

**Perceptions of influence by social actors on professional doctoral students: A nested case study's methodological use of sociograms**

by

Linda Leith

Canterbury Christ Church University

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## **Abstract**

Social influence is an important part of human relationships and people's daily interactions (Turner 2005) and causes changes in attitude, values, emotions, behaviour, and actions.

This interpretive study explores the social influence perceptions and experiences of eleven professional individuals. It analyses who their influencers were and how they affected participants' decisions and actions to engage in a professional doctorate.

Turner's (2005) concept of social power through others and Broome's (2009) philosophical concept of reasoned judgement, motivation and action were used to understand how the participants' social interactions affected their actions.

Research participants were professional doctorate students at various stages of their study. Each professional participated in semi-structured interviews and completed a sociogram to explore the effects of social influence. Template analysis, a form of thematic analysis, was selected to analyse data because this approach supported the development of multiple iterations as new themes emerged, allowing other themes to be changed or deleted.

The findings highlight how friends' and families' influential skills signposted doctoral study and the ways they used social power to encourage, challenge or dissuade professionals from engaging in a doctorate. An unexpected finding was the significant effect authoritative parents had on adult children with established careers and the way these parents' education expectations affected their children's doctoral engagement.

The findings also identified how professional colleagues' status, expert voice and in-group membership were important influences, as participants aspired to attain the same status

and expert voice as their colleagues and become influential professional practice advocates.

The research makes an original contribution to knowledge and PD practice as it illustrates the perceptions of how family, friends, and professional colleagues used influential strategies and the effect this had on professional doctoral students' personal and professional decisions and actions.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1 INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND OF PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATES .....	1
1.2 STATEMENT OF THE ISSUE .....	3
1.3 RESEARCH AIMS .....	4
1.4 RESEARCH QUESTION .....	5
1.5 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK.....	6
1.6 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH.....	7
1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY .....	10
1.8 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY .....	14
<b>2 LITERATURE REVIEW .....</b>	<b>17</b>
2.1 INTRODUCTION .....	17
2.2 SOCIAL POWER AND INFLUENCE POWER .....	21
2.3 INFLUENTIAL SOCIAL AGENTS.....	28
2.4 THE POLICY PICTURE, WHO WERE SOCIALLY INFLUENTIAL? .....	38
2.5 PROFESSIONAL CHOICE: PD OR PHD? .....	43
2.6 PROFESSIONAL DOCTORAL STUDENTS .....	51
2.7 WHAT IS IN IT FOR INFLUENTIAL SOCIAL AGENTS – BENEFITS AND RISKS .....	60
2.8 CONCLUDING SUMMARY .....	62
<b>3 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK .....</b>	<b>64</b>
3.1 INTRODUCTION .....	64
3.2 THE THREE-PROCESS THEORY .....	65
3.3 REASON, REASONED - JUDGEMENT AND ACTION .....	68
3.4 POWER IN ACTION MODEL .....	70
3.5 SUMMARY.....	70
<b>4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN.....</b>	<b>72</b>

4.1 INTRODUCTION .....	72
4.2 SECTION 1 – AIMS OF THE STUDY .....	73
4.3 SECTION TWO — THE RESEARCH DESIGN .....	79
4.4 DATA COLLECTION .....	82
4.5 PARTICIPANTS SAMPLE .....	86
4.6 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DESIGN .....	89
4.7 SECTION THREE — DATA COLLECTION METHODS .....	92
4.8 SECTION FOUR – DATA ANALYSIS METHODS .....	100
4.9 RESEARCH PERMISSIONS AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS .....	108
4.10 THE PILOT STUDY .....	111
4.11 CONCLUDING SUMMARY .....	113
<b>5 FINDINGS RELATING TO PERCEIVED SOCIAL INFLUENCE OF PARTICIPANTS’ FAMILY AND FRIENDS.....</b>	<b>114</b>
5.1 INTRODUCTION .....	114
5.2 THE EXPERIENCE OF FAMILY SOCIAL INFLUENCE .....	115
5.3 DEALING WITH CHALLENGE .....	133
5.4 THE EXPERIENCE OF FRIENDS’ SOCIAL INFLUENCE.....	140
5.5 SUMMARY.....	143
<b>6 PROFESSIONAL COLLEAGUE AND GROUP SOCIAL INFLUENCE.....</b>	<b>148</b>
6.1 INTRODUCTION .....	148
6.2 THE INFLUENCE OF PROFESSIONAL GROUPS.....	150
6.3 INFLUENCE OF STATUS .....	152
6.4 OBSERVATIONAL INFLUENCE.....	163
6.5 PROFESSIONAL COLLEAGUES’ PERSUASIVE ADVOCACY .....	169
6.6 DOCTORAL EXPECTATIONS .....	173
6.7 EXPECTATIONS OF INFLUENTIAL AGENCY .....	176
6.8 SUMMARY.....	186

<b>7 DISCUSSION.....</b>	<b>190</b>
7.1 SOCIAL AGENTS AND THE WAYS THEY INFLUENCE DOCTORAL ENGAGEMENT.....	190
7.2 THE EXTENT OF PROFESSIONAL INFLUENCE.....	195
7.3 SUMMARY.....	201
<b>8 CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>202</b>
8.1 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY.....	202
8.2 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY.....	204
8.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH.....	208
8.4 FINAL THOUGHTS.....	208
<b>9 AFTERWORD POST VIVA REFLECTIONS.....</b>	<b>210</b>
<b>10 BIBLIOGRAPHY.....</b>	<b>217</b>
<b>APPENDIX.....</b>	<b>236</b>

TABLE OF FIGURES

Figure 2-1: The three-process model of power illustrating the concept of power through people  
(Turner, 2005: 7).....34

Figure 2-2: Twilight Zone of professional doctoral students (based on Scott et al., 2004; Lee, 2009;  
and Maxell, 2010).....52

Figure 2-3: Model of power in action from the perspective of an influential target (Raven, 1990:  
512).....59

Figure 2-4: Model of power action from the perspective of an influential actor (Raven, 1990: 506)  
.....60

Figure 3-1: The three-process theory of power (adapted from Turner, 2005: 9) .....66

Figure 3-2: Scheme A (Broome, 2009: 80) .....68

Figure 4-1: Interview Schedule .....91

Figure 4-2: First iteration of the influence sociogram.....96

Figure 4-3: Second iteration of the influence sociogram .....97

Figure 4-4: Third and final iteration of the influence sociogram. ....98

Figure 4-5: Personal social influences template .....103

Figure 4-6: The first iteration of potential themes for analysis constructed in NVivo.....105

Figure 4-7: The second iteration of themes for analysis based on the conceptual framework  
constructed in NVivo.....106

Figure 5-1: Model of family and friend’s influence from the perspective of participants’ experience  
(adapted by Leith, 2021 based on Raven, 1990).....146

Figure 6-1: Model of professional influence from the participant’s perspective and experience  
(adapted by Leith, 2021 based on Raven, 1990).....188

Figure 8-1: Revised Twilight Zone Venn Diagram (based on Maxwell, 2010, Leith 2020) .....206



## TABLE OF TABLES

Table 2-1: Summary of the different forms of soft and hard power (based on Nye2004). .....	25
Table 2-2: Social agents and forms of communication .....	30
Table 2-3: Overview of Soft and Hard Power based on French and Raven, 1959; Nye, 2004; Lukes, 2005; and Turner 2005.....	31
Table 2-4: Definitions of Social Power (based on French and Raven, 1959; Cialdini 1984; Turner, 2005).....	32
Table 2-5: Differences between the PhD and PD routes of study (based on Scott et al., 2004; Taylor, 2007; Mellors-Bourne et al., 2016).....	46
Table 4-1: Based on origin of case study (Thomas, 2016: 99) and kinds of case study simplified (Thomas, 2016: 116).....	79
Table 4-2: Case studies design decisions based on Thomas (2016).....	82
Table 4-3: Overview of participants' details .....	87
Table 4-4: Participant interview venues .....	88
Table 4-5: Professional influences template.....	104
Table 6-1: Overview of expectations of the Professional Doctorate and the areas they wish to influence.....	177

# **1 Introduction**

The aim of this thesis is to explore the social influence experiences of eleven professional doctoral students and explore the way these affected their doctoral engagement. Social influence occurs when an individual's attitude, thoughts, feelings, behaviour, and actions are affected as a result of their interactions with another individual or group of people and is part of the human relationships and social interactions that affect daily life. Social influence may be used in different ways, for example, to improve people's health outcomes (Cialdini, 2007), promote leadership (Pratkanis, 2014), or have an effect on people's buying habits or the way they purchase items (Sridhar and Srinivasan, 2012). A negative effect of social influence (Turner, 2005; Lukes, 2005) may occur when it is used as a deterrent to gain control over people's actions.

This study represents a significant shift in the way education has considered professional doctoral students. The introduction provides an overview of professional doctorates (PD), the study's issues, the research aims and research question, and an overview of the thesis.

## **1.1 Contextual background of professional doctorates**

The PD was designed to increase professional learners' knowledge by applying research to practical problems and complex issues in order to contribute to professional practice (Gill and Hoppe, 2009; Brew et al., 2011; Boud et al., 2020). Consequently, the majority of learners who are engaged in a PD are career professionals who exist in the twilight zone between professional workplace and university (Scott et al., 2004; Lee, 2009; Maxwell, 2010). PD students are required to combine their new knowledge and skills with research to enhance their personal, professional and workplace practice (Boud et al., 2020), while also working within the requirement and protocols of higher education (HE). The

programme is designed to incorporate a set of taught modules that learners must complete prior to moving to the thesis stage.

Mellors-Bourne et al's (2016) PD project report, funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England, published by The Careers Research and Advisory Centre (CRAC), whose aims are to support career development by providing research expertise for government and education organisations, highlighted the opportunity for universities to promote the benefits of PDs to employers and professionals as 'perceptions of quality' remained an issue. Four years after the publication of the PD report, House (2020:14) noted that the PD had lost its popularity and appeared to be in decline across the UK, notwithstanding Mellors-Bourne et al's (2016) argument that professional doctoral students 'undertake greater learning' because they have to contribute new knowledge and professional practice.

Part of the popularity issues may be due to people's perceptions or confusion about categories of doctorate. The PhD requires students to define their research scope from the outset. It does not require students to have established professional careers and practices, which means that young people who have just completed an undergraduate or postgraduate degree are able to progress to PhD study. In contrast, mature students with established careers are more likely to engage in a PD (Costley and Lester, 2011; Costley, 2013) which may be an issue for some people who may not want to undertake a module based doctorate.

The first PD to be established in the UK was the education doctorate in 1989, paving the way for other PDs with subject-specific discipline boundaries, like medicine and law, while other PDs, e.g., business, leadership, and management, adopted a multidisciplinary approach (Scott et al., 2004; Lee 2009; Barnacle and Alba, 2011). In contrast to a PhD,

which required students to begin with a problem or query, these programmes provided doctoral level opportunities for professionals and practitioners to apply knowledge to fresh problems and develop their practice.

## **1.2 Statement of the issue**

According to Scott et al. (2004); Wellington and Sikes (2006); Costley and Armsby (2007), and Boud et al. (2020) people who engage in professional doctoral programmes are often career professionals with advanced qualifications. They often belong to a qualified professional group where their professionalism has become established within the norms and standards of the group. As an individual or professional group member they have established their practice which underpins both their professional and social identity (Evans, 2008; Burnard, 2018).

Although there have been a significant number of studies concerning professional doctoral students, there has only been limited research into professional doctoral students' perceptions of social actors' influence. What is unclear is the significance of social influence on successful professionals and the ways social agents affect professionals' decisions and actions to engage in PD study.

Social influence according to Turner (2005) is a central part of human society as people live in interconnected social worlds, and there are many ways in which social agents use their influence that moves other to act (Cialdini, 2005; Lukes, 2005; Berger, 2016; and Smith, Louis and Schultz, 2016). Turner's three-process theory (2005) argues how social agents use their powerbase and influential skills of coercion, persuasion, or authority to encourage, inspire, and move people to act, as opposed to using their power to exercise control over them. Interestingly, Bandura's (1989) 'social cognitive theory' identified that

a person's reaction to social influence may vary according to their personal, behavioural, and environmental factors, e.g. influence from an encounter with a friend or colleague may be seen as supportive and persuasive, while they may view a line-manager's influence as authoritative or coercive. According to Brew et al. (2011), social influence is 'dependent on a receiver's field of reference' (p. 62) which may influence their personal life and potential career trajectory.

### **1.3 Research aims**

The aim of this study is to explore professional doctoral students' perceptions of social influence, to identify who the instrumental social agents were, and what their impact was on participants' engagement in a multidisciplinary professional education doctorate. It also explores the participants' responses and how social influence experiences influenced their doctoral engagement. This is significant, as the way people use social influence may often be overlooked in education. Although based in the scientific discipline of social psychology, social influence research has become widely used in other research areas, for example, marketing (Leiss et al., 1997); HE branding (Diriba and Diriba, 2015); communications (Rose, 2012); consumerisation (Sridhar and Srinivasan, 2012); leadership (French and Raven, 1959); and politics (Nye, 2004).

Traditionally, HE has considered students' motivation to be the driving force for doctoral engagement and retention, as previous research studies by Scott et al. (2004); Maxwell, (2010); Lee, (2009); Wellington and Sikes (2006); and Brailsford (2010) have shown. Another study, by Kiley (2017), considered professionals' experiences on entering doctoral study, and the advantages and challenges of 'doctorateness', while Burnard et al. (2018) published an article on the professional identity of educational doctorate students.

This study contributes to PD literature, as it considers the phenomenon of social influence and the ways it affected professionals' doctoral study engagement.

The study aims to:

- a) identify influential social agents;
- b) understand professionals' perceptions of social influence and the ways affected PD decisions, aspirations, and actions;
- c) explore professionals' attitudes, behaviour, and emotional responses.

#### **1.4 Research question**

The following research question served as the primary guidance for this study:

To what extent do professionals perceive that social influence affects their decisions to engage in a PD and what is the nature of that influence?

To answer the key question, a set of sub-questions developed:

- *To what extent are professionals exposed to social influence prior to their engagement with doctoral study?*

Answering this question would contribute to PD literature and provide an understanding of professionals' perceptions of their family, friends and professional social networks prior to their doctoral engagement.

- *How do professionals perceive their social actors and what ways do they influence doctoral study actions?*

The identification of who the powerful influencers are and the ways in which they use influential strategies to prompt action is important. The study aims to provide an understanding of the influences that the participants encountered prior to joining the PD and during their doctoral journey. This knowledge would contribute to the recruitment and retention of doctoral students as the power of people's social interactions are often overlooked.

- *In what way does professional doctoral students' perceptions of social influence affect and aspirations, if at all?*

This question aims to identify whether participants want to bridge the academic and professional gap or focus on supporting professional practice. This knowledge may support professional doctoral students' expectations and provide inspiration during challenging study periods.

## **1.5 Conceptual framework**

The issue of social influence and the ways it affects professional students' PD engagement needs to be analysed using a set of theoretical constructs that address their unique experiences and perceptions. Previous research has examined professional students through different lenses, e.g. professional identity (Rayner et al, 2015; Burnard et al., 2018), and motivation (Scott et al., 2004; Wellington and Sikes, 2006; Brailsford, 2010). Given that the focus of this study is the construct of social power and influence, the three-process theory (Turner, 2005) is central to the framework. Broome's (2009) philosophical concept of reason to act and reasoned judgment leading to motivation, and Raven's (1990)

model of power in action from the perspective of a person who are the recipients of influence, are also included in the framework. To ground this study within the world of PD I draw upon Scott et al's (2004) research and Mellors-Bourne et al's (2016) PD report.

## **1.6 Purpose of the study and methodological approach**

The purpose of this study is to explore a small group of professional doctoral students' perceptions of social influence. As people's social relationships and interactions are complex, I focused on the phenomenon of social influence and how it affected the participants' actions.

This study is qualitative in nature, underpinned by an interpretive paradigm, as the aim was to understand participants' experiences (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; Newby, 2009; Mertens, 2015). The methodology includes a nested case study because this approach allows 'sub-units that have a connection to one another [to] fit within the whole case' (Thomas, 2016). This approach allowed the participants' stories to be subdivided and 'form an integral part of a broader picture – integral to something that occurs in a wider, connected context' (Thomas, 2016: 177-180).

The pen portraits provided brief overview of the study participants and additional participant details are included throughout the study.



Pen portrait of participants	
Alice	Alice is an early career secondary school teacher in her mid-twenties. She took up a teaching post in England after completing her initial teaching training (ITT) in her home country, Northern Ireland. Alice has close-knit family who supported her move to England. She is a second year PD student.
Carol	Carol is a mid-career full-time higher education (HE) tutor, in her early forties. Carol remained in HE after she completed her ITT programme. Carol is married with teenage children and is a second year PD student.
John	John is a mid-career professional in his forties. He is the only person in his family to complete a degree. He has a supportive partner who encouraged his move from primary school leadership to HE.
Judith	Judith has an established business career in Germany that she combines with her work as an academic tutor. After her marriage, she moved to England and has two young children who both attend primary school. Judith is a part-time associate tutor and is in the second year of the PD.
Lesley	Lesley is an established HE tutor with senior leadership responsibility. She is married with two teenage children and is in her late-forties. Lesley is in the second year of the PD.
Megan	Megan is an HE education tutor in her early thirties. She has a supportive husband and a young pre-school child and comes from a supportive family background. Megan is in the first year of the PD.
Nancy	Nancy is in her mid-sixties. She is in the late stages of her career which began as a secondary teacher before she moved to HE over 20 years ago. She is married and her children are married and have their own professional careers. Nancy is a third year PD student.
Stella	Stella is a semi-retired HE health tutor in her late-sixties She is in the late stages of her professional career. Working as an international health care professional in HE she continues to be involved in health care projects. She is married, with adult children. Stella is a third year PD student.
Susan	Susan is in her late fifties with an established career as school senior leader prior to moving to the HE sector two years ago. Susan's partner recently retired after a long and distinguished career and they have two adult children. Susan is a third year PD student.

Pen portrait of participants (continued)	
Violet	Violet is in her early sixties, with an established career as an HE social science tutor. She comes from a widening participation background. Violet's partner is an academic, and she has three adult daughters. She started a PhD in her forties but dropped out after taking up a new post in the South of England. Violet gained her PD during the interview period
Zoe	Zoe is in her late forties and is passionate about education. She is a senior leader and SENCO in a primary school. Zoe is married to a prominent member of her local community and has three sons. Two sons have established professional careers in the city, while her youngest son lives at home. Zoe is in the final stage of PD.

Data collection included semi-structured interviews, with supplementary sociograms to support validity. The participants had the choice to complete their sociogram either before or after their face-to-face interviews. I selected a template analysis method to analyse the data because it supports the development of multiple template iterations during data analysis. NVivo software was used to code the data and support the different template framework iterations.

Waring and Wainwright (2008: 85) suggest that 'the application of template analysis to rich unstructured qualitative data following the primary data collection phase' has seen a growth in popularity. According to King (2004), template analysis is a way of thematically organising and analysing codes using a multiple-technique method that is not as prescriptive as grounded theory. A researcher may include participant observations, semi-structured interviews, transcripts, stories, or narratives to develop an analytical strategy within an interpretive case study (King, 2004). Although template analysis is considered a sub-set of thematic analysis, the approach to coding rich unstructured qualitative data differs because it is time efficient. I selected this iterative approach because it provided flexibility during data analysis. I developed several template iterations

from the data by adding, changing, or deleting codes and themes. This method supported the identification and interpretation of participants' social influence responses and actions.

### *The researcher's position*

Originally, I held a dual insider-outsider researcher's position when I started the PD thesis stage because I was a postgraduate tutor and a doctoral candidate. My interest in this study developed from witnessing how social influence affected people's actions and noticing that during my own professional practice, I had been instrumental in influencing students to continue their studies to doctoral level. These social interactions guided the focus of this study. Although I draw on research literature from the fields of behaviour, social psychology, and education, I am not a social psychologist and make no claims in this area.

## **1.7 Significance of the study**

This study argues that professionals' personal situations should be considered, as their social interactions significantly influenced their doctoral degree engagement and actions. The findings represent a significant shift in previous research into professional doctoral students' engagement, as the study focused specifically on social influence and the ways it affected professionals' doctoral decisions and actions. This study provides insight into the interconnected social worlds of professionals and examines their social interactions with family, friends, and professional colleagues. Professional doctoral students are often considered to operate in the twilight zone between university and their professional workplace (Scott et al., 2004; Lee, 2009, and Maxwell, 2010) but many students may also spend a considerable amount of time studying at home.

The key findings:

Family and friends and professional colleagues were influential social agents and used hard and soft power to influence participants to engage in doctoral study.

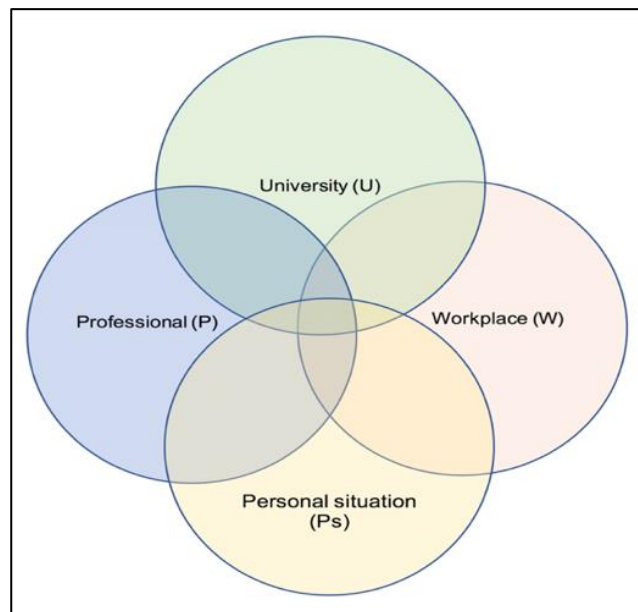
1. Family members were found to use their family ties and social influence tactics to influence participants' attitudes, emotions and behaviour, which supported and encouraged their action to engage in doctoral study.
2. The study illustrates how professionals perceived that their parents had high education expectations and used a range of social influence skills to generate emotional responses in their adult children. Participants reported that authoritative parents used social influence to move their education forward, because they believed it was in their child's best interest. Participants' emotional responses comprised of not wanting to disappoint parents, seeking parental approval, obedience, guilt, and a desire to fulfil parental expectations. These feelings contributed to participants' doctoral study engagement.
3. A significant finding was the way friends and professional colleagues used their doctoral experiences and personal knowledge to influence participants' choice of doctorate (PhD or PD).
4. An overriding finding was that some participants reported how they overcome personal and professional challenges, as family members and professional colleagues did not support their doctoral study aspirations. For example, family members used their influence to dissuade doctoral engagement on the grounds of age, health, the participant's career stage, and an unwillingness to share quality family time with doctoral study, and some professional colleagues used social

influence attempts that focused on doctoral choice. Although the power of these influence attempts was at times fleeting, they did however pose a barrier as participants had to negotiate a compromise or use social influence to gain support. Indeed, there were perceptions of influential attempts that caused participants to doubt their programme choice or to continue to question their actions, and some instances where family influence caused the participant to withdraw from doctoral study.

5. Professional perceptions of status influenced the participants employed in HE institutions, as they wanted the same status and power as their co-workers. They were concerned about keeping up with colleagues or being overlooked for promotion by employers. Participants reported that line-mangers' influence were more direct and supportive, but also revealed how they expected the participant to conform and engage in a doctorate. However, participants based in school environments were not influenced by status or concerned about their position within the organisation.
6. Participants employed in HE institutions were influenced by observing the power and status that they considered other doctoral colleagues and in-group members possessed. This resulted in participants' willingness to conform to the norms and standards required to gain doctoral status and become an academic group member and enhance their future employment opportunities.
7. The participants' perceptions of how family, friends and professional colleagues used influential strategies to get them to consider doctoral study because they valued education. Promoting the idea of doctoral study had a direct effect on participants' doctoral study decisions and their engagement actions. Some social

agents became emotionally engaged and were committed to supporting participants through the doctoral journey.

8. This study provided insight into the perceptions of participants' professional and personal worlds and the people who influenced their actions prior to and during the



PD. The idea that PD students only had to navigate the boundaries between the professional workplace and university is limited, as family, friends and professional colleagues all played an active role in participants' doctoral engagement and ongoing journey. Therefore, I propose that a new segment, personal situation (PS) is included in the twilight zone diagram. This diagram is considered in Chapter 8 and Figure. 8-1.

9. Participants' future doctoral aims focused on self and status, as well as on supporting the practice and development of the students they taught, and on becoming influential altruistic advocates.

## 1.8 Overview of the study

This study charts the social influence experiences of eleven professionals and the ways in which their family, friends and professional colleagues socially influenced their attitudes and decisions in respect of PD engagement. The study contributes to PD literature as it considers the effect of social influence on professional doctoral students. This has implications for the recruitment and retention of professionals in doctoral programmes.

The data collected during the interview period represents personalised accounts of the professionals' social influences. The study design and template analysis coding framework emerged from the literature and other documentation. As template analysis is an iterative process, the coding framework developed and changed as themes emerged from the data.

I have divided the study into the following chapters:

Chapter Two introduces and defines key social influence literature and its relevance to the study. I have divided this chapter into two key areas: social influence and ways influential social agents may use their powerbase to influence people's actions. The second section considers the genesis of PDs, the political doctorate landscape, and professional doctoral students' characteristics.

Chapter Three defines and justifies the study's conceptual framework. Turner's (2005) three-process theory of power is the main theory that underpinned this study, supported by Broome's (2009) concept of motivation that people act for a reason. As Broome (2009: 83) argues that a person will 'judge that [they] have a reason to do something, if you are rational that judgement plays a part in determining your judgement about what you ought to do. The data indicated that participants experienced personal and professional social influence and I draw on Raven's (1990) model to map their experiences. To frame the

context of the study Scott et al's (2004) writings offer insight in the world of PD students, while Mellors-Bourne et al's (2016) PD report examined the landscape of PD in England.

Chapter Four presents and justifies a nested case study approach and provides outline details of the professionals who took part in the study. A template analysis method was selected because it allowed a flexible framework to develop. Initially, a thematic analysis approach was chosen but this was later rejected because of the complexity of the interview data. This chapter also addresses the ethical issues and anonymity of the participants and the dual position of the researcher.

Chapter Five presents the participants' perceptions their personal family and friends social world and identifies influential social agents. It provides an insight into professionals' social influences on their experiences and perceptions. The evidence suggests that family and friends held powerful positions and were able to see opportunities that the participants had not necessarily identified and used social influence to encourage participants to engage in a doctorate and complete the final education level. Authoritative parents were found to have a powerful influence over their adult child's doctoral engagement and supported their doctoral journey. One participant engaged in a PD to fulfil her deceased mother's wishes and to fill a gap left by her death. Interestingly, family members rarely identified a specific doctoral programme as being most appropriate for their relative's career progression. The study found that some professionals had to overcome friends' and family's negative influences prior to starting their doctoral journey.

Chapter Six explores the participants' perceptions of their professional world, and how interactions with co-workers influenced their attitudes, values, and subsequent actions. Observing colleagues' actions and how others positioned their fellow professionals had a significant influence on participants' perceptions. Colleagues' attitudes were found to



have a notable influence over participants' perceptions, as they either supported or discouraged their doctoral choice.

The final chapter presents this study's contribution to knowledge and professional practice. The chapter concludes with recommendations for future research and suggestions for supporting the recruitment and retention of future professional doctoral students.

The following literature review chapter considers existing social influence research and its relevance to professional doctoral programmes, the political context, and how social agents use a variety of influential skills to affect people's actions.

## **2 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

There is limited research on professional doctoral students' social influences and their influential social agents. Indeed, Brew et al's (2010) study proposed that 'little is understood about the influences... of professional doctoral students' (p. 51). Several researchers (Scott, 2004; Lee, 2009; Wellington and Sikes, 2006) have previously reported on professional doctoral students' motivation. This chapter draws upon literature and reports from a range of research fields, including HE, social influence, social psychology, social science, business and marketing, and leadership research. It develops a picture of the way people use social influence to advance the needs of others, and to control, encourage, or inspire their action. Therefore, the scope of this literature review is across research disciplines.

#### **2.1.1 Summary of the literature review**

As the research focus is social influence and the effect it may have on professionals' engagement in professional doctoral studies, I have divided the literature review into six sections:

Section 2.2 considers the debate about social influence and social power theory.

Section 2.3 focuses on the role of influential agents and their social powerbase.

Section 2.4 considers the genesis of UK PDs and the use of soft power to effect change in European HE and doctoral study programmes.

Section 2.5 considers the debate around PhD versus PD.

Section 2.6 considers PD students

Section 2.7 considers the risks and benefits to influential agents.

### **2.1.2 Overview of social influence**

The empirical literature of social influence considers the way influential agents, groups and organisations use their powerbase to cause action in others. Social influence research has a wider interest than the traditional social psychology and social science fields; for example, Pratkanis (2007: 11) identified additional research disciplines, such as consumerism and marketing psychology, organisational behaviour, political research, behavioural and communication sciences, and advertising and economics, which also study the effects of social influence on aspects of society.

Kramer (2014) suggest that the use of social influence provides an opportunity for individuals to obtain power, and this power facilitates social influence because powerful people have more resources, e.g., the ability to reward, encourage, befriend, persuade, and request action, that ‘induces a change in other people’s attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, feelings and behaviour’ (p. 298).

The issue of social influence and the ways influential agents use their social powerbase is complex, as experimental research has established (Bandura, 1989; Cialdini, 1993, 2005; Turner, 1991, 2005; Nye 2004; Lukes 2005; Pratkanis, 2007, 2014; and Berger, 2016).

A person or group’s social powerbase depends on their interpersonal skills and the power that people think they have or give them, e.g., authority, referent, informational, reward and legitimate power, (Table 2.4). An individual’s status or position in a group may influence the actions of others.

According to Willier et al. (1997), the concepts of power and influence are important aspects of society and have the potential to guide or affect personal and professional social situations. Interestingly, Turner (2005: 1) argues that the ‘power of social influence is central to human affairs’ because influential agents can use their powerbase to ‘control’ or ‘advance’ the needs and actions of others (Figure 2.1).

The debate about social influence has gained new prominence recently. Gonçalo, Prada and Santos (2016: 1) argue that ‘social power is one of the most pervasive social concepts in society today’ due to powerbase dynamics and ‘human agent interactions’ that influence action in others. Although they agree with Turner and Egan that it is part of today’s society, they go a step further by suggesting that it is widespread and dynamic because of the way people use their powerbase to influence others’ actions. Social influence research has identified the ways social agents use strategies to advance or control an individual’s or a group’s action (Turner, 1991, 2005; Cialdini, 1993, 2005; Pratkanis, 2017); therefore, an influential social agent may have used their social power and influential skills to affect professionals’ PD engagement decisions that moved them to action. A professional’s willingness to act may be due to referent, legitimate or authoritative power or status they believe the influential person holds (Table 2.4).

The debate over whether power is used to control others’ actions or advance others’ needs by supporting them to move forward will depend on the context of the influence and the person’s personal views. A person may consider the influence to be a valid request, which is encouraging or empowering, or may see it as an attempt to control their actions.

Nevertheless, Schwenk (2009: 29) argues that a person’s decision to take action or not will depend on social cues. Therefore, the aim of this study is to explore the social influence

experiences of eleven professionals and whether these affected their action to engage in a PD.

### **2.1.3 Professional Doctorates**

The Higher Education Funding Council for England-funded PD report, published by CRAC in 2016, noted the complexity of options available for prospective doctoral students, and the different education experiences within and across disciplines.

Notably, the research debate regarding PDs continues alongside the review of doctoral students' engagement and over the years several interesting and complex aspects have surfaced. For example, research by Maxwell and Shanahan (1997) considered the 'Reconceptualising of the Education Doctorate in Australia', and in 2004 a substantial study by Scott et al. considered how 'PDs integrate professional and academic knowledge' and considered the issue of PD students' contribution to professional practice and knowledge. Following Scott et al's publication, Park (2005 and 2007), Costley and Lester (2011), and Barnacle and Dall'Alba (2011) published research on the attributes of PDs. Biddle's 2013 research considered factors that had affected USA education doctoral students' choices, while Armsby's study in the same year focused on the sociocultural construction of professional students' identity.

Mellors-Bourne et al. (2016) identified the complex decisions professionals faced when considering doctoral pathway choices and found that of paramount consideration was the type of doctoral programme that fitted both personal and professional requirements, i.e., a programme needed to offer potential benefits, such as professional development, enhancement of professional practice and advanced research skills.

The decision-making process of choosing between the traditional Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) research route or the alternative taught PD may be further complicated for professionals because others' attitudes and opinions about these awards may socially influence them. Compared to the two-stage PD, the PhD route is still considered by some universities as 'a gold standard doctoral qualification' (Mellors-Bourne et al., 2016: 74); however, this statement may be contested by some universities, as their view of parity between doctoral programmes may differ. The perceived status and value of a PhD versus a PD may socially influence a professional's perceptions of the different doctoral programmes. There is the potential for a professional to select the PD in favour of the traditional PhD route, as it will contribute to the advancement of their professional practice and enable them to develop research skills alongside a group of like-minded people. As the PD is a two-stage award that includes several taught modules before the student progresses to the formal research stage it allows professionals to develop a social network of like-minded peers during their doctoral study.

A professional who was unsure of which route to opt for, or which university would provide the most suitable programme to fulfil their professional development and research needs, may seek information from other professionals or organisations, exposing them to the power of social influence as they consult online information and seek the opinions of other people.

## **2.2 Social power and influence power**

This section considers the theoretical and empirical division and integration of social power and influential power. Sixty years ago, French and Raven (1959: 150) defined social power in terms of influence, and influence as a behaviour change 'where power and influence involve a dyadic relationship The first part of the statement refers to social

agents who ‘exert power’, whereas the second part of the statement notes the ‘actions of the recipient behaviour’ (French and Raven, 1959: 150). Turner (1991: 7) suggest that Moscovici’s 1976 research identified differences between influence and power, suggesting that influence ‘produces subjective acceptance and conversion and power being the bases of coercive compulsion and compliance’. However, later researchers considered ‘power and influence [to be] interchangeable’; for example, Lukes (2005: 17) cites examples from Dahl and Polsby’s writings about its interchangeability, where Dahl refers to ‘*influence*’ and Polsby uses the term ‘*power*’ to explain people’s action (Lukes, 2005: 17). Influential social agents who exerted their powerbase (Table 2-3) may lead to a change in an individual’s or a group’s attitude, values, and actions (French and Raven, 1959; Lukes, 2005; Turner, 2005; and Cialdini, 2007 and Smith, et al., 2011).

French and Raven (1959) identified five criteria for social power – reward, coercive, legitimate, expert and referent – that they considered would influence change in others’ actions. Five years later, Raven (1964) included informational social power as the sixth dimension to ‘social influence and power’ criteria. Raven defined informational power as the power-holder’s ability to either share or withhold the information they possessed, thereby making themselves powerful. For example, if academics share information about their knowledge and experience of doctoral study with colleagues or professional groups, that information has the potential to become the driving force that leads to engagement with doctoral study.

Smith et al. (2011) emphasises how social influence can be perceived in different ways in a recent study:

social influence occurs when an individual's thoughts, feelings, and actions are affected by other people... Social influence takes many different forms, and can be seen in processes of conformity, socialisation, peer pressure, obedience, leadership, persuasion, minority influence, and social change, to name but a few topics into which social influence research extends its reach (Smith et al., 2011: 3).

#### *Hard and soft power*

The concept of hard power is frequently attributed to political power and is applied to some international systems or countries that do not recognise superior authority (Nye (2004)). In contrast, Nye argues how soft power relies on a state, organisation, or individual's ability to apply their personal power resources without force and that the use of soft power is infinitely more effective than hard power. Therefore, influential agents may position their powerbase within the boundary of soft power. They can use persuasive strategies to convince or persuade others to follow their example, or to want what they want, instead of using hard coercing strategies. Therefore, influential agents may use soft power to direct other people's beliefs and desires, which may point the way to positive outcomes or actions. An additional argument, provided by Nye (2004), is that different degrees of hard and soft power could achieve the same outcome or action. Therefore, it is possible that the type of social powerbase chosen by a social agent may depend on several situational factors, and a person's willingness to achieve an outcome. The ability of an influential agent to select either a hard or soft powerbase might depend on an individual or group's compliance. The state of compliance might align with that individual or group's



personal or professional values and goals, in which case the power of social influence may generate a suitable outcome for the person or group.

Different powerbases can be compared in terms of the ways they are used, for example, the carrot and stick approach of hard power in contrast to soft power, where no explicit threat or exchange takes place (Nye, 2004: 7). Soft power relies on attraction, desires, and inducements; therefore, influential agents who prefer a soft powerbase could use a positive approach to influence and advance the outcomes of others by exerting their 'power through others rather than over others' (Turner, 2005). A contrasting view of hard power is where authority and coercion strategies are used by an influential agent to 'get the outcomes they want' or to shape the preferences of others to 'want what they want' (Turner, 2005), hence influential agents may draw upon a hard powerbase and use strategies to exert control over others, even though it may not be in the individual's best interests. Consequently, hard and soft power could be considered opposite ends of a power spectrum, as illustrated in Table 2-1.

Power	Hard	Soft
Spectrum of behaviours	Coercion Command Coercion Inducements Authority	Agenda Setting Attraction Co-opt Authority Persuasion Co-operation Attraction Culture values Manipulation of the agenda
Most likely resources	Force Payment Sanctions Bribes Economic/money Status Employment security	Institutional and personal values Status Benefits Rewards

Table 2-1: Summary of the different forms of soft and hard power (based on Nye2004).

Lukes makes an important point when he proposes that it is a mistake to say person (A) can exercise power over another (B), when it affects B in a manner contrary to B's best interests (2005: 12). Therefore, an influential agent has the capability to select different aspects of power to control or advance the needs and actions of others. To affect actions in others, Schwenk (2009: 30) suggest that the active and passive aspects of social influence may be mixed. However, regardless of the original forms of power, be they soft or hard, people use strategies of persuasion, authority, or coercion to affect the actions of others (Turner, 1991; Hidi and Harackiewicz, 2000; Nye, 2004; Lukes, 2005; and Cialdini, 2007).

#### *Power in action*

The question of 'power in action', posed by Schwenk (2009), occurs when a person is receptive to influence. Although French and Raven's (1959) model of social power first identified legitimate power, recent research by Turner (2005) and Zarifa and Davies

(2007) linked legitimate power to authoritative power. They argue that social agents consider they have the right to prescribe their beliefs, attitudes, or actions because they hold positions of power (Turner, 2005: 8). An example of group power is the Quality Assurance Agency for HE (QAA), which sets education criteria standards and expects universities to uphold them. Doctoral students must meet these standards to gain entry into the academic community.

### **2.2.1 Daily social influence encounters**

In society today, it is difficult not to be exposed to influential power. Egan (2007) refers to the many different sources of communication and information and provides examples, such as the way parents influence their children from the moment they are born and the ability of partners to influence each other's thoughts, feelings and behaviour to an extent that leads to actions. Egan (2007: 58) argues that teachers influence their students and that students may possess the power to influence their teachers in return.

In addition, personal one-to-one or group interactions, books, journals, or newspaper articles also have the potential to influence a person's values, behaviour, or actions, and popular 'sites of modality', namely television, film, and YouTube channels, may be designed, according to Rose (2012), to influence the viewer. Such sites may alter personal values towards certain situations or support individuals' actions. It is important to include websites, because of the informational materials they contain, such as visual images and targeted text. Blogs, Instagram, Twitter or Facebook are also important examples of social communication media sites, due to their easy accessibility. Rose (2012) provides a detailed analysis of the different ways informational resource sites are constructed to influence a particular audience, i.e., an individual or specific group. Therefore, it is plausible that a university will construct its doctoral programme webpages to attract a

particular type of doctoral student, as this form of communication is information-based and has the power to socially influence a potential professional to engage in doctoral study.

Informational modes of communication accessed via internet sites, like those mentioned above, are commonly used in society today. As the worldwide web has become more ubiquitous, people can now access these sites of communication on a variety of platforms, for example computers, smart phones, watches, televisions, and smart tablet devices. As people have become more familiar with looking up information online, it is important to remember that these sites are constructed by people who have a marketing agenda (Lukes, 2005). Therefore, they become an influential social agent with the potential to communicate information to a specific audience. This social power may derive from an authoritative or informational powerbase, for example a university or professional organisation, where the inclusion and positioning of, say, the university logo and photographs are purposely placed to influence and instil trust in their brand of education and potentially influence a professional's decisions regarding whether to engage in a particular doctoral programme.

People or group members are therefore both influential social agents and the recipient audience when they interact with others, for example, their family members or work colleagues. As the aim of their influence may be to control a person's actions or to advance their needs, so they are moved to act (Turner, 2005). According to Lukes (2005: 109) 'power is a dispositional concept' as people have the ability to use their power, but they may or may not choose to exercise it to control an individual's actions, e.g., 'A controlling B's actions', Lukes suggests, is a simplistic view, as social power and resources that are used to 'control' or 'advance' actions in others may affect the social

agent and the recipient in different ways. Turner (2005) puts forward the argument that power is used ‘through people’ rather than ‘over them’, while Lukes (2005: 110) suggests that ‘power can be given a specific meaning... with intention and positive action’. This is in direct contrast to the classical understanding of power, which relies on control over people. Previous research has demonstrated how people can be subjected to social power that will influence their actions, but their actions may affect the way the influential agents select and use resources. The next section will consider their powerbase and the resources that may advance the needs of others or control the action of others (Lukes, 2005; Turner, 2005).

### **2.3 Influential Social Agents**

Social agents have the power to control information by designing it specifically to influence a specific audience (Turner, 1991, 2005; Williams, 2003; Cialdini, 2005; Pratkanis, 2007; Rose, 2012). In exploiting their power, a social agent may communicate information using a range of resources that become an influential source that cause a person to act, e.g., politicians who persuade the electorate to vote for their policies, companies that post influential information to advertise their products to attract customers, university advertising campaigns to attract new students, and TV and radio programmes that communicate social influence messages through storylines (Table 2.2).

