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**Philosophical positioning in  
grounded theory**  
*Striking the balance*

**CNMR**  
Centre for Nursing  
& Midwifery Research

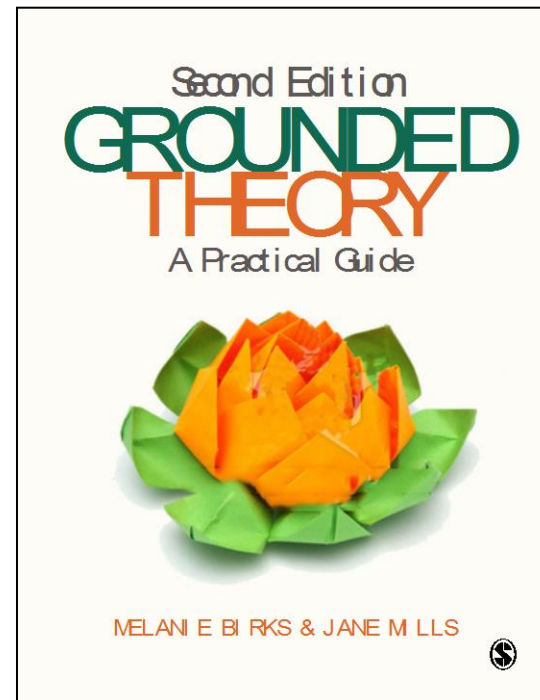
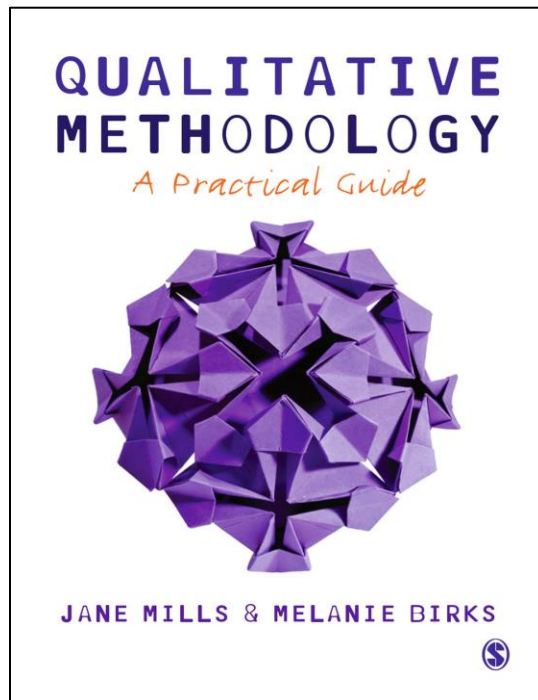
In this presentation we will consider:

- The significance of positioning the researcher in a grounded theory study
- The role of theoretical sensitivity in grounded theory research
- Strategies and techniques that can be used to raise a researcher's theoretical sensitivity



# Shameless self-promotion

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# Preliminary concepts

- Grounded theory
- Philosophy
- Ontology
- Epistemology



Source: <http://offthemark.com/search-results/key/ground/>

# Philosophy and research

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Paradigm	Philosophical position
Positivism	There is a single reality that is to be discovered.
Postpositivism	No measurable reality exists in isolation of the observer.
Postmodernism	Reality is subjectively relative to those who experience it.
Constructivism	Reality is constructed by those who experience it.

