

CHAPTER 2

Philosophies and Perspectives about Research

CHAPTER SUMMARY

- Scientific research is not in any way a monolithic enterprise.
- Scientific research can be driven by many different philosophies and perspectives.
- Two overall philosophies of scientific research are the inductive and deductive approaches.
- Variations in scientific research are also evident in the methods that are used, with quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods being options.
- Mixed methods of both quantitative and qualitative methods are becoming fairly common in studies.
- Specialized perspectives are also likely to be evident in research.
- Three specialized perspectives popular in social work research are the feminist, Afrocentric, and Participant Action.
- Critical thinking involves using an important set of skills that are relevant to research as well as practice.

CSWE COMPETENCIES FOUND IN THIS CHAPTER

Professional
Identity

Ethical Practice

Critical
Thinking

Human Rights
and Justice

CHAPTER OUTLINE

Inductive and Deductive Philosophies

Inductive Research

Deductive Research

Assessment of Your Philosophical Tendencies

Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed Methodologies

Quantitative Methods

Qualitative methods

Mixed Methods

Some Specialized Areas in Social Work Research

Participatory Action Research

Feminist Research

Afrocentric Research

Critical Thinking and Social Work Research

Summary

SUGGESTED IN CLASS DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Identify a research study that is based on feminist research. How does this study seem to be different from other studies you have read? Are there differences in the research methods used or the emphasis given to findings and recommendations?
2. Identify a research study based on PAR (participatory action research) perspective. How does this study seem to be different from other studies you have read? Are there differences in the research methods used or the emphasis given to findings and recommendations?
3. Identify a research study based on an ethnic perspective such as Afrocentric. How does this study seem to be different from other studies you have read? Are there differences in the research methods used or the emphasis given to findings and recommendations?
4. Based on your responses in filling out the questionnaire, "What are Your Inductive and Deductive Tendencies," how likely do you think the results are reflective of your actual tendencies to lean toward one philosophy or the other? How could you bring more balance to your tendencies?

5. Review the section on "Critical Thinking and Social Work Research," and identify one attribute of critical thinking that you could develop further in your practice. How could you improve this attribute when working with clients?

CLASS ASSIGNMENTS

1. Review two or three Websites on African Americans to find out more about the needs and problems of African American people. Then identify one research topic that you may be interested in studying. How might an Afrocentric researcher investigate this topic differently than other researchers?
2. Review two or three Websites on feminism to find out more about the needs and problems faced by women. Then identify one research topic that you may be interested in studying. How might a feminist researcher investigate this topic differently than other researchers?
3. Identify a social problem faced by people in the community connected to your field agency or employment agency. Develop a research proposal in which the PAR (participatory action research) is used. How could this proposal, if implemented, empower the people in this community?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Asante, M. K. (1987). *The Afrocentric idea*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Deem, R. (2002). *Talking to manager-academics: Methodological dilemmas and feminist research strategies*. *Sociology*, 36(4), 835-856.

DePoy, E., Hartman, A., & Haslert, D. (1999). *Critical action research: A model for social work knowing*. *Social Work*, 44(6), 560-569.

Gibbs, L., & Gambrill, E. (1996). *Critical thinking for social workers: A workbook*. Thousands Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.

Gibelman, M. (2003). *So how far have we come? Pestilent and persistent gender gap in pay*. *Social Work*, 48(1), 22-32.

Resnicow, K., & Ross-Gaddy, D. (1997). *Development of a racial identity scale for low-income African-Americans*. *Journal of Black Studies*, 28(2), 239-255.

Skeggs, B. (2001). *Feminist ethnography*. In P. Atkinson, A. Coffey, and S. Delamont (Eds.), *Encyclopaedia of ethnography*. London: Sage.

Rothery, M., Grinnell, R., & Tutty, L. (1996). *Qualitative research for social workers*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Get Students Connected with MySocialWorkLab

MySocialWorkLab is a dynamic website that provides a wealth of resources geared to help students develop and master the skills articulated in CSWE’s core competencies—and improve their grades in their Social Work courses.

