

Article

Identity-Conscious Scholar Formation: Shaping More Inclusive Academic Communities

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Abstract: As colleges and universities commit to creating and sustaining a more inclusive and equitable community, it is important to understand how the role of identity intersects with the existing processes of socialization and development. An identity-conscious practice is the process of realizing that who we are informs and impacts how we act, interact, and see the world around us. In particular, how identity should be considered as part of bidirectional socialization. Understanding socialization as bidirectional means that organizations can contribute to healthier communities that not only retain scholars but also engage with the identities and experiences of their students. This paper explores the ways in which doctoral students of color, in particular, Asian American and Pacific Islanders, experience the socialization and development processes through the lens of race; identifies the key organizational challenges; and provides recommendations for how colleges and universities can move towards a more inclusive and equitable community. This paper advances a framework for an identity-conscious model of the formation of scholars.

Keywords: Asian American; Pacific Islander; doctoral student socialization; scholar formation; graduate programs; identity-conscious practice



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1. Introduction

An identity-conscious practice is the “process of realizing that who we are informs and impacts how we act, interact, and see the world around us” [1] (p. 13). As colleges and universities commit to creating and sustaining a more inclusive and equitable community, it is important to understand how the role of identity intersects with the existing processes of socialization and development. Understanding these processes as bidirectional means that organizations can contribute to healthier communities that not only retain scholars but also provide structures to thrive. This paper explores the ways in which Asian American and Pacific Islander doctoral students experience the socialization and development processes through the lens of race; identifies the key organizational challenges; and provides recommendations for how colleges and universities can move towards a more inclusive and equitable community.

The Council of Graduate Schools [2,3] stated that the purpose of the doctoral program is to prepare a student “to become a scholar; that is, to discover, integrate and apply knowledge, as well as to communicate and disseminate it” (p. 1). As doctoral students engage in the academic environment, they are socialized to the skills they must demonstrate, the behaviors and social norms of the profession, and their own influence within the academic landscape as they negotiate their roles as emerging scholars, faculty, and practitioners [4,5]. However, socialization and development are not identity neutral [1], and the role of identity must inform and impact processes and structures within higher education. Overall, higher education should be concerned with the formation of doctoral students for four main reasons [6]: (1) doctoral student persistence contributes to talented leaders, innovative researchers and influential educators; (2) Doctoral student persistence contributes to students who feel successful and may pass on that success to others;

(3) Doctoral student persistence, retention, and satisfaction helps programs understand how to best support students; (4) Doctoral student retention can reduce costs associated with recruiting new doctoral students, investment in graduate assistantships, and contribute to departmental assistance. Situating this work within the landscape of identity and racialized experiences may contribute to more inclusive and equitable experiences for scholars.

Not all newcomers, however, have the same amount of influence in this role-negotiation process of developing a scholarly identity. Doctoral students of color and scholars of color, for example, have experienced socialization processes that have marginalized and devalued their identities, experiences, and interests [7,8]. Scholars of color have found themselves at a disadvantage because of organizational cultures that have marginalized teaching, research and service in and about communities of color [7–14]. Additionally, existing research has highlighted that doctoral students of color may experience socialization that is impacted by additional negative social and professional factors. These factors include a lack of representation in the professoriate [15–17]; a lack of access to effective mentoring and support [18–23]; a hostile campus climate [24–27]; and racial and ethnic bias [28,29]. These experiences complicate the socialization processes by often leaving scholars of color feeling discouraged and isolated [30–33]. If higher education is to be concerned with creating and sustaining more inclusive and equitable communities, it is important to consider the structural and environmental contributions to scholar formation as well as the ways in which identity is situated in these processes.

Purpose and Guiding Questions

Colleges and universities have expressed commitments to creating and sustaining more inclusive and equitable communities. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore how departments were, if at all, paying attention to intersections of race, racial identity, and social stereotypes and the impact on socialization and doctoral student development in higher education programs. To answer this question of how Asian American and Pacific Islander doctoral students experience formation as scholars in higher education programs, the following questions were used to narrow the focus of the study:

- What organizational factors of doctoral programs impact or inform the development of Asian American and Pacific Islander doctoral students in higher education programs?
- In what ways do higher education programs, including curriculum, pedagogy, peers, faculty advising, etc., shape the socialization of Asian American and Pacific Islander doctoral students?

2. Literature Review

2.1. The Role of Socialization

In higher education, the socialization process reflects institutional and academic culture and new members learn the organizational values and beliefs of the academic environment and community [34]. Though Tierney and Rhoads [34] and Bess and Dee [12] described socialization as a bidirectional process, earlier research describes socialization as a unilateral process, whereby a novice is prepared by the organization to perform a function or a role [35]. This unidirectional socialization means that students need to assimilate to the norms of the discipline and institution with little to no regard for identity.

While there is value in being socialized to the norms, values, and beliefs held by academic culture, this approach has been largely informed by Eurocentric standards, values, and academic influences. As the landscape of higher education is changing, there is an overwhelming need to respond to changes in demographic shifts, particularly as students of color are participating at higher numbers in colleges and universities and the professoriate has remained relatively homogeneous [36].

2.2. Clarifying Differences between Doctoral Student Development and Socialization

Though often addressed together, there are distinct differences between doctoral student development and doctoral student socialization. Socialization can best be expressed

as a social transmission of values through instruction, explanation, role modeling, and group reinforcement [37,38]. Development, on the other hand, refers to the “ways that a student grows, progresses, or increases his or her capabilities as a result of enrollment in an institution of higher education” [39] (p. 27). Taken simply, socialization is a process that seeks to align an individual to a group with given norms while development is a process by which an individual grows in one’s own capabilities.

