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**The British Society of  
Dental Hygiene and Therapy  
South East Regional Group**

**Chatham Maritime  
7<sup>TH</sup> March 2020**

University of  
**Kent** | Centre for  
Professional Practice

**Dr Debbie Reed**

University of Kent  
Senior Lecturer

Head of The Centre for Professional Practice



**Doctor Reed...and a story of education,  
empowerment, autonomy and power...**

# Aim, Objectives and Outcomes

## Aim:

The intention of the presentation is to provide delegates with a deeper understanding of the role studying for Higher Education qualifications has in empowering Dental Hygienist and Therapists to maintain and enhance a high level of professional practice.

## Objectives:

**Identify:** the link between on-going Higher Educational study and the key features of the professionalisation of occupations.

**Discuss:** the value of Higher Education study Dental Hygiene and Dental Therapy occupations.

**Apply:** The principle of Higher education study to the context of on-going journey of professionalising the Dental Hygiene and Dental Therapy occupations.

Development outcome	Example
A Effective communication with patients, the dental team and others across dentistry, including when obtaining consent, dealing with complaints, and raising concerns when patients are at risk;	
B Effective management of self and effective management of others or effective work with others in the dental team, in the interests of patients; providing constructive leadership where appropriate;	
C Maintenance and development of knowledge and skill within your field of practice;	
D Maintenance of skills, behaviours and attitudes which maintain patient confidence in you and the dental profession and put patients' interests first.	

Linking to  
GDC Outcomes  
B, C and D

# Background

Doctoral Research

Sociology Of The Professions

Basil Bernstein – Educationalist

Narratives established through story telling

# Prompted By...

- **Interest in DCP practice—**
- **What are the key periods in relation to...**
  - The dental sector
  - Why
  - In whose interest??
- **Who is claiming what...**
  - Knowledge and 'territory'
    - for their own...
    - and why..
    - and what does that say...

Best way  
to explain  
is to tell  
you a story  
– the  
story...

# Background

Doctoral Research

Sociology Of The Professions

Basil Bernstein – Educationalist

Narratives established through story telling

# Purpose Of The Research

- The thesis sought to demonstrate how professional journeys within the dental sector are restricted or enabled by educational and pedagogic strategies and tools.
- Professions and the position of occupational groups within them are always in flux; dentistry is no exception.



# Background

- Increasingly, there are occupational groups within the dental professions, who pursue professional parity and an equivalent opportunity to influence the dental sector.
- The research focuses on understanding the elites' positioning within the dental sector from the perspective of theories of professionalisation and knowledge acquisition.

- The **sociology of the professions** provided a background which shows how occupations differentiate, some acquiring professional status and others not.

# Professionalisation

The term **'professionalisation'** is defined as the processes an occupational group undertakes when determined to achieve professional status



[1] Collective Cohesion and Patronage

[2] Epistemic Controls and Claiming Knowledge

[3] Exclusion and Closing the Market

# Background

The research was located within the sociology of education using the concepts of Basil Bernstein to analyse professional enculturation...

...in terms of what is transferred during exclusive dental-elite professional educational exchanges, with peers and superiors, steer knowledge gathering over the course of a professional lifetime.

# Basil Bernstein



Together, the concepts of **classification** and **framing** propose that knowledge reproduces and conducts dominant power structures and social values through the selection and dissemination of knowledge by way of both formal institutional curricula and informal, everyday pedagogic communications.

Bernstein's theory proposes that *what* knowledge is **selected** for curricula (classification) and *how* it is **transmitted** (framing), shapes and can change society.

# Aim of the Research

- The practical aim of the research was to inform the **professional journeys** of other aspiring dental occupations seeking to achieve elite, that is to say, influential positions in the future.

# The 3 Research Questions

- (1) How are the professional journeys of influential dental sector elites characterised?
- (2) What typifies the relationship between powerful and dominant agents/agencies that influence the formation, distribution and communication of professional knowledge in dentistry and those who go on to establish elite professional positions within the dental sector?
- (3) What are the implications of a Bernsteinian analysis for the emerging professionalising dental occupations?

- These questions were generated from my own experiences, both as a registered dental professional and as a researcher and also from a consideration of social theories which align with my beliefs, assumptions and values

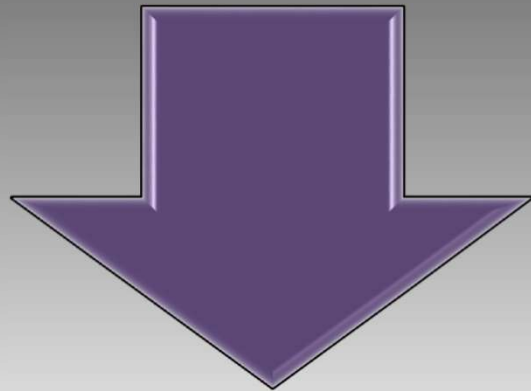
# Process Overview

- The questions were addressed by qualitative exploration of the educational and professional lives of **nine influential elite** professionals working within the dental sector.
- Influential elites who have **held positions of national influence** within the National Health Service, the Department of Health or other government office, or have been the national representative of one of the registered dental professional bodies in a role related to the development of the dental workforce and dental workforce strategy.

