

Establishing Researcher Identity as an Emerging Scholar
Experiences of Doctoral Students Writing for Scholarly Publication

by

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ABSTRACT

Becoming a researcher not only involves the acts of contributing to the body of knowledge in a field, but it also involves constructing the image or identity of a researcher. Doctoral students who aim for positions within academia upon graduation see doctoral education as a phase where they develop their research skills and prepare for publication. An existing body of literature in the field of writing has explored the publishing practices of graduate students, with extensive attention given to the role of external factors such as the adviser/advisee relationships, resource access, issues of authority, and so on. However, less attention has been given to exploring the role of internal motivators or intrinsic factors in graduate writing and how it relates to research work and research productivity. Conducting semi-structured interviews with four doctoral students who have published research articles in peer-reviewed journals, this study explores the process through which doctoral students develop a researcher identity, the challenges they face, and the role of the doctorate program in developing a researcher identity. Using a narrative approach and by first-person accounts of experiences told in the story form, the process of identity formation is elicited through individual stories focusing on the narrated experiences, thoughts, and actions. The findings of this study showed that validation and recognition are crucial factors in helping doctoral students see themselves as researchers and persevere through the challenges faced in publishing. All participants in this study recognized collaboration opportunities as experiences that helped them become a researcher. In working with others, they

felt like they had a valuable voice and insight, creating a positive attitude toward their work by realizing that their work is meaningful. The most significant challenge discussed by all participants was receiving negative comments or criticisms that inhibited their motivation. Having a better understanding of the experiences, perspectives, and challenges of doctoral students in identity development brings attention to points of conflict and how these conflicts can be resolved or mediated for doctoral students. It offers insights into doctoral students' training and advising by illustrating how research productivity can be enhanced at the doctoral level.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Becoming a researcher not only involves the acts of contributing to the body of knowledge in a field but also constructing the image or identity of a researcher. It is through identity development that a newcomer becomes part of a community of researchers in a field (Golde, 1998; Lave & Wenger, 1991). While some pursue doctoral education to improve their employment prospects by seeking transferable skills for jobs outside of academia, others aim to become researchers in their field of study or at least develop research skills in their fields. Many doctoral students aim to prepare for academic jobs focusing on teaching, research, or a combination of both. Having publications is increasingly becoming a requirement for academic jobs. Thus, doctoral students aiming for positions with research components see doctoral education as a phase where they can develop their research and publishing skills. Publishing research articles is not only a crucial indicator but also an outcome of being a researcher. Emerging scholars publish their research to a) disseminate the knowledge and make contributions to the field and b) create the image of being a scholar for themselves (Habibie, 2016).

Graduate studies are often seen as a site where researcher identity is developed and practiced. Thus, it is a strategic site for understanding how one becomes an insider in a field (Prior, 1998). An existing body of literature in the field of writing has explored the publishing practices of graduate students. In this literature, extensive attention has been given to external factors such as adviser-

advisee relationships, resource access, and issues of authority. Consideration of intrinsic factors in graduate writing and education has been identified as an area for future research. This gap was noted by Sinclair et al. (2014) when they argued,

The link between creative, enthusiastic engagement with research work and productivity has not been investigated in the vast productivity literature, as the majority of work focuses on external or extrinsic factors rather than intrinsic or internal motivators. Developing these ideas further— particularly in relation to the role of the doctorate in cultivating emotional engagement with research work as a key to formation of an active researcher—offers a fruitful path for future research. (p. 1982)

While the challenges of doctoral students writing for publication have been studied from various perspectives, including advising, issues of authority, language proficiency, access to resources, and so on, less attention has been given to exploring the role of internal motivators and examining identity development from a more holistic perspective. Through a narrative approach, this dissertation explores doctoral students' perspectives on their identity development process and writing research articles to publish in peer-reviewed journals. It aims to explore the process through which doctoral students develop a researcher identity as they engage in the publishing process, focusing on both creating an image of being a researcher and performing as a researcher. In this study, I focus on publishing experiences of doctoral students given its crucial role in enabling one to construct an image of being a researcher as someone who is

actively contributing to the body of knowledge in their field. Through reflections, doctoral students share their experiences and their faced challenges as they navigate the publication process to illustrate the inhibiting and facilitating factors.

Having a better understanding of the experiences, perspectives, and challenges of doctoral students in identity development and publishing helps to better understand the role of the doctorate in the development of a researcher identity as it is experienced by doctoral students. It also shows how a pre-existing identity impacts the process of writing for publication and the challenges faced in this trajectory. This study offers implications for graduate student training and advising, helps identify areas of improvement in doctoral education, and illustrates how research productivity can be enhanced at the doctoral level. It also offers insights for teaching advanced writing courses (advanced academic writing and writing for publication), as well as the research into advanced academic writing.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Having an identity is "to be who one is" (Burke, 2003, p. 1). As Caskey, Stevens, and Yeo (2020) suggested, one's identity influence the current behavior as well as the future behavior. One's identity is multiple including personal identities, social identities, and role identities (Burke, 2003).

To be a researcher is a role identity exerting a powerful influence on one's approach and resilience toward conducting research (Caskey, Stevens, & Yeo, 2020). For most doctoral students, becoming a researcher is a designated identity (Sfard & Prusak, 2005) that they aim to achieve. Facing conflicts is an indivisible part of the process of identity development. After all, identity is not a static construct. It changes over time with the individual's experiences (Erikson, 1968). Erickson (1968) suggested that, over the lifespan, one experiences phases of identity confusion as they develop from one stage to the other. Movement across the stages results in "turning points" and "a crucial period of increased vulnerability and heightened potential" (p. 96). As one develops a researcher identity, there are phases of confusion leading to turning points which eventually result in embodying a researcher identity. For doctoral students, doctoral education involves phases of identity confusion, resulting in turning points where they gain a stronger sense of who they are as researchers.

This literature review provides an overview of the previous studies on researcher identity. It also gives an overview of the studies focusing on the

experiences of doctoral students in navigating through doctoral programs as well as in becoming a researcher. In the examination of the literature, I first explore what constitutes researcher identity and synthesize the studies that explore various components of researcher identity. In the second section, I focus specifically on studies that explore researcher identity when it comes to graduate students writing and the contexts for developing a researcher identity. The last section focuses on studies that explore the experiences of doctoral students during graduate education as well as during their publishing process.

What Constitutes Researcher Identity?

Becoming a researcher not only involves performing the act of contributing to the body of knowledge in a field of study, it also is about constructing the image or identity of a researcher. In fact, it is through identity development that a newcomer becomes part of a community (Golde, 1998; Lave & Wenger, 1991). Researcher identity is one of the important intrinsic factors in scholarly writing and research productivity. Having a researcher identity creates the emotional engagement to remain persistent in overcoming the potential obstacles as one learns to write for publication (Caskey, Stevens, & Yeo, 2020).

In her longitudinal study of 17 students in engineering, Tonso (2006) offered a frame for understanding the development of identity, including performance as well as their constructed image. This frame included a) how one thinks about oneself, b) how one performs as a researcher, and c) how one is thought of by others. This study showed how the labels used by engineering students to describe one another drastically impacted their performance, even

though the self-perceptions contradicted the constructed image by others. The impact of these labels was profound to the extent that those from more marginalized labels (especially in the case of female engineering students) considered alternative career paths, such as becoming a math teacher or seeking interdisciplinary work in fields such as environmental engineering.

These different aspects of identity including self-perception, performance, and perception of others have received attention in a variety of studies in the existing literature on the process of research writing and becoming a researcher. These studies explore the realities of identity development and point out the areas of tension in the process of becoming a researcher, as illustrated in the following sections.

Thinking About Oneself as a Researcher

One component of researcher identity is thinking of oneself as a researcher or developing the self-perceptions of being a researcher. This aspect of researcher identity is crucial in creating a sense of motivation, resilience, and emotional engagement with the research, writing, and publication process. Harrison (2009) focused on 'thresholds of self-perception' in narratives of nine doctoral students experienced as 'stuck places' of anxiety and insecurity and resolved through a process of self re-storying, repositioning, and their changing perceptions of what it means to be a knower. The experiences that resulted in these realizations derived from the doctoral students' interactions (with colleagues, supervisors, and other researchers) as well as their past and ongoing personal and professional lives (Jazvac-Martek et al., 2011). These moments of

realization resonate with the notion of "turning points" by Erikson (1968) in the process of developing a new identity. McAlpine (2012) referred to this complex process as 'identity trajectory' which "attends particularly to individual agency, nesting the academic within the personal and incorporating students' past as well as imagined future" (p. 38). Cotterall (2015) argued that the identity trajectory of a researcher is intellectual as well as institutional, highlighting the importance of accounting for the activities and interactions in which the emerging researchers participate. These contexts noted by Cotterall (2015) and the personal (intellectual) factor determine how one's researcher identity develops.

How doctoral students perceive their identities as a researcher can be influenced by their other embodied identities. As doctoral students construct a researcher identity, they are subject to constant negotiation of identities (Gunasekara, 2007; Norton & Early, 2011). Hall and Burns (2009) showed that pursuing a Ph.D. requires candidates to negotiate new identities and reconceptualize themselves both as people and professionals— a process that is impacted by one's past life experiences as well as their desired future (Xiujuan & Trent, 2020). For instance, if the main perceived role of a doctoral student is to be a teacher, they may fail to see the large picture when thinking about a research idea. Burn and Hall (2009) suggested that to avoid conflicts in developing researcher identity, doctoral students should think about research issues that transcend contexts when they argued,

Rather than focus on problems specific to the classroom in which they once taught, using their personal experiences to justify beliefs, they must

learn to develop arguments and theories that provide insights into educational issues and knowledge that transcends the context in which they are familiar. (p. 53)

This argument shows the importance of considering the big picture in developing research interests and considering larger implications of the research rather than focusing on one specific context (such as a given classroom) in one's development of researcher identity.

Performing as a Researcher

Another component of researcher identity is performing the acts associated with being a researcher. Performing as a researcher, or doing what the researchers do, constitutes an important part of researcher identity. Through performance, doctoral students become recognized and are confirmed as researchers. As Jazvac-Martek (2009) noted,

In order for a particular role identity to be claimed, behavior with others must be consistent with that role identity so that the identity is not disconfirmed. (p. 260)

One's performance as a researcher can only be recognized by other members of the field and without the recognition factor, performing as a researcher may not result in researcher identity. In Lopes and Lourenço (2019), the performances associated with researcher identity (or what led to the feeling of belonging to a research community) were identified as: a) networking and interacting with a diverse range of people both at institutional and non-institutional level, and b) doing activities associated to the work of a researcher such as publishing in

journals or reading the literature. From the authors' perspective, meeting the goal of a Ph.D. program is assessed through what the students can accomplish through their performance. As they argued, the Ph.D. program aims to enable doctoral students to "conceive, design, and implement a substantial program of research with integrity, use and adapt established research methods; demonstrate critical analysis, evaluation, and synthesis of new and complex ideas; frequently publish in high-ranking academic journals (European Commission, 2011; Hall & Burns, 2009; Kehm, 2004)" (p. 303). In their perspective, the demonstration of these abilities is what constitutes researcher identity.