2.3. Experiences of Doctoral Students of Color with Socialization and Development

While students play a role in their own development and formation, the role of the organization (i.e., colleges, universities, departments, and programs) also informs and impacts the experiences of students in ways that can lead to exclusion and marginalization. For example, existing organizational socialization processes that devalue and marginalize teaching, research, and service in communities of color can leave doctoral students feeling isolated and frustrated and, as a result, possibly questioning and doubting their academic work and abilities [7,10,11,17,20,40–44]. This stifling of scholarly endeavors, as described by Gildersleeve et al. [41] can be the result of an academic department that lacks scholarship focused on the experiences of people of color or one that holds little value in the experiences of people of color. The findings of Fries-Britt et al. [17] also illustrate the failure of institutions to uniformly value the research interests of faculty of color who engage in scholarship on communities of color, stating that such research is often dismissed as “self-serving” [45,46].

Findings from existing studies suggest that doctoral students of color must endure a socialization process that has the potential to push them out of doctoral education [20,47,48]. This pushing out inhibits student progress toward doctoral degrees and takes shape in the form of failed and insufficient advising and mentoring relationships with faculty, academic and personal invalidation, the lack of departmental and institutional support, and alienation and isolation [41,49,50]. Taken together, these influences impact doctoral student development and a scholar’s sense of belonging in a department or academic field. Supporting this research are data that show that, historically, attrition from doctoral programs has been consistently higher among students from underrepresented racial minority groups [51]. Further understanding the intersections and the impact of these factors can provide higher education professionals with the tools for supporting and sustaining an increasingly diverse faculty as well as a more inclusive and equitable college and university community.

2.4. Asian American and Pacific Islander Doctoral Students in Higher Education

Because this study is rooted in the experiences of Asian American and Pacific Islander doctoral students, the following section will briefly review the literature on this population to contextualize how race informs and impacts socialization and development.

Interactions that cause race-related stress are often consequences of racialized interactions based on racial socialization experiences, racial identity, personal experiences, individual characteristics, and situational characteristics [48] (p. 227). Race-related stress and race-related trauma manifest themselves as emotional, physical, and psychological discomfort and pain, further amplifying existing experiences of isolation and marginalization and impacting the academic pipeline if doctoral students of color choose to forgo academia.

Though research seeks to dismantle the existing stereotypes of the model minority myth [52]—a problematic stereotype that perpetuates beliefs that Asian Americans are the same regardless of diverse ethnic backgrounds, that Asian Americans are not racial and ethnic minorities, that Asian Americans do not encounter challenges because of their race, that Asian Americans do not need or seek resources and support, and that college and degree completion are equivalent to success—approaches to identity-conscious socialization of Asian American and Pacific Islander doctoral students has not been widely practiced. Existing research has shown that Asian American and Pacific Islander doctoral students may not experience a supportive environment, adequate mentoring, or a sense

of inclusion [48,53,54]. Wasburn-Moses [54] found that Asian American doctoral students reported lower levels of satisfaction with their interactions with faculty than students from other racial groups and reported more feelings of dissatisfaction. This finding is significant, as connections with faculty have been shown to impact socialization and role continuance.

The existing literature has supported the need for inquiry into Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders who have chosen to enter the field of higher education [55,56]. In this racialized landscape, Asian American and Pacific Islander doctoral students in higher education have stated they experience marginalization in the classroom, lack Asian American and Pacific Islander role models on the faculty, are excluded from the dominant literature and texts foundational to higher education, are not represented in scholarly journals, are too often aggregated into a monolithic experience, and have experienced oppressive, microaggressive comments about the lack of value of Asian American and Pacific Islander research. It is in this context that the need for an identity-conscious framework for scholar formation is situated given that socialization and development are not identity-neutral processes yet have been treated in the literature as such.

This study offers an opportunity to hear directly from Asian American and Pacific Islander doctoral students who come from programs with a commitment to their development as Asian American and Pacific Islander scholars as well as doctoral students who experience isolation and lack of affirmation in their identities as Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

Finally, this study is relevant to professors in higher education who seek to be more inclusive of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders as well as Asian American and Pacific Islander issues in their curriculum and pedagogy, preparing future scholars and practitioners in higher education to be more culturally responsive and culturally inclusive, and positively impact the formation of scholars.

3. Methodology

3.1. Conceptual Framework

Through a critique of existing socialization theories, Antony [57] stated that “socialization should instill an awareness of the field’s values and norms without expecting a student to accept those values and norms as one’s own; that there is more than one method for socializing graduate students; and that socialization should enhance and encourage intellectual individuality” (p. 373). This is important because studies have demonstrated that some graduate students of color have described their graduate school experiences as “oppressive and dehumanizing” [20,58]. Based on this approach of uncovering the ways in which approaches to socialization and development must be more comprehensive to understand the formation of Asian American and Pacific Islander doctoral students, this study was informed by the theories and concepts of the socialization of graduate students [8], organizational socialization [42,59,60], Asian American racial identity development [61–63], and Asian Critical Race Theory [64].

Using a CRT framework, Buenavista et al. [65] asserted that the generalization of Asian Americans is a result of a racial agenda that maintains the dominant status of Whites in the United States and oppresses Asian American ideas, experiences, and contributions. The emerging framework of AsianCrit has been used to apply critical race frameworks to the analysis of Asian American experiences to better understand the ways in which racial oppression and subordination have impacted Asian American communities and identities. As race is socially constructed, racism occurs at micro- and macro- levels [47], and the interconnected tenets of AsianCrit provide a framework for scholars to examine both the past and present marginalization of Asian Americans in higher education.