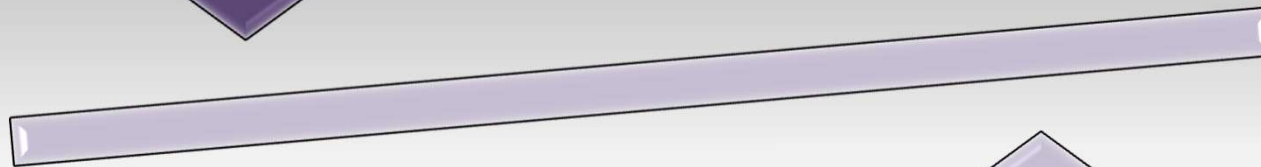


<b>Table 5.1 Introduction To Dental-Elites</b>		
<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Key Influential Roles</b>	<b>Brief Narrative Appendix 15</b>
<b>St Clair</b>	Ex-Dean of the Royal College of Surgeons Faculty of General Dental Practice.	a.
<b>Angus</b>	Academic and ex Chair of General Dental Council and British Dental Association.	b.
<b>Walter</b>	Ex-NHS Postgraduate Dental Dean and member of COPDEND. Committee member of Royal College of Surgeons Faculty of General Dental Practice.	c.
<b>Nigella</b>	Department of Health, past deputy Chief Dental Office and a committee member of Royal College.	d.
<b>Andrew</b>	Civil Servant – Department of Health.	e.
<b>Robbie</b>	Academic and past Chair of the Dental School's Council.	f.
<b>Cathy</b>	Ex-NHS Postgraduate Dental Dean, Chair of COPDEND and invited member of Royal College of Surgeons Faculty of General Dental Surgery.	g.
<b>Evan</b>	Ex-Associate Dean of Royal College of Surgeons Faculty of General Dental Practice and committee member of the General Dental Council.	h.
<b>Wayne</b>	NHS Postgraduate Dental Dean, member of COPDEND and a lead in the current NHS Advancing Dentistry Project.	i.
<b>Casey</b>	The composite narrative of the fictional character.	j.

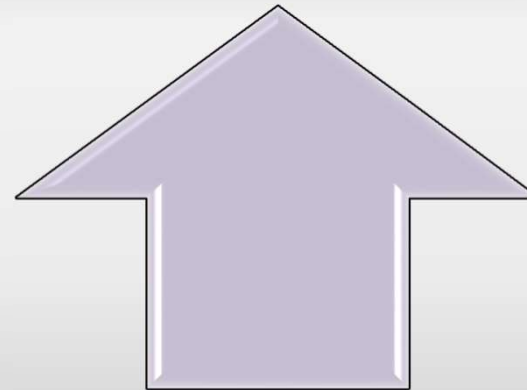
# Methodology and Methods



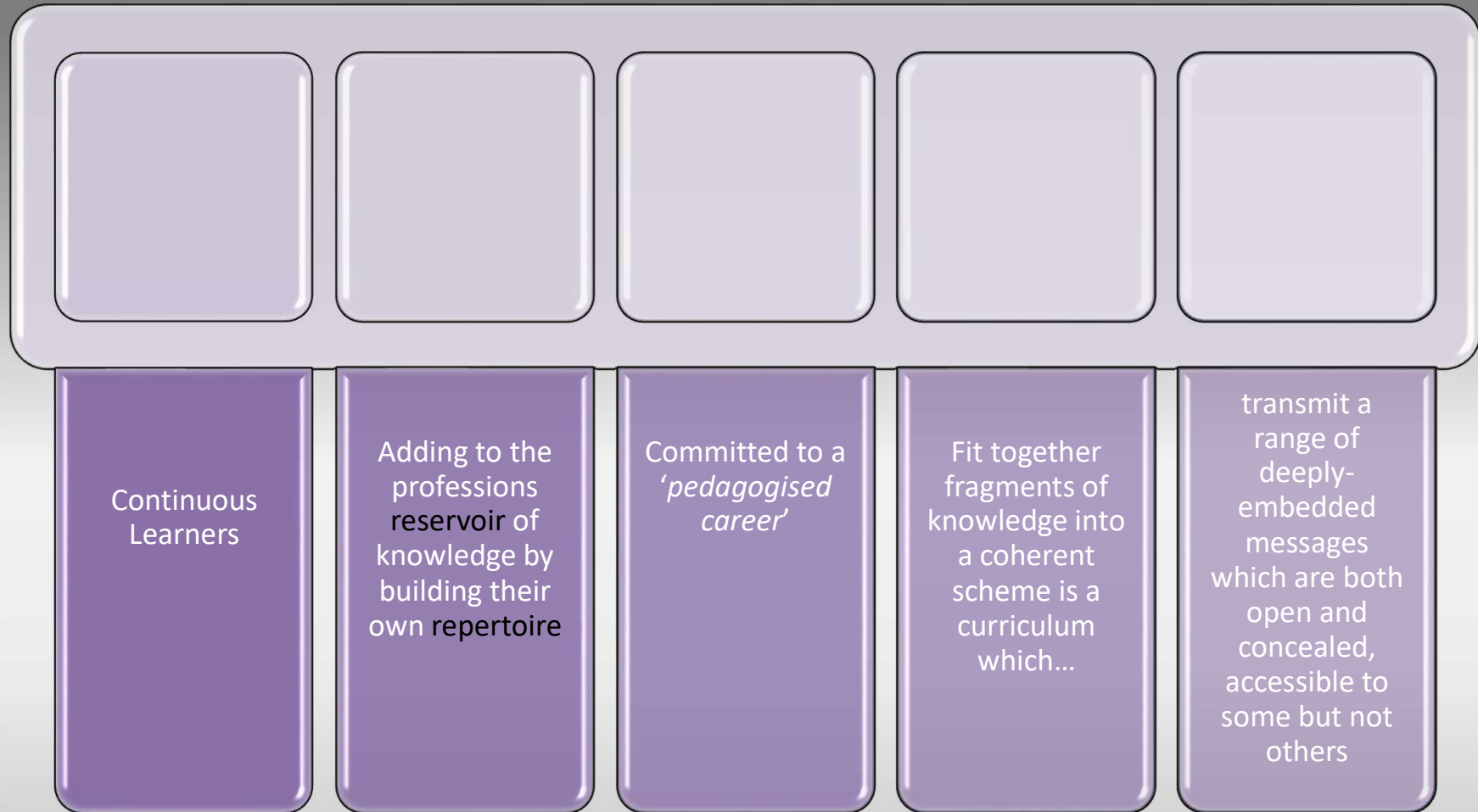
Narrative  
Methodology  
Methods interviews  
& life grids



