

# Exploring Doctoral Students' Belonging and Identity with Figured Worlds Theory and Community of Practice Theory

**Hsin-Chi Huang**

Bristol University, UK

## **Abstract.**

This study presents a potential theoretical framework for understanding doctoral students' belonging and identity development by integrating Wenger's community of practice theory (Wenger, 1998) and Holland et al.'s (1998) figured world theory. Doctoral students take part in various communities of practice during their learning journey; they construct meanings and form their own realm of interpretation in offline, online, and hybrid learning contexts. From novice researchers to seasoned scholars, this socialisation process not only transfers knowledge but also forms their sense of belonging and identity. The combination of these two theories can also help to demonstrate the dynamic nature of doctoral socialisation. This paper illuminates the uniqueness of the doctoral students' identity and belonging mediated by both physical objects and digital technologies in the hybrid learning and research environment. In Part One, after introducing the significance of doctoral students' belonging and identity, the author introduces doctoral communities of practice and elaborates on three important elements of figured worlds: improvisation, activity, and artefact in the doctoral learning context. In Part Two, the author explains the feasibility of integrating the two theories and how doctoral students' figured worlds are linked to their participation in different communities of practice.

**Keywords:** dynamic; hybrid; participation; place; socialisation