# A philosophical position?

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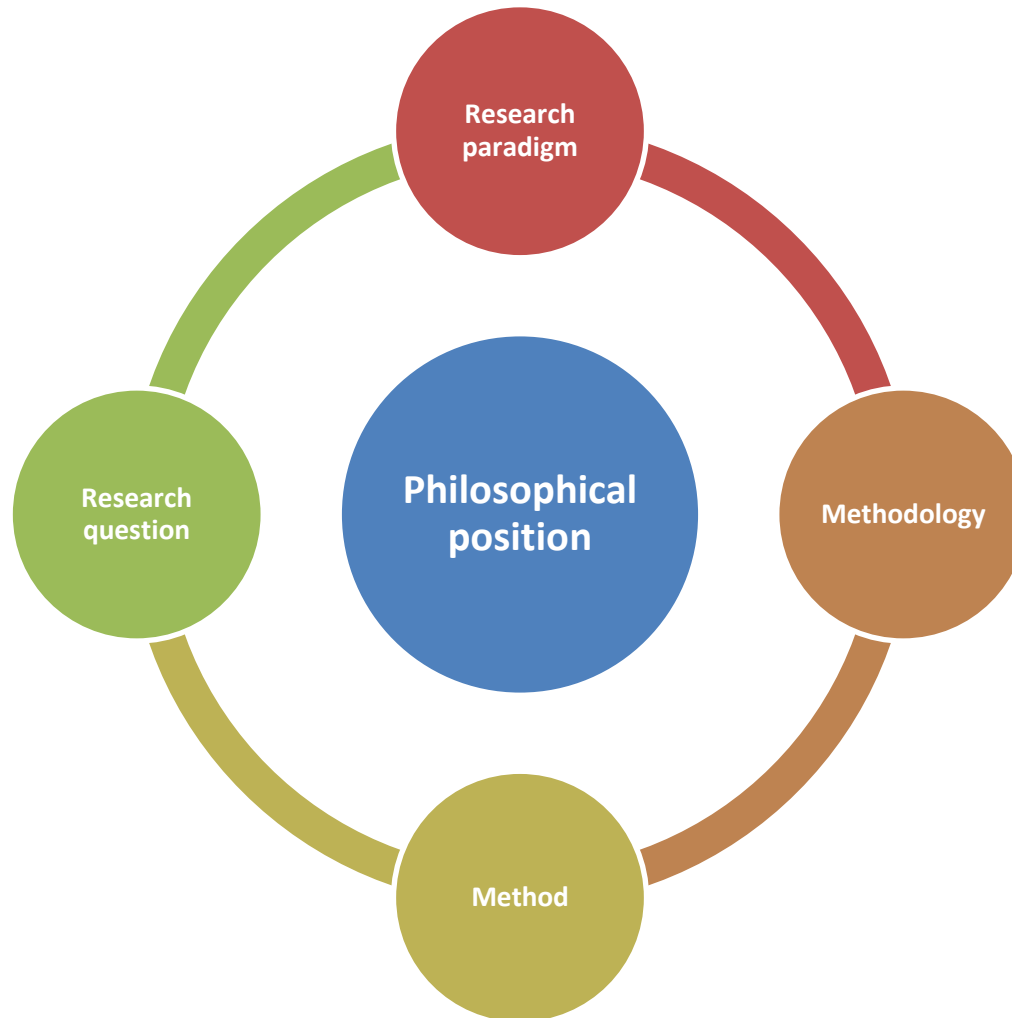
*“...what counts as ‘real’ and ‘true’ and what is to be valued as ‘good.’” (Schostak, 2008).*

*“...truths and principles of our existence and that these truths are accepted by us...” (Mackie, 2007).*