For example, a university will design their website information pages to attract specific student audiences. Arguably, certain types of information about a professional doctoral programme posted on a university website by the developers would be designed in a specific format to attract a potential professional postgraduate audience. The web development team’s pre-defined agenda will purposely present information to influence engagement by the viewer and the design will include the positioning of images

and selected text in both ‘persuasive or authoritative’ formats (Cialdini, 2005; Rose, 2012).

Social Agents Communication Sources	
Social Agents	Forms of Influential Communication
Governments:	Organisation branding Websites Advertising and branding Publications Public policy information Television and radio interviews Political conferences, etc. Social media (Facebook, Twitter, blogs) YouTube
Professional Bodies:	Websites Social media (Facebook, Twitter, blogs, Snapchat, Instagram, etc.) YouTube Advertising and branding Publications Public policy information Television and radio interviews Conferences, etc.
Private and public organisations:	Board or staff members Volunteers Websites and email Social media (Facebook, Twitter, blogs, Instagram, etc.) YouTube Advertising and branding Publications Media images Public policy information Academics and teachers Television and radio interviews Conferences, etc.
Personal: family, friends, work colleagues, line-managers, and work environment	Websites and emails Social media (Facebook, Twitter, blogs, Instagram, etc.) Images and conversations Television and radio Interviews Conferences attended

Table 2-2: Social agents and forms of communication

### 2.3.1 Influential agents' social powerbase

Whilst social power is considered the powerbase of social agents, the strategies influential agents may use will vary according to the situation, their relationship with the person, because the individual may give their influencers different attributes during their interactions (Table 2-3). These may also differ according to the individual or groups involved and the available resources (Table 2-4). For example, a professional may consider their influential agent to exert expert or legitimate social power and persuasive skills when advising them to consider engaging in a doctorate. If both parties share similar values, desires or goals, the outcome of their interactions may result in a positive shared experience. In contrast, an influential agent may exercise hard power and use coercive strategies, such as the 'carrot and stick' (Nye, 2004) approach, or legitimate power to control a professional's actions by offering a reward or sanction to ensure they engage in doctoral study.

Division of Social Power		
Type	Definitions	Example attributed to personal or positional power
Soft (subtle and positive)	A soft powerbase rests in the ability to shape the preferences of others by getting others to want the outcomes that you want through co-option, shared values, or attraction.	Expert Referent Information
Hard (punitive and overt)	A hard powerbase resides with the ability to offer inducements or threats to make others conform.	Legitimate Reward Coercive

*Table 2-3: Overview of Soft and Hard Power based on French and Raven, 1959; Nye, 2004; Lukes, 2005; and Turner 2005.*

The different types of social power can be subdivided into the powerbase strategies used by influential social agents.



Definitions of Social Powerbase Tactics		
Tactic	Influential agents' powerbase	Outcome
Coercion	The ability to deliver punishments or threats. While coercion can be effective in the short-term, it creates resentment.	Loss of job or promotion. A parent threatening to take a child's privileges away when not following a request. Scarcity.
Reward	The ability to offer a reward or compensation to a person in exchange for their compliance.	Compensation such as an offer of a job. Status title or money. Persuasion.
Referent	The social agent powerbase relies on others liking them or on admiration. The target models the agent's behaviour. The influential person becomes a reference model.  Groups can be a reference model as they provide the standards and norms of behaviour, for example social or peer pressure.	Reciprocity.  Exchange.  Social Proof.  Likeness.
Legitimate/ Authoritative	The powerbase comes from positional authority, where a person recognises or accepts the other's position or role. The power is in position or role rather than an individual. The unique aspect of legitimate power is that it is not about rational arguments — the power comes from the position or role held.	The right of a person to control the decisions that affect others. The right to control collective decisions, goals, and effectiveness without conflict. Assertiveness.
Expert	They generate the powerbase from a personal or organisational credibility or the perceived expertise or knowledge in an area. It is limited by the creditable awards a person holds.	A doctor, dentist, barrister, etc.  Social Proof.  Likeness.
Informational	It grounds this powerbase to a person's knowledge, or information they have about the content of a specific situation or subject. This is the most transitory type of power, as other forms of power are independent of the content. The person who holds the information has the powerbase because it is their decision to share or withhold information from others, thus making them powerful.	Social Proof.  Persuasion.  Scarcity.  Likeness.

Table 2-4: Definitions of Social Power (based on French and Raven, 1959; Cialdini 1984; Turner, 2005)

### 2.3.2 Status cues

An interesting study into the effect of status cues, conducted by Stahelski and Paynton in 1995, established that high-status influential agents were more successful in exercising the power of persuasion to affect a person's actions compared to someone they considered as lower-status. The research found that influential social agents who were seen by others as holders of low status were more likely to exercise coercion as a power tactic to control the actions of an individual or group (Stahelski and Paynton, 1995). A high-status influential agent, for example a colleague with management and research skills or a person who has achieved doctorate status, may use their position to influence others. This social agent may use referent group power strategies to uphold the standards and normative behaviour expected of individuals or the group. Therefore, an individual or group may identify doctoral study as the expected norm in their professional practice environment. An influential agent may exercise persuasion techniques to advance the needs of an individual or group in preference to controlling them.

Turner's (2005: 6) research on social power defined it as the 'capacity of people to have an intended influence on others where power emerges between people' and their social relationships shape the form it takes, for example, social and personal identity, shared beliefs and values, the formation of social group and organisation. The 'three-process model of power' argues that groups begin to share their social identity because of influential power that is applied through people as they gain the ability to control resources (Turner, 2005: 19).

### 2.3.3 The nature of social power through others

Turner's theoretical concepts are the main source for this thesis and are considered here, in Chapter 3, and in the discussion chapters. Turner's (2005) research identifies multidimensional qualities of 'persuasion, coercion and authority', where an influential person 'exerts [their] will through others, rather than over others' (p. 9) moving them to act. Turner emphasises the different dimensions influential agents exert when they attempt to control resources (Turner 2005: 2). The concept of powerful influence 'through rather than over others' (Figure 2-1) can be used to move people forward or empower their actions, as social agents are able to call upon different strategies when supporting others to identify their goals or desires. These influences may lead a professional to change their behaviour, and, by considering the benefits and value of a doctoral study, they may be activated to engage in a PD, even though the social power of an influential agent may or may not be recognised by the individual or group.

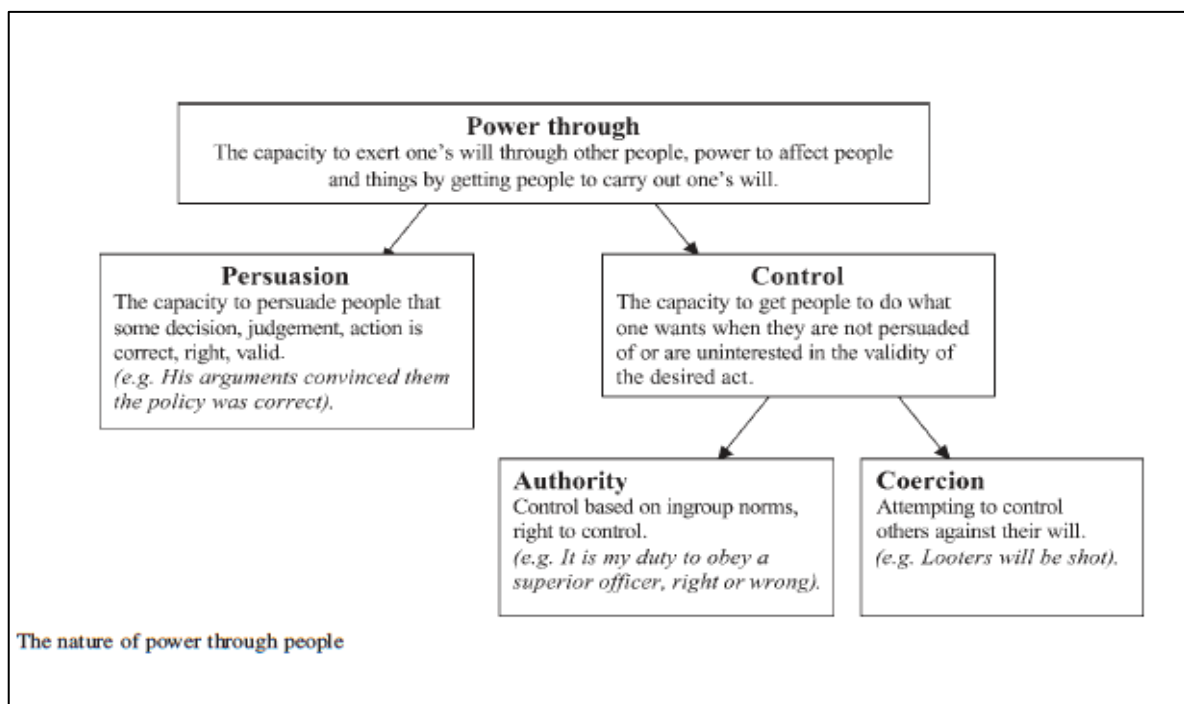


Figure 2-1: The three-process model of power illustrating the concept of power through people (Turner, 2005: 7)

In the three-process theory Turner identified three types of influence (authority, persuasion and coercion) that could be used by a social agent and an overview is provided below.

### *Authority*

Turner (2005) defines authority as legitimate power, where the power of a group or a person has control over other group members (p. 30). When considering a professional group in this context, they are bound by their group identity. This influence is from a ‘top-down centralised control that rationalises the hierarchy of power’ (Zarifa and Davies, 2007: 260). Under these circumstances, it is possible to argue that the informative influence of the group is bound by conformity and authority, as the compliance process is based on ‘shared understanding and social independence’ and the group’s desire for social acceptance and approval (Deutsch and Gerald, 1955). For example, Scott et al. (2004) and Wellington and Sikes (2006) found that their doctoral students could identify the power associated with becoming a member of the doctoral community.

### *Authoritative influence*

Authoritative colleagues maintain a balance between responsiveness and high expectations, which can influence a professional’s career ambitions or their desire to engage in a doctorate. Similarly, authoritative parents, although supportive of their children, have high educational demands and expectations (Howard et al., 2019). Therefore, professionals who have authoritative parents may feel they have to live up to parental expectations even though they have established successful careers.

### *Persuasion*

An influential agent/s may use persuasive influences when an individual or group are receptive to suggestions that may provide the impetus for action; equally, the individual or group's professional situation may favour action. Under these situations, the influential agent may provide social proof (Table 2-4) (Cialdini, 2007). Turner (2005) makes the argument for an individual or a group being able to make a judgement about the validity and 'actual compatibility' with their situation resulting in the acceptance of persuasive tactics because they fit the professional's situation and the context of their existing knowledge, values, and goals (Wood, 2000).

### *Coercion*

The power of coercion is an 'attempt to control the will... and self-interest' through social influence. An influential agent may use their powerbase and information resources in a particular way to manipulate a recipient's behaviour, regardless of the recipient's views (Taylor 2005: 12). For example, a professional may perceive they are focus of soft coercive skills if their influential agent based their attempt on friendliness; however, they may feel pressurised into engaging in a doctorate because they think they lack status or a valid professional voice in the group. Other professionals may take the view that a person does not have a valid voice or status until they become a member of the academic academy. Wellington and Sikes provide an example of this in their 2006 research, where a PD student believed they were inferior to people with PhDs. This student's feelings of inferiority may result from their co-workers' coercive or authoritative power strategies, for example they may have interpreted their head of school's comments during social interactions as either a persuasive or coercive influencing power, depending on the recipient's point of view and emotional state during the conversation.

### **2.3.4 Three-process theory**

The 'three process theory' is multidimensional and has different social influence characteristics that affect a person or group's actions. The power of the influence will depend on one's situation, emotions, beliefs, and values held at a given point in time. This multidimensional state explains how it is possible to be influenced by a multitude of influences at the same time. The most dominant influencing factor will depend on professional values, reality, and circumstances at a particular time; therefore, being open to influence may fluctuate.

When considering the 'three dimensions of power', Lukes (2005: 111) argues that it is 'possible to judge the significance of outcomes that social agent power can bring about'. This implies that there is the potential to understand a social agent's influence and the ways they use influence strategies to get others to act. Understanding the activity of social agents and the ways they use their powerbase to encourage professionals to consider doctoral study engagement will contribute to the current PD debate.

Cialdini's (1984) research identified persuasion as a social influence tactic that often goes unnoticed or is 'virtually undetectable' (p. 13) by the recipient audience. Interestingly, Cialdini's (2007) later research cited 'weapons of influence' as differentiated persuasive influence, guided by the six principles of reciprocity; commitment and consistency; social proof; liking; authority; and scarcity, which, in some areas, overlap with French and Raven's concept of standard social power.

## 2.4 The policy picture, who were socially influential?

### 2.4.1 Genesis of the UK Professional Doctorate

PD programmes were established in the UK during the 1990s and were developed for professionals interested in doctoral study in a range of subject areas, for example, law, medicine, engineering, healthcare, psychology, and business administration (Mellors-Bourne et al., 2016). The education doctorate, according to the United Kingdom Council for Graduate Education (UKCGE) 2002, was developed to bring a high level of research enquiry within a practical context to enhance the knowledge, skills and professional practice of individuals. Although the design of the PD focus is advanced study and research, PD programmes must also meet the specific needs of professional groups external to universities whilst still satisfying the university criteria for the award of a doctorate (UKCGE, 2002: 62).

The European University Association (EUA) defines the PD as a ‘practice-related doctorate, embedding research in a reflective manner [for]... professional practice’ (EUA, 2007: 15). In contrast, the UKCGE’s definition highlights embedding professional knowledge and practice through reflection, rather than the more performative requirements of professional groups or associations like The General Medical Council, National Health Service, or The Law Association. Despite these slight variations in definitions, the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) set the UK requirement for research standards supporting professional development practice.

The literature highlights conflicting accounts regarding which UK PD has become most popular over the years. Mellors-Bourne et al. (2016) suggest in their report that this can partly be attributed to the many titles given to a PD programme in the same subject area. For instance, Fell et al. noted that in 2011 professional doctorates had 19 different titles in

the education field. Mellors-Bourne et al. (2016) discovered the situation was further complicated by the addition of 'in' or 'of', which added to the proliferation of professional education doctorate titles. The most popular title for the professional education doctorate, identified by Mellors-Bourne et al. (2016: 10), was the EdD.

Mellors-Bourne et al's 2016 report identified a need for clearer programme titles to reduce confusion for professionals wishing to engage in doctoral studies. One limiting factor considered in the report was that some universities did not directly acknowledge their PD programmes by including the word 'professional' in the title, while others did. This report also advocated the need for website information to clearly identify the differences between the PhD and PD, in order to support the information needs of professionals who may wish to engage in doctoral level study. This opens the debate about social influence strategies and their potential to influence the actions of prospective professional students.

#### **2.4.2 Higher Education Bologna Process Agreement influential agents**

Prior to the 1999 Bologna Process Agreement, Ministers of HE in France, Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom (UK) were the key influential agents who used their social power to influence change in European HE. In the discussion paper, 'Refining the Doctorate', Park (2007: 21) notes that the three principles of the 'Sorbonne Declaration' resulted from the collaboration of four HE Ministers. The goal was to harmonise European HE, which eventually led to 29 Ministers of HE signing the Bologna Agreement in June 1999. Later that year, 15 European Member States, three European Free Trade Association countries, and 11 European Candidate countries signed the Bologna Agreement (EYURYCIC, 2010). Whether the 29 signatories viewed these principles as rules, guidelines, values, standards, or goals is not clear. However, Zgaga (cited in Curaj et al., 2012) argues that



ministers may only consider these principles as guidelines for independent national HE rather than a binding European HE system.

According to Nye (2004: 4), political leaders establish their soft powerbase through ‘intangible assets, such as an attractive personality, culture, political values and institutions’. Their use of soft power relies on the ability to get people to ‘want the same as you want by co-opting people rather coercing them’ (Nye, 2004: 5). People in powerful positions, for example HE Ministers, may have exerted their soft powerbase while negotiating the HE Bologna Process Agreement.

The four HE Ministers from France, Germany, Italy, and the UK, may have used soft power to persuade other ministers that their policies had legitimacy and moral authority by presenting their ideas as a more interconnected European HE scheme. Ministers may have used ‘soft power’ tactics and political skills to ‘shape the preferences of others’ by getting ‘others to want what they wanted’ (Nye, 2004: 5).

Ministers who signed the 1999 Bologna Agreement had shared values and a common aim to harmonise the European HE system, with a view to transforming tertiary education into a European ‘dynamic knowledge-based economy... capable of economic growth... through employment [and] greater social cohesion while reducing inequalities’ (Communiqué of the Conference of Ministers, 2003). These shared aims and values meant ministers could use political skills and soft power strategies to influence others, without the use of ‘tangible threats or payoffs’ (Nye, 2004), and thereby legitimise the Europe of Knowledge Scheme.

The Bologna Agreement set the foundation for a European knowledge-based economy strategy, creating a global market competitor (Fell and Haines, 2009; European

Commission, 2015: 25). Working collectively, government ministers may have used soft power strategies to develop a unified model of tertiary education.

According to Rizvi and Lingard (2010), competition within the global education market signifies the commodification of HE. It is possible, however, that competition ‘promotes new lifestyles and creates consumers whose cultural identities are defined by their association with products rather [than] their obligation to their communities’ (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010: 167). The social power of these social agents changed the provision of European HE. Ministers were proficient at using soft power and resources, such as their political skills and social networks and authoritative hard power tactics (Nye, 2004; Lukes, 2005). In addition, ministers may have endorsed the use of other forms of power diplomacies to secure recruitment outcomes and to attract students who may have wanted to study outside of their home countries and away from their cultural norms.

### **2.4.3 Doctoral education – the third cycle**

Following the success of the first two cycles of the Bologna Process, European ministers decided to concentrate on doctoral provision. Focusing on ‘doctoral level as the third cycle in the Bologna Process’ (Bologna Process, 2003: 7) signified a change to doctoral programmes across Europe (Berlin Communiqué, 2003). According to the 2003 Berlin Communiqué, European ministers considered it ‘necessary to go beyond’ the remit of the first two HE cycles because, at that time, doctoral students represented only five percent of the European student population (European Commission, 2015) and Europe needed to increase doctoral candidate numbers to attract significant research funding from a variety of sources. This strategy would arguably contribute to the European knowledge-based economic strategy. The HE Ministers recognised that doctoral students would play a significant role if the student population engaged in doctoral study.

The European Commission funded the European Universities Association (EUA) 'Doctoral Programme for the European Knowledge Society' and in 2005 the Salzburg Consensus published 'ten basic principles of doctoral education This included a new top-down doctoral programme model, that required providers to develop doctoral students' 'transferable skills The European government and EUA recognised the potential for students to work in industry and 'across the knowledge economy and employment market' rather than relying on academic skills to support employability.

Although the goal agreed by ministers was to increase the number of successfully completed doctorates across Europe, one of the key challenges, according to Zgaga (cited in Curaj et al., 2012), was agreeing to the common structure and definition of a European doctorate. The 'Europe of Knowledge' expectation was for doctoral students to gain 'transferable skills' and workplace experience as well as becoming researchers. Although the European Knowledge Community signalled mass changes in order to become a global education marketplace competitor (European Commission, 2015: 31), some organisations needed a lot of convincing, as they had concerns about the devaluation of doctoral degrees if student numbers increased (Zgaga, cited in Curaj et al., 2012).

Rizvi and Lingard (2010) described this as the commodification of education, suggesting that the proposed increase in doctoral and post-doctoral students may have placed an economic value on their engagement so that their education could be seen as a commodity following the changes to doctoral programme provision. Equally, it is possible to consider doctoral engagement as contributing to economic growth and European knowledge. In a competitive education market system, a doctoral student or post-doc could become an influential social agent and use their knowledge and skills to influence the actions and outcomes of others.

## 2.5 Professional choice: PD or PhD?

The demand for a highly skilled graduate workforce has influenced growth and driven competition within the HE marketplace (UKCGE, 2002: 17). In the last two decades, PD programmes have increased (Scott et al., 2004; Costley, 2013; Mellors-Bourne et al., 2016); however, a recent study by House (2020) proposed that professional doctorates are now in decline across the UK, although this may be due to a decline in international student numbers because of the COVID 19 pandemic.

Practising professionals, whatever their career stage (early, mid, or late) may consider a professional doctoral route, as opposed to a traditional PhD, as they may want to be a ‘professional researcher’ rather than a ‘researching professional’ (Bourner, 2001). The opportunity to combine research and professional practice development, rather than pursue a purely research-based programme, may be an attractive alternative to the traditional PhD route for some career professionals.

- *Seeking advice*

Professionals who are contemplating doctoral study may consider which pathway would best fit their personal and professional needs and, as a result, may seek additional information from colleagues, line-managers, professional group members or the PhD and PD academic tutors. Equally, because doctoral study represents a significant personal commitment, they may seek guidance from family members or friends, and these people may also become influential and affect doctoral study decisions and actions. In addition, a professional may question which route would best fit their needs – a research doctorate or a PD – and may seek information online or in print to help inform their choice. All these sources have the potential power to influence their values concerning doctoral study. For

example, professionals may be persuaded that one programme is better than another on account of different fees, or because they offer different modes of study (part-time or full-time); or they may want to be part of a teaching group or prefer to focus on pure research. All these considerations have the potential to influence their decisions and later action. As some universities still consider the PhD as the ‘gold standard’ (Mellors-Bourne et al., 2016), the debate over which has higher status, the PhD versus the PD, could be controversial and socially influential on a prospective candidate, with the organisation’s attitude potentially impacting on professionals who are considering doctoral study at that institution.

### **2.5.1 The PhD versus the professional doctorate**

This section considers the ongoing debate over the perceptions of quality between the different doctoral programmes, despite the continued growth in PDs, although the report authored by Mellors-Bourne et al. (2016: v) recognised that this ongoing debate mainly continues in post-1992 institutions. This report included a number of positive responses from PD students and some employers, but they discovered that there were still issues, ‘particularly within HE’ settings, as some institutions and academics raised concerns about the quality of the PD compared to the traditional PhD (p. vii). In response to these perceptions about the quality, the report argued how students have to contribute to knowledge and professional practice:

PD students undertake greater learning than PhD researchers as they tend to have less support in the environment in which they conduct their research. Their research is also expected to have an impact on professional practice, not solely to make a contribution to knowledge (Mellors-Bourne et al., 2016: vii).

This additional dimension suggest that successful professional doctoral students may become influential social agents themselves by supporting the development of other practitioners.

Inevitably, there will always remain some individual critics and organisations that have their own views about the quality of the PD, even though most of the academic community accepts their equivalent status. However, an individual's viewpoint could be influenced by another's personal doctoral experiences or preconceptions of the value of one doctoral degree pathway over another. Equally, they may lack an understanding of the PD requirements (Scott et al., 2004; Park, 2007).

Research focusing on issues relating to equivalence of the PhD and the PD, as conducted by Boud and Tennant (2006) and Fell et al. (2011), discovered that the value of the PhD was considered by some academics to be the 'enduring robust' accepted model in contrast to PDs (Table 2-5). This, they argued, was due to a lack of transparency in policy statements, as the PD was often overlooked or amalgamated in with PhD guidance, this made it difficult for academic and professional communities to understand the requirements expected of PD programmes during that period (Fell et al., 2011).

Differences between the traditional PhD and Professional Doctorates	
<i>PhD</i>	<i>PDs</i>
Research training through an apprenticeship model.	Research training through taught programme, with direct study.
Dyads of students/supervision.	Taught by teaching teams as students form a cohort group. Different mentors/supervisors for distinct elements of the programme.
Entry may directly follow a first degree.	Entry usually following a Level 7 degree, plus professional experience, or additional qualifications.
Narrow, specialist disciplinary focused on Mode 1 type knowledge that is 'characterised by an indifference to the practice setting, and the designation of the practical setting as merely the source for theoretical deliberations' (Scott et al., 2004: 45) which 'reflects the interests of the academy rather than the knowledge users' (Wood, 2000, cited in Lee, 2009: 142).	Broad focus on Mode 2 type knowledge that is 'characterised by a form of technical rationality that is content-led and experience-based in professional practice' (Scott et al., 2004: 45) 'where the focus of knowledge generation and development is shifted from within the academy to a professional practice setting' (Lee, 2009: 143).
Assessment is by the outcome of the candidate's production of a thesis that is examined by a viva.	Continuous assessment throughout the programme via coursework assignments, plus the production of a thesis that is examined by a viva.
Requirement of transferable skills in training.	Students are already in professional employment. They may also be at different career stages (Scott et al., 2004).
Focus on research, contributing to knowledge with wider dissemination.	Focus on research affecting professional practice and contributing to knowledge with focused dissemination.
Normative study referenced as the research projects are defined at the beginning with the aim of a long-term focus.	Criteria referenced. Learning outcomes comprising professional skills and knowledge. Research projects are defined at a later stage in the programme. Short-term and long-term strategic focus.
PhD normally viewed as training for a career in academia.	The PD is seen as higher study in terms of career change and development or the desire to consolidate professional learning and contribute to professional practice.

Table 2-5: Differences between the PhD and PD routes of study (based on Scott et al., 2004; Taylor, 2007; Mellors-Bourne et al., 2016)

The debate in the academic community concerning the parity of professional doctoral degrees with the traditional PhD route is still ongoing today. The comment by Mellors-Bourne et al. (2016) illustrates perception issues by some HE institutions and individuals regarding the quality and parity between doctoral programmes:

perceptions of inequivalence persist in the academic environment, which can only be explored through a primary investigation of PD and PhD research outputs so as to provide robust measures of the quality of PD research in comparison with PhD research. This should not rely on individuals' perceptions of quality (Mellors-Bourne et al., 2016: 76).

At the 6th International PD Conference (22-23 March 2018) Professor Burnard, of Cambridge University, UK, Dr Claire Slight, from the HE Academy, UK, and Dr Margaret Malloch, from Victoria University, Australia, all commented on parity issues between PhDs and PDs as some employers and organisations still retain the perception of a gold standard PhD compared to the PD qualification. Professor Burnard's keynote referred to issues raised in Mellors-Bourne et al's 2016 report, particularly the lack of consistency in promoting the distinctive nature of the PD, and its equivalency to a PhD programme. After considering the report's recommendations Burnard identified the actions she took, which included posting the attributes and differences between the PhD and PD on Cambridge University's EdD programme website.

The PD report (2016) recommended several benefits that could be introduced to raise awareness, for example:



- highlighting the importance of the research context and the impact requirements of professional practice;
- the need for different and new research insights into both academic and professional practice can be acquired;
- personal career-related up-skilling and self-development features highlighted.

This highlights how potential exposure to different informational influences, such as the recommendations in the report by Mellors-Bourne et al. (2016) may influence or deliver beneficial outcomes, change in organisational environments, or the personal goals and actions of others (Hidi and Harackiewicz, 2000), as the experience of another's expertise, personal opinion, or promotional materials has the potential to become an explicit or hidden influential force that may affect a professional's personal or professional goals. As the range of professional doctoral programmes vary in expectation and eventual submission outcomes, such as sponsoring a portfolio of professional evidence rather than a traditional thesis (Lunt, 2002), an EdD candidate is more likely to be attracted by the 'relevance to practice and [their] professional work', as it allows them to 'research real-world problems' of professional practice (Klenowski et al. 2011: 618).

#### *Professional group influence*

A person's professional group or organisation may influence their personal or professional choices regarding a PhD or PD. Hence, the potential exists for a professional to select one doctoral programme over another based on the perceptions, values, and judgements of others. Research by Germar et al. in 2013 found that social influence 'biases decision making, changed judgements and opinions' of the receiver of influence (p. 218). Also, the

implied value held by other professionals may derive from persuasive informational influences from the dominant social power of a group (Turner, 1991).

The desire to gain higher level skills while continuing to develop their ‘existing experience and expertise’ (Costley and Lester, 2011: 266) may influence doctoral study choice. In contemplating doctoral study, they may contact academics or experts in their professional field and, in seeking expert advice, they become exposed to influential agent/s’ powerbases and informational resources that have the potential to sway their decisions. Professionals who embark on PDs have to combine both academic and professional worlds (Scott et al., 2004) in contrast to PhD students who are submerged in the academic world. Naturally, it may be in academia’s interest to recruit students to ensure longevity through viable programme numbers.

### **2.5.2 Influential power of websites and social media resources**

This section focuses on the influential power of websites and social media research, as a professional doctoral candidate may be receptive to the content of social influence online resources that universities use to market their offer to potential students. Mellors-Bourne et al’s 2016 report ventured into the realms of promotion and branding, which has the potential to influence or sway readers’ opinions, and noted that in an effort to enhance practice, a professional practitioner viewing these sites may be susceptible to influential subliminal priming campaigns.

A social influence experiment conducted by Sridhar and Srinivasan (2012) designed a website to test how people were influenced during their website interactions. They included five-star product ratings and personal recommendation comments, with the aim of examining the potential influential outcome on consumers’ behaviour. Although the authors recognised the study’s limitations due to website access, their findings showed a

significant shift in people's choices. This influence-strategy promoted specific items over others on the websites and the study found that personal comments and five-star ratings influenced people's decisions. Therefore, the value of information placed on a promotional site, when viewed by a professional who might be contemplating doctoral study, could be very influential.

### *Branding HE*

Development of an HE institutional brand is complex, as it has to represent numerous factors and include the ability to persuade others of the quality of provision. Branding represents an organisational authoritative powerbase and influences others into believing they are a market leader as their brand logo reinforces the message by addressing the 'information gap between choice factors identified by students and publications' (Williams and Omar, 2014: 2).

The 2015 report by Diriba and Diriba establishes that HE institutions which 'failed to position themselves in the market arena' often became 'dominated and marginalised' (p. 3). In addition, they established that successful institutions which had engaged in branding their materials on numerous social media platforms, such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube, had an additional impact on viewers who accessed their messages on these platforms. Branding facilitated a positive influence on students' engagement with the institution by allowing the institution to 'stake its position' within the HE market arena. The branding of visual images and information materials displayed on sites like YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, or blogs were considered to influence professionals' engagement.

Universities use social power strategies to attract the attention of potential students, which may also be considered as subliminally priming their viewers, as consumerism has made social media sites popular and there are many academics and universities who

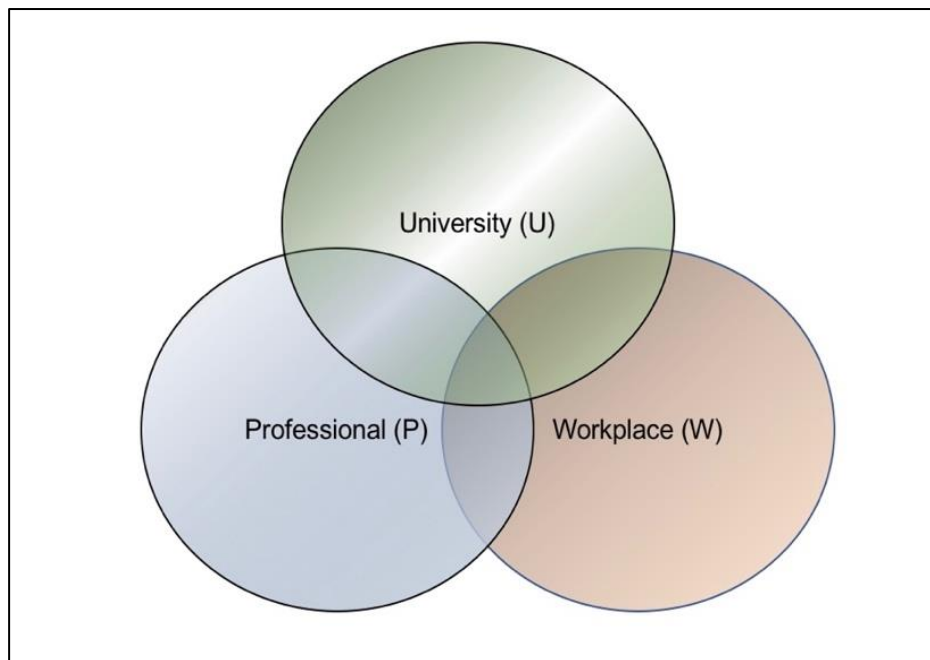
communicate information via the sites listed above. For example, academics Pat Thompson and Inger Mewburn post academic research information and doctoral support materials online via Twitter and use blogs to inform and support HE doctoral study consumers.

Research findings by Saichaie and Morpew (2014) noted that university websites displayed imagery and text that advocated a course of action and considered this to be the primary way that potential students learned about HE and what an institution might offer. These images and texts have influential power because the design is aimed at persuading potential students to engage in HE study. A professional may view these doctoral study communications as beneficial for career development or their aspirational goals and may compare several university websites. The design of a programme's informational content, positioning of successful students' images, and personal positive comments and experiences displayed on a doctoral programme webpage may affect a susceptible professional or empower them to act, causing them to become consumers of education.

## **2.6 Professional Doctoral Students**

This section of the literature review focuses on research and reports relating to PD students. Breen and Lindsay (1999), Bourner et al. (2001), Scott et al. (2004), and the QAA (2010) describe professional doctoral students as professional practitioners who are engaged in research activities at the highest level. It was not until 2002 that the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) included PDs, even though they had existed since 1989 (Lunt et al., 2002). Research by Lunt and her colleagues, who studied professionals engaged in these programmes, provided new insights into professional doctoral programmes.

At that time, their research focused on education, engineering, and business administration programmes in 12 universities. Further research by Scott et al. (2004: 1) concluded that PD students operate within a ‘twilight zone’, Figure 2-2, which exists within the overlapping boundaries of their university identity, where research is dominant; their identity as professionals, where standards of professional practice are maintained; and their workplace identity, which has different requirements. A further difficulty was the identification of the exact career stage a professional was at when they embarked on doctoral level study.



*Figure 2-2: Twilight Zone of professional doctoral students (based on Scott et al., 2004; Lee, 2009; and Maxwell, 2010)*

The Venn diagram (Figure 2-2) illustrates the overlapping zones of a professional candidate. According to Lee et al. (2000) and Maxwell (2010), P denotes their professional identity and professionalism, U represents the university and the constraints of the professional doctoral curriculum, and W signifies the professional workplace. A later study by Wellington and Sikes (2006: 724) outlined the issues that some of their EdD students encountered when trying to balance a ‘multitude of identities’ relating to parenting, partners, professional work, and doctoral study. Interestingly, Maxwell’s (2010)

Venn diagram does not include the personal situation of professionals. Adult learners may have additional personal pressure because they juggle their professional practice with study and family commitments and need to cope with personal issues and personal and professional commitments.

The complexity of navigating these zones gives professional practitioners engaged in a PD the opportunity to strengthen their professional accountability and professional doctoral identity (Armsby, 2013) and critically reflect on their practice (Schon, 1987). An interesting point argued by Costley (2013), is the existence of the twilight zone which professionals navigate as they merge professional practice knowledge with their research field because they can develop their personal learning and research study skills ‘beyond [expected] conventional research expertise’ (p. 9).

Although the expectation of professional doctoral students is to contribute to professional practice and new knowledge (Lunt, 2002; QAA, 2000, 2014; Boud et al., 2020), the central intersections signify the professional doctoral students’ challenges as they bridge the knowledge gap between ‘Mode 1 knowledge production’ which exists within the pure research domain of the university and ‘Mode 2 knowledge [that] result[s] from practitioner agency and/or reflecting on practice’ (Maxell, 2010: 286).

Differentiation between Mode 1 and 2 types of knowledge production may become an influential factor for a professional as their choice of doctoral pathway may need to fit their personal or professional aspirations and boundaries or advance their professional practice. Professionals may have to decide which doctorate route to follow and seek advice from others. The issue then is whether the advisor/s have subjective perceptions of the different doctoral programmes, i.e., Professional Doctorate compared to PhD, reported by Mellors-Bourne et al. (2016).

### **2.6.1 Professional doctoral students' influences**

While the overall responsibility for doctoral choice remains solely with the professional contemplating doctoral study, Gill and Hoppe's (2009) study proposed five motivational profiles that contributed to doctoral students' desire for a degree and found that all career stages were looking for personal fulfilment and self-enrichment. The concept of motivation, which is generally accepted in education settings, differs from social influence, which is generated from a social agent's powerbase and skills that make a person move in a particular direction by creating a change in their attitude that may lead to motivation, according to Broome (2009), and a specific action (Pratkanis, 2007).

A professional student may have been influenced by an influential agent's hard power, for example, Nye's (2004) carrot and stick approach of a 'reward' to engage in doctoral study or may have been told that failure to engage would result in loss of status or position. The effect of a soft power approach, where an influencer suggest that it may advance their career or fulfil a desire, could be viewed as encouragement to act. In both circumstances the professional may associate these actions with referent power (Table 2-4) as they may identify the influencer as a role model who sets the standards and norms of behaviour (French and Raven, 1959).

In contrast, a hard power approach may generate from 'legitimate, expert or informational power', i.e. an influential person or group may have expert knowledge or power or convey information that influences professionals' decisions, as research practitioners with doctoral status have gained expert power and as Scott et al. suggest (2004) are open to new opportunities that may enhance their credibility. Professionals may view the PD as a product that gives them professional standing and as a tool to improve their promotion and employability prospects.

## 2.6.2 Social influence leading to professional students' motivation

Referring to Turner's (2009) comment at the beginning of this literature review, that the 'power of social influences is central to human affairs' (p. 1), I will consider motivation theory and links to social power. In conversational language, the terms 'motivation and influence' may be used interchangeably, as individuals may consider these terms to have the same or similar meanings during an interaction. Indeed, Boud et al. (2020) use the term influence and motivation interchangeably when referencing Wellington and Sikes' 2006 study on EdD students' motivation:

given that the rationale of professional doctorates is that they are close to and seek to influence practice, overall there should be clear traces of influence from them on the possible resolution of complex problems, social justice and the wider good' (Boud, et al., 2020: 1).

Therefore, it is important to consider how social influence differs from motivation, as influence is a process where others are able to move people to act, whereas motivation comes from within, from ones' self-interest or external factors. Broome's (2009) philosophical concept of motivation, discussed in Chapter 3, is important, as he argues that a person requires a reason to do something before they are able to act. Their reason may have been generated from an encounter with an influential agent, who introduces the idea or signposts a potential course of action, e.g., engaging in a PD. Broome (2009) argues that a person will make a reasoned judgement, whether they should do it or not, which may generate their motivation to act. However, this motivation may have been triggered by an influential agent.

Over the years, a number of theorists have conceptualised motivational theories within different research fields (Gross, 1996; Franken, 2002). The diversity of motivational



theories includes, for example, Maslow's 'hierarchy of needs' (1943 and 1970) and Deci and Ryan's self-determination theory (1985). Interestingly, Lia (2011: 2-4) attributes aspects of motivation to a person's 'beliefs, values, and interests... that may require them to do or not to do something' because of external influences. For example, a professional doctoral candidate may sustain their levels of motivation if they have the support of others who share the same values, experiences, and interests. In contrast, a professional candidate's motivation may only be fleeting or temporary when the rewards or goals they wish to achieve become too difficult or problematic. A person's motivation may wane altogether when the outcome they want to achieve is no longer valued, or the goal they set themselves loses significance.

Motivation studies by Guary et al. (2010: 712) considers a person's 'underlying behaviour', while Gottfried (1990: 525) argues that academic motivation is based on 'enjoyment of learning' with a curiosity to master learning and persistence to overcome 'difficult or novel' challenges.

Ryan and Deci's (2000) research recognised that an individual must be 'moved to do something [and] energised or activated towards an end' linked to 'underlying attitudes and goals' (p. 54), which echoes Broome's (2009) concept that a person may require a reason to act. For example, a tutor may consider a student to be motivated if they had a goal or wanted to master a specific task, whether it was an internal intrinsic goal, or extrinsically motivated by the direct involvement of a teacher. However, personal motivation may be fleeting, so the teacher may use the power of influence and the skills of persuasion, authority, or coercion to move the student to act.

Ryan and Deci's (2000: 56) research presented a convincing argument for motivation to be separated into intrinsic and extrinsic in their self-determination theory as they

concluded that it did incite action. In contrast, motivational theorists (Lepper, Green and Nisbett, 1973; Deci, 1992; Alexander et al., 1997; Harackiewicz et al., 1998) argued that ‘such distinctions do not serve us well’, as intrinsic and extrinsic factors should be used together to optimise academic motivation.

Findings from Baker and Lattuca (2010) and Guerin et al.’s (2015) research associated persistence, enjoyment, and the mastery of research challenges with their doctoral students. Wellington and Sikes’ (2006) study focused on 29 EdD doctoral students and had similar findings to Scott et al’s (2004) research, although Wellington and Sikes limited their focus to education, unlike Scott’s research, which encompassed a range of professional doctoral disciplines.

Wellington and Sikes (2006) claim that EdD students’ personal and/or professional goals are situational factors, driven by external career influences. As professionals, they must consider and comply with their organisation’s practice. An important consideration linked to organisational motivation is the reciprocal ‘control over the work’ (Zarifa and Davis, 2007: 260) that may enhance a professional’s career opportunities in an economic and skills-driven environment. In this circumstance, an influential agent’s involvement may help to maintain a professional’s doctoral motivation.

Vernon defined the nature of motivation as ‘being urged or driven to behave in certain ways, and one’s desire to act in a particular way to achieve certain ends or object[ives]’ (1969: 1). While motivation can be based on particular types of behaviours, Vernon describes ‘persistence’ that involves consistent action and ‘considerable energy’ (Vernon 1969: 1), such as being driven by personal desire or achievement goals, rather than being instructed by others to take action.

Wellington and Sikes (2006) asserted that EdD students valued the detachment between the workplace and professional activity, which they described as the ability to move from a position dominated by professional practice (act in a certain way) to a position dominated by academic knowledge and skills (desire or goal). Although exposure to an influential agent who suggested doctoral study may lead to motivation.

Empirical research suggest that motivation is subject to manipulation through certain instructional practices and have positive and negative effects as studies on intrinsic motivation have reported different outcomes. Deci (1971) and Lepper et al. (1973) established that people's intrinsic motivation decreased when external rewards were offered for their activity. As the rewards held no value for them, the individuals lost motivation, struggled, or did not complete their task. This could be significant as those highly-driven professionals may lose motivation as they progress through the doctoral journey, or may even drop out altogether, and an influential agent may prevent this by providing the support needed to reinvigorate their motivation.