Plus historical and  
policy documents



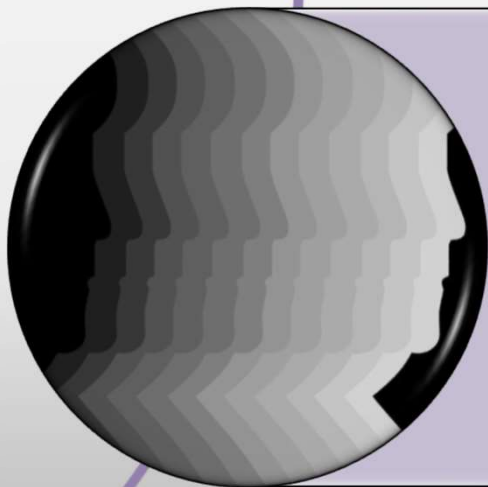
# Findings ...Dental Elites are...



# Findings



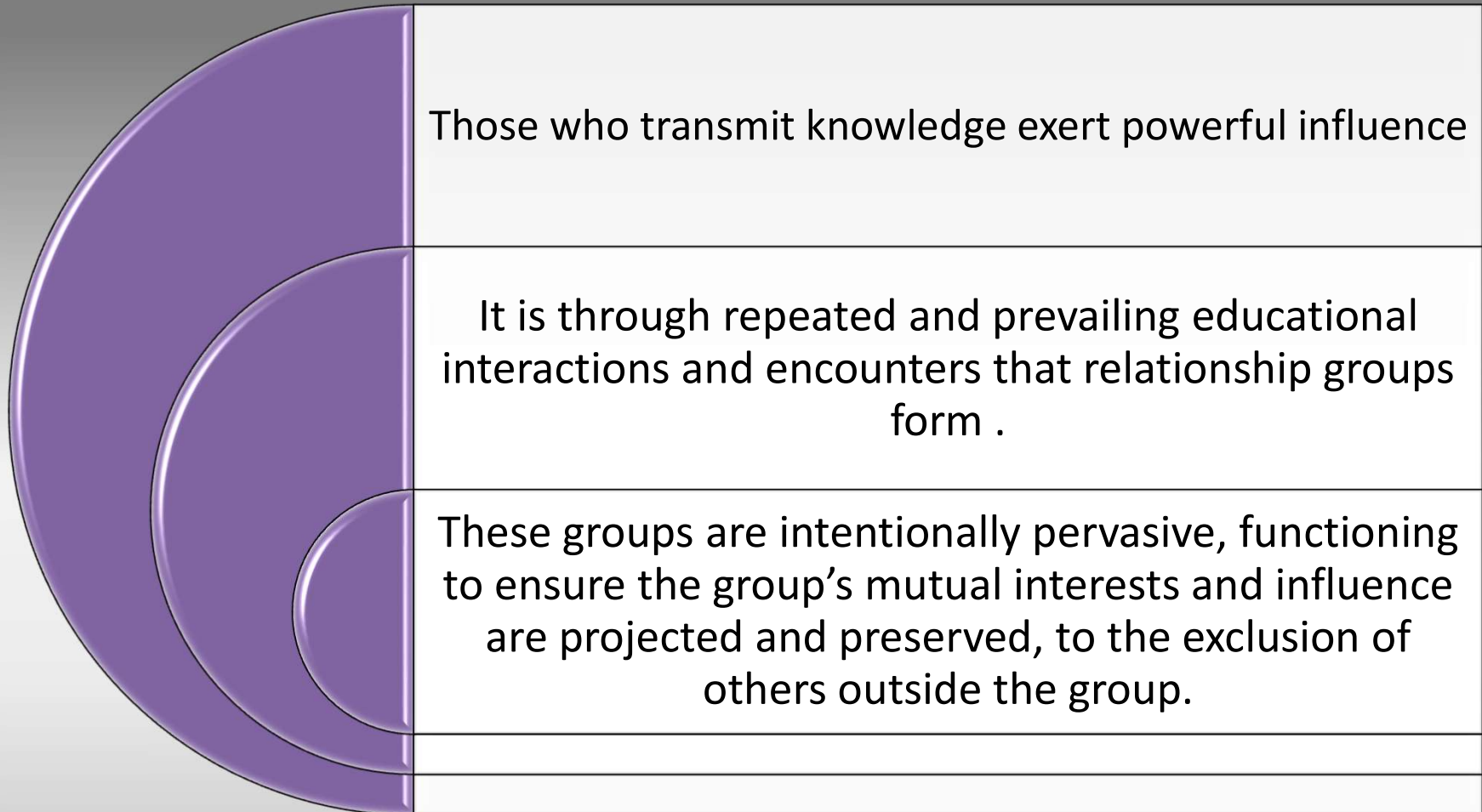
The findings showed that such messages influenced the receiver of education, [1] a sense of who they were [2] their limits in terms of options as to what they were permitted to do



Knowledge might fade or be replaced, the **relationship were enduring** and relied upon by the influential dental-elite to gather further knowledge in the future

- This is how a system of practices, norms, values, and worldviews that the professional curriculum conveys are presented.

# Thesis Argued



# The lesson for others



Against which  
their own  
pedagogic  
structures  
might be  
evaluated.

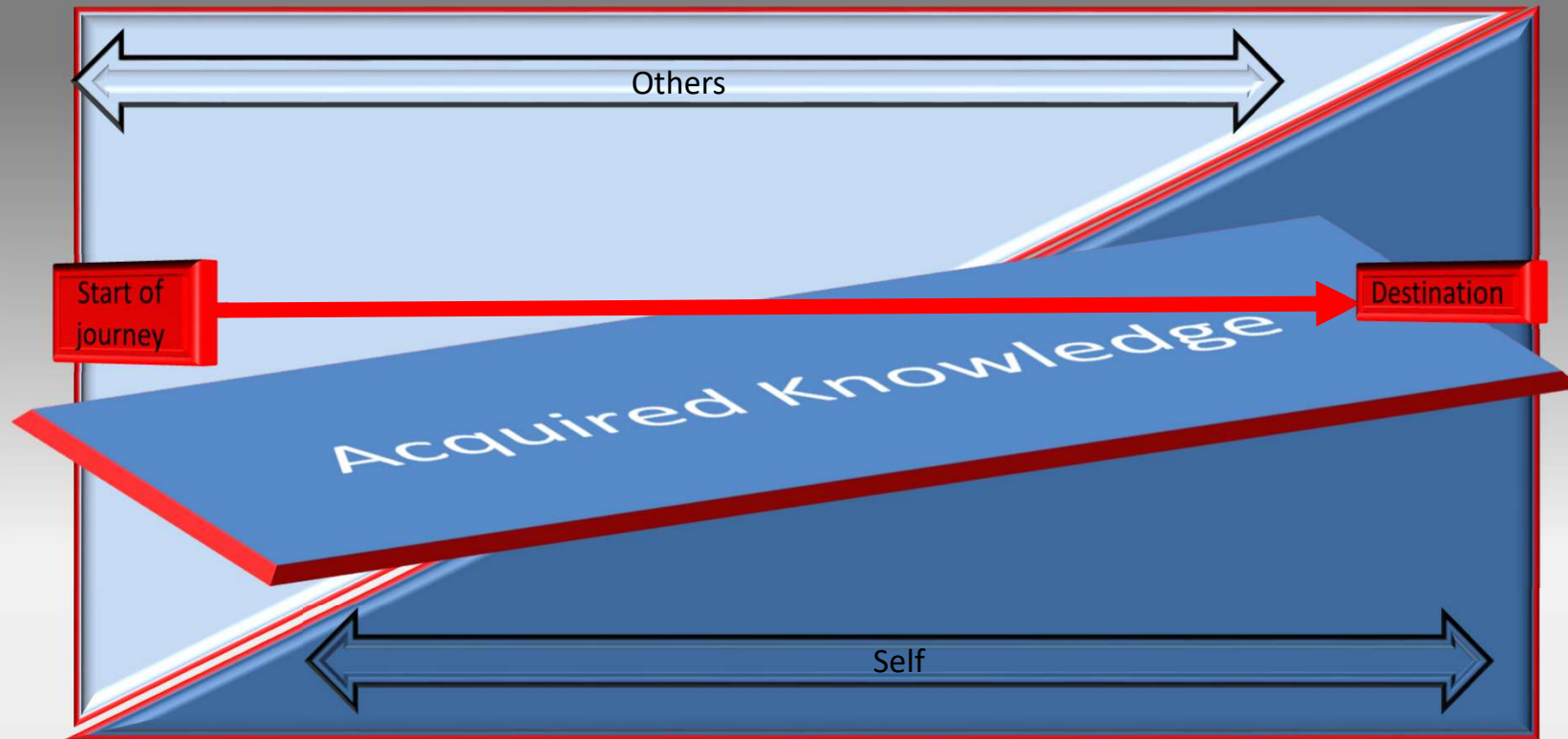
This with a  
view to  
identifying  
how these  
structures  
might be  
strengthened  
to support  
those who  
wish to  
achieve  
positions of  
influence  
within the  
dental sector  
of the future

