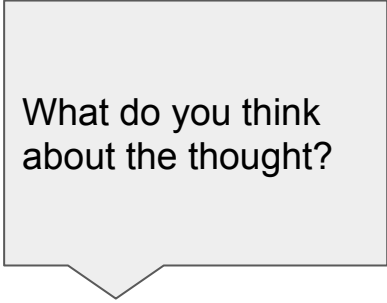


Positionality

26.10.2022

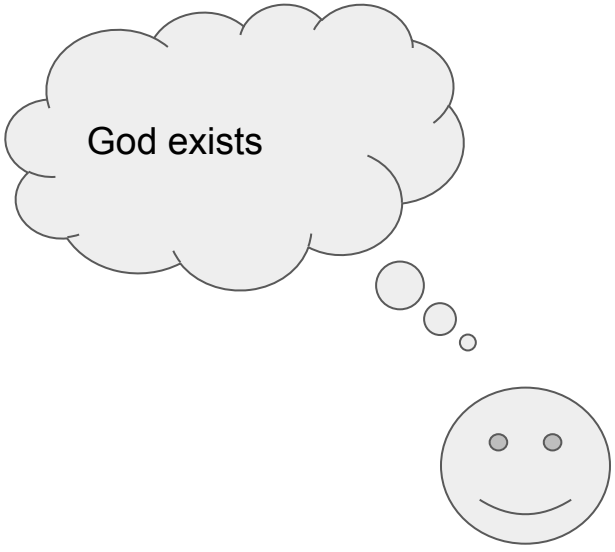
Lauri Lukka, Lee Yeon, Sapokaite Patricija

The general notion that we discuss today is that **the perspective** always influences the knowledge of the person.

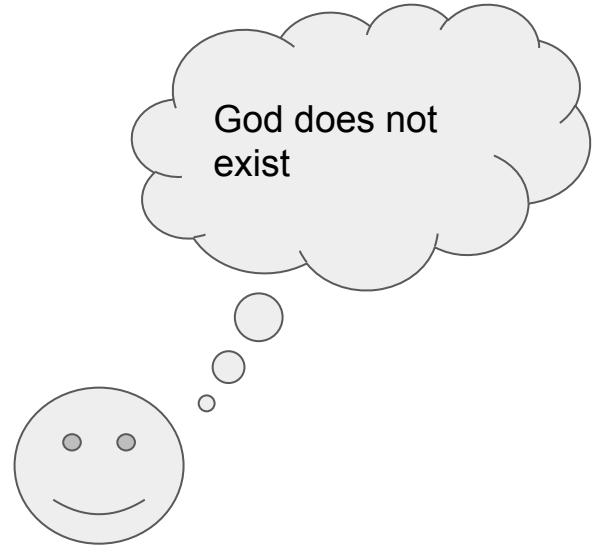
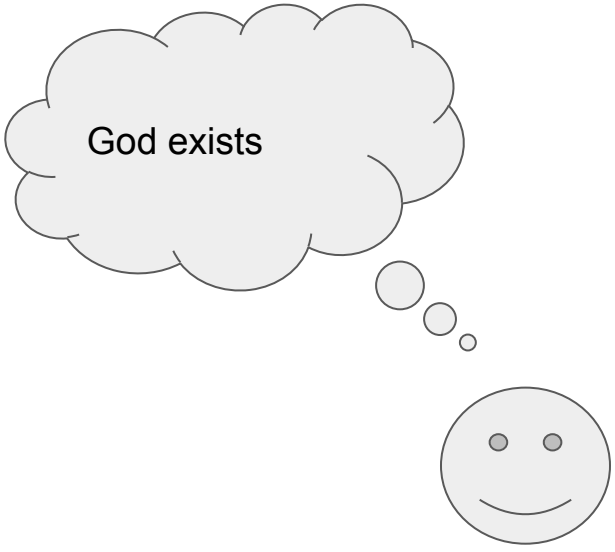