This conceptual framework is a starting point for analyzing emergent themes related to these factors, and a final model of Identity-Conscious Scholar Formation has been created based on the findings of this study to better understand the impact of race, socialization, and development.

Qualitative methodology also deepens our understanding of Asian American and Pacific Islander experiences that have been structurally and programmatically excluded from literature and practices in higher education doctoral programs. Because the number of Asian American and Pacific Islander doctoral students in higher education programs is small, the field lacks an understanding of the experiences within both the broader racial group and more specifically within the diverse ethnic groups that make up Asian America. A qualitative methodology provides an avenue for Asian American and Pacific Islander doctoral students to tell their own stories and experiences with socialization that is more nuanced than widely accepted models have represented.

3.2. Participants

Asian Americans come from diverse ethnic, cultural, linguistic, religious, social, and political backgrounds. Asian American ethnic groups have diverse immigrant histories and relationships to and with the United States, including but not limited to political asylum, colonization, government-sanctioned internment, exclusion, and perceived elevated social status. Though these experiences vastly differ between ethnic groups, Asian Americans are faced with stereotypes that treat these communities as monolithic. Therefore, this study was designed to amplify the ways in which Asian American and Pacific Islander doctoral students experience both similarities and differences in the formation of their scholar identities. Developing a better understanding of their persistence strategies, their methods of coping, their choices to adopt or to resist socialization that affirms or denies their identities, and their choices to either continue in their roles with the faculty or to choose alternate career paths would create a more robust and nuanced understanding of how to support Asian American and Pacific Islander doctoral students in higher education programs.

The final sample included twenty-two Asian American and Pacific Islander doctoral students in fifteen different programs of higher education representing both the PhD and EdD degrees. Phase I ($n = 7$) is defined as the stage beginning with enrollment in a doctoral program to engaging in coursework. Phase II ($n = 12$) is defined as the stage where a doctoral student has completed a considerable amount of coursework to prepare for comprehensive exams and/or qualifying proposals. Phase III ($n = 3$) is defined as beginning with the independent research phase to graduation with an earned doctorate. It was important to have representation across the phases, as socialization and development are ongoing processes, and participants were able to comment on these experiences at these stages. All students in the study were enrolled in programs that focused on teaching and leading in higher education (e.g., higher education, leadership in higher education, leadership studies).

Ethnically, the students were asked to self-identify and provided the following ethnic categories: Multiracial Japanese-White (1); Taiwanese American (3); Khmer (1); P/Filipino American (5); Vietnamese American (3); Multiracial Filipino-White (1); Indian American (2); Multiracial Chinese-White (1); Cambodian American (1); Chinese (3); and Samoan (1). Given that some ethnic categories were represented by a single number of participants, this sampling further supports the use of narrative inquiry as it is a methodological tradition in which the single story has meaning and context. It was important to consider the ethnic context of racial identity, development, and socialization as Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are often treated as a monolithic category; however, their experiences with development and socialization were often impacted by their ethnic histories, identities, and experiences. The differences in ethnic identity experiences informed aspects of the external, racialized concepts explored within the model.

3.3. Interview Content and Timing

Through in-depth narrative inquiry, two semi-structured interviews of approximately 60 min were conducted with each participant—one in the spring semester and one in the fall semester. The first interview included questions designed to gain an understanding of the participant's socialization to education and decisions to apply to, and enroll, in a

doctoral program in higher education. The second interview captured impressions of and experiences with socialization as a doctoral student from an organizational lens and their current experiences within their programs, courses, and in their research. These questions focused on doctoral student socialization; experiences in graduate school including advising, mentoring, and curricular experiences; environmental experiences such as social group and community; socialization to graduate school; and the role and purpose of graduate school. All interviews were conducted via video interviewing and were recorded. Interviews were then transcribed and coded for meaning. Additional member checking was conducted for participants to give feedback on the findings.

4. Results

4.1. Identity-Conscious Model of Scholar Formation

Doctoral student development and doctoral student socialization are often discussed as one process; however, there are distinct differences between these two concepts, and they should be addressed as such. Doctoral student development, when considered as part of the larger literature on student development, refers to a growth process in which the individual becomes increasingly able to integrate and act on many different experiences and influences, incorporating intellectual, cognitive, social, and moral development, along with moral reasoning. Doctoral student socialization refers to the process through which new members learn the values, norms, knowledge, beliefs, and the interpersonal and other skills that facilitate role performance and further group goals. However, given the common landscape, in which racism is endemic, the socialization and development of Asian American and Pacific Islander doctoral students in higher education programs were highly influenced by experiences with race and racism. Therefore, there was a distinct interaction between socialization, development, and race. Previous models related to doctoral student socialization and doctoral student development did not include the experiences of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

This study demonstrates the interconnectedness of socialization and development given the common landscape of a racialized context. Based on the findings from this study, the “identity-conscious model of scholar formation” framework was developed (Figure 1) to contextualize the conditions through which Asian American and Pacific Islander doctoral students in higher education programs shaped their identities as scholars. While previous models only discuss socialization and development, this model provides a deeper context of the experiences of racism, family influences, educational influences, social experiences, and community that were important to Asian American and Pacific Islander scholar formation.