Later research by Harackiewicz (1979) and Ryan (1982) considered the giving of extrinsic rewards to intrinsically motivated people. However, their research did not consider the impact of social influence strategies, when others intervene and offer a reward, or whether the person giving the reward caused a change that moved them forward. In this context, Raven's model offers insight from the perspective of the person receiving the influence (Figure 2-3) and considers their position in terms of potential acceptance and the different ways they are affected by their agent's use of power during an influential attempt. The below model maps the change in values, attitudes, and behaviour that aids motivation or facilitates goal achievement and moves a person toward action.

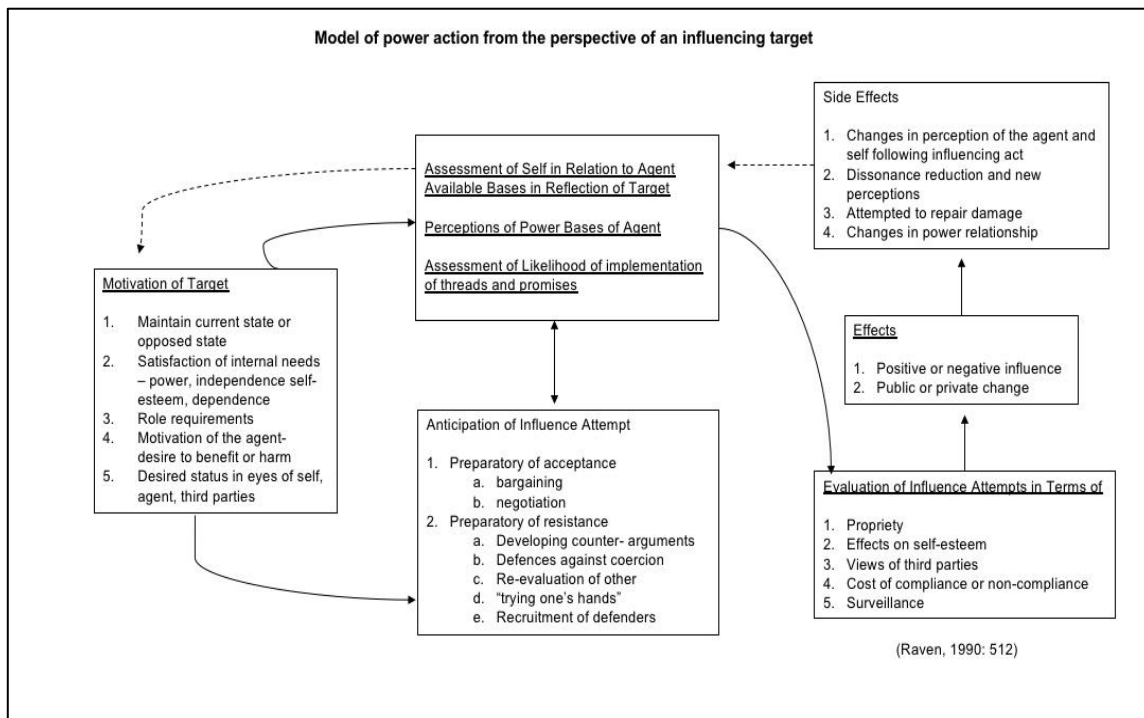


Figure 2-3: Model of power in action from the perspective of an influential target (Raven, 1990: 512)

An influential agent may facilitate others to achieve their goals by influencing the direction of their action; however, to achieve this state an influential agent may intentionally use their social powerbase to ‘advance the needs’ or ‘control’ the action of others. For example, a colleague may share their knowledge, values, benefits (rewards) and enjoyment of doctoral study with their professional group or a peer and this interaction may be influential in encouraging and motivating others to engage in doctoral studies. In this context, they become influential agents. They may consider using overt or covert social power strategies to encourage others, depending on the receptiveness of the individual. The potential exists for the social agent to want the same opportunities and experience of doctoral study for others, which may drive the situation. Conversations between peers may become a hidden influence, as these types of informational exchange may go unnoticed or not be valued until much later (Cialdini, 2005). The information may only become valued by a person after a period of reflection, or when the situation or social conditions are favourable.

This may provide the opportunity for a professional to make a reasoned judgement.

Broome (2009) suggest that after considering others' views and relevant information it may at a later stage become the hook for motivation. The model outlining power in action from the actor's perspective (Figure 2-4) illustrates the many ways a social agent/s can use influential strategies and resources to motivate a person.

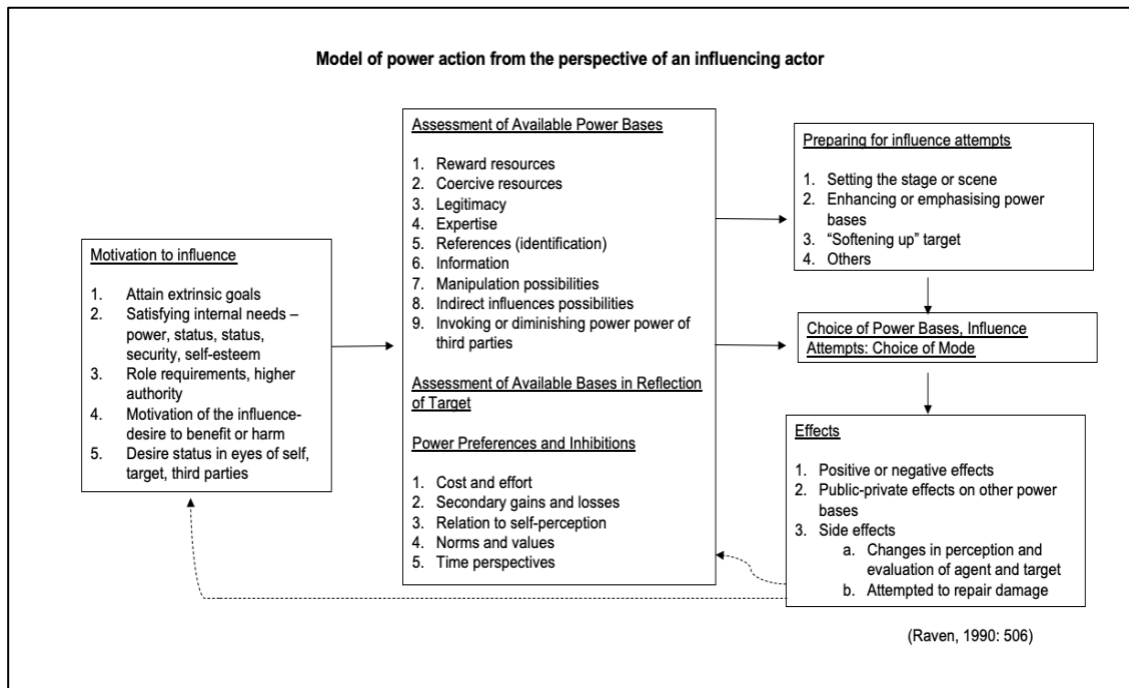


Figure 2-4: Model of power action from the perspective of an influential actor (Raven, 1990: 506)

## 2.7 What is in it for influential social agents – benefits and risks

After considering social power and the potential effects that influential agents may have on a professional's doctoral study engagement, this section considers the potential risks and benefits for influential agents themselves. An influential agent may use their informational or expert powerbase to share their doctoral experiences or the criteria of a doctorate in order to influence action and support others. They are open to sharing their personal experiences and in doing this may provide personal information that may drive the desires, goals or status needs of others. As experts, they may exercise their

professional and personal values and demonstrate an understanding of the professional's circumstances by selecting an appropriate tactic, for example, persuasion or coercion.

Raven's 1990 power/action model focuses on the perspective of an influential agent (Figure 2-4). In this model Raven assumes that influential agents are rational agents who decide which type of social power and influential skills they will exercise to achieve a change or action in a person or group. Although Raven applied this model to a political scenario, I suggest it may be useful in understanding what the potential benefits are for PD students' influential agents. In the first section, Raven suggested that motivation from a social influencer's perspective can be based on a prepared set of influential situations, which include the direct attainment of extrinsic goals or the need to satisfy the motivator's own internal need for power, recognition of status, or their personal security or self-esteem (p. 506), as illustrated in the feedback loop.

Interestingly, Raven identified that a social agent's motivational desire may benefit their individual or cause emotional or physical harm. The use of harmful motivation is unlikely in educational settings, but this may differ in a professional candidate's workplace. The outcome, according to Raven's argument, is a desire for the agent to obtain status, either for themselves, or by third party recognition of the individual's status.

The second section, Figure 2-4, illustrates the different powerbases that influential agent/s may select when assessing a person's needs and their own requirements. For example, a doctoral candidate may use referent power or informational power to influence a friend's engagement, based on their desire to benefit a friend who is undecided about committing to further study. They would, however, need to assess the potential of their various powerbases regarding the effectiveness of their actions in terms of successful outcomes. As Raven (1990: 507) argues, 'a rational influencing [agent] assesses his/her powerbases

in terms of the situation and nature of the person upon whom the influence would be attempted

In addition to this, they would need to review the cost in terms of their relationship with the other person. For example, a relationship bond may deepen if the outcome is successful, or the person attributes their success to the influencer, thereby enhancing the influential agent/s status. In contrast, the potential risk of a detrimental outcome to the relationship may also exist if the individual feels pressurised by coercive attempts into doing something that they do not want to do but feel obliged to do, and their relationship bond may become broken and irreparable.

## **2.8 Concluding summary**

The findings in this chapter are important to me as the researcher as it shines a light on the complexity of professional doctoral students' worlds, and the gap in educational literature that considers the way social agents use their powerbase to influence professionals' engagement with doctoral study.

Taking into account the complex nature of the different doctoral programmes offered, it is possible that a professional may seek advice from family, friends, other professional colleagues, and university academics, and that the people who offer advice may become influential agent/s because they hold knowledge and informational power that may assist the decision-making process.

I have considered the influential agents' powerbase and resource skills, including the ways they use their power through or over others. I have collected literature from a diverse range of research fields, which illustrates the complexity of social influence to support

this study and shows how social power may take different guises when an influential agent tries to advance the needs and action of others.

I have considered the classic features of power within the context of social and political power, and how social agents use both hard and soft power to affect people's attitudes, beliefs, and desires, and cause them to act. The perceptions and experiences of a professional doctoral student's influential social agents' power can be contextualised within the boundary of PD engagement, as social agents' influential strategies may be the factor that drove professionals' actions.

The following chapter considers the conceptual framework and the theories that support this study.



## 3 Conceptual Framework

### 3.1 Introduction

The issue of social influence and the many ways it may affect professionals' PD engagement is complex and needs to be analysed through a set of theoretical constructs. According to Cialdini (2005, 2007) people often overlook three essential points when they interpret social influence and the way it affects people's decisions and actions. These are outlined below:

- Other people or a group's actions may determine another individual or group's actions;
- Acting as social agents, people may use a variety of skills to influence others' actions;
- An expert may decide they need to seek other experts' opinions to support their action.

The literature review identified how 'social influence and power' can be used interchangeably (Lukes, 2005) to explain events, although early researchers proposed 'social influence and social power' were two discrete entities (French and Raven, 1959).

This conceptual framework has been constructed to analyse the issue of professionals' social influence and to understand the ways family, friends and other professionals influenced their PD engagement. Central to this study is Turner's (2005) three-process theory that argues how social power can be used 'through others' as opposed to being used to exert 'control over people's actions. The theory provides an understanding of the way social agents are able to move people to act. Given the nature of the research question,

Broome's (2009) philosophical concept of motivation, where the action of others causes a person to make a 'reasoned judgement whether to act or not' serves as a guide to understand how professionals made their decision to action PD study. To provide a richer picture on how social influence affected professionals' action, Raven's (1990) power in action models (Figures 2-3 and 2-4) provide guidance on mapping the ways social influence affected the participants. Adom et al. (2018) argue that researchers are at liberty to modify existing [models] to suit their research context and question. To position this study within an educational context I draw on Scott et al's (2004) research and Mellors-Bourne et al's (2016) PD report. In addition, I consider Bandura's (1989) argument that social interactions can shape the trajectory of people's lives and Cialdini's research on persuasive influence add a further dimension in the three process-theory.

### **3.2 The three-process theory**

Turner's (2005) research categorised social influence as:

- The power of social influence on people or group actions;
- Influential social agents' power relationships and the ways they influence others.

Interestingly, Turner described social influence as the capacity for 'control through others' which supports and enables action in others (Figure 2-1, the three-process theory). This is a different approach when considering control 'over others', when one party in a relationship holds the control that causes an action in the other party (p. 6). A group, for example a professional body or organisation, may have a dynamic individual or leader who has the ability to influence and share the group's identity with the individuals inside that group in a way that facilitates cooperation and harmony and develops a strong group identity.

Building on Turner's (1991, 2005) research, group identity is important as it represents a person's sense of belonging and the way they share a set of values and characteristics which may influence others. Due to their shared identity, they are able to use their influential strategies (authority, persuasion and coercion) to support others' actions, as opposed to controlling their actions. This influence, according to Turner (2005), is the basis of social power as it allows both parties to control resources such as information, rewards, money, status, group ties, and social approval, which have the capacity to influence people's values, attitudes and beliefs, Figure 3.1.

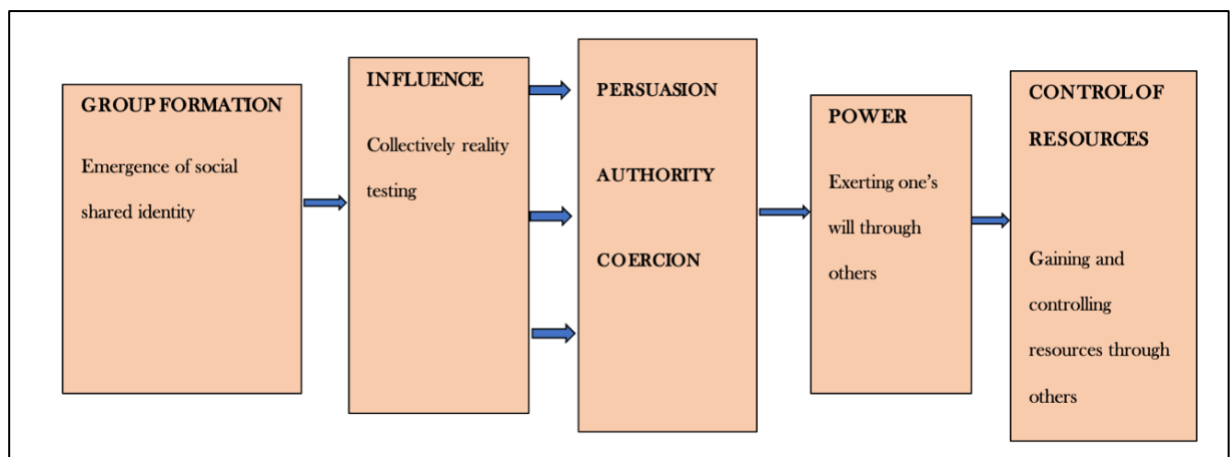


Figure 3-1: The three-process theory of power (adapted from Turner, 2005: 9)

The emergence of a shared social identity is central to our relationships and endeavours (Keltner et al. (2003) cited in Turner, 2005) and this emergent power can shape our relationships through the sharing of beliefs and values to enable the development of social identity (Turner, 2005).

A group's social identity will acknowledge its members' 'mutual influential power', but as 'power is never absolute' it can become socially constrained by the values and beliefs of others (Turner, 2005: 19). For example, when parents exercise authority over their children, they may use tactics of coercion and persuasion over their child's daily actions. However, this influential power changes as their children become adults (Egan, 1990).

Similarly, exposure to the social influential interactions of their family, colleagues, or a manager may affect a person's personal or professional values and behaviour.

Social agents may use their social influence in positive ways to generate action in the other person. It is arguable that a social agent may seek approval or an understanding of their ideas or values. Similarly, the values of an organisation's leadership may have social power, as their influential approach may be used to control or empower others. For example, where an organisation's leadership has control of resources, this power can be used to control standards of membership and act as gatekeeper for the profession (Bandura, 1991: 245). Likewise, professional bodies which share a group identity and values have the authority to influence other members. Interestingly, Bandura posits that 'people do not passively absorb ready-made standards from whatever social influence that happens to be imposed upon them' (Bandura, 1989: 254). Arguably, information received from a professional body's social agent will require members to make a judgement about the information before taking any action.

Cialdini (2005, 2007) argued that persuasion should be divided into six principles, which he characterised as 'weapons of influence'. The word weapon, however, may signify an aggressive form of influence, nevertheless 'reciprocity; commitment and consistency; social proof; liking; authority; and scarcity strategies', are applied in non-aggressive ways (Cialdini, 2007). For example, social proof refers to an influence or action that other people follow or assert if they are uncertain about how to act, i.e. they take their cues from others; so, if the surrounding people are studying for a doctorate, they take their cue from them. Liking, Cialdini (2007) argues, is sharing similar ideas, compliments, or cooperation. In contrast, scarcity refers to the desire for something a person perceives to be less available, but when a person has a position of authority, they have the capacity to

build trust and establish their expertise. However, Turner's 2005 three-process theory argues that persuasion is a approach that can be used as social influence *through* others, unlike Cialdini's (2007) concept of reciprocity which makes a person feel obliged to give back.

Therefore, the potential exists for a social agent to use a range of tactical influences to inspire or instigate a professional's decision to take part in a doctoral programme.

Although many educational researchers may attribute such a decision to motivation, exposure to an influential agents' influence may contribute to a professional's decisions to action doctoral engagement.

### 3.3 Reason, reasoned - judgement and action

Broome's (2009) philosophical concept of motivation explains that 'rational process[ing] affects our values and reasons and gives rise to act' (p. 80), i.e. the process of rationality leads a person to consider the act before taking action, but cannot be attributed to the act itself, Figure 3.2.

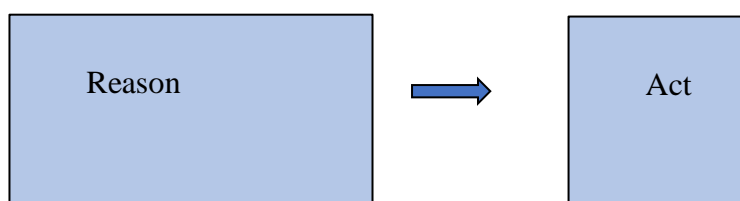


Figure 3-2: Scheme A (Broome, 2009: 80)

For example, social agents may share socially constructed information, such as a radio programme that highlights an academic's work and use this information to influence action. Although the listener may process this information, they may question whether it is the cue for action or a nudge to consider action. Importantly, the selection of the content and message could be presented in an overt or covert way that causes action. Broome

(2009) makes the argument that during this processing phase, reasoning develops, and it requires a person to make a ‘reason-judgement’ where they may consider their values, family life and attitude towards the situation before deciding whether ‘to act or not to act’ because it may shape their later behaviour and action.

This act may contribute to their reasons for engaging in a doctoral programme, as any action they take may have an influence on their professional and personal lives. It is possible that a professional may make a reasoned judgement that involves their personal beliefs and values as well as their attitudes towards their work, family, and their life in general. Their reasoning to engage in a doctorate may become the ‘hook that leads to motivation and action’ (Broome, 2009: 83) as illustrated in Figure 3.3.

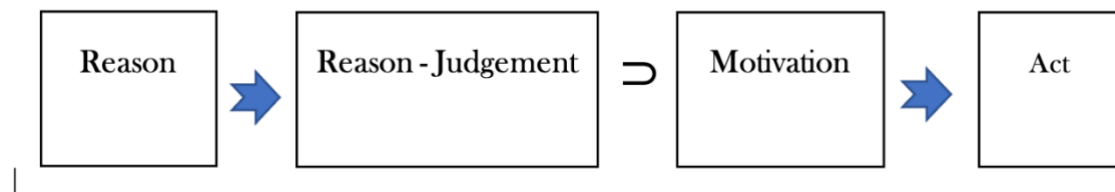


Figure 3-3: Scheme 3 (Broome: 2009: 83)

Interestingly, Broome (2009) did add a caveat to the argument, suggesting that a ‘person may be motivated to do something without being committed to doing it’ (p. 92), unlike an intention, which is a commitment to an action that does not involve motivation (Broome, 2009). Arguably, the hook for motivation may be generated from different influential factors, for example, advice from other experts (Cialdini, 2005) who may affect a professional’s reasoning and judgement.

Several researchers have recognised the different ways social agents use influential tactics, such as ‘persuasion’ or ‘coercion’ that may cause a change or manipulate the actions and beliefs of others (Gass and Seiter, 1999; Pennington et al, 1999; Turner, 1991, 2005; Cialdini, 1993, 2005, 2007). In the context of this study, I suggest the term tactics relates

to strategies of non-coercive caring encouragement, persistence, confidence building, and social proof modelling, as opposed to aggressive strategies.

### **3.4 Power in Action Model**

Raven (1990) offers insight from the perspective of an influential agent as well as the person being socially influenced, as discussed in Chapter 2. Raven's (1990) models identified the ways social agents (Figure 2-3 page 59) and the recipient audience (Figure 2-4 page 60) were affected during an influential attempt. Raven's argument is supported in the analysis of family, friends and professionals' use of influence.

More importantly, his model from the perspective of a recipient provides a useful guide to support the analysis of these influential attempts and their effect on professional participants. The model, Figure 2-4, acts as a guide to map participants' attitudes, values and behaviour changes following their family and friends and professionals' influential attempts that moved them towards doctoral engagement.

### **3.5 Summary**

This conceptual framework was implemented to understand the ways a social agent's relationship influences a successful professional's actions to engage in doctoral study and how these experiences affected the professional participants.

Life experience and daily exchanges of information will differ from individual to individual because of social cultural conditions, timing, and age, and these social encounters can shape people's lives (Bandura, 1989). These influential interactions, Turner (2004) argues, can be confined to people within the group, or may influence outside group members, e.g., a social agent's interactions may affect a successful

professional's values, attitudes and behaviour, and their professional and personal worlds in a way that moves them to engage in doctoral study. It could be argued that a social agent's power relationship may be the influential starting point or stimulus for a professional's reasoning processes, prior to motivation. Broome (2009: 89) argues that people need to consider the reasons why they need to act before they make a 'reasoned-judgement', as this judgement may generate motivation.

Some social agent influences may be 'light touch' while other 'encounters may have more lasting effects' that thrust people into new life trajectories (Bandura (1989: 7).

Whilst many researchers have previously studied professional doctoral students' motivation, this study focuses on the experiences of professional doctoral students' social influence. The theoretical insights in this chapter are important as there is limited research focusing on the complexity of professional doctoral students' social influence, and the ways influential agents use their powerbase to influence professionals' engagement with doctoral study.



## **4 Research Methodology and Design**

### **4.1 Introduction**

Building on previous empirical and theoretical literature that identified power as the ‘basic building block upon which all collective human endeavour is based and is part of all human relationships’ (Turner, 2005: 1), this chapter sets out the methodology for the qualitative study of doctoral students’ experiences of social influence.

Reading the literature focused my thoughts on whether I had been the recipient of social influence in my own doctoral journey. Reflecting on my personal experience, I realised that there had been many instances where I had been socially influenced by others whose input had affected my subsequent actions. On reflection I found that I could separate my social influence experiences from my motivation and could identify the different ways people had used their social influence to stimulate my decisions and actions. I recognised the way my social agents had used their powerbases in overt and covert ways to stimulate my action. Some social agents used tactics that transferred the power to act over to me, however there were instances when I was not aware of their influence until much later (Cialdini, 2005; Lukes, 2005; and Berger, 2016). This issue of how social influence affected my actions to engage in a PD developed my thinking. Were other professionals exposed to social influence and, if so, what were their experiences like? Could they identify their influential social agents, and how did they affect their actions?

Although many studies have considered different aspects of PD and their students, I thought there was a gap in the literature as the experiences of social influence on PD students had not been considered. The literature drove this methodology, which aims to

explore professionals' experiences of social influence and the ways it affected their decisions to engage in PD.

The methodology chapter is divided into four sections:

Section one outlines the aims of the study and the ontology, epistemology, and research paradigm;

Section two considers the design and its implementation;

Section three examines the case study approach of the research and participant details. A semi-structured interview and sociogram approach was used to collect data;

Section four considers the tools used to analyse the corpus of data – template analysis, NVivo software and tools for sociogram analysis – followed by the generalisability, validity, reliability, and ethical issues relevant to this study.

## **4.2 Section 1 – aims of the study**

The aim of this study is to investigate the phenomenon of social influence and how it affects professionals' engagement in doctoral study. After completing the taught EdD modules, my research interest widened because of my conversations with doctoral tutors and fellow students, when the subject of social power and influential people became a topic of interest. It was my own personal and professional experiences of influential people that had led to my doctoral engagement which this led me to question who had socially influenced other doctoral students' actions and experiences and to decide on this as the study's research focus. The following research question served as the primary guidance for this study:

To what extent do professionals perceive that social influence affects their decisions to engage in a PD and what is the nature of that influence?

To answer the key question, a set of sub-questions developed:

- *To what extent are professionals exposed to social influence prior to their engagement with doctoral study?*
- *How do professionals perceive their social actors and what ways do they influence doctoral study actions?*
- *In what way does professional doctoral students' perceptions of social influence affect and aspirations, if at all?*

#### **4.2.1 The research paradigm**

I spent some time considering the literature and how it informed my world view. I considered many authors' views on a suitable methodology and paradigm. Guba and Lincoln (1994: 116) describe a paradigm as a way of looking at the world and assert that it is the researcher's position that influences practical decisions. Interestingly, Sparkes (1992, cited in Coe et al., 2017: 17) defined a paradigm as a 'particular lens for seeing and making sense of the world'. Therefore, I needed to consider my view of the world as a professional and a doctoral candidate, as these factors would influence my research position. The lens I chose for this research needed a lot of contemplation, and I found working through this concept of paradigm in the early research stages was crucial for seeking clarity. Anfara and Mertz recommend that a paradigm and methods should fit the research situation and have clear links between theory and methodology (2006: xxi). Of note was their citation of Crotty's earlier work which asserted 'that an approach to research can be constructed from methods... to the methodology' and 'epistemology

informs the theoretical perspective’ (Anfara and Metz, 2006, pp. xxi-xxii). The argument for focusing on these processes, Silverman (2017: 19) advocates, is not to isolate the researcher’s enquiry by restricting their thoughts to a single paradigm. Similarly, Denzin and Lincoln (2003: 5-6) suggest that a qualitative researcher may be ‘a bricoleur’ as they ‘piece together a set of representations that are fitted to the specifics of a complex situation... by combining different tools, methods and techniques of representation and interpretation’. This is an interesting point, as Mertens (2015: 44) recognised the ‘permeability of the lines around major paradigms’ and the increased use of qualitative research methods. In her argument, Mertens (2015: 7) sets out the reasons for the increased use of qualitative research methods and identifies ‘shared commonalities between constructivists, transformative and pragmatic paradigms’. Mertens (2015) argues that it is the researcher’s responsibility to address ‘philosophical assumptions [that] will guide and direct a researchers’ thinking and actions’ (p. 7).

I considered my ontological, epistemological, and methodological perspectives to guide my actions as these would ‘support the construction of my research framework’ (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003: 33) and permit me to examine my ideas in a ‘specific way’ (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003: 30; Creswell, 2003; Anfara and Mertz, 2006; Coe et al., 2017).

#### **4.2.2 Ontological position**

An interpretivist ontological position proposes that there is no single reality or truth. Therefore, to interpret the truth, I had to decide on a qualitative approach and the methods I would use to interpret the multiple realities of a complex world (Coe et al., 2017). I found it challenging to locate social influence within the context of professionals’ doctoral study experiences. I decided that an interpretivist view would provide a framework to interpret the multiple realities of the participants’ worlds, as the complex world of social

influence, power and professional doctoral students' experiences are important in this research study and their experiences provide the opportunity to explore and learn about these.

Thomas (2009: 86) explains that it is essential to know research 'exists out there' as this 'interactive process' shapes the researcher's background and experience, and 'the people in the [research] setting' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005: 6). The literature informed my thinking, as I considered it necessary to identify who and what had been influential in my professional and personal life, in order to focus on the socially constructed view of participants' worlds.

#### **4.2.3 Epistemology position**

The epistemological assumption, from an interpretivist viewpoint, is the social construction of knowledge by people and their actions. Considering the various arguments for these major paradigms by researchers (Creswell, 2003; Schwandt, 2007; Bryman, 2012; Mertens, 2015; Coe et al., 2017) my focus was the nature of the study as I wanted my participants to construct their own view of their world by re-telling their stories, as their professional and personal experiences and perceptions were unique.

An interpretive stance would also facilitate the data being placed within a social science framework, which would result in a double interpretation. Bryman (2012: 31) describes double interpretation as the bringing together of different types of data:

researcher is providing an interpretation of others' interpretations, and the researcher is interpreting data defined by the concepts, theories and literature of the discipline (Bryman, 2012: 31).

Although participants' experiences are important, other factors such as their emotional reactions need to be considered in order to develop a rich picture. Reflecting on my experience, many external factors influenced me, such as time management, my family commitments, and my busy professional life. There were also emotional factors to consider that influenced my decision, as many of my family members wanted me to complete a doctorate but did not understand the reality of such a commitment.

It was my responsibility to listen for the sense people make and construct meaning from the data they have generously given to me. Therefore, a personal and interactive mode of data collection was important, as Schwandt (2007), Thomas (2009) and Mertens (2015) note that as an interpretive researcher, I must assign meaning to people's actions.

The interpretive researcher's world is socially constructed and critical of the 'application of a scientific model' because it is influenced by different 'logical traditions... to understanding human action' (Bryman 2012: 28). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2003: 36), when implementing a strategy, researchers must continue to anchor their 'skills, assumptions and practice' within a specific methodological practice.

In implementing an interpretivist strategy, this study aims to explore the social influence experiences of participants and the ways in which these affected their action to engage in a doctorate. An important note is that the professionals in this study have different career trajectories, so their social influence experiences may differ from each other. The participants are, or have been, educators in different settings, such as the health professions and education and education studies disciplines in HE. The theoretical

perspective presented in the literature review, and my own personal experiences, have guided the methodological decisions of this study.

## 4.3 Section Two — the research design

### 4.3.1 Case study approach

I selected a case study approach as it offers a ‘rich picture of insights’ that comes from several ‘different angles’ (Thomas, 2016: 21) and supports the search for meaning of complex issues (Merriam, 2009: 179). Thomas (2016: 113) notes that several authors have offered different case study approach definitions. For example, Merriam (1988) defined a case study approach as either descriptive, interpretive, or evaluative, while Stake’s (1995) definition focuses on the intrinsic, instrumental, and collective nature of a case study approach. In contrast, Yin (2009) appears to use a more dynamic language, by expressing his view of case study research as being extreme, unique, longitudinal representative or revelatory in nature.

Kinds of case study subject	... Which means	Purpose of the case study	The approach you decide to take	Process
Key Case	A good example of something: a classic or exemplary case	Evaluative Intrinsic	Drawing a picture, illustrative	Single or Multiple Nested
Outlier Case	An ‘outlier’ showing something of interest because of its difference	Instrumental Explanatory Exploratory	Testing a theory Building a theory	Parallel Sequential Retrospective
Local Knowledge Case	An example of something interesting in your personal experience about which you want to find out more.		Descriptive Interpretive Experimental	Snapshot Diachronic

Table 4-1: Based on origin of case study (Thomas, 2016: 99) and kinds of case study simplified (Thomas, 2016: 116)



I have used Thomas' guidance to identify my approach, see above Table 4-1, as Thomas offers an interesting metaphor as a starting point by referring to 'where to shine that searchlight beam', which requires a researcher's consideration (p. 112). This advice establishes the need to consider several research decisions based on insight during the design phase. Drawing on Thomas' (2016: 99 and 116) guidance, I decided that the study fitted the criteria illustrated in Table 4-1.

Referring to Thomas' advice, the first decision I needed to make was, 'what type of case study' did I want? Reflecting on the different definitions offered for 'what type of case study?' I considered that a local knowledge case would fit the study parameters, as it was an 'example of something of interest and personal experience' (Thomas, 2016).

Thomas (2016: 112) recommends that the second decision should be to select an analytical frame that encapsulates the 'purpose, approach and process' of the case study. Merriam (1988: 6) offers insight for researchers on the purpose of a study and provides examples of approaches framed as explorative and explanatory. Reflecting on Merriam's advice, and the fact that this study involved real-life experiences, I considered the benefits of both explorative and explanatory cases. After much deliberation, I decided that an explorative framework would fit the research parameters because it offered a way to shape and make sense of doctoral students' experiences. An explorative approach would support an exploration of issues relating to power and social influence. As the issues underpinning the purpose of this research are: who are the doctoral students' social agents; to what extent have they used influential power; did this influence affect their actions of doctoral study engagement? This exploratory approach would allow a richer picture to emerge from the data.

A further consideration outlined by Merriam (1988: 9) was that the ‘desired end-product’ should link to the ‘nature of the questions asked’. After selecting an explorative approach, that would support the study’s purpose and ‘shine a searchlight’ (Thomas, 2016: 112) on professionals’ experiences, the next action was considering the parameters for ‘building a theory and testing’ key and outlier case studies, as outlined by Thomas (2016: 116). I rejected this type of case study because of the limitations of a bounded system, particularly as this case study is a complex integrated system that focuses on individuals who are part of a PD group and are studying at the same university.

According to Merriam’s (2002: 178) definition, a bounded system is ‘a choice of what is to be studied’ when the ‘what’ in the case is a ‘bounded system [of] a single phenomenon or entity’. In Merriam’s earlier 1988 work, she identified a bounded system as a ‘specific phenomenon, such as a programme, an event, a person, a process, an institution or a social group’ (p. 10).

After reflecting on the opportunities of the research and its parameters, I decided that a ‘local knowledge case’ focused within an exploratory approach would fit the ‘desired end-product’ (Merriam 2002). The ‘bounded system’ in this research was the PD and the ‘specific phenomenon’ was the participants’ experiences and perceptions of social influence. The next stage explored the data collection process to generate the corpus of data and tools to analyse participants’ experiences and their actions. Having based the structure of this case study on Thomas (Table 4-1), I outline the structural research design decisions for this case study in Table 4-2.

Case studies design decisions					
Case study Type	Purpose of the case study	The approach	Process	Data Collection Methods	Analysis tools
Local Knowledge Case.	Exploratory.	Interpretive.	Nested Case.	Semi-structured Interviews. Sociogram. Literature.	Template Analysis.

Table 4-2: Case studies design decisions based on Thomas (2016)

One of the features of a nested case study is that it has distinct sub-units. Thomas describes these sub-units as ‘nested because they fit within a large unit’ i.e., they can be sub-divided within the principal analysis unit, thus gaining integrity from the wider case (Thomas, 2016: 177). The nested design of this study considers unique aspects of the participants’ experiences that fit within a wider case.

#### 4.4 Data collection

This section will discuss my position and access to the research field, followed by a description of the data collection methods. The qualitative approach aims are to develop a complex, rich picture and report the detailed views of participants (Creswell, 2003), however my position as a PD student, as well as being programme director for the education master’s during this phase, required transparency. There were several issues that needed to be considered, for example, my personal knowledge as a doctoral student and the fact that as a member of staff in the institution, I had access to information that my fellow students would not be aware of. I also had many professional relationships with university colleagues.

#### **4.4.1 The research position: insider-outsider researcher**

The binary language of insider-outsider researcher, according to Thomson and Gunter (2011), may become dominated by the viewpoints of the researcher. Professional doctoral students are required to become dual researchers, as they often research their own practice. In contrast to this position, Scott et al. (2004: 45) advocate that professional doctoral students should remain outsiders, even if the research is about their practice. This supports Denzin's (2003) argument that all researchers are outsiders, because they retain an outsider position relative to their research participants. I have a binary position because of my different identities. As a doctoral student researching my practice I have an insider position. However, my identity as a researcher allows me to position myself as an outsider, because I am not part of the participant group or their social world.

The externalist view of an outsider researcher is that they view knowledge of the social world with detachment (Schwandt, 2007) and are considered as 'fresh eyes' on the phenomenon. Therefore, the outsider can benefit from 'not knowing too much about the research site'. However, Thomson and Gunter (2011: 2) argue that this could be an issue for the outside researcher, as the potential exists for an outsider to misinterpret meanings and practices within the research data.

By contrast, the insider researcher would be familiar with the research site and its 'local micro-politics' (Thomson and Gunter, 2011: 2). This alternative viewpoint from an internalist's perspective is that an insider will have a 'social agent's account of what life means and pre-existing knowledge of the social world (Schwandt, 2007: 152). Such closeness, he proposes, can be equally problematic, as a researcher may develop a blind spot and miss nuances in the data because they are too close to the research field. This insider research position, according to Thomson and Gunter (2011: 2), could result in a

‘lack of perspective’ because they ‘overlook or dismiss’ the everyday occurrences that exist in the data. Interestingly, Burnard et al. (2018: 43) argue that the boundaries for professional doctoral students are not defined because they:

occupy a privileged place [where] – the insider – with both feet firmly balanced between the cultural systems and organisational learning specific to their workplace. There is no clear boundary between outsider and insider for the professional researcher undertaking their own research in the professional setting (Burnard et al., 2018: 43).

### *Professional Reflections*

Reflecting on the duality of my insider-outsider position, the insider position acknowledges my pre-existing knowledge of the social world as a doctoral student. As the researcher, I have knowledge of the professional social world, because of my real-life shared experiences of working with other professionals. My outsider position is also important, as I am an outsider to the participant group. Participants who contributed to this study are from different doctoral cohorts; their professional experiences vary, and they hold unique roles and status within their organisations. In considering the duality of the insider-outsider perspective, some participants’ shared knowledge and understanding of the social worlds may be similar. However, my own social agents and doctoral candidate experience will differ from those of the other participants in this study. Interestingly, Peel (cited in Thompson and Gunter, 2011) introduces the argument that PD researchers have a practitioner’s binary position that needs combining during doctoral research engagement.

### *Personal Reflections*

My main influence in selecting this topic developed out of conversations with my family and my colleagues about their personal education influences, and what had influenced

their career choice. These personal stories would often focus on one individual or on particular event/s that influenced their decisions. Many cited parental expectations and pressure, while saying they followed the traditional family career path. Conversations with my son about his marketing and PR career field developed my thinking. If I am being socially influenced by advertising and marketing strategies, what had socially influenced me and others to study for a doctorate?

#### **4.4.2 Gaining access to the field**

As a current doctoral candidate, I considered it vital to ensure transparency when gaining access to the research field and participants. I sought permission from the programme director to contact the EdD programme's cohorts and appointed a gatekeeper to protect the confidentiality of the doctoral students and myself. The gatekeeper, the EdD programme's administrator, acted as go-between and facilitated access to the research field. The gatekeeper had access to all cohorts, as well as the doctoral students' details and emails. They shared no sensitive information with me. The gatekeeper distributed the email requesting volunteer participants to all professional doctoral candidate cohorts within the faculty. The email outlined the research aims, and my position as a doctoral candidate. To fulfil the criteria for participants, the email was distributed to professional doctoral groups only. A consent letter and form agreeing to take part in the research was also attached to the email (Appendix 1). All positive responses were returned directly to the gatekeeper for collation.

Nine doctoral students responded to the first email sent by the gatekeeper. I contacted all respondents by either telephone or email at the time specified on their consent form.

Interestingly, eight out of nine participants preferred initial contact by telephone. This provided the opportunity for me to discuss the purpose of the research in more depth and

encouraged participants to ask questions about the aims of the research. This process helped to establish a relationship before the face-to-face interviews took place. All nine participants were given time to reconsider taking part in the research after the initial telephone conversation, and all agreed to take part in the interview process.

Following the same procedures outlined above, a second email was sent to the EdD community, following the advice of my supervisor, who considered a participant group of nine to be insufficient for this study. The gatekeeper received two additional responses in the second round, taking the total number of participants in the group to  $n = \text{eleven}$ , as summarised in Table 4-3 below.

#### **4.5 Participants sample**

A purposive sample according to Silverman (2006: 306) requires the ‘researcher to think critically about the parameters of the research population in relation [to the area] of interest’. To identify the research sample, I considered the setting, the group of interest and individuals within the group, ‘where the processes being studied [were] most likely to occur’ (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994: 202). The sample size in this study was determined by ‘practical constraint[s]’ Mertens (2015: 34). These included the participant criteria, which required them to be professionals engaged in a PD. A further constraint was the significantly lower ratio of professional doctoral students compared to postgraduate PhD, masters and undergraduate students in the university setting, and another hindrance was the case study’s bounded system, because some professionals may not have experienced social influence.

Participants Details						
Pseudo Name	Gender	Age Group	Programme Stage	Profession	Employment status	Career Stage
Alice	Female	30-40	Second Year	Secondary Teacher	Full-time	Early
Carol	Female	40-50	Second Year	Education Academic	Full-time	Mid-career
John	Male	30-40	First Year	Education Academic	Full-time	Early
Judith	Female	40-50	Second Year	Business Academic	Full-time	Mid-career
Lesley	Female	40-50	Second Year	Education Academic	Full-time	Mid-career
Megan	Female	30-40	First Year	Education Academic	Full-time	Early
Nancy	Female	40-50	Third Year	Education Academic	Full-time	Mid-career
Stella	Female	50-60+	Third Year	Health Academic	Semi-retired	Established
Susan	Female	50-60+	Third Year	Education Academic	Part-time	Established
Violet	Female	50-60+	Completed Doctorate	Social Science Academic	Full-time	Established
Zoe	Female	40-50	Thesis	Primary Teacher	Full-time	Mid-career

*Table 4-3: Overview of participants' details*

The study's purposeful and convenience sample comprised of volunteer participants who were in full-time or part-time professional posts and were engaged in a PD, along with one volunteer who had just completed the PD (Table 4-3). An interesting point to note is that ten female professional students volunteered and only one male came forward and volunteer. I am aware there was a gender imbalance in the study (outlined in the introduction pen portraits and Table 4.1 above).

An important variable in this sample is the range of doctoral characteristics identified by Scott et al. (2004) in their research, i.e., early, mid, and established careers, which I considered would provide a richer picture. A second variable was the programme stage;



with the research sample comprising participants from all stages, i.e., years 1-3, thesis stage, and completion.

Several factors restricted the times that participants were available for face-to-face interviews, including their professional work commitments, the time they had set aside for doctoral study, and their personal, family, and social obligations. The interview schedule took place over three months, with participant availability driving the extended timescale for the interview phase.

