

Introductory Vocabulary

Epistemology: The philosophical theory of knowledge

1. What is knowledge?
2. How is knowledge acquired?
3. What do people know?
4. How do we know what we know?
5. Why do we know what we know?

Belief: a statement of what is true

Truth: a statement about a fact that can be *checked*, i.e., *confirmed* or *denied*

Knowledge: to know that a belief is true

Empirical Knowledge

Hypothesis: an untested statement about the relationship between two variables

Theory: a set of interrelated definitions and relationships that organizes concepts of social phenomena and understanding of the empirical world in a systematic way.

Paradigm: a framework of guiding assumptions, theories, and methodologies that define the *appropriate* means for solving a *scientific problem*. Paradigms shape...

1. ...the kind of questions you can ask.
2. ...the kind of evidence you can use.
3. ...the kind of explanation you can give.

The Social Sciences

Norms: are shared expectations of behavior that connotes what is considered culturally desirable and appropriate. These *cultural rules* and expectations, most often implicit, guides the behaviors of its members

Attitude: the psychological tendency that is expressed by positive or negative evaluation of a particular attitude object (person, place, or situation). Attitudes are 1) learned, 2) enduring, 3) affective evaluations, and 4) related to human behavior.

Values: ¹ are subjective evaluations of what is desirable/undesirable, good/bad, etc

² are standards of conduct (more general than attitudes and may underline a cluster of attitudes)

Opinions: are verbalized attitudes and beliefs.

Social Institution: A relatively long-standing social arrangement, made up of a stable set of values, norms, attitudes, and behaviors that develop around a basic social need.

Normal*: (statistical) the most common accruing or most numerically frequent type, which is used as the baseline for identifying the unusual and statistically rare.

*Commonly confused with “socially normative” (e.g. *the “traditional” nuclear family* is normative but not normal)