Each aspect of scholar formation—racial identity, doctoral student development, and doctoral student socialization—which, until now, has been discussed in the literature as a separate component, is discussed as a comprehensive bidirectional process; yet, as evidenced in this study’s findings, these three components influence and interact with each other more distinctly than previous models have demonstrated. These three bidirectional components are additionally framed within an understanding that higher education and education departments are racialized environments where racism is endemic in the lived experiences of people of color. Within the racialized environment of higher education and education departments, themes such as racialized stereotypes, social experiences, community, family influences, and the influence of education served as additional identity-conscious components in the formation of Asian American and Pacific Islander scholars.

4.1.1. Racial Identity as Bidirectional

Racial identity describes a person’s identification with membership in a racial group, and this identification is largely influenced by socialization around race [66]. As Kim [63] noted, “the saliency of a person’s ethnic and racial identity may also vary depending on the social context and individuals’ stage of identity development” (p. 140). The findings from this study suggest Asian American and Pacific Islander doctoral students who engaged in coursework and a curriculum that affirmed Asian American and Pacific Islander identity

contributed to persistence in doctoral studies. However, in the current educational climate, most courses that are provided in programs and departments tend to center a Eurocentric curriculum that has erased or made invisible stories and history of Asian Americans in education. Henry, a resident of California, helped to shed light on a myth that being in a racially diverse state such as California, and being in proximity to Asian American communities, meant there was a commitment to Asian American identities: “Yeah, but it’s all so different because I’m in California. The diversity is here, you have a bunch of people who do look like you and yet none of us are learning about who we are. We’re still learning Western Civilization, we’re still learning the traditional cannon. We’re not visible in any of those types of literatures”.

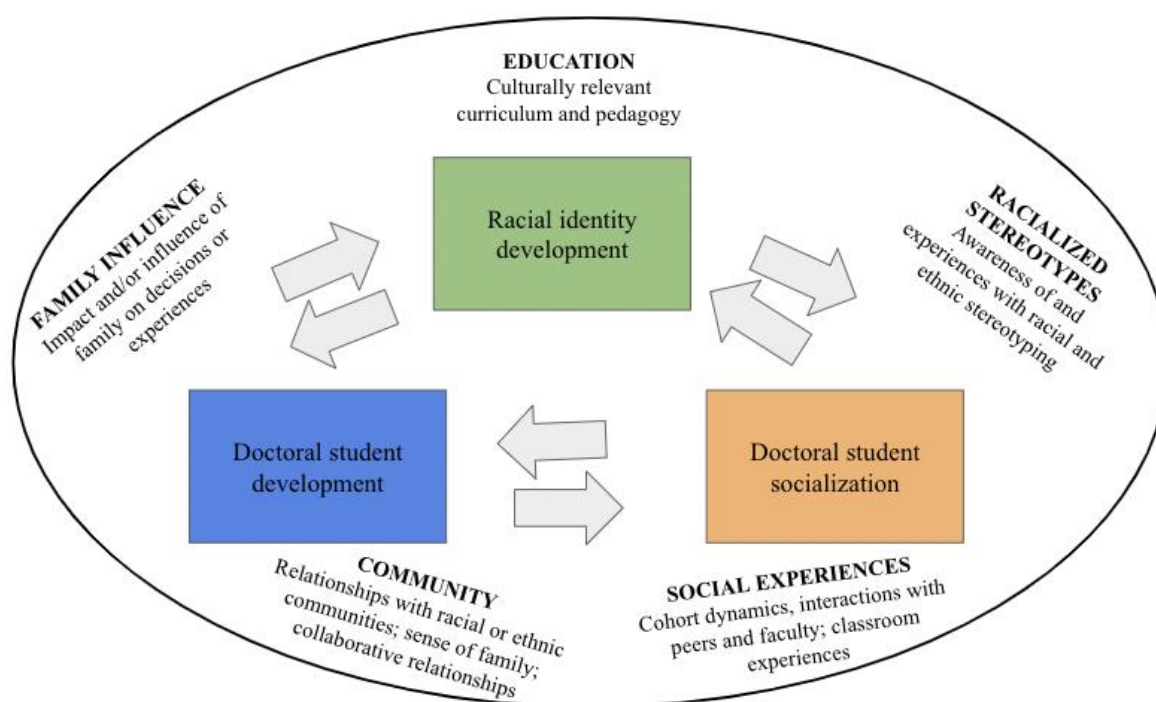


Figure 1. Identity-conscious model of the formation of scholars.

Participants who did not engage in Asian American or ethnic studies and whose coursework was largely centered around whiteness prior to doctoral studies articulated that they felt more conflicted about their racial and racialized identities and lacked meaningful context for how to engage in scholarship, once they arrived in their doctoral programs, that related to their identities. Some participants were able to find mentors or faculty who affirmed their identities and their interests. For example, Kira, a Pacific Islander doctoral student, was very active in her undergraduate institution with Pacific Islander student groups as well as with ethnic studies. Kira stated, “My background in Asian American studies, I think, informed a lot of how I navigated this doctoral process. I’d been exposed to things like critical race theory, critical theory, and critical pedagogy. I consider myself an ethnic studies scholar. I always look through the lens of race”. Through these opportunities, doctoral students engaged in spaces that contributed to their growth and racial identity development. The opportunity to engage in meaningful experiences that affirmed racial identity contributed to a more confident research agenda for those studying Asian American and Pacific Islander issues, provided greater resources, and connected students to mentors who guided them through racialized experiences during their doctoral studies. Kira continued, “I think going to the undergraduate institution that I went to and being a part of the Pacific Islander student group and inhabiting a Pacific Islander identity was important to me. I think if I hadn’t gone to that institution, I probably would have not really been involved at all. I probably wouldn’t have had a desire to go give back to my

community or even understand that was there for me to do.” Exposure to opportunities to explore and develop a healthy racialized identity rooted in Asian American and Pacific Islander communities impacted how different students approached their work as doctoral students, how they navigated research, and how they accessed support systems in and outside of their programs.