Other studies have also explored researcher identity development through expression and demonstration of knowledge. For instance, Chen (2014) explored how doctoral students balanced knowing and not knowing during their dissertation defense sessions and how their satisfaction with their performance was influenced by how they viewed themselves as researchers. As Chen (2014) argued, a newcomer needs to demonstrate knowing to be recognized as a researcher (Chen, 2014). Dunlap (2006) showed that engaging in developmental activities such as writing for publication and engaging in the process promotes self-efficacy for Ph.D. students. Paré et al. (2006) also argued that engaging in academic work underlies one's developing identity as an academic. Since doctoral students develop a rigorous plan for their dissertation at the candidacy level, for many doctoral students, candidacy is the stage where their confidence in their research is enhanced. While some of these activities occur in a formal

context, others may occur in an informal or semi-formal context. The studies that focus on the performance aspect of researcher identity often draw on the theory of community of practice in which through a socialization process, the emerging researchers are given opportunities for representation of their knowing.

Being Thought of as a Researcher

Researcher identity can be confirmed, approved, boosted, or challenged through interactions with others. Identities are confirmed through alignment between how one perceives oneself and how one is perceived by others (Mantai, 2017; Tonso, 2006). Ennals et al. (2016) showed that individuals are recognized as researchers in working with others. Working with others also allows individuals to assess their skills and status in comparison with others and understand what it takes to be a researcher. In addition, Mantai (2017) argued that researcher identities are socially co-constructed and constantly adjusted as one develops skills and knowledge. The importance of recognition in developing a researcher identity was also shown in Carlone and Johnson's (2007) model of science identity when they argued that successfully enacting a particular identity requires "making visible to (performs for) others one's competence in relevant practices, and, in response, others recognize one's performance as credible" (p.1190)—even though in practice this performance may not always be accompanied by the desired response from others. Validation and confidence in research ability can result in emotional engagement with research— a key factor that facilitates forming researcher identity (Sinclair et al., 2014; Turner & McAlpine, 2011). A

sense of validation and confidence motivate and support doctoral students in the face of challenges during their graduate degrees.

Being perceived as a researcher helps doctoral students build confidence in their trajectory of becoming a researcher. Confidence, or believing in one's own capabilities to succeed, helps doctoral students overcome negative feelings of isolation, disorientation, and imposter syndrome (Cotterall, 2015). In her study of identity-related experiences of six international Ph.D. students, Cotterall (2015) examined how different individuals, events, and interactions contributed to (or disrupted) the students' perception of themselves as researchers. This study showed the importance of attending to the missed opportunities to provide a supportive community of practice for doctoral students (by departments, supervisors, etc.). This study highlighted the importance of developing confidence in doctoral education and suggested that researcher identity is nurtured through experiences of confidence, agency, and being a part of a community. In this study, all the participants were international students. Exploring the experiences of a diverse group of emerging researchers can be fruitful in better understanding doctoral students' experiences in their identity development trajectories. Another limitation of the existing literature as noted by Kennedy (2020) is that novice researcher identity literature is largely authored by research supervisors or other senior scholars, which results in the elimination of the graduate students' perspectives and lived experiences, and an incomplete picture of their experiences and faced challenges.

Englander (2009) voiced the same concern when he pointed out that although scholarly identity is transformed only when the identity of the novice researcher is recognized by 'legitimate' members of the community, many doctoral students feel invisible in their departments, particularly international students (Ingleton & Cadman, 2002). The mentoring relationship is one of the crucial sites where doctoral students' confidence and agency can be enhanced (Cotterall, 2015). Thus, participation and engagement should be actively fostered by the supervisors and reinforced at every level of departmental activity. It is especially crucial to attend to less traditional students' abilities and accommodate their different priorities and needs (Cotterall, 2015).

Not being recognized or approved as a researcher challenges the process of identity development during doctoral education. As Jazvac-Martek (2009) argued, "When students face interactions that threaten confidence in idealized identities, this can create perceptions of enormous failure or lead them to withdraw from interactive situations" (p. 261). Constructive criticism is crucial for one's development as a researcher, without positive reinforcement it can result in discouragement and inhibit the process of development. Jazvac-Martek (2009) also argued that these experiences can be threatening to students' sense of intellectual ability and confidence in becoming an academic. Her work showed that more collaboration opportunities could create positive affect and a renewed sense of confidence for doctoral students.

The findings from the previous studies show that there is no linear relationship between the components of researcher identity. Performing as a

researcher may precede self-perception of being a researcher. Others' perceptions of one's researcher identity may also precede self-perceptions of researcher identity, as it is the case with emerging scholars who experience imposter syndrome.

Development of Researcher Identity During Doctoral Education

When doctoral students begin to see themselves as researchers, it influences their current and future behavior as well as their interpretation of the behavior (Jazvek-Martek, 2009) and takes on a more active role in their academic journey (Sinclair, Barnacle, & Cuthbert, 2014). Regardless of the intent to pursue research beyond a doctoral degree, it is argued that the sooner doctoral students include researcher as an identity, the smoother and more successful their doctoral experience will be; Building a researcher identity early in the program, and it becomes a solid foundation for success in doctoral programs. (Caskey, Stevens, & Yeo, 2020). However, many doctoral students struggle with seeing themselves as researchers (Caskey, Stevens, & Yeo, 2020), especially in the early stages of their program. One of the reasons for the struggles is that doctoral students at the beginning stages are still developing the required skills that other competent researchers have. In the early stages of the doctoral program, doctoral students have not yet constructed an image of being a researcher for themselves as well as others. They may also not have research outcomes yet to indicate or prove that they are researchers.

Xiujuan and Trent (2020) explored the identity trajectory of a Chinese doctoral student through narrative inquiry. This study showed that becoming a

doctoral researcher entails a continuous process of identity development fraught with interruptions and transitions. The doctoral students in this study had a clear sense of desire that self-enabled them to critically reflect on their research journey and the challenges faced, including the disruptive influence of a conflicting supervisor—a deficient leadership, as recalled by the participant, that resulted in a decline of motivation. Seeking validation from other resources seemed to result in regaining his feeling of visibility and validation as a member of a scholarly community and exercising the feeling of agency as a scholar. This study shows that exploring the experiences of doctoral students and the role of the factors such as confidence, validation, and motivation is crucial for doctoral students training and advising. Exploring the experiences and reflections of doctoral students may lead to a greater understanding of what programs can do to further doctoral students' researcher identity (Caskey, Stevens, & Yeo, 2020).

Contexts of Researcher Identity Development

In addition to the studies on what constitutes researcher identity, some studies have examined the context in which the researcher identity develops. In his study of early career researchers' identity, Castello et al. (2015) examined researcher identity development in different spheres of activities: a) the learning activity sphere (e.g., courses, seminars, etc.); b) the professional activity sphere (shaped by prototypical activities defining the professional communities to which early career researchers belong or aim to belong when they finish their journeys); and c) Personal/family/social activities sphere (related to values and aims and personal intentions). Castello et al. (2015) used the notion of spheres (as

domains of participation in life or human activity) as each category can be found in different communities. For instance, the learning sphere includes several communities, such as a community of peers participating in courses and seminars or a community of Ph.D. students in a research team working with and learning from senior researchers. The framework of spheres of activity allowed for analyzing researcher identity development to address a gap in the field:

Although studies focusing on identity development or identity trajectories have grown exponentially in recent years, research in the field has not yet resulted in a comprehensive framework that integrates identity and signals or offers a comprehensive way to analyze researcher identity as it unfolds across the different systems or spheres of activity in which researchers participate. (p. 40)

While the framework offered by Castello et al. (2015) was useful in understanding a range of contexts where the researcher identity develops, they called for further testing of their framework with new data to assess its transferability to other contexts and identifying signals emerging in and across different spheres of activity to refine the framework.

Graduate Education as an Apprenticing Phase

In exploring how doctoral students become researchers, it is noteworthy to attend to the notion of legitimate peripheral participation developed by Lave and Wenger (1991). Based on this notion, it is not the formal study of rules but practicing the relevant discourse of the community, one wishes to join that leads to one's insider professional status. It is through practice that future researchers

learn the unwritten rules and become insiders in the field. This notion explains how one can become an 'insider' in a disciplinary community of practice. With this framework, learning can be seen as entering the disciplinary community and performing as a researcher. Through the process of participating in practices, emerging researchers change their status to being more experienced members of the field. In describing this process, Paul Prior (1998) stated,

As people learn to participate in a community's definition practices, they change their locations within the community, gradually taking on roles of more experienced members whose patterns of participation differ from those of newcomers. (p. 4)

In understanding writing expertise, Prior (1998) showed the importance of attending to the various activities involved in the act of writing. As he stated,

When seen as a situated activity, writing does not stand alone as the discrete act of a writer but emerges as a confluence of many streams of activity: reading, talking, observing, acting, making, thinking, and feeling, as well as transcribing words on a paper. (p. xi)

In graduate education, Prior (1998) considered three different modes of participation based on different levels of engagement in disciplinary activities: Passing, procedural display, and deep participation. At the level of passing, doctoral students perform to meet the institutional requirements such as passing credit hours examinations. The procedural display is acting a particular practice in a cooperative or interactive manner, such as doing a lesson during which conflicts and resistance may occur, or as a collective accomplishment, such as

writing a research proposal. Deep participation is a form of deep access and engagement in the practices taking up mature roles in the community of practice.

As doctoral students perform the practices associated with being a researcher, they move from a peripheral position to the insider circle and become socialized in their disciplinary community. Jazvac-Martek (2009) defined this process of socialization as "the process of acquiring attitudes, beliefs, values, and skills needed to participate" (p. 254). This process includes observations, interactions, and emulating behaviors of advisors, faculty members, and senior graduate students. As described by Lave and Wenger (1991), more observation occurs on the periphery, and as one performs the expected acts, they gradually become insiders. This process is especially the case for doctoral students who desire to pursue a career in academia. As Jazvac-Martek (2009) argued,

For doctoral students who desire a continued career in academe, this translates into acting and enacting the idealized conceptions of what good doctoral students and early career academics are imagined to be or do (e.g., confidence in speaking about the topic in which they are developing expertise, creating innovative research, having clarity in writing, etc.) and enacting them in settings where is confirmed by others. (p. 255)

Through performing the acts associated with being a researcher, doctoral students gain a sense of validation and confidence. This sense of validation creates an image and identity of being a researcher for doctoral students. As Perry (1970) noted, the skills of academic inquiry and identity formation overlap, and doctoral journey represents the same structure for functioning as a scholar.

While the frame of doctoral education as an apprenticeship model presents a view of how one can become an insider in the field, it often creates the assumption that the advisors hold a collective responsibility to socialize students into the research and disciplinary context (Jazvac-Martek, 2009). However, in addition to being apprenticed into the field, students' intentions, motivations, or the variability of experiences and interactions that influence the shifting identities play a crucial part in this socialization process (Jazvac-Martek, 2009).

In her study of nine Ph.D. students experiencing identity roles (in their programs and in the process of becoming academics), Jazvac-Martek (2009) showed that one of the crucial factors in doctoral students' success is gaining a sense of validation as well as taking on agency in performing as an academic. These roles result in moments where doctoral students feel like an academic and act like an academic, leading to an enhanced sense of confidence for the students. These roles included activities such as "having peer-like discussions with other faculty, speaking to others from a position of expertise, collaborating on ideas, engaging in scholarly discussions, deeply thinking or attending to ideas, receiving constructive or even negative feedback on written papers or proposals, working on publications, having publication accepted, presenting at conferences, receiving subject-specific grants from disciplinary communities, being invited to give a talk or an interview for a tenure-track faculty position" (Jazvac-Martek, 2009, p. 258). In this study, Jazvac-Martek (2009) differentiated between various levels of engagement with various roles: These roles can be

passively accepted, independently projected, or actively enacted. Her other differentiation was that the acts could be imposed by someone from a higher status or self-imposed. This study showed that by taking on agency, doctoral students have more opportunities for legitimizing their identity. Additionally, the identities that doctoral students aim to construct become confirmed through interactions with others. The study showed that, surprisingly, the participants rarely received this confirmation from their supervisors. However, the exchange or interactions that caused these confirmations were often encouraged or created by the supervisor (e.g., encouraging students to contact an outside expert for advice).