I considered it important not to pressure participants into taking part in the interviews straight away. Therefore, the pace of each interview had to fit with each participant's availability to ensure they were comfortable, felt secure, and were not subjected to other external pressure at the time of their interview. To facilitate this, all participants set the date, time, and venue for their interview (Table 4-4).

Overview of interview venues and time		
No. interviews	Venues	Time
1	University library	Evening
1	Hotel cafe	Afternoon
3	Participant's home	Morning
3	Researcher's office	Afternoon
3	Participant's office	Afternoon

*Table 4-4: Participant interview venues*

## **4.6 Implementation of the design**

### *Stage 1 — May-July — The research proposal*

The original proposal for the research setting stated that the research would take place in six HE organisations; however, the research panel feedback recommended undertaking the research in one institution. Following its advice, I amended my research plan, as it affected the research ethics approval process, and I would have required additional approval to recruit and interview students from the institution I was employed by and studying in.

#### **4.6.1 Seeking ethical approval for the study**

I outlined the ethical and moral factors of undertaking research as a member of staff and researcher in the educational setting on the ethical approval form and the university ethics panel and education faculty granted approval for this research in May 2015.

I asked the EdD Programme Director for permission to contact the EdD cohorts so I could gain access to the field and permission was granted on the basis that a gatekeeper be appointed, as outlined earlier in this section.

#### **4.6.2 The data collection interview sequence**

### *Stage 2 — July-September pilot study and recruiting participants*

The interview pilot study consisted of four professionals who were studying part-time. I had previously taught the pilot group participants and had an established relationship with them. The rationale for selecting this group for the pilot was that they were all professional educators and were studying for their doctorate part-time. The development and results of the pilot are in section 4.7.1.

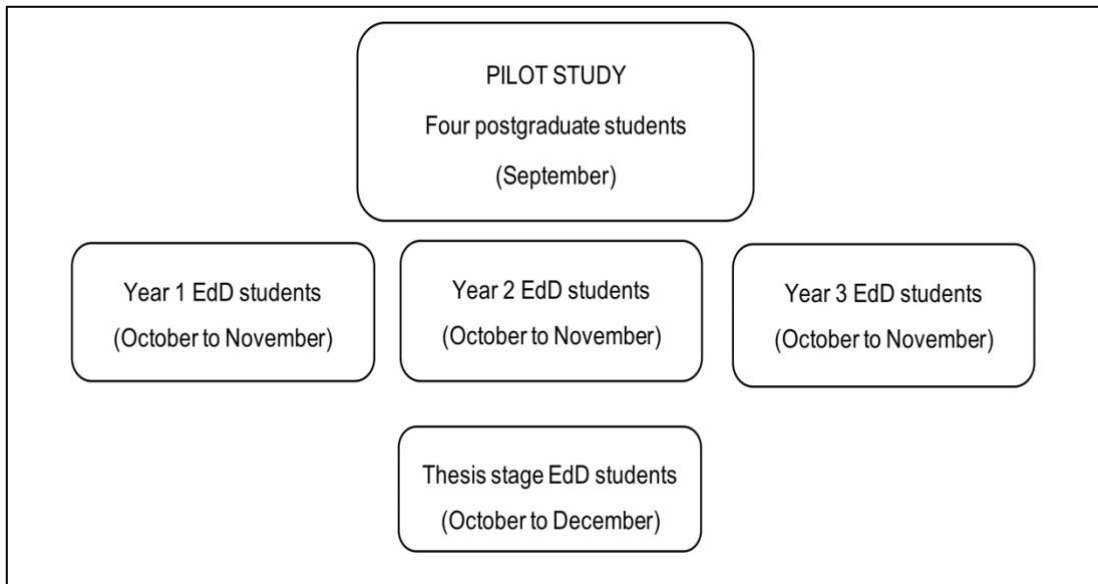
A group of master's students agreed to pilot and comment on the doctoral influence sociogram. This was a different group to those in the research questions pilot. This pilot phase resulted in three iterations of the social influence sociogram. Section 4.7.2 outlines the development of the sociogram used in the study.

### *Contacting participants*

As explained previously, to gain access to the field, a gatekeeper emailed the EdD cohorts to request volunteers. My first contact with volunteers was by telephone and email as this approach allowed the aims of the study to be explained, along with an outline of the interview process. This strategy supported preliminary discussions as participants could raise questions and agree dates for their interview.

### *Stage 3 — Data Collection Period*

I conducted pilot group interviews with a group of postgraduate students during September. The data collection period was scheduled to take place during the first academic term – October to December – of the year as this matched the availability of participants on the taught programme stage. During the schedule, one volunteer completed their PD and wanted to participate in the research Figure 4-1.



*Figure 4-1: Interview Schedule*

#### **4.6.3 Stage 4 — transcription of interview data**

I completed all interview recordings and transcripts to ensure confidentiality and reduce the scope for identification. A copy of each transcription, interview recordings stored as mp3 files, and a photocopy of the completed sociogram, were emailed to each participant. I asked all participants to verify the accuracy of the transcribed data compared with the interview recording. This strategy also gave participants an opportunity to retract any information they considered sensitive. All participants verified their transcript files and gave additional permission to use their data in this study. Only one participant retracted a minor part of their interview because of its sensitive nature. I identified no timescale for the return of data, as the participants were all busy people.

## 4.7 Section Three — data collection methods

### 4.7.1 Semi-structured interviews

A researcher's key task is to 'present a balanced picture' and 'not to serve an ideological or populist purpose' (Gillham, 2005: 6). Gillham argues for the importance of presenting a balanced view of the phenomenon; mindful of this advice, I planned a schedule of face-to-face semi-structured interviews to 'facilitate the contextualisation of what was being said' as my role was to identify 'important descriptive and theoretical links' when the participants' stories were being told (Gillham, 2005: 42). As an insider (doctoral student and professional) this was challenging. I tried, however, to focus on each of the participant's stories in turn. The semi-structured interview approach allowed me to ask the same open-ended questions of all participants, which offered a level of procedural consistency in the collection of qualitative data.

Denzin and Lincoln (2003) note that interviewing research participants is not a 'neutral tool' because it requires a level of 'active interaction' by the researcher. They advocate building a relationship between the interviewer and interviewee to facilitate the 'acquisition of rich in-depth accounts' of people's lives. Sending questions in advance of the interviews would prepare and support participants to tell their stories. Likewise, I had to consider my own story from an insider researcher's perspective, as it was important that any 'preconceived ideas' I held did not transfer to my participants during the interview phase, which is possible when face-to-face interviews take place (Creswell, 2003; Cohen et al., 2007: 150).

Seeking responses to questions asked by a researcher or a participant during an interview may cause misinterpretation of the question or affect a respondent's response. To reduce any misunderstanding of the questions asked during the interview, I sent a copy of the

questions prior to the interview taking place. This gave participants an opportunity to review the questions and seek further clarification, although no participant asked for this, and only six participants had looked at the questions prior to the interview. I also gave participants a physical copy of the questions at the beginning of their interview.

Bryman (2012) advocates the need for flexibility during interviews. Therefore, additional time for a pre-semi-structured interview and post-interview phase was allotted. This strategy gave participants and researcher the opportunity to relax and gain a level of trust before the interview began. Participants were able to ask and answer questions in the re-telling of their story.

During the pre-interview phase, participants agreed that their interview could be recorded which allowed vocal nuance to be captured during the interview. Following Bryman's (2012) advice, all participants were given the opportunity to change their mind about the digital recording or to withdraw their consent. During the time spent setting-up and testing the digital recorder for sound quality, participants were given the opportunity to ask questions. Interestingly, one participant used this time to ask about the structural differences between the PhD and PD.

I used three specific strategies for each interview. First, I switched the digital recorder on in the pre-interview phase and left it running to capture responses and informal conversation during the post-interview phase. The purpose of this was to put the participant at ease during their interview, but this also enabled my second strategy, which aimed to capture interviewees' 'ruminations' and garner additional information that could be included in the transcript (Bryman, 2012: 487). The third strategy was to become consciously engaged in non-verbal techniques.

Insights into the four basic non-verbal modes for collecting interview data are suggested by Gorden (cited in Denzin and Lincoln, 2003: 87).

- proxemic communication is the use of interpersonal space to communicate attitudes;
- chronemic communication involves the use of speech pacing, and length of silences in conversations;
- kinesic communication includes any movements of body or postures, and;
- paralinguistic communication includes all the variations in volume, pitch, and voice quality (Gorden, (1980) cited in Denzin and Lincoln, 2003).

These forms of non-verbal communication allow a researcher to play an active part in the interview process without interrupting the flow of participants' responses (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003). I intentionally used all four forms of non-verbal communications – proxemics, chronemics, kinesic and paralinguistic – to establish my interest in their stories.

Guba and Lincoln (1994) warn against the potential for bias during the interview process. I restricted the use of proxemic communication, because I want to avoid any potential bias that I might unconsciously hold or transfer to participants during the interviews.

I was concerned over reframing real-life events into a two-dimensional interview. This requires, according to Denzin and Lincoln (2003), an ‘inherent faith that the results are trustworthy and accurate’, and not to make any assumptions while participants were ‘re-telling their accounts’ of their experiences.

To ease any misconceptions, I asked participants to complete a pre-prepared sociogram during the post semi-structured interview phase. I based the design of this on Scott’s (2013) description of social network analysis.

This strategy for collecting data had two aims; the first was to compare the completed doctoral study sociogram to interview data. The aim was to capture variations and any additional information not discussed during the interview. The second aim was to capture the levels of intensity participants attributed to a particular social influence.

#### **4.7.2 Adaptation of doctoral influence sociogram**

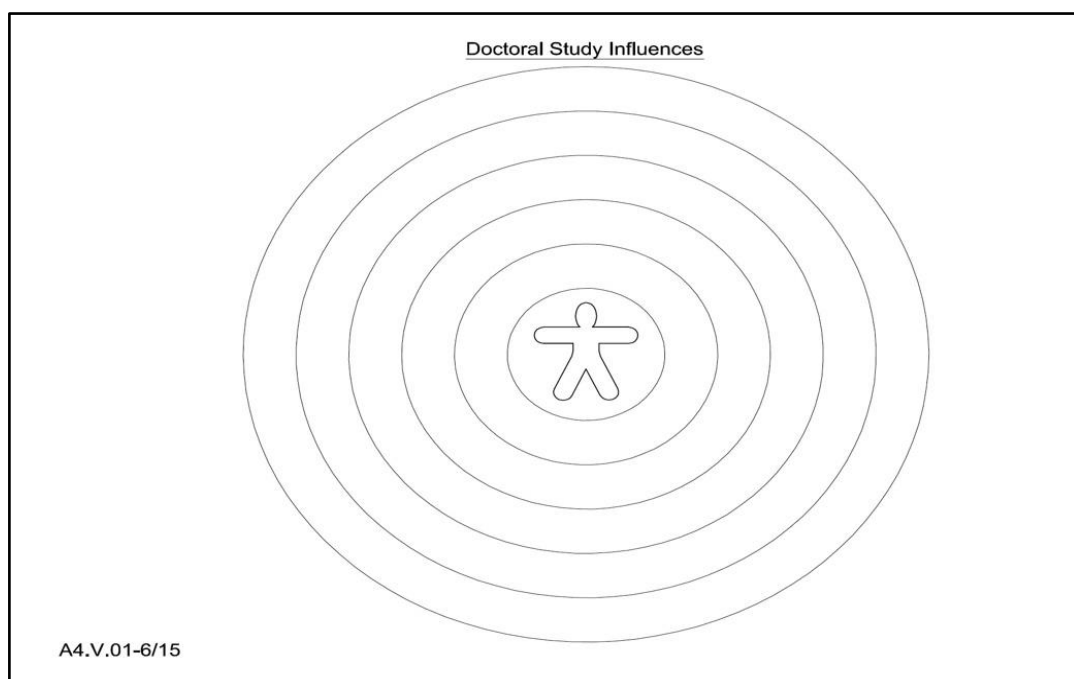
I decided that asking participants to complete a sociogram would aid triangulation. A sociogram can identify spheres of interdependent activity within people’s interpersonal networks, and relational data such as ‘contacts, ties and connections’ can, according to Scott (2013: 3), capture the intensity a person has with their influential agents. The links between levels of intensity and influential events can be compared to, and link to, the influential experiences of participants. According to Scott (2013), any connections cannot be reduced down to the ‘properties’ of a single influential agent but may illustrate a social action and provide information.

My sociogram was based on the concepts of network graph theory and drawn from Scott’s (2013) description of ways to capture network analysis data. I adapted the design principles to construct the doctoral study influence sociogram as my aim was to capture



the intensity levels that participants attributed to their social influence experiences. For instance, where would a participant place an influential factor on the sphere, and what influence did they consider to be most, or least, influential in their decision to engage in a PD?

The doctoral study sociogram went through three iterations after piloting the tool with participants in the pilot group. I gave verbal instructions to the pilot group with an explanation of its purpose to capture the intensity levels of influence that they associated with their experience. The pilot group completed the sociogram and gave verbal feedback. The first iteration Figure 4-2 was considered too basic.



*Figure 4-2: First iteration of the influence sociogram*

The pilot group's verbal feedback was instrumental in the development of the design. They recommended that the first version required more detailed information to support the user, such as key identifying words, and constructed a second version of the sociogram, Figure 4-3, which I subsequently piloted with the same group.

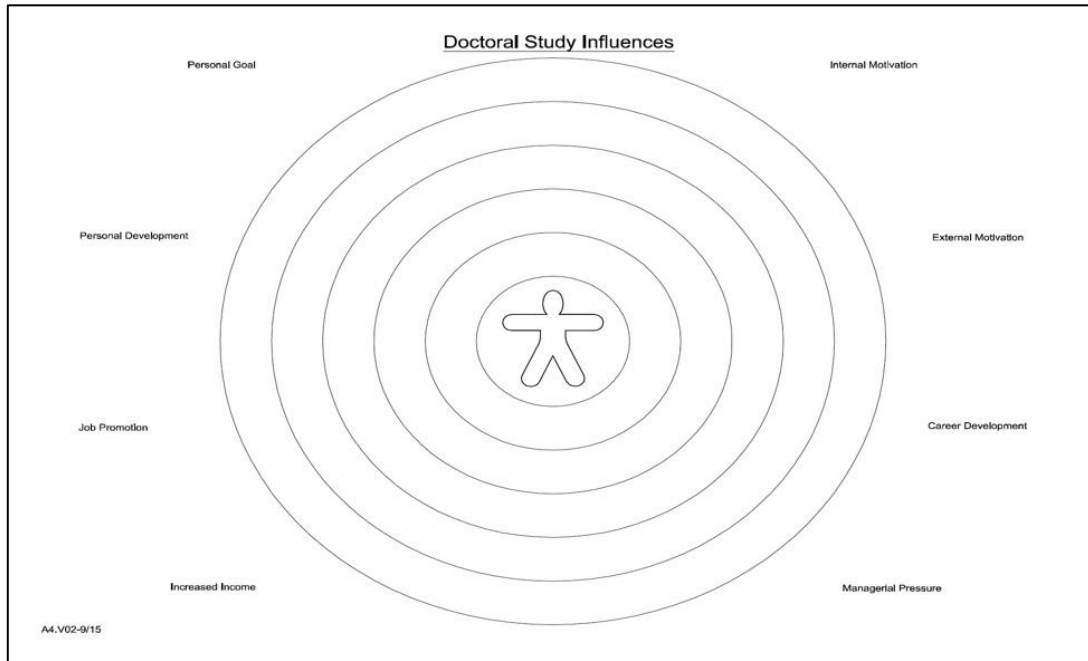


Figure 4-3: Second iteration of the influence sociogram

I was initially concerned about the selection and inclusion of words in this version, as I did not want to influence participants' views. I did not want the wording to act as an influential prompt during completion; I wanted participants to consider their own personal experiences, and the factors they felt were most important. With this in mind, I opted for words associated with adult learning, for example, aspects of motivation and career development that appear in Scott et al's (2004) PD book. Interestingly, Scott (2013: 43) acknowledges that it is acceptable to use name-generator prompts.

Initial feedback from the pilot group about the prompt words confirmed that these words did not influence the way they completed the sociogram. The group did, however, suggest that the intensity levels of each circle needed more clarity to aid understanding. The third and final iteration (Figure 4-4) included numbers on each circle. The inner circles

represented the highest intensity levels, and the outer circles represented the least intense levels.

The rationale for including the numbers on each circle was to clarify the levels of intensity for the user in relation to the figure in the central circle.

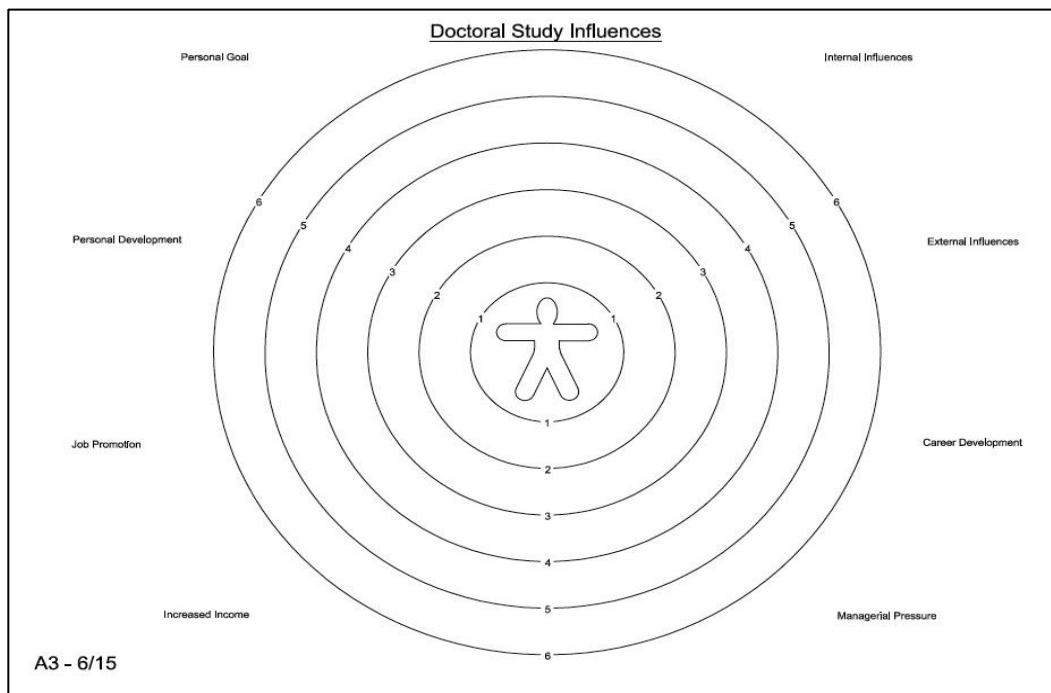


Figure 4-4: Third and final iteration of the influence sociogram.

### 4.7.3 Implementing the doctoral study influence sociogram during the interview phase

All participants agreed to complete the doctoral study influence sociogram, and there were no concerns expressed. I gave participants the choice of completing the sociogram during any phase of the interview and all decided that they wanted to do this directly after their interview. Interestingly, many of the participants knew instantly where they intended to place their main influential factors on the sociogram during the pre-interview phase, after verbalising their experiences, three participants changed their opinions in the post interview phase.

#### **4.7.4 Transcription**

As the researcher, it was important that I transcribed the interview data. Transcribing the interviews kept the data ‘true to its nature’ (Poland, cited in Braun and Clarke, 2005).

Transcribing the interview data took time and gave me the opportunity to correct any ‘intuitive glosses’ during the face-to-face interviews (Bryman, 2012: 482). Recording the participants’ voices during interviews allowed me to capture a range of non-spoken data, for example, pauses, laughter and hesitation. Transcription facilitates a ‘rigorous orthographic’ and ‘verbatim’ account of all verbal and non-verbal utterances’ (Braun and Clarke, 2005: 17) and as a qualitative researcher I was interested in the ‘way’ and ‘what people say’ (Bryman, 2012: 482) that is open to public scrutiny. Considering Bryman’s (2012) advice, I sought verification from participants that all data was an accurately transcribed account (as explained in the ‘Implementation of the design’ section above).

The ethical considerations concerning the shared nature of the data were important. I gave participants time to reflect on their data, and to consider if any parts were too sensitive. It was important that each participant could, if they wished, delete information. All participants verified their transcripts as correct when they returned their electronic copies and gave consent for their data to be included in the study.

## **4.8 Section Four – data analysis methods**

This section outlines the method selected to interpret the corpus of data. After much deliberation about the tools that would support data analysis, I decided a thematic analysis approach would allow me to identify inductive patterns by separating description and interpretive themes. The data proved to be messy in its complexity because it appeared unstructured at times as I could have attributed aspects of the data to different codes and codes within codes (Figure 4.7) which I found problematic when differentiating between description and interpretive themes.

My original attempt to construct a thematic analysis structure was too simplistic, (Figure 4-6). In the second iteration, I became overwhelmed by the complexity of the potential links that I constructed from the data (Figure 4-7) and became concerned as I was finding it difficult to construct a linear narrative. I needed an approach that would support the design structure, but still allow for flexibility as I uncovered findings from the data not previously considered.

I decided that a template analysis approach would offer a logical solution to my problem. Although template analysis is a sub-set to thematic analysis, this approach provided a structure from the outset, but also flexibility when analysing textual data. This method of analysis does not require a distinction to be made between themes or the position of themes from the outset (Brooks et al., 2015: 203).

### **4.8.1 Template analysis**

An important aspect of template analysis is the iteration process of redefining themes and codes or the removal of codes if they are not useful (Brooks et al., 2015). I decided to organise my first template framework into themes and codes identified from the literature.

This approach provided freedom to include new themes and codes as they became relevant during the iteration stages of the analysis. This iterative approach allowed me to include both new themes, and to change or delete themes /codes as I moved forward with the analysis.

I followed the steps Brooks et al. (2015) describe to develop a template analysis:

- My first template starts with themes identified for the literature (Appendix Figure 10-2).
- After my initial reading of the interview data to familiarise myself with it, I completed the first coding structure using NVivo software (Figure 4-5) which provided the basic coding structure for template development.
- I identified parts of the transcripts relevant to my research question, for example, who the social agents were.
- The following template iterations allowed me to develop new themes and codes during the analysis. This permitted new sub-set themes as the data analysis progressed.

Developing the template included selecting text segments that became part of a category of empirical evidence. If a particular but relevant text did not fit into an existing theme or code, I amended the theme or code during the iteration process and developed a new template.

#### **4.8.2 Advantages of template analysis**

According to King (2004), template analysis is flexible and permits the researcher to ‘tailor it to match their requirements’, as the researcher is able to make modifications and

add new themes to the template. The method allows the researcher to make comparisons within the interview data or between cases to generate themes. The net effect of template analysis is that it is less time-consuming than an interpretative phenomenological grounded theory approach. Template analysis is not a single delineated method but relies on several techniques for thematically organising and analysing codes (King, 2004: 256).

#### **4.8.3 Disadvantages of template analysis**

- In conceptualising the template, a researcher may develop too many themes and codes and become overwhelmed by the data.
- The development of three to seven or more templates is normal.
- Researchers can take a minimalist approach to construct the topics and allow issues to emerge within individual interviews.

The tool itself has no allegiance to either inductive or deductive thematic analysis; where the research sits in the inductive-deductive continuum depends on the research question (Gale et al. (2013) cited in Brooks et al., 2015).

The initial starting point was setting a coding framework based on the data and literature. After the first data reading, new themes emerged and were included in the template, and some existing themes were changed, which supported new understanding of the data. It took several template iterations to make order out of the complex data set. One consequence of the iteration process, Brooks et al. (2015: 204) argue, is that researchers may have difficulty settling on a final version of the template because it can be almost endlessly refined. Therefore, they recommend that the template is appropriate as soon as it supports the research question. The final template Figure 4.5 is divided to fit the page layout. The first template can be found in Appendix 10-2 (Figure 10-2).

Personal spheres of influence (family and friends)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Social Agents                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Family members</li> <li>○ Friendship groups</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Powerbase – attribute participants gave social agents</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Types of influence                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Social</li> <li>○ Emotional</li> <li>○ Challenging</li> <li>○ Persuasive</li> <li>○ Authoritative</li> <li>○ Controlling and Conforming</li> <li>○ Inspiring</li> <li>○ Encouraging</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Aims of the influence                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ To fill the gap of a                                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Mother’s legacy</li> <li>▪ Parents’ high education expectations</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Family challenge                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Negotiate</li> <li>○ Compromise</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Mercurial nature family social agents                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Mixed messages</li> <li>○ Dealing with emotional responses</li> <li>○ Pressure</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Powerful influential individuals                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Influential positions of university staff members</li> <li>○ Informative communications and persuasive action</li> <li>○ Supportive professional environment</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Figure 4-5: Personal social influences template

<sup>1</sup> The template has been split into 2 tables only to make it fit the page layout.



Professional – Spheres of influence (professional colleagues and workplace)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Desire for doctoral status – <i>throughout interviews</i></li> <li>◆ Desire to have an expert voice <i>throughout interviews</i></li> <li>◆ Public acknowledgement</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Colleagues and Professional groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Participants' influence of observation</li> <li>○ Colleagues influence doctoral pathway choices</li> <li>○ Colleagues' authoritative and persuasive actions</li> <li>○ Seeking advice</li> <li>○ Challenging colleagues</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Attitude and behaviour change <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Desire for wanting the same status and advantages as others</li> <li>○ Participants mirroring actions</li> <li>○ Pressure</li> <li>○ Competitiveness</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Unexpected <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Vulnerability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Loss of job</li> <li>▪ Group position</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Expectations of doctorate - becoming influential agents <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Personal career development</li> </ul> </li> <li>◆ Supporting others as <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Knowledgeable experts</li> </ul> </li> <li>◆ Influential Advocates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Development of people and practice</li> <li>○ Altruistic advocates for change</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Table 4-5: Professional influences template

#### 4.8.4 NVivo

I used NVivo software, as it supported the data coding and analysis and allowed files to be stored in one place. I imported the following files into NVivo:

- An Excel file containing details of the convenience sample details.
- Audio mp3 interview recordings.
- Word document interview transcripts
- PDF versions of the doctoral study sociogram
- Documentary resources, reports, and research articles

I used the mapping tool in NVivo to draw and visualise the links between the data. The visualisation links supported the development of several iterations; however, I found linking the data structure to my conceptual framework became too fuzzy and messy in NVivo. Although this process was helpful in organising my thoughts, I abandoned it because I struggled to find a linear approach when organising the data, Figure 4-6.

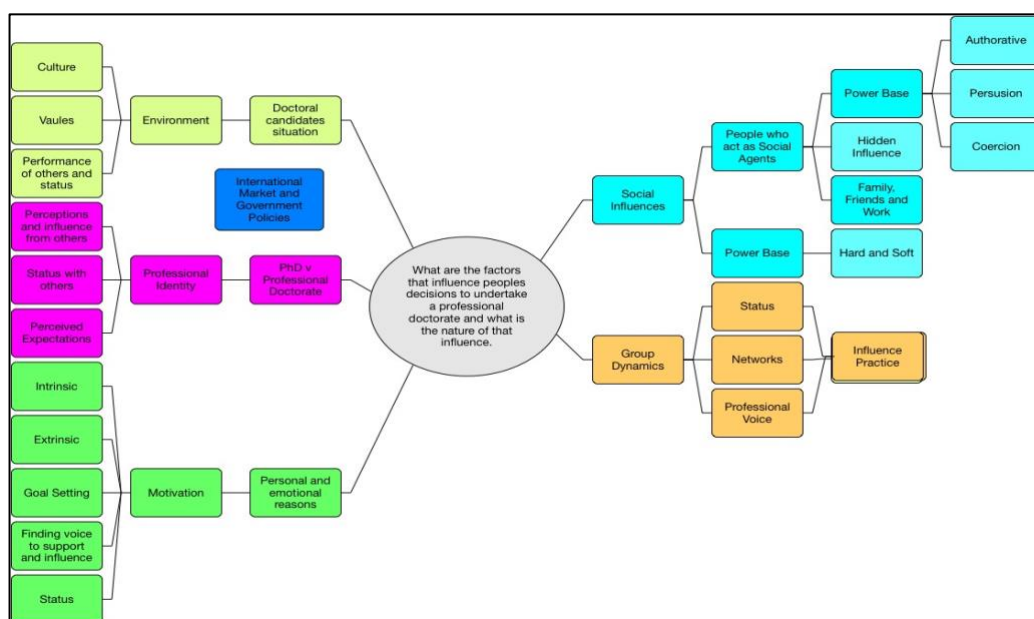


Figure 4-6: The first iteration of potential themes for analysis constructed in NVivo

The memo and annotation functions in NVivo supported the recording of reflections during the coding process. NVivo was a useful tool for collecting field notes and evidence, and for charting the progress of coding, identifying potential themes, and recording the high and low points during the study.

The downside to using software programmes like NVivo, according to Bazeley and Jackson (2013), is the effect of detaching the researcher from their data. To reduce this distance, I imported the recordings into NVivo, where I used the playback feature to support the typing process for the full transcripts. The ability to slow down the recording was a useful feature as this facilitated transcription accuracy. A further disadvantage that Bazeley and Jackson (2013) point out is the use of the auto-coding function and retrieval methods, as this facility may override or mechanise the analysis.

To reduce this potential distance, when reviewing the transcript text, I linked parts of the text to a code or codes. After the first coding phase, I identified several new themes and codes, Figure.4-7.

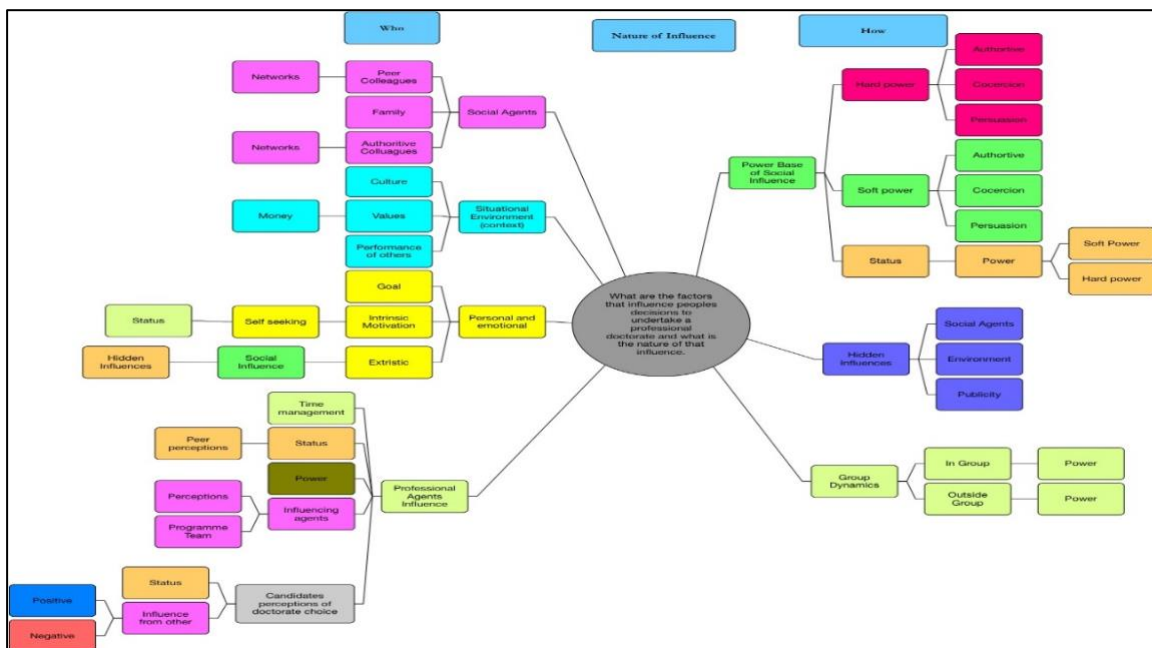


Figure 4-7: The second iteration of themes for analysis based on the conceptual framework constructed in NVivo

I changed the original data analysis tool and selected the template analysis approach, which is used in organisation and psychology research fields (King, 2014; Brooks et al., 2015). This tool provided an opportunity to untangle and make sense of the data as it provided more freedom during the analysis process, Figure 4-5.

#### **4.8.5 Reliability and validity**

The checks put in place to identify the trustworthiness of data were:

- All transcripts were transcribed by the researcher;
- All participants verified their interview transcriptions were a true account after comparing them with their voice recordings;
- The researcher compiled the coding themes for template analysis;
- The flexibility of iteration allowed the inclusion of new themes, and modifications or deletion of themes throughout the analysis period.

Bryman (2012) argues that there are varying degrees of reliability, replicability, and validity, however, Bryman noted that earlier researchers like Stakes seldom mentioned these criteria, in contrast to Yin who considered there were numerous ways to address the reliability and validity issues. They did all agree that the integrity of the data was a measurement of validity. The criteria included:

- Participants had to be professionals who were engaged in a PD;
- The same set of questions was asked in the same order in interviews;
- Participants were asked to complete a set sociogram;
- All data was returned to participants to review and validate for accuracy.

#### **4.8.6 Limitations of the study**

This study had limitations. Firstly, the data collection was limited to 11 participants from different professional doctoral cohorts. A second limitation was that they had different professional roles in their workplace setting. A third was that some participants were employed full time, and other worked part time.

It is not the researcher's intention to make these study findings generalisable, as transferability is problematic. The complexity and level of detail in this study, according to Firestone (cited in Bazeley and Jackson, 2013: 410), makes it difficult to contextualise lessons learnt. The research set out to question the social influence experiences of participants, which makes this study difficult to replicate. Participants' social agents, personal networks and organisations are unique, therefore making it difficult to generalise these findings to the wider population. What can be learnt, Bazeley (2013: 411) argues, is that each person or event embraces a degree of universality that reflects the dimensions of social order at a specific time.

#### **4.9 Research permissions and ethical considerations**

Prior to conducting the study, the following requirements of the PD programme were complied with. A research proposal, outlining the study aims, methodology and data collection, was submitted to the doctoral review panel, with an accompanying illustrative bibliography. The doctoral panel approved this and authorised progression to ethical approval stage. The relevant paperwork was completed with guidance from my supervisor and the documentation was submitted to Canterbury Christ Church University's ethics panel for scrutiny.

This research study involved volunteer participants who were professional educators. They engaged in face-to-face interviews, which involved no physical risk or harm.

There were no safeguarding requirements, such as parental consent, as all participants were adults.

As I was a doctoral candidate, I had multiple identities throughout this research study. I wanted to maintain a trusting relationship (Drake and Heath, 2007) with participants because of my inherent duality as a professional educator, researcher, and doctoral student. It was therefore an important ethical consideration to ensure transparency with participants from the outset and minimise any personal and professional conflict. A gatekeeper was identified, and strategies were put in place to ensure confidentiality, transparency, and trust.

Coe et al. (2017) assert that part of the gatekeeper's role is to develop trust between participants and the researcher. As I had an established relationship with some doctoral students, the professional doctorate programme administrator was ideally placed to take on the role of gatekeeper. The gatekeeper controlled access to the research field, as they sent the email request to all PD student cohorts asking for potential research volunteers to get in contact. At this stage no personal details (names, telephone numbers, email addresses or other sensitive information) were shared with the researcher. The gatekeeper collated the replies and acted as the go-between between the researcher and volunteers.

The next ethical consideration was to ensure that volunteers were happy to engage in the research, and at this stage the participants' names, contact details and email address were shared with the researcher. This enabled a series of telephone conversations and email exchanges to take place, in which the research aims were explained in more detail and interview dates and venues were organised. This provided the opportunity for participants

to ask questions thereby reducing any potential anxiety. Prior to their appointment, I emailed each participant a set of questions and an information sheet advising that they could ask for clarification or discuss any points during their interview. I did this to ease any stress prior to their interview and to ensure they were comfortable with the arrangements. The participant information document also outlined their right to withdraw from the research at any stage without offering a reason. I reiterated these points verbally during the pre-interview stage.

Permission to record interviews was granted prior to pre-interview stage. I informed all participants about the measures taken to ensure their anonymity, placing emphasis on the possibility that others might be able to identify them in the study. The main issue, in terms of a potential identifying link, was their professional position combined with their doctoral study status. In view of this, I requested and was granted additional consent by them for their data to be used in the study. During anonymisation, pseudonyms were substituted for real names in the working transcripts and the final thesis. Research data, unless required for other academic purposes, would be destroyed.

Throughout the data analysis, I attempted to manage any assumptions that may have influenced the data interpretation. I know that any preconceptions I may hold may originate from my professional and researcher status, my gender, age, and personal history. It is important to reaffirm that as doctoral student I have experienced social influence in my personal, professional and researcher's role, and have influenced many postgraduate students to consider taking their education studies further.

#### 4.10 The pilot study

The pilot study findings varied, as each participant identified a different causal influence, but, interestingly, three of the four participants identified their social agents. Participant A spoke fondly about a colleague who had stimulated their interest in doctoral study.

*“It all happened because of X. They were enthusiastic about their study experiences. She would always tell me about her experiences of working with a group of like-minded people. X persuaded me.” (Participant A).*

Participant A shared an account of these conversations, reporting that it was their colleague who they consider used persuasive skills as the social agent in their relationship. Commenting on the colleague’s enthusiasm for considering a doctoral programme:

*“...it was her enthusiasm that persuaded me to join the doctoral programme. I would never have considered a doctorate; it was all down to her persuasion and enthusiasm. To be honest, I would never have bothered.” (Participant A).*

Participant B identified their organisational environment as the influence for their engagement with doctoral study. The following comments are their words.

*“The institution has changed since I first started working here. What’s worrying are all the changes, you know. I even overheard colleagues saying you’ll never be considered for promotion in this place until you have a doctorate. I know it’s all gossip, but it’s worrying all the same... I suppose to some extent, I’m ambitious, I need job security, I think that Doctor sign on my door will give me both.” (Participant B).*

Participant C appeared to be highly influenced by symbols of status in the team and displayed concern about their membership of their group.



*“Everyone in my team has a doctorate, I don’t! I sometimes feel like an imposter; I know it’s stupid because my colleagues treat me as an equal. I need that certificate saying Dr X, to become a full member. I want to have the same standing as they do in research meetings. That’s the reason I did it, you know, to be part of the team.” (Participant C).*

Although Participant C is part of a research network, they reported how they felt vulnerable because of their personal perception of group membership and desired the same status as other team members, even though colleagues considered them to be an equal. Influenced by external status, Participant C was concerned about a display of power to the professional world, which they attributed to the Doctor prefix.

During their interview, Participant C described their feelings about their status in research meetings, thereby illustrating that self-perception of their status within that group had influence action. A study of the effect of status cues by Stahelski and Paynton (1995) found that people’s social power and influencing tactics became heightened when they had unequal status in meetings, even when the context of the meeting was equal in relationship. It is possible that Participant C’s sensitivity became heightened during meetings, and the hidden influence only emerged later.

In contrast, Participant D was more relaxed about their engagement with doctoral study. Their influential agents were colleagues who shared office space and whose proximity had encouraged Participant D’s actions and their selection of what they considered was the best pathway.

*“Both of my office colleagues have doctorates, but by different routes. One had a PhD and x had a PD. I know they both found it tough because they often studied in the office and shared their ups and downs... I think they supported each other. There was a lot of friendly banter and rivalry between the two of them as to*

*who had the superior doctorate. They knew I wanted to do a doctorate sometime. I'm convinced now in hindsight, their banter was the ruse to get me started, but also to choose what was best for me.” (Participant D).*

Participant D was initially unaware of her colleagues' hidden influences, because she commented on their rivalry, however her colleagues' friendly banter may be considered as both persuasive and authoritative, as they used their different experiences and resources to empower participant D's action. Findings from the pilot study corresponded with those found in the literature particularly in respect to hidden or unwitting influence.

#### **4.11 Concluding summary**

This methodology chapter has described the framework and research design for this study, outlined details of the convenience sample and recruitment process, and explained how consideration of the research design and literature informed both the data collection strategies and methods used to construct the template analysis framework for the research. The pilot study findings were included as they informed the construction of questions and the development of the sociograms. Consideration of the analysis tools and use of NVivo software have been included, alongside the advantages, disadvantages, and various pitfalls I experienced while learning to use the software. For example, importing and exporting different document types and mp3 files, because of different operating systems, as I use a Mac at home and a PC in the university. Interestingly, this led to the discovery of template analysis during a web search for help with NVivo. The final sections of this methodology chapter considered the limitations, reliability, and validity of the study. The ethical issues have been discussed and implemented throughout the research period.

## **5 Findings relating to perceived social influence of participants' family and friends**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the findings from participants' interviews that relate to the social influence of their family and friends'. This chapter is structured around the first two research questions:

- *To what extent are professionals exposed to social influence prior to their engagement with doctoral study?*
- *How do professionals perceive their social actors and what ways do they influence doctoral study actions?*

Participants' exposure to influence from family and friends is important, as all eleven participants reported their perceptions of family influence experiences, although the intensity of the influential attempts varied. Even when participants already had successful, established careers, friends and family used their relationship ties and influential tactics to get participants to consider engaging in doctoral study.

The findings are presented as a set of nested units where each sub-unit explores the unique aspects of family and friends' social influence. A nested case study, according to Thomas (2016: 177), gives a sense of a sub-unit fitting in and 'gains its integrity, its wholeness from the wider case... as its breakdown is within the principal unit of analysis'.

The first section (5.2), which highlights the ways family members use their social influence, has been divided into sub-units. Sub-section 5.2.1 explores participants' perceptions of the role of parents and their use of authoritative and persuasive skills. I

consider Zoe's story, and combine two other participants' stories to illustrate aspects of the theme in sub-sections 5.2.3 and 5.2.4. Sub-sections 5.2.5 and 5.2.6. broaden the theme and consider the social influence of a mother's legacy.

Section 5.3 considers the ways participants overcome challenging or negative social influences. Sub-section 5.3.1 examines how Judith used her influence to negotiate a family compromise and action her PD engagement. Sub-section 5.3.2 outlines the ways in which three participants overcome family and friends challenges to doctoral engagement and the penultimate sub-section (5.3.3) considers the dynamic nature of influence, the final section (5.4) explores participants' perceptions of friends' social influence.

## **5.2 The experience of family social influence**

The following three sub-units explore the participants' perceptions of the way family members used social influence to move them towards action (Turner, 2005; Lukes, 2005). Parental influence, according to Egan (2007) and discussed in 2.2.2, has the power to affect adult children's attitudes, values and behaviour, although their influence and actions may equally be viewed as a form of social modelling because of shared values and social interactions (Table 2-3).