4.1.2. Doctoral Student Development as Bidirectional

As doctoral student development is defined as cognitive, interpersonal, moral, and professional growth, these findings indicate that race and socialization are both impacted by and intersect with doctoral student development. As evidenced in this study, students who were learning, working, and researching in culturally responsive and reflexive environments felt a greater sense of agency in their doctoral studies.

This growth and development served in a bidirectional relationship with socialization. Through the socialization process, students learned about the roles of the profession and the expectations of them as scholars in an identity-affirming manner, exposing and connecting students to other Asian American and Pacific Islander mentors, scholars, and peers who provide affirmation and validation about their experiences as doctoral students. Students learned a more nuanced approach to the norms, values, and behaviors of the profession through the lens of race and better understood how their positionalities informed and impacted socialization. Sophea, a Cambodian American woman, noted that some of the internalized racism she carried with her as a doctoral student informed and impacted her development: “I’m at a point where I’m trying to deal with all the internalized racism that I developed for the community. In some ways it still affects how I engage with the community now. Me, being a doctoral student now, I’ve always considered myself in the margins, because I’m Cambodian but I was never raised within the community, so I feel uncomfortable when I’m around the community, even though I try and want to be a part of this space, but because my identity development was outside of that space, I don’t have that same connection that other people might have.”

The combination of faculty dynamics and student underrepresentation also played a role in doctoral student development, the internal processes of growth. Patrick noted having to navigate these challenges and make decisions about what he was willing to speak up about and what he felt he could not risk: “The combination of power dynamics of faculty coupled with the underrepresentation within the classroom contributed to feelings of frustration, particularly around wanting to speak up and address the microaggressions but also acknowledging the power that faculty, advisors, and possible dissertation chairs might create.” As Patrick stated: “I remember going back and forth, because it’s like you really want to represent. You really want to call out and explain this if it’s going on, and faculty need to kind of rethink this and rework it, but then again, they’re also your faculty. They’re going to be, potentially, your advisor and they’re going to be on your committee, whatever, so how do you do it? How do you walk that fine line? It’s an impossible line to walk.” This tension impacted Patrick’s understanding of himself as a doctoral student and his own development, lack of confidence, and questioning his agency to advocate for his needs. Throughout his program, he questioned whether he had the right to speak up and how he engaged with his faculty and classmates.

It is important that programs pay attention to the role of racial identity and development in the formation of scholars as these can impact how a doctoral student feels in the program, their belief in themselves as scholars, and the pursuit of an affirming research agenda. While previous experiences may have invalidated their interests in studying or engaging with Asian American and Pacific Islander issues due to the overwhelming impact of White values and norms of the academy, some students had experiences with culturally engaging approaches to doctoral student development that contributed to greater confidence in their abilities and interests. For David, that validation came in the form of a supportive faculty presence. David stated, “Probably, our program’s different, just because we have so many faculty of color. I would say that within our program, it’s probably a little

bit easier, just because most of our faculty come from critical epistemological backgrounds. They brought us in as people of color, and pretty much everyone has some kind of minoritized identity. I think for those who wanted to engage in research, those opportunities were there. Also, because our faculty had a wide range of identities, folks who identified with those groups, that wanted to do that work, were more easily able to engage in those areas. I have faculty who identify as Black, as Asian American. I have faculty who identify as Latino. Faculty who identify as gay. There are all these identities on our faculty where you can plug yourself in where you feel appropriate. It felt like, for the most part, if you wanted to get engaged in research on a particular topic, and the faculty were doing that work, that they would be open to entering those spaces with you.” Because of the diversity and engagement in David’s program, David’s development as a doctoral student built his confidence, provided him opportunities to explore different areas of research, and affirmed his identity and choices throughout the program.

4.1.3. Doctoral Student Socialization as Bidirectional

To the extent that socialization is a social transmission of values through instruction, explanation, role modeling, and group reinforcement [38,67] identity-conscious scholar formation occurs when curriculum, culture, and environment also influence socialization. An identity-conscious environment also allows for the student to influence the environment in the form of influencing curriculum, creating inclusive spaces for socializing and community building, and affirming identity-conscious research agendas. While they are learning about the norms, beliefs, and behaviors of the academy, bidirectional socialization means that part of scholar formation is the ability for doctoral students to be able to influence the norms, beliefs, and behaviors in culturally relevant ways. For example, as Asian American and Pacific Islander scholars develop in racially contextual ways, they influence the ways in which the department engages in scholarship, research, and community building. Asian American and Pacific Islander doctoral students create peer networks which have strengthened connections for other Asian American and Pacific Islander scholars to share experiences, research, and resources. Together, they begin to shape a new understanding of what it means to be a part of the academy from a more racially conscious perspective.