Writing for Scholarly Publication as a Graduate Student

One of the important outcomes and indicators of being a researcher is publishing scholarly work. Doctoral students, especially those aiming for research positions, feel increasing pressure to make contributions to their fields of study through publishing. The competitive job market also adds more pressure to publish research articles. As emerging scholars, many doctoral students face difficulties in publishing their work even after completing their degree. This struggle is evidenced in a national survey by Golde and Dore (2004), showing that less than half of the doctoral students (42.9%) believed their programs prepared them to publish, and only half (52.4%) felt confident in their abilities to do so. Doctoral students are frequently advised, and increasingly required to publish before graduation (Habibie, 2016). On the importance of publishing during doctoral education, Shvidko and Atkinson (2019) argued,

In today's competitive academic world, publishing professionally— particularly in international/English-language peer-reviewed journals— is considered a primary marker of success. (p. 155)

Exploring the experiences of doctoral students in becoming scholars, Shvidko and Atkinson (2019) concluded that the major facilitating factors recalled by the six participants that led to their success in publishing were experiences of co-authoring, mentors' support, experience and growing confidence, and persistence. Other additional factors mentioned were intrinsic motivation to publish and a supportive institutional environment. The findings from these six participants did not indicate language as a limiting factor, and similar challenges were reported by native and non-native speakers. In this study, Shvidko and Atkinson (2019) speculated that gender can be however a relevant factor in the experiences of female participants as they consistently reported mentoring and co-authoring as facilitating factors, whereas male participants did not talk about those factors, although all six participants had co-authoring experience. Similarly, in Casanave and Vandrick (2003), factors such as gender, race, national origin, and class, among others, were considered to influence access to the publishing world.

In exploring the issues and challenges that doctoral students face in publishing research articles in the case of two anglophone participants, Fazel (2019) recognized some challenges that doctoral students face in writing for publishing. These challenges included recognizing the discursive linguistics forms, familiarity with the process of publication (such as selecting an appropriate

publication venue), genre differences (what they have been instructed and what they experience), dealing with critical peer reviews or rejections, or understanding confusing comments, and engagement with the editors. Some other challenges related to rhetorical knowledge included rhetorically framing the work that is appealing to the audience and adhering to the conventions. Similar issues have been reported in the experiences of graduate students who are non-native speakers of English and writing to publish their work in peer-reviewed journals. Feeling dejected and demoralized after critical comments was a key challenge and similar affective challenges were also highlighted in other studies (Flowerdew, 2000; Li, 2006; Cho, 2004). These challenges were not related to the language status but were more concerned with the novice status of the writers and experienced by doctoral students who were native and non-native speakers of English.

Research Gap

Increasingly doctoral students feel the pressure to publish to meet the expectations of their program as well as the competitive job market. One of the important intrinsic factors in scholarly writing and research productivity is developing researcher identity. Developing a researcher identity creates the emotional engagement to remain persistent in overcoming the potential obstacles as one learns to write for publishing. The previous research has offered some insights into the process and components of developing a professional identity, including performance, self-perceptions, and perception of others (Tonso, 2006). Some other studies have also provided a view of the contexts in which

researcher identity is formed (Castello et al., 2015). In exploring the experiences of doctoral students writing to publish their work in peer-reviewed journals, some studies have discussed the challenges faced by doctoral students. What seems to have received less attention is how researcher identity is constructed during doctoral education, how developing a researcher identity impacts the trajectory of publishing, what common challenges are faced, regardless of language background, and how these challenges can be overcome by doctoral students.

By focusing on the experiences and perspectives of doctoral students, this dissertation aims to explore the process of researcher identity development for doctoral students who are engaging in the process of publishing. Having a publication record is the most visible sign of being a researcher with a tangible outcome recognized by other members of the field. For that reason, doctoral students often see publication as a means to an end to be recognized as a researcher. The study focuses on the publishing experiences of doctoral students as it is a critical context for one's development of researcher identity.

The research questions that the study aims to answer are the following:

- How is researcher identity developed during doctoral studies?
- What experiences facilitated the process of identity development for doctoral students? What is the role of the doctorate in this process of identity construction?
- What are the challenges that doctoral students face in the process of becoming a researcher?

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

This study employs a narrative inquiry approach to provide an understanding of the perspectives and experiences of doctoral students in constructing researcher identity. Sfard and Prusak (2005) defined one's identity as "collections of stories about persons or, more specially, as those narratives about individuals that are reifying, endorsable, and significant" (p. 16). To understand the process of identity development, I use a narrative approach as it allows for eliciting the doctoral students' stories and their understanding of the experiences. This approach enables collecting and interpreting the doctoral experiences as lived and told by the participants (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004), providing insights into the process of identity formation.

As De Fina (2015) argued, identities "emerge through semiotic processes in which people construct images of themselves and others" (p. 351) and that the narrative method is the prime vehicle for expressing identity" (De Fina, 2015, p. 351). The narrative approach allows individuals to provide rich details of their prior experiences. Narratives allow for making sense of the past. As Riessman (2008) argued, "narratives invite us as listeners, readers, and viewers to enter the perspective of the narrator" (p. 9). They also allow us to "structure perceptual experience, organize memory, and segment and purpose-build the very events of a life" (p. 10).

Aiming to explore the process of identity formation of the former doctoral students, I use the narrative approach to focus on the participant's prior beliefs and emotions, as well as their development from their own perspective (Barkhuizen, 2015). By first-person accounts of experiences told in the story form, the process of identity formation by former doctoral students is explored, focusing on the narrated experiences, thoughts, and actions. In using stories as data, language is viewed as a resource rather than the topic of inquiry. As Cotterall (2015) argued, "investigating the construction of scholarly identity requires sensitive research tools that foreground doctoral researchers' voices and experiences" (p. 360). To elicit the narratives of doctoral students, I used interviews as the main means for data collection as they allow for "entering into the other person's perspective" (Patton, 2002, p. 341).

By narrative approach, the researcher can interrogate the intentions, how, and why of the experiences, as well as the impact of the experiences. Highlighting the experience-centered nature of narratives, Riessman (2008) argued,

They [narratives] do not merely describe what someone does in the world but what the world does to that someone. They allow us to infer something about what it feels like to be in that story world. Narratives also recount those events that happen unwilled, unpredicted, and often unwished for by the actors, even if those very actors set the events in motion in the first place... Narratives do not merely refer to past experiences but create experiences for their audience. (p. 22)

The narrative approach in this study allows us to understand the impact of the common experiences during doctoral education on the doctoral students' trajectory of identity development, offering valuable implications for teaching and mentoring doctoral students.

Using narrative approach in this study allows for gaining new insights and understanding of the experiences of doctoral students. A shortcoming of this method is, however, relying on the participants' memory to elicit the experiences. The participants may not remember some of the critical moments at the time of the interview, giving an incomplete view of the experiences and their affordances for researcher identity development. To address this limitation, I attempted to use the information from the CVs to probe more information during the interviews.

Recruitment Process and Selection of Participants

In this study, I view researcher as someone who carries out academic or scientific research and actively pursues making contributions to an academic journal to join a conversation in a given field as an outcome or measure of being a researcher. I view researcher identity as a constructed image of being a researcher, both in an individual's and others' perception, through performing the acts associated with being a researcher. I consider doctoral students who are actively engaged in the process of publishing their research articles in a referee journal as emerging scholars or researchers.

Four doctoral students with a publication record in a peer-reviewed referee journal were contacted to participate in this study to explore their experiences in the process of publishing and becoming a researcher. The recruited participants

were high performing doctoral students or recent graduates who had achieved publishing (at least one) single-authored research article in a peer-reviewed journal. Focusing on this category of doctoral students, high achievers, allows for understanding what factors and experiences can lead to positive outcomes. A limitation though is not excluding the experiences of the doctoral students who has not yet achieved to publish limiting our understanding of the inhibiting factors, and what results in lack of success in this process.

The participants were either former doctoral students who graduated during the past year or were within one year of graduation. The rationale for selecting this time frame is so that the participants remember their process of development and can reflect on their experiences during their doctoral degrees. The participants were selected from the Department of English (two from Applied Linguistics and two from Writing and Rhetoric program). With this selection, I was able to understand the participants' references to their research topics, journals, and conferences since I am familiar with the subject-matter knowledge of the English field. The small group of participants allows for an in-depth and detailed holistic analysis of their life story, specific events, and experiences, and a detailed account of their identity development process. Having 4 participants still allowed for capturing a variety of backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives.

Recruitment letters were emailed to the participants with a brief explanation of the study and the procedure, including participation in two interviews for approximately 60-90 minutes and collecting their CVs. After participants responded by accepting the invitation, consent forms were emailed

to them. The consent forms were signed and returned along with the CVs before scheduling the interviews.

Participants

Participant 1: Sheila. Sheila received her Ph.D. in 2022, a few months before participating in this study. At the time of the interview, she had published one book chapter and two articles in peer-reviewed journals. All her published works were single authored. She had extensive teaching experience prior to starting her doctoral studies. Sheila was a native speaker of English.

Participant 2: Kelly. Kelly was in her last year of doctoral studies and had published three co-authored articles in peer-reviewed journals. She also had two book chapters, two manuscripts under review, and two book reviews published. Kelly was a non-native speaker of English.

Participant 3: Todd. Todd finished his doctoral degree earlier in 2022 before participating in this study. He had published one article in a peer-reviewed journal and had another article published in a special issue. He also published two newsletters, a book chapter, and a review article. Todd was a native speaker of English.

Participant 4: Ethan. Ethan was within a year of graduation when he participated in this study. He had published one article published in a peer-reviewed journal and had another one under review. Both articles were single authored. Ethan was a non-native speaker of English.

Table 1

Participants' Status and Prior Experiences with Publishing

	Sheila	Kelly	Todd	Ethan
Degree Status	Graduated	Within a year of graduation	Graduated	Within a year of graduation
Publication history	Two single-authored articles and a book chapter published	Three co-authored articles and two book chapters. Two manuscripts under review	One single-authored article published. One article in a special issue. Published a book chapter, and a review	One single-authored article published. One single-authored article under review

Data Collection Process

Prior to the interviews, the participants' CVs were reviewed to elicit background information on the participants. The CVs were also used as a reference for the interviews. Each participant participated in two different interviews. The purpose of the first interview was to familiarize the participants with the project's goal and gather data on their overall experience with writing during their doctoral degrees as well as the process of publishing. The purpose of the second interview was to specifically explore the process of identity formation based on the framework of researcher identity by Tonso (2006): self-perceptions, perceptions of others, and performance. Narratives are discursively constructed. Thus, the interviews were semi-structured to allow for prompting and guided by a list of questions with further follow-up questions to generate detailed accounts rather than brief answers or general statements (Riessman, 2008).

