

UNIT I: Knowledge Base

SWK 3300
Kimberly Baker-Abrams

Why is it relevant to study research?

- Evaluation
- Effectiveness
- CSWE
- Development
- Techniques

A social worker should be able to:

- use research findings
- collect data
- monitor interventions
- demonstrate effectiveness
- specify issues in observable terms
- formulate questions
- use research as tool in intervention process

How do we learn?

experience
observation

Western perspective

assumption of absolute truth
seeking understanding of order

Types of knowledge and understanding:

- Values
- Intuition and experience
- Revelation
- Authority
- Media
- Science

The foundation of our knowledge and learning is linked to observation. Observation in the scientific method is an active part of learning. Measurement is used to help reduce the likelihood of inaccurate observations.

So what is the scientific method?

- problem formulation
- designing the study
- data collection
- data processing
- data analysis
- interpretation of findings
- sharing results

In social work research there are two main approaches to using the scientific method.

positivist (quantitative)
interpretive (qualitative)

Positivist (quantitative)

- knowledge from objective observation and measurement
- topic focused study (researcher driven)
- causality
- deductive reasoning
- generalize results

Interpretive (qualitative)

- knowledge from subjective experience
- focus on description and in-depth understanding
- use of inductive reasoning
- results are rarely generalized (too specific)

Ethical issues are concerns, dilemmas, and conflicts that arise over the proper way to conduct research.

- define what is and is not proper
- few absolute standards
- unethical behavior often results from short-cuts

Types of scientific misconduct NOT involving a human subject:

- Research fraud
- Plagiarism
- Misuse of Power

Scientific misconduct involving a human subject

- requires balancing value of advancing knowledge against value of non-interference
- guidelines emerged after gross violations of human rights occurred in the name of science

Core ethical issues for research with humans:

Do no harm
Confidential versus anonymous
Informed consent

What about when a person cannot give informed consent?

- a legal guardian must give consent
- researcher bound to follow all ethical principles to protect subjects
- ensure no use of coercion for participation

GRACE-ful ethics

- **G**et the whole story
- **R**ecognize obligations
- **A**ccept responsibilities
- **C**onsider consequences
- **E**valuate