For Vinny, one of the participants in the study, he mentioned how important it was to have a mentor who specifically helped him be socialized to the field and who encouraged him to continue that socialization for others: “Glen’s is one of my mentors. I always asked him, ‘What can do to repay you for the time that you’ve given me?’ He said, ‘The only thing you need to do to repay me is to spend as much time with someone else as I’ve spent with you.’ So, I did. Another Asian American student was the beneficiary of that. He was the first person I met who was looking for an Asian American mentor. I talked to him on a weekly basis almost either by email or Google Hangout or by text, checking in on him, just trying to be a mentor to him and walking through some things. That’s one of the ways that I do it.” Olivia, a participant who identifies as Filipina, stated, “I had a supervisor who was Asian American. He would be very direct, and we would talk about what it means for me to be an Asian American woman. How’s that influencing my experience in the field? He would ask those questions and challenge and push me. I think that was one of the first times I started to really look at the intersections of being Asian American and being a woman. Particularly how I didn’t fit a stereotype that maybe people were expecting. Like I wasn’t quiet or passive. You know, those awful stereotypes? You know, what it means to be an Asian American woman and the ways in which that influenced how people perceived me? Those are the conversations my supervisor was having with me.”

Bidirectional socialization does not occur in isolation. For doctoral students to experience positive formation as scholars, they must have agency to impact the field. For Asian American and Pacific Islander doctoral students, this means influencing the ways in which Asian American and Pacific Islander are represented in the literature, curriculum, class discussions, teaching practices, opportunities for mentoring, and engagement in research that affirms their identities. Faculty and program directors can serve as barriers to bidirectional

socialization if they refuse to acknowledge and implement culturally relevant practices in their programs. The two examples of Vinny and Olivia demonstrate how faculty and administrators in the program can have a positive effect on students who, in turn, influence the program and/or the experiences of others.

4.2. Environmental Factors That Influence Identity, Socialization, and Development

The following section emphasizes the role of the colleges, universities, and departments in creating and sustaining a more inclusive and equitable environment. In this section, the research highlights ways in which these constituents might shape a more identity-conscious community.

While the purpose of this study was to explore the interaction of identity, socialization, and development, the findings indicate that Asian American and Pacific Islander doctoral students experienced five additional factors that influenced their formation as scholars: racialized stereotypes, social experiences, community, family influences, and the influence of education. These findings created an additional and unexpected context for how scholars formed an academic identity in a cultural context. In this section, colleges and universities can find key recommendations for practice and implementation that can help shape and sustain more inclusive and equitable environments in higher education that support identity-conscious scholar formation.

4.2.1. Impact of Racialized Stereotypes on Identity-Conscious Scholar Formation

If the goal is to move towards a more inclusive and equitable college and university environment, it is critical that individuals, programs, and departments responsible for socialization processes understand the impact of race, racism, and racialized stereotyping that occur for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. In particular, it is important to note how development, socialization, and identity formation occur in the context of the program and department.

For Asian American participants in this study, the pervasive model minority myth impacted the ways in which others treated them. Asian Americans have been largely grouped into a single, monolithic stereotype. Doctoral students described the impact of the model minority myth and other racialized stereotypes as impacting their sense of belonging, their belief in advancing a research agenda focused on AAPI populations, and their ability to access scholars who could serve as mentors. Some shared, for example, that faculty advisors did not see the relevance of studying Asian American and Pacific Islander issues, some participants experienced race related micro- and macroaggressions from faculty, and some encountered faculty who were not able or willing to introduce them to Asian American and Pacific Islander mentors or support networks. For Olivia, however, having Asian American representation in her program, along with a well-known faculty member who researches Asian American issues, has been incredibly helpful to her formation as a scholar: "You know what? I think it's really cool that we have so many Asian Americans in our program. I mean we kind of joke about it that there is this Asian American group of people. In the past five cohorts there have been just strong representation. Then, we have a faculty member who has research teams that she's created around either challenging the model minority myth and the way it's used in research or looking at lawsuits and being part of that history project. So, all of this is really awesome for me as an Asian American as well a doctoral student. I feel like in my doctoral program it had been pretty present both around faculty interest and with other doctoral students." Melissa also experienced positive relationships with a faculty member who supported her pursuit of a research agenda focused on Asian Americans. Melissa stated, "I think I've gained a lot of sense of empowerment and a stronger sense of my own identity as an Asian American woman and as a doctoral student researcher. I think a large amount of that comes from the fact that I am working with a strong, Asian American faculty member. She's served as a mentor and is my instructor this semester. She is also my research assistant group supervisor. All that exposure to her own research and her own perspective and views has definitely, I

think, racialized my experience in a really positive way. I am also interested in looking at research that has to do with Asian Americans and Asian American communities and Asian American positionality. “Addressing the impact of racialized stereotypes, that include the model minority myth, is important in creating a more inclusive context for doctoral students to seek out research, scholarship, and practice that aligns with their interests and needs. Not addressing the impact of racialized stereotypes can serve as a barrier for doctoral students to accessing relevant resources, opportunities, and mentoring.