# Model of the Journey of Dental Elite Acquisition of Knowledge



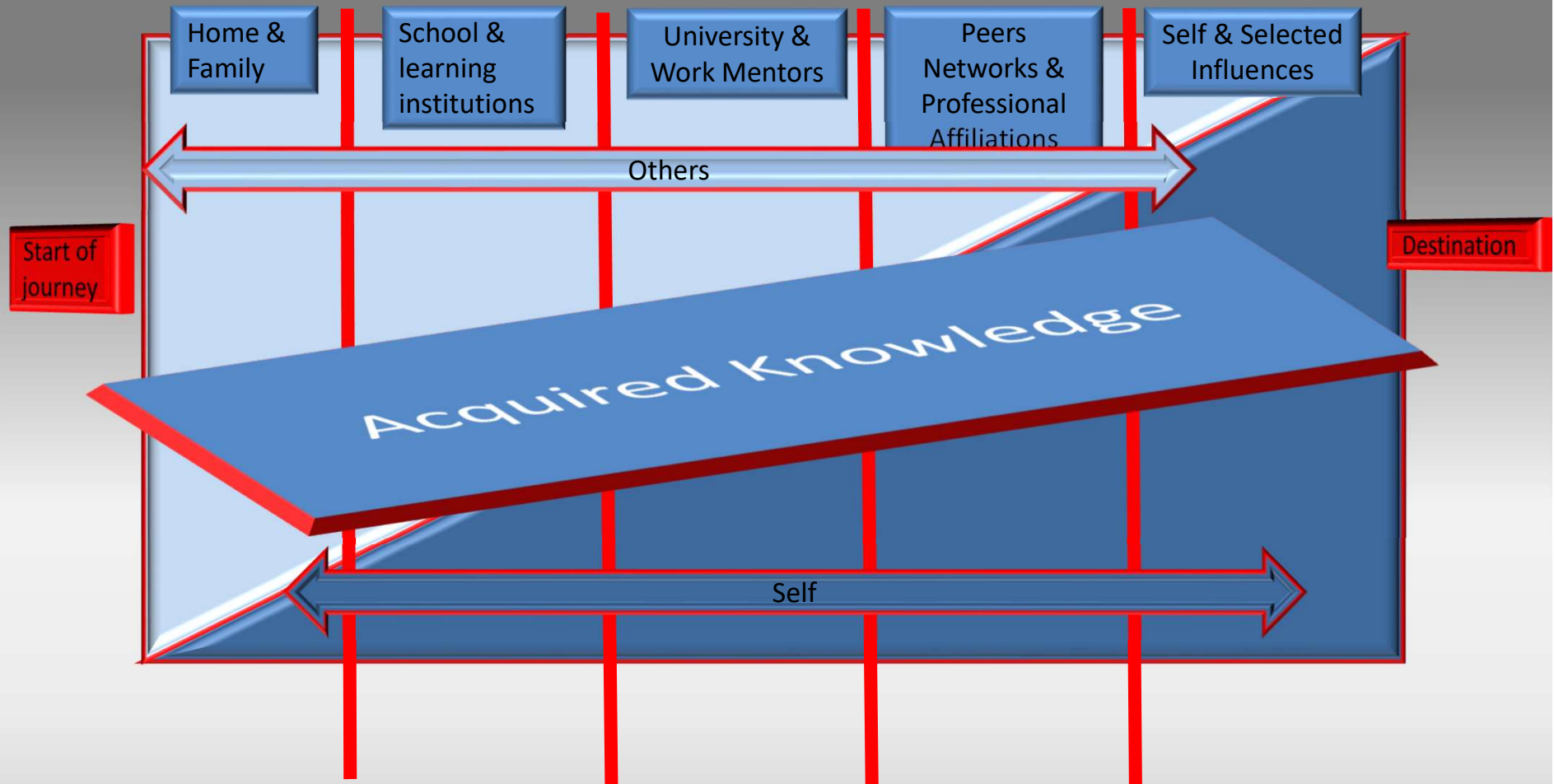
# Model of the Journey of Dental Elite Acquisition of Knowledge