Participants reported that their parents' social influence and actions were instrumental in moving them forward to actions and were essential to their doctoral decision-making process. This study's findings differ from Williams et al's (2019), whose online survey of 185 EdD students found that parental influence decreases when students were in their mid-career stage.

### 5.2.1 Parental influence - filling a gap

At the time of her interview Zoe was an established primary school teacher with responsibility for Special Educational Needs Coordination at an independent school. Prior to moving to the independent sector, Zoe's professional practice had been in primary state schools, but she had sought a fresh teaching experience in the independent sector. Zoe was in the second year of the doctorate when the interview took place. Married with three sons, two of Zoe's sons had established successful careers and lived away from the family home. Her youngest son attended secondary school and still lived at home. Zoe had a very close family network; her parents lived near the family home and she described them as an integral part of her life. Zoe described them as "*the most supportive people... both my parents believe in me. Well, my dad especially.*" These comments show Zoe has a powerful bond and strong ties to her parents, who challenged her to take part in doctoral study.

*"My parents would at frequent intervals ask me if I was going to do a doctorate. I suppose that is a bit of a pressure. Although they wouldn't see it as that, they would see it as support. It became a powerful influence, that constant little nag. No, not nag, just the little drip, drip, drip. If it had come from one person, I wouldn't have done it." (Zoe)*

Interestingly, Zoe reported that her parents put forward the idea that she should engage in a doctorate by using a slow drip feed social tactic identified in Chapter 2, (Lukes, 2005; Nye, 2004; Turner, 1991 and 2005) to influence her decision and later action. According to Kramer (2007) the influential strategies used by other people can induce a successful outcome in others:

effective social influence can successfully induce a change in other people's attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, feelings, values and behaviours by means of one's behavioural tactics' (Kramer, 2007: 297-298).

Zoe stated that the action of her parents' 'slow drip' (Nye, 2004) repetitive doctoral request combined with their high education expectations (2.3.3) "*put the idea in my head.*" She admitted that "*I don't think I thought about that [doing a doctorate] at that time*"; it was their constant questioning and signposting of doctoral study that led to her engagement.

Explaining how her parents had initiated the idea of doctoral study, Zoe said,

*"what happened, it's mad they put the idea that my education pathway wasn't complete. Once someone puts an idea in my head, I am a person who can't leave it incomplete. Looking back that was an actual influence."* (Zoe)

Broome (1997: 130) argues that people often need a reason to do something, as discussed in Chapter 3, but their reason to act only becomes important when they have a clear understanding of the facts to support their action (Figures 3-2 & 3-3). Even though Zoe reported that she found their persistence irksome at times, she thought her parents were able to provide reasons why they thought taking part in doctoral study was important. As influential agents they conveyed the importance of action through their encouragement, authoritative and persuasive voice.

An influential message may provide a goal or inspire a person's action when they consider it a worthwhile thing to do, hence Parfit and Broome's (1997:101) point that people need time to consider relevant facts as part of their procedural rationality and 'reason to do something'. However, procedural rationality, according to Parfit and Broome (1997), does

not require a person to have a goal as their reason to do something. This differs from normative reasoning, where a person has a desire or goal they want to action. Although Zoe's parents planted the concept of engaging in a doctorate, they also provided a set of justifiable facts about why she should complete all her academic levels, providing her with a reason to act and setting the ultimate goal of *"stopping... and finding inner peace"*.

*"I actually thought, when I get there, there would be no more academic levels to achieve. I can stop." (Zoe)*

It is unclear whether Zoe's perception of her parents' actions forced her into making an emotional or reasoned judgement, but it was their social influence that provided her with the reasons to fill a gap in her education. While considering the potential of closing the gap in her education, Zoe could rationalise this concept by appraising whether a doctorate would be a worthwhile goal.

Zoe's perception was that her parents pressured her to make a decision, and she originally thought this was coercive, but her attitude began to change because she realised she needed to complete all the education levels. Initially Zoe felt conflicted, because she thought she was letting her parents down by not actioning their request. As a daughter, she still had the desire to make her parents proud of her achievements.

*"I always want them to be proud of me. I know that it sounds really pathetic at my age, but you know that hasn't changed." (Zoe)*

Although Zoe reported that her parents did not place a sanction for non-compliance, she felt vulnerable because her parents did not drop the idea of doctoral study. Their persistence strategy influenced Zoe's behaviour and attitude because she considered they had legitimate power, outlined in Table 2-3, which affected her response to action her parents' influential attempts. Zoe considered her parents' social influence attempts to be

overt and persuasive (Turner 2005; Pratkanis, 2016). In contrast to hidden influence, they were open about their opinions and used non-coercive encouraging and loving tactics to advocate the benefits of a doctorate. Zoe had initially perceived their attempts as coercive, but later – after reflecting on the sense of accomplishment a doctorate would bring her – began to see their attempts as persuasive and accepted their idea. The findings suggest that Zoe’s parents used influence as a form of ‘power through’, discussed in Chapters 2 (section 2.2.3) to move her forward to action their request.

Interestingly, Schwenk considers Turner’s ‘power through’ concept to be ‘power in action’ because of its nature as:

power is a more or less persistent relation between individuals, whose potential may be realised in certain situations. Regardless of how strongly an influence relation is rooted in certain “bases of power”, its appreciation by the target person is a necessary condition for it to be effective (Schwenk, 2009: 28).

The concept of ‘power through’ and ‘power in action’ differs from French and Raven’s (1959) standard power theory, discussed in Chapter 2, where people have control over peoples’ actions (Turner 2005). Zoe reported that her parents’ persistent influence was based on encouragement that allowed her to navigate a way through to making a reasoned judgement about her academic capability prior to actioning their request. Zoe’s parents’ act of encouragement and belief in her educational ability supports Turner’s (2005) concept of ‘power through’, as it allowed her to gain control of resources because of her parents’ influence, which led to her doctoral engagement. In addition, the evidence supports Schwenk’s argument that a person’s powerbase – in this instance Zoe’s parent’s authority and legitimate power – ‘needs to be appreciated by the individual’, and when



Zoe understood that her parents wanted the best outcome for her, it gave her a sense of empowerment and drove her to act.

### 5.2.2 Emotional pressure

Nancy experienced a similar situation to Zoe, in that she reported that her father wanted her to complete a doctorate. Nancy thought her father used his powerbase and persistent persuasive skills.

*“My father wanted me to do a doctorate, he kept asking... I did try and resist it for 6 months as I really did not know what I wanted. I know he’s proud of me, but now I’ve started I wish he would just stop asking me how I’m getting on.” (Nancy)*

Nancy reported her perceptions of emotional pressure that left her feeling vulnerable at times because her father’s influence did not stop even after she started the doctorate. His actions may be interpreted as a ‘standard form of control over’ her because he keeps asking; however, his action may have been his way of providing encouragement as a ‘power through’ by asking how she was managing.

Alice, another participant in the study, recognised that “some people may feel pressured by family members to undertake a doctorate,” although she considered her situation was different because “*the doctorate was all about me... as it kind of felt right for me*”.

The participants’ stories presented showed how their families’ influence gave them a reason to act. The evidence suggests that Zoe and Nancy originally thought their situation was problematic; however, they changed their attitude because they wanted to please their parents.

As social agents, family members used the power of persuasion, discussed in Chapter 2, as a ‘weapon of influence’ (Cialdini, 2007) to guide or modify a situation. The parents’

ongoing persistence and authoritative power strategies focused on getting their daughters to 'want what they wanted' (Nye, 2004; Lukes, 2005; Turner, 2005) and act accordingly. According to Lukes' three dimensions of power there are aspects of influence that may not be considered power:

Power may not be a form of influence – depending on where sanctions are involved; while influence and authority may or may not be a form of power – dependent on whether a conflict of interest is involved (Lukes, 2005: 35-36).

Turner (2005: 11) argues (section 2.3.2) that authority resides within the social norms of a group or a person and under certain conditions they may feel they have right to wield influence to change their belief, attitude, or behaviour. Legitimate and authoritative power are comparable concepts (Table 2, French and Raven, 1959; Turner (2005)) as power comes from a person's role, e.g. from a parent, but the situation may dictate whether a person is willing to comply, as outlined in Raven's model (Figure 2-3).

Zoe and Nancy reported that they accepted their parents' right to ask them to take part in doctoral study and although it could be argued that there were no sanctions involved, the prospect of disappointing or rejecting a parent's authority may have prompted emotional conflict that could have contributed to their actions. Their perception of their parents' actions underpinned what they considered to be in their best interests and, as their influential agents, they used their power to manage the situation. Previous research by Schwenk (2009) identified how a person who was the object of an influential attempt may eventually come to appreciate their agent's influential message. Zoe and Nancy reported their perceptions of their parents' social influence. However, it took time for them to come to the same understanding as their parents and decide doctoral study was worthwhile, as they reported that they thought their parents' influential attempts were both persuasive and

coercive. They needed time to consider the situation and make a reasoned judgement before actioning their parents' request.

### 5.2.3 Coercion

Interestingly, Zoe described her parental social influence as “*a hidden coercive force*” that initially made her feel vulnerable, as she believed her parents would be disappointed if she did not comply with their request and felt that she did not want to let them down.

*“It was sort of coercive because if one wasn't doing it then the other was. It took quite a lot of thinking about... I wasn't going to be allowed to let it drop... my parents influenced an inherent need in me. I think that it was there in the background without me realising it, until my parents said, oh, you're going to do a doctorate.” (Zoe)*

Although hard power, as discussed in section 2.2.1, may rely on inducements (‘carrot’) or threat (‘stick’) strategies (Nye, 2004: 39), depending on the circumstances a social agent may decide to use a soft power approach to achieve an outcome.

Gass and Seiter (1999) argue that an influential attempt is rarely purely coercive, because the attempt relies on the way the influence is received; for example, as in the case of the Ministers of HE, referred to in section 2.4.2. Gass and Seiter’s (1999: 26) argument that ‘most influential attempts can include both elements’ is supported by Nancy’s and Zoe’s experiences, as their perceptions of parental coercion changed when they realised the attractiveness of the doctorate. As there appeared to be no physical bribes or sanctions for non-compliance, the findings suggest that their parents had the ‘ability to manipulate the agenda’ through soft power and authoritative tactics (Nye, 2004).

Table 2-2 identifies how soft power tactics can be used by people in powerful positions to get others to do what they wanted (Nye, 2004). The findings suggest that Zoe and Nancy’s

parents used their relationship ties and soft power tactical affability and parental authority, (section 2-3.2). They persuaded their children to act by getting them to ‘want what they wanted’, using their skills to influence to manipulate the doctorate engagement situation.

Arguably, under these circumstances, any reluctance to conform would seem futile because their daughters had an inherent need not to disappoint their parents. Even though Zoe and Nancy candidly refer to coercion, the parental message may be considered persistent persuasion, as they later interpret the request as an excellent achievable goal. Turner’s concept that coercion can be used as ‘power through’ can be applied, as Zoe and Nancy gain control of resources as their self-assurance, confidence in their ability, and attitudes and beliefs change (Figure 5-1) due to parental influence. As Turner (2005) argues how people may consider the aspirations or needs of others and embrace them as:

people to act in line with one’s desires by persuading them that the desired judgement, decision, belief or action is correct... [they] act on it as a matter of their own volition, as free, intrinsically motivated and willing agents (Turner, 2005: pp 6-8).

Although Nancy and Zoe reported that their parents’ persistent strategy morphed into persuasion, Gass and Seiter, (1999) argue how there may be instances where focus of the social agents’ influence may be modified according to the situation:

persuasive and coercive strategies aren’t so much polar opposites as they are close relatives. As most influential attempts often include both elements (Gass and Seiter, 1999: 26).

This results in coercion and persuasion strategies becoming crossed, as the evidence suggests that Nancy and Zoe both accepted the idea that engaging in a doctorate would be

a good thing to do. By contrast, Zoe reported that she shared her family values of engaging in a doctorate which became a powerful influence as,

*“there has always been a very strong influence regarding education in my family...they are the most supportive people. There is a part of me that wants to prove to myself that I am not stupid. The idea of a doctorate must have been a big subconscious influence for me, because they believed I could do it.” (Zoe).*

Likewise, Nancy’s experienced perception of emotional pressure from her father. After enrolling on a doctoral programme, he still would not *“stop asking how I’m getting on, it makes me anxious, I feel vulnerable and get in a cycle of feeling guilty that I have not done enough.”* It is possible that Nancy’s father viewed his request for information as actions of support and encouragement for her doctoral studies and was possibly unaware of the emotional pressure he was putting his daughter under. As Nancy reported that her father was invested in providing support which links back to the findings in section 5.2.2.

#### **5.2.4 Reward**

The power within an informational family message can provide the reason for conformity and empowerment. Reflecting on their family ties and their parents’ past emotional responses when they achieving their degrees, Megan and John described their experiences:

*“My mum cried when I got my MA. God knows what she’ll do when I achieve my doctorate. They become very involved as my family are massively proud of me... I have expectations of myself and my family.” (Megan)*

*“I know my parents were very proud of me... it’s all about me, they would be very proud in what I’ve achieved.” (John)*

Interestingly, Megan and John noted the lack of family pressure to engage in a doctorate; however, the findings suggest they expected their family to become passionately involved

in their doctoral achievement and, because of their previous experiences, they appeared to expect an emotional reward as a rite of passage.

Turner (1999: 119) argues that ‘what a person finds rewarding will depend on the psychological stimulus’ of a certain or given situation. In the examples above, participants knew their family would acknowledge their engagement and, interestingly, were able to predict the emotional rewards. However, others may find it difficult to envisage the emotional reward they have been left in the legacy.

### **5.2.5 A posthumous legacy**

Stella is a semi-retired healthcare professional in the third year of her doctorate. She had been a part-time carer for her husband and late mother, who both had health issues. She has two grown-up children who had established professional careers and lived away from the family home. When the interview took place, Stella was working towards completing the final taught module of the part-time EdD.

Stella had established a successful practice as an occupational therapist, manager and academic. Originally, she wanted to become a lawyer and read law as an undergraduate.

*“I would have gone on to law school... that couldn't happen. I chose a different path, and I was very happy in it.” (Stella)*

Stella reported that before joining the doctorate she had spent a significant amount of time visiting and caring for her elderly mother, who was in her 90s. Caring for her husband restricted her travel further. Stella felt confined by her family circumstances, as they limited her travels to Zambia, where she had established professional practice. She missed working with her professional colleagues as she commented that “*more and more people in Western universities work with African people at universities.*”

*“Because of my mother, I realised I couldn't go swinging off to Africa two or three times a year, and perhaps to other places that I would like to have visited to be honest.” (Stella)*

The death of a parent brings a series of emotional reactions. The void left by Stella's mother's death, combined with her mother's encouragement and persuasive influence, resulted in emotional pressure. It took Stella a while to consider the possibility of fulfilling her deceased mother's wishes.

After her mother's death, Stella realised how her world had shifted,

*“My mother died... it released me from travelling up and down the motorway over the last six to eight months, I realise its only in the short term”. (Stella)*

Stella reported that after her mother's death, which gave her more time to fill, she slowly began to realise that doing a doctorate was an opportunity to fill the gap. It had been her mother who had raised the possibility of her joining the EdD programme:

*“We had often discussed the possibility of a doctorate in the past, as it was something my mother felt I could do. Well, just winding back about 10 years, I did actually start the EdD. She felt strongly then that it was something worthwhile. She still had quite strong feelings that it was something I could, and should, do for myself. My mother felt it worth doing, even if I did have restraining, caring duties at that time.” (Stella)*

Stella recollected how her mother encouraged her to engage in a doctorate, despite previously dropping out 10 years earlier, and commented that her mother believed it was something she should do for herself. What Stella was unclear about is whether her mother recognised that her death would leave a gap in her daughter's life. The evidence indicates that Stella perceived her mother used a referent soft powerbase (Table 2-4), and persuasive skills to influence her into re-joining the EdD. Although Stella did not fully recognise the

power of her mother's influence at the time of her death, it became the focus for later action.

*"After her death, I came to it. Her feelings were so strong that I needed to do something for myself. Now I felt I needed to put this new-found time to do something really worthwhile. I guess the emotional pressure has been taken off, now I have more control over it." (Stella)*

Recalling perceptions of conversations during the interview, Stella considered the strong ties of their mother and daughter relationship, as she referred to the emotional strain she experienced during that period of her life. Stella reported how her mother's insight and persuasive tactics did lead her, as she felt the need to fill the gap, which rekindled her desire to engage in an EdD and do something for herself.

The data suggest that Stella perceptions of her mother's use of soft power, was a result of her position within the family and her understanding of the situation allowed her to assess the situation and use persuasive skills to influence her daughter. Recommending that a doctorate was something worthwhile, and well within her daughter's academic capability, appears to be the key message her mother wanted to communicate, although Stella states that it took a while before she actioned her mother's persuasive request. A parent's social influence may possibly be measured by the level of attitude, values, or behaviour changes (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Bandura, 1986; Cialdini, 1998 and 2005; Lukes, 2005; Turner, 2005). Pratkanis, (2014: 149) argues that the emotional dynamics of a situation, e.g. a death, or baby's birth may quickly reach peak intensity, then naturally subside over time if the emotional response is left undisturbed by external factors. The findings indicate that Stella required time to come to terms with her mother's death and allow the emotional pressure to subside before she was able to change her attitude and re-evaluate the possibility of engaging in a doctorate and action her mother's wish. Stella's mother's



posthumous legacy provided a sense of personal fulfilment, allowing Stella to gain control of resource, i.e. time and the values her mother had imparted.

### *Conformity*

Conformity is a power process, and it is possible to argue that by conforming Zoe, Nancy, and Stella's action to engage in a doctorate became their 'reality to... act correctly' (Turner, 1991: 144); however, in their situation, conformity might be considered a shared value from their family background, as all participants commented that their families valued education. In contrast to their experiences, Megan and John reported in section 5.2.4. that their families may consider their doctoral action to offer an emotional reward.

Referential power (Table 2-4) relies on a person's admiration of their social agent who may provide the standards and norms that they can base their own behaviour on (French and Raven, 1959; Cialdini, 1989; Turner, 2005).

Stella's mother's referent power may be based on social proof and reciprocity, as Stella internalises the information by testing the reality of the idea (Turner, 1991) of doctoral study which was not a professional necessity for Stella, although the findings suggest that her mother used the building blocks of admiration, love, and faith in her daughter's ability, which, combined with Stella's respect and love for her mother, influenced her to act by filling the gap and fulfilling her mother's wishes.

Turner (2005) argues that a judgement needs to be made about the validity and 'actual compatibility' of the situation. The evidence indicates that by accepting her mother's persuasive tactics for action, Stella used her existing EdD study knowledge to support her reasons to make a valid judgement. In this instance Stella reported that her mother "*thought I should do it... so the idea just snowballed from there*". Her mother's

persuasive skills affected Stella's reasoning, as they encouraged her to make a reasoned - judgement (section 3.5) to engage in the EdD and provided her with a fitting tribute to her mother's memory.

Wellington and Sikes (2006) argue that powerful influence from the past can act on the present, because of previous experiences as:

what has happened to us in the past affects the things that happen to us in the present, both through the social, cultural, academic and economic capital we possess and are able to draw on, and through the identities we have developed (Wellington and Sikes, 2006: 732).

The responsibility to fulfil her mother's influential legacy changed to practical action based on love and respect and was a way that Stella could fill the gap after her caring responsibilities stopped.

### **5.2.6 A mother's living legacy**

Violet is a full-time sociology academic who recently achieved her part-time EdD. She is a wife and mother with two grown-up daughters. As the daughter of a coal miner, she considered herself,

*“a working-class girl... who never came from a secure background... knowing what poverty was like”. (Violet)*

Violet thought her insecurity first started because she attended seven different primary schools when she was young. Her self-confidence was affected when she failed her 11 plus. Although she only attended one secondary modern school, she was not sure where she “*fitted in academically*”.

There have been many studies regarding the effect on pupils failing their exams at a young age. Indeed, Wellington and Sikes' research with EdD students (Chapter 2), noted that the reason why one of their doctoral students undertook the challenge of doctoral study was because they:

failed 2 out of 3 of her A Levels... really wanted to prove that I could cope with education at the highest level... it will represent a huge personal achievement (Wellington and Sikes, 2006: 728).

Wellington and Sikes' student had the need to prove her self-worth after her negative education experience and engaging in doctoral study had provided a major boost to the student's confidence and self-esteem. Violet's perceptions of her experience is supported by two other participants, Nancy and Lesley, who also mentioned the impact of failing their eleven plus examination during their interviews.

Bandura (1991: 253) argues that personal standards guide a person's actions and play a major role in judging self-directiveness, as social referential comparisons occur when people judge their performance against others. Violet reported that she struggled to know her academic place, as she considered her mother's achievements set her personal academic standard. Violet compared her mother's academic achievements to her own childhood education failures, despite her mother's personal circumstances preventing her from entering HE. Commenting on this during her interview, it appeared that Violet still believed her failed eleven plus damaged her confidence, although she demonstrates resilience by commenting "*I am not stupid.*" Violet described her mother as a very successful person who had overcome a lot of challenges in her life.

*“My mum was very feisty. She'd gone to grammar school. I think the notion that my mother went to the grammar school, and I didn't quite make it, put pressure on me, knowing my mum did that. My mum was pregnant at 16. I realised that all those grammar school aspirations that might have been open to her, she had to let go for my dad. At that time... her life was really confusing for 2 or 3 years. She left my dad and trained to become a comptometer operator, and then I came along. I was very loved. Then my mother split up from my father... it was the violence.”*  
(Violet)

Violet's retelling of her mother's story, prior to her birth, is based on other people's interpretation of her family environment. Violet's emotional connection to her mother is built on her referent power of admiration and love, and her mother's strength and success at overcoming adversity provided a set of personal standards for Violet. At a young age she witnessed her mother's reward for professionalism, which gave her an appreciation of social mobility.

*“My influences were definitely from her... I'd seen my mother be the professional. A comptometer operator was a good job for women in those days, and she had a kind of independence. She even brought her work home... and she even bought her own comptometer and worked at home, so I kind of worked out at an early age that you needed a skill or trade.”* (Violet)

Violet developed her own set of personal standards based on observing her mother's actions. As Violet's mother is a significant person in her life, it allowed her to make social referential comparisons and judgements based on her family values and their environmental situation at that time. Violet's perception of her mother provided the social proof that encouraged her to emulate her mother's professional and personal standards, as Violet reported how she developed an overwhelming desire to achieve the social mobility

she desperately wanted. Violet's perception of her mother became her social proof that enabled her to set future goals for action.

*"I was influenced by my family background, I wanted to get a proper job... it was about social mobility. I wanted to get a proper job and not go to university... I didn't do the BEd. I wanted to go to college and get a job at the end, so I did the Cert Ed... as I could go into education". (Violet)*

Violet became a teacher at 21, and she considered her mother's influence to be powerful because she,

*"knew I wasn't daft... she encouraged a sense of social capital. For me, being a teacher was quite an achievement... it was a kind of social mobility as a professional woman". (Violet)*

Violet's status as a teacher was not enough for her because she still doubted her educational ability.

*"At the time, being a teacher was the kind of social mobility I was looking for. I think it was always all to do with my self-confidence. I failed my eleven plus, I expect you have heard it many times before. I wasn't convinced that I was PhD material."*  
*(Violet)*

Although Violet was fully aware of the gap in her education, her low self-confidence remained an issue until her family came along. Violet appears to compare her career performance to her mother's success. Later it was Violet's own family that influenced her values and behaviour. During her self-reflections, she considered the possibility of filling the gap she perceived existed in her education.

*“Then I had my family and life took over... I began to think I could go further. I probably had grown in confidence. They gave me the confidence to think I could do it. I got my Master’s... and it was always in my mind that I still had one to do. The EdD was becoming more popular, so I thought let’s give it a go, as I’m very mindful that these things have to fit in with one’s life cycle.”*  
(Violet)

As Violet’s family life changed, her confidence grew. She became emotionally strong and considered it was the right time to complete the gap in her education. Her family social agents influenced her self-belief and gave her the confidence to complete a doctorate once her daughters left home. Violet thought it was the perfect time because it would fill both the gap in her education and the gap left by her daughters after they moved out of the family home. Bandura’s (1991: 256) research (Chapter 2) recognised how people who were able to acknowledge and reward their own attainment were the ones who usually accomplished more. Violet thought that by engaging in a PD she would achieve the social mobility she desired and eliminate her past academic failure.

### **5.3 Dealing with challenge**

It would be a mistake to assume that family members are inevitably in favour of their relative taking part in doctoral study, as participant’s reported that some family members used their social influence as participants reported they were challenge or actively discourage from engaging in doctoral study. The following nested sub-units explore the way family members were perceived to used social influence to deter or challenge participants’ PD aspirations and/or engagement.

A 2013 study by Klenowski et al. considered EdD students’ family and work life balance to be a major challenge, as sharing time between the demands in their life became a

constant daily juggle. In addition, Kember's 1999 study reported that some students experienced adverse circumstances that conflicted with their family demands and commitments as some 'families perceived family duties as having priority over study time' (p.144) resulting in a conflict of interest which affected their home environment.

In contrast, Kember's (1999) international study on 'integrating part-time study with family, work and social life found that students succeeded when their family members were interested in their study activities, supported their study needs, and valued the qualification.

According to Schwenk (2009: 28), 'power in action', discussed in section 2.2.1 and illustrated in Raven's (1990) model figure 2-3, happens when a person recognises the power of their influence in certain situations; for example, when a person questions the judgement or actions of others, the powerful person is able to control the outcome. This study found examples of family members using their influence to discourage or challenge participants' PD engagement. Faced with this situation, participants who were determined to engage in a doctorate used their social influence to persuade others that doctoral study was important. They became powerful as they were determined to negotiate a family compromise and gain their support.

### **5.3.1 Negotiating compromise**

The following sub-unit considers Judith's perceptions of her family network and the way its members challenged her decision to engage in doctoral study. To solve her family issue, Judith reported that she used her social influence to persuade them that a doctorate was a goal she needed to fulfil. She took control of the situation by presenting the facts and explaining why the doctorate was so important to her.

Judith originally established a successful business career in Germany. She married an English man and moved to England, where she continued her business career and started a family.

*“You know a lot of people think it’s rather ambitious to work full time and have children... My children, one is at junior school, and one is still at home.” (Judith)*

Judith’s desire to complete a PhD was long-standing, but due to life circumstances it took her 20 years to contemplate fulfilling this doctoral goal. However, Judith had to navigate family and friends’ opposition.

*“After I finished my undergraduate and master’s degree, I thought about doing a PhD. It has been at the back of my mind for 20 years... only now I’m ready for the next step. My family think it’s a waste of my time... they would say I was over ambitious trying to do the doctorate. My family wanted me to be with them. My friends think it a waste of time. They think I’m mad, they say, it takes up such a lot of time, why do you want to do it?” (Judith)*

Nevertheless, Judith rejected the questions set by her family and friends but accepted the ‘necessary conditions’ that she needed to move her doctoral study engagement forward. Regardless of how strong a social influence may be, Schwenk (2009) argues that the recipient of influence needs to appreciate the conditions for the influence to be effective. The evidence shows that Judith considered their views and used her influence to negotiate an effective compromise before taking action. Under these conditions Judith became the powerful person, as she was able to process their point of view and use influential strategies to negotiate a family compromise.

In certain conditions, perceptions of social influence may be considered informational rather than a ‘social force’ (Schwenk, 2009: 28). The power of using informational



influence helped Judith to control the situation by negotiating a compromise that would be acceptable to all family members.

*“I want the doctorate and being realistic, the PD was the only route open to me. I found it is difficult to find a part-time PhD... plus I could not move away from the area because of my family commitments.” (Judith)*

There are circumstances when a person is prepared to compromise to control their situation. In this instance, Judith considered part-time study as a compromise she needed to make to achieve her doctoral goal. A further concession was to change her PhD goal to an EdD, which she could study close to home and would still allow her to achieve her doctoral status goal.

*“In the end the EdD seemed the only route available that fit my circumstances... that was a big external influence. I know I was too quick in deciding to do an EdD. I should have continued with my search... into the part-time PhD routes. I should have spent more time talking to others about the doctorate and other routes.” (Judith)*

The reasons why Judith wanted to undertake a PhD as opposed to the EdD is discussed in the following chapter, which explores professional social influence.

### **5.3.2 Overcoming challenging social influence**

This nested unit is a composite of three participants’ perceptions of family challenge. These participants had been considering doctoral study for a long time but were initially concerned about the opinions of others, which constructed a negative mental barrier. They had not made any previous attempts to engage in a doctorate because they were fearful of family and friends’ attitudes. They reported what they thought their family and friends might say, for example:

*“If I'd been 10 years younger it wouldn't have mattered, but family and people influence you. I just don't think I was in the right mood or environment to take me onto that next step because of my family... if anything, they would talk me out of it. All my children say why do you want to do it, especially at your age?” (Carol)*

*“For me it's all about my family... I don't want to have to justify it to anybody except maybe my family and friends. I know I would have to justify it... I wanted to be able to challenge myself.” (Lesley)*

The findings indicated that both participants appeared to have constructed their own narrative and transferred their previous inactivity onto family and friends. Wood (2000: 549) notes ‘that people’s responses to a particular attitude... can reflect diverse evaluations, cognitive representations and interpretations, and [affect] reactions... and underlying attitudes

Evidence indicates that participants based their negative attitude and lack of action on their age and disposition, but their fear of inactivity was transferred onto their family and friends as a justifiable coping mechanism.

The evidence also indicates that some participants took years to consider doctoral study because the attitudes of others made them hesitant. Others were openly challenged by their family and friends:

*“My dad questioned why I want to do it now. He wouldn't pressurise me, although to him education is extremely important. When I was younger, he was a real influence, but he would question why I was doing it at this stage... as it is not ostensibly going to take you anywhere.” (Carol)*

*“I don't think my husband understands what it is [referring to the doctorate programme]. He doesn't understand why I'm not happy to sit and do the crossword in the garden. He doesn't understand why I want to do these things. I think I may have to keep it a secret for now.” (Stella)*

While some participants reported their perceptions of overcoming challenging family attitudes by using their social influence, Stella, sadly, had decided to keep her doctoral study a secret to prevent any challenge from her husband.

### **5.3.3 The dynamic nature of social influence**

The final nested sub-unit explores the dynamic nature of social influence. Susan's doctoral story began with the support of her family. Susan's professional career had always been in the field of education and she had recently moved to the university sector after many years of secondary school teaching. Prior to joining the university, she had been part of the school's senior management team. Susan explained that her husband, daughter, and son-in-law were originally supportive and enthusiastic about the prospect of her engaging in doctoral study.

*“My husband and my son-in-law said, gosh that is a brilliant opportunity. You would like that. But not so much my daughter, she worries about my work life balance.” (Susan)*

Susan valued professional development and questioned how she could continue her professional learning after joining the university. She explained,

*“I was always doing something in my job. I did a literature master's and led the literacy team. Then I did a middle leader's qualification and the NPQH [National Professional Qualification for Headship]. Professional development has been really important for me. When I joined the university, I did wonder what I was going to do. One of the biggest influences was the*

*doctoral opportunity. I couldn't really pass that up now I'm working at the university... I just felt that it was something I needed to do.” (Susan)*

The evidence shows how professional development was an important issue for Susan and engaging in a part-time PD was the driver that enabled her to continue learning. Initially, her husband and son-in-law were enthusiastic and supported her study, but Susan’s daughter used her influence to raise concerns.

Research studies have highlighted the importance of having the support of one’s family when engaging in doctoral study (Kember, 1999; Lee, 2009; Maxwell, 2010). However, in Susan’s case, the family initially supported her goal but later withdrew their support. As Susan notes, *“they were surprised that I was prepared to undertake it considering I was working so much”*. Work life balance in Susan’s situation appears to have affected the home environment as her family became concerned about her health.

*“They worry about my work life balance and everything now. They think that since I started the doctorate, it's become a step too far. You know, the support my family gave me originally has changed because they don't support me as much now. They think I have developed stress issues... my family are less encouraging now... it's all about stress.” (Susan)*

During her interview, Susan did not acknowledge any issues with stress. Although she explained how a change in her family’s behaviour made her *“feel less engaged... I'm isolated at this stage”*.

The findings indicate that a participant’s resolve to complete their studies may weaken when a social agent changes their attitude or behaviour towards a situation they had previously supported. Scott (2026) notes that because of knowledge limitations, it can be difficult for a social agent to predict the future events of their influence:

... they are unable to plan for all contingences. Actions are, therefore, inevitably undertaken with imperfect knowledge of the conditions that may facilitate or limit the achievement of their intention (Scott, 2013: 140).

Susan reported that her family members changed their attitudes because they believed it was affecting her health, and this attitude change and lack of support weakened her resolve and affected her behaviour as she felt insecure. The response to her family's appeal had a direct effect on her attitude as her 'thoughts may reflect an after-the-fact justification for attitude judgments' (Woods, 2000: 553).

When appeals have a direct effect on attitudes,

*"I've done it all a bit too late. My daughter and husband are not keen now, I'm getting towards the end of my career, so the timing wasn't perfect. They made me feel that at this stage of my life... I must be mad. There is always tension there in the background, the idea of the EdD, and how relevant it is going to be for me now." (Susan)*

Originally, Susan thought of the EdD as the ideal way to support her professional development as a learner. The family challenged the necessity of gaining doctorate status at this stage of her career and the value of completing her doctorate became less important, resulting in her leaving the EdD programme after three years of study.

#### **5.4 The experience of friends' social influence**

This section explores participants' friendship networks and their influential experiences. A friend's social influence attempts appear to differ in nature from the family dynamic. Participants appeared to base their judgement of doctoral study engagement on the advice and experience of friends. Friendship networks tended to use a softer approach compared

to family members, because participants sought their friends' influential views as justification and encouragement. I divided the social influence of friends into two categories.

- Provision of precise practical guidance for doctoral study;
- Provision of the reason for self-challenge and action.

A study by Kember (1991) found that friends' influences were less dynamic than family or work colleagues' influences. Although, Kember's research did not focus on students' engagement prior to their part-time study, there was compelling evidence that students became conflicted 'by the demands and pressure from friends... [and] some students were not prepared to make sacrifices with their social lives' (p. 119).

#### **5.4.1 Friends are an important social influence**

Bandura (1989) argues how people have the capacity to shape the trajectories of other's lives, and this is supported by some participants in this study reporting that they had sought guidance from friends because they believed they understood the complexity of their worlds.

The findings indicate that John valued his friend's judgement because he understood his nature and the situation. *"My friend knew me and the way I think and work... I wanted to find out which route would be the best for me"*. John valued his friend's expert and referent power and based his actions on the facts held in his informational message.

*"I talked to a friend of mine and he said the PD would suit me, so that made my mind up."* (John)

Like John, Carol sought a friend's guidance because, "She was already doing an EdD. She gave me quite a good insight into how it all worked and was really enthusiastic."

Influenced by her friend's enthusiasm and knowledge of the EdD, Carol claims not to have considered doctoral study prior to her conversation. "*I hadn't really thought about it before I spoke to her. She was instrumental at that point.*" As Carol had established a trusting friendship, their conversations about her friend's doctoral experience became a hidden influence. The power of their conversations only emerged later when Carol began to think that she 'wanted' to have the same experiences as her friend.

- *A sense of self-challenge*

Prior to making a decision to engage in a doctorate, some professionals aired their perceptions of self-doubt with their friendship groups. An unexpected finding that emerged was how participants' self-confidence was affected when they turned to friends to help them overcome self-doubt. In Carol's case, her friend raised her confidence by suggesting the idea of engaging in a doctorate. In contrast Lesley, was influenced by a number of conversations with friends. Initially, Lesley reported that she was hesitant about engaging in a doctorate because she feared failure. Her hesitancy would, she realised, restrict her membership of the group, and if she 'did nothing' she would remain a group outsider (Broome, 1997; Turner, 2005; Cialdini, 2007). To steer Lesley's engagement, her friendship group used 'power in action' (Schwenk, 2009) by acknowledging her fear but also emphasising the enjoyment. They were able to provide practical information (section 2.5.1) to challenge her doctoral perception and alter her attitude.

*"My friends were talking about it, but I think it takes a lot of courage to give it a go. I was terrified, because of the possibility of failure, which isn't a very good thing. They all said no one wants to do that but give it a go, you'll enjoy the challenge"*  
(Lesley)

Alice used her friend's PhD experience to evaluate her personal situation. "*I have a friend who's doing a PhD at the minute and he is really struggling. He said he doesn't know what he's really doing*". Their conversations caused her self-doubt because of his experience. "*I don't want to be in a situation like that... I don't want to struggle*". Although she was interested in the idea of the doctorate, her anxiety over struggling restricted her commitment. She reported that her friend used his social influence to help her overcome this barrier by linking her professional practice to the EdD. Aware of situation, Alice considered how her friend shared his existing knowledge to support her judgement.

*"I had no idea of the difference between PhD and PD until he explained... I sort of thought the professional route, which had a taught element, would suit me because of my role as a teacher."*  
(Alice)

By recommending the EdD, he guided her actions and challenged her feelings of self-doubt by recommending a specific doctoral pathway. Alice engaged in the EdD because of the referent and expert power she held for her friend. Nevertheless, Alice still appears to lack clarity about the differences between PhD and the PD, which supports Mellors-Bourne et al's (2016) findings.

## 5.5 Summary

This chapter explored the participants' perceptions of family and friends' social influence. Lee (2009) identified the important role of a supportive family and work colleagues, suggesting that engaging in a PD was a daunting and exciting prospect.

The analysis of participants' perceptions of their experiences found that the majority of family members and friends acted as influential agents and used their capacity for



influence and skills of persuasion, authority and coercion as ‘power through’ participants, which empowered their decision to act and move forward to engage with a PD. However, the study identified examples where participants delayed their doctoral engagement because of challenges by their family members and friends.

The key features of the nested sub-units emerged as:

- Family members and friends were perceived to have influenced participants’ actions by using a range of influential strategies, e.g. persuasion, authority and non-coercion, that provided information, reasoning, encouragement, and inspiration to support their action.
- Participants’ responses to parents’ social influence were instrumental in signposting doctoral study and moving them to action. An unexpected finding was the significant power parents held to move their adult children to act, regardless of age, professional or career stage. These findings differ from Williams et al’s (2019) study which found that parental influence diminished by the time students were in their mid-career stage.
- Family and friends appeared to have the foresight to identify what was in participants’ best interests and used social influence to open them up to new possibilities.
- Family members rarely recommended a doctoral programme that aligned with their adult child’s professional practice, although one parent recommend a specific doctoral pathway based on her adult child’s previous history, in contrast to friends who offered doctoral guidance based on their experiences.

- Some participants' perceived family and friends influence as supportive or demanding in nature while others challenged the idea of engaging in a doctorate based on age and career stage.

Drawing on Raven's (1990) power in action models from the perspective of a recipient of influence discussed in Chapter 2 (Figure 2-3) and an influential agent (Figure 2-4), I have constructed a model (Figure 5.1) that maps the ways participants' attitudes, confidence, behaviour, and actions were affected by their influential agents.

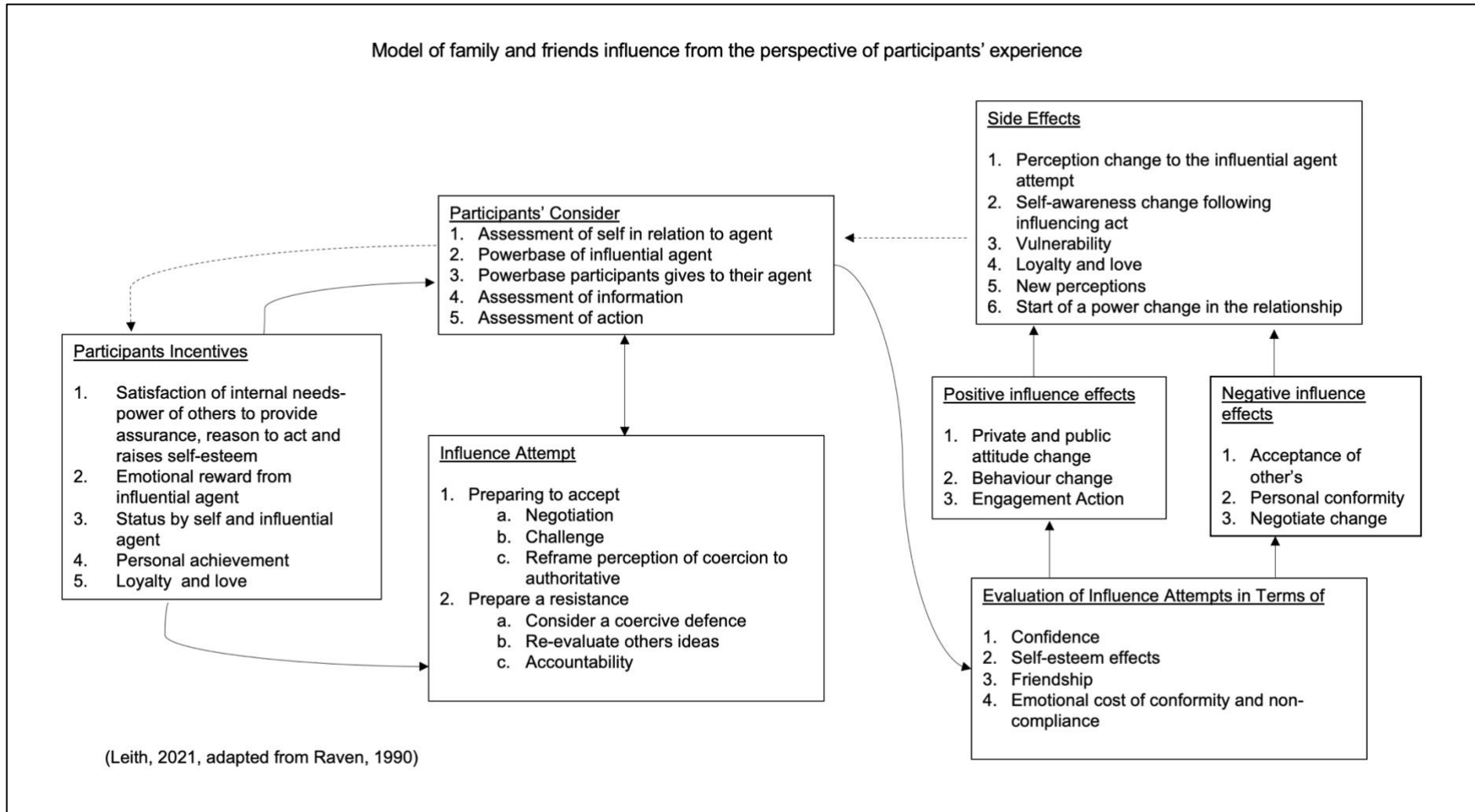


Figure 5-1: Model of family and friend's influence from the perspective of participants' experience (adapted by Leith, 2021 based on Raven, 1990)

The participants' family and friendship ties, combined with a range of influential tactics, affected participants' confidence (Figure 5.1) in their doctoral ability, although there were instances where a side effect of an influence attempt exposed participants' possible vulnerability (Violet, Nancy, and Zoe); however, the findings suggest that in these cases their compliance was based on love and loyalty for their parents, as they did not want to disappoint them. The evidence indicates that the majority of influential attempts were based on Turner's 'power through', as participants were encouraged to take control of the available resources to make a 'reasoned judgement' prior to their doctoral engagement.