Interview Questions

Interview 1

Introductory questions:

- When did you start thinking about doing a Ph.D. program?
- What was your motivation for pursuing a Ph.D. degree?
- What are the research topics you have been working on? Which one is your main research topic?

Questions on participants' experiences with writing for publication:

- What drives you or what motivates you to write for publication?
- Have you faced any challenges or struggles during your process of writing for publication?
- Are there any moments that you consider “memorable” in writing for publication?
- Why does this experience stand out to you?
- Describe a moment when you felt encouraged to write for publication.
- The second part of this question inquires about failure experiences. Can you describe a moment when you felt discouraged?
- When you write for publication, what sources of feedback do you have?
- How have they facilitated or hindered your process of writing for publication?
- Were there any other additional resources that influenced your work? Can you describe a specific encounter or interaction?

(A potential follow-up question is: Who else did you talk to about your research, either one-on-one discussion or in the form of a presentation? (If not addressed)

- Think about your first experience with writing for publication. Was your experience different from the training you had received (such as during coursework)? If so, explain how.
- Tell me about your relationship with your supervisor?
- In what ways has this relationship influenced your process of publishing?
- Were there specific encounters, interactions, or moments that influenced your work?
- Were there other people who influenced your work or your development as a researcher?
- Have you had collaborations with other scholars?
- How has that experience influenced your sense of who you are as a researcher?

Interview 2

- How do you see yourself as a researcher now?
- When you started your doctoral program, how did you see yourself as a researcher?
- What was your idea of being a researcher? How did you envision becoming a researcher?
- Did that idea or image evolve or change with time?
- How do you do research? Where do you start? What are the steps you go through?

- Can you think of moments in which you felt like you became a researcher?
- Can you think of a moment when you felt challenged as a researcher?
- Tell me about a moment when you felt good about being a researcher?
Why did that particular moment stand out to you? (Follow-up questions may relate to situations, people, experiences, relationships, etc.)
- When did you start to feel more confident in writing for publication?
- When did you start to feel that you have authority in writing for publication?

Data Analysis

The data collected from the interviews were analyzed based on the thematic content analysis approach, considering the content of the interviews and the told information as the exclusive focus rather than the telling itself. The thematic analysis focuses on the content of the experiences of the narrator and their reflections on these by searching for themes in the narrative data (Barkhuizen, 2015). Analysis of the narratives followed the procedures of inductive coding for themes, categorizing and looking for patterns of association among them (Barkhuizen, 2015).

The interviews were thoroughly transcribed to elicit data. The data analysis consisted of reading and rereading the interview transcripts to identify themes relevant to belonging to a community of researchers or becoming a researcher. The unit of analysis is a single episode or bounded segment about a single incident (Riessman, 2008). I manually coded the data inductively, allowing themes to emerge from the data rather than fitting them into pre-existing

codes/models (Miles & Huberman, 1994), and categories were created by inducting categories while reading the transcripts recursively. Prior theories were used as a resource for the interpretation of the narratives (Riessman, 2008). Based on the literature, I attended to three main components in understanding the formation of researcher identity: Self-perception, perception of others, and performance. Some of the themes include the moments that the researcher identity was experienced, the first time they felt like a researcher, the effects of feeling like a researcher, the progression of researcher identity, suggestions and attempts (failed or succeeded), and factors such as confidence, network support, motivation, and a sense of community in forming a researcher identity.

Triangulation Process

To triangulate the data from the interviews, I gathered additional data from analyzing the participants' CVs to learn more about their research identities and the changes they have gone through. This triangulation allowed for gaining more insights into their development process and also served as a basis for asking follow up questions. In analyzing CVs, I paid close attention to the following:

- a) The participants' research interests and accomplishments during their doctoral studies
- b) Outstanding experiences such as collaborations and contributions
- c) Prior education, work experiences, conference attendance, and organization affiliations.
- d) Any changes in the research interests

The analysis of the CVs was also used to support any shifts that were discussed during the interviews. Some of the follow-up questions during the interviews also referred to the experiences that were indicated on the participants' CVs.

Researcher's Positionality

My position as a doctoral student developing a researcher identity has influenced my decisions and interpretations in different stages of this study. My personal experiences and struggles as a doctoral student navigating through the doctorate program and attempting to become a researcher (as well as observing the experiences of my peers in the program) informed the process of coming up with my research questions. Another important stage of the study that have been informed by my own position was the interviewing process. In coming up with the interview questions I relied on the literature to extract the possible areas to tap into. However, it is possible that I unintentionally probed conversation on areas that were familiar and in alignment with my own experiences. I acknowledge that there may have been additional areas and factors contributing the development of researcher identity that was not unpacked during the interviews or did not come out as an emerging theme in the data analysis due to not having sufficient data. Finally, being in the same department with the participants could have potentially impacted the information they chose to or chose not to disclose during the interviews. It is also a possibility that they were constructing certain identities during the interviews by deciding what experiences to include and what experiences not to include in their narrative.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS PART I: HOW IS RESEARCHER IDENTITY DEVELOPED DURING DOCTORAL STUDIES?

This chapter focuses on the factors that contributed to the participants' development of researcher identity. On how and when they started feeling like a researcher, the participants talked about the four following themes: 1) gaining a sense of belonging to a larger community of researchers and feeling like they are a member of their field, 2) Developing research productivity over time, and developing a research plan and thinking about their future work, rather than focusing on the work in hand, 3) Constructed image of being a researcher, both in terms of how they see themselves and how they are seen by others, 4) Developing the mindset of being an independent researcher to develop their work individually, rather than relying on help from others (including their academic advisor).

Theme 1: Gaining a Sense of Belonging to the Community of Researchers in Their Field

For the doctoral students who participated in this study, researcher identity was characterized by their sense of belonging to a larger community of researchers/scholars in their fields. One of the crucial motivators to write for publishing and push through the challenges of the publishing process was feeling a sense of belonging to the community of researchers.

When asked about her initial motivation to pursue research and the Ph.D. program, Sheila emphasized the significance of the comments that her professors made during her master's degree that sparked her interest in pursuing her research interest and publishing. She was told by her master's degree professors that she would be "a good fit in academia" and that she "is the kind of person they would like to work with." Such comments motivated her to pursue a doctoral degree where she can develop her research interest and make her work known to others.

In her journey of getting her work published in peer-reviewed journals, Sheila faced challenges such as dealing with critical comments from the reviewers. Having a sense of belonging to the larger community of the field helped Sheila stay motivated and push forward through the challenges.

Even though the feedback was tough, there was some pretty generous feedback that made me feel that I might be able to be a part of this community... I felt like I'm more of a colleague than a student. That was cool.

Early in the doctorate program, the doctoral students' concerns mostly related to a student role rather than a researcher role, such as meeting the professors' expectations and the program requirement. However, toward the end of their degrees, the concerns and challenges were more shifted toward making contributions to their fields of study and "getting their ideas out there" (Kelly). A sense of belonging to the community of researchers in the field was shown by

their desire to present at major conferences, work with other scholars, and, most importantly, publish research articles.

In describing her motivation to pursue research, Kelly emphasized that one of her important motivations for publishing her work is to “reach to other members of the community” and “get her arguments and ideas out there.”

When I try to write a paper for publication I would think Okay, so can people see my arguments and see what I’m doing. I want to get my findings or my arguments out to as many people as possible. I mean, it’s important to have a line on your CV... But I want to ‘communicate to more people’ and. And I want people with the same interest to see what I’m doing, so maybe next time they will approach me and say. Look, you’re doing something similar, would you like to collaborate, etc.

Being acknowledged and seen as a researcher by other scholars as someone who has enough expertise for collaboration pushed Kelly to connect herself to the community through her published work.

Theme 2: Research Productivity and Having an Active Research Plan

Publishing in a peer-reviewed referee journal did not come naturally for any of the participants, especially with their first publishing experience. All participants persistently worked on their ideas (and manuscripts) for an extended period of time, going through extensive revisions, multiple rejections, and rewriting processes until the manuscript reached a quality that could be submitted to a journal. This process took great persistence in the face of negative experiences, which eventually resulted in their success. From the initial

publishing experience, the participants developed a clear understanding of their research plan to pursue certain topics and future manuscripts to write. The dissertation project also allowed the participants to decide what line of research they aim to pursue in the future. They knew what they aim to do going forward and what research directions they orient themselves to. As Kelly said,

Right now, I have a more clear sense of what my research will be or what I'm doing right now and what I will do in the future and I think that's largely due to the dissertation project. I have found something interesting from my dissertation. And also, I think, from my findings, I'm inspired or like I see some gaps... I see some gaps in my research which motivates me to do the next step.

Kelly also talked about how, initially, her research ideas were in a state of transformation with different experiences. However, with the publishing experience, Kelly was able to determine her future research plan, and she believed that with this experience, she has gained more discipline and became more organized as a researcher.

I have a better sense of what my research will be. Previously, I think [back then] everything was kind of messy. you found an interesting point and then maybe you read something about that. Maybe next class you discuss another point that's also interesting and you read about that. So, everything's kind of scattered. But now I kind of know how those links are connected to each other... I will say [I'm now] more organized. Organized, more purposeful. Like you have a better sense of purpose.

When I asked Kelly about the moment that she started to feel like a researcher, she reflected on the first time that she was able to draw the lines between her research ideas and make connections between her current project and future projects.

The first thing that comes to my head is the moment when I identified my next research project. In my dissertation, I found something interesting, and based on that, and I kind of designed, or at least like in my head, I tried to design my next project... well actually, the next two projects, and they just kind of clicked, you know. Like I see the relationship between them... like how one leads to the other. And how both of them could contribute to the discussion in different ways. I think that moment makes me feel like I'm a researcher and not just a student who is kind of like randomly trying to find a research topic... to see clearly the line of research, the line of inquiry. I think that's the moment I feel like a researcher.

In Kelly's experience, developing the ability to foresee future projects, or how a research interest connects to a larger theme was a sign of a transition from a student role to a researcher role.

Theme 3: Constructed Image of Being a Researcher

All participants wanted to be seen, recognized, and acknowledged as a researcher in their pursuit of research and publication, even though they often

struggled with embodying that image, especially those participants struggling with imposter syndrome (Ethan and Sheila).

When I asked Todd about his main motivation in pursuing research and publishing his work, he considered receiving “recognition” from other members of the field as the most crucial motivating factor, which led to a constructed image of being a researcher for him. As he said,

Recognition is the thing that kind of feels the best. But also discovering things that have never been discovered before... It shows that I'm doing what I'm supposed to do, especially as a grad student in a Ph.D. program, at an R1 [university]. We're sort of expected to do these things.

Having the image of a researcher was a motivator that Todd emphasized in his trajectory of becoming a researcher. For Todd, a critical moment in becoming a researcher was when he saw his own work published. On the significance of this moment, he highlighted that with a published research article as an outcome, he could be recognized as a researcher.

I think that I really enjoy the recognition. The idea that, you know, my hard work, I mean in the Ph.D. program, we are told to publish, but I really don't know that many people that actually end up doing any significant publishing... So, to be able to do that really made it seem like it's possible. It's not as hard as it actually seems.... It's a long process, the process is long and drawn out. And it's frustrating. But, you know, when I saw my name there, in print, it sort of had an ending to it [the frustration]. You sort of see the arc of the publication, where you have the things that you're

required to do in order to be successful. And then when you see it in print, it's sort of like, you're done with that. So, I think for me, it just solidified it. Seeing my name in-print sort of solidifies the idea that, you know, it is something within your realm of capabilities and that you can be a researcher as long as you're willing to go through the process that it takes to publish in journals, and, you know, basically just willing to go through the process it takes to publish.