4.2.2. Impact of Social Experiences on Identity-Conscious Scholar Formation

Colleges, universities, departments, classrooms, and meetings are key spaces where social experiences occur. Participants in the study often described experiences of being the only, if not one of few, Asian American and Pacific Islander doctoral students in their program or cohort. This isolation led to a lack of culturally affirming activities within their programs and departments, experiences with tokenism, and an overall isolation from cultural contexts. Participants shared that, in predominantly white cohorts, the social activities often took place in spaces where there were no other people of color, and this contributed to discomfort. Some participants began to withdraw from social experiences with classmates because they often felt unsafe or unwelcome in social spaces that were predominantly white or unwelcoming to people of color. An identity-conscious approach to scholar formation requires the department, program, faculty, and peers to identify ways in which students of color may be marginalized or isolated from the social experiences are important to building networks of support. As organizations pay attention to the formation of scholars, it is important to examine and prepare for how experiences related to race and identity might inform and impact socialization. For example, for Jessica, the cohort model was important but also a source of community stress for her: “My cohort is very diverse. I get along with my cohort members. Well, actually, I heard that some of my cohort members are talking about me. Their feelings are a little bit hurt because I don’t participate in a lot of their activities. Pretty much, they spend time drinking, eating pizza, hanging out, and watching football games. But, I don’t like any sports and I don’t like loud rowdy spaces with drunk people. I don’t drink because I’m a practicing Buddhist. There has been some misunderstanding that people think that I don’t want to hang out with them as people. So, I show my face here and there sometimes at the appropriate places, but I don’t try to force myself to go to places that make me uncomfortable”. Sophea, a Cambodian American woman, noted that being one of the only Asian Americans in the program can be challenging as people have set ideas about who she is: “I’m very aware of being the only one. My program in the college is the most diverse part of campus, the higher education department and the College of Education. We’ve got a lot of diversity, however, right now I am the only Asian woman, and not only that, I’m the only Cambodian. It’s been interesting to kind of recognize that when I walk into a room, people have already these set, well I’m assuming, people already have these set ideas about who I am, and what I am, and why I’m here. I was even asked, in a class where we were discussing critical race, ‘What kind of Asian are you?’” Social support, particularly in the form of cohort development, can influence sense of belonging for doctoral students. A lack of intention related to social gatherings, cohort development, and programs can lead to isolation and feelings of exclusion. Because informal networks of support can also be spaces where doctoral students learn about opportunities or build important connections with one another, social experiences that are not rooted in identity-conscious practice have the potential of leaving out cohort members, classmates, and program participants.

4.2.3. Impact of Community on Identity-Conscious Scholar Formation

For individuals, faculty, and departments, it is important to understand the role of community in identity-conscious scholar formation. For some students, community has been a vital way to persist in doctoral studies; for others, finding and building community is an ongoing process. For still others, community is only found on online spaces due to

geographic or program isolation. It is important for individuals responsible for effective socialization to understand how a doctoral student perceives community and what that student needs to persist.

While some participants found community in their doctoral programs, others had to find connection outside of their cohorts, programs, and institutions. For Sabina, a Desi doctoral student who feels isolated from faculty and students who identify as Asian American, social media has been her primary source of support. Social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter, have given her access to Asian American mentors, faculty, and students who help her feel connected. While she has not participated directly in these groups, Sabina noted that her passive following of posts and comments has affirmed some of the experiences and feelings she has had as a doctoral student: “One of the most helpful things was that a friend added me to the Asian Pacific American Network through ACPA, and another Facebook group for Desi Americans. I don’t know these people in the groups because I haven’t been to any of the conferences yet. But I see these Facebook posts, and, well that’s always... that’s been very affirming. I think that that’s the best way to describe it. That it exists, it’s just fabulous to me. I really enjoy it even if I don’t know many here.” Doctoral students can make important connections to communities through online platforms, conferencing, or networks focused on support. It is important that programs and departments provide opportunities and resources for doctoral students to build these connections, particularly if students are experiencing isolation or distance from communities that may reflect and affirm their identities.

4.2.4. Impact of Family Influence on Identity-Conscious Scholar Formation

It is important that the impact and influence of family and family-like networks be considered in identity-conscious scholar formation. While there are variations in the extent of impact and influence, overall, the Asian American and Pacific Islander participants noted that family and family influences were important in their decision-making processes to pursue doctoral education. Individuals responsible for doctoral student socialization should be aware of the impact and influence of family or family-like networks on doctoral students and provide opportunities for support in the process of scholar formation. This influence, for some participants, informed which types of graduate schools they applied to and their geographic proximity to family. Participants who had strong ties to family responsibility often chose institutions that were closer to home, allowing access to their families if they needed to come home (e.g., translation services, duties as the oldest child, multi-generational homes that rely on all caregivers). For example, Gavin had family responsibilities that kept him closer to home for his doctoral studies: “I wanted to build my network in California. I have family here. I have family obligations here. There are certain things that, I feel like if I were to move out, would have been a lot harder for my overall family. Being the first born, being the oldest son, things like that, played not a substantial role in my decision, but it played a role in my decision at that time. I ended up choosing (a school in California) because of this”. While it is true that not all Asian American and Pacific Islanders hold a single-approach to family and family-like networks, the participants in this study emphasized the role that family and family-like networks played in their decision-making process. Programs and departments may want to consider the ways in which these influences may inform and impact a scholar’s development and socialization to the field and program.

4.2.5. Impact of Education for Identity-Conscious Scholar Formation

To foster identity-conscious scholar formation, doctoral courses should address issues of educational disparity, diversity, equity, and inclusion that include Asian American and Pacific Islander experiences. While there are Asian American and Pacific Islanders who have achieved success, and those stories should also be told, there are Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders who face institutional and organizational barriers to success. These nuances must take social, political, and environmental issues into account. By increasing

opportunity for, knowledge of, and experience with different racial and ethnic groups, programs can positively impact the attitudes of students, who have not been given opportunities to study, learn, and discuss their histories. To do so may also require faculty to deepen their understanding of the complexity of the Asian American and Pacific Islander racial group, including literature that disaggregates Asian American and Pacific Islander groups and discusses relevant issues within the community. Henry shared that while his faculty have not always included content related to Asian Americans, he sees that they are trying. The lack of inclusion of Asian Americans in his doctoral classes signaled to him that his experience was outside of the norm. However, Henry's professors have slowly incorporated more Asian American articles and readings. Henry shared the following: "I see myself reflected in some of my classes, but not all. In most of the literature that is most recent, I see a little bit more of myself. But I've been critiquing about that with our faculty, saying, 'I don't see myself in any of this, and in fact, you're completely making me feel like the model minority again in a lot of these situations.' It just so happens that some of last night's readings included Asian Americans".