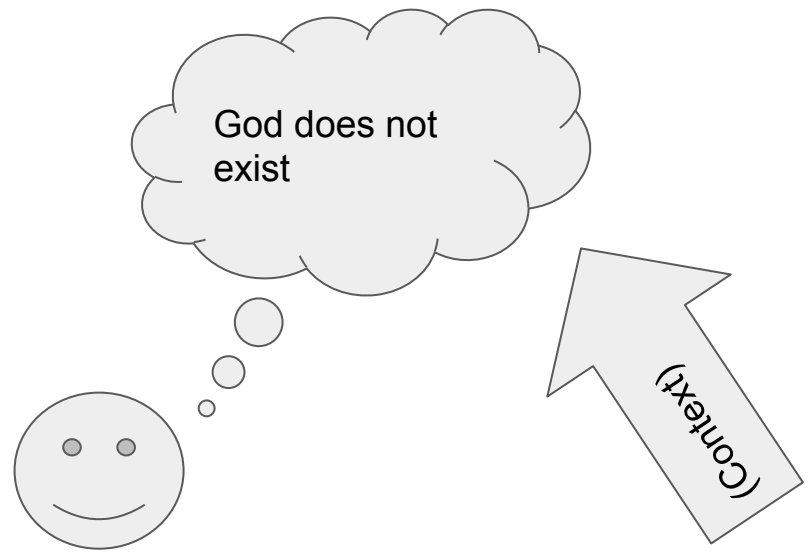
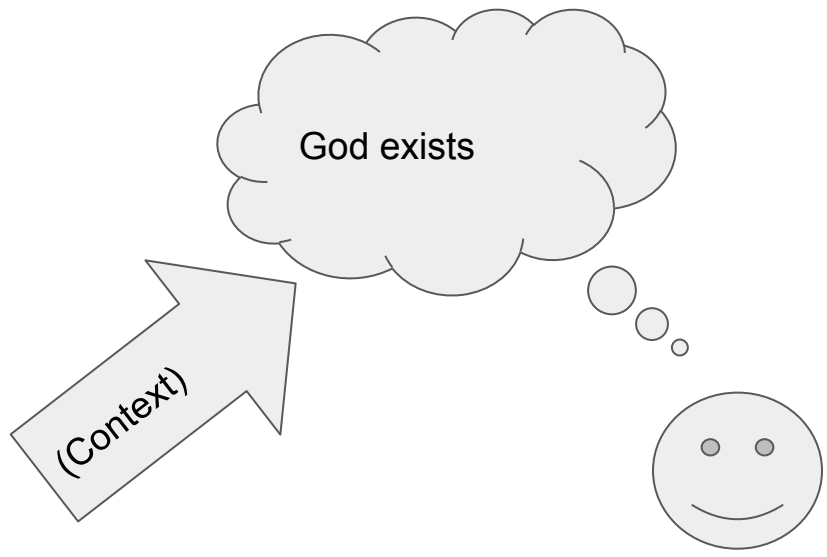
What do you think
about the thought?

The general notion that we discuss today is that
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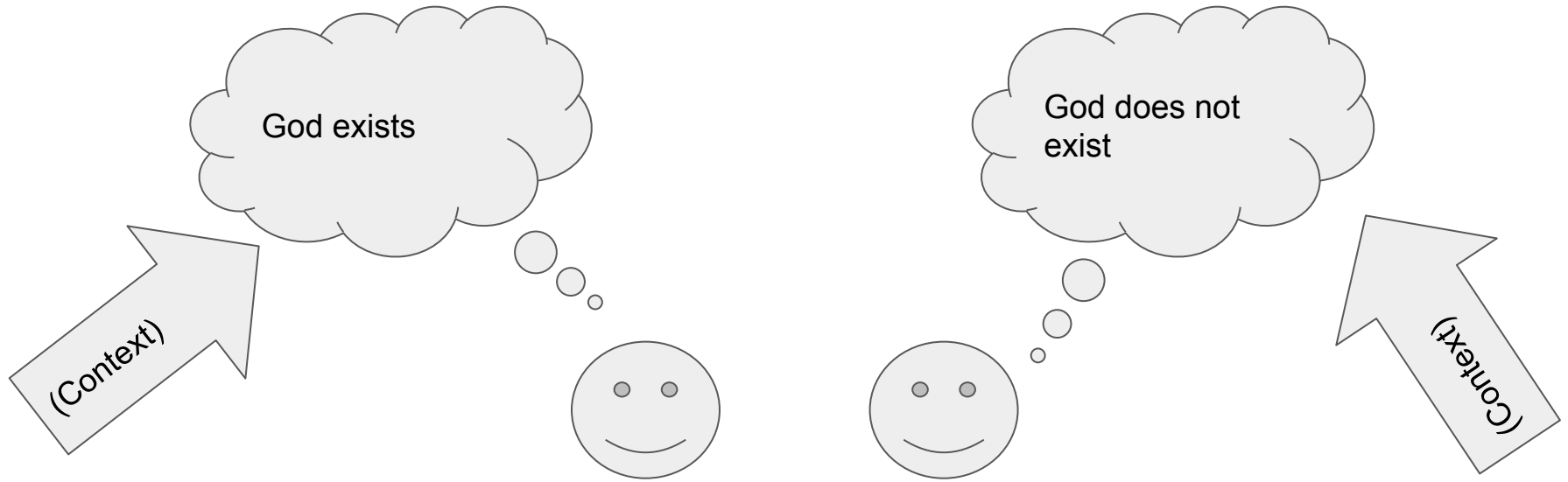
God exists





Positionality

Both can coexist - and does not make a statement of their truth value necessarily



The two poles

- “The truth is out there” (**positivism**)
- There is no objective truth per se, but different perspectives to the matter (**positionality**)

Are there **different types of truths**?

- “The truth is out there” (**positivism**)
- Natural science, chemical, physical realities that can be accurately described and predicted.
- The point of view does not matter for the results. They are not subject to debate. One person is right, another is wrong.
- (Caveat: Paradigm developments in sciences have corrected science)
- There is no objective truth per se, but different perspectives to the matter (**positionality**)
- Political, psychological, and societal phenomena that are under constant debate. The truth is less certain.
- The truth may be spatio-temporal: contextual.

