ELSS611 S2L5

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Epistemology

- Epistemology makes you ask yourself **what you regard as knowledge or evidence** of things

  - How a social phenomenon can be known and how knowledge can be demonstrated (Mason, 2007)

  - What are the possible methods by which you can reach the knowledge needed

  - How do we know what we know (Patton, 2002)

Epistemology

- Two different approaches to knowledge (Whitley & Kite, 2013)

  - **Logical positivism**: the knowledge can be generated through empirical observation, tightly controlled experiments

  - The researchers are distant, interested observers

Epistemology

- Two different approaches to knowledge (Whitley & Kite, 2013)

  - **Humanistic perspective:** people are best understood in their natural environments rather than in laboratories

An example of ontology and epistemology (Mason 2007, p. 17)

- The focus of the topic: **Racist attitudes among school children**

  - **The ontological assumption** is that **individual** people (students) hold attitudes and the **attitudes are meaningful** components of the social world

  - Another ontological assumption could be seeing racism as *an institutional* issue. In other words, institutions are more meaningful components of the social world

An example of ontology and epistemology (Mason 2007, p. 17)

- The topic: **Racist attitudes among school children**

- **The epistemological position** holds the view that distinctive dimensions of the social world (like attitudes, actions) are knowable and it is possible to generate knowledge about them and evidence for them

Summing up

- At the beginning of the research process you have to ask yourself

  - How do I understand the social world and reality?

  - How do I understand the topic of my research?

  - How can I get knowledge?

  - What do I see as evidence?

Sincerity

- The researcher should be aware of her/his own preconceptions and understanding of the concepts and theories
  - In this present study, leadership is understood…

"Sincerity means that the research is marked by honesty and transparency about the researcher's biases, goals, and foibles as well as about how these played a role in the methods, joys, and mistakes of the research." (Tracy, 2010, p. 841)

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