While Henry may see this bidirectional socialization process—where he is influencing the types of readings and approaches in his program—not all the participants were in programs that were receptive to changing and including Asian American and Pacific Islander content. This lack of representation, critical content, and willingness to include Asian American and Pacific Islander issues can have an impact on the experiences of AAPI students who may already experience invisibility and erasure in the educational discourse. Jessica shared, "I get frustrated when my cohort doesn't understand why we need to talk about Asian Americans in our curriculum. They have said to me that there's no reason why we must talk about Asians in this class because they're not an oppressed group. Now, I'm okay with regulating my facial expressions but not my body heat. When I get angry, I just get so hot and red, and my friend was like, 'Jessica your face is so red.' I was like, 'It's because I'm furious, I'm furious!' In class, I'm like, are we going to play the oppression Olympics now? In the scale of oppression Olympics, the spectrum was only Black and white and that was it. I was like, you just forgot Asians, Southeast Asians, Latinos, Native Americans, you just forgot everyone." Including content, research, discourse, and critical frameworks related to Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders is not only important to AAPI students but also complicates the scholarship and practice of students who lack a context for the issues and experiences of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in education. Because most k-12 and undergraduate courses, unless taken in Ethnic Studies or an Asian American focused major, exclude the histories and realities of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, many doctoral students are coming to the programs without a critical understanding of the community. To include these issues in doctoral studies means that future scholars, researchers, and leaders can be more inclusive in their own practices which reflect a changing landscape of higher education.

5. Recommendations for an Identity-Conscious Practice

As colleges and universities seek to sustain and engage with more inclusive and equitable practices, it is important to amplify the voices of participants in this study to advocate for meaningful structural change. By addressing the factors contributing to scholar formation, this study has demonstrated that students experience doctoral education in a racialized climate, one that has kept their experiences in the margins of our own curriculum and research in higher education. By implementing an identity-conscious framework for scholar formation, colleges, universities, and departments can create sustainable structures to support, retain, and encourage scholars to thrive in the academy. The voices and critical narratives of Asian American and Pacific Islander doctoral students have shown us that they experience doctoral education in a racialized climate, one that has kept their experiences in the margins of our own curriculum and research in higher education. While our programs must be responsible to our universities, our financial stewardship, and to the overall expectations of the field, we are also responsible to our students. Because the

participants in this study were all doctoral students who were personally and professionally invested in improving conditions in doctoral studies, they provided helpful suggestions related to curriculum, advising, research, and community which include:

- Some Asian American and Pacific Islander doctoral students who are interested in studying underrepresented Asian American and Pacific Islander ethnic groups may find that there is not a depth and breadth of existing research available on the topic. Many of the participants relied on the support of their faculty members and advisors before continuing to pursue these topics. They identified that pursuing research related to underrepresented groups was culturally affirming for them, and participants noted differences in how faculty responded to their individual desires to pursue this research area.
- Provide opportunities for Asian American and Pacific Islander doctoral students to discuss community and the impact of community. For some Asian American and Pacific Islander doctoral students, the tension between being rooted in community and the ways in which a doctorate moves one away from community is a unique experience. Provide opportunities for students to explore what this might mean, if anything, for them.
- Connect Asian American and Pacific Islander doctoral students in your program with other Asian American and Pacific Islander faculty, students, and peers in other programs. Participants in the study articulated that it was important for them to know that there were other Asian American and Pacific Islander doctoral students in the field. These connections might also be within Ethnic Studies departments or with Asian American and Pacific Islander faculty outside of the department.
- While same-race mentoring does not, in and of itself, assure fit, it is important that Asian American and Pacific Islander doctoral students have access to advisors and mentors who are culturally responsive and inclusive of Asian American and Pacific Islander identities. This includes understanding why research in Asian American and Pacific Islander communities is important and relevant to the examination of higher education as a whole.
- Include Asian American and Pacific Islander scholarship in the general content of curriculum. As Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are often left out of general research involving diversity, equity, and inclusion, it is important for faculty to include readings and discussion that include Asian American and Pacific Islander issues. This also requires faculty to deepen their understanding of the complexity of the Asian American and Pacific Islander racial group, including literature that disaggregates Asian American and Pacific Islander groups and makes relevant issues within the community.

6. Future Research and Conclusions

In addition to exploring the socialization of individuals to education, this study explored the organizational barriers Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders face in pursuing degrees or positions in education and environmental conditions in which Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders might engage in affirming racial identity. Considered individually, doctoral student socialization, doctoral student development, and even student development theories have failed to consider the role of race and racialized environments on the formation of scholars. As Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are also subjected to racialized environments in which their identities are informed by existing problematic stereotypes such as the model minority myth, it is important to consider an interactional model between and among processes of socialization, student development, and racial identity development with this racialized climate in mind.

As a result of this study, a model of identity-conscious scholar formation was developed for colleges, universities, and departments to create a more engaging and sustaining environment for students. Previous research approached development and socialization as two distinct features and did not take note of the ways in which identity informed

and impacted student experience. This study, however, provided an identity-conscious model of scholar formation which integrated these three important processes against a backdrop of racialized contexts. Because this study was based on the lived experiences of Asian American and Pacific Islander doctoral students, future research is needed to understand whether this model may also support the identity-conscious scholar formation of other racialized groups that have experienced socialization and development in a White, hegemonic framework where racism is endemic.

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