For Todd, seeing his work published was also a way of showing himself that he is a researcher, and it is within his capabilities to publish. Thus, it was not only a means for receiving validation from others on his capabilities, but also, he self-validated his own knowledge as a researcher once he saw his name in print. Kelly also said feeling acknowledged by others helped her feel validated as a researcher and someone who is knowledgeable enough for collaborations.

Being acknowledged in one way or another makes me feel that I'm making progress. In this year's [conference name], a guy just came to me, and he recognized me. Because he went to my presentation at [another conference name]. He just approached me as, "Oh, you are so and so, and I remember your presentation from [conference name]. So that was also a very exciting moment because I think that was the first time that I was recognized by someone. Because previously you're just this anonymous person at the conference that nobody knows about. Yeah, I think those are the moments [that I feel like a researcher]. Right now, if I approach the big names and people who have published quite a lot in the

field, I feel more confident talking to them; I don't feel like they are like high up there, you know... I see them more as potential collaborators or coworkers, not as "unreachable" people.

Being approached and recognized by others in a conference setting helped Kelly build confidence as a scholar and helped her to embody a researcher identity. It also helped her construct a sense of authority when their expertise was acknowledged by others— something that doctoral students often struggle with. As Kelly added,

That article showcases my authority in this field, although I don't have any... (laughing) I remember, so there is a scholar from [university name], and they came to ASU to give a speech.. she had actually read my article... we talked about [research topic] ... [and she said] "oh you wrote your article I read it in the [journal name] and she complimented me on knowing about this field, which makes me feel good.

Ethan also had a similar motivator in his publishing pursuit, in the sense that he thought it is necessary to have a publication record to be validated and recognized as an eligible candidate and also meet the expectations of being a Ph.D. student.

I want to publish for the recognition as well, I guess, you know, as Ph.D. student, and I've always been told by, sometimes by my faculty or by my colleagues that, Oh, by the time you graduate, you should have at least one publication in a referee journal or something like that, just to validate the fact that you are a Ph.D. student and that you are a candidate and that

you should have something valid, or you know, that qualifies you as doing some sort of research in your field of study.

Receiving a sense of validation from the publishing experience was important for Ethan as it was a tangible outcome from his years of performance in the doctoral program. As he said,

Because it validates your performance, your efforts throughout these years, right? You started writing this paper in 2019. You know, for a course paper, and then you revise it through the whole portfolio paper process. And then, you use a lot of sources for your bibliography for your comprehensive exam, and then you revise it again multiple times after you send it out for publication to journals. Right? So, it's a lot. It's a long process. And especially when I felt discouraged before... from rejections, from mean comments, from all those. It finally becomes something. It feels as, you know, like that your effort actually counts. It uplifts you in a way.

Ethan also added that having a publication record gave him a sense of “legitimacy” to be a researcher which resonated with the improved confidence factor that Kelly talked about.

I feel a little more legitimate, I guess (laughing) because before I got published, I felt like maybe I'm not good enough as a researcher because I always got rejected even though I revised a lot. And now that I have published, I think it's sort of a token that proves that I can actually do it too, you know, that maybe I can be a big deal one day or something along

those lines. But yeah, a little bit better mentally and physically too, than before I got published.

Ethan emphasized the importance of receiving the recognition of being able to publish in helping him feel accomplished as a researcher.

Because it's a recognition that your work has been recognized by the people. The moment that I get to tell people, the moment that I get to post about it on social media (laughing), look. Look! The topic that maybe you all think it was too silly to [write about] ... (laughing), [cause] people think it might be too silly to write about [topic]. Look! It actually got published.

From the participants' narratives, it seemed that receiving recognition is critical to students' perception of themselves, especially for those dealing with imposter syndrome. This was the case for Sheila, who admitted that she struggles to see herself as a researcher, although she had published research articles and completed her Ph.D. degree.

I have my Ph.D. now. Now I'm gonna go into these places and think of myself, really, as a real researcher. Because it's always been put [that way], I feel like I'm playing... Playing researcher instead of being one... I think I'm still working on it. I think I think I'm still working on... I think I've always felt like a student pretending to be a researcher.

Despite having accomplishments and publications, feeling like posing as a researcher instead of being one was a clear indication that Sheila was struggling with imposter syndrome.

That's just what I love to do... But I feel like I'm playing researcher... I'm like, if I don't say anything, they won't know that I'm just a grad student. You know, they won't know... but I know what I'm doing... And so, I think I kind of feel like a researcher, but I still feel like I'm posing, I feel like I'm pretending but I do feel like I'm doing something.

Although Sheila struggled with feeling like a researcher, there were certain experiences other than publishing that helped her feel like a researcher. One of these experiences was talking about her research with others, which put her in a position to receive direct or indirect validation or positive feedback from her professors, peers, and other scholars.

I feel like a researcher in talking [about her research topic]. Even when I did my prospectus, even when I defended my prospectus, I think the feedback I got, the positive feedback I got, made me think, "Okay, I am doing this right". Even though it didn't feel like [it was right], it felt really ugly. I'm like [told myself], "Really? This is what you're all doing? This is it?!" It wasn't pretty. And I think those validations with that [prospectus], and then with your dissertation, I think that's like, Okay, I earned the right to be called the researcher.

In her experience during the prospectus defense, although Sheila was questioning her own work, receiving positive reinforcements from her committee members helped her gain confidence in her abilities as a researcher and the work she was doing.

Theme 4: Developing the Mindset of Being an Independent Researcher

With repeated practice, the participants gradually developed the mindset of an independent researcher. When they started their experience of writing for publishing, they sought early and frequent feedback from advisors and professors. However, after gaining more experience and awareness about how the process of publishing works, they gradually shifted from seeking early and constant feedback from advisors and professors to becoming more independent, especially at the early stages of the work.

Shift from a student role to a proactive researcher

When Sheila started her Ph.D. program, she recognized herself as a student who needed to be told what to do rather than an independent researcher. Moving toward the end of her doctorate, her goal had shifted to become an independent and proactive researcher, for which she developed strategies such as learning to “ask the right questions.”

I’m learning to be more aware of the questions that come up, knowing that they are not just questions. That they are research projects... so I think learning and kind of shifting that from a student mindset to more of an agent one where I have agency and choosing [what to do]. That was a big shift.

When asked about her image or idea of what it means to be a researcher, Sheila said that her initial idea of being a researcher seemed unrealistic as someone who already knows everything. Engaging with the publishing process, repeated practice, and seeing the experience of others helped her realize that being a

researcher is persevering through the process of learning and improving the work to sharpen her argument and improve the quality of her work.

I thought they [researchers] already knew everything. And they didn't have to work so hard. It was [about] having to work so hard. It was just a sign of me not being a good researcher.

This awareness of the complexities of the process and the importance of persevering through the challenges seemed to facilitate Sheila's process of becoming a researcher.

[To me] They [researchers] were people who already knew everything, and they simply decided what to write... It wasn't so much of somebody who was looking for information. Not like me collecting data not knowing if, you know, maybe I find something, maybe I don't, and how do I recognize the themes that continue to come up or form... I didn't know what I'm doing. "I don't know what I'm doing. I don't know what I'm doing, oh wait, there's something here..." So, it takes me a while to find something. And so, the whole first part of the process is continual self-doubt, you know, continuing to think that I don't know what I am doing, or I'm doing it wrong.

When asked how this shift of perspective happened, Sheila emphasized her experience of being a part of a coalition of scholars and learning about the similar experience of other scholars firsthand.

The more I read about their experiences, the more I'm like, oh my gosh, you know, they are normal. They're human. And so, I think that... that is

what changed a lot for me. Yeah. It's just listening to their stories... that helped me to know that I wasn't doing it wrong.

This realization made Sheila more aware of the realities of becoming an independent researcher, which involved going through many phases of trial and error and a continuous search for finding the right direction in her work.

Kelly also talked about the importance of becoming independent as a researcher and transitioning from depending on the advisor to being able to solve many issues on her own.

He [the advisor] did provide a lot of useful feedback to my writing. For example, I tend to mix the findings in discussion together, I don't know which information should go where. And he pointed it out a couple of times, and now I know. Having him point that out to me, I think, really helps. Helps me improve my writing and improve especially improve the way that I think and improve the way that I work. There are many positive influences from my mentors. Now, I do not really go to him for every paper. One reason is because I think that's going to slow me down, and I don't want to need him every day to get things done. I think another reason I did that deliberately is because I think we have to be independent sooner or later. We can rely on our advisor for now, but we will have to graduate one day, so I would rather just try, through trial and tribulation, I guess, to learn how to do things independently.

In Kelly's experience, being in the program and having access to her advisor served as a resource that helped her learn how to conduct research and write.

With receiving constructive feedback and practice, she later became capable of operating as an independent researcher—one that could overcome the challenges without the help of a supervisor.

The experiences of the participants showed that the main characteristics that contributes to doctoral students' development of a researcher identity is having a sense of belonging to the community of researchers in their field of study. This sense of belonging was crucial in their pursuit of research and becoming resilient in pursuing their research goals. Having a clear vision and goal to be part of that research community naturally resulted in an enhanced research productivity and developing long-term research plans. For participants, maintaining the motivation in their pursuit of research and publication seemed to be facilitated by receiving recognition from others in the field as well as their program of study, emphasizing the importance of being able to construct an image of being a researcher. At the later stages of the program and after achieving publication in peer-reviewed journals, the participants were able to develop the mindset of being an independent researcher and operate individually in their further research work.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS PART II: WHAT EXPERIENCES FACILITATED THE PROCESS OF IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT FOR DOCTORAL STUDENTS?

The publishing process posed certain challenges for doctoral students, such as dealing with criticism and imposter syndrome. With their internal motivation and resilience, the participants were able to overcome these challenges. Certain experiences were shown to facilitate this process for the doctoral students in this study. One of these experiences that was common for all the participants was collaboration opportunities which not only helped them learn from another scholar but also helped them to build confidence because of sharing their insights and having their voice in the work. Another factor that facilitated the participants' experience was having a support system from their peers or professors that helped them overcome the negative feelings and thoughts and focus on their long-term goals. The courses and workshops offered in their programs of study also helped participants get familiar with the field and develop the genre knowledge and awareness that is crucial for succeeding in the publishing process.

Theme 1: Collaboration Opportunities

The participants valued formal collaboration opportunities, co-authoring a piece with another scholar as well as co-presenting with other scholars, formed both inside and outside of the department. In collaborating with others, either in writing a manuscript or presenting at a conference, the participants became more cognizant of the delivery of their argument. Sheila reflected on her experience

collaborating with other scholars and how it resulted in better delivery of her argument,

You know when you're first learning a language, and you're first learning vocabulary and jargon and all of that... I know I might use it a little wrong, or I don't know what I'm saying, and I'm like stretching... I'm trying to express ideas that can't quite wrap my mind around, and so when somebody questions that... when I'm on shaky grounds, to begin with, and I'm going to defend that shaky ground a lot harder than if I was confident in what I was saying, you know... I think it's just that kind of collaboration and that kind of push back [that helps] ... sometimes questioning can be very, very productive and in just helping us think about it more, think about our theories more and go over and rehearse our expression of them so that they become more clear. Even if we still disagree or at the end, there's still a disconnect in some places, at the end, I feel confident in being able to express what I know and knowing what I know.

