

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a key. The hand is positioned on the left side of the frame, with the thumb and index finger gripping the key's head. The key is a standard brass key with a notched blade. The background is a dark blue gradient. The text 'Beyond Bourdieu and Bernstein: Legitimation Code Theory' is overlaid on the right side of the image in white font.

# Beyond Bourdieu and Bernstein: Legitimation Code Theory

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# Plan

1. Why do we need to see knowledge practices?
2. How can we see knowledge practices?
3. What do we gain from seeing knowledge practices?
  1. greater explanatory power
  2. practical impacts
  3. meta-language for understanding research
  4. building cumulative knowledge



# Plan

1. **Why do we need to see knowledge practices?**
2. How can we see knowledge practices?
3. What do we gain from seeing knowledge practices?



# The knowledge paradox

Two features of accounts of contemporary social change:

1. claim knowledge is central to economy, politics, culture and personal life; e.g.:

- Castells, M. (1997, 2000a, 2000b) *The Information Age, volumes 1-3* (London, Blackwell).
- Stehr, N. (1994) *Knowledge societies* (London, Sage)
- Bauman, Z. (2000) *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge, Polity)
- many theorists in the past: Bell, Touraine, Masuda, Beniger, Machlup, Porat, Lyotard, Harvey, Drucker, etc.

2. lack a theory of knowledge

- e.g. ‘a set of organized statements of facts or ideas’ (Castells 2000a, p.17, n25)



# Knowing

‘scientific understanding of learning includes understanding about learning processes, learning environments, teaching, socio-cultural processes, and the many other factors that contribute to learning. Research on all of these topics, both in the field and in laboratories, provides the fundamental knowledge base for understanding and implementing changes in education’

(Bransford, Brown & Cocking, 2000, *How People Learn*, p. 233)



# Constructivism

- dominant approach to education in many countries, including Australia
- a theory of *learning* that is often seen as a theory of teaching, of curriculum and of research
- based on belief that ‘the more basic phenomenon is learning’ (Lave and Wenger 1991: 92)
- *what* people are learning is obscured



# ‘Epistemological dilemma’

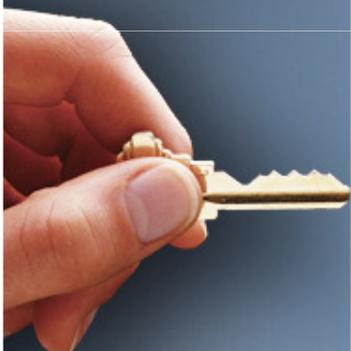
Either / or choice between:

- positivist absolutism
  - knowledge as decontextualised, ‘objective’ and value-free
- constructivist relativism
  - knowledge as socially constructed and entwined with power and interests



# False choices

- *intellectual fields*
  - either formal properties of knowledge or play of power among actors
  - either ‘relations within’ or ‘relations to’ only
- *educational fields*
  - either transmission of knowledge or valorising experiences of knowers
  - e.g. teacher-centred versus student-centred
- *either epistemic relation or social relation (LCT)*



# Knowers

- ‘new sociology of education’ of 1970s, standpoint theories, ‘critical’ theories, various ‘constructivisms’
- key moves:
  - Knowledge is socially constructed
  - ...rather than related to something real.
  - So, reality is socially constructed,
  - and knowledge is only relative to a standpoint.
  - Thus knowledge is arbitrary and only reflects dominant social interests.
  - Main aim should be to unmask all claims of knowledge as merely somebody’s knowledge



# Knowledge-blindness

- ‘space of possibles’ is subjective knowledge only:
  - inside our minds (knowing)
  - someone’s perspective (knowers)
- studies of knowledge as an object are seen as essentialist, asociological and ahistorical
- knowledge equated with contents



## Socrates in Plato's *Theaetetus*

- You are over-generous, my friend. I asked for one, and you are offering many; I asked for something simple, and you respond with complexity.
- But the question was not “What are the objects of knowledge?”, nor ‘How many branches of knowledge are there?’. We didn’t ask the question because we wanted a catalogue, but because we wanted to know what knowledge is.
- Doesn’t it strike you as dishonourable for us to assert what knowing is like, when we are ignorant about knowledge? ... getting clear about knowledge is altogether one of the highest achievements.



# Plan

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- 2. How can we see knowledge practices?**
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# Social realism: a coalition of minds

- coalesced from late 1990s onwards; focus:
  - ‘For knowledge’ (Moore 2000)
  - ‘Recovering pedagogic discourse’ (Maton 2000)
  - *Reclaiming Knowledge* (Muller 2000)
- ‘second wave’ of scholars
  - e.g. conferences in Sydney 2004, Cambridge 2008, Sydney 2008, Cape Town 2009
- draws from:
  - sociology, e.g. Bernstein, Bourdieu, Collins
  - philosophy, e.g. Bhaskar, Gellner, Williams
  - systemic functional linguistics - ‘Sydney school’



# Power and knowledge

- knowledge of the powerful
  - traditional focus of sociology of education
  - reveal whose position lies underneath supposedly ‘neutral’ or ‘objective’ knowledge
- powerful knowledge
  - neglected by most educational research
  - some forms of knowledge are more powerful than others
  - some forms are better for building knowledge over time, for helping students learn, etc



# Legitimation Code Theory ('LCT')

- relational and realist sociological framework, created from and for empirical research

Integrates and subsumes:

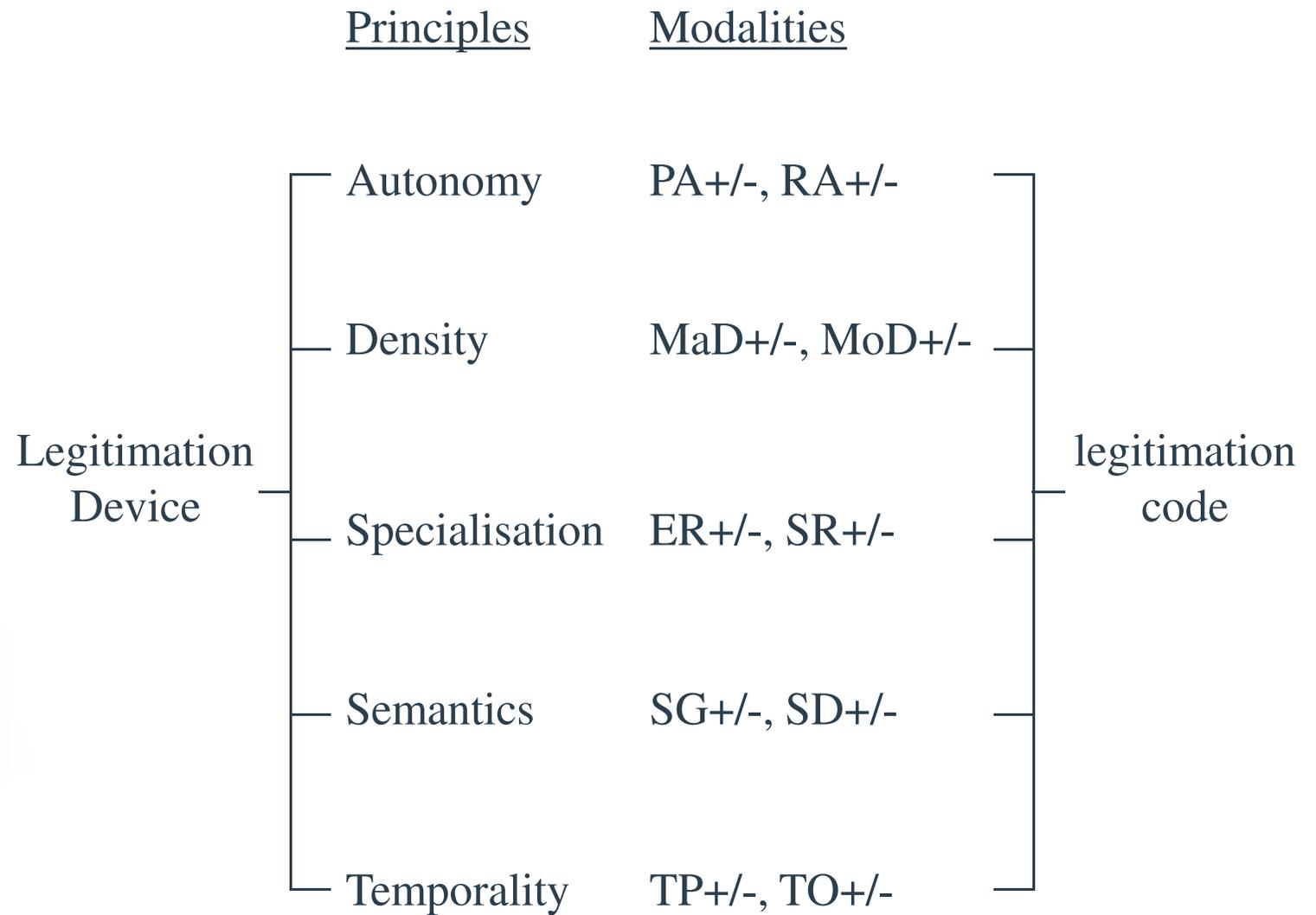
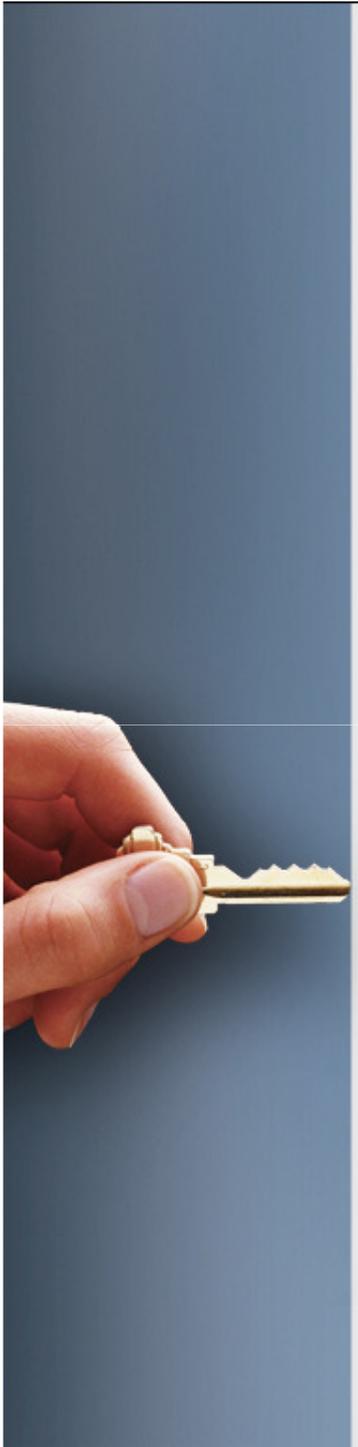
- Bourdieu – practices are strategies of actors who are positioned in fields of struggle over status and resources
- Bernstein – analyse organising principles of those practices in terms of 'codes' and 'devices'
- critical realist ontology and epistemology
- other influences including Karl Popper, Mary Douglas, Ernest Gellner, Michel Foucault, etc.



## Basic ideas

- Education as a ‘field of struggles’ where actors compete for legitimacy
- Practices and beliefs as *languages of legitimation*: measures of achievement
- *Legitimation device* - ruler of the field
- *Legitimation codes* – organising principles of practices

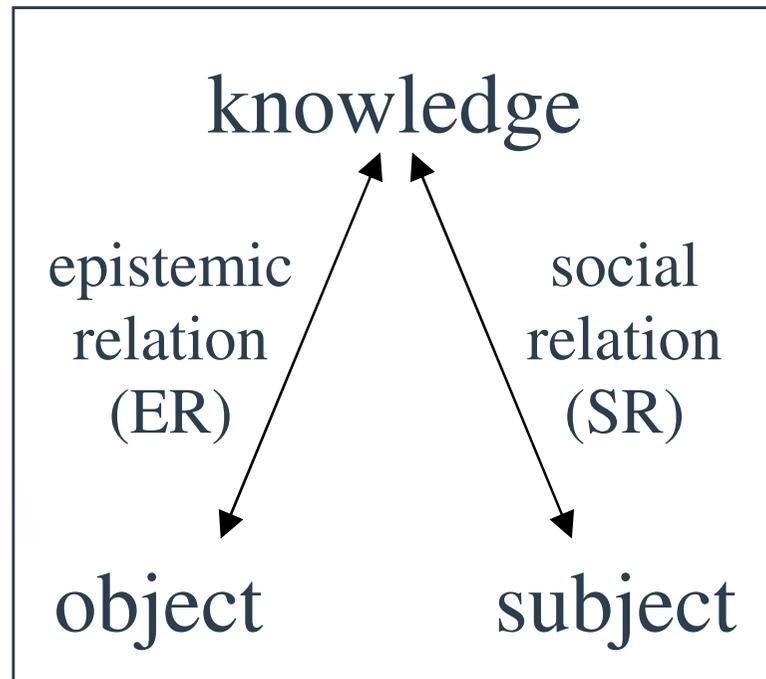






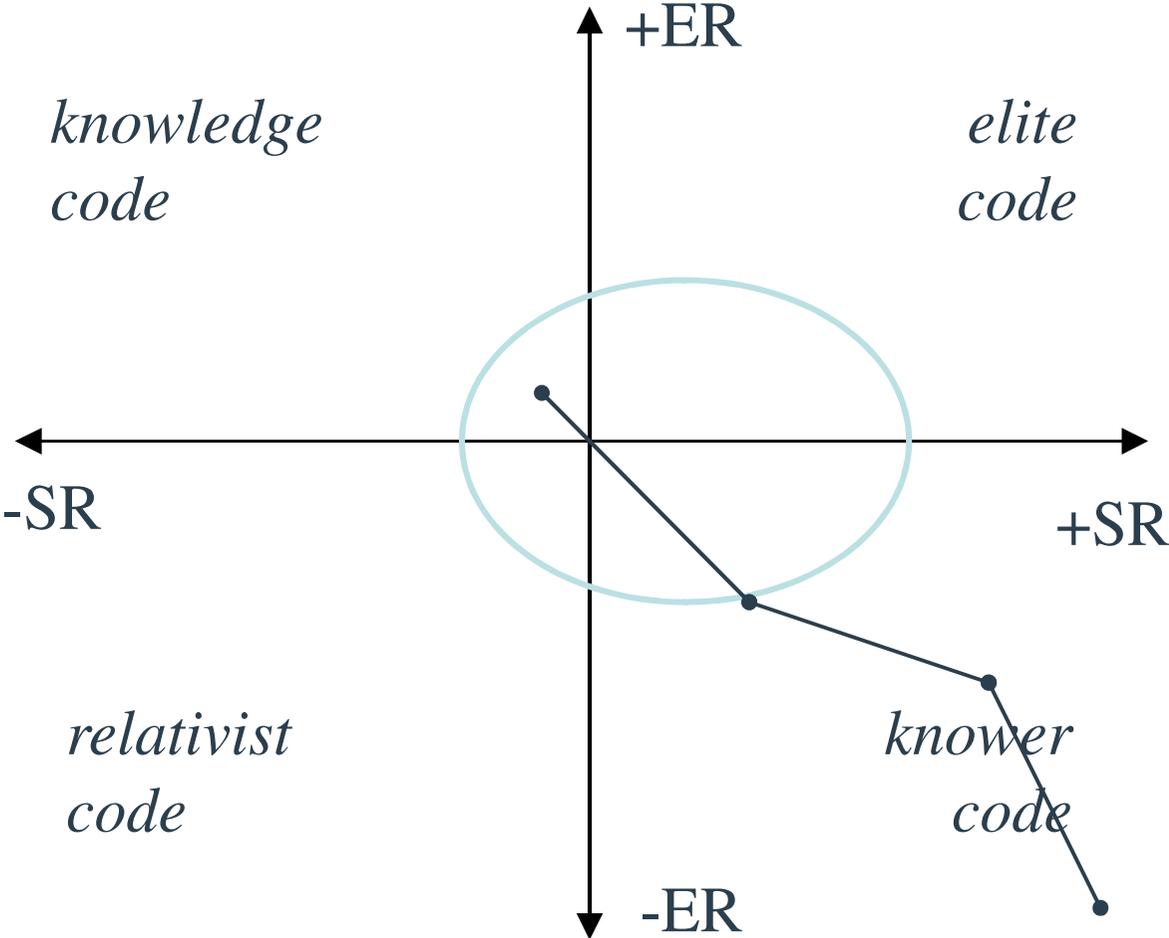
<u>Principle</u>	<u>Referent relations</u>	<u>Concepts</u>
Autonomy	external	positional autonomy, relational autonomy
Density	internal	material density, moral density
Specialisation	social- symbolic	epistemic relation, social relation
Semantics	meaning	semantic gravity, semantic density
Temporality	time	temporal position, temporal orientation

# LCT(Specialisation)



- ★ ER and SR can each be stronger (+) or weaker (-)
- ★ Two strengths give code for Specialisation

# Specialisation codes of legitimation



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## Gains from seeing knowledge using LCT\*

1. accounts of greater explanatory power
2. practical implications for education policy
3. meta-language for objectifying fields
4. capacity for building cumulative knowledge

\* proclamations of seeing knowledge are insufficient; gains require relational concepts analysing organising principles; ideal types and metaphors will only help partially. If in doubt, consult an independent theoretical advisor with realist credentials.



## (1) Greater explanatory power

Example: Chinese students learning online in Australia

– Rainbow Chen, Sue Bennett & Karl Maton

- Context

- growing internationalisation of student body

- growth of educational technologies

- dominance of constructivism

- Data:

- in-depth series of interviews with students

- interviews with teaching staff

- analysis of teaching materials



# Analysis

## 1. code 'heritage culture'

- educational dispositions brought by Chinese students to Australian higher education

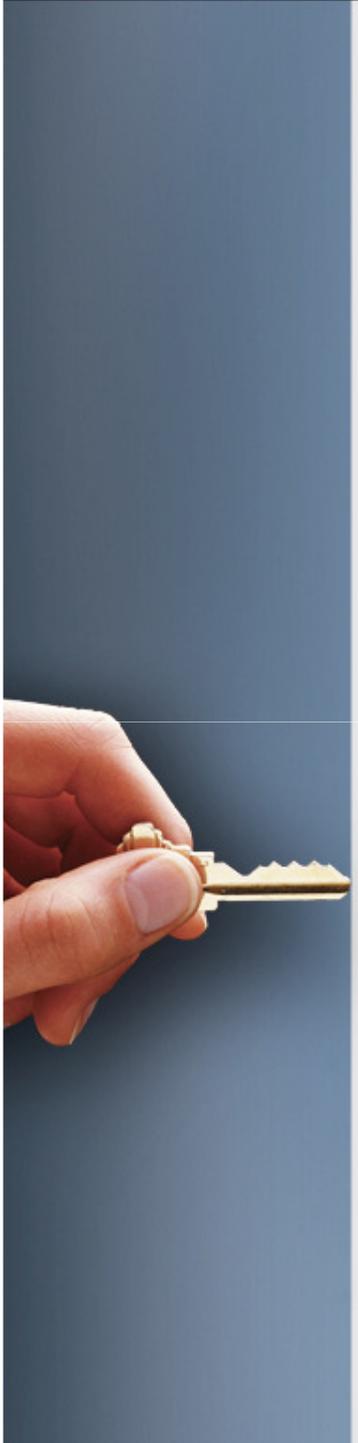
## 2. code 'host culture'

- educational contexts they encounter in Australian university

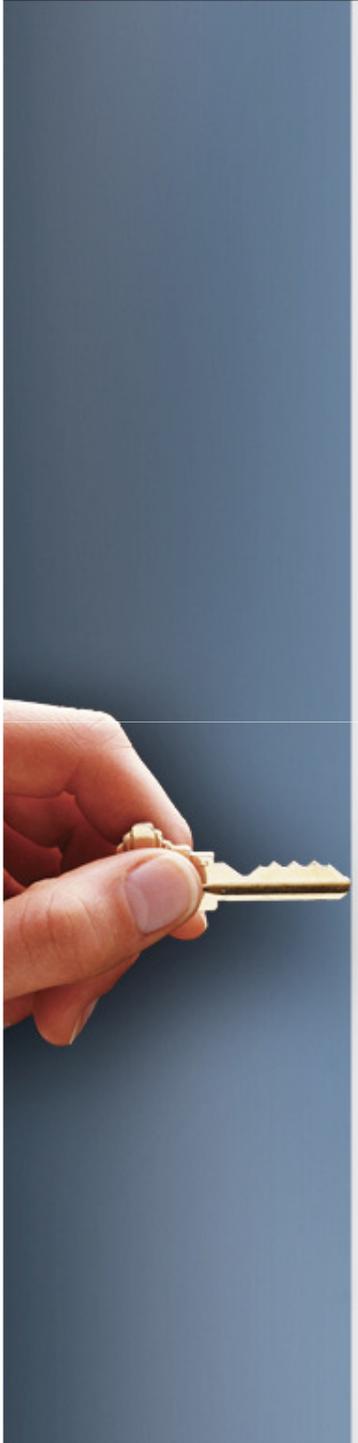
## 3. relations between 1 and 2:

- experiences of these students within these contexts

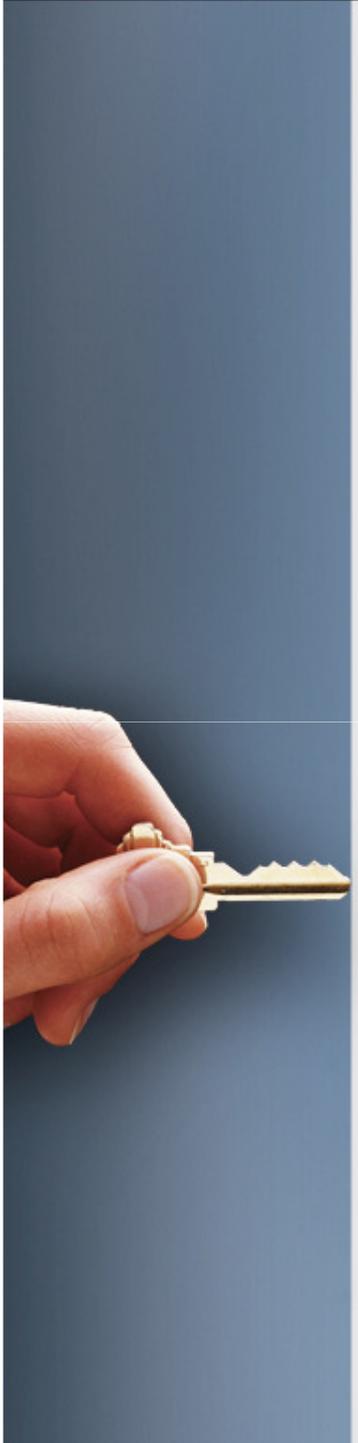




- heritage educational culture
  - content knowledge, explicit instructions and criteria, strong boundary between everyday and academic knowledge, expertise based on knowledge
  - downplay personal opinions and experiences
  - *knowledge code (ER+, SR-)*
- host educational culture
  - little explicit instruction, content is arbitrary, teacher as ‘facilitator’ or ‘co-learner’
  - student as already legitimate knower of personal experiences and opinions
  - *knower code (ER-, SR+)*