LEARNING EXPERIENCES USING MySocialWorkLab

Activity	Competence	Assessment Outcomes
In-Class Activities		
Deductive or Inductive Practice?	Research-Based Practice	Research-Based Practice
Active Listening Approaches	Critical Thinking	Research-Based Practice
Homework Activities		
Limits of Generalizing	Diversity Practice	Engage, Assess, Intervene, Evaluate
Critical Thinking in Practice	Research Based Practice	Research-Based Practice
Involving Clients as Participants	Critical Thinking	Research-Based Practice
MyLibrary Activities		
Assessing the Case	Critical Thinking	Ethical Practice
Applying Feminist Ideas in Practice	Human Behavior	Diversity in Practice

In-Class Activities

1. Go to "Interactive Cases for Practice: Domestic Violence" and watch the videos "Using Skills of Engagement" and "Data Collection and Problem Definition." Do you think the social worker's information-gathering strategy is more deductive or more inductive? Give evidence to support your position.
2. Go to "Interactive Cases for Practice: Domestic Violence" and watch the video "Elaboration: Using Active Listening." How does the social worker use a qualitative approach to learn more about her client's situation? In small groups, brainstorm additional questions the social worker could ask to learn more about the client's situation and categorize them as qualitative or quantitative.

Homework Activities

1. Go to "Interactive Cases for Practice: Domestic Violence" and watch the videos "Clarification of Roles," "Identifying the Next Steps," and "Seeking Client Feedback and Reaching for Feelings." Write a short paragraph exploring limitations the social worker faces in generalizing about her client on the basis of other domestic violence cases.
2. Gibbs and Gambrill (1996) identify problems that arise when social workers fail to think critically in accordance with the principles of social work research. Go to "Interactive Cases for Practice: Domestic Violence" and identify three things the social worker does that help her avoid the following problems: misclassifying the client, focusing on irrelevant factors, selecting weak or inappropriate interventions, increasing client dependency, or inappropriately continuing/discontinuing an intervention
3. Go to MySearchLab and do a literature search on the following topics: participatory action research and domestic violence. On the basis of your literature search, what suggestions might you give the social worker in "Interactive Cases for Practice: Domestic Violence" to help her involve her client as a participant in the problem-solving process?

MySocialWorkLibrary Activities

1. Go to MySocialWork Library and read the article "Domestic Violence: Betty and Charlie Bristol." How does the social worker, Shelly Schuurman, use critical thinking skills and research knowledge to question the initial CMH worker's assessment of the case?
2. How does the social worker apply feminist research in her assessment of Betty's situation? Explain how the use of feminist research helped Shelly Shuurman acknowledge human diversity and increase her cultural competence in the client-therapist relationship.

ASSIGNMENTS USING MYSEARCHLAB

By using the MySearchLab component of MySocialWorkLab, students can access a variety of search engines, resources, and articles that can help them develop their understanding as well as their research abilities. Have students research one or more of the following key terms. Some suggested assignments follow.

- Philosophy of research
- Perspective of research
- Inductive research
- Deductive research
- Quantitative methods
- Qualitative methods
- Mixed methods
- Participant Action Research
- Feminist research
- Afrocentric research
- Ethnic-based research
- Critical thinking
- Reductionism
- Generalizing

Suggested Research-Based Assignments

1. Select one of these terms that has peaked your interest or curiosity. Find out more about this term by reviewing research articles or Websites that use this term. Write a short essay on what you have learned about the term beyond what is described in chapter 2.

ASSESSMENT AVAILABLE IN MySocialWorkLab

Using the MySocialWorkLab is a great way for students to develop their overall understanding of the content of this chapter, as well as understanding the theoretical application in practice settings.

There are two types of multiple-choice (and essay) assessments included for each chapter:

- Practice Test
- Chapter Exam

Practice Test

After reading the chapter, students are then recommended to take the *Practice Test*. The *Practice Test* measures student comprehension of the material learned in this chapter.

Chapter Exam

After class discussion and/or assignment chosen by the instructor, students should then complete the *Chapter Exam* on MySocialWorkLab. This *Chapter Exam* will be graded and will automatically feed into the MySocialWorkLab instructor gradebook upon completion.

To view the Practice and Chapter Exam test questions, visit [www. mysocialworklab.com](http://www.mysocialworklab.com).

ASSESSMENT FOR IN-CLASS USE

The following test questions were developed for in-class use. These questions are not the same as the test questions found on MySocialWorkLab.

Pick the best possible answer from each of the four options provided with each questions.