The findings highlight the dynamic nature of social influence, as an agent can change their attitudes and withdraw their support. This experience left Susan vulnerable when her family withdrew support; however, Judith used her social powerbase and influence to negotiate a compromise that supported her doctoral engagement.

Although some participants encountered negative comments from others, they were not, I suggest, controlling influences, but a way of reinforcing their resolve even though their influence slightly delayed participants' doctoral engagement.

## 6 Professional colleague and group social influence

### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the participants' interviews that relate to their perceptions of professional colleagues and group social influence. The previous chapter examined the participants' perceptions of family and friends' social influence and the ways their relationship affected their actions. I present this chapter in a different format, as professional social influence had multifaceted phases and its structure on the three sub-research questions:

- *To what extent are professionals exposed to social influence prior to their engagement with doctoral study?*
- *How do professionals perceive their social actors and what ways do they influence doctoral study actions?*
- *In what way does professional doctoral students' perceptions of social influence affect and aspirations, if at all?*

The findings are presented as a set of sub-units (discussed in Chapters 4 and 5) to explore the unique aspects of professional social influence.

Section 6.2 highlights the participants' perceptions of professional groups influence; section 6.3 explores the social influence of status and the impact this had on some professionals' perceptions; section 6.4 highlights the social influence of observing professional colleagues' actions; section 6.5 presents the findings on professional colleagues' advocacy; and section 6.6 explores the participants' PD aspirations and the areas they want to influence.

All eleven participants reported their perceptions and experiences of socially influence by professional colleagues and their working environment which contributed to their PD engagement, their doctoral status goals, and professional practice aspirations.

Working with professional colleagues or a group involves establishing a set of relationships due to shared interests, e.g. when participating as a group team member, which benefits both the group and individual (Turner, 2004; Katz et al., 2004). A distinct set of ties according to Katz et al. (2004) facilitates the flow of knowledge and expertise within a group, and affects people's attitudes and social interactions, as they share more than one type of tie:

these included communication ties (such as who talks to whom, or who gives information or advice to whom), formal ties (such as who reports to whom), affective ties (such as who likes whom, or who trusts whom), material or workflow ties (such as who gives money or other resources to whom), proximity ties (who is spatially or electronically close to whom), and cognitive ties (such as who knows who knows whom) (Katz et al., 2004: 308).

The participants' professional settings were based in different university departments, primary and secondary schools; therefore, their professional ties and the nature of professional group and colleagues' social influence varied.

The key themes that emerged from the corpus of data were:

- Professional groups had a significant influence on participants' actions;
- Observing colleagues' actions in the workplace contributed to the HE participants' doctoral engagement;

- The HE participants had a yearning for doctoral status, while all participants wanted an authoritative expert voice;
- Participants aspired to use their experiences and PD knowledge to contribute to professional practice by becoming influential actors.

## 6.2 The influence of professional groups

This sub-unit explores the social influence of powerful groups and the ways insider group members used their social power and influential tactics ‘through’ (Figure 2.1) the participants to inspire or direct their actions, as ‘opposed to having control over’ their actions (Turner 2005).

A social group Hogg et al, argues is a collection of people who may share similar characteristics and share a collective sense consequently:

people who have the same identity – they identify themselves in the same way and have the same definitions of who they are, what attributes they have, and how they relate to and differ from specific out-groups (Hogg et al., 2004: 251).

Reicher et al. (2012) argue how ‘groups are a source of social power with the potential to shape the world and produce social change’ (p. 365). Association with a group may drive a person to seek inner-group membership because they want the same advantages or status that only group insiders possess (Turner, 1991, 2005; Cialdini and Goldsmith, 2007; White et al., 2009). The potential exists for professional group members to influence participants as they share a common identity and understand the professional norms and values of the workplace. Often a person’s association with a distinct group may change because group membership evolves and affects the influential shape and power of the

group. Carol, an established HE professional, reported how her professional group and colleagues' influences changed throughout her career.

*“I think your colleagues around you influence you. They seem to know what you want to do. They help you develop a kind of goal set because they are experienced and knowledgeable. It’s quite a different influence from the group I was with in the early part of my career. I have such a high regard for so many people around me. I have trusted colleagues that have influenced me, which has come as quite a surprise. I guess looking back, they have been an enormous influence in so many different ways.” (Carol)*

Carol acknowledged how colleagues' expertise helped to establish her professional career and influence her professional goals, although she did not specify her goals during the interview. Turner (2005) argues that a person's goals may align with their group's identity. Reflecting on her professional influences during the interview, Carol expressed surprise at the level of influence a group of colleagues had on her aspirations and professional practice (section 6.6.4) and was able to identify different phases of influence that occurred throughout her career, which she had been previously unaware of.

Professional colleagues' influence and authoritative leadership will support a person during the early part of their career. Carol noted that this relationship changed as she became a proficient practitioner and established her career identity. She reported that she trusted her colleagues because *“they know me so well”* and their experience and knowledge influenced her professional goals.



### 6.3 Influence of Status

An early analysis of findings identified professional status as an important factor. The development of status hierarchies, according to Bingham et al. (2014: 73), is a social construct that relies on ‘inter-subjectivity’. Social status is a concept based on people's understanding and acceptance of a person's, group's, or organisation's position within a social system. People make judgements about a person's status based on their attributes, group hierarchy or organisational position (Turner, 1991, 2005; Stahelski and Paynton, 1995; Bingham et al., 2014). These social systems, according to Scott (2013), are the result of organisational structures and sub-groups that form within the organisation. Because people value these formal structures, they attach status to authoritative positions because they consider the holder has either power, expertise, or an advantage they do not have.

A person's status can be a significant predictor during group communications, as the value of their message may affect others' behaviour (Stahelski and Paynton, 1995: 554). An easily recognisable symbol of authority and expertise, according to Cialdini (2007), is ‘Dr title status’ because it symbolises years of hard work and achievement. In addition, he argues that in an education setting it is the most difficult title and status to achieve. Nevertheless Cialdini (2007: 222) suggest that people tend to be ‘more influenced by the title than the nature of the person claiming it. The findings indicate that some participants were influenced by colleagues’ Dr title status and their positions of authority (discussed in section 6.3.1) that influenced their actions.

This sub-unit explores the stories of four HE participants’ perceptions of their experiences (Lesley, John, Judith and Susan) and how their social actorss affected their doctoral programme decisions and actions.

### *Referent Group*

The data reveals that participants considered their colleagues to be referent group members. In this setting, a referent group (outlined in Chapter 2, Table 2.4) would be the participants' doctoral colleagues who maintain the standards and values of the academy. A referent group's powerbase is based on the respect participants have for their colleagues' experience, superior knowledge, status, and enhanced positions (Schwarzwald et al., 2005; White et al., 2009). The evidence highlights how some participants were influenced by:

- 'significant pressure they thought came from the others expectations'
- what they thought 'significant others approved of'
- 'what others do' (White et al., 2009: p.136)

### *Personal pressure*

The findings suggest that there is a link between a referent group's powerbase and the participants' feeling pressured or vulnerable because they believe they have to live up to the expectations of the people they admire also discussed in section 6.4. This affected John as he compared his position to other members in his group who had already achieved their doctorates after observing behavioural changes that he attributed to their doctoral status. As he believed their doctoral knowledge gave them greater status, this caused him to consider his own potential loss of status and relative position within the group. The actions of his professional group influenced him to

consider engaging in a doctorate as he wanted to achieve parity with his more academically-qualified colleagues.

*“When you're in a group of colleagues who you see on a weekly basis as being comparable to you. Suddenly there is an interesting power dynamic shift. They have a great deal of knowledge, but the way colleagues behave is interesting. My colleagues who I considered to have parity become more powerful as they become lauded speakers. I look at them getting external validation and power by doing the MPhil, PhD route. That's my perception of what's going on in my working situation.” (John)*

Observing his colleagues' and other group members' actions caused a shift in John's attitude. He appeared to put pressure on himself after judging that his colleagues' power shift was the result of their doctoral status. His colleagues' actions significantly influenced his attitude, as he did not want to lose parity with others or lose his own group position.

Self-induced pressure may have affected John's attitude, but group pressure, Turner (2005) posits, is based on 'organised, collective action' that requires compliance. John's professional group influences may have originally been hidden due to his original prejudice against the PD, but he became goal-oriented as a result of wanting the same status as his peers.

Lesley, an established HE professional, reported that her personal goal-orientated pressure developed from what she believed were other people's professional expectations.

Commenting on the appraisal system and conversations with her line-manger and appraiser she was able to identify her doctoral goal, but the impact of their conversations influenced her actions.

*“I think it is the appraisal system. If you put it on paper, you've then got to do it. I didn't meet my personal target of applying for*

*PhD, but the fact is my appraisers had expectations. They encouraged me, so I applied for the EdD. They thought I could meet that target, and I thought other people in the faculty would expect me to do this too.” (Lesley)*

The formal ties (discussed in this chapter’s introduction) Lesley shared with her appraisers and the act of committing to a goal made her actions public. Lesley’s reported perceptions were that her appraisers controlled the flow of information and used their authoritative powerbase and influential skills to persuade her to consider the EdD. Sharing expectations of others is a persuasive attempt by her appraisers to get her to conform to university norms. As Lesley reports, she felt the pressure to engage in a doctorate because other people expected it and while her appraisers were encouraging and supported her personal goal, they guided her actions by recommending the EdD pathway.

### **6.3.1 Doctoral pathway influence – PhD or Professional Doctorate**

Some participants reported that their colleagues held biased attitudes and used social influence to get them to engage in a specific doctorate. Mellors-Bourne et al. (2016) identified that some institutions still consider the PhD as the ‘gold standard’ and the traditional pathway to an academic job, particularly in research-intensive universities (Brew et al., 2011).

#### *Influencing John’s attitude change*

John had reservations about his department colleagues’ advice because of group power dynamics, so he approached an external group of colleagues whom he valued and trusted to give unbiased advice. The status and positions of his external group of colleagues influenced John, who subsequently acted on their advice to join the EdD as opposed to the PhD.

*“The single biggest battle for me was my perception of the EdD versus the PhD and how I would be perceived in the academic world. The problem was, I felt there was a disparity in status. It was only when I got external validation from colleagues outside of my institution. One of them is a colleague who works in a highly prestigious UK university that was when I thought this is the right route.... It became a realistic option because it came from people in the field who I greatly admire... I trusted their judgement, it was that external validation I was after, that made the difference.” (John)*

John had concerns about the way he thought the external world would accept his doctoral status if he selected a professional practice route over the traditional research route. John reported that he held a biased attitude towards PD, and that it was his colleagues who persuaded him to change his attitude and perception of doctoral parity. Their persuasive interactions and John’s respect for their position provided the support and reasons to engage in the EdD.

Interestingly, Woods (2000) argues how people make public their judgement which can often cause a shift in personal judgements:

research on the impact of behaviour on attitudes has shown that people’s interpretations of their public statements and other attitude-relevant behaviours can instigate shifts in privately held attitudes. [As] social-influence paradigms respondents often give their judgements, first, publicly and then again privately, as judgement contexts can emerge from the effects of initial judgements (Woods, 2000: 544).

John’s attitude shifted after sharing his private views of the PD in public. Although selective about who he shared his views with, John made a reasoned judgement about who he should approach for advice. He valued external colleagues’ advice over his institution

and departmental co-workers' because he trusted and valued their judgement, and this external group could provide personal information and advice which influenced John's positive attitude shift and action.

The external professional group influenced John's judgement, as the power of their message changed his attitude and affected his future action. Nevertheless, John's perception of the PD being under-valued in the academic world supports Mellors-Bourne et al's (2016) findings. Similarly, Judith and Susan's stories suggest this may still be an issue in some institutions.

- *Judith's institutional influences*

Judith reported that doctoral parity had not been an issue for her until her professional colleagues tried to influence her opinion. As they had completed PhDs their influential attempt was based on prior knowledge and what appeared to be the professional culture of university. Therefore, I would argue that their influential attempts were based on advocacy as they considered holding a doctorate to be the norm in their professional setting. However, Moskowitz (1996) and Wood (2000) argue that an advocate may have a personal self-interest, which may be the case here, as Judith comments how "*I think they were only really interested in PhD supervision... and they wanted full-time supervision.*"

*"I think my university is traditional as they only have people who have a doctorate. No, only people who have a PhD, actually... I think traditionally the university only has academic teaching. They are proud of their academic teaching... They all proudly put their Dr or Professor titles in front of their names. It may be just me... but they all do it because it's driven by the people within, not the institution. My colleagues are quite elitist. They are actually proud of their PhDs from Oxford, and they show it... My*

*external factors would not be the PD, but to have the doctorate.”*  
(Judith)

The way professional colleagues used their status and authority emerged as a theme in this chapter. Judith commented that her colleagues used their authoritative position to influence her attitude. Based on her observations and conversations, she thought her colleagues held biased attitudes and favoured the traditional PhD culture of the university, which influenced their opinion of the PD.

The issue of whether Judith's colleagues were seeking her social conformity or cultural norms compliance (Gass and Seiter, 1999; Cialdini and Goldsmith, 2004; Cialdini, 2007; White, et al., 2009; Pratkanis, 2014) is open to interpretation. Judith's colleagues may have considered they had 'the direct right to prescribe [their] private beliefs' (Turner, 2005: 11) as they had achieved their doctorates and may have thought it was the best way for Judith to further her academic career.

Although these participants experienced other people's attempts to shape their attitudes, values, and actions, they had the power to accept or reject the beliefs or advice of others. John accepted his colleagues' advice while Judith struggled to accept her colleagues' views. Consequently, Judith's colleagues and the traditional culture of the institution influenced her to look for a PhD programme.

*“People told me I should have spent more time talking to other people about the doctorate and other routes because they thought I was too quick to choose the EdD. They said, there were online courses that I had not considered. I realise now how I should have spent more time looking to see if I could find a part-time PhD supervisor.”* (Judith)

The importance of status and achieving the Dr title, rather than the actual doctoral route, supported Judith's search criteria.

*“I want the status as I am in a competitive environment. My reasons and influences for engaging in the doctorate would not be for the PD, but the doctorate overall. To be someone in academia, you need to be Dr something, rather than just yourself, and have the academic rigour of a PhD.” (Judith)*

Influenced by her colleagues’ PhD argument, Judith notes that her workplace is a competitive environment as they suggested that a PhD provides the academic rigour necessary for career progression, which an EdD does not equal. In addition, her colleagues fail to identify the link between academic researchers and researching practitioners.

*“There is a big thing about being a doctor in the country I grew up in. You always put that you are a doctor first, even in a friendly conversation. In business, you would also introduce yourself as a doctor. In the work environment, you would always announce your Dr title when you meet someone. The doctoral title status is a big thing. It’s different in the UK as nobody really uses it, except in academia. The culture here in the UK is different, but that does not affect my influence to become a doctor, it’s down to my home background and work environment.” (Judith)*

Judith is influenced by her German culture and experiences as she identified how people view doctoral status as important in personal and professional settings, in contrast to UK culture where she observed doctoral status to be less important in personal settings. Judith thought that doctoral status was important for career progression as she comments that,

*“teaching in HE you need a doctorate to be influential as I have discovered colleagues who will not work with someone unless they have a doctorate, so I do need that level of recognition”.*



The key influences in the inner circle of Judith's sociogram were *'kudos, students' perception of her status, and career development'*. The third circle in Judith's sociogram identified how *'managerial pressure only [became an] external influence after starting [to] study for the doctorate [and] job promotion'*.

Judith's view of status and the use of the Doctor title is a form of power that Turner (2005) argues 'is never absolute but always socially constrained and conferred

Judith's reported perceptions of her colleagues acting as social actors and used their authority and expert knowledge to provide information on what she should have done, rather than useful advice or persuasive tactics of support. The EdD fitted her family commitments and provided the Doctor title although her colleagues' authoritative tactics had not taken these factors into consideration when they questioned the legitimacy of her EdD decision.

In this situation, Broome (2009: 83) argues that a person can 'judge they have reasons to do [something or] not to do it... [and this] becomes a reasoned judgement if [they] are rational' (see chapter 3). The choice to take part or not may provide the 'impulse pushing you towards the act' as it is the best course of action. Judith's professional environment, her colleagues' comments and her personal situation contributed to her reasons and emotional judgement to join the EdD.

Two years into her EdD studies, Judith's professional colleagues' influences are still affecting her decision, as she continues to question whether she should change her EdD pathway to a PhD.

*"Looking back with hindsight, those influences are working against me. I'm two years into it and I'm still not sure if I should*

*change my pathway. I only want the title of Dr out of it... I suppose I might be too far down that path now?" (Judith)*

- *Susan's judgement*

In contrast to Judith's experience, Susan had the foresight to overlook people's perceptions of "*stigma*". Susan reported that her aim was to enjoy the PD learning experience and develop her practitioner-researcher skills.

*"I know everybody talks about PhDs and there is a certain stigma attached to PDs but really at the end of the day I'm the one who counts. I'd rather do something that I know will make a difference to my practice and my teaching." (Susan)*

Susan's colleagues used their authoritative position to tempt her to engage in a PhD. "*My office colleagues suggested the PhD... I did actually set up a meeting [referring to PhD] and I talked about it with others.*" Her colleagues' actions were instrumental because she arranged a preliminary PhD meeting and spoke to knowledgeable colleagues; however, once Susan understood the implications of the PhD application, her colleagues' influence was short-lived, and after gathering all the information, Susan made a reasoned judgement not to engage in a PhD.

*"When they said I would have to write a research proposal, I didn't know what to write about at that stage. I decided not to go down that route, I thought the PhD route was too vague. It's not what I wanted to do at that time." (Susan)*

Initially influenced by her group of office colleagues, she considered the value of becoming 'a professional researcher [or a] researching professional' (Bourner, 2001) by rationalising the situation. Broome (2000) argues how sometimes a person's judgement to do something, may appear to be based on a false or true reason:

when you judge that you have a reason to do something, that is because you do have one. In practice, sometimes you judge wrongly: you have a reason-judgement when you have no reason. A false reason-judgement can explain an action just as well as a true one can. For almost any potential action, you will have reasons to do it and reasons not to do it. Probably you judge whether you have reasons to do it and reasons not to do it (Broome, 2009: 82).

Susan reported that she did not want to commit to a pathway she might later regret and gathering information from other colleagues helped her to make a reasoned judgement in favour of the PD despite her office colleagues' influence attempts.

*“My colleagues thought the EdD was not as highly thought of as the PhD, and how I should do a research-based doctorate if I wanted a career as an academic. They tried to dissuade me from doing the EdD, were quite surprised when I came back from my first residential weekend. They said, ‘it was good that I was doing it’, but I should have taken more time to consider my options.”*  
(Susan)

Susan's perception of her colleagues influence attempts may be based on their attitude or experiences. They may have thought the PhD was in Susan's best interest because it would provide academic career opportunities and appeared to hold biased attitudes that undervalued the EdD. However, their views may have been based on their personal PhD experience and enjoyment rather than the cultural norms of their institution.

These stories are important as they support Mellors-Bourne et al's (2016) findings that some HE staff members continue to question the parity of PD and PhD. The fact that this still appears to be an issue four years after their original report was published has ramifications for PD recruitment.

## 6.4 Observational Influence

The data in this section suggest that observing powerful group members' actions can activate participants' desire to become group members. Participants in the HE sector are exposed to the symbolic power and status of doctoral colleagues' actions and a participant's interactions or observations of powerful group members may influence their desire to seek group membership. Turner (1991) argues that people will often consider a group's importance before they consider membership. A further consideration for group outsiders is their willingness to conform to group standards and norms (Turner, 1991; Lukes, 2004; Nye, 2004; Cialdini and Goldsmith, 2007).

Inner-group members' influential actions make membership attractive to outsiders. They use their powerbase and influential skills to change outsider's attitudes and behaviour (Nye, 2004; Lukes, 2005; Turner, 2005). A study by Schwarzwald et al. (2005), based on French and Raven (1959), identified the ways inner-group social actors used their social powerbase; e.g., high-status group members were more likely to use harsh 'interpersonal and personal rewards... coercion, the legitimacy of their position, equity, and reciprocity tactics' (p. 645). Throughout this study I refer to Lukes' and Turner's definitions of hard power, although Schwarzwald et al. also use this term. In contrast, however, they suggest that low-status group members are more likely to use soft power and weak tactics based on 'friendliness... expertise, referent, information, and legitimacy' (Schwarzwald et al., 2005: 645). Turner's (2005) 'three process theory' argues that people may use persuasion, authority, or coercive skills to influence action in others. The nature of the influence will depend on the group's identity and a social agent's relationship with the person or people being influenced, while group members' influential strategies may depend on their status or group position. The recipients of the influence may consider the attempt to be

authoritative, persuasive, or coercive; however, their perception may be based on their group position, attitude, or circumstance at the time.

This section is a composite of five participants, Susan, Nancy, and Carol John, Lesley who are HE tutors in the same faculty. John, and Lesley are mid-career professionals while Carol and Susan are late-stage career professionals. The data highlighted how the participants' observations affected their attitudes and actions to engage in a doctorate.

Several studies regarding normative social influence (Deutsch and Gerald, 1955; Turner, 1991; and Goldstein and Cialdini, 2004) found that witnessing the actions of other people had a powerful effect on behaviour. HE participants had the advantages of observing colleagues' actions, e.g., doctoral colleagues' enjoyment and struggles and the ways in which other colleagues acknowledged their success and status.

- *Competitive influence leading to vulnerability*

John appeared to be frustrated by his lack of action to engage in a doctorate. Observing his colleagues' doctoral activities and witnessing their study experiences and achievements, despite being persuasive, was not his only driver. The evidence indicates that John's competitive nature influenced his actions, but he felt vulnerable being the only person without a doctorate.

*"I was getting itchy, the fact that I saw other colleagues going down that doctoral route and getting their doctorate... and enjoying it. They did look a bit fraught and frazzled, but they were still enjoying it. I kept thinking they're going to get their doctorates before me... I should do that. I needed to get on with it and stop wasting time. I suppose truthfully, a tiny part of me is looking forward to going to the bank and changing my bank card from Mr to Dr." (John)*

Observing colleagues on their doctoral journey became John's social proof, as their enjoyment and doctoral success became part of his social norm. His observations helped to establish his doctoral expectations, but these were underpinned by a sense of vulnerability as he felt a lack of action would result in a loss of power and position in the organisation. The actions of John's colleagues changed his attitude and values by reinforcing his reasons to take action.

Lesley also experienced vulnerability as she thought she would be overshadowed by colleagues who had doctorates.

*"I know that working in an area where credentials and letters after your name are important. I see other people doing their doctorate in the faculty. I don't want to be left behind or to be overlooked. It's definitely influential as I fear being left behind by my peers as you don't get any recognition and I know I won't get any credentials or awards or letters after my name for doing a good managerial job." (Lesley)*

According to Pratkanis (2014: 39), people have a tendency to follow and imitate social models that are 'high in prestige, power and status'. This provided the social proof that John and Lesley needed, however, it may also have resulted in additional social pressure because other colleagues were gaining academic status within their professional fields. The European Union Associations (2016), European HE Area (2003), and Quality Assurance Agency (2015) note that doctoral holders are held in 'high esteem in society because they have demonstrated greater learning and contributed to new knowledge' (Chapter 2).

- *Academic pressure*

The data highlights how the status of colleagues contributed to academic pressure, as Carol, Lesley and John were concerned about being overshadowed by their peers. Carol reported how her colleagues' status and power influenced her actions.

*"I wanted to have the same standing as my other colleagues... they were getting promotion and with it more power... that factor influenced my decision to join the doctoral programme."  
(Carol)*

John was concerned about what others thought about his professional status and position.

*"The pressure, it's never greater than when you're stood against colleagues doing a paper. When they say Dr so-and-so and Dr so-and-so and then Mr so-and-so! It's like okay, that kind of grates a bit, no, quite a bit! I just think people take you more seriously when you have a doctorate."  
(John)*

Lesley's concerns were based on job security, and the academic pressure of her peer group. As she suggests "it's about keeping up with others, it's about job security. Nobody is going to push you into doing a doctorate, but people influence you by making you feel worthy." Lesley considered the consequences of not following her colleagues' social model, which induced academic pressure because she thought her colleagues expected her to complete a doctorate. Her influences were based on her perception of colleagues' professional expectations and support.

John and Lesley questioned the possibility of being discounted by colleagues or losing their organisational status. The decision to act became important as they wanted to mirror their colleagues' experiences.

The participants reported that they wanted to replicate other colleagues' professional experiences, this act of mirroring is a form of social influence which results in attitude and behaviour changes, an effect Berger (2016: 28) described as 'a heuristic that simplifies decision making [because observing] others engaging in a process, or achieving it, [the observer considers] it must be worthwhile'. John, Carol and Lesley were exposed to the academic values and standards of the university by observing other colleagues, and the action of engaging in a doctorate to achieve status and parity with others became an important influential factor that contributed to their doctoral action.

Susan described how her observations influenced her doctoral decision and explained that she felt her relationship with her office colleagues changed following their doctoral achievements. Susan valued being part of the group, but after they achieved their doctorates, she considered herself to be a group outsider. The act of making their Dr title public to the world was persuasive, as she wanted the same title and public recognition.

*"I shared this office with three colleagues, one doctor and three of us were not doctors. The name boards outside the door made that quite clear. Then over a couple of years there were three doctors' names on the door, and the one person in that office who wasn't a doctor was me. That was something that really influenced me. As they had all achieved their doctorate, I began to feel the outsider. I think that definitely influenced my decision. I thought I should at least try to get myself up to the same standard as them." (Susan)*

The findings suggest that participants appear to want the same opportunities as colleagues, because they valued and reasoned that it was worthwhile. This aligns with Bandura's (2001) and Berger's (2016) research where people were identified as having ability to 'pursue or do as a result of what others do around us' (Berger, 2016: 25). Although participants considered themselves to be team members, they were aware of their position



as doctoral group outsiders or associates because they had not undertaken the demanding rigours of a doctorate. This resulted in some participants feeling academic pressure while others felt competitive, as they wanted the same kudos, professional power, and promotional advantages as their doctoral colleagues. Susan's social influence came from the Dr titles displayed on their shared office door; as she was the only person in the office without a doctorate, which affected her selfhood and induced academic pressure.

- *Supportive Colleagues*

Nancy reported how informal staff room conversations influenced her doctoral engagement. Being included in their conversations raised her aspiration to engage in a doctorate, as her colleagues influenced her attitude. Their behaviour provided a referent and expert social proof model (Table 2-4) for Nancy, as she wanted to develop her research skills and gain parity with other group members.

*“I had some very supportive colleagues who influenced my decision to become a doctoral student. It started with those informal conversations in the academic lounge over lunch or tea. Someone would start-up a conversation about their experience and research... which would just snowball, intrigued me. It really made me aware of how supportive the group of colleagues were to everybody doing their doctorate. This made me think I wanted to be part of that group... I wanted to join the group rather than being an outsider sitting on my own.” (Nancy)*

Nancy's story indicates how her perceptions of colleagues became her referent and expert group models when she witnessed their achievements and their doctoral expertise. Observing and engaging with them was a legitimate nudge for her to seek group membership.

A favourable environment provides a source of credibility and social proof for others (Bandura, 1989; Cialdini, 2007; Pratkanis, 2014). The professional environment and witnessing others' doctoral experiences and rewards became the participants' social proof, as their awareness of status, in-group relationships, and advantages became important. Their social proof became a significant social influence as the bandwagon effect suggest they were more likely to engage in a doctorate because other people were doing so. Participants had a choice: they could do nothing, and risk becoming group outsiders, with the potential loss of their professional position, or they could take action and engage in a doctorate which would gain them membership of that academic group.

## **6.5 Professional colleagues' persuasive advocacy**

Two participants, Zoe and Judith, reported that social interactions with other professionals influenced their doctoral engagement. The following sub-unit explores participants' persuasive experiences.

- *Influential tutor - Zoe's experience*

The previous chapter explored facets of Zoe's perceptions of parental social influence. Besides her parents' influence, Zoe cited one professional whose persistent persuasive attempts affected her decision to engage in a doctorate and whose idea that she should complete a doctorate became an entwined social influence.

Reflecting on her experience (discussed in Chapter 5), Zoe recalled how "*it was my parents and MA tutor. Think about it, it was a lot of a pressure as he told me my education pathway wasn't complete.*" Due to her parents' influence, Zoe was already contemplating her next educational step and her tutor's recommendation contributed to her anxiety. Having become a significant influential and trusted person during her studies, she

felt apprehensive but open to the idea of completing a doctorate when *“he put the same idea into my head.”* Feeling pressurised by the situation, she felt that her tutor reinforced the doctorate issue. For Zoe, it was like history repeating itself, as her parents had already planted the idea of completing a doctorate.

This situation, Zoe recalls,

*“became a nagging influence, looking back at that situation, that was the actual influential part. It’s that professional thing, they made me aware of.”*

Her tutor used the authority of his professional status to suggest a course of action that echoed her parents’ influential messages, using ‘soft social power’ (Chapter 2) that he ‘exerted through her’ to cause her to action doctoral study. People’s attitudes are often influenced by favourable messages and authoritative people often pick up on social cues and use information to confirm an idea or action. Zoe’s tutor was able to use subtle snapshots from previous conversations to frame his appeal. Wood (2000) suggest that framing persuasive messages in an unexpected manner may increase a person’s level of confidence.

Zoe’s relationship with her tutor provided the opportunity for him to drip feed persuasive affirming messages. Recalling her experience, she reported,

*“it was at my graduation when he first said, "When are you going to do a doctorate?" I said, "thanks!" I have an open house every year and he’s on my invite list... I would email and invite him. He would reply, sorry can't make it, but when are you going to do a doctorate? It came up in every blooming email.” (Zoe)*

Zoe’s perceptions of these exchanges shape her attitude as his positive messages used persuasive tools of ‘liking, scarcity, social proof and reciprocity’ to influence her action

(Cialdini, 2007). The constant drip effect raised her awareness, as she realised she wanted to conform to expectations.

*“What tipped it for me was he kept saying it, my parents kept saying it. Plus, he’d been on my case just like my parents with his little drip, drip, drip, saying “you are going to end up doing a doctorate.” I kept thinking that’s not me. I just couldn’t get my head round it, so I went back to him. He posed questions that made me think he made sense. In a way his influence was instrumental.” (Zoe)*

Zoe’s tutor shows the power of persuasive advocacy (Haycock and Matthews, 2016) as his initial influential attempt established the idea of engaging in a doctorate. According to Cialdini (2016:4) the best influencers have the critical insight to set the scene for ‘optimal receptibility’, hence her tutor’s slow drip persuasive approach affected her willingness to action his doctoral recommendation.

A survey by Guerin et al. in 2015, questioned why PhD students undertook a doctorate. Friends and family were the most important factor, while a lecturer’s influence was third. Although the survey did not focus on social influence, or professional doctoral students, they found that ‘advice and encouragement from the people who surround students plays an important role in study choices’ (Guerin et al., 2015: 98).

- *Influential programme director - Judith’s experience*

Judith recognised how her interactions with the EdD programme director influenced her opinion of the EdD programme which then actioned her engagement.

*“After much online searching for a PhD route and sending a lot of emails, I started looking at other routes. I found a part-time EdD option near me, so I made contact to see if it was what I wanted to do. I emailed the programme director who answered all of my questions straight away. That was a selling point for me, so I went to meet the programme director. She was very good and explained the entire structure of the EdD, especially how the part-time model worked. That was very helpful... she said, ‘there’s lots of flexibility in the EdD That seemed to fit with what I was looking for, as I had to consider my family. What finally influenced my decision was her persuasive knowledge, plus I could start straight away... That contact was very influential as I was tired of looking... she understood my situation and was tremendously supportive.” (Judith)*

This extract from Judith's interview reveals how her interactions with the programme director were influential. The clarity of information and programme director's speedy response influenced Judith to arrange a face-to-face meeting, which was important as it provided the opportunity to establish the programme director's expertise and build a relationship. It also allowed the programme director to use her influential skills to get to know Judith and her circumstances. Acting as a social agent, the programme director established background information that Raven (2008) argues 'build a basis for subsequent action'.

The powerful way information is presented can influence a person's actions and the process of answering Judith's questions enabled the programme director to emphasise and adapt the information to support and influence Judith. The programme director used her influential skills to support Judith's judgement about the suitability of the EdD, and her persuasive information sharing established her expertise and provided the 'hook' Judith needed to activate her EdD engagement (Broome, 2009).

Bandura argues how people can shape their views and actions from their social world, relationships and the environment:

construct outcome expectations from observed conditional relations between environmental events in the world around them, and the outcomes given, [and] actions produced. The ability to bring anticipated outcomes to bear on current activities promotes foresight behaviour. It enables people to transcend the dictates of their immediate environment and to shape and regulate the present to fit a desired future (Bandura, 2001: 7).

Judith overcame her colleagues' biased attitudes towards the PD and made a reasoned judgement in selecting the EdD, i.e. her goal of achieving the doctorate title and her family commitments were the influential factors that moved her towards action.

The next section explores the study participants' PD expectations. Although motivation and influence are often used interchangeably in conversation, as discussed in Chapter 2, there are differences. Motivation is based on self-interest whilst social influence moves a person towards action.

## **6.6 Doctoral expectations**

The interview data revealed that participants had pre-set expectations about what they wanted from the PD, including status as professional experts, and the ability to contribute to society and professional practice.

The Dr title was an important symbol of status for participants. Nevertheless, their expectation of status differed. Alice and Susan viewed status in terms of their professional value, practice legitimacy, and validation of their knowledge as experts.

*“I think it's about having a higher level of professional credibility, to be thought of as knowledgeable... that's very important in our world. It's very influential, isn't it?” (Susan)*

*“I suppose the doctorate will provide that step to becoming a professional expert. That's quite exciting, as I have a better understanding about the profession, and the possibility of becoming that influential expert. I want to be good at my job... I want to help others to be good teachers.” (Alice)*

In contrast, Judith, Violet, John and Megan expected the world to acknowledge their doctoral status as doctoral community members.

*“My influences are getting the Dr title, that is my biggest influence. I want to be someone in academia because you need to have that doctorate status.” (Judith)*

*“It was really all about calling myself Dr... those two letters mean a lot to be a doctor at a university. That's really important. It counts.” (Violet)*

*“It's about me getting the qualification I need, and I want... just I think people take you more seriously when you have a doctorate.” (John)*

*“Being a doctor has a professional standing. People are aware of what that means in terms of your career and expertise.” (Megan)*

Although most participants considered status important, they also expected to become influential because of their doctoral journey. This evidence corresponds with Kiley's (2017) research on PhD students from professional backgrounds where:

candidates seeking entry into a PhD programme feel they have something important to say based on professional experience, and that with the credibility of a PhD qualification they might be more likely to be taken seriously (Kiley, 2017: 553).

While this study's focus is on professional doctoral students' social influence prior to their doctoral engagement, findings from the interview and sociograms highlighted participants' doctoral aspirations and the areas they would like to influence.

Alice, an early career stage professional stated that,

*"I suppose I am quite an idealist when it comes to education. I have a very romantic view of education. My external influence is to be really good at my job. I would like to teach other people to be really good teachers. It's a very personal thing. I don't care about money and it's not about promotion, I feel being a teacher is one of those jobs that makes me very happy."* (Alice)

Alice identified a range of reasons why she decided to engage in a doctorate and acknowledged her love of teaching and contentment with her job as an early career stage teacher (section 6.7). Alice appeared uninterested in promotion but wanted to become a more proficient practitioner; she reported that she would like to support the professional development of others. The findings suggest she did have doctoral aspirations but, for her, the timing had to be right.

In contrast, Judith, a mid-career professional reported that,

*"Engaging in a doctorate is a bit like a photo album, it gives me a document where I can say I produced something. It's important that students recognise me as somebody from academia... it's not the money, it's the status that's important to me. Money comes with status, as I will become a lecturer rather than a teaching*



*fellow. Growing up in a different country, where being a doctor is a big thing... as you would always say you are a doctor first, even in a casual conversation at a party. In business, you would always introduce yourself as a doctor. A Dr title is big status, more than in the UK. In the UK, nobody really uses it, except in academia... I think it's my home culture, and business background affect my influence to become a doctor, as UK culture is quite different." (Judith)*

Judith appears to be socially influenced by the prospects of career promotion and status, yet a major influence is her cultural and employment background. The cultural differences between the countries, where doctoral status recognition would come from wider society in Germany compared to the UK, concerned Judith. However, because of doctoral status scarcity, society rewards people with expert knowledge and authority (Cialdini, 2007; and Barnacle and Dall'Alba, 2010). Nevertheless, Judith's observations presumed her doctor status would be appreciated in wider UK society.

Although Judith and Alice's reasons to engage in a PD were different, i.e. for Alice it was happiness and the opportunity to becoming a supportive expert, whilst Judith's cultural background was influential because in German society doctoral status was highly valued, both could identify their doctoral expectation and they areas they wanted to influence.

## **6.7 Expectations of influential agency**

I cannot presume to know the future impact of participants' PD study as they are at different stage, identified in Chapter 4, Table 4.3. This section addresses the question '*In what ways does social influence affect professional doctoral students' aspirations, if at*

all?’ Table 6-2 provides a brief overview of participants’ PD expectations and the educational areas they wish to influence.

Overview of PD expectations and areas they wish to influence		
Personal	Professional Influence	Society
Professional status Expert Become a famous academic writer.	Improve teacher training in home country Develop student’s professional practice Support HE students writing	Develop teachers’ practice Support education career development Research and publication
Push social norm boundaries	Build resilience and female empowerment Push the boundaries	Contribute to feminist agenda
Challenge children’s perception of academic failure	Widening Participation advocate Challenge perceptions of academic failure	Improve health outcomes
Influence education policy	Challenge Ofsted inspections	Contribute to social justice Eliminate teachers’ anxiety and prevent suicide

Table 6-1: Overview of expectations of the Professional Doctorate and the areas they wish to influence

The literature suggests that when participants achieve their doctorate, they will be part of an ‘in-group minority’ with public and private influence, although the level of their social influence will depend on the nature of their relationships with others (Turner, 1991).

The following sub-unit explores four HE-based participants’ professional practice expectations. Costley and Lester (2011) and Boud et al. (2020) argue that professional students are ‘part of a community of practice in terms of their personal and professional development’. The findings identified a distinct set of practices the participants wanted to socially influence.

### **6.7.1 Development of professional practice**

Two themes emerged from participants’ doctoral expectations: how they wanted to develop their research knowledge, and ways in which they could contribute to professional development in terms of career advancement and academic practice.

The evidence suggest that participants expected to develop doctoral knowledge and contribute to learning by using their influence to develop practice. This is to be expected as it is arguably a focus of a PD. However, only four out of eleven participants expressed a desire to engage in research activities.

*“I want the whole experience of the doctorate to develop a deeper knowledge and understanding... find your voice through that process... that's quite a big challenge... I want to contribute to research, to work and write with people who have developed a really strong knowledge base who are much further forward than me.” (Carol)*

*“I would love to make a difference in terms of research. At this stage, it's about me developing my understanding so I can make a difference in some way. I like pushing boundaries. I really want to be influential by pushing the boundaries of what I am doing. I'd like to write about the things I can definitely influence... to articulate at a level that changes people and to challenge people's conventional ways of thinking.” (Violet)*

*“It's about having that confidence when you know something really well. To know one aspect in fine detail and understand the issues so well. God, it would be absolutely fantastic to be that knowledgeable, but it's a challenge. It's not an altruistic thing, but to know that you're a knowledgeable and influential person.” (Megan)*

Locating their expectations in terms of knowledge contribution, participants also expected to use their expertise to make a difference to learning and improve outcomes for others. The evidence identified two participants whose expectations were concerned with status. Judith reported that her first publication was important as she felt it would enhance her academic standing with students. Judith wanted to develop her students' writing as her contribution and expects recognition and appreciation from her students.

*“It's not just the doctorate that's important to me, it's the first publication. I think it's important to tell my students what I have published. At the moment, I hope to influence myself, not when I have achieved the doctorate. I hope to continue my learnings about writing from the doctorate, to develop my students' writing. I hope my students appreciate it.” (Judith)*

John's uncertainty about his knowledge contribution may be attributed to him being in the early stage in his doctorate. His contribution appears person-centred as he was concerned about other people's perceptions and was influenced by his experience of working with knowledgeable others who had gained expert status recognition. He appears to 'want what

they have' (Turner, 2005), as he states, "*I want people's perception of me to be as someone with authority in the academic field.*" For John, it was important that "*having the doctorate will give me influence, it will also give me the opportunity to get another post in another institution.*"

I have classified John as an outlier, as the majority of participants (ten of the eleven) were able to articulate how they want to contribute to knowledge and professional practice while John wanted status and a position of authority that would provide job opportunities.

### **6.7.2 Finding one's place**

This section considers the personal and professional development goals of the HE-based participants.

*"I'm hoping more opportunities will come my way. I hope colleagues, those who are at really interesting career stages, will allow me to become involved in E A L pedagogy and contribute to research writing by possibly working with different groups of people. I hope I can be influential and eventually write things like the Stephen Balls of this world. That's something to aspire to... I'm hoping to influence teachers and teacher training, it's about raising students' aspirations, supporting them as they embark on their careers." (Carol)*

Carol identified her goals as wanting to develop the trajectory of her career and improving her opportunities. She has identified a high-profile academic role model whom she would like to emulate, signifying a desired shift in role from a doctoral student spectator to a social actor who has influential evidence-based practice. Of concern is her comment regarding her colleagues allowing her to become part of the group. I suggest, at this stage, she considers herself a group outsider. As an established professional practitioner, she already has the confidence to influence teacher training programmes and teachers. As

Lee's argument suggests that a professional will gain confidence as they develop in their practice and knowledge:

as individuals work within practice, they continually build expertise based on experience and reflection in addition to the acquisition of professional knowledge and skill... an expert professional will have knowledge and confidence in practice, while reflecting on how that practice could be developed further: its strengths and challenges based on influencing factors. (Lee, 2009: 123).

Although personal and professional goals become closely entwined and difficult to untangle, the evidence suggest that participants' goals are to support students and influence the development of practice. Several participants reported how doctoral engagement influenced their personal and professional lives, as exemplified by the following quotes.

*"I would like to think I influence the student teachers I teach. It's about me being more confident in my teaching. If I can change my trajectory, then anyone can. I think I can make a difference by influencing people to keep proving themselves."*  
(Lesley)

*"I am not interested in publishing articles; I am not interested in presenting to other professionals... What's the point of doing the doctorate if I cannot be influential, as I want to be able to use my new knowledge to support my students' development by influencing their practice."* (Nancy)

*"I'm very keen to invest quite a lot of time and energy, practical energy, emotional energy, and money into doing what I do in Africa. I love teaching and seeing the development of health practitioners. I know I can play a part in health improvements,*

*plus I love doing it. The doctorate will tie up all those loose ends for me, plus I will get something out of it.” (Stella)*

### **6.7.3 Becoming influential advocate for change**

The following sub-unit explores the two school-based participants’ doctoral goals and their desire to challenge systems and change attitudes as persuasive advocates. Their stories exemplify how belonging to a ‘community of practice is an integral part of daily life’ (Wenger, 2008) because of familiarity, although, as previously identified, membership boundaries may exist within a group due to a person’s status, title, or position (Woods, 2000; Schwarzwald et al., 2005; Wenger, 2008).

The first story highlights the ways Alice’s professional teaching network influenced her to engage in the EdD and how their support helped her to consider her goal (section 6.5). Alice was able to compare her prior teaching experience in her home country to the expert support she believed she experienced in her English school, which contributed to her desire to become a persuasive advocate. The second story exemplifies Zoe’s experience of a system she believed induced people, at worst, into taking their own life. Zoe’s goal was to use her doctoral status as a persuasive media advocate to challenge policy.

- *Alice’ story*

*The extent of my social influence is to help other people become excellent teachers. The EdD will give me that first stepping-stone to becoming a professional expert. That’s what I want to use the doctorate for... It’s important that I use my research to teach people how to be good teachers. The EdD is all about the professional, and the possibility of becoming that expert who develops teachers’ careers. I consider it to be an enormous influence and definitely not a motivating factor or even a driver for me. What’s important is the doctorate... it will make me an influential expert... to help people develop their careers.*

*It's all because of my training in Ireland. I first realised my training was awful when I got my first proper teaching job in England... I was quite lucky in that when I first started teaching over here [referring to England] I started teaching with brilliant people. They were fantastic; they taught me an awful lot about teaching in this country. That experience really hit home, it influenced me to think I should go back home and teach people how to be good teachers. It was that working group of people who influenced me to do the EdD, that was a really big thing because they made me realise just how bad my teacher training was.”*  
(Alice)

Alice's teaching social network influenced her EdD engagement as she was part of a community of practice. However, the greater social influence, I suggest, involved Alice's heightened consciousness of the teacher training programme in her country. The evidence appears to indicate her colleagues' expectations of her compliance to England's teaching standards, which influenced her practice and resulted in her questioning teacher training methods. This suggests that Alice's colleagues held 'position[s] of authority based on expertise', where they could use 'expert power' as a soft tactic (Cialdini and Goldsmith, 2004: 595). In addition, their 'authority derive[d] from their relative position in a hierarchy' which provided legitimate power because her professional organisation required compliance (Raven, et al., 1998; Koslowsky and Schwarzwald, 2001; Cialdini and Goldsmith 2004).

This raises the question of whether it was the cultural difference between the training programmes or her colleagues' social influence that caused her to question her professional practice. Indeed, Alice appears to change her attitude and teaching practice to comply with the social norms expected of her school organisation. The implications of cultural differences between teacher training programmes require further research as it is beyond this study.



Alice identified what she considered to be an issue as a result of her personal experience. Her expectation of the doctorate was to use her new knowledge to challenge teaching training in her home country. As a persuasive advocate with doctoral status and expertise (Cialdini, 2007; Haycock and Matthews, 2016) she would be in a position to influence the career development of others as a social actor, thus contributing to society and professional practice by using her authoritative and legitimate expert knowledge as a persuasive resource.

- *Zoe's Story*

*“People are important as an influence because they focus my mind. Two head teachers committed suicide because of the pressure of things like Ofsted. I don't want it to happen again. It's important because this isn't an isolated story. I think there is something wrong with a system that's putting people under that much stress, they take their own life. I was getting more and more angry with people leaving the profession and all the negative teaching press.*

*There is an injustice and I've got a strong sense of social justice, that's my influence. I have a strong social conscience that influences me because of my belief. In my background we have a saying, you neither are not free to complete the task neither are you able to desist. That says to me, even if you make a tiny little difference it's there... It's possibly naïve and really simplistic, but I would like to get on the radio. I listen to the Today programme... most days someone who has just done their doctorate will discuss their work on the programme... I want to influence the way politicians and Ofsted people think, as I know damn well, they listen to the programme.*

*I'd like to think my tiny little study would be influential, that I can actually influence others.*

*You know you are told you can actually make a difference when you join the doctorate. That's a good enough reason because you*

*never know where the influence will go. It's because of the ripple effect, it takes on huge proportions in life.*

*I believe passionately that if I could just take my study onto the Today programme and raise those important questions about Ofsted being so judgemental. Raising the differences between the English and Scottish system, I could make a difference. It's like those same little drips that influenced me... I'm hoping that I can use my status and expertise to drip influence elsewhere. I would like someone who had greater influence to hear about what I'm doing and to take an interest... There's nothing to say that won't happen, but it won't happen if I don't do the doctorate in the first place.*

*A powerful influence for me is knowing that I can influence whatever I do... it's important to envisage when and how you do it. I can't actually tell you how I think it will be influential because I don't know yet. All I know is that if you don't do it, you won't be in a position to influence anything. If there is a chance it will help, then you should go ahead and do it... My intention is to influence for social good, so as long as nothing negative comes out of it then I passionately believe you should do it.” (Zoe)*

Driven by her belief system, Zoe paraphrases Pirke Aboth, “*you are neither not free to complete the task, neither are you able to desist*” after observing what she considered an issue with the Ofsted system. Zoe feels obligated to try to make a difference, as the quotation tells her to focus on the effort she makes and not the outcome.

Identifying ways to use doctoral knowledge to frame questions and challenge attitudes and systems through the power of media, Zoe's goal is to use her research for persuasion by using media outlets for powerful advocacy. The concept of a powerful advocate, the literature suggest, may result in limited social influence because of bias or personal self-interest (Moskowitz 1996; Wood, 2000). Indeed, Zoe's story identifies a biased attitude towards the system and situation, but not the people in power she wants to influence.

Nevertheless, her social conscience and belief system allowed her to make a reasoned judgement to act as a persuasive advocate, not for personal gain or out of self-interest, but because she believed it was the right thing to do, as one person's expert voice can have a ripple effect that produces effects which spreads and produces further effects that makes a situation powerful.

Driven by their experiences and beliefs, participants have set their goals to become influential actors. Doctoral status will provide the power of expert credibility, and the use of soft power tactics could provide starting points to change attitudes and systems that support learning. They do, however, see opportunities to contribute to and support the professional matrix of education.

The findings suggest that some participants do seek influential advocacy to enrich the profession and contribute to practice. They want to use their status and new knowledge to move others towards action rather than self-seeking external rewards.

## **6.8 Summary**

The main finding of this chapter has shown the extent of profession colleagues' and group social influence. The evidence suggest that some participants considered their colleagues and professional groups as referent role models who provided social proof for doctoral engagement. The evidence indicates that ten participants did seek expert advice and information from their professional colleagues, which concurs with Cialdini's (2007) view that people seek experts to support and validate their proposed actions.

However, expert advice and information was perceived in different ways by participants. Seven participants reported how their professional colleagues and group members' inclusive actions encouraged their doctoral study actions, while two participants sought

expert advice from outsiders, because they did not value their institutional colleagues' opinion or thought they had hidden motives. Two participants reported how they were influenced to consider a PhD by colleagues, but later rejected their advice after considering their options.

Influential colleagues' strategies and actions raised the participants' awareness of doctoral study. Colleagues used their social powerbase through the participants, rather than over them, as they were able to gain control of resources, e.g, information, attitude and value changes, potential benefits, and rewards, etc, and action their PD engagement. Raven's (1990) model, discussed in Chapter 2, is a useful tool, as it provides a guide for mapping how professional influential attempts affect participants' attitudes, values, and behaviour. Figure 6-1 provides a model that illustrates the ways professional influence attempts affected the participants.

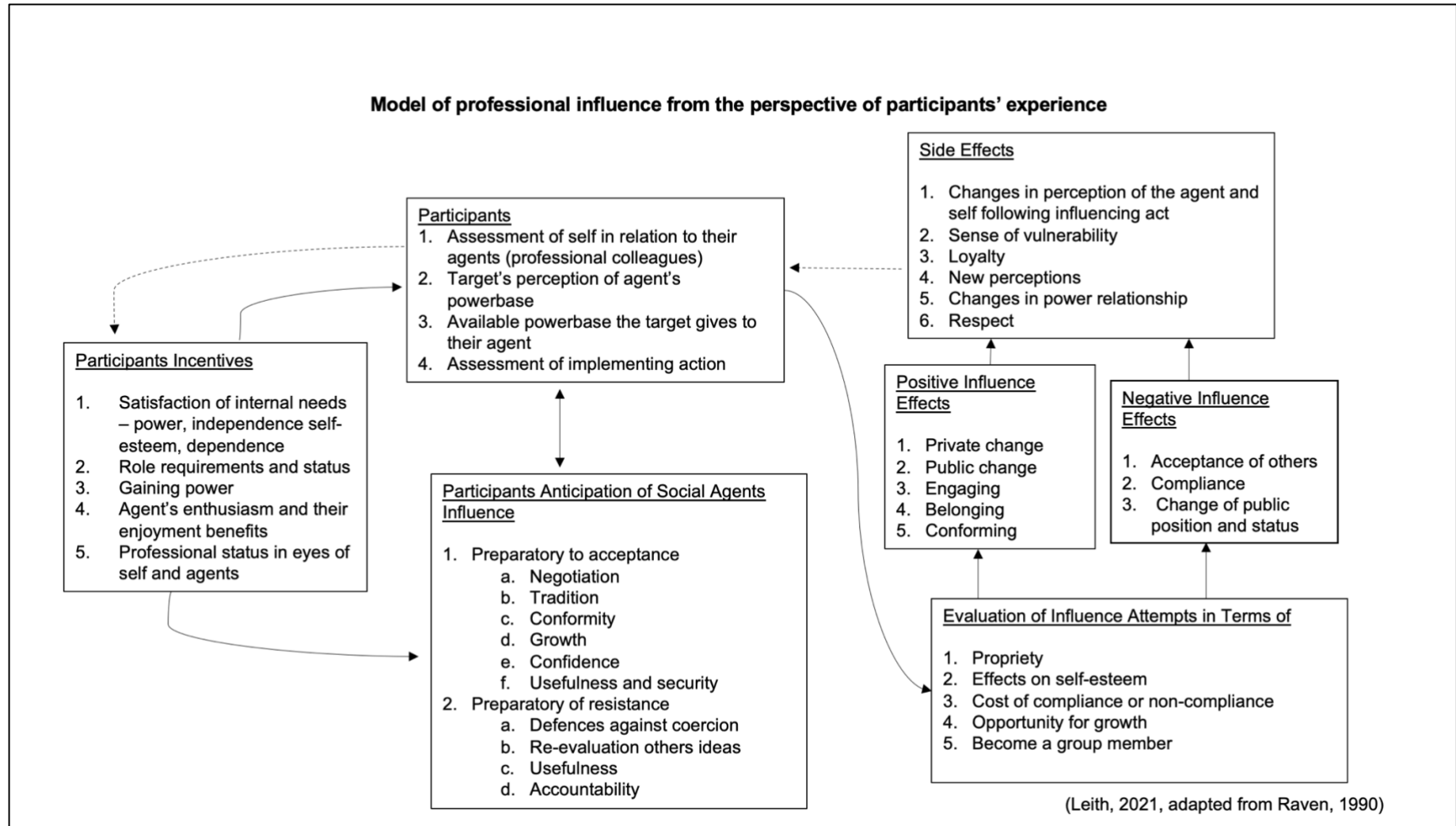


Figure 6-1: Model of professional influence from the participant's perspective and experience (adapted by Leith, 2021, based on Raven, 1990)

The findings show many similarities to family and friends' perceptions of social influence; however, there are some differences which is to be expected because of the different professional relationship. Comparing Figure 6.1 to Figure 5.1, group members were perceived to use authoritative and persuasive influence to encourage participants' doctoral engagement; however, this resulted in a sense of vulnerability for some participants as they felt an internal pressure because they thought others expected action.

The participants were influenced by their colleagues' or group members' expertise and authoritative power because of their doctoral status and position, which supports Cialdini's findings that people are influenced by status and position rather the person. This finding suggests that HE participants were looking for status and professional recognition, possibly due to the influences and expectations of their workplace or professional practice. However, school-based participants reported that their professional experiences were the drivers for their PD.

The evidence illustrates how professional group members and colleagues used influential tactics and knowledge to support participants' career trajectories as their actions signposted the way for participants. Observing professional colleagues' and group members' actions prompted a desire to want the same advantages and doctoral status as their co-workers because they did not want to drop behind or lose their hierarchical organisational position.

Although professional colleagues provided inspiration for doctoral study, it was the participants' professional experience that generated their doctoral study aspirations, as participants reported a desire and ambition to become influential experts and support others as a result of their doctoral learning journey and experience.

## **7 Discussion**

The discussion is framed around eleven professional participants' perceptions and experiences in response to the research question: *To what extent are professionals exposed to social influence prior to their engagement with doctoral study?* The theories chosen to guide the study were important as they made the participants' social influence perceptions and experiences more meaningful.

### **7.1 Social agents and the ways they influence doctoral engagement**

According to three-process theory, social influence develops from human relationships and interrelatedness and a social agent is someone who has the ability to affect people's attitudes or behaviour and moves them to act (Turner, 2005). Identifying participants' social agents is important because it was their actions that moved participants to consider the value of a doctorate, and the ways they used their influence was a key factor that supported their decisions to engaging in doctoral study. Based on Turner's concept, the study participants' social agents can be defined as an individual or group who used their relationship powerbase and influential strategies to signpost and/or create an opportunity for participants to engage in doctoral study. The power of their relationship, Katz et al. (2004) argue, is based on their ties; therefore, a social agent's power is dependent on their relationship with the participants.

The social agents have been divided into two categories: personal and professional. The personal group consisted of family members and friends, while the second category comprised participants' colleagues and professional groups. Turner's (2005) three process theory guided the analysis, as social agents use influential skills based on authority, persuasion and coercion as well as a range of resources to support their influential

attempts which were found to have a unidirectional effect on participants' attitudes and behaviour when applied over time. This unidirectional influence is illustrated in the way two participants thought their parents' influence was coercive, but later changed their opinion to describe it as persuasive influence after their attitude changed because they realised the value of engaging in a doctorate.

### *Family*

All participants in the study acknowledged perceptions of family member's influence, although levels of intensity varied. Drawing on perceptions of persuasive tactics, family members were able to make an emotional connection that instilled a sense of desire to please because of emotional ties, love and respect. This provided the opportunity for some family members to use soft power to signpost what they considered to be the next educational step for their relative. Family expectations encouraged professionals' actions, and the majority of participants recognised the emotional reward for family members, i.e. they anticipated their families would be proud of their doctoral success, even though they already had established successful careers. The findings suggest that in these instances a unidirectional social influence existed because both participants and their social agents were affected.

### *Powerful Parents*

A surprising finding was the level of perceived influence parents had on their adult child's actions. Parents were perceived to use authoritative power to introduce and provide reasons why their adult child should engage in a doctorate. This caused some participants emotional anxiety because of the pressure caused by high expectations. Howard et al. (2019) argue that authoritative parents' have high educational expectations (Chapter 2) that their adult child would complete a doctorate. Cialdini (2007) describes persuasive



tactics as sometimes being ‘multidirectional’ and this can be seen in the case of Zoe, Stella and Nancy, where actioning their parents’ request resulted from being influenced both by parental authority and their own respect and loyalty towards them.

*Coercion and persuasion – crossed messages*

Two professionals initially considered their parental influence coercive, but after reflecting they thought the influence was more persuasive in nature. These instances of influential messages crossing boundaries are recognised by Gass and Seitier (1990) and Turner (2005). Because the influential behaviour was supportive rather than controlling, the two participants attributed this to persuasion, as their parents’ intention was to inspire confidence in their doctoral ability, while encouraging action. The persistence of their parents’ requests allowed participants to re-evaluate the actionable possibility of engaging in a doctorate, as their conformity would earn parental respect.

*Challenge, vulnerability and resilience*

The majority of family members and friends were committed to supporting professionals on their doctoral journey, a finding that Lee (2009) argues is an important factor for doctoral students. Family members use their power and persuasive tactics to encourage their relative’s personal growth and strengthen their resilience by demonstrating pride in their educational achievements and doctoral engagement actions as Bandura (2001) notes that:

to make [a] way successfully through a complex world full of challenges and hazards, people have to make good judgments about their capabilities, anticipate the probable effects of different events and courses of action, size up sociostructurally opportunities and constraints, and regulate their behaviour accordingly (Bandura, 2001: 3).

Nevertheless, there were instances of challenge and influential hazards, e.g., attempts were made by family and friends to dissuade them from doctoral study. These perceptions of challenge were mainly reported by mid and late career stage participants. Negative comments by family and friends who questioned why they wanted a doctorate resulted in feelings of vulnerability, mapped in (Figure 5.1), as well as hesitation and delayed action. Carol and Stella reported (Chapter 5) that these challenges increased their determination, although Stella kept her doctoral engagement a secret.

Successfully navigating challenges and hazards requires a person to make ‘good judgments about their capabilities’ (Bandura, 2001); however, the withdrawal of family support became a barrier for Susan. Her thoughts and feeling of insecurity, isolation and guilt, and lack of doctoral connectiveness were influenced by her daughter suggesting that her health was compromised by issues relating to work-life balance and doctoral study (Chapter 5). These comments may have been perceived as a coercive attempt (Turner, 2005) that influenced Susan to withdraw from the doctorate after three years of study, i.e. the comments provided the ‘reason’ for her to make ‘reasoned judgement’ (Broome, 2009) not to continue, and, because she wanted to support her family, this changed the trajectory of her career.

### *Friends' Influence*

The study findings show how professionals relied on friends to provide emotional and constructive advice and quell their pre-engagement anxiety prior to making a commitment to engage in doctoral study (discussed in Chapter 5). Friends used their power to signpost the PD and used effective persuasive tactics based on their own doctoral study experiences and personal knowledge. Their friends and friendship groups were perfectly positioned to provide information based on their professional experience and judgement and were an important influence as they led participants to consider which doctoral pathway would be most appropriate. Alice's experience (Chapter 5) identified how her friend was able to provide social proof and guided her towards the PD, by using his influence as 'power through' rather than over or controlling her actions.

### *Friend's challenges*

In a complex world, people are going to face challenges, which the study cannot overlook. Participants reported experiences of friends' attempts to dissuade or question their decision to engage in a PD. Bandura (2001: 7) asserts that the capacity and agency of others is a 'function of belief systems that construct outcome expectations from observed conditional relations'. While friends' agency did delay their doctoral engagement, it did not dampen their desire undertake a doctorate.

The impact of family and friends' social influence affected participants' PD engagement in many ways, through signposting, encouraging, and challenging participants' decision-making processes; however, the flow of their influential communications appears dynamic and unidirectional.

## 7.2 The extent of professional influence

The participants reported how conversations with others triggered the idea that they may like to engage in a doctorate. Casual conversations shared between people, Cialdini (2005) and Berger (2016) suggest, may often be the starting point for unknown goals or aspirations to become visible, as this sharing of information may signpost a course of action, e.g., engaging in a doctorate they may not have previously considered, or had a reason to do because of the circumstances.

### *Professional Colleagues' and Group Influence*

The collective action of professional colleagues and their use of persuasive and authoritative strategies was a major factor for HE-based participants. Professional doctoral students were found to assign their professional colleagues' different powers, based on their perceptions of status cues (Section 2.3.1), group membership, and position within the organisation (Woods, 2000; Turner, 2005; Cialdini 2007; Pratkanis, 2014). High status colleagues within a professional group were considered to hold legitimate power because other professionals respected their expertise, knowledge, and position.

The intensity of influence reported by participants differed. Lesley, an HE tutor and mid-career professional, reported how supportive her line-manger and appraiser were, because they considered it was the next step and would be professionally beneficial and worthwhile. Their encouragement induced feelings of pressure (Chapter 6) because Lesley thought her network of colleagues were expecting her to engage in a doctorate, which Katz et al. (2004) suggest may flow out of mutual interests and bring benefits for everyone. Lesley considered how success would be beneficial for her, her department, the organisation, and society. Equally, perceptions of inclusion in research conversations by

professional group members and colleagues influenced Susan and Carol's doctoral engagement, as they enjoyed the interactions.

### *Status Cues*

John, Judith, and Lesley respected their colleagues' status and felt they were entitled to use authoritative and persuasive skills to guide engagement in doctoral study. An unexpected finding was how John and Judith sought doctoral guidance from outside of their institutions, as they both thought their colleagues may have a hidden agenda. It is interesting to note how an issue of trust in their colleagues' judgement (Chapter 6) caused them to seek outsiders' opinions, which aligns with Cialdini (1989, 2007) and Berger (2016), who note that people will often seek the opinions of others who have similar interests, but that status also proved to be a model for social proof.

Professional colleagues used their influence to encourage and support doctoral action, rather than using 'carrot and stick' (Nye, 2005) coercive tactics, as shown by participants being welcomed into a community of practice that encouraged and supported their actions, inspiring them to achieve doctoral status and become an inner-group member. Influential agents' selective use of authoritative and persuasive strategies, illustrated in Chapter 6 (Figure 6.1), moved participants' personal and professional judgement forward and contribute to their doctoral decisions and action (Broome, 2009). The impact of professional colleagues' influential skills and actions not only provided information, but also inspired doctoral aspirations by encouraging risk-taking and self-belief. The act of engaging in a PD required participants to consider both attitudes and behavioural changes, because the time they would have to commit to doctoral study would impact on the people in their personal and professional worlds.

It is interesting to note that status was an important issue for six participants, as they wanted the same power as other professional colleagues (Chapter 6). Research by Abrams and Hogg (2010: 206) noted that ‘people expect to agree with ingroup members, and through self-categorisation conform to the norms which define the group in the salient social comparative frame of reference

The participants who feared being discounted by their colleagues, professional group, or students because of their lack of doctoral status, were comparing their position to others, creating personal anxiety about their position in the organisation. They were influenced to seek membership into the academy after observing others gaining doctoral status. This affected the professionals because they observed how the increased number of doctoral staff members raised professional standards within the institution, which Turner (1991) argues emerges from group polarisation and normative commitment.

#### *Influence of Observation*

The power of social worlds had a significant influence on professionals’ actions, as their observations of colleagues’ actions, and the way their colleagues acted around people whom they thought had status (Chapter 6), affected their doctoral decisions and actions. An awareness of inner-group members’ power became a personal issue for participants (6.3.1) as they became aware of their peripheral position as a group associate, as opposed to holding full academic status membership. As a result, they felt their colleagues used their influence to encourage their action to gain doctoral status recognition.

Observations and perceptions of their professional world resulted in a desire to mirror others’ actions as they wanted to gain the same professional status and expert voice as their colleagues (6.6.4). Status was an important issue for six participants as they wanted the same power as other professional colleagues. Three participants identified the fear of

being discounted by colleagues and students because of their lack of doctoral status, and of losing job security and their current position in the organisation. In addition, participants considered their perception of covert and overt influence attempts that resulted in feelings of competitiveness and pressure to achieve doctoral status.

Participants found the professional world both influential and supportive of their doctoral engagement as their colleagues' experiences and knowledge opened up new ideas and opportunities. Participants' professional and personal experience and influences from the PD provided insight into how they could use their knowledge and expert voice to make a difference to professional practice and society by becoming influential agents in their own right.

#### *Opportunities to make a difference*

Throughout the interviews, participants reported their insights on how their personal and professional experiences had influenced their doctoral aspirations. Completing the sociograms (Appendix 3 sociogram data) during their interviews offered an opportunity for participants to share their future aspirations (6.7.2 and 6.7.3). As social influence was the focus of the interview, it became a natural stimulus and progression to share doctoral aspirations.

All eleven participants had a desire to become influential and use their professional expertise to develop practice; however, the areas they wanted to champion and support varied according to their professional situation. Engaging in the doctorate provided participants with the opportunity to develop their doctoral professional goals. Compared to school-based professionals, HE-based participants were found to have a more pragmatic approach for their aspirations, due to their working environment.

### *Altruistic aspirations*

The personal and professional worlds of the two school-based participants differed, as the areas they wanted to influence were rooted in their prior professional teaching experiences, but both saw engagement in doctoral study as a channel to make a difference. Identifying the issues that were important prepared them to champion change through altruistic advocacy. Zoe's altruistic advocacy action stemmed from her sense of social justice (6.7.3). Her extreme experience of teachers committing suicide and leaving the profession because of Ofsted inspection anxiety, inspired her advocacy goals, although her faith and passion for teaching was key because she felt strongly that she could not let these issues go unchallenged. Zoe's perception was that having an expert doctoral voice would give her the right to champion the issue. Similarly, Alice's altruistic advocacy came from her passion to support others to become "good teachers" (6.7.3) because of her perceived issues and experience in her home country's ITT. Alice valued the support and challenges she received from her English teaching colleagues and valued being accepted into a community of practice. She saw an opportunity for future altruistic leadership that would allow her to challenge ITT practices because of her doctoral expertise and would provide an opportunity to support the wider school community.

### *Status and expertise*

HE-based participants had a more pragmatic approach, as all nine expressed a desire to be good at their job. However, the areas they wanted to influence were more practice-orientated, due to the nature of the PD doctorate and their working environment. Interestingly, only two participants reported that they wanted to use their doctorates to gain recognition and respect from students. This concurs with Cialdini's (2007) finding that people acknowledge the title holder rather the person (6. 6.7). Although they did want



to use their expertise to improve students' outcomes by developing their academic skills and raising their aspirations, two out of the eleven participants expressed their aspirations in terms of acceptance by colleagues and job security. They identified doctoral status, legitimate power and self-confidence that would provide the opportunity to move their careers forward and become authorities in their fields.

### *Self-fulfilment*

All eleven professionals stated that they were looking for a sense of personal fulfilment and expertise on completing the doctorate; however, this varied from individual to individual. John expressed his sense of fulfilment as being able to change his title in the bank, while Judith was looking for student admiration and recognition of her status. Both were looking forward to exercising legitimate power and gaining the respect of colleagues. Their goal was to see their doctoral status publicly acknowledged (Chapter 6). Becoming an influential researcher was important for one participant, Carol, who identified a 'hero', whose widely-respected research she admired and wanted to emulate by becoming an influential researcher herself.

### *Career security*

Two out of eleven participants expressed their aspirations in terms of doctoral identity, which provided legitimate power and self-confidence to move their careers forward as they aspired to be leading authorities in their fields.

### 7.3 Summary

Through Turner's (2005) three process theory, the power influential agents held, and their different influence strategies moved the participants to action doctoral engagement.

Broome's (2009) philosophical theory of motivation provided the theoretical perspective for participants' reasoned action, and how others used their social influence to signpost doctoral engagement, which became the starting point for their action and motivation.

Participants' professional and personal experiences affected their actions, which aligns with Bandura's (2001) argument that those who support agency in others have the capacity and belief systems to support other people's expectations. The participants' unique experiences and their influential agents' belief and aspirations contributed to their PD engagement.

Family members, friends, and professional colleagues used their positions of power to drive participants towards action, as they wanted what they thought would be best for them; therefore, their influential attempts were based on achieving the best possible outcome for action. Their social influence went beyond sharing information and resources, as it contributed to participants' motivation, desired goals and empowerment by signposting what was available and offering directions on how to achieve it. Engaging in the PD programme influenced professionals' attitudes and values as they wanted to become influencers of change and use their doctoral knowledge, research skills and status to nurture others' practice. In short, because of the multidirectional flow that exists in real life situations and their daily encounters and experiences with others, participants were able to change their role from being influenced to becoming influencers during social interactions.

## **8 Conclusion**

This study has explored the perceptions of eleven professionals and ways social agents influence affected their PD engagement. This final chapter considers the limitations and implications of the study, offers recommendations for future research, and shares my final thoughts.

### **8.1 Limitations of the study**

#### *Conceptual framework*

The theories chosen to guide the study were important as they made the participants' social influence perceptions and experiences more meaningful by grounding the research. Drawing on knowledge from different fields of research, the framework supported a deeper understanding of social influence and the ways it affected participants' actions.

The theories for the conceptual framework were key, as the participants' stories revealed how their perception of their personal and professional worlds empowered their actions and how their social agents had their best interest in mind and used social power to guide their doctoral engagement action as opposed to controlling them. The research of Scott et al. (2004) and Mellors-Bourne (2016) was a key element as it situated the study within the PD world. Turner's three-process theory of power was important as it illustrates how people use their influence as power through others. Cialdini's research on persuasion highlighted aspects of Turner's theory and Broome's concept of motivation was useful as it examined the way people need a reason to act. The interview data illustrated the reasons why the participants acted. Analysing the data, I realised that I needed to address participants' perceptions as the interconnecting flow of decision making, emotion, attitude and behaviour changes affected their doctoral engagement. Raven's (1990) model

illustrating an influential agent's and recipient's perspective, was a valuable tool that facilitated the mapping of participants' personal and professional perceptions of social influence.

### *Research design*

An important limitation was the small sample size. There were eleven professional doctorate students who volunteered to take part in the study, and they came from different cohorts and were at different stages in the PD programme. It is not possible to consider such a small sample as being representative of PD students as a whole, or to infer that their experiences might be transferable to another educational setting.

The time available for interviews or any follow-up data collection was limited because of availability and the professional and personal commitments of participants. The study relied on participants re-telling their experiences and perceptions of events that had happened earlier; therefore, they may have told an edited version of events or what they thought the researcher wanted to know. Although their experiences were unique to them, some were found to be replicated across the participant cohort.

Due to the qualitative research design and its interpretive nature, data collection points were semi-structured interviews and sociograms that provided a snapshot in time. This qualitative research required meaning to be made out of participants' perception of their experiences that were unique, which limits the study's replicability. Their personal attitudes, values, and behaviours varied according to their social worlds. A research decision based on semi-structured questions as opposed to a more naturalistic open-ended interview flow provided a subjective exploratory dimension to participants' accounts.

I selected a template analysis method because it allowed a pragmatic approach to the analysis of the corpus of data. The flexibility of this method enabled several template iterations as new themes emerged during the analysis stage; however, this method has limitations as the findings cannot be extended to a wider population. It supports the exploratory nature of people's actions as it allows rich description, but is limited by the coding assigned to participants' accounts, and my interpretation of their social connectedness and the way others used social influence to introduce the idea of undertaking a PD. A significant issue was trying to ensure ethical anonymity of the eleven professionals as they were doctoral students from the same faculty and aspects of their experiences may be recognisable by others. In addition, nine professional participants were academic staff members who were sharing information about their experiences with other colleagues. Ensuring the anonymity of everyone was an ethical concern that took additional time to resolve, both during the analysis phase and in the findings.

## **8.2 Contribution of the study**

As a contribution to knowledge, this study provides insight into the perceptions and social influence experiences of professional doctoral students. Overall, the study provides new insight into the role that social agents, including professional colleagues, family and friends, play in signposting the way for participants to engage in doctoral study. While Lee (2009) and Kember (1999) acknowledged that professional doctoral students have to balance their ongoing family commitments with doctoral study, they did not address the issue of family challenge or the role of family members in the pre-doctoral engagement stage or consider the impact family influences had on progression, all of which this study does.

### *Implications for practice*

This study has implications for UK HE, as universities continue to attract professional learners to their PD and PhD programmes. The overall findings of this study indicated that powerful people use their social influence to signpost doctoral study by shaping a change in professionals' attitudes, values, and behaviour that actively incentivises their motivation and PD study engagement. Based on these findings I have several recommendations that would address the needs and support the development of PD professional students.

Overall, the study found that influential agents used their power to encourage doctoral engagement and were prepared to support professionals on their doctoral journey. There were also instances of people using their influence to dissuade engagement. Therefore, it is important that PD tutors and supervisors are aware of professionals' personal situations and take account of the impact of influential social agents, which may present adverse difficulties for a doctoral student. Examples from the data resulted in one professional student's withdrawal from the PD, while other participants experienced dissuasive influential attempts. Support from PD tutors and supervisors may provide the persuasive influence a professional doctoral student needs to continue their doctoral engagement and their use of persuasive influence may counteract influences generated by family and friends and reduce PD programme attrition rates.

Doctoral students' family and friends have a significant influence over the way professionals operate in the PD 'twilight zone'. The original findings illustrated in Maxwell's Venn diagram only considered the implications of three areas that affected professional doctoral students: university identity, professionalism, and workplace (Maxwell, 2010). Based on the study findings I recommend a fourth segment that represents professionals' personal situation (Ps), Figure 8-1, because the impact of family

and friends' support, constraints, and commitments, also contributes to the way professional doctoral students operate in this 'twilight zone'.

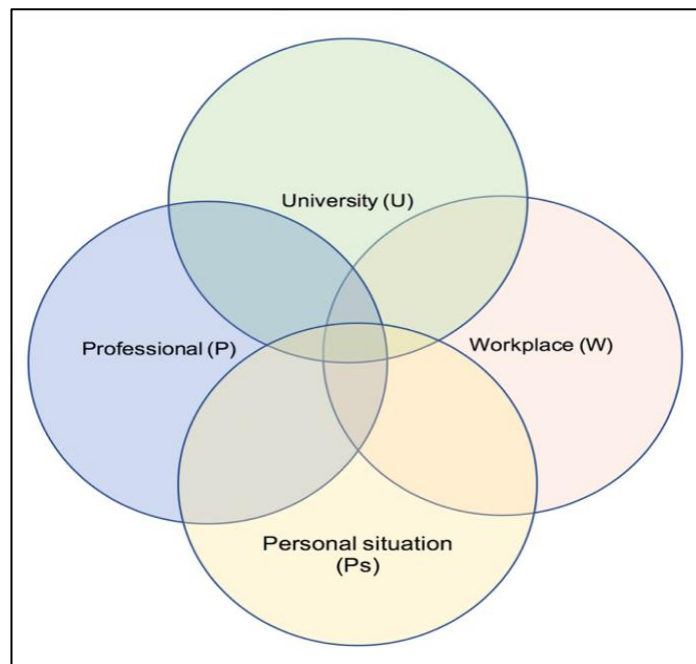


Figure 8-8-1: Revised Twilight Zone Venn Diagram (based on Maxwell, 2010, Leith 2020)

The practical implications for HE are far-reaching as the findings show that some academics continue to hold biased PD opinions. Mellors-Bourne et al's (2016) report acknowledged the need for universities to promote professional doctoral pathways by collaborating with employers. However, there remains a need to level the playing field so that prospective students are not dissuaded from engaging in a PD, rather than a PhD, due to the biases of others.

I suggest that the influences of family members have previously been overlooked because doctoral students are considered to be independent adults. The contribution of professional students' families and friends may be vital to supporting the doctoral journey and reduce the risk of withdrawal when personal and professional commitments take precedence.

A personalised direct approach with clear information had a significant impact on professionals' doctoral engagement decisions. Therefore, the attitudes and actions of

academics and university marketing and recruiting departments may be a key influence on professionals, as the way they present information can have a significant impact on students' decisions and actions. The information they provide has the power to sway a professional's judgement and elevate pre-doctoral engagement anxiety, as the study found that some participants had hesitated for years before engaging in PD study.

Faculty members can act as advisors and use their influence to support others who may be anxious or feel pressured into engaging in doctoral study. The study found that colleagues' expertise and experience was a key supportive influence that encouraged doctoral engagement.

Under these circumstances, I would argue that an academic involved in doctoral study recruitment may use a soft powerbase and the resources of expert and informational power, persuasion, and authority to influence prospective students. Although the use of hard power – for example, authoritative or coercive tactics such as offering financial rewards – may be beyond their remit, a professional may be enticed by the prospect of enhanced professional status as a beneficial outcome from doctoral study. Nevertheless, an academic acting as a social agent may exert both soft and hard power in this situation. They cannot offer status as a reward until the students has successfully completed the programme. The power role of the academic as an influential agent in this context, I argue, would be to advance the needs and outcomes for others, whether it be a career professional, a colleague seeking advice, or an employer wishing to develop and upskill their workforce.



### **8.3 Recommendations for further research**

There is more to be learnt about social influence and the way it affects professionals' PD actions. This study has shown how professionals perceived the way people to used their power to socially influence their PD engagement action and moves beyond the commonly-held belief that motivation is the primary driver for professional students. This section outlines future research which could be undertaken in order to extend this study, such as:

- further research to gain a deeper understanding of social influence from a HE tutors' and supervisors' perspective;
- research into family members' social influence process and their impact on doctoral engagement decisions;
- an in-depth study on parental power and the process of influence they exert over their successful adult children's decisions and doctoral study actions;
- research on the effectiveness of PD and PhD websites, as the study found that students were more likely to be socially influenced by the power of academic and personal recommendations.

### **8.4 Final thoughts**

The ways in which people are socially influenced became an important topic to me after I observed how my part-time master's students changed during the programme. Listening to students talking about why they were doing postgraduate degrees and what and who had influenced them sparked my interest, as I felt my personal social network, professional colleagues and students had influenced my own actions to do a PD. This particular interest

developed into this study, because I belonged to a network of PD students and wanted to understand what aspects of social influenced had affected their PD engagement.

Reaching the thesis stage, I drew on the research literature and my own experience to frame open-ended questions to try and reduce the possibility that my unconscious bias might affect participants' responses. To reinforce this, the use of a gatekeeper, who had offered to volunteer in doctoral students' research, was key. The same questions were asked of participants, although the length of their responses, and therefore each interview, varied considerably. I was aware that some participants may have answered what they thought I wanted to hear; to minimise this, I focused on unconditional and moderated responses. Reducing the halo effect to minimum, was an important consideration because of the nature of the research topic.

## 9 Afterword Post Viva Reflections

I was concerned why some students in my cohort decided to leave the PD before completing the taught stage. This was an issue identified in the literature (Scott et al. 2004; Costley, 2013; Mellors-Bourne et al. 2016) which led me to question what had influenced them to engage in the PD in the first place. As doctoral study is a progression pathway for MA students, I worry this may have an impact on their education engagement and long-term prospects.

### *Positionality*

When I started the PD I was an academic and manager in the professional development department in the faculty of education. Many academics in the department had doctorates which resulted in lively and interesting debates. This atmosphere was engaging and influenced my decision to join the PD. The department culture, with a focus on supporting and building a community of researching postgraduate professionals was something I wanted to emulate as the MA programme director. My focus was on encouraging and sharing the doctoral experience with my MA students. I wanted to understand how I could support their doctoral progression pathways decisions.

My personal doctoral influences originated from my family and friends who encouraged to me to study for a doctorate while I had the opportunity. For example, a close friend encouraged me to consider the PD as she was enjoying her experience at a London university. In hindsight, it was that slow constant drip effect which influenced me, in the

same way it did for participants Nancy and Zoe like. In addition, I was apprehensive about joining the doctoral programme at my age, which corresponds with some other participants' concerns.

Notably, I was the first person in my family to go to university and complete a science degree. After my studies, I decided to become science teacher and complete a secondary education teaching training programme which was similar to Violet, Nancy and Lesley's career journeys. I quickly moved to school management and led the Gifted and Talent and Aimhigher strategies before moving to higher education.

It was my role as an MA programme director, and support from the department team that influenced my doctoral engagement and research journey. Teaching undergraduate and postgraduate students and seeing their education progression, while also managing Education Extended Schools projects as a critical friend, contributed to my research journey.

#### *Research Journey*

Flutter's (2016) analogy of 'a traveller navigating their way through the doctoral voyage', echoes my experience. I found myself traversing research and practice challenges, then the emotional ups and downs of my PD journey. Flutter (2016) identified 'embarkation, learning the ropes, guiding lights, logging the journey and new waters' as stages students encounter on the PD journey. I used these stages to reflect on my influences and my own PD journey.

‘Embarking’ on the thesis stage provided the opportunity to critically consider questions concerning PD policy, professional practice and theory to develop my research question. Although I understood research methodology, I questioned and found new ways of doing things that were outside of my professional practice. Interestingly, Hyland (cited in Kamler and Thompson, 2006: 73) suggest that researchers would often use strategies and markers that were familiar. Initially, my scientific background and report writing style influenced the way I gathered evidence and critically evaluated literature. I wanted to capture PD professionals’ perceptions of social influence which required participants to reflect on their experiences.

The second stage, ‘learning the ropes’, provided the opportunity to critically question PD policy and how it influenced participants’ personal and professional social worlds and their careers. The participants’ responses led me to question current PD policy and the people and institutions that support PD outside of universities. In addition, Mellors-Bourne et al. (2016) found employers have limited knowledge of PDs. This then limits the effectiveness of the knowledge economy.

Navigating the route between practice and research influenced my identity, because I was an outsider to the research while also being an insider due to my doctoral student status and professional knowledge, a position (Burnard et al. 2018:43) called an ‘inbetweener’. My understanding of the issue developed and changed as I interrogated the corpus of data.

NVivo and template analysis provided the space to step back look at the developing the picture.

The participants and literature were ‘guiding lights’ in my research journey. I was in a privilege position as the participants were willing to share perceptions of their influences and experiences which I discovered were at times similar to my own professional and personal influences.

My interviews supported how participants’ narrative was co-constructed with their family and friends and colleagues. It influenced their perceptions, attitude, values and emotion of their lived experience. A unidirectional social influence flow was created during the interview process as the participants’ important memory unfolded. I noticed how their level of frankness changed because we were both affected by the experience and surroundings. The emotional aspects of their stories were influential, particularly Stella’s story of caring for her mother. It prompted memories of caring for my mother during my doctoral study, which was a difficult juggling act, eventually I decided to take a study break.

#### *Surprises and ruptures*

I was dismayed to find some participants’ felt they had been let down by their family and colleagues. For example, Judith’s interview prompted reflection in the moment as she said “I’m still not sure if I should change my pathway”, which caused her to question her decision and action after two years of PD study because her colleagues had influenced her

views about PD and PhD parity. The power of their influence and behaviour still affected her attitude and emotions, which made me consider how the words and actions of academics may have a profound impact on students.

I was surprised how participants selected a doctoral pathway based on the views of others, particularly the role parents played in the decision-making process. The perceptions of ‘family influence’ and how positive and negative emotions affect participants’ actions, and their doctoral journey was striking.

Reflecting on the writing phase of this thesis contributed to ‘logging the journey’. This was a daunting phase because I was out of my comfort zone writing for an academic audience opposed to my normal DfE and programme director report writing. Selecting material and reflecting on the landscape of my interdisciplinary thesis, I had to decide which elements were relevant to develop the research picture based on my research question and understanding of the issues. I took strategic decisions to jettison writing that failed to enhance the thesis narrative and as my writing developed, I rewrote or deleted sections to provide a deeper understanding of the issue.

Navigating the doctoral thesis took me down extraordinary meanders and different research routes that required trying something new, back-tracking and making critical decisions to develop my knowledge and practice. I developed confidence in my writing, having been a reluctant writer. Furthermore, I found I could even confidently defend aspects of my research with colleagues. A critical incident that guided me into ‘new

waters' were perceptions of PD and PhD parity, an issue Mellor-Bourne et al. highlighted in their 2016 PD report.

Moving into post viva 'new waters', I have contributed to PD knowledge and professional practice. However, like many other part-time students, my PD journey has not been straight-forward. It has taken years to navigate my way through the emotional and intellectual challenges, while juggling my personal and professional commitments which has significant effect on the flow of my doctoral study. In hindsight and based on findings from the research, these are the areas that would contribute to policy and practice innovation.

#### *Policy and Innovation*

As PD's tends to attract mature students (Costley and Lester, 2011; Mellors-Bourne et al. 2016), there is a need for a dynamic shift in PD policy that provides professionals with a more fluid approach to PD study and coursework. A more flexible timescale would allow students to take professional breaks without incurring time penalties, contributing to PD recruitment. This would also enhance students' study experience and contribute to the knowledge economy by reducing attrition rates.

In addition, an induction programme for academics aimed supporting informed doctoral choices based on students' goals and their personal and professional circumstances would be beneficial. Finally, it is important to note that academics have an important role as



social actors because their words and actions are powerful tools that contribute to doctoral recruitment and reducing student attrition.

A range of research projects could be developed from this research. For example, the extent of parental power on professionals and how sociograms can support students' goals, motivation, and aid retention through the doctoral journey. In summary, my doctoral journey has allowed me to develop my academic voice as an advocate for professional doctorates and identify further areas research and PD practice innovation.

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# Appendix

## 1. Participant consent form and interview schedule

### Participant Consent Form

**Consent** I agree to participate in the research as indicated in the study research boxes

Please indicate in each box the task/s for which you are willing to be a volunteer.		
1.	Participate in a recorded focus group interview and be willing to draw a personal influences graph	
2.	Participate in a recorded telephone or face-to-face interview	

### Confidentiality

All data will be confidential and coded at source to protect participant identity. Telephone or face-to-face interviews will be audio recorded and can be emailed to participants' personal email addresses on request. As research participants you can delete or withdraw sections from your audio interview file. Digital data will be safely stored on a password-protected computer. Data collected in this research will be transposed from digital audio format recorded into written transcripts with all names being removed from the data. If you choose to withdraw your interview from this research study, your data will be removed and destroyed. I will protect your personal information and will endeavour to ensure that you cannot be identified in any written report but cannot guarantee this.

All data and personal information will be stored securely in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and CCCU's data protection requirements. The data will be accessible to the researcher, her appointed EdD supervisors and one administrator with responsibility for transposing the audio interview files into transcripts. On completion of the research study all data will be destroyed in accordance with requirements of the Data Protection Act.

### Consent

Please initial box as appropriate

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information for the above study, and I have had an opportunity to ask questions.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason.
3. I understand that any personal information that I provide to the researcher is confidential.

YES	NO

Name Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Researcher: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

## 2 Interview Schedule

Research questions	Interview Questions
<p>RQ1: To what extent can social influence affect professionals' decisions to engage in a PD and what is the nature of that influence?</p>	<p>1. Can you tell me about any experiences or events that influenced you to consider undertaking a professional doctoral?</p>
<p>SRQ1: To what extent are professionals exposed to social influence prior to their engagement with doctoral study?</p>	<p>2. Can you explain how these influential experiences affected your decision?</p> <p>3. Can you tell me about any social influence in your personal life, professional life or workplace that made you consider doctoral study?</p> <p>4. Did you experience any resistance from others about undertaking a doctorate, if so, can you explain what they were and how it affected you?</p> <p>5. How did you cope with these challenges, if at all?</p>
<p>SRQ2: Who are the social agents and in what ways do they influence professionals' doctoral study actions?</p>	<p>6. Can you tell me about the people who influenced you to consider a doctorate?</p> <p>7. How did their influence, if any affect your attitude and reasons for engaging in a professional doctorate?</p>
<p>SRQ3: In what, if any way does social influence affect professional doctoral students' aspirations, if any?</p>	<p>8. Can you tell me about your future study aims and aspirations?</p>

### 3 First iteration of template framework

#### 1. Participants Personal Influencers

- Influential actors
- Personal influencers
  - Family
  - Friends
- Professional Influencers
  - Colleagues
  - Line-Mangers

#### 2. Participants Seeking Direction – Powerbase of Professional Influencers

- Synthesis of a persuasive powerbase
  - Knowledge
  - Information
  - Shared experience
- Synthesis of coercive tactics
  - Status in work environment
  - Participants' reactions
  - Emotional responses
  - Resilient responses
- Participants experience of authoritative actors' powerbase
  - Supportive
  - Negative

#### 3. The Choice Effect

- Professional understanding of doctorate
  - Mixed messages
  - Professional values associated to doctorate
  - Persuasive example
  - Coercive example
  - Authoritative example
- Personal Motivation Outliers
  - Background influences

#### 4. Influential network and resources

- Family and Professional
- Effect on values and actions
- Pride and affirmation and support

- 

5. The powerful group

- Seeking membership of the group
  - Persuasive power
  - Authoritative power
  - Membership status power
  - Finding an authoritative voice
- Organisational Influence
  - Competition from within
  - Having a voice
  - Powerful actors
- The effect of the market
  - Programme reputation
  - Programme delivery

6. Hidden Influences

- Soft power of others
  - Gentle influence of setting
  - Unseen resources
- Hard power from (social actors) others
  - Failure
  - Persistence
  - Emotional Pressure

7. The mercurial nature of disappearing influential actors

- Emotional response when influential power evaporates
  - Intrinsic motivation disappears
  - Difficulty in stepping away
  - Fading guilt of non-completion
  - Desire to become influential philanthropic
  - Improve outcomes for others
  - Improvements to professional practice
  - Public acknowledgment
  - Self-esteem and status



Appendix 2: Finding from the sociograms transposed to table

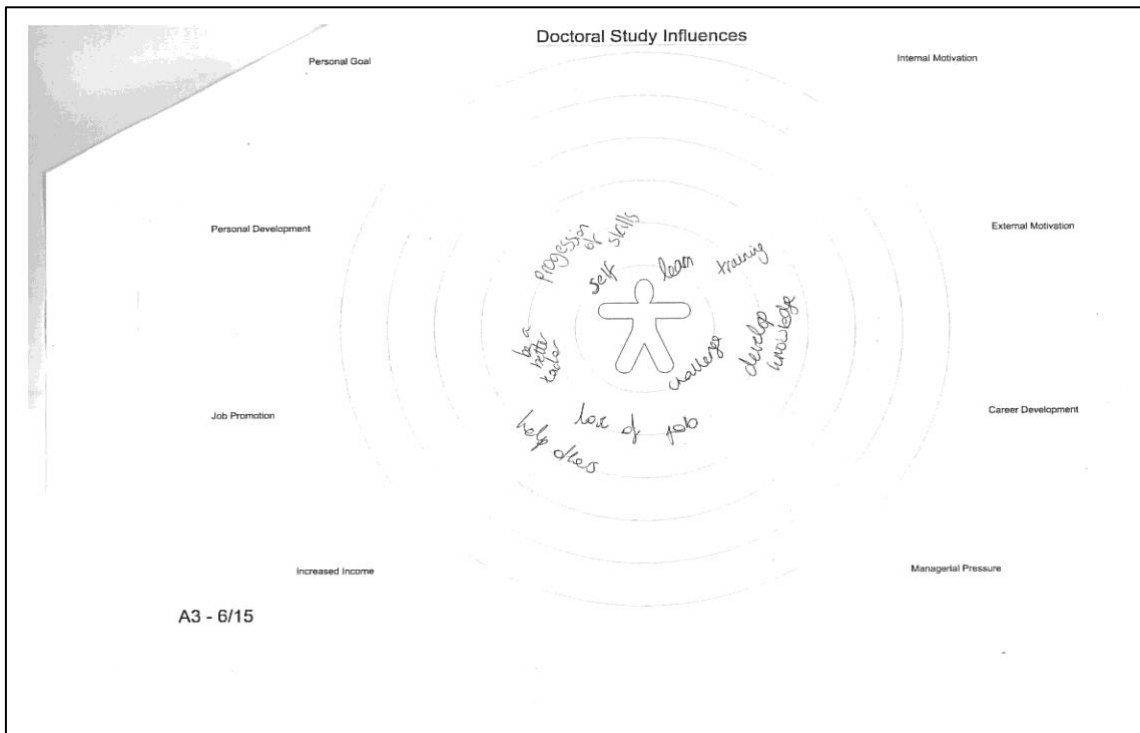
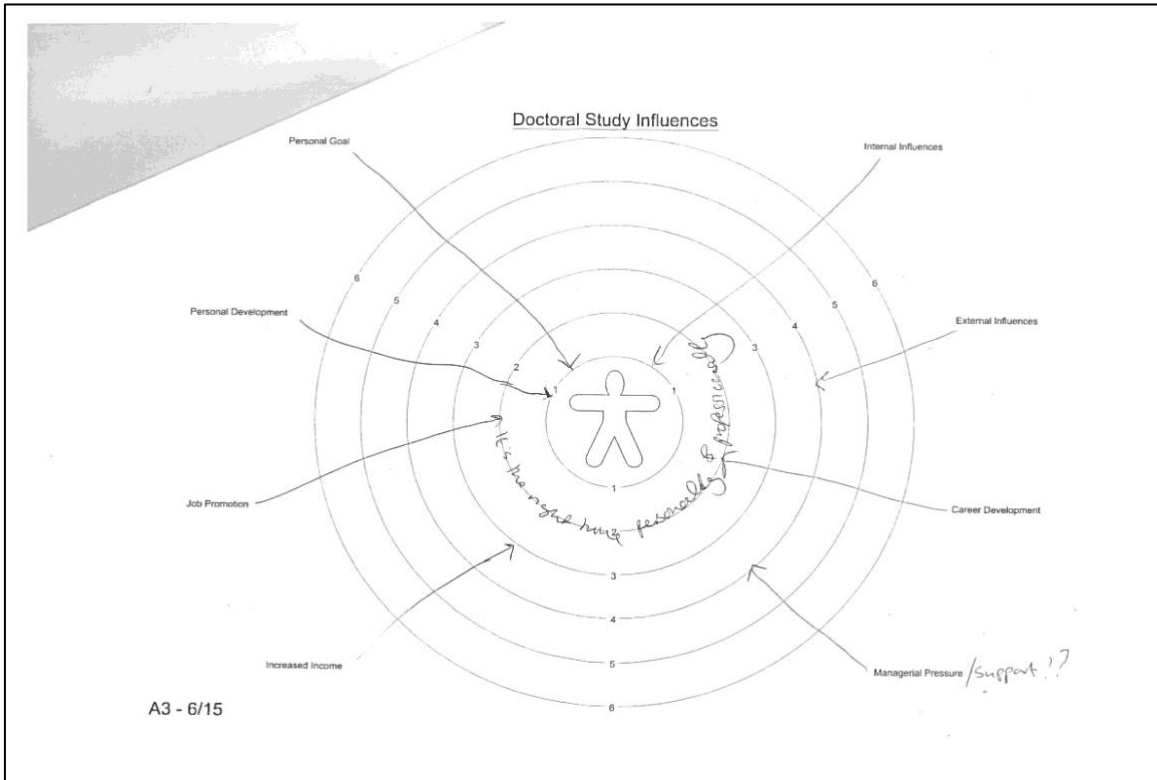
Name	Career Stage	Circle 1 (Inner Most)	Circle 2	Circle 3	Circle 4	Circle 5	Circle 6 (Outer Least)	Outliers
Alice	Early	Self-Learning Challenge	Training, progression of skills.	Develop knowledge Love of job To become a better leader/ teacher	Help others	N/A	N/A	N/A
Carol	Mid	Personal development is really important as I move through this doctorate. My own self-belief. My colleagues have influenced my professionalism. It's about my personal goal.	It's about something that's interesting and gives me options to open doors. Exposure to opportunities Reflection is important	Career Development	Friends challenge me and push me in my thinking.	Opening doors, exposure too, opportunistic	Its more about me thinking about the stories of my friendships.	N/A
John	Early	External Influence Professional status Career progression	Collaborative learning environment Learning with colleague	Further my identify in the field	Colleagues externally validating an EdD approach	Colleagues internal to the institution validating the EdD route	Have the prefix doctor before my name	N/A
Judith	Mid	Career development Students perception "Kudos" is an internal influence	Personal development Personal goal	External Influences Managerial pressure only after starting doctorate Job promotion	External influences by others	Increased income	N/A	N/A

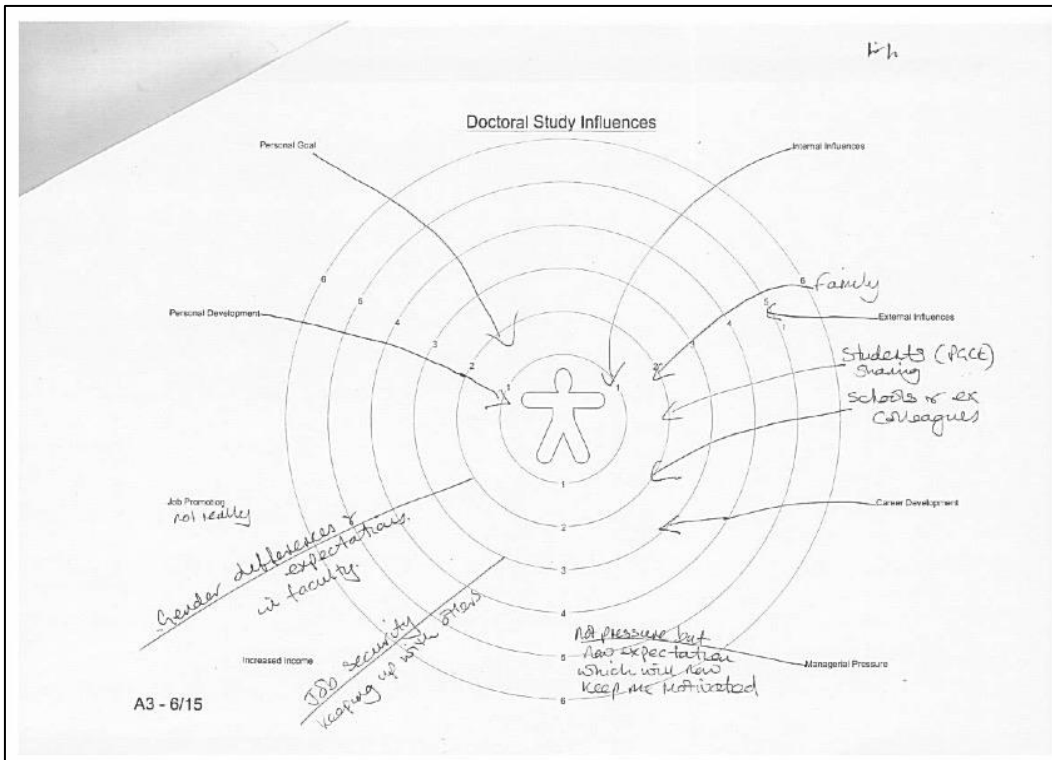
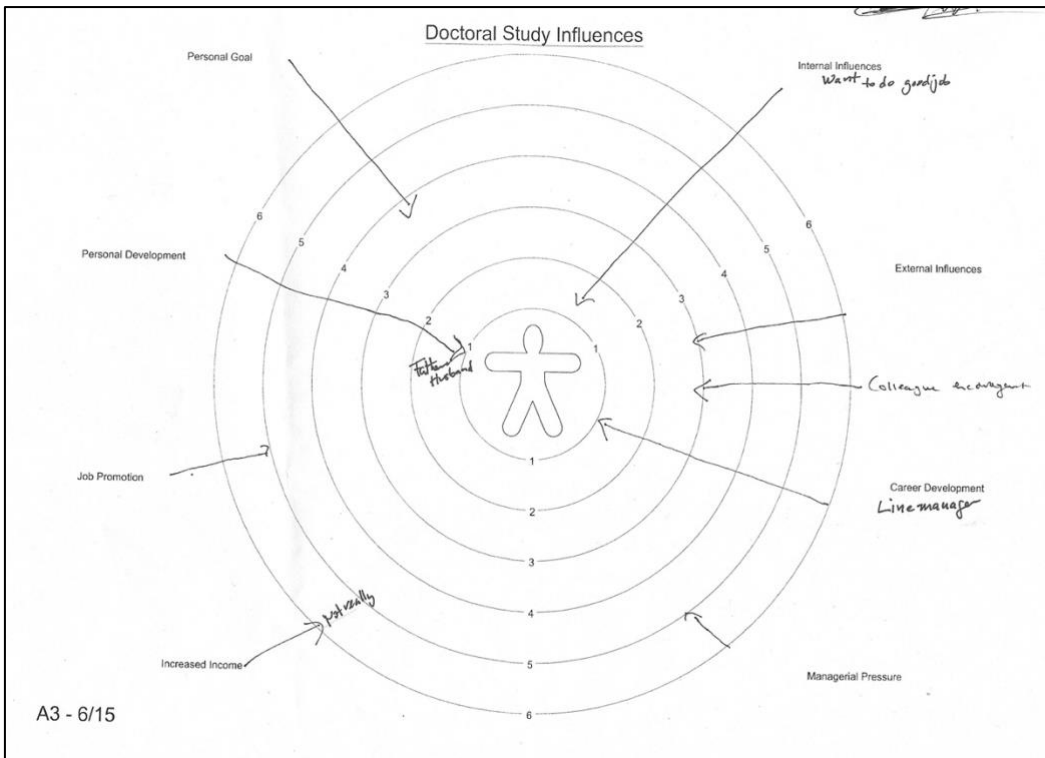
Name	Career Stage	Circle 1 (Inner Most)	Circle 2	Circle 3	Circle 4	Circle 5	Circle 6 (Outer Least)	Outliers
Lesley	Mid	Internal influence. Personal development.	Personal Goal Family is an external influence they would be proud. Students sharing my experiences is an external influence. Schools and ex-colleagues. Gender differences and expectations in the faculty.	Career development Job security. Keeping up with others.	N/A	Managerial pressure in form of expectation, which will now keep me motivated.	Not really job promotion.	N/A
Megan	Early	Internal Influence Personal Goal Personal Development	Job promotion. Career development as it's the right time personally and professionally	Increased income.	External Influence Support / Managerial Pressure	N/A	N/A	N/A
Nancy	Established	Family influence and support. Value education.	To have same status as others. Love of learning challenge.	Professional Development Wanted experience to support teaching.	Didn't want to be only person not have doctorate Managers influence Status was important for image.	Wanted to be of part of researcher group.	Not really fussed about title.	Father keeps pressure up. I am only one to go to university.
Susan	Established	Personal and career development	Internal influences	External influence Colleagues encouragement	Personal Goal	Managerial Pressure Job promotion	Increased Income	N/A
Violet	Established	Values On my own terms	N/A	N/A	N/A	School	School	Managerial pressure not so much.

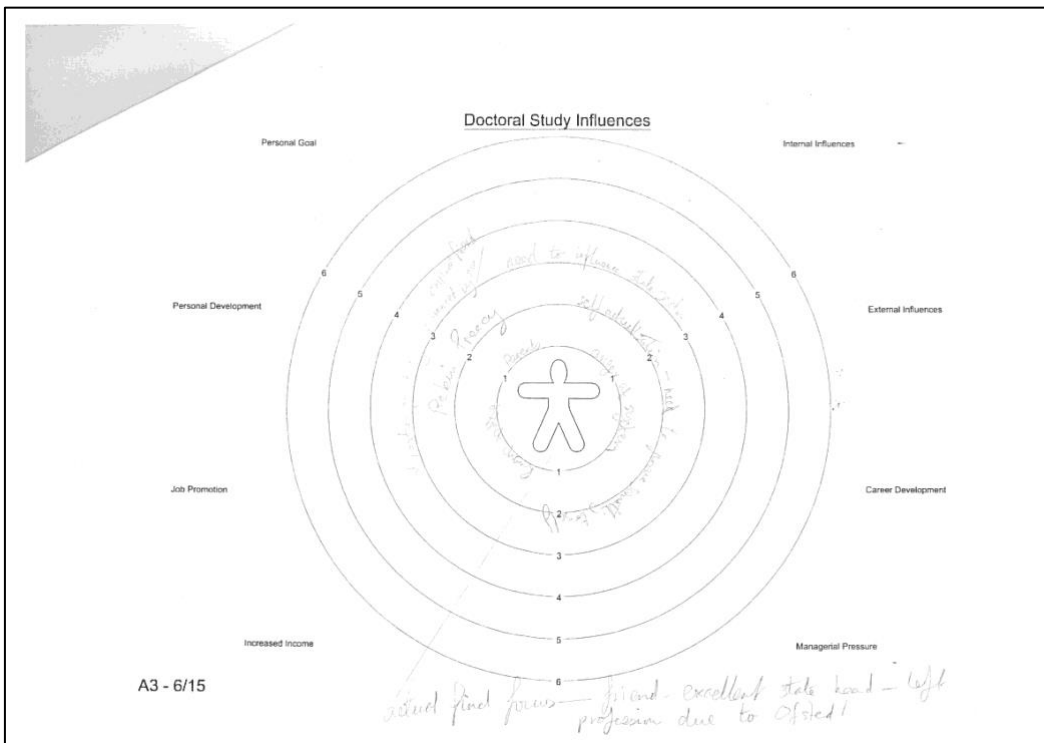
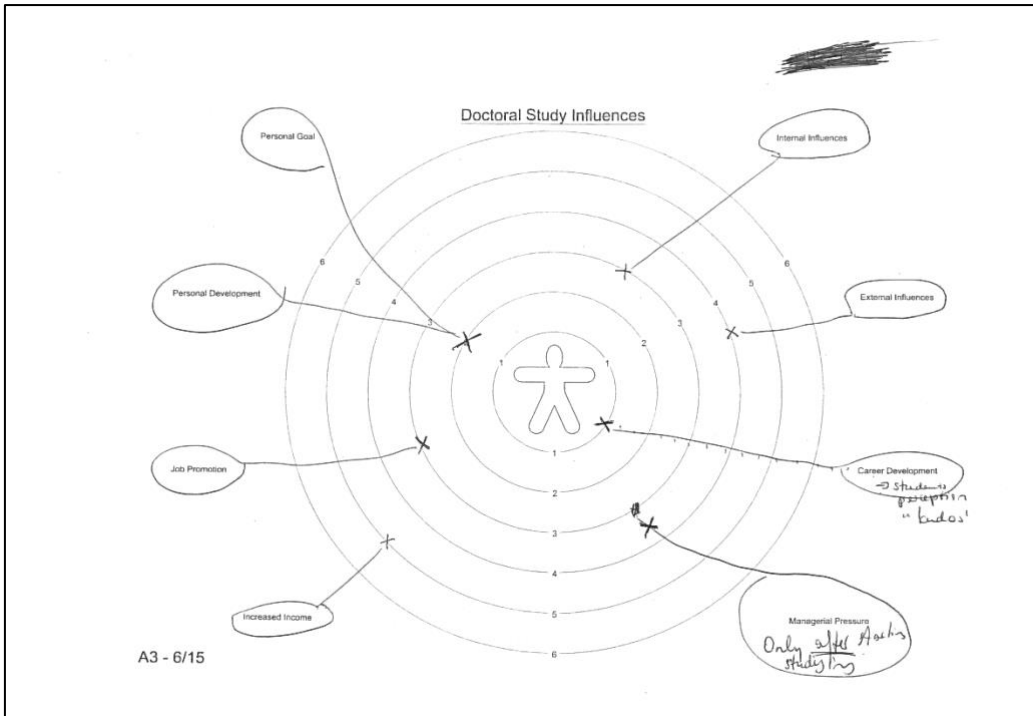
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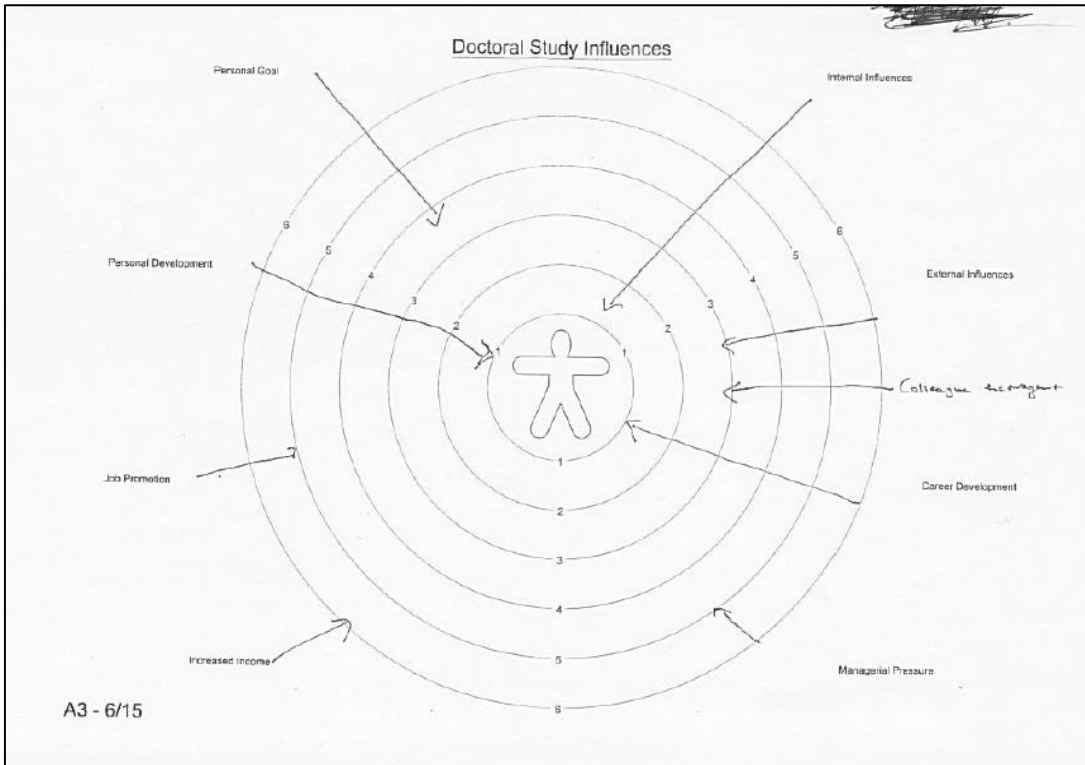
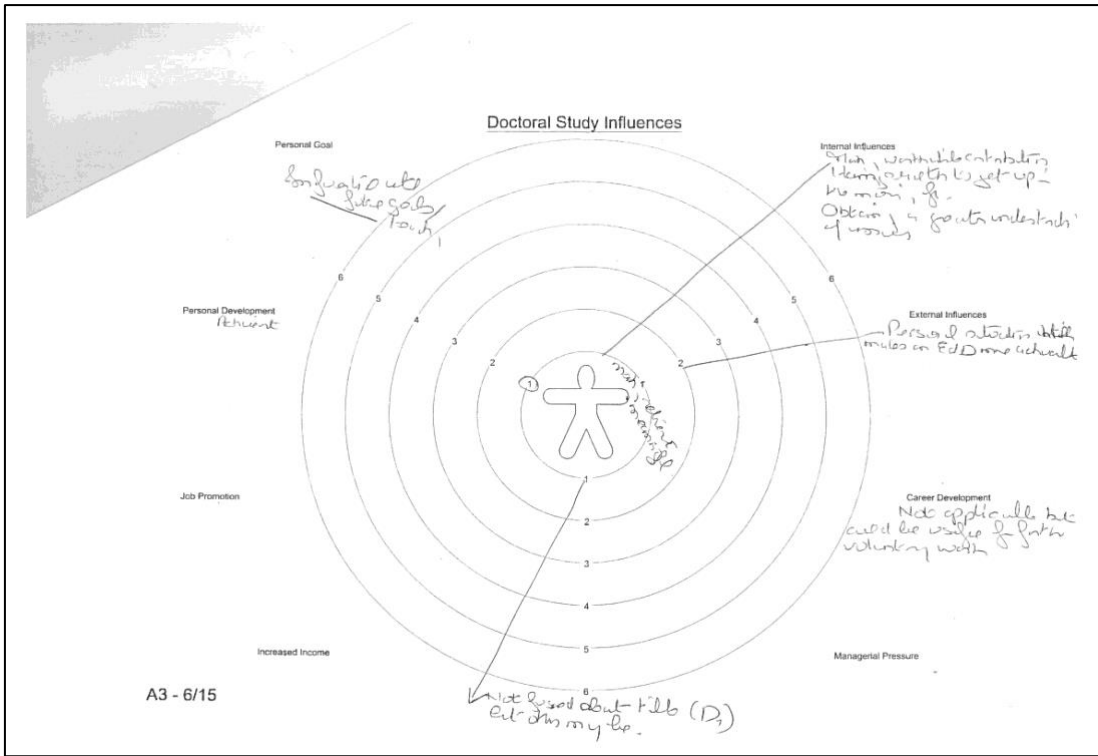
Name	Career Stage	Circle 1 (Inner Most)	Circle 2	Circle 3	Circle 4	Circle 5	Circle 6 (Outer Least)	Outliers
Stella	Established	Manageable Resilience and meaningful as not fussed about the Dr title. Internal influence as I want to contribute. I want something to get up for in the mornings and make retirement meaningful.	External influence is my personal situation as I want to learn with others on the EdD, this makes it achievable.	N/A	N/A	Personal development achievement.	Career development is not applicable but would be useful for voluntary work. Personal goal, influential by my subject - to keep in touch.	Achievement. Maybe useful for voluntary work in the future.
Zoe	Mid	Parents Anger at the [education] system actual find focus - friend who was an excellent state head who left the profession due to Ofsted.	My Master's tutor. Self-actualization and the need to prove something to myself.	My direction of study was influences by a critical friend /son. A need to influence the state sector.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

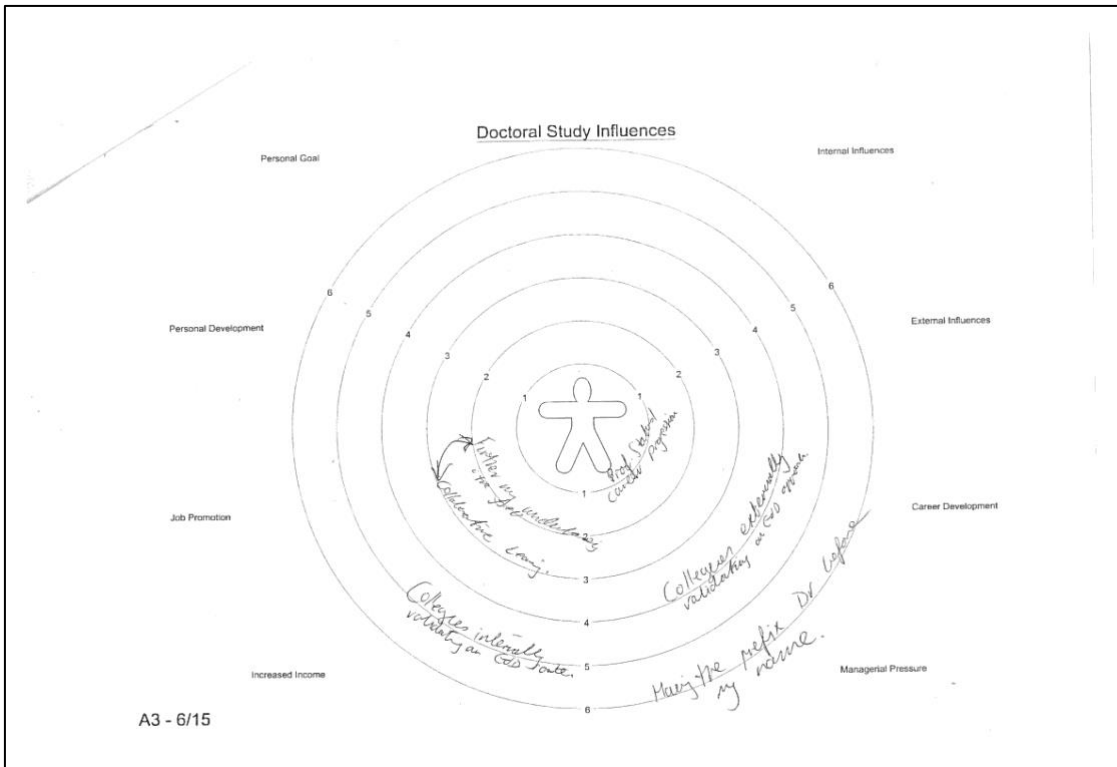
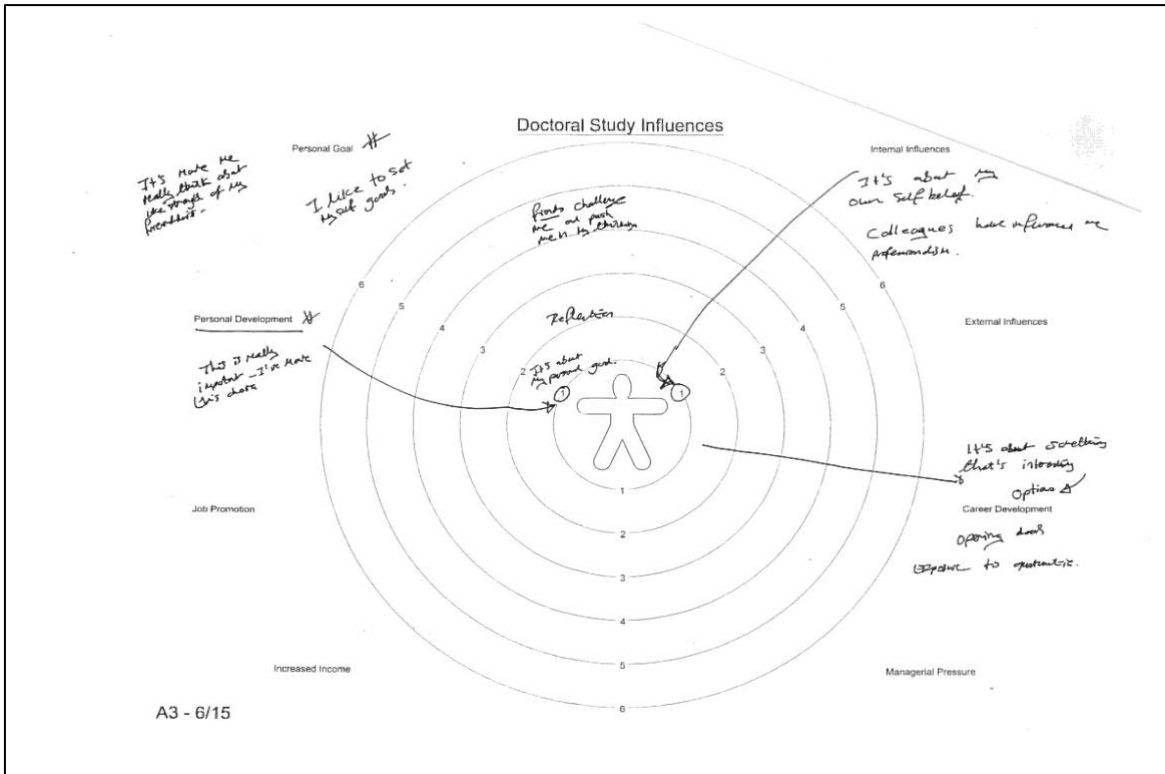
# Appendix 3 Participants Sociograms



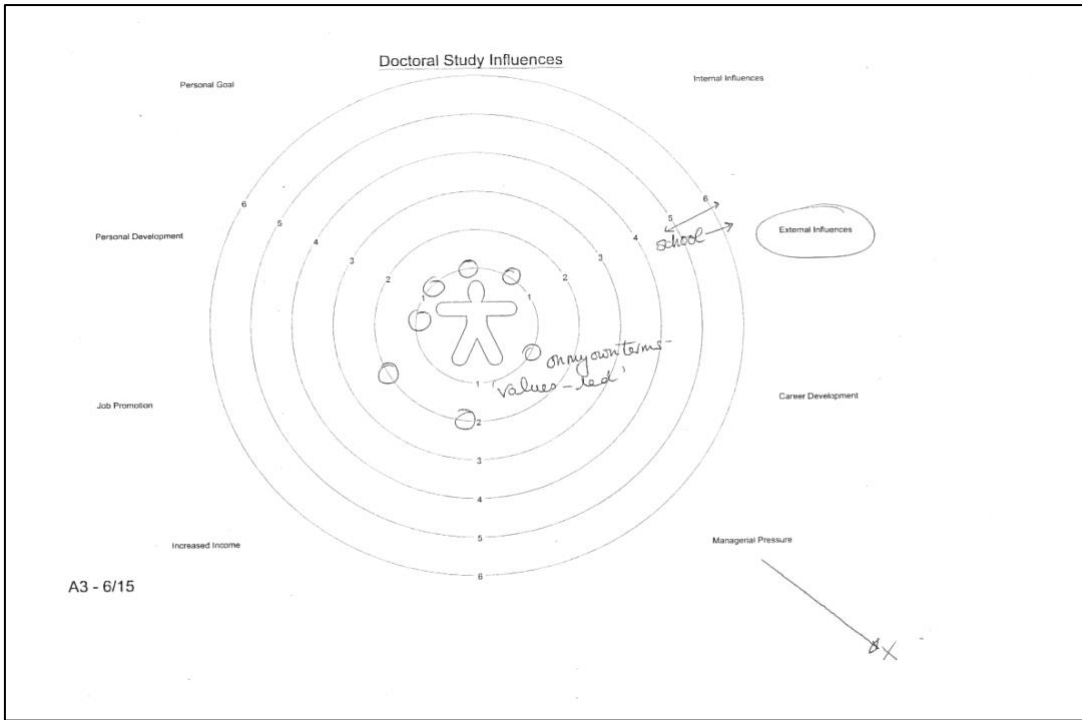












Appendix 4: Higher Education Statistics Agency

Doctoral data 2014 - 2019

sb255-figure-3

Title:	Figure 3 - HE student enrolments by level of study				
Subtitle:	Academic years 2014/15 to 2018/19				
Reference ID:	SB255 Figure 3				
Data source:	HESA				
Data source link:	<a href="https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/sb255/figure-3">https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/sb255/figure-3</a>				
Data file canonical link:	<a href="https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/sb255/figure-3.csv">https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/sb255/figure-3.csv</a>				
Licence:	Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International Licence				
Date:	2020				
Filters:	Country of HE provider	All			
	Mode of study	All			
	First year marker	All			
	Sex	All			
Level of Study	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
<b>Postgraduate</b>					
Doctorate research	98,555	98,525	100,085	100,275	101,885
Other postgraduate research	14,355	14,615	12,435	11,290	10,930
<b>Total postgraduate research</b>	<b>112,910</b>	<b>113,145</b>	<b>112,520</b>	<b>111,565</b>	<b>112,815</b>
Masters taught	299,110	293,915	313,920	334,310	354,445
Postgraduate Certificate in Education	27,400	25,990	24,020	24,945	26,345
Other postgraduate taught	98,755	98,185	101,135	95,740	92,125
<b>Total postgraduate taught</b>	<b>425,270</b>	<b>418,090</b>	<b>439,075</b>	<b>454,990</b>	<b>472,915</b>
<b>Total postgraduate</b>	<b>538,175</b>	<b>531,235</b>	<b>551,595</b>	<b>566,555</b>	<b>585,730</b>
<b>Undergraduate</b>					
First degree	1,524,235	1,564,105	1,597,825	1,621,725	1,652,675
Foundation degree	46,005	39,965	36,975	33,975	32,385
HNC/HND	15,840	15,820	15,150	14,270	12,575
Professional Graduate Certificate in Education	2,365	2,030	1,730	1,440	1,160
Other undergraduate	139,360	126,270	114,600	105,130	99,445
<b>Total other undergraduate</b>	<b>203,570</b>	<b>184,090</b>	<b>168,460</b>	<b>154,815</b>	<b>145,560</b>
<b>Total undergraduate</b>	<b>1,727,805</b>	<b>1,748,195</b>	<b>1,766,285</b>	<b>1,776,540</b>	<b>1,798,240</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,265,980</b>	<b>2,279,430</b>	<b>2,317,880</b>	<b>2,343,095</b>	<b>2,383,970</b>