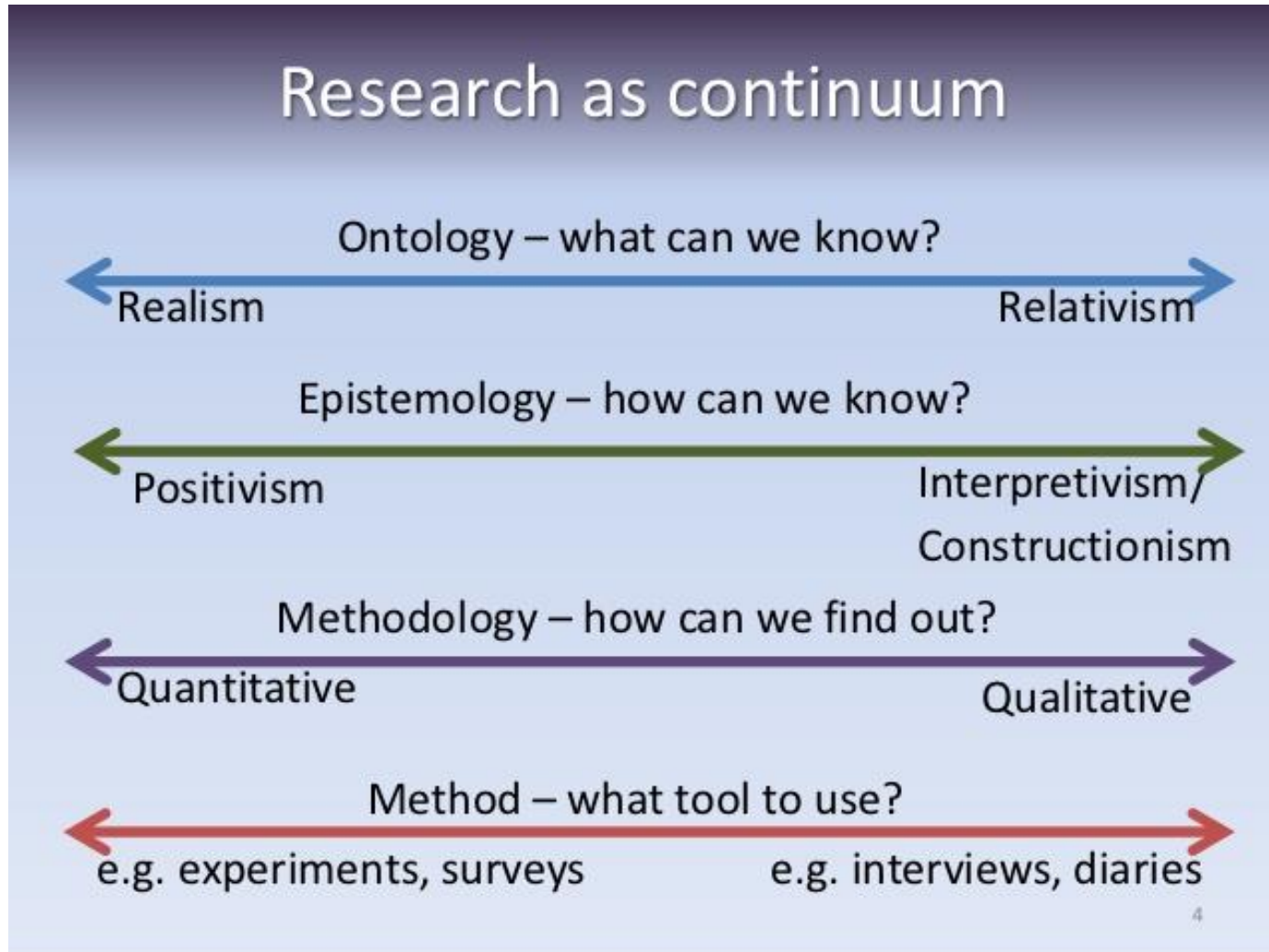


# What's the big deal?

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# Philosophical congruence





# Let's get into position!

Take a moment to consider:

- How do you define reality?
- How do you gain knowledge of the world?



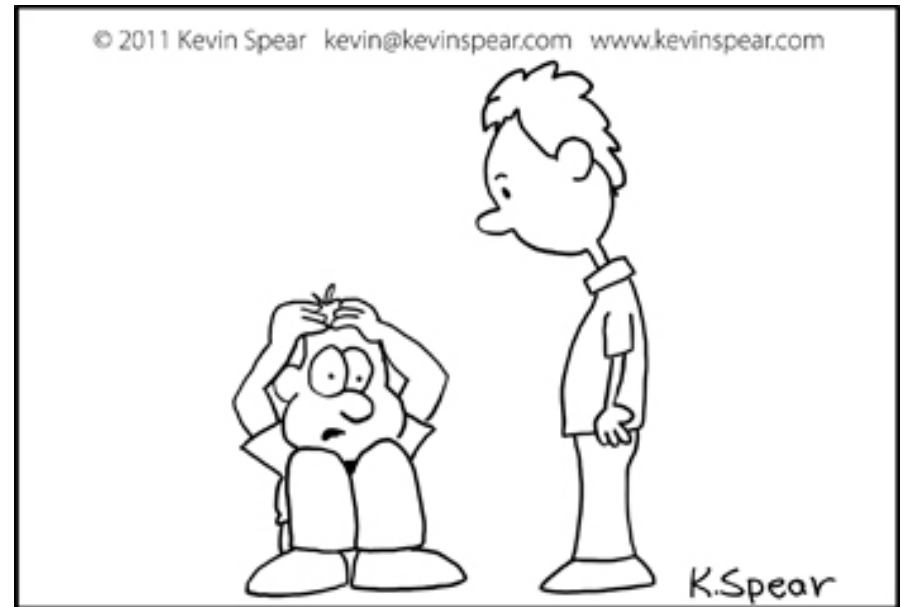
# Positioning in GT

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- Little attention in seminal works
- Strauss (1987) identified the role of researchers' biographies
- Strauss and Corbin (2008) acknowledged the position of the researcher in co-construction
- Clarke (2005: 13) 'we need to become more visible and accountable for, in, and through our research'
- Charmaz (2014) - need to recognise the influence of taken for granted assumption