Difficulty: 1 = Easy; 2 = Moderate; 3 = Challenging

Multiple Choice Questions

1. During a conference social work practitioners are discussing about the treatment needs of sexually reactive youth (e.g. youth who sexually abuse others). Several of the practitioners mention that cognitive-behavioral (CB) theory holds promise for reducing recidivism. In particular, one of the constructs of CB that seems to be helpful is self-efficacy, whereas CB theory postulates that there is a relationship between self-efficacy and adaptive behaviors. Therefore the practitioners decide to conduct research on this relationship between self-efficacy and recidivism. What type of research philosophy tends to use established theory to create hypotheses?
 - a) Exploratory
 - b) Descriptive
 - c) Inductive
 - d) Deductive

Answer: d

Difficulty: 2

Competence: Research Based Practice

2. Physicians observe that Hmong residents in the county seem to have higher rates of diabetes than other populations. The physicians contact the local health department to report the phenomena, and subsequently the health department contacts a college professor who is a known as an expert on Hmong culture. The professor is interested in conducting research on the issue, but she claims it will be inductive in nature because little is known about diabetes among Hmong communities. Inductive research typically starts with:
 - a) Hypothesis
 - b) Data analysis
 - c) Data collection
 - d) Theory

Answer: c

Difficulty: 3

Competence: Research Based Practice

3. A macro-level practitioner is working with community members on developing a program that prevents delinquency. Some of the community members think the program should be mandatory, while others believe that it should be optional. During the debates the social worker is cognizant to listen to both sides of the argument, allowing herself to be open to multiple points of view. How is this an example of critical thinking?
- a) Considering alternative points of view
 - b) Understanding the importance of emotional expression
 - c) Understanding the importance of cognitive and emotional expressions
 - d) Empowering the community to prevent delinquency

Answer: a

Difficulty: 3

Competence: Critical Thinking

4. An article is written in the newspaper that critiques the counties mental health services. What is portrayed is inadequate space in the emergency room and psychiatric facilities to accommodate the burgeoning mental health needs of the community. Subsequently, staff of the mental health clinic are upset because nothing positive is acknowledged and no “success” stories are portrayed. However mental health administrators review the content of the article and believe that it may help to generate funding. Reviewing the content of a newspaper article is what type of data analysis?
- a) Quantitative
 - b) Deductive
 - c) Qualitative
 - d) Philosophical

Answer: c

Difficulty: 2

Competence: Research Based Practice

5. Alice develops a survey about depression that is designed to measure the symptom intensity. The survey has 10 questions, and each question has a rating scale that ranges from 1 to 5, with 1 = low depression and 5 = high depression. For instance, one of the questions is “have you lost interest in activities that use to be pleasurable.” Possible responses to the question are 1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = sometimes, 4 = frequently, and 5 = always. Scores on the survey can range between 10 and 50. Alice finds that the average score on the survey is 22. What type of data analysis is this?
- a) Quantitative
 - b) Deductive
 - c) Qualitative
 - d) Philosophical

Answer: a

Difficulty: 2

Competence: Research Based Practice

6. A researcher wants to test a developmental theory that is disparate in comparison to conventional models. He believes that conventional theories are inadequate for explaining the development of females. What is most likely this researcher's philosophical orientation?
- a) Afrocentric
 - b) Experiential
 - c) Experimental
 - d) Feminist

Answer: d

Difficulty: 1

Competence: Critical Thinking

7. Geriatric consumers from an assisted care facility attend activities in the community. Some consumer's report these occasions as favorable, while others have concerns such as lack of stimulation and poor transportation. The director of the facility wants to ascertain more about the concerns, and is particularly interested in the opinions of the consumers. What type of research will most likely be implemented?
- a) Experimental
 - b) Participatory action research
 - c) Deductive
 - d) Quantitative

Answer: b

Difficulty: 2

Competence: Research Based Practice

8. Law enforcement professionals communicate to the local media that more juveniles have been petitioned for prostitution over the past year than the past twenty-five years. In response, the public health department is contacted about the social problem, but they have little information on the factors that lead to juvenile prostitution. What research philosophy can the health department use to gather more information on the problem?
- a) Inductive
 - b) Deductive
 - c) Quantitative
 - d) Feminism

Answer: a

Difficulty: 3

Competence: Critical Thinking

9. Immigrants who migrate from Somalia to U.S. are having problems with family preservation. What seems to be occurring is a fracture between the parental and sibling subsystems. In particular, caregivers want their children to assimilate to their new culture(s), but also want them to embrace the traditional customs and practices from Somalia. