to do with it and they get surprised because the student got admitted. There have been faculty who go to admissions and say, "how could this student have been admitted?" And so, the student goes to the [student success center] or the [MC] and they go in as broken, used goods.

Student affairs operates to fix students, to serve them.

Here, Ana discusses how prestige gets carried through academic excellence at LAC and how student affairs operates to fix students so they can return to the broader campus community and meet articulated hallmarks of success. Ana continued,

Students talk about [the MC's] programs because we're doing so much, we're constantly covering a lot of ground. I think what's dangerous is that somehow the staff is equating that with being at the center of LAC and I challenge that because the center, if that were the case, then there wouldn't be so much running around with the [dean of multicultural life's] position... We would have a more active presence with the faculty, we would be doing policy-oriented work, work that changes the culture of the college and the conditions. Instead, the programming has a temporary impact. In four years, we'll find ourselves with the same demands and needs. My question is constantly: How is our work changing the conditions on the ground?

Ana articulated how, despite assertions by the college, multiculturalism is not at the center of the LAC experience. Zoe expressed the same concerns when she discussed how certain spaces within LAC remain untouched by the MC's programming efforts. Instead,

the MC operates to address immediate concerns from minoritized students and provide educative services for students, faculty, and staff who seek out this education.

The MC's function, however, is not due to the staff or students associated with the MC but due to how the MC is positioned on campus. Instead, the staff and students in the MC do the best they can to address violence and oppression and change the culture on campus. However, I saw their efforts get funneled into specific actions that serve the college's existing definitions of success and the multicultural image it purports. For example, several of the staff meetings I attended during fieldwork were spent deciding which students to nominate for institution-wide student awards. The discussion with Derek, Ana, and Marc turned to how harmful institutional awards culture can be. I posed the question to the staff, "Why are you nominating students if you believe the culture to be harmful?" Marc stated astutely, "If we don't nominate students of color, nobody will and the awards will all go to White men. Representation is important." Indeed, representation is very important. In a cut-throat culture where excelling in several arenas is required for success, it is important to see folks like you represented. At the same time, the college is given a diverse pool of nominees for these awards so they can maintain their multicultural image through marketing the success of its minoritized students.

The MC staff also create the conditions where minoritized students can get their needs met through in-depth, varied programming that is able to be tailored by students themselves. MC programming provides spaces for students to explore their identities, to express emotions, to learn about other minoritized communities, to develop their academic skills, and to get emotional support. Nearly every student I spoke with

expressed their gratitude for the staff members in the MC. Given an institutional climate characterized by a great deal of privilege and rigorous academics, MC programming becomes one of the only spaces on campus that ensures minoritized students' survival.

The most oft cited function of MC programming by participants is to rant. For example, when asked about advice they would give to incoming students sharing their identities, Pup, a queer Asian American student, stated,

Definitely go to the MC, to spaces where you feel safe enough to talk about your identities, and explore your identities, because classrooms can be toxic, and some people don't realize that it is, and then it starts building up, all these tensions within them, and I feel like if you can find a space where you can talk about these issues, then that will help lessen the stress a student may get. I know when I first came in, I was like so focused on classes, and then I got so stressed out whenever the teacher made a microaggression. It definitely helped my mental stability to be able to go to [the MC] and just rant, or even just rant to people I know who kind of share similar experiences, and the MC is a big part of bringing these people together.

Here, Pup discussed how the MC is integral to their survival in the academic context because it provides a space to rant about extra-multicultural spaces with like-minded people. This sentiment was echoed by 15 of the 16 student participants.

While providing spaces for students to rant about oppression and microaggressions they face in their larger campus community constitutes a necessary function in today's society, it becomes problematic when this space gets concentrated on

a supposedly social justice-focused campus. To my point, Ana discussed how students will often *protect* faculty when they say or do problematic things. Ana said,

Students who are struggling with the writing, faculty communicate what should be a mentoring of a scholar experience as a, “you write like a 5-year-old, go somewhere else” and the students will protect the faculty even with those messages and that treatment. They will protect them.

Here, when Ana says “protect,” she is referencing experiences where students chose not to name faculty members who comment disparagingly on their work so, while she as a staff member could begin a conversation with faculty who she knows belittle students’ skills and knowledge, students will not tell her which faculty members they struggle with. While these comments do not necessarily reference minoritized identities, assumptions about students’ academic preparedness are certainly raced and classed. The myth of the meritocratic society has been debunked (e.g., Liu, 2011) and so comments about the elementary nature of a students’ writing cannot be read outside of this framework. This statement exemplifies two phenomena; first, it shows how the faculty’s resistance to change is embedded in student culture and, second, it shows how the MC gets continually marginalized as it seems under the purview of the MC to train faculty so these microaggressions are addressed at an institutional level instead of endured by minoritized, and frankly all, students.

The MC functions, then, as a diversity sieve. That is, it gives students space to process their own oppression and learn enough truth about their situations and their resiliency to have the mental, emotional, and sometimes physical fortitude to overcome

their institutionally constructed deficiencies and succeed according to institutional definitions. This functions to ensure that LAC can continue to uphold its image as a prestigious multicultural institution. The college boasts 2016 6-year graduation rates that are higher for students of color than for White students. The MC effectively functions to collect minoritized students (because the MC's efforts are blocked from being infused on campus) and sprinkle them into the rest of the campus community for them to work toward success. This does not happen in exactly the same way for all students, however. The nature of governmentality is that students still have agency and they *choose* to work toward institutional definitions of success, in large part for the institutional rewards that these versions of success bring.

Implications and Interventions

Derek, the assistant director of the MC noted in our interview,

Here, at [LAC], you sign up to be assimilated in certain ways. You come here for the [LAC] name. There are a number of students who don't even engage with multicultural life who are like, I'm here to do [LAC], not to be Puerto Rican at [LAC].

Derek's comment suggests that minoritized students feel that they need to divorce themselves from their identities and cultures to avoid navigating the governmentality set up by the MC that asks students to contribute to multiculturalism. Students are not required to perform their differences and contribute to multiculturalism. For example, Micah, the self-proclaimed failed subject, navigated the governmentality set up by the institution by refusing to match their definition of success to that of the institution. That,

however, came with consequences which included not having institutionalized support structures in place for their chosen career path and never gaining institutional recognition for their successes. The institution requires extra labor for minoritized students to gain the same recognition and services that majority students. Derek continued,

A lot of what ends up being rewarded are the people who already have the social and cultural capital and come from places exactly like [LAC] and have both the internal motivation and the circumstances to make it through in spite of everything.

Again, Derek spoke of the institutional rewards that come with striving to be the successful LAC subject. He also noted how students with certain privileges automatically get rewards where some minoritized students must do extra work to attain these rewards.

Interestingly, participants with White privilege represented outliers in these data. Maura, a White, Jewish woman, situated herself most within LAC's discursive construction of success while Micah, a White, queer, agender student, situated herself furthest outside of this construction. While the discourse analysis showed that all minoritized students were implicated in the MC's discursive construction of success, the fact that White participants seemed most able to envision themselves outside of this construction indicates that White privilege may allow students to more freely navigate institutional constructions of success and envision themselves both inside and outside of these discourses. This indicates the need for further research exploring how racial identity influences students' abilities to subvert institutional discourses.

If some students choose to opt out of engagement with the MC and therefore of its constructions of success as Derek suggested, it is important to reflect on the implications of this engagement or lack thereof. Minoritized students indicated that engagement with the MC provided them emotional and academic support and a peer network that helped them to meet articulated hallmarks of success and also critically reflect on and explore their minoritized identities. With paths to success articulated through institutional messaging always being preceded institutional hallmarks of success, engagement with the MC and therefore its versions of success may be the only way students are able to see themselves becoming successful. On the other hand, students articulated to me the ways in which they saw themselves and their peers exploited while continually needing to perform labor to ensure their educational environment was safe. For example, Jane discussed needing to interrupt microaggressions and educate the campus community so her environment was less violent despite her articulation that it was not her job to perform these roles. Nevertheless, students' awareness of their exploitation may allow them to better navigate their institutional environment as most participants noted how important the MC was for their academic survival and mental health.

After listening to Derek's reflections, I thought of my own experience as an undergraduate and how I was wrapped up in my institution's construction of success and how my White privilege may have allowed me to see myself better represented within that discourse. As a queer student, I sat on panels to explain my difference to my peers. I provided labor to make the institution a better place to exist within. Despite my own realization of the ways in which institutions such as LAC construct a governmentality of

success, as an alumnus, I give back to my own institution in much the same way as LAC primes students to. I donate money each year and I am the chair of an alumni board. I am continually surprised at how embedded these institutionalized constructions of success are.

Given these interpretations, what are scholars and practitioners to do within their contexts to mitigate some of the harm that may come from these institutional constructions of success, especially for minoritized students? I am left to wonder how the extraction of stories from minoritized students for the benefit of the institution can actually hinder minoritized students' personal and academic development and how it might be helpful in other regards. Neoliberalism and the institution's economic context is not likely to change anytime soon, meaning the economic pressures and the marketplace in which the institution exists will remain relatively static. The question then becomes: How can we alter our practices within these conditions toward a more just environment for minoritized students? How can we interrupt business as usual?

First, I believe we need to talk about the conditions under which minoritized college students exist and how our institutions code success for these students. We also need to be humble and realistic about how our cultural centers and diversity programming are implicated in these constructions. For example, while the MC certainly provides necessary services for minoritized students and my intention is not to vilify this work, we can ask how the MC can subvert institutional constructions of success to do better for minoritized students at LAC. I also believe we need to seek institutional solutions to social justice issues that are not dependent on the students who exist on our

campuses. How are programming and initiatives changing the culture of all aspects of the institution itself? And how are students implicated in that?

Next, I believe that institutions need to interrogate how success gets taken up by students and who and what success asks students to become. Social institutions, to include higher education institutions, should be organized to facilitate human flourishing with respect to each individual's unique conditions. Given the ways in which LAC often puts its own ideals of success above those of students, I believe LAC is concerned with the flourishing of its students only in the sense that it wants students to achieve very specific constructions of success. How can we support students in their own goals and dreams for their educations and their lives in general?

To enlarge institutional definitions of success, institutions of higher education need to commit to change their culture of success through institutional channels rather than through individual students. Changing the culture of success can be written into the strategic plan, with individual office assessments of how success is discursively constructed through institutional messaging. Departments can ensure they have institutionalized support structures in place for students pursuing a variety of different career options. The institution's social media feeds and alumni magazine can highlight students, alumni, faculty, and staff who are on paths that are not necessarily equated with prestige and power. Curricular restructuring could also allow for different constructions of success and could truly reflect a self-directed experience through not privileging certain experiences over others.

While I did not broach the subject of self-care in my interpretations of the data, I would be remiss if I did not mention it here. Nearly every participant spoke of the importance of self-care and the ways in which the institution stressed that students practice it and gave them resources to do so. This troubled me as I saw the institution and its actors continually expect students to live up to impossible ideals of success while also stressing the importance of taking care of oneself. The messages were inherently contradictory. I find it a moral imperative that, in addition to promoting self-care through institutional channels, that institutions reflect this need in their expectations for students. When discussing their favorite professor, Micah said, “She has a very realistic and nuanced view of the fact that students are people, which shouldn’t be something I admire her for but it is.” The institution needs to create conditions in which students can flourish.

In addition, institutions of higher education need to understand how the market economy creates conditions where they need to sell a product. This requires that there is a product. Marketing a multicultural education, then, requires making available for consumption the experiences, stories, and bodies of minoritized students, faculty, and staff. A socially just, multicultural education creates a catch-22; it *cannot* be sold because the selling of a multicultural education necessarily requires positioning minoritized people as a product to be sold, which would not be consistent with the ideals of social justice. Therefore, the enactment of a socially just, multicultural education needs to be just that and exist on its own, without explicit promotion as such.

Finally, given the neoliberal context in which higher education operates, I find it imperative that if an institution touts a multicultural education, it monetarily compensate

students for the extra labor they are asked to perform. I am reminded of the cultural taxation accommodation in the California Faculty Association's Collective Bargaining Agreement (Canton, 2013). This clause considers the increased labor asked of minoritized faculty in the promotion and tenure process arguing that "service to the University and to the community" encompasses more for minoritized faculty. Similarly, institutions could compensate students when they are asked to do the labor of educating majority students on their differences. While, in some cases, this does occur, particularly for those students whose on campus employment is in multicultural affairs, this labor often goes unnoticed in spheres outside of diversity programming. When offering a multicultural education, it is important to interrogate who makes the education multicultural and how this education influences the minoritized students enrolled.

Mertens (2015) stated, "In qualitative research, the burden of transferability is on the reader to determine the degree of similarity between the study site and the receiving context" (p. 271). While findings from this study are from one institution, I imagine the phenomena described here play out at every higher education institution in the United States to varying degrees. That said, I wish to caution readers about applying these findings to their campuses. LAC operates in a very specific context and the nature of neoliberalism is that it is far from a universalized doctrine. That is, using a neoliberal lens looks different based on context. This project took 17 months from beginning data collection to this final draft and it therefore can be a slow process of understanding how success gets constructed and how these constructions get taken up. Regardless, I urge higher education scholars and practitioners to ask, "How is success delineated and

defined at my institution and specifically through cultural centers and diversity programming?” and “What is the impact of that construction on minoritized students and their abilities to flourish?”

Conclusion

I do not believe we will win. I do not believe hope should be a prerequisite for trying anyways.

-alok vaid-menon

I agree with Foucault when he noted that no institution can be a guarantor of freedom and liberty (Foucault, 1984). Further, I understand “freedom” not as an indication of complete autonomy but as a process and a struggle to push against constructed norms and existing possibilities to create opportunities to live a more open life (Butler & Birules, 2008). Higher education, then, cannot guarantee freedom but should not foreclose on individuals’ ability to engage in the struggle to create more open lives for themselves. My worry is that, through processes of neoliberalization, higher education has become subsumed with discourses of “success” that privilege the economic, elitism, and prestige creating conditions, even within articulated support spaces, through which minoritized students must choose to construct themselves in particular ways or risk punishment.

This research shows how institutional discourses of success create a governmentality where minoritized students are asked to actively educate others, using their identities as a tool to create a “multicultural” institution. This exploitation and reification of specific ideals of success come at the expense of limiting students’ abilities to imagine their lives outside of institutional definitions of success. While some students

may choose to willingly become subsumed by institutional definitions of success, as Derek notes above, this choice necessarily comes with a socialization process that may deculturize (Spring, 2007) students and limit potentials they see for themselves.

My hope is that through this work, higher education scholars and practitioners can learn to question, and teach students and colleagues to question, why we do what we do, why we want what we want, and why we are who we are. We need to do all of this interrogating knowing that we very well may still make the same self-governing decisions. What does it mean when higher education institutions tout the “success” of their students? What rewards do students gain from presenting and acting a certain way? Why did students grow up wanting certain things and to be a certain way? Can students articulate ways of being that might serve their communities and themselves better than what currently exists? Who or what is informing the decisions they have made? Is higher education truly giving students opportunities to live a more open life? These are questions I see this project opening up.

I believe the power in this project lies in the potential to explore how programs and offices, touted as resources to promote equity, may actually be reinforcing existing hierarchies and merely creating avenues for conformity. Exploring how these mechanisms work can allow us to question who we are in relation to neoliberalism and our educational institutions and create new possibilities for being and doing that promote flourishing and freedom.

Notes on Writing a Poststructural Dissertation

As I write this dissertation, I wonder if what I have presented has been fair and ethical. Speaking to a friend who makes his living as a documentary photographer about the ethical considerations of my work, he offered his wisdom, “tell the truth.” In grappling with the construction of a poststructural dissertation, the concept of truth was always salient. I would tell myself that I am presenting *a possible* truth rather than the truth; this is the beauty of poststructural inquiry. As I think about the possible truths that I have told here, I am reminded of Spivak’s (1993) text, warning me that I am limited by what I cannot imagine; that we all are limited by what we cannot imagine. Neoliberalism, as it has seeped into our intellectual tapestries, has limited what we are able to imagine for ourselves, for our lives, for our identities, and for our ways of being. It takes a great intentionality to continually ask ourselves why we are how we are, why we do what we do, and who we are serving in these embodiments. I am reminded as I read these incredibly intelligent and astute students’ narratives that we all have agency, but that this agency is limited by dominant narratives that serve to limit our imaginations. We are teaching these narratives if we are not interrupting them.

The word that kept coming to me as I wrote was *sinister*. I struggled with this word each time I finished writing up an analysis. After attempts to understand how the institution constructed success, my instinct was to label it sinister and, yet, I was continually reminded of the good intentions of the leaders of this institution, of the people I know who operate in roles that directly perpetuate the processes that I instinctively labeled as sinister. If this is just one interpretation, is it fair, is it ethical to label any

action as anything? And although I understand that there certainly are disparate, adverse consequences for minoritized students, faculty, and staff, my instinct is to say, “this is just how it is. This is just what our political economy allows for.” My politics say otherwise, however. I tell myself after every time I read this work that these truths are rational and unjust. *Rational and unjust; The neoliberal conundrum* might have been a more apt name for this dissertation. One lesson I have taken away from this work is to continually ask, “For whom?”

“This makes sense.” “For whom?”

As I write this, I am skipping the very last annual meeting of my term as the chair of an alumni board at my alma mater. I cancelled my trip last minute because each time I return to campus, I see this work. I did not provide an excuse; what was I to say? “I am grappling with how this institution defines success and am not sure I want to support it?” That sounds ludicrous and from what I know of strategic conversations from top administrators on college campuses, this is not the type of conversation that is often had. I realized I was complicit in the constructions I highlight in this work and I needed to take a step back. For me, for now, this means disengagement. At some point, I know I will re-engage with a renewed sense of how to approach my work as an alumnus. There is potential to be a change agent. What a curious situation it is to work within and have been produced by that which you critique.

To end, I wish to return to a concept my pal Emma and I return to over and over in our interlocutions – flourishing. My parents’ continuing desire for my eternal happiness seems unrealistic and naïve. I have not had a happy life. I would not say my

life has been sad, either. I return to the Buddhist teaching that the only two things certain in this life are suffering and the end of suffering. Flourishing, however, seems to me a much better metric with which to measure one's life. What are your unique conditions for flourishing? Can these conditions be met? For participants in this study, success often came at the expense of their flourishing.

More difficult to directly show in any academic paper, however, is how students' abilities to *imagine* what their conditions for flourishing might be are constrained by their constant quests for success and their fear of that which is not successful. While in college, I knew I needed to be successful and that unrelenting drive came at the expense of my mental health, relationships, privacy, physical health, sobriety, identities, and my conditions for living. I could not imagine what failure looked like because I had constructed (or I took up the discursive construction of) a dichotomy where success meant one thing and failure meant a deep, dark hole to which death was preferred. The thing I like about flourishing as a concept, as Judith Butler (2009) discussed, is that it is concerned not only with the material conditions but also the psychic and ontological conditions that can create human flourishing. At a very basic level, social justice work should be concerned with each human's ability to *imagine* themselves and their lives free from societal or institutional standards and their ability to manifest their unique conditions for flourishing. Poststructuralism has allowed me to begin to understand how discourses (re)produced through higher education institutions can limit our imaginations. I no longer wish to be successful and I no longer wish to promote success; I wish to flourish and I intend to fight for this ability for myself and others.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocols

Student Protocol

1. Tell me about yourself and the identities that are important to you.
2. Tell me the story of how you came to be a student here.
 - a. What does being a student here mean for you and who you are?
3. What advice would you give to an incoming student who holds your identities?
4. Tell me about your involvement with the cultural center here?
 - a. Why did you initially decide to get involved with your cultural center?
5. What does the cultural center do?
 - a. How do you know this?
6. How do you think campus might be different if the cultural center didn't exist?
7. Do you think you belong here on campus?
 - a. Where do you think you belong and do not belong?
 - i. Why do you think this is the case?
8. What does the word "diversity" mean to you?
 - a. What does "diversity work" mean to you in the context of your institution?
 - b. Is this work important? Why?
9. Can you tell me about a time when you felt successful since coming to college?
 - a. What made you feel that way?
 - b. How do you know if you're successful?
 - c. What do you need to do to be successful?
 - d. How do you define "success"?