Although Sheila struggled in defending her position in collaboration experiences, she still acknowledged that such collaborations helped her understand that she does have valuable insights in the field. Working on the delivery of the argument helped her to a further increased sense of confidence as a researcher. On the importance of collaboration, Kelly also stated that collaboration with other scholars in the field allows one to realize that the work that they do is valuable.

Just being able to find someone like-minded people, I think it's like being able to show that person, you have this [research] idea. I think that's

encouraging; I think that means that you are maybe onto something that's really promising.

In collaborating with others, Kelly perceived her research ideas to be “promising” as it made her feel she has valuable insights that contribute to the work of others.

Theme 2: Having a Support Network

Being in a doctorate program facilitated the development of the researcher identity for the participants in different ways. One of the advantages of being in the doctorate program for the participants was being surrounded by other peers who were in the same boat as them, dealing with the same struggles and goals, and serving as a system of support for each other. Having access to a support system helped the participants maintain their motivation and gave them a sense of validation.

For Sheila, being connected to peers with the same goals and journey served as a support system. She referred to her peers as “camaraderie” and considered that group a place where they could all openly share their experiences. She gained validation and confidence from her doctoral student peers.

That was the group that I could ‘admit’ that I didn’t know what I was doing or ‘admit’ frustration. That I don’t think I can do this... I can’t do this... knowing that they would tell me ‘I can’... because I need somebody to tell me that I can do it. So, I think that was probably the most [helpful]. I think that being in the same boat with like-minded people in the same position while trying to do the same thing. That was strong. That was supportive.

The group of peers seemed to help Sheila overcome her imposter syndrome to some extent by assuring her that she would overcome the challenges and succeed. Having a support system also helped Ethan overcome the feeling of failure. As he said,

I told them [my peers] about my experiences, and they always told me, “Oh, rejection is part of the process, you know, plenty... multiple... 1000 rejections before success. But keep going. There will always be that ‘one’ journal that will like it and accept it eventually”. But then I’ll just also think, like, how? you know, how much longer can I keep going, you know... I can just be dealing with rejections all the time. It’s very discouraging, but I stuck to their advice... I don’t want to throw all of this hard work away, you know... I kept working on it. I just keep sending it out. My peers also said that they sent out their manuscripts under review and then got rejected as well. And that was kind of a thing that made me realize that, you know, I’m not alone. That there are other people, too. We’re going through the same thing.

Ethan also said his peers with publishing experience, as well as his professor, played a crucial role in overcoming the rejections and helped him understand the expectations. As he said,

Definitely, my peers, those who have published before me, they gave me good advice, like, how I should go about it, what to expect. Yeah. This friend that I mentioned earlier has been very supportive. Tell me what gave me suggestions on what to do after each rejection. I also had, you

know, other professors in my committee also gave good advice about publishing since one of them is from [research area].

For participants, receiving support was not limited to their peers. For some participants, the academic advisors served as a major source of positive reinforcement, encouragement, and mental support. This was especially the case for Sheila, whose advisor played a critical role in helping her overcome the discouragement resulting from the negative comments from the reviewers and validated her knowledge and expertise in the work that she was doing. In her first experience of publishing, Sheila had received an overwhelming amount of feedback from the reviewers. What seemed to help Sheila overcome the feeling of discouragement after receiving the reviewer's comments, her imposter syndrome, and pushing through the revision process was the encouragement received from her advisor. The advisor played a positive role in helping her process the comments and remain motivated to revise her work and re-submit for publication.

They gave me pages and pages of feedback... but she [the advisor] said, "If they didn't think it was worth it, they wouldn't have spent the time to give you all this feedback."

This comment helped Sheila overcome the self-doubt that she was facing after receiving substantial feedback from the reviewers. The positive relationship with the advisor and the support she continuously received from the advisor made Sheila comfortable sharing her ideas with the advisor, even if not "complex thoughts" in her belief.

She is really good at just letting me talk and ask about the dumbest things and not be so worried about if I'm saying the right things or making me feel dumb for not knowing the answer... It helped me build trust.

In addition to the trust and support from the advisor, Sheila valued the specific feedback and thought-provoking questions that her advisor offered her.

She would really point out specific areas and questions that really helped. She would go through the reviewer's feedback; she would go through it with me. And basically, explain it to me. Sometimes there were a few things that I just didn't get, and she would simplify it... She would walk me through that. We sat in her office, and I had pulled up my laptop, and we just talked about it, and she would simplify it. Or rephrase it in a conversational language. And that was good. But it was mainly me having that trust in her that I could ask her anything.

Sheila's experience showed the importance of building trust between advisees and advisors and having one-on-one conversations to guide the advisees' work.

Ethan emphasized the guiding role of his advisor. When he was struggling to make his work relevant to the field, the advisor provided him with an example of a research article that was similar to his research topic, which informed his work extensively.

She once gave me this paper that's really very similar to my paper, and it got published, and that just really inspired me to keep going. That's like, "Oh, they can do it this way. And they got published, and I can do it in a

similar way and got published too.” Something like that. So that was a good example of the things that pushed me forward.

Kelly also emphasized the importance of having the opportunity to receive personalized feedback from her advisor. As she said,

He [the advisor] did provide a lot of useful feedback to my writing. For example, I tend to mix the findings in discussion together, I don't know which information should go where. And he pointed it out a couple of times, and now I know... Another problem that I tend to have was the research question [and] research finding. Sometimes they tend to claim something that's not obvious in the research finding, and sometimes the research finding did not really support or there's not enough findings to answer the research question so that kind of discrepancies are very critical.

Kelly emphasized the importance of receiving personalized feedback through one-on-one conversation to understand the gaps in her work.

I think that's kind of how you learn, you can discuss functions of different sections [in a class setting], but I think it's only when you make the mistake and only when you are corrected that you learn how to do it next time.

Having opportunities to receive individualized feedback was one of the crucial benefits of being in the program that significantly facilitated Kelly's experience of publishing and helping her grow as a scholar.

Theme 3: Formal Instruction During Coursework and Workshops

The participants shared their insights on one course they had all taken as a requirement in their program, writing for publication, emphasizing the role that the course played in their experience of publishing.

Sheila benefited from this course significantly, and she emphasized that one of the important experiences she had during the course was the opportunity to talk to journal editors to understand the reviewers/editor's expectations. As Sheila said,

She [the course professor] had editors Skype in and tell us their experience and what they're looking for and what editors do, and that helped a whole lot to understand [the expectations].

Kelly also mentioned that during her first publishing experience, she was taking this class and was able to receive personalized feedback from the professor on her manuscript as she was in the process of submitting her work. As she said,

I also took a writing for publication course during that time. and so, if there was a question related to publication, I would ask her [the professor].

Ethan and Todd also added that the writing for publication course enhanced their genre knowledge and learned about "the culture of their field" (Ethan) which facilitated their publishing experience. Todd also emphasized that the coursework during his doctoral studies helped him develop unique perspectives in his work that would not have been possible otherwise.

All the courses I took, each individual course would influence the direction of my work. So, I'm not necessarily a [expert in area 1]. But my article deals with [area 1]. And that's because I was taking a [area 1] class. And

[expertise area 2] that aspect of that article was included because I had taken [expertise area 2] with [professor name] and my certificate in [that area] ... So, I would say that the courses themselves are what really influenced me.

The coursework informed the research work of the participants in different ways. The publication course helped doctoral students familiarize themselves with the conventions of their field and better understand the journals and their expectations. Other courses helped the doctoral students enhance their subject-matter knowledge and add additional insight into their work that could have been possibly undiscovered without having the relevant coursework.

While all participants faced many challenges in the trajectory of becoming a researcher and publishing their work, certain types of experiences facilitated their process of development. These experiences included not only opportunities that allowed the doctoral students to gain new knowledge (such as coursework and constructive feedback from professors and reviewers), but more importantly the opportunities that allowed them to build confidence such as collaborations with other scholars where they could develop and practice their scholarly voice, and having a support system to remain resilient and focused on the long-term objectives (becoming a published researcher).

CHAPTER 6

FINDINGS PART III: WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES THAT DOCTORAL STUDENTS FACE IN THE PROCESS OF BECOMING A RESEARCHER?

The main challenge that all the participants had to overcome in their trajectory of becoming a researcher and also getting their work published was the critical comments from the reviewers and getting through multiple rejections before they could publish their work. While these experiences resulted in frustration for the doctoral students, with time, they learned not to take the comments personally, work to address the comments and grow from the experience. Another important challenge that impacted the participants' experience was the phases of imposter syndrome or the feeling of not being good enough to be a part of the community. This feeling was exacerbated when they struggled to reach an outcome (publishing) after receiving criticism and rejection.

Theme 1: Persevering Through the Reviewers' Negative/Conflicting Comments

Overcoming the feeling of disappointment after receiving criticism or substantial feedback was one of the challenges that all participants emphasized in their overall experience of becoming a researcher. These critical and often substantial comments mostly came from the journal reviewers, causing the participants to struggle with finding the motivation to continue working on their manuscripts. Sheila reflected on her experience in overcoming the challenge of

critical comments that she received from the reviewers when she submitted her manuscript for the first time:

They were very kind... but basically, they said there's something there and said even some of the language is quite powerful but if you want this published, you're going to have to completely redo it! ... And said we do understand if you do not want to do this amount of work.

Taking in the feedback and persevering through the process was Sheila's biggest challenge in her publishing journey as she said, "the hardest was just getting that feedback and not curling up and give up". Sheila emphasized the importance of taking the time to process feedback and overcoming the self-doubt and discouragement resulting from the substantial feedback.

I had to set that aside for a little while, and then I picked it up, and when I first read through the feedback and what they were proposing, it's like I couldn't even wrap my head around what they were proposing and that's when the self-doubt you have like I'm not even good enough to know what they are talking about.

What seemed to help her overcome the feeling of self-doubt and push through the revision process was the encouragement from her advisor. The advisor played a positive role in helping her process the comments and remain motivated to improve her work and resubmit.

They gave me pages and pages of feedback, and she [the advisor] said, "If they didn't think it was worth it, they wouldn't have spent the time to give you all this feedback.

This comment helped Sheila overcome the self-doubt that she was facing at the time. From this first attempt at submitting the manuscript to a journal, Sheila learned that one of the major areas she needs to develop as a research writer is to learn how to dive deep into her work and go “beyond the surface,” as she described it. She said,

And this is one of the things they told me, I spend a lot of time almost like trying to prove my intellect by doing a whole lot of [source retelling]... what they are saying is that I was writing it as a student, like writing a dissertation where I feel like I have to prove that I know what I’m talking about by bringing all of this other content and all of these other sources, which is good, the lit review is good, but I go overboard, and I tend to let the scholars make my arguments for me, than support me.

This metacognitive awareness seems to be the turning point in Sheila’s journey of becoming a scholar, where she discovered how to strengthen her voice in her writing.

Once I saw what I was doing, I saw it everywhere. I am like, oh my gosh, I see it now, but it was [advisor’s name] that was like really pointing it out to me that I hide behind scholars. That’s almost like understanding the way it works, so I still didn’t quite get the way it worked [previously] and it took me a while to figure that out, and I think that was the hardest.

In this experience, Sheila emphasized the importance of receiving positive feedback in her journey that kept her motivated to push through the challenges. At the time that she was struggling with the feedback received, and the feeling of

self-doubt, the positive feedback from the reviewers helped her feel a sense of belonging to the larger community of the field.

