

Good example of essay on scientific skepticism

[Family](#), [Children](#)



“ Scientific Skepticism”

The meaning of the word science has suffered many changes across the centuries in Western civilization. The scientific method is commonly known to be at its base, but the philosophy that serves as its foundation is often overlooked. This is in part because its contemporary meaning, made possible by Descartes' separation of meaning from truth, has a great pretension of rigor that is especially linked to mathematics. Lilienfeld theorizes that there are six principles that serve as guidelines for what should be accepted as scientific thought.

Furthermore, these theories must also hold other qualities that differentiate them from other ways of thinking; the thoroughness that these principles expect from the theories makes them stand out as scientific. The first is that the claim must be falsifiable: one must be able to disprove it. Therefore, this discredits many claims, especially those that are religious in nature, as being non-scientific; no amount of evidence could prove that there is an invisible God that watches over all of us. Not only do the theories need to be backed up by evidence, but this needs to be replicable. Independent researchers must be able to repeat the experiments that sustain these claims and achieve similar results for it to be valid. Finally, causation must be proved and differentiated from correlation. The fact that two phenomena generally appear simultaneously does not imply that one causes the other; the variation of one of the variables must be subject to the deliberate manipulation of the other so that the claim may be considered scientific.

The importance of these principles for the study of human conduct cannot be overestimated. Due to the many non-scientific theories that abound in

culture as to why people do what they do, one can rely on these guidelines to help keep the theories on the scientific track. Human behavior is of interest to many and, as we constantly seek meaning, people often try to explain what they do through common sense. As was stated earlier, modern science goes against common sense; therefore, it is important to evaluate pseudo-psychological claims with these principles to validate theories.

For example, “ Leadership is the Key to Effectively Managing a Child Care Center” (Ezine, 2014) should be evaluated with the principle of causation vs. correlation. As its title effectively implies, it proposes that leadership causes the effective administration of a child care center. Nevertheless, one would have to ask if it is not the proper inner workings of the job site that allow a leader to manage it effectively.

The article “ Surviving your Child’s Adolescence” (Pickhardt, 2014) postulates roles for both parents and teenagers to be able to live in greater harmony; especially, it focuses on the parents’ tasks, which include watching out for their safety and responsibility, which should be achieved by discussion and negotiating each step towards independence. This ought to be evaluated by the principle that states that other theories should be ruled out. While surely many teenagers would benefit from this, some others could get along with their parents if they took other attitudes. Differences among people are so great, that generalizations and ready-made recipes like these should always be put under inspection.

Finally, in “ Unconscious influences on decision making: A critical review” (Newell & Shanks, 2014), the authors state that there are factors that go beyond thoughts that influence conduct. This would have to be evaluated

well to see if it is falsifiable, as one cannot think of or observe aspects of the mind that are apart from consciousness. This reveals another of the limitations of modern scientific theory: in its pretention to subjugate everything into a formula, it must leave out certain aspects of the human condition that always end up manifesting themselves through other means. In conclusion, modern science has imposed a paradigm that excludes many lines of thought, valuing reason to explain phenomenon. Six principles have been proposed to validate theories as being scientific: ruling out other theories, extraordinary claims need extraordinary evidence, Occam's razor, falsifiability, replicability, and correlation vs. causation. These guidelines are very important for the study of human behavior; being what is manifested as a phenomenon as an effect of the mind, its study is of much value to psychology. As many people deal with others on a daily basis and humans constantly seek meaning, it is important to separate those theories that are scientifically valid from those that aren't. Three articles found on the internet demonstrate that these principles are important when it comes to evaluating the pseudo-psychological information that may be expressed in different outlets. Different principles must be used to discriminate within all the information available, to see what is useful for scientific investigation and what is not.

Reference List

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