Figure 6.2

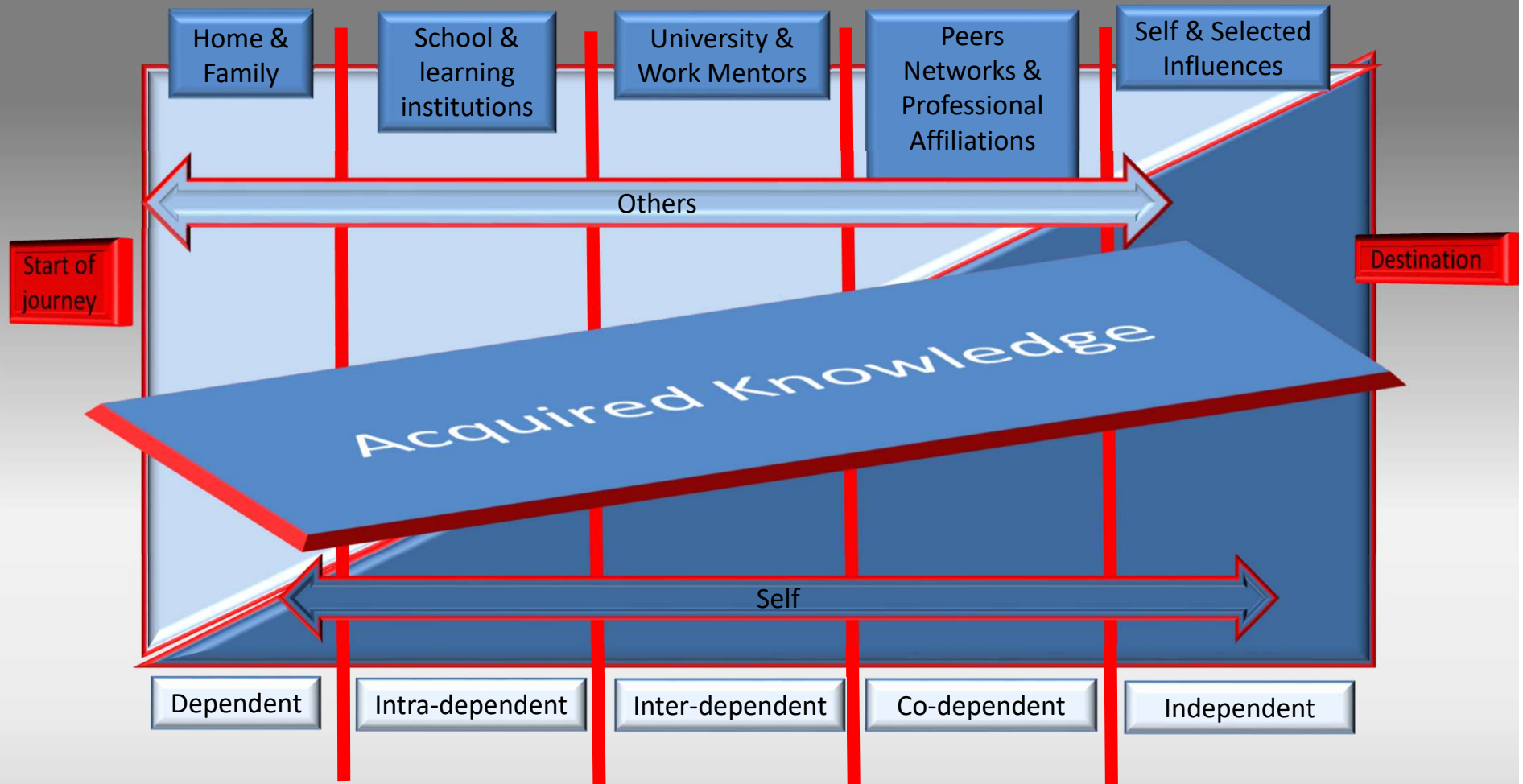




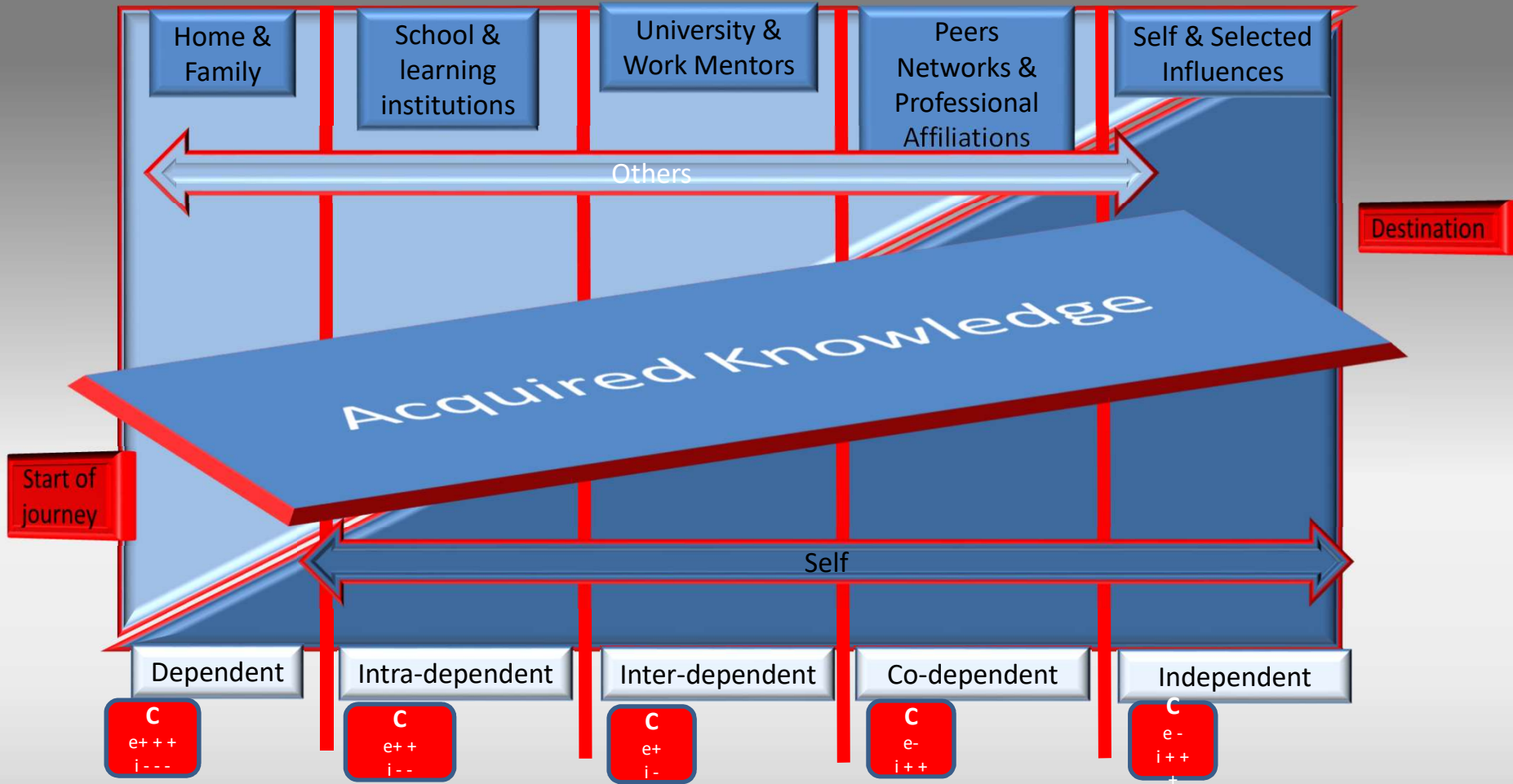
# Model of the Journey of Dental Elite Acquisition of Knowledge



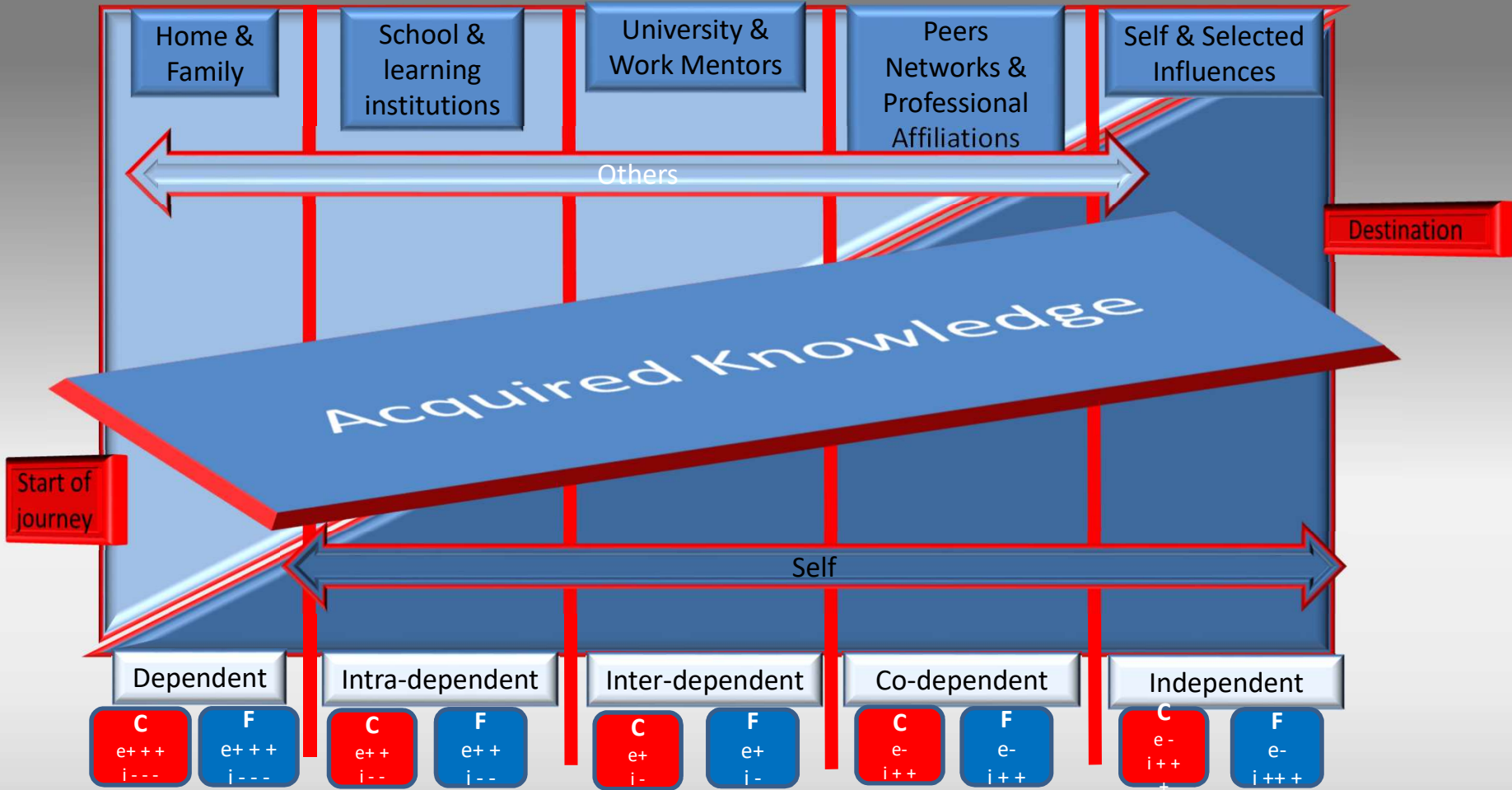
# Model of the Journey of Dental Elite Acquisition of Knowledge



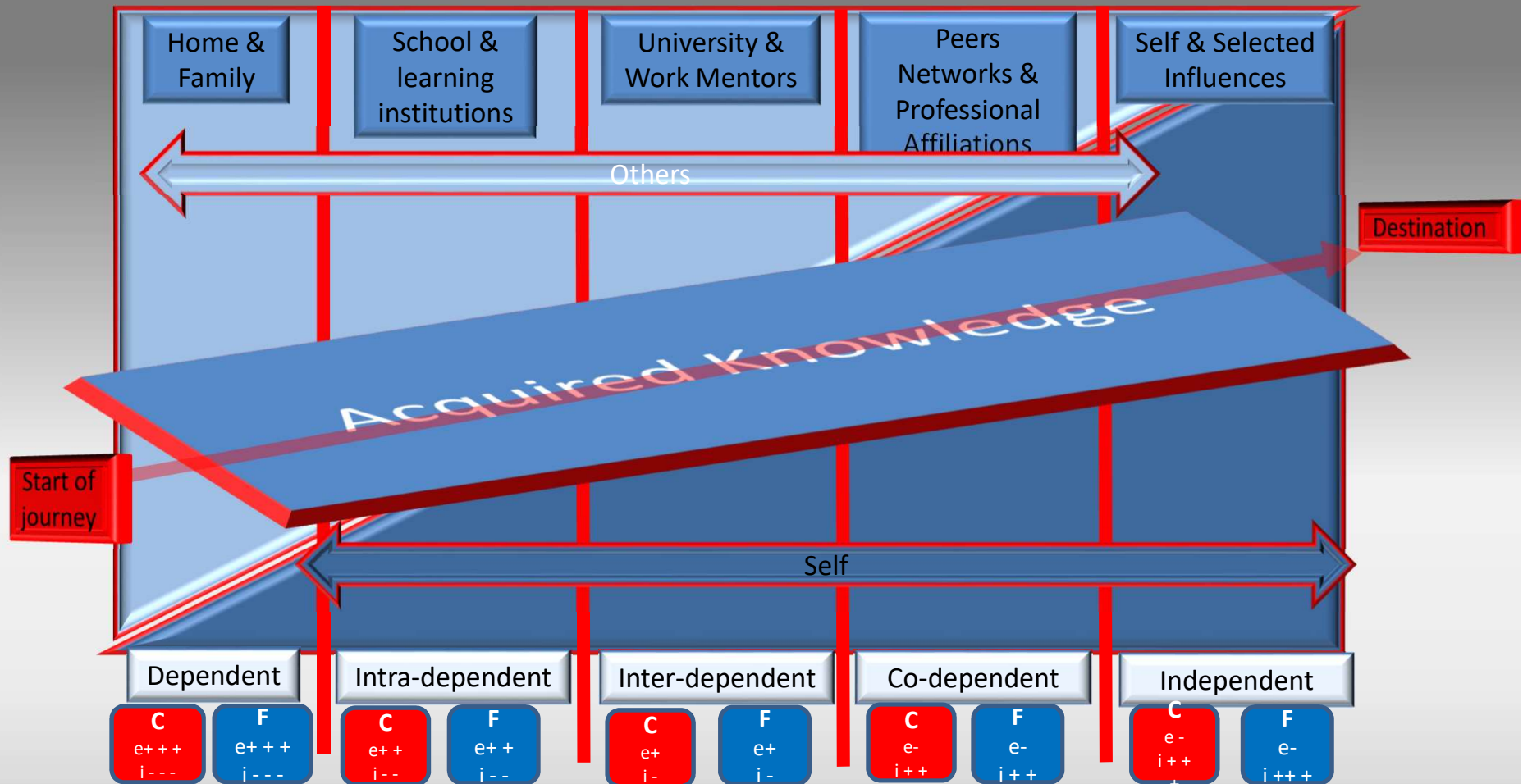
# Model of the Journey of Dental Elite Acquisition of Knowledge



# Model of the Journey of Dental Elite Acquisition of Knowledge



# Model of the Journey of Dental Elite Acquisition of Knowledge



Animated Model

11 minutes in length

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zYqt1pfORTA>

**Thoughts?**



# Implications: Micro (Practitioner) Level

## Understanding of Professionalisation

The study furnishes practitioners with a foundation for understanding key information and direction to locating evidence sources and historical insight

## Tool for Reflection

The study offers practitioners a tool with which to punctuate their day-to-day activity and to secure conversational spaces for deeper reflective consideration of how development and educational opportunities, specifically related to postgraduate study and professional credentials, have advantaged others in the past.

# Implications:

## Meso (Organisational) Level

- Model of *Journey of Dental-elite Acquisition of Knowledge*
- The model is for practitioners, but mainly for professional organisations and educational stakeholders.

What is the current nature of the organisation?

What are the organisation's positions, both strategic and operational?

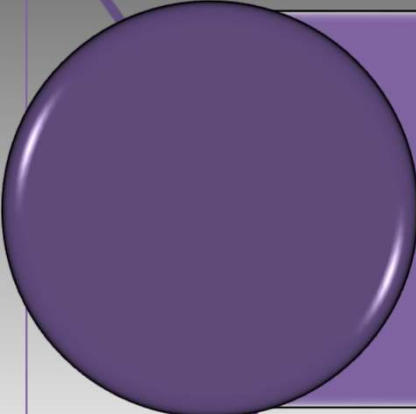
What position does the organisation need to adopt to ensure members' interests are represented going forward?

Are the vision, values and strategy enough to reflect the purpose of the organisation and its relevance in the future?

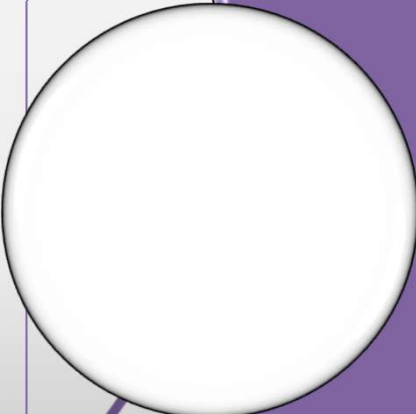


# Implications: Macro (National) Level

- The transformation of the dental workforce is an ongoing project.
- For those seeking to bring about workforce transformation in terms of future dental sector influencers



First, identify and understand 'who' (organisations, positions and individuals) controls and transmits knowledge within the dental sector and *de facto* those who exert powerful influences on those with whom they come into frequent and prolonged contact. Then...



Second, develop a strategy (and associated policies) that aim to establish routes to ensure that these arenas are 'opened up' so that all occupational groups, not only have advocacy, but also a presence, with legitimate rights to be part of decision-making and to contribute to powerful, multi-professional dental arenas.

# Contributions to the Dental Professions

This study has contributed to understanding the journeys to positions of influence within the dental sector, and what lessons can be learnt from these journeys to enable others who increasingly represent the multi-professional workforce, to make those journeys too...

the role of influential knowledge, which binds the dental-elite together

- how that
- knowledge is
  - acquired

- how influence
- is sustained

The research has generated understanding about...

# Contribution to Professions



This research has contributed to the evolution of the dental workforce by illustrating how one dental profession has established control through professionalisation.



It also shows that if associated inequalities in knowledge and educational distribution continue, there will be a resultant continuation in stratification within the dental professions.



It has been possible to illuminate the potential effects of educational stratification, such as access to powerful groups through a credentialing system, which permitted access and contribution for some but not others.



# Theoretical Contribution

Innovative use has been made of Bernsteinian concepts to explore how the elite of the dental workforce propel themselves through career-long knowledge acquisition and pedagogical relationships.

In Bernstein's terms, a discursive gap has been opened up between the internal language of the theoretical concepts and the external language of the real lives of influential/elite dentists.

By gathering the narrative accounts of elites who have achieved positions of influence within the dental sector, it is possible to understand what characterises the career journeys that lead to positions of power and the influences that are bought to bear during those journeys.

It has been possible to illuminate the potential effects of educational stratification, such as access to powerful groups through a credentialing system, which permitted access and contribution for some but not others.

# Contribution to Knowledge



The research has shown how the acquisition of sacred knowledge from certain 'others' through pedagogic devices, over a career lifetime, produces a dental-elite professional.

Although located within the context of dentistry, this approach could be applied to any occupation seeking professional standing.



Bernstein has been used to highlight the struggles occupations experience to gain professional status and his concepts to frame the professional enculturation, in terms of what is transferred during exclusive elite professional educational exchanges, with peers and superiors, which steer knowledge-gathering over the course of a professional lifetime

# Questions?

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**Research Gate**



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## References

In addition to the documents and sources already mentioned, the following informed the material delivered today...

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