# Impact of positioning

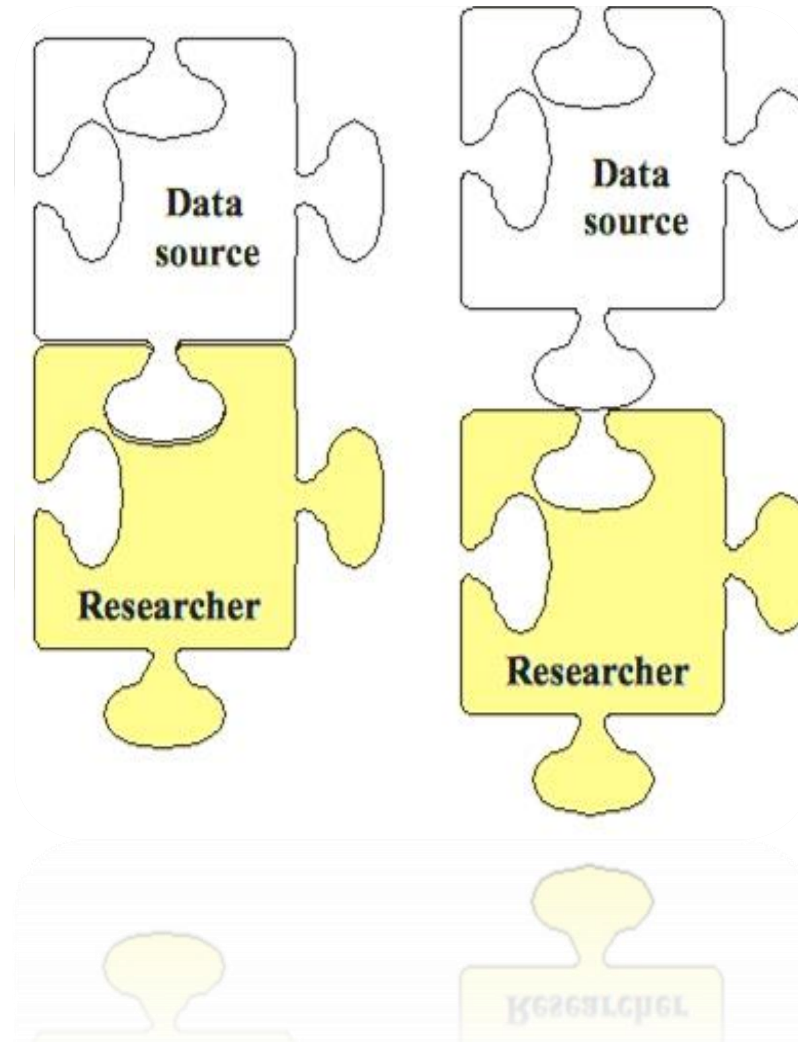
- Philosophical position influences the researcher's:
  - Relationship with the data
  - Theoretical sensitivity



"I'm okay. This is just how I get creative."

# Relationship with the data

*Researcher as  
subjective,  
active  
participant*



*Researcher as  
objective  
instrument*

# Theoretical sensitivity

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- What is it?
- How do you get it?
- What do you do with it?
- Won't it result in 'forcing' the data?



# Characteristics of TS

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1. It reflects the sum of your personal, professional and experiential history.
2. It can be enhanced by various techniques, tools and strategies.
3. It increases as your research progresses.

# Raising your TS

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- Identify your baseline before you begin
- ‘Dance’ with the data (Hoare et al., 2012)
- Strauss and Corbin’s (1987, 1990, 1998, 2008) ‘analytical tools’
- Examine your underlying assumptions about the world on an ongoing basis
- Memo, memo, memo

# References

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# Questions?



<http://blogs.e-rockford.com/applesauce/files/2013/03/funny-pictures-society-for-asking-stupid-questions.jpg>

"Excuse me, is this the Society for Asking Stupid Questions?"