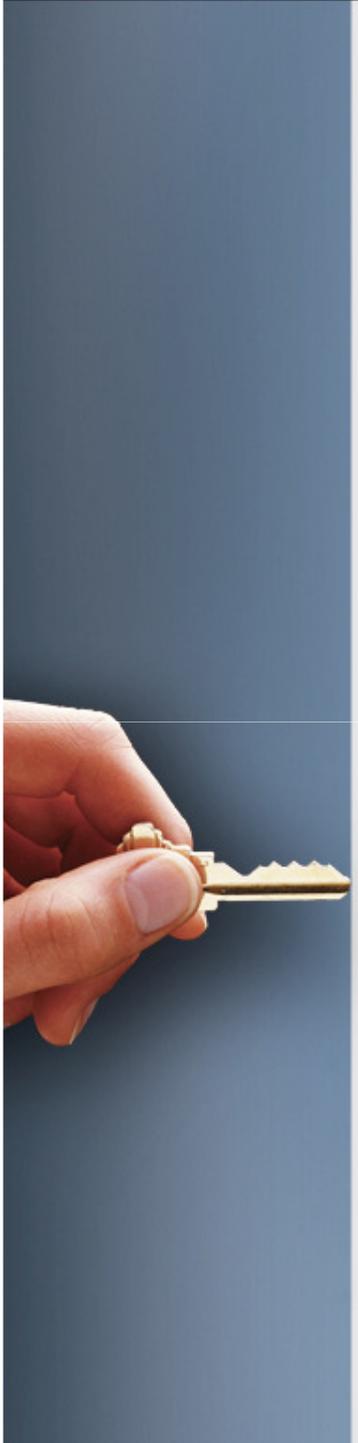


- students' experiences:
  - did not understand 'rules of the game'
  - did not see themselves or fellow students as legitimate knowers: personal experience of little value
  - did not view pedagogy as teaching anything
  - experienced vacuum of legitimacy
  - *relativist code (ER-, SR-)*

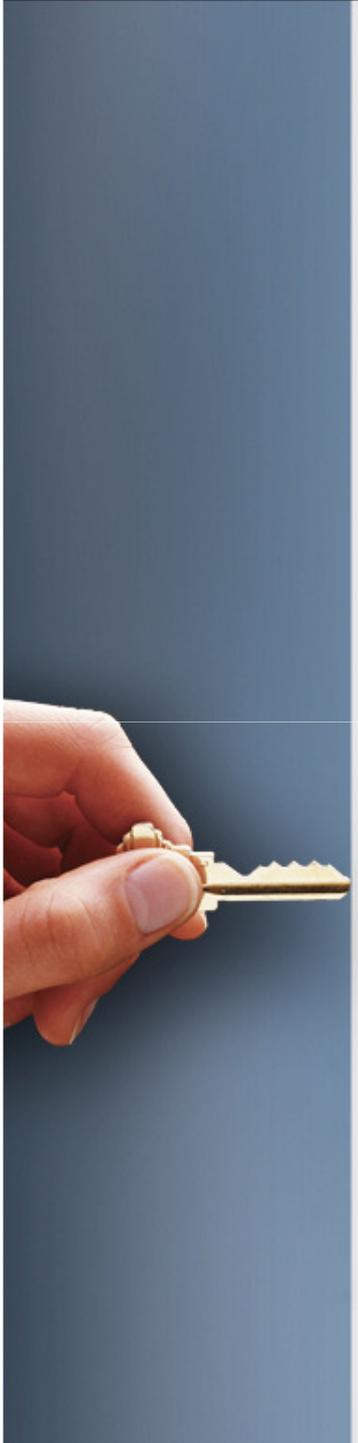


‘I feel that teachers do not teach in online classes. They raise a lot of questions for us to discuss. What do they teach us? They teach us nothing. They ask us to think, but what if I can’t think of anything? I can sit there thinking all day, not sleeping at all, but I still can’t think of anything. So I don’t think they are teaching me.’

(Vivian, Interview 3)



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- students' responses:
  - treat assignments as traditional essays
  - read only teacher contributions
  - write to criteria as much as possible
  - assemble 'personal' opinions from literature
  - i.e. continue using past educational practices (knowledge code)
  
  - led to feelings of inferiority, anxiety, insecurity, frustration, guilt, helplessness and depression

## Code clash

- knowledge code students (ER+, SR-) in knower code environments (ER-, SR+):
  - did not see SR+ (e.g. personal experiences) as legitimate basis
  - so experience knower code as vacuum
- = relativist code experience (ER-, SR-) with negative psychological and educational effects



## (2) Policy implications

- Digital Education Revolution in New South Wales (DER-NSW)
  - one-to-one laptop program for all Year 9 students (ages 14-15) and teachers
  - evaluation led by Dr Sarah Howard, University of Wollongong
- Research focus:
  - influence on pedagogy
  - influence on students' understanding, skills, and attitudes
  - consequences for students' educational outcomes



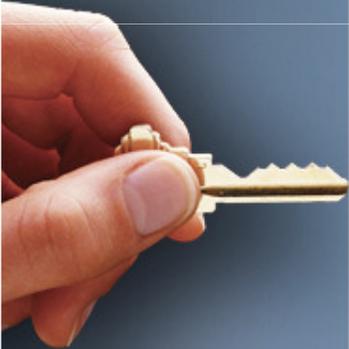
# Mixed-methods evaluation

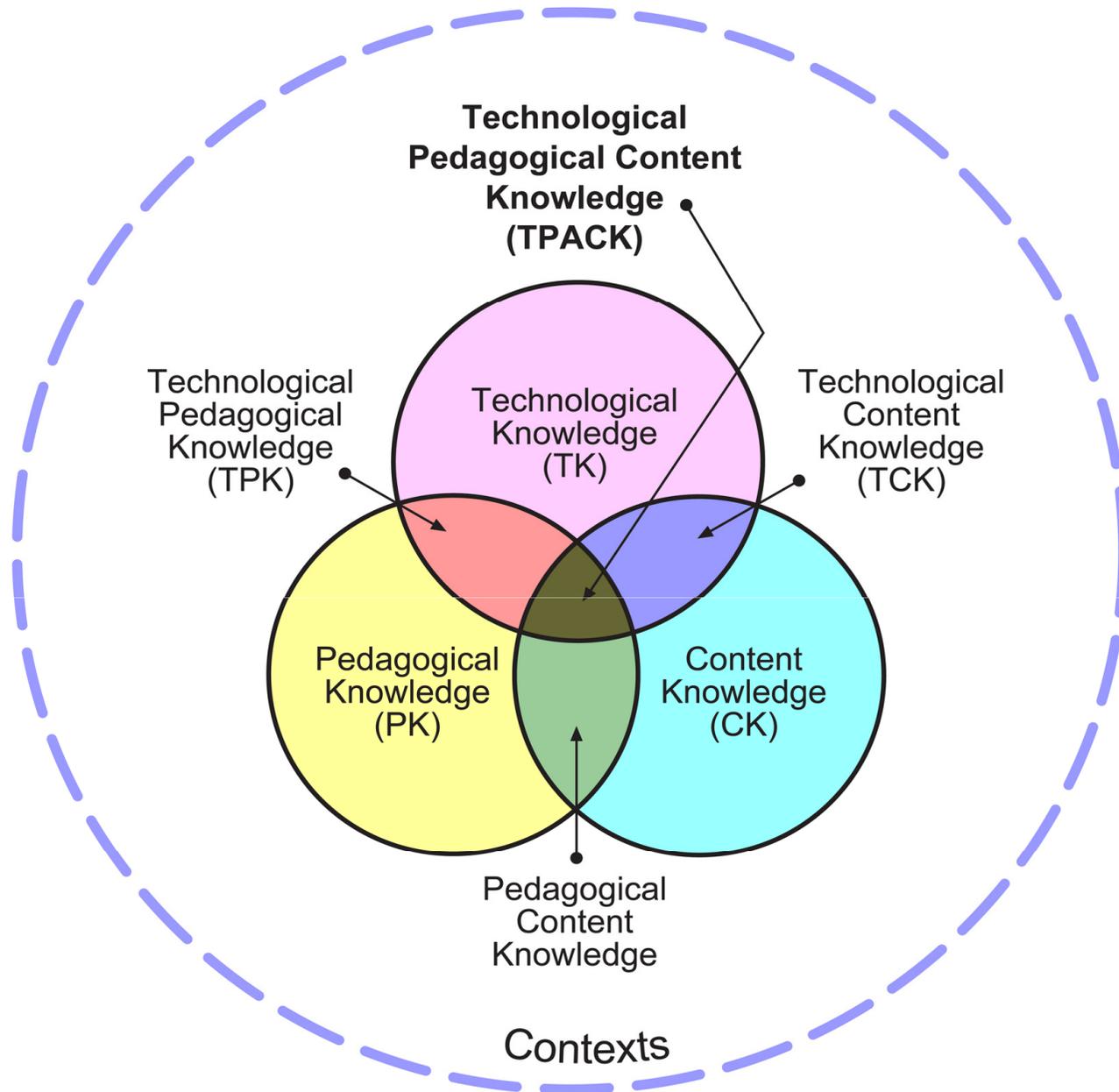
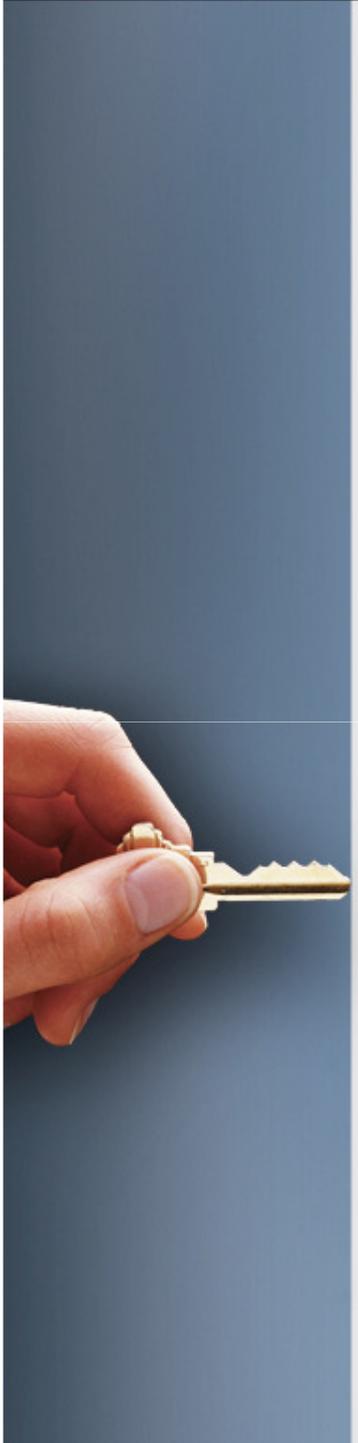
- Online questionnaires
  - student: access to and knowledge of technologies
  - student: beliefs about technologies, learning and integration
  - teacher: use of, and beliefs about, technologies in teaching and learning
- Case studies of schools: interviews and focus groups
- Document analysis, e.g. curriculum, school policy, government policy, etc.



# Context

- existing research shows differential integration across subject areas
- different forms of knowledge practices are largely absent from research





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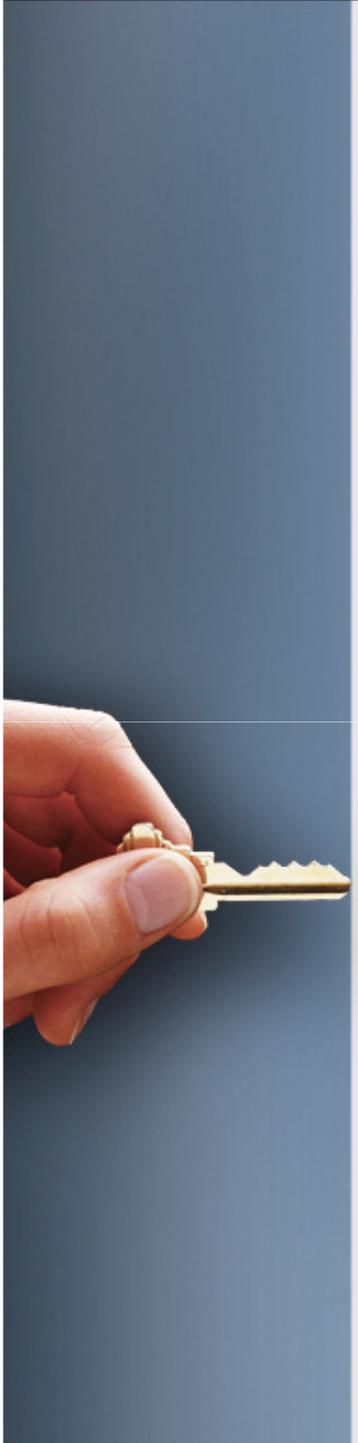
=> does form taken by knowledge practices in different subjects play a role in shaping use of technology?



# Analysis

- a) coding policy goals: practices desired by DER-NSW in use of technology
- b) coding existing knowledge practices in different subjects areas
- c) analyse relations between these codes to help explain differential integration of technology across the curriculum





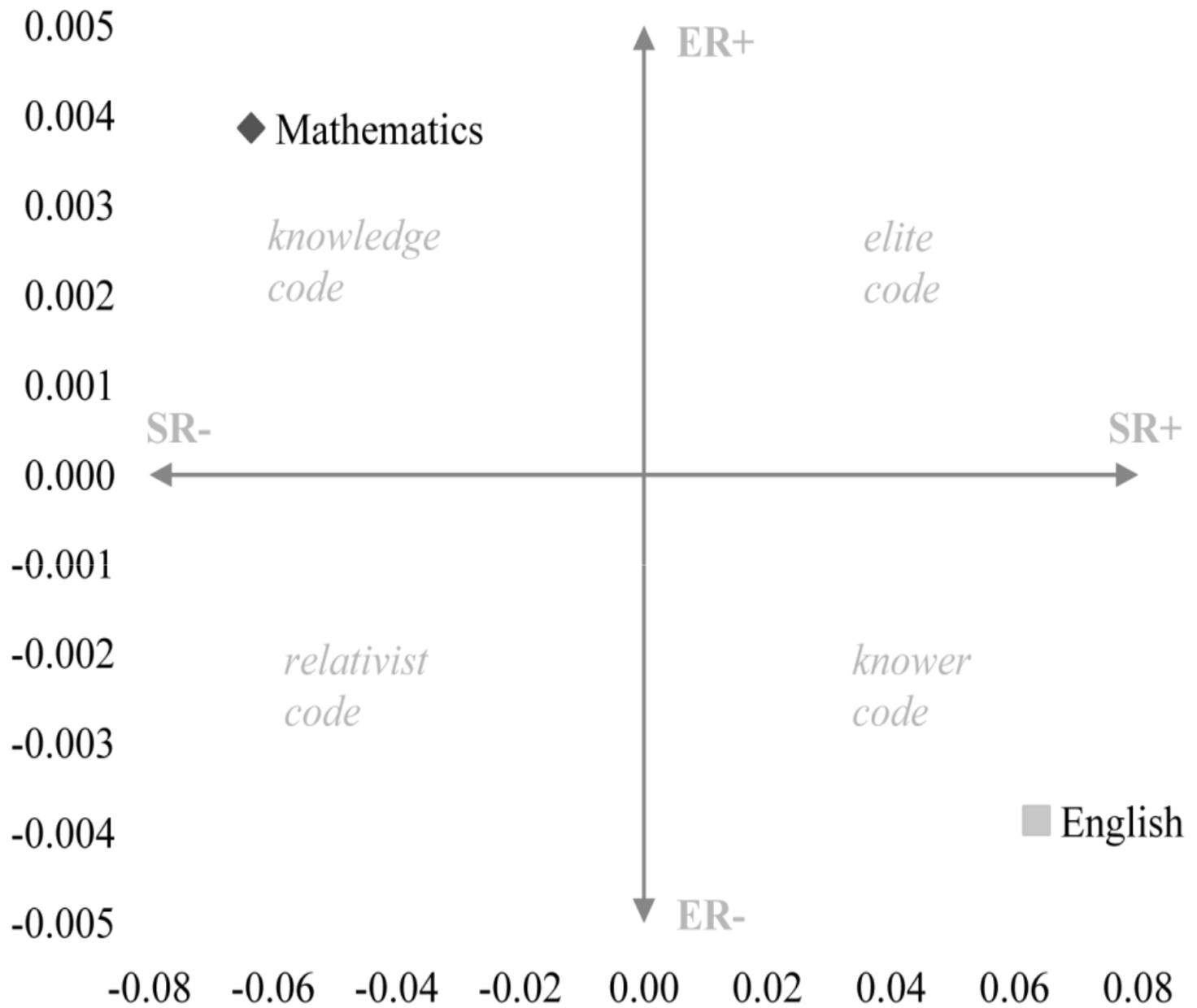
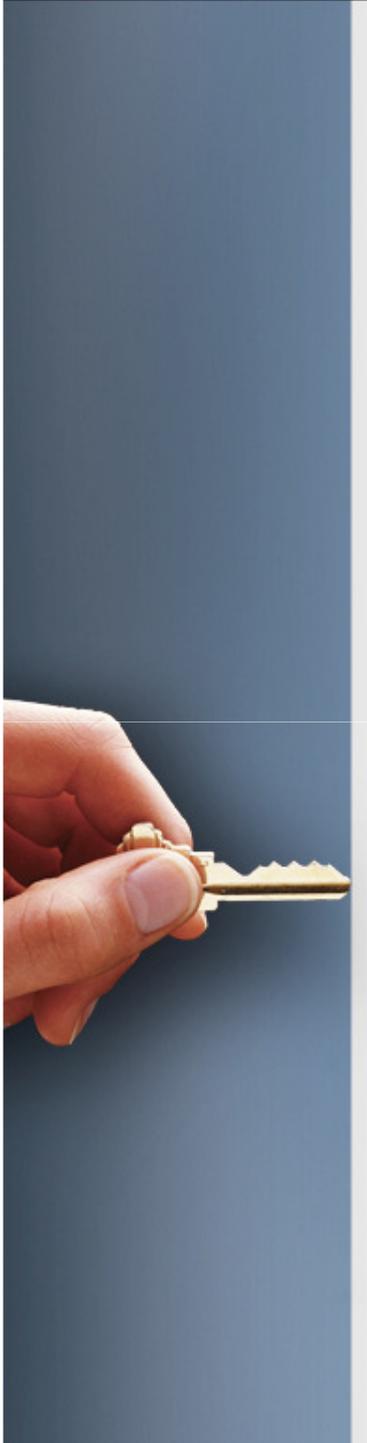
- Aims of DER-NSW:
  - shift from ‘teacher-centred’ to ‘student-centred learning’
  - no mention of specialist knowledge or subject content
  - emphasise personal attributes of teachers and learners

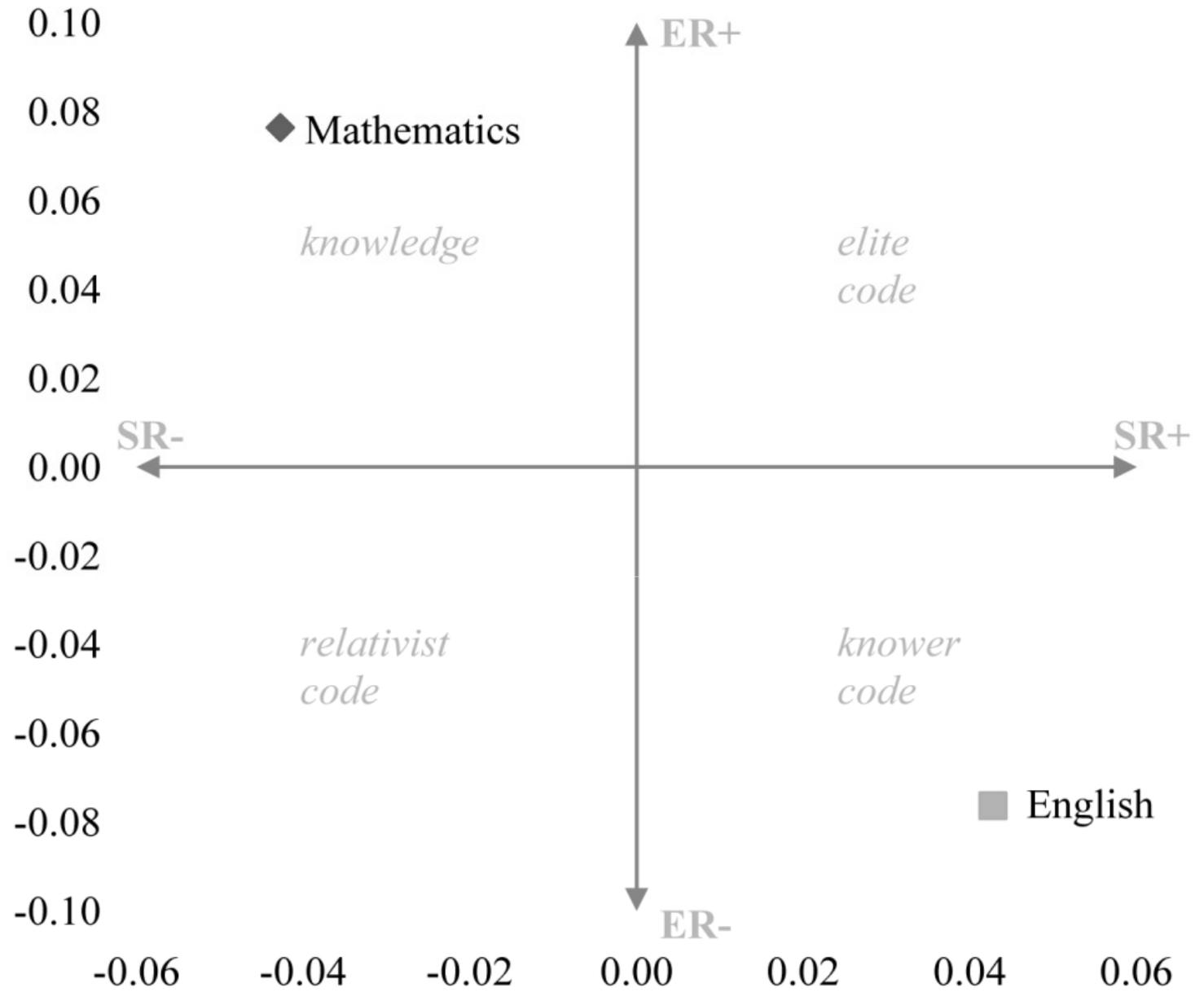
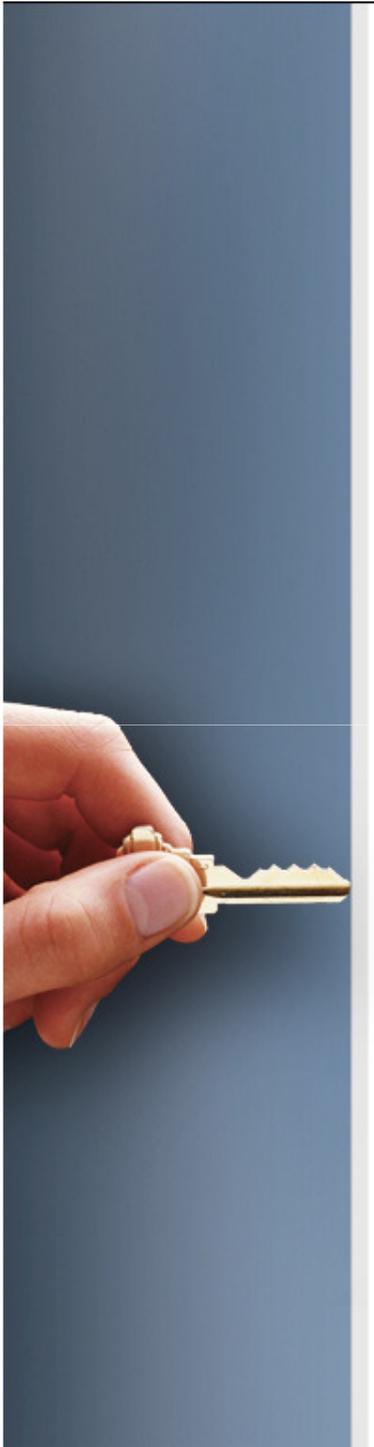
= *knower code (ER-, SR+)*

- Subjects:

**9. How important are the following things for being good at Maths?**

	Not at all	Not very important	Important	Very important
Having natural talent at Maths.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Learning knowledge and skills in Maths.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Getting experience or a ‘feel’ for Maths.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>





# Code clash and match

- DER-NSW = knower code
- Mathematics = knowledge code
  - lower use of new technologies
- English = knower code
  - higher use of new technologies



## Mathematics (interviews)

- ‘Maths is about practice, practice, practice’
- use new technologies for learning mathematical skills – e.g. graphing
- but not for student-centred practices: ‘Oh! You mean the *long way around!*’
- use less technology and, where used, it is for *knowledge code* goals



# English

- ‘a love of words, of language itself’
- new technologies used to enable students to express themselves, show their already legitimate insight
- but not for technical skills – e.g. essay structure and grammar
- use more technology for *knower code* goals but not for *knowledge code* goals

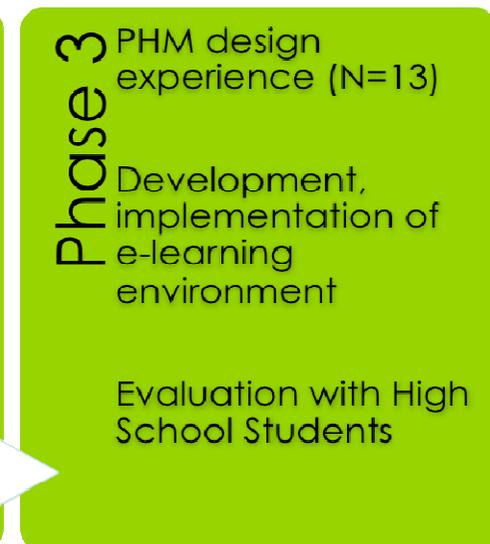
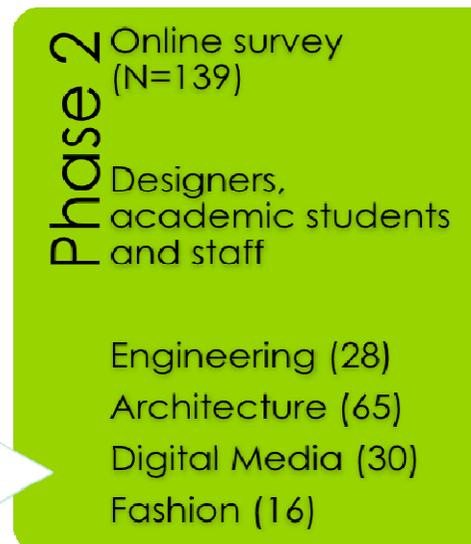


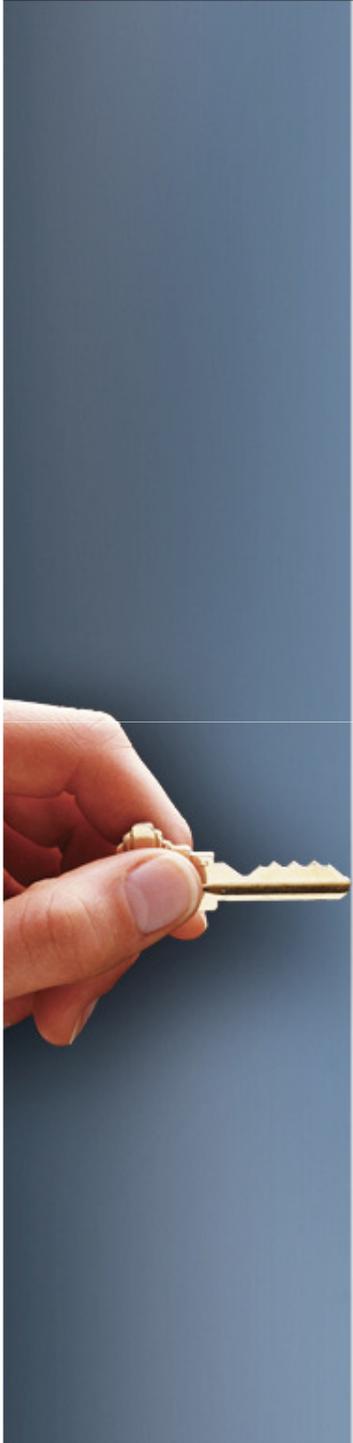
# (3) Meta-language to objectify fields

Informal learning about design

Lucila Carvalho, Andy Dong & Karl Maton

- Context
  - growing emphasis on informal learning
  - growth of new information and communication technologies
  - design as ‘laboratory’ of code clashes and code shifts
- 3 stages of research:



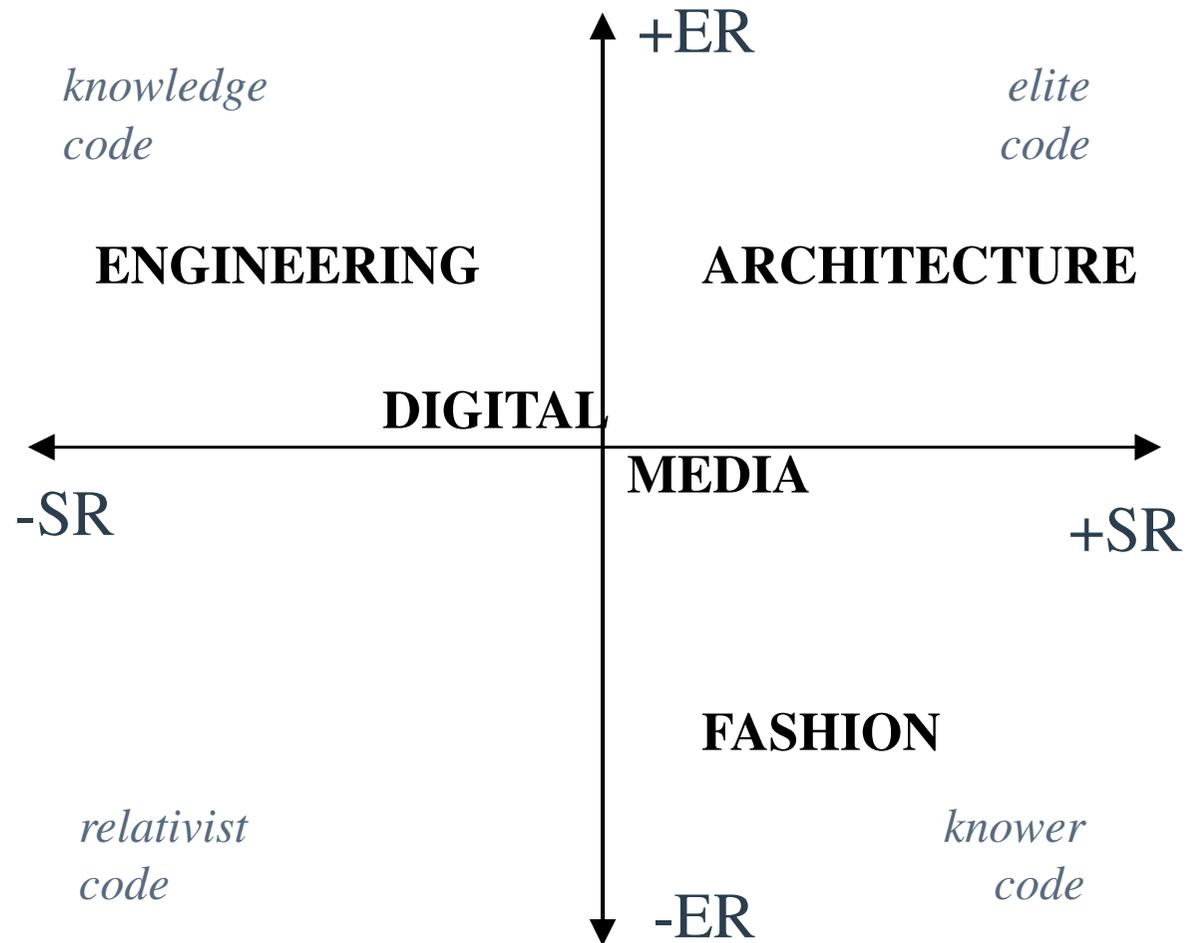


## Phase 2 - survey

- Perceptions of design disciplines
  - Task 1 - Use three words to describe design disciplines
  - Task 2 - How important are skills, taste & talent?
- Perceptions of designers
  - Task 1 - Use three words to describe designers
  - Task 2 - Fictitious profiles
- Strategies to identify genuine design
  - Task 1 - How often designers in your discipline do X
  - Task 2 - Open question - other strategies



# Four design disciplines



The Design Cycle

Objects



DESIGN STUDIO

- › WELCOME
- › **CHOOSE AN OBJECT**
- › CHOOSE GENDER
- › CHOOSE YOUR ADVISOR
- › CHOOSE TYPE OF ASSISTANCE
- › CHOOSE WHERE TO START

### CHOOSE AN OBJECT

Choose from the selection the type of object you would like to design.

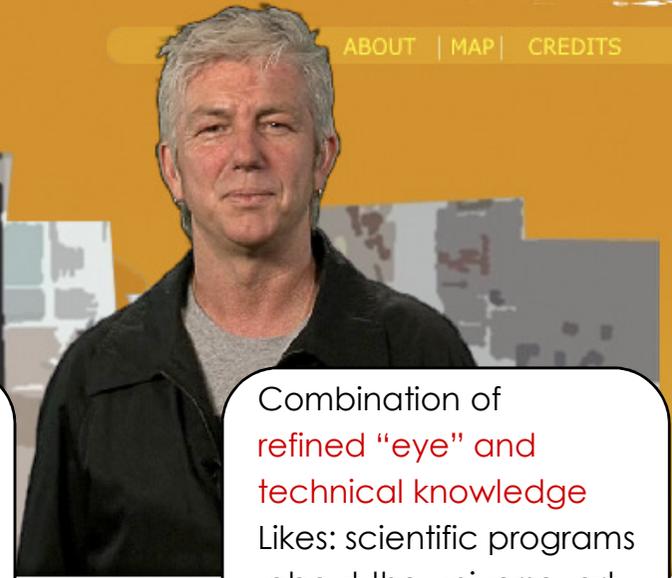


DESIGN  
STUDIO

ABOUT | MAP | CREDITS

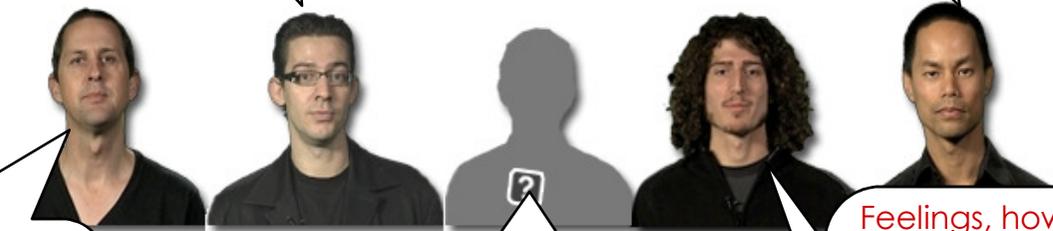
The Design Cycle

Objects



Methodic, practical,  
go direct to the point  
Likes: puzzles, manuals  
Dislikes: talking about  
Feelings  
(Knowledge Code)

Combination of  
refined "eye" and  
technical knowledge  
Likes: scientific programs  
about the universe, art,  
Dislikes: common place  
(Elite Code)



Average, common  
person  
Likes: beach, BBQ  
Dislikes: Philosophy,  
nerds or sensitive people  
(Relativist Code)

Have advisor assigned  
according to your  
choice object

Feelings, how one  
experiences object,  
people's person  
Likes: creative things, art  
Dislikes: following rules,  
Methodical people  
(Knower Code)

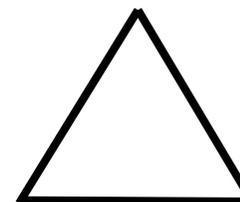
# Knowledge structures

## *Horizontal*



‘a series of specialised languages, each with its own specialised modes of interrogation and specialised criteria ... with non-comparable principles of description based on different, often opposed, assumptions’

## *Hierarchical*



‘an explicit, coherent, systematically principled and hierarchical organisation of knowledge’ which develops through integrating ‘knowledge at lower levels, and across an expanding range of phenomena’

## (4) Building cumulative knowledge

- substantive topics
  - educational technology, music, nursing, physics, etc
- educational contexts
  - school, university, everyday ‘informal learning’ contexts
- intellectual and educational practices
  - knowledge production, curriculum construction, classroom teaching and learning
- levels
  - single text, classroom, school, university, discipline, national educational system, etc
- methods
  - surveys, interviews, documentary analysis, etc.
- theories
  - e.g. systemic functional linguistics, critical realism, interaction analysis



# LCT in practice

- nursing
  - mathematics
  - music
  - physics
  - biology
  - design studies
  - neoliberalism
  - informal learning in museums
  - curriculum and assessment in higher education
  - forms of writing in different disciplines
  - regionalisation of higher education degrees
  - cumulative learning in classrooms
  - online internationalised education
  - Chinese students learning online
  - educational technology
  - young people's knowledge practices with technology
  - Freemasonry apprenticeship
  - Indigenous Native Title claims
- ... and many others, available at:

[www.legitimationcodetheory.com](http://www.legitimationcodetheory.com)