Even though the feedback was tough, there was some pretty generous feedback that made me feel that I might be able to be a part of this community. That was probably one of my favorite things.

With the positive reinforcement, Sheila was able to see herself as a scholar, rather than just a student. She emphasized the feeling of being the collaborator's colleague when she said, "I felt like I'm more of a colleague and not just a student".

Sheila was challenged by the substantial feedback from the reviewers. However, through this experience, she developed the perseverance and attitude to keep improving her work. Kelly also talked about the challenge of understanding the comments and taking in the criticism from the reviewers.

I think during that stage, one of the difficulties was to understand the suggestions and maybe sometimes being able to take the criticism, you know, because some criticisms could be pretty harsh, so you have to take the criticism and think and come up with a way to integrate those suggestions into revised paper.

Kelly highlighted the importance of developing the mindset of taking in the criticism and thinking about ways to integrate those comments into the work.

Similar to Sheila, Kelly also mentioned the role of her advisor in facilitating her work in developing the manuscript which had to be significantly revised.

And of course, I got help from my mentor, who especially helped me during that revision stage because I had to change quite a lot from the original manuscript. I changed some parts about the organization of the writing. But I also changed quite a bit in terms of language. Like how to... how not to sound so harsh, I guess. Yeah, anyways, you just sometimes need a second pair of eyes. To help you in [becoming] a more experienced person.

Kelly highlighted the importance of taking the time to process the feedback from the reviewers.

Of course, I had a hard time taking the feedback, but once you just sit down and think about the solutions and do not just draw on the problems. I think that helps. That kind of mindset helps you manage the process.

In addition to the role of the advisor in mediating the process, Kelly also emphasized the importance of not taking the feedback personally and the mindset of being open to constructive feedback.

We get a lot of feedback from different people... from our professors from outside, the reviewers. Don't think of them as criticisms, as they do not intend to take you down. It could be very hard to face the criticism and understand them, sometimes. But if you think about it, they actually make sense, right? And you fix that. It actually helps; you improve. So now whenever I have criticism, I think of them as constructive [feedback]. It helps me, it helps my work get better, so I think that kind of mentality helps.

Todd also shared his experience in gaining the same awareness— that it takes multiple rounds of feedback and revising to produce a work of good quality. As he said,

One of the things I think I took away is that there's sort of these multiple intellectual levels that you need to address. So, each time [you get feedback] you've added some sort of intellectual level to a paper, I think that it becomes more and more viable, as a publication. It has to make sense [to the readers].

In explaining the challenges that he faced in dealing with the reviewer's comments, Todd said.

Usually, those reviewer comments are super negative. And, you know, you have to take the time to take the perspective that it's critical. This is the way that we make sure that what happens is valid. And the things that we are publishing are good academic articles. So, there's that aspect too. So, I think that you need a sort of perspective shift when you get the comments, the first the first time you read through them, you're kind of like, No, this is wrong. No, I hate this reviewer. No. They are wrong. But you take the time to think about the fact that your paper would never be as good without their comments. So, you just need to consider their comments and move forward, like you would, you know, if you got criticism from a professor. At least, that's what I did. It's like if my professor was like, "You did this wrong, and this wrong, and this wrong," I wouldn't be like, "You're wrong!" I would be like, "Okay, how can I fix it?"

And so, you just have to, I mean, at first, it seems like it's never going to happen because you got like 50 different comments that you're trying to address. But you just go slowly, go one by one, or what is it? Anne Lamott says Bird by Bird, is a Bird by Bird [process], and you get it done.

Todd emphasized the importance of being able to take in the criticism and maintain a positive perspective to constructively incorporate that feedback and develop the ability to take in the criticism "bird by bird." Despite the challenging process, Todd valued the perspective gained from the reviewers when he added,

And there's no possible way I would ever be able to write the article that I wrote, without the reviewers' comments and criticism. So to me, I take a positive perspective. I may not agree with everything. And if I don't agree, then I will consider that as the author and I'll make a rebuttal to why I don't think that that's a valid sort of criticism that I should address. But that's our job. Right? As a researcher, that's your job; your job is to take criticism from other people from your peers, consider what they say, think about it, and make a decision on how to move forward. And the truth is that, you know, my personal experience is that the writing that I've done would never be as good as it is without that criticism. So even though it's negative, even though I don't like it, you know, I systematically set about putting it into a grid each comment, and then I specifically, you know, and then I just go through and what is the Anne Lamott says Bird by Bird, one by one, go through, address them, and tell them all done.

Similar to Kelly, Todd emphasized the importance of maintaining a positive mindset in taking in the feedback and enhancing his audience awareness to improve the work, achieve publishing, and feel “validated” as a researcher. When he said:

And it takes a little while; I can't do that right away, right? Because at first, I read the comments, and it pisses you off. And then you're like, ah, that's all. That's all kind of horrible and stupid, and I don't like it. And there's so many comments [that] I don't agree with. And then you kind of put it away for a week or two, and then you get back to it. Because, you know, you got to submit it again. And you know, you orient yourself correctly, by the time you come back, you say, these comments are going to make my paper better. And if I engage with them and think about them, and I don't have to agree with all of them, right? But I need to consider them because these people are my peers. And they took the time to read my paper and give me feedback. And only through that process will my sort of research be 'validated.' And will my research be better 'because' of those comments for future readers? Yeah! I mean, I take the same perspective as we teach in first-year composition. Right? A reader is a reader, and the author is the author; I can never beat the reader. So, I need readers to tell me how to be better.

In addition to the critical comments, another challenge that Todd emphasized was receiving conflicting comments from the reviewers. Todd said,

It's a challenge to deal with reviewers because sometimes they have conflicting advice. Yeah, sometimes they tell you opposite things to do. Some people love what you're doing. Some people don't. Some people suggest things other people say that it's good. And so that sort of conflicting advice is really hard to navigate because, ultimately, they're the ones that decide whether it gets published. So I don't know how you necessarily balance those, but I guess you just do your best job.

Ethan also considered getting through the reviewers' comments as one of the biggest challenges in his trajectory of becoming a researcher. He said,

I've been rejected multiple times, and cried multiple times, and then felt really discouraged multiple times. But I let that, you know, sink in for about a week or two. Then I get back to rewrite and revise.

In overcoming this challenge, he considered his perseverance a crucial success factor since he was interested in his research topic and was determined to publish his work. He said,

It was one of my portfolio papers that I kept revising, like 1000 times. And it's been three years since I started writing that paper. It was originally a course paper. And I've always been interested in [topic], you know, especially because I can work with data from [data source]. And so, I stuck with that. And I just kept revising and a lot of perseverance to push through.

Ethan experienced significant challenges in working with the journal reviewers as the value of his work was not initially justified in his work. However, his personal

experience with a social issue and his interest to advocate for that issue gave him the resilience to continue to address the criticism he received which eventually resulted in his success in publishing his research work.

Theme 2: Imposter Syndrome and Lack of Confidence

The participants often struggled with confidence and feeling like a researcher, especially after receiving criticism and substantial feedback on their work. Ethan reflected on his first-time experience submitting a manuscript for a journal and how the discouraging feedback he received resulted in him developing doubts about his abilities as a researcher and a writer.

I got a rejection after it went for a peer review round. And the comments were really... I found it really unprofessional and very rude. And I just felt really discouraged... Because you know, the reviewer one said, using a lot of exclamation points, it's like... It was like he or she was yelling at me. They just lifted 10-20 points from my paper... And the last one was just like, this paper doesn't really contribute to our field. It's not making any new knowledge. You just pull in different information from different, you know, papers, but you're not really making anything conclusive here and with a lot of exclamation points. So, I was like, is that even like, how people do it in academia, because I thought they would be more, I don't know, respectful, more courteous, like I get it, that you can reject it. I mean, that's like, that's the normal, I mean, I expected that because that's like the culture, I guess. I just didn't expect the rudeness from them... But that was my first time getting feedback from them. So, I kind of knew what

to expect, too. So that was the first struggle that I saw. I was like, wow, it was like taking a bullet. So yeah. That was like the real struggle that I had the most.

The negative comments from the reviewers and the tone that it was delivered caused a phase of imposter syndrome for Ethan. He said:

So those mean reviews, the multiple rejections, and this mentality of not being good enough, [and asking myself] am I even valid? It. Sometimes it just made me question myself, am I good enough to be in the Ph.D. program? I'm almost graduating, and I don't really have a solid work performance, something tangible to look at, or something like that. Is that some sort of an imposter syndrome, I guess when you get a lot of rejection and all of that, it definitely questions you whether you are good enough or not, going into the job market.

In overcoming these challenges, Ethan emphasized the importance of perseverance and the mentality of "fake it until you make it."

I just, you know, sucked it up, even though I don't have [answers to] those questions, I just kept going. I persevere. Some sort of just fake it till you make it.

Although Ethan was challenged by imposter syndrome, with his awareness of the competitive job market as well as observing the experiences of his peer he was able to push through those feelings of not being good enough as a researcher.

Theme 3: Lack of Authority as a Novice Researcher

In working with the reviewers, Ethan considered humility and modesty as important factors in order to receive approval from the reviewers. This was especially due to his position as a novice researcher and someone who has not yet established himself in the field.

I feel like I'm humble as a novice researcher, I guess because I always have taken or considered the feedback from the committees, from the reviewers, and all of those. I don't really defy them. I don't go against their power or whatever. Whatever they tell me to do, I'm going to do it. I'm not usually the kind of researcher that challenges their advice unless it's really against my interests or 90% of the work that I have already done. And if they say, oh, I have to collect new data or something like that, that it's something that I might go against. So, I was always willing to add something in there in my research if they told me to add more. And so, humility, perseverance, and patience as well... I feel like part of it is because I'm so new; I just got into this culture... because I haven't been here for a long time. I feel like it's better for me to just follow their advice rather than just who is this new student wanting to like, defy and (laughing) testing their power or something like that. So, I feel like [by humility] I would have a better chance of getting published.

However, going forward, Ethan believed that with a publication record, he would be in a position to have more authority as a researcher.

I guess I have the agency to start, what topics I want to write about, what directions it wants to go. And then this agency gets, I don't know,

determined and controlled on some level by them to say whether this is the right path or not. But usually, I talk to them first. I run the ideas by them first, and they usually agree they let me do it anyway... I think it's the publication that makes me feel more authoritative, or that gives me more authority, for example. So, the authority will be very specific [to my publication], so it has to be very relevant to what I published. So I think I might be more legitimate in terms of a researcher [topic] So it's so very specific to these kinds of things that I feel like I get to be a little bit more powerful because I did a lot of research on it and then I reported, and then the publication validates those experiences for me.

Kelly also talked about how even with her publication record, she feels as though she does not have authority as a researcher in the field.

I don't know if I have authority, I still feel like I'm being judged by editors or reviewers.

The experience of publishing a newsletter where she took on a strong stance on her research topic, exercising a strong voice, and further being recognized by other people in conferences helped her get a sense that she can be "authoritative" in that specific domain of research as it shows she knows the field well.

CHAPTER 7

DISCUSSION

The experiences of participants in becoming a researcher confirmed Tonso's (2006) framework in that the development of identity occurs in three main aspects:

- Developing the perception of being a researcher
- Performing as a researcher
- Having the image of being a researcher

While the three main components are crucial in forming identity, one's image or perception of others can drastically impact the performance and self-perceptions, as was seen in the experiences of doctoral students aiming to have a tangible outcome as published work to be seen and validated as a researcher. This finding aligns with Tonso's (2006) findings showing that for engineering students, the image and the labels were important determining factors in students' performance, future career objectives, and the individual's motivation in becoming an engineer.