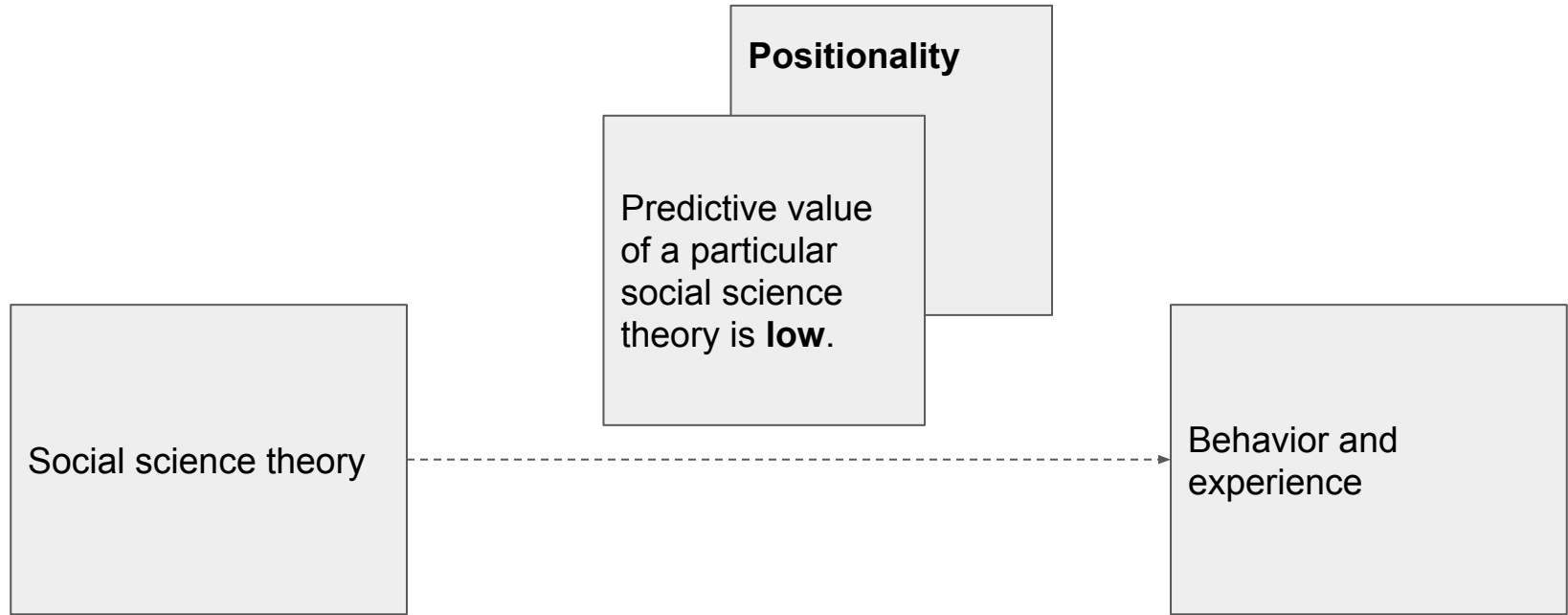
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What does this difference between the two positions cause?

The truth in **social sciences**

- “The truth is out there” (**positivism**)
 - Psychological theories
 - Sociological findings
 - Political research
 - Media research
- For example, one’s socioeconomic status influences the likelihood of getting higher education which is greater in countries with less monetarily supported education
- There is no objective truth per se, but different perspectives to the matter (**positionality**)
- One’s one unique life story that is one **instance** of the theories being applied in practice
- For example, the subjective experience of being poor has great variety of narratives that can’t be differentiated.

