

ONTOLOGY VERSUS EPISTEMOLOGY

Ontology is concerned with what is true or real, and the nature of reality

Asks questions like
“What is existence?”
and *“What is the nature of existence?”*

Epistemology is concerned with the nature of knowledge and different methods of gaining knowledge

Asks questions like
“What do you know?” and *“How do you know it?”*

Pediaa.com

Hasa. (2016, 4 December). Difference between ontology and epistemology. *Pediaa*. Retrieved from <http://pediaa.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Difference-Between-Ontology-and-Epistemology-infographic.png>

PARADIGM	ONTOLOGY <i>What is reality?</i>	EPISTEMOLOGY <i>(how do I know reality?)</i>	THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE (‘CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK’) <i>(which approach do I use to know something?)</i>	METHODOLOGY <i>(How do I go about finding out?)</i>	Method <i>(what techniques should I use to find out?)</i>
Positivism	There is only one single truth	Reality can be measured and there are reliable and valid tools to do this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Positivism – Post-positivism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Experimental research – Survey design 	Usually quantitative ; may include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Sampling – Measurement & scaling – Statistical analysis – Focus group interviews
Constructivism/ Interpretivism	There is no single reality or truth. Reality is created by individuals in groups	Therefore, reality needs to be interpreted, in order to uncover the underlying meaning of events, activities and behaviours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Interpretivism – Phenomenology – Symbolic interactionism – Hermeneutics – Critical inquiry – Feminism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Ethnography – Grounded theory – Phenomenological research – Heuristic inquiry – Action research – Discourse analysis – Feminist standpoint, etc 	Usually qualitative , may include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Interviews – Observation (researcher as participant / non-participant) – Case Study – Life History – Narrative – Theme Identification
Pragmatism	Reality is constantly renegotiated, debated, re-interpreted in light of its usefulness in new situations	The best method is one that solves the problem. Finding out is the means, with change the underlying goal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Deweyan pragmatism – Research through design 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Mixed methods – Design-based research – Action research 	Combination of any of the above, as well as data mining, usability testing, physical prototypes
Subjectivism	Reality is we perceive to be real	All knowledge is purely a matter of perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Postmodernism – Structuralism – Post-structuralism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Discourse theory – Archaeology – Anthropology – Genealogy – Deconstruction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Auto-ethnography – Semiotics – Literary analysis – Pastiche – Intertextuality, etc
Critical Realism	Realities (plural) are socially constructed, under constant internal influence	Reality and knowledge are both socially constructed by power relations within society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Marxism – Queer Theory – Feminism – <i>Kaupapa Māori</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Critical discourse analysis, – Critical ethnography – Action research – Ideology critique 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Ideological review – Civil actions – Open-ended interviews/ questionnaires/observations, – Journals

Adapted from Patel, S. (2015, 15 July). *The research paradigm – methodology, epistemology and ontology – explained in simple language*. Retrieved from <http://salmapatel.co.uk/academia/the-research-paradigm-methodology-epistemology-and-ontology-explained-in-simple-language> .