The participants showed that one of the major motivations in publishing is being seen as a researcher by other members of the field and feel validated as a researcher. They believed that publishing is an act that is expected from their current and future role, along with other acts such as presenting at conferences, collaborating with other scholars, and so on. Being perceived, acknowledged, and validated gave participants a sense that they are doing what they are

expected to do and gave them a sense of belonging to the community. This finding aligns with Dunlap's (2006) work that engaging in publishing promotes self-efficacy for Ph.D. students. The publishing experience and constructing an image of being a researcher, both in the eyes of others as well as the participants themselves, gave them a sense of confidence and validation that helped them overcome the challenges they faced (Sinclair et al., 2013; Turner & McApline, 2011) including imposter syndrome.

Development of Researcher Identity

For the participants, the main goal in constructing an image or performing as a researcher was to gain a sense of belonging to a community of researchers in a field. For them, presenting at conferences and publishing research articles was a way of showing their 'knowing' that they are a part of the community of researchers in the field and are capable of making contributions to this community. This sense of belonging was critical in the doctoral student's decision to start the Ph.D. and also to pursue publishing in a referee journal.

Feeling a sense of belonging to a community of researchers was a crucial aspect of researcher identity development and, in fact, the criteria for selecting 4 out of the initial five recruited participants for the study. In the case of the fifth participant, who was further excluded from the study, the main identity recognized by the participant was being a 'practitioner' above all, and he rejected the idea of having a researcher identity, even though he had published research articles in refereed journals. He denied belonging to the community of researchers based on his personal preferences and experiences of conflicts. This

participant's emphasis on his identity as a practitioner echoed the findings from the literature that how doctoral students perceive their identities as a researcher can be influenced by their other embodied identities. This finding confirms Hall and Burns (2009) findings that establishing researcher identity is contingent on the negotiation of identities and having conflicts with other role identities can inhibit the formation of researcher identity. The experience of the excluded participant also illustrated the importance of understanding the doctoral students' pre-existing identities as well as their objectives and goals in order to decide what type of mentoring suits their path.

Another major aspect of identity development was the ability to develop a research plan for their future work and make connections between different research ideas. This ability was enhanced during the later stages of the Ph.D. program as the participants were getting closer to graduation, allowing them to shift from a student role to a researcher role. Constructing an image of being a researcher was critical in participants' experience in becoming a researcher as it gave them a sense of self-confidence from the validation and acknowledgments. This aspect of identity development was a powerful force that caused the doctoral students to be persistent with their publishing goals and persevere through the challenges. These findings confirmed Sinclair et al. (2014) and Turner and McAlpine (2011) that validation and confidence are critical factors in the formation of researcher identity and creating an emotional engagement with research. It also confirmed Coterall's (2015) findings that confidence, or believing

in one's own capabilities to succeed, helps doctoral students overcome negative feelings of isolation, disorientation, and imposter syndrome (Cotterall, 2015). Less explored in the previous literature, the last aspect of researcher identity development that the participants highlighted was developing the mindset of being an independent researcher, one that needs less reinforcement and feedback from others (mainly academic advisors) to start and continue a research work. While at the beginning of their trajectory, they sought feedback and input from their advisors, with experience and repeated practice, they gradually learned to be critical of their own work, predict and seek questions and became more independent as a scholar.

Support System, Validation, and Positive Reinforcements

The experiences of the doctoral students in this study showed the significance of receiving positive reinforcement in students' success in completing their doctoral degrees as well as in becoming a researcher. While the feedback received from the advisors, professors, and reviewers was constructive in improving their work, the doctoral students often struggled with receiving critique on their work, losing their motivation or confidence that scholarly work is within their capabilities. It was only through positive affirmations and acknowledgments that they could persevere through these challenges. The sources of positive reinforcement for doctoral students were both formal and informal. For participants, formal reinforcement was gained in interactions with advisors, professors, and other scholars during the conferences and receiving positive feedback from the reviewers. The informal reinforcement was gained

through the network of peers, both within and outside the institutions, where no power hierarchy was involved in the interaction.

These experiences show the importance of providing opportunities where the work of doctoral students, whether they result in publishing outcomes or not, is recognized and valued. It also shows that these affirmations occur through various channels.

Self-efficacy, the confidence for successful performance (Bandura, 1977), has been shown to be one of the determining factors in writing performance (Bruning & Kauffman, 2015). The sources of self-efficacy as proposed by Bandura (1977) were the following: Mastery experience or successful performance, observation of other's performance and assessing personal abilities in relation to those observations, psychological and emotional states, and others' beliefs on the individual's abilities. As Bruning and Kauffman (2015) elaborated, the last source involves "suggestions, encouragements, and interpretations of performance" (p. 162). The participants' experiences in this study affirms these theories in that although all participants had a strong internal motivation to succeed in publishing, external validation was crucial in maintaining their sense of motivation, especially prior to having a tangible outcome (such as their publication record).

While the advisor-advisee is often considered the main site for such affirmations, the experiences of the participants showed that having an expanded network of support, including other peers, course professors, potential collaborators in the field, the reviewers, or other scholars with similar interests

can contribute to students' sense of validation. The findings from the literature also indicated that not being recognized or approved as a researcher poses challenges in the process of identity development during doctoral education and that more opportunities for collaboration can create positive affect and a renewed sense of confidence for doctoral students (Jazvac-Martek, 2009).

A sense of validation was critical in doctoral students' confidence influencing their trajectory of becoming a researcher. All the doctoral students in this study experienced phases of self-doubt after receiving criticism and rejections when first attempting to publish their work. They experienced moments and phases where they wanted to give up or thought they were not good enough to publish. However, they managed to push forward and succeed, mainly due to positive reinforcement received from formal and informal sources—possibly an important differentiating factor between the students who succeed and those who fail to succeed.

Encouraging doctoral students to build networks within and outside their programs can cultivate a context where they can receive this positive reinforcement. The advisors could work to encourage the doctoral students to participate in formal (conference presentations and networking) and informal opportunities (peer groups) early on in doctoral programs so the students have an expanded network for support rather than solely relying on advisor-advisee relationships. As argued by Hyon and Wolke (2020), graduate writing groups can play a role in doctoral students' socialization in their academic discourse communities. Thus, the reading and writing groups within and outside of the

departments can also serve as a good support system and a place where doctoral students practice their voice and articulation of ideas.

Role of the Doctorate Program and Collaboration Opportunities

Being in a doctorate program facilitated the experiences of doctoral students in different ways. One of the important impacts of being in a doctoral program was having access to professors with similar areas of expertise. This network was a great source of formal and informal feedback for doctoral students as they were preparing their manuscripts for publishing. The professors as well as the peers in the department served as a support system that helped doctoral students overcome the negative feelings and imposter syndrome.

For all the participants, the first published work had started as a course paper which they continuously received feedback on (from different resources) and kept revising until they succeeded in publishing. A particular course, Writing for Publication, was a good opportunity for doctoral students to enhance their genre knowledge and understand the expectations of the journals and the field. It also provided a good opportunity for the participants to get feedback on their manuscripts as they were engaged in the process of writing and submitting their work, and they had the opportunity to work on the reviewer's feedback with the help of the course professor and as well as their advisor.

The experiences of doctoral students showed that collaboration opportunities, both within and outside of the department, provided a context for the doctoral students to not only learn from the perspectives of other scholars (who were usually more experienced than them), it also allowed them to feel that

they have a valuable perspective and insight in the field. Furthermore, as Sheila's experience showed, it can be an opportunity for doctoral students to practice the delivery of their arguments and engage with their ideas on a deeper level. These findings align with Jazvac-Martek (2009) that more collaboration opportunities can create positive affect and a renewed sense of confidence for doctoral students. Offering, fostering, or encouraging collaboration and other professional development opportunities early in the program can greatly help doctoral students develop their researcher identity through working with other scholars and practicing their research voice. While this study focused on the experiences of formal collaboration in the form of collaborating to publish or present at a conference, informal collaboration opportunities such as group projects during PhD coursework or peer reviewing activities could also bring the same benefits in doctoral students' trajectory of becoming a researcher as these opportunities create a supportive learning context and enhance a sense of efficacy for the writers (Bruning and Kauffman, 2015).

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND LIMITATIONS

The narratives of the doctoral students showed that the process of publishing can be discouraging for emerging scholars as they go through many challenges in getting to know their field as well as dealing with the criticism of their work. The challenges faced had moments and phases of frustration and self-doubt. What seemed to allow the doctoral students to succeed was their personal perseverance which was facilitated by the positive reinforcements from others and having a strong channel of support.

This study has implications for doctoral students' training and advising. Traditionally, advisors are seen as the main source of influence on doctoral students' work (Golde, 2005). This study, however, shows the need for attending to other potential resources within the departments or across the institution for doctoral students to enhance their internal motivators to pursue their scholarly work and achieve their desired outcome. Networking and collaborating with their peers and professors (in different forms) can be a valuable addition to advisor-advisee relationships to further facilitate the formation of researcher identity. It is also important to bring more attention to the common challenges faced, such as frustration or feeling stuck in the research, as challenges that all emerging researchers face and allow for accepting of that phase as a natural step in becoming a researcher. Cultivating collaboration opportunities in writing or

presenting can drastically facilitate the process of identity development among emerging scholars.

This study also offers implications for research in the writing field, bringing more attention to the role of identity development in writing performance. Internal motivation and a developed sense of identity were shown to result in continuous work to achieve an outcome. The participants' experiences call for more attention to the process of identity development both in research on writing development, as well as teaching advanced academic writing. In the case of the writing for publishing course, more hands-on practices can be incorporated to have doctoral students practice various aspects of their research writer identity.

This study had some limitations that call for future exploration. Given the limited scope of this project, I only attended to the perspective of the doctoral students relying on their memory and shared stories as the main source of data. Including the perspectives of mentors, journal reviewers, and writing instructors can be fruitful in having a more detailed understanding of the process of identity development and what additional factors play out in the success of doctoral students—mainly when it comes to publishing. The study could also benefit from including data from text analysis to explore how doctoral students' writing has gone through shifts as they were working to address the criticism received. At last, all the participants recruited were from the English department, and they were also experienced in teaching writing. Thus, all the participants had a high level of genre awareness when it came to their scholarly writing. A further study can explore the process of identity development among doctoral students in

other fields (such as STEM) to identify any potential differences or additional factors involved in the process.

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APPENDIX I

ASU IRB APPROVAL LETTER



EXEMPTION GRANTED

[Paul Matsuda](#)
[CLAS-H: English](#)
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Dear [Paul Matsuda](#):

On 5/24/2022 the ASU IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title:	Scholarly publication (writing for publication) and researcher identity
Investigator:	Paul Matsuda
IRB ID:	STUDY00015996
Funding:	None
Grant Title:	None
Grant ID:	None
Documents Reviewed:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consent form-Nouri(REVISED), Category: Consent Form;• Interview questions-Nouri, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions);• Recruitment email-Nouri, Category: Recruitment Materials;• Template: Social Behavioral Protocol-Nouri(REVISED), Category: IRB Protocol;

The IRB determined that the protocol is considered exempt pursuant to Federal Regulations 45CFR46 (2) Tests, surveys, interviews, or observation on 5/24/2022.

In conducting this protocol you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).