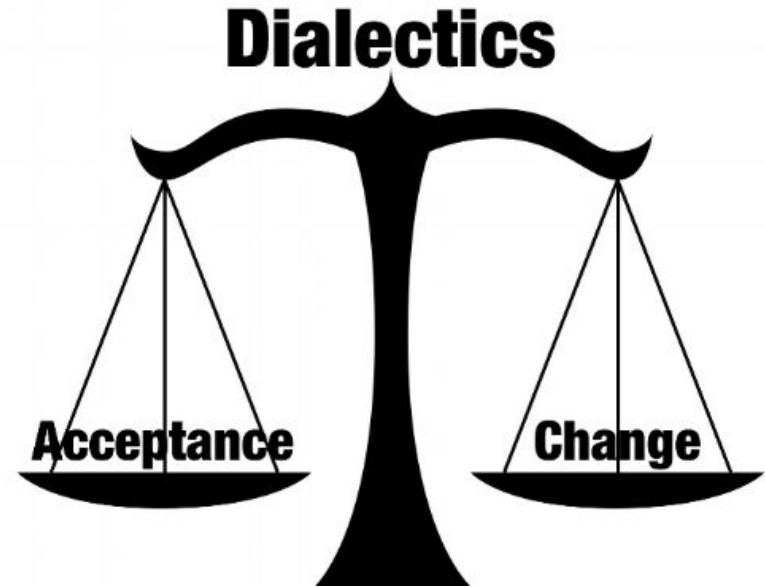


Case of counselling

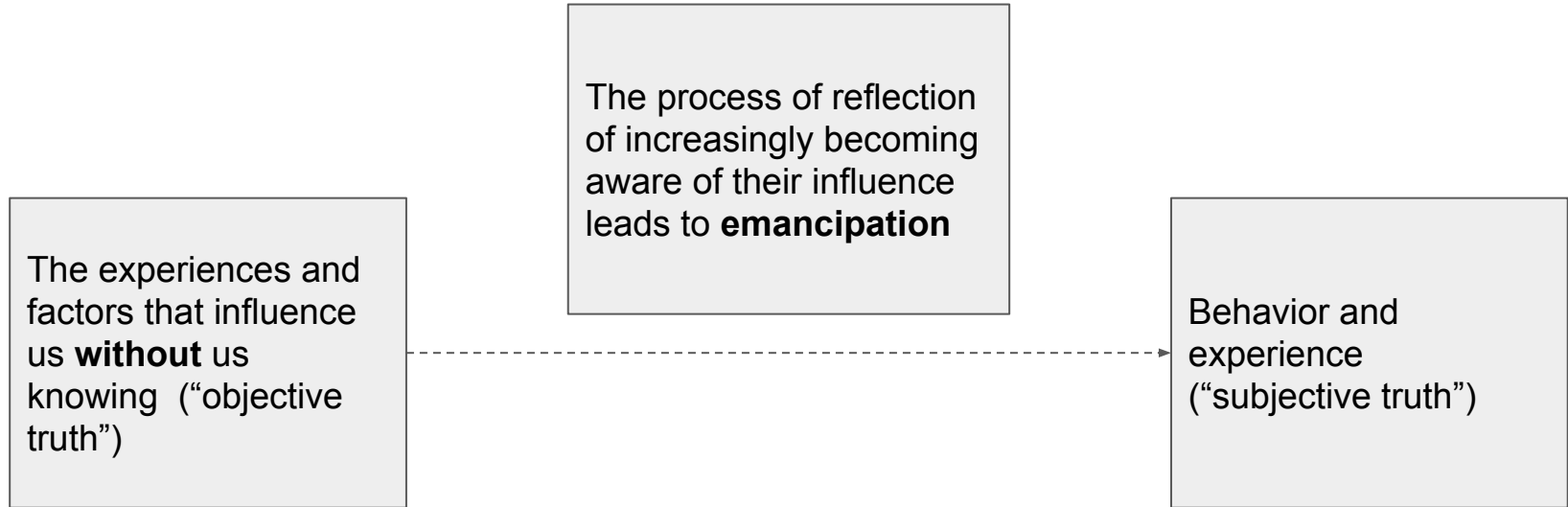
- In therapeutic setting, there are various concepts and frameworks that may describe why a person acts in a certain way
- Yet, the truth value of the theories is secondary to the therapeutic context and interaction, and the subjective experience.
- The aim is to help the person make sense of their challenge and cope with them.

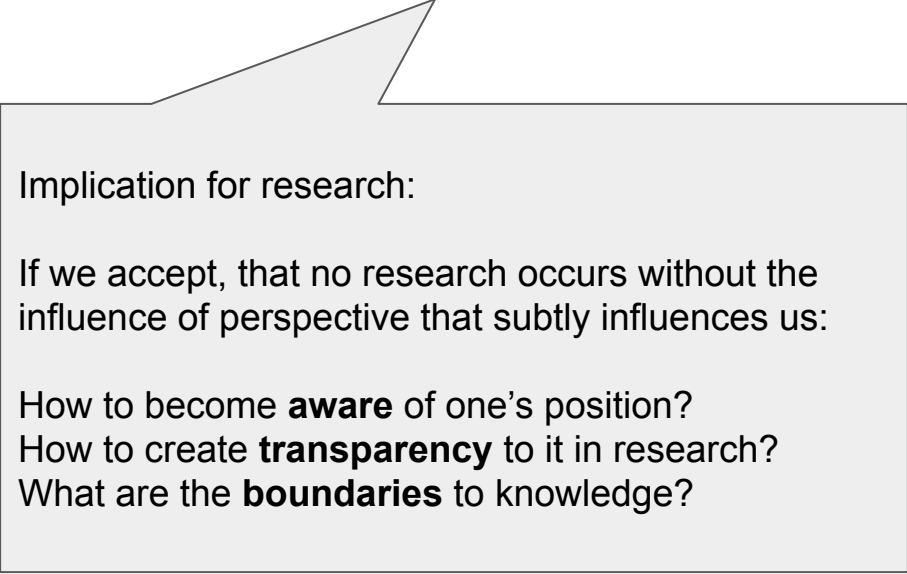


- There are behaviors that we “know” to be insufficient or leading to negative impacts, for instance, drug-use.
- Yet, they are also solutions for the person. Thus, they “make sense”. Moreover, we can’t tell the person how to behave.
- We must **accept** the other as they are - and encourage them to **change** at the same time.
- Thus, the “objective” truth and subjective perspective coexist.



The (traditional) underlying logic of counselling





Implication for research:

If we accept, that no research occurs without the influence of perspective that subtly influences us:

How to become **aware** of one's position?

How to create **transparency** to it in research?

What are the **boundaries** to knowledge?

Case of righteous knowledge

- Skal (2022) is an movie from Faroe island about a young woman grown up in a religious community struggling to break free from its boundaries.
- In the movie, the protagonist becomes aware of the existence of their internalized beliefs (“God watches”) that are shared in community, and struggle with them.



The eternal struggle

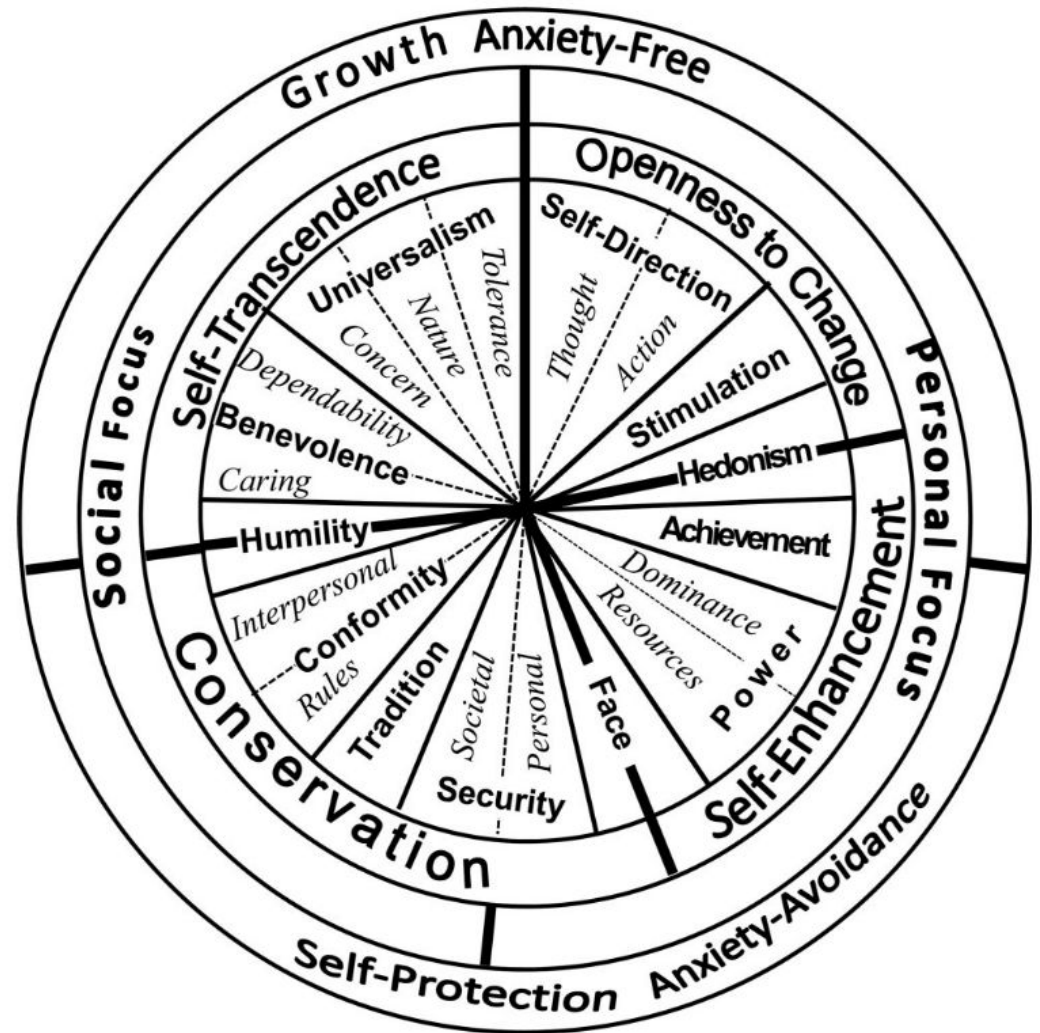
Liberalism

- There are different ways in living one's life. We should encourage tolerance and inclusion.
- Individual should be free and not controlled
- Yet, the ideology of being free is paradoxical, offers little guidance, and is highly individualistic (and capitalistic).

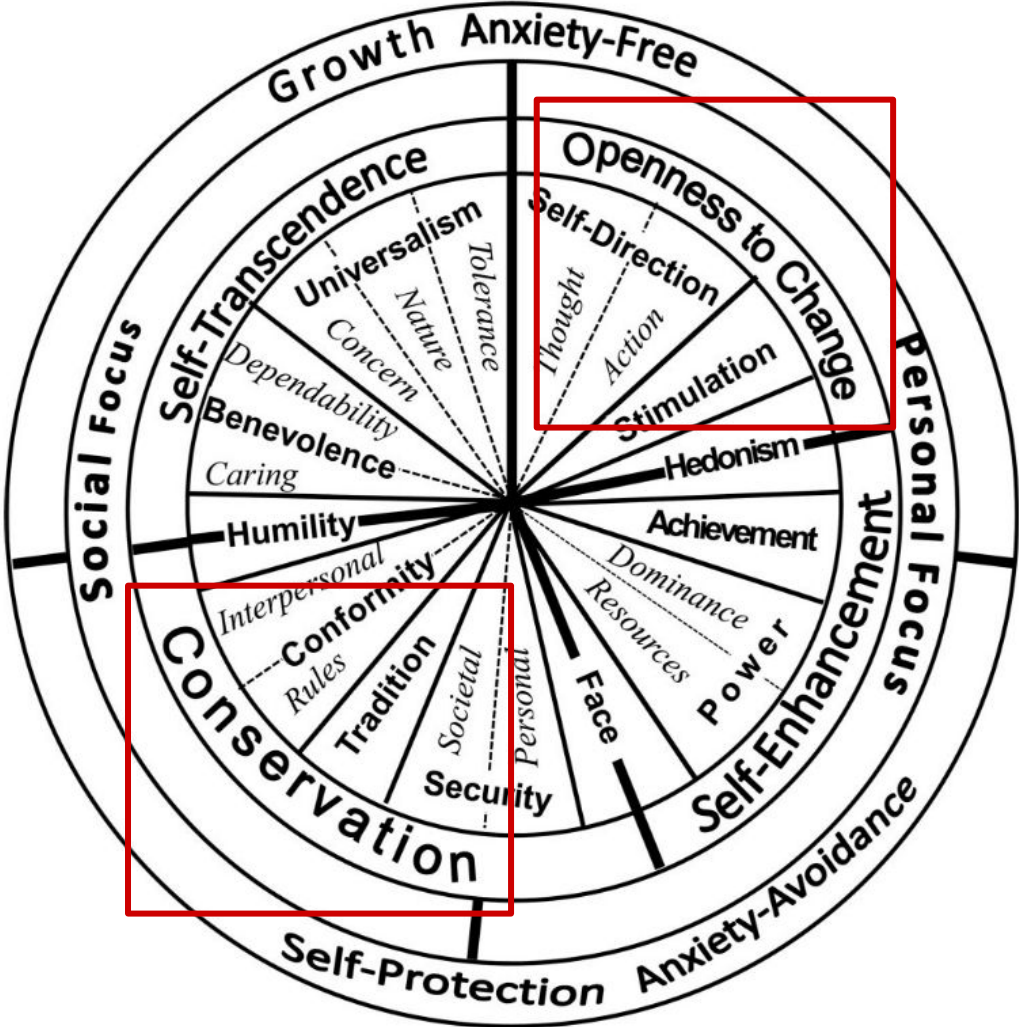
Conservatism

- There is a right way to act and think
- “God is good, god is right. We must serve him.”
- Individual should serve the eternal truths (that we know to be right because we know them to be right)
- In extreme case, blind to its own position and righteousness.

Schwartz values



Schwartz values

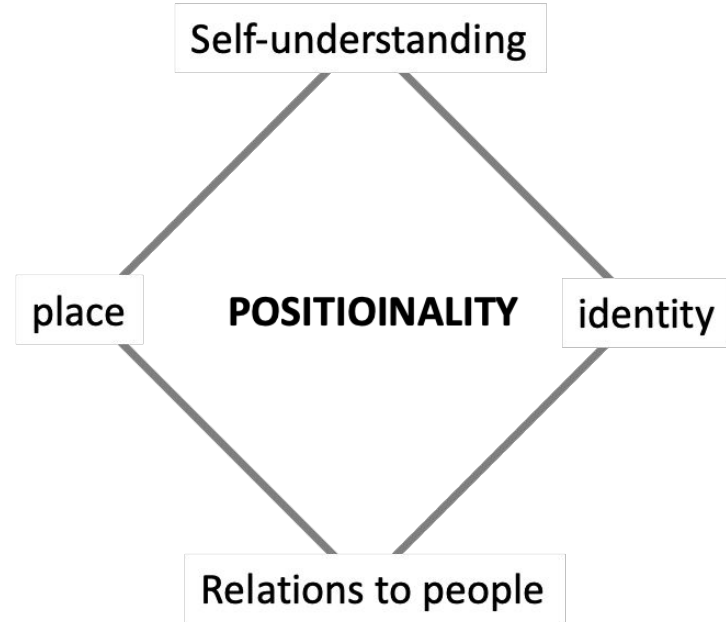


What do you think of the tension between conservation and liberalism?

Positionality & Research

Positionality

“Our positionality comes with experiences and perspectives that afford us unique insights into the research process”



Which experiences and perspectives are related to your research interest/topic?

