INSTRUCTOR’S MANUAL: RESEARCH METHODS FOR SOCIAL WORK, 9TH EDITION

Chapter One - Why Study Research?

Outline

I. Introduction

A. Agreement Reality

B. Experiential Reality

II. The Scientific Method

A. All Knowledge is Tentative and Open to Question

B. Replication

C. Observation

D. Objectivity

E. Transparency

III. Other Ways of Knowing

A. Tradition

B. Authority

C. Common Sense

D. Popular Media

IV. Recognizing Flaws in Unscientific Sources of Social Work Practice Knowledge

A. Overgeneralization

B. Selective Observation

V. Ex Post Facto Hypothesizing

A. Ego Involvement in Understanding

B. Other Forms of Illogical Reasoning

C. The Premature Closure of Inquiry

D. Pseudoscience

VI. The Utility of Scientific Inquiry in Social Work

A. Will You Ever Do Research?

VII. Reviews of Social Work Effectiveness

A. Early Reviews

B. Studies of Specific Interventions

VIII. The Need to Critique Research Quality

A. Publication Does Not Guarantee Quality

B. Distinguishing and Facilitating More Useful Studies

IX. Compassion and Professional Ethics

X. Utility of Research in Applied Social Work Settings

A. Research Methods You May Someday Use in Your Practice

B. National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics

Behavioral Objectives

Upon completion of this chapter, the student should be able to:

1. Answer the question, “How do we know?”

2. Contrast agreement reality with experiential reality.

3. Contrast social work research with non-applied research in the social sciences.

4. Summarize reviews of research on social work practice effectiveness.

5. Discuss how practice effectiveness concerns bear on the utility of social work research.

6. Discuss why it is important for social work practitioners to be able to critique research quality.

7. Explain why utilizing research is a compassionate endeavor.

8. Describe the fit between research utilization and social work values and professional ethics.

9. Contrast scientific inquiry with nonscientific inquiry.

10. Identify and describe flaws in unscientific sources of social work practice knowledge.

11. Identify the features of the scientific method.

12. Explain the importance of replication in science.

13. Recognize pseudoscientific claims

Teaching Suggestions and Resources

1. The following “True–False” test can be used to illustrate two points. First, it illustrates that the social sciences do not simply document trivial “common sense” ideas. Second, it illustrates how we know the things we know.

Ask students to answer whether the following statements are true or false. In addition, ask them to write down how they knew whether the statements were true or false.

Upon completing the “quiz,” ask how many answered that one statement was true, how many said two statements were true, etc. Then ask how they knew whether the statement was true or false. After discussing how they knew the answers, tell them that all the statements were false. Unless they have taken a similar “quiz” in an introductory course, the students will be surprised.

(1) Given the strains between their roles as mother and employee, working mothers experience more mental illness than nonworking mothers.

*False*—Gove,Walter, & Michael Geerken. 1977. “The Effect of Children and Employment on the Mental Health of Married Men and Women.” *Social Forces,* 56: 66–76.

(2) Most old people have no interest in, or capacity for, sexual relations.

*False*—Masters, W., & V. Johnson. 1966. *Human Sexual* *Response.* Boston: Little, Brown.

(3) Because there was a steady increase in the number of births in the United States between 1976 and 1982, the number of college students preparing to be teachers increased in anticipation of a teacher shortage in the 1990s.

*False*—Astin, Alexander W., Kenneth C. Green, William S. Corn, and Marilyn Schalit. 1985. "The American Freshman: National Norms for Fall 1985." University of California, Los Angeles: Higher Education Research Institute, Graduate School of Education.

(4) Revolutions are more likely to occur when conditions remain very bad, not when previously bad conditions are rapidly improving.

*False*—Davies, James C. 1962. “Toward a Theory of Revolution.” *American Sociological Review,* 27: 5–18. Davies, James C. (ed.). 1971. *When Men Revolt—And Why.* New York: Free Press.

2. FILMS

*Inventing Reality*

60 min. PBS Video

Mill-108-CR94

ISBN 0-7936-0674-8

In Western Society, science and magic are seen as opposing views of reality. Is there in fact a balance to strike? Travel to the Huichol Indian villages of Central Mexico to witness a Mexican doctor and a tribal shaman battling an epidemic of a rare strain of deadly measles. Then visit a cancer treatment center in Canada.

*The Cave*

10 min. Color. Bosustow Productions.

To lead into a discussion of the question “How do we know?” show this film.Based on Plato's sixth book of *The Republic,* the film depicts four men viewing the reflections on the wall as truth. One escapes to see reality. This film was reviewed in the ASA’s “Using Films in Sociology Courses: Guidelines and Reviews.”

*The Eye of the Beholder*

25 min. 1954. Indiana University.

To illustrate the errors we make in observation, show this film.It develops the idea that no two people see the same thing or situation in the same way.

*Perception*

28 min. Color. 1979. Penn State University.

Shows how we perceive situations differently.