10. Can you tell me about somebody at this institution who you look up to or admire?
 - a. Do you think that person is successful? Why or why not?
11. What are your hopes and dreams for your future?
 - a. How will you know if you're successful?
12. What are your hopes and dreams for the future of the cultural center and the broader campus community?

Administrator Protocol

1. Tell me a little bit about yourself and the identities that are important to you.
2. Tell me the story about how you came to be in this position.
 - a. What does being an administrator at this institution mean for you and who you are?
3. Tell me about the cultural center and how it functions on campus.
4. What are the stated and unstated purposes of the cultural center here?
5. (How) do you partner with or interact with others on campus?
6. If you could change how the center functions, how would you do that and why?
7. How do you think campus might be different if the cultural center didn't exist?
8. Can you tell me about a student who you worked with who was successful?
 - a. How do you know if your students are successful?
 - b. How do you define "success"?
9. What does the word "diversity" mean to you?
 - a. What does "diversity work" mean to you in the context of your institution?
 - b. Is this work important? Why?

10. What are your hopes and dreams for your future?
11. What are your hopes and dreams for the future of the cultural center and the broader campus community?

Appendix B: Consent Form

Diversity Funnels: Cultural Centers as Sites of Subject Production

You are invited to be in a research study about students and multicultural programming. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a student who is a part of a minoritized population. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by: Garrett Hoffman, PhD candidate, Organizational Leadership, Policy, and Development, University of Minnesota

Background Information:

Higher education yields individual and collective benefits, to include higher earnings, increased civic engagement, and national economic growth. While social and democratic benefits are included in the expansive lists of positive outcomes, economic benefits, both for the individual as well as for society, remain at the forefront of national conversations about higher education's importance. However, gaps in postsecondary degree attainment and, therefore, related benefits between various demographic groups persist. The purpose of this study is to understand how the privileging of neoliberal constructions of "success" impacts minoritized students' lives and identities. Specifically, this study examines how neoliberal discourses of "successful" college students work through cultural centers to shape the subjectivities of minoritized students.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things: This study includes a commitment of one-to-two hours for an interview and subsequent digital communication wherein you will be asked to review transcripts and analysis for accuracy.

- Required is at least one in-person interview lasting 60 to 120 minutes. Contact information will be retained and follow-up interviews may be added to facilitate member-checking of initial analysis. Each interview will be audio recorded.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study

Risks: Risks of participation include the time taken for the interview and review of transcripts and analysis. In addition, the interview protocol includes questions regarding your identities, past experiences, and educational history. This may bring up mild discomfort for some participants. You may decline to answer any question without penalty or removal from the study.

Benefits: Benefits include access to a transcript of their story, and an opportunity to share experiences with the intent to improve cultural center praxis.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private; digital records will be kept on a password-protected computer accessible only to the researcher and paper records will be kept in a locked cabinet. Study data will be encrypted according to current University policy for protection of confidentiality. In any report I may publish, there will be no information that will make it possible to identify a participant. Pseudonyms will be assigned to the institution and to each participant and maintained throughout the study, dissertation writing, and subsequent publications. Audio recordings of interviews and observations will only be accessible to the researcher and will be transcribed and held for 365 days before being destroyed. Transcripts will be removed of all identifiers, will be labeled with pseudonyms, and protected digitally. The transcripts will be used for my dissertation and any following publications following graduation.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University of Minnesota. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is: Garrett Hoffman. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact me at hoffm873@umn.edu or 612-508-2217. Additionally, you may contact my advisor, Rebecca Ropers-Huilman, at 330C Wulling Hall, 612-624-1006, or ropers@umn.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), **you are encouraged** to contact the Research Subjects' Advocate Line, D528 Mayo, 420 Delaware St. Southeast, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455; (612) 625-1650.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature: _____ Date: _____