Positionality influence in research

These experiences and perspectives also bias us in the research journey by

- influencing which resources we do or don't select, shaping our criteria for determining what "counts" as a "good" source
- and affecting how we choose to present or articulate our own research



**Research should be a neutral or objective process.
Can we fully achieve neutrality or objectivity?**

Goal

We will always carry our experiences and identities as well as the biases they come with.

The goal is **to be aware of how and where our biases are at play in our research.**

We can make sure we're not overlooking certain voices for our research or make assumptions.

The goal is not neutrality, but awareness!

What kind of assumptions or voices you have in your research?

Reflecting Time: what are your social identity

Let's spend some time reflecting on the identities that make up our positionality.

We invite you to first identify the identities you embody (based on the social identity wheel we will show) and then reflect on the identities you embody.

You don't have to write something for each category.

- Accuracy depends on honesty. These questions are not about who you want to be, but how you show up today.

This exercise was adapted from an exercise created by the Intergroup Relations and the Spectrum Center, University of Michigan and the Four layers of Diversity Source (adapted from Gardenswartz & Rowe - 2003).

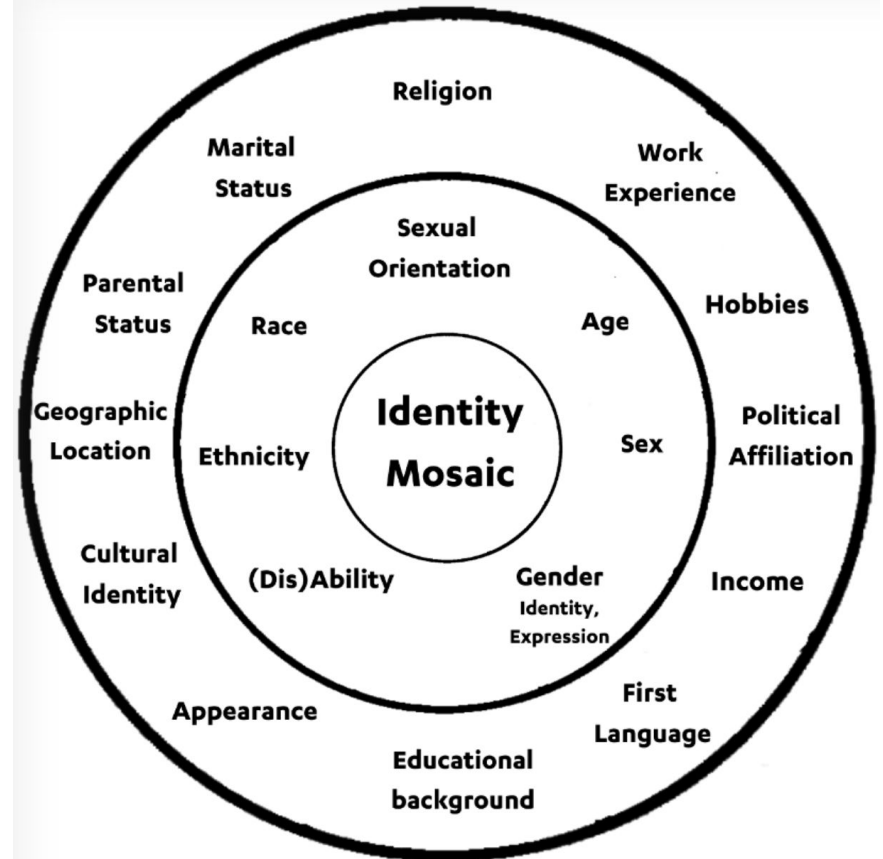
What are the identities you think about most often?

What are the identities you think about least often?

Which identities have the greatest effect on how others perceive you?

Which identities have the strongest effect on how you perceive yourself?

Think about your social context. What biases and/or insights accompany these identities? How might they affect your research process?



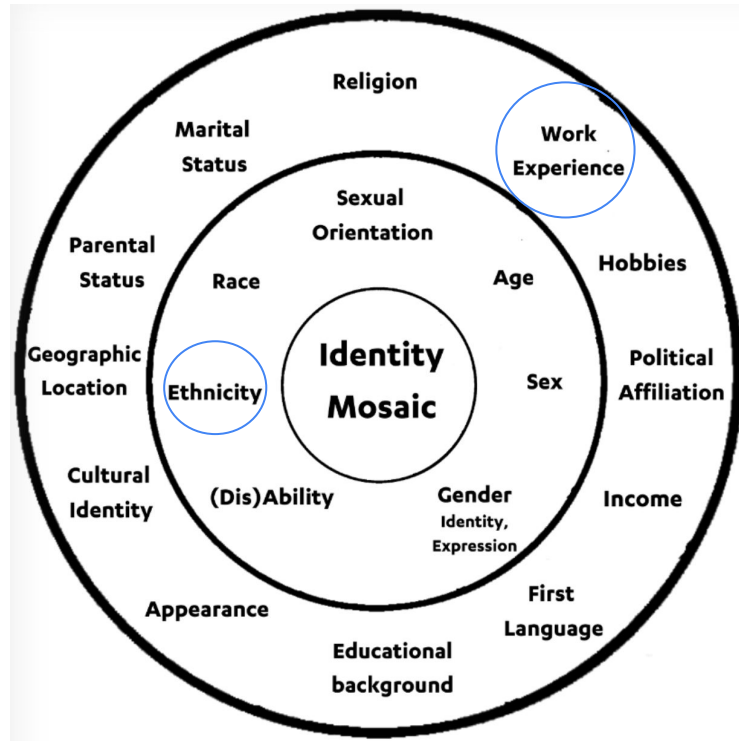
How to take your reflection into your research?

1. drafting positionality statement
 - a. can vary in length
 - b. brief description of your identity mosaic
 - c. how it influences your research

It is easy to make assumptions about a positionality you've never embodied.

The positionality statement can be the space where you note these differences and indicate how you plan to remain in dialogue with how these differences might influence your research.

You can make sure you're giving voice to the positionalities beyond your own



Please make circles on specific identities which can be related to your research topic.

How to take your reflection into your research?

2. sharing your research with a mentor or instructor

They can bring the subject expertise and the perspective of their own positionality to help you identify voices you may have left out in your initial research.

To help you include those voices or remain mindful of your positionality, they may recommend you use a specific methodology

Positionality of Logic

A biologist, a physicist and a mathematician are on a train when they see a blue cow outside the window.



A biologist, a physicist and a mathematician are on a train when they see a blue cow outside the window.



“This land must have blue cows!” shouts an excited biologist

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“This land has at least one cow with at least one blue side”, remarks a mathematician

Contextualism

We need context to determine whether the statement is true.

Are you rich?

Contextualism

We need context to determine whether the statement is true.

Are you rich?

Can you think of other such questions?

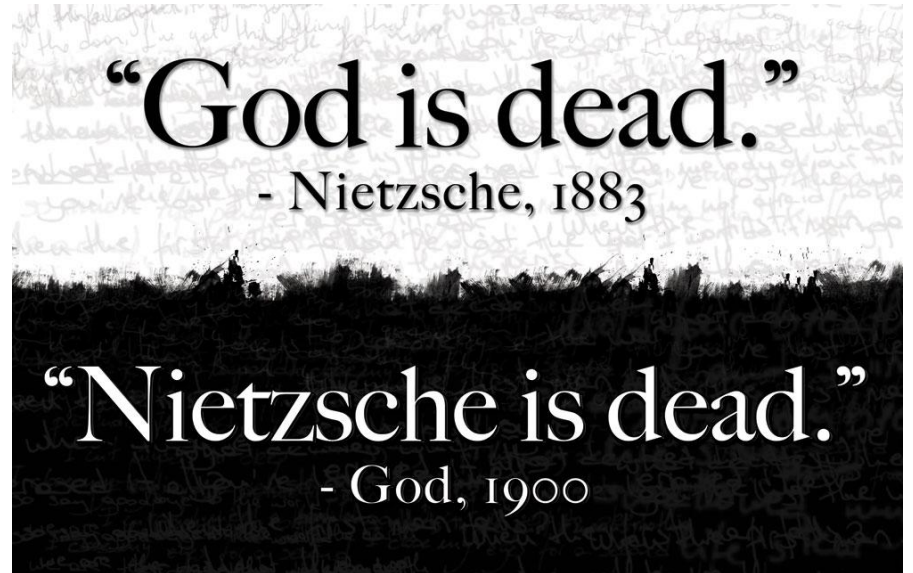
Dialetheism

Some statements can be both, true and false.



Perspectivism

All truths are a product of person's perspective, there is no (observable) higher truth.



Russell's paradox

Take a set S to be the set of all sets that do not contain themselves.

Russell's paradox

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Does S contain itself?

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Are natural sciences based on the assumption that correlation equals causation?

Trends

Although research trends do not change truth, they highly influence which truths are being researched.

“nearly three-quarters of cases where a disease primarily affects one gender, the so-called “men's diseases” are overfunded, while the “women's diseases” are **dramatically underfunded**”

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What trends of your subject are you familiar with?

Past research positionality

The science we have today is based on what views, surroundings and beliefs past scientists had.

Gödel's First Incompleteness Theorem: "Any consistent formal system F within which a certain amount of elementary arithmetic can be carried out is incomplete; i.e., there are statements of the language of F which can neither be proved nor disproved in F ."

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What past beliefs and how influenced the subject you are researching?

What else can be doubted?

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<https://plato.stanford.edu/>

Coghlan, D., & Brydon-Miller, M. (2014). Positionality. In The SAGE encyclopedia of action research (pp. 628-628). SAGE Publications Ltd, <https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781446294406.n277>

Rowe. (2014). Positionality. In The SAGE Encyclopedia of Action Research (Vol. 2, pp. 627–628).

"Positionality & Research: How our Identities Shape Inquiry", UCLA library
(<https://youtu.be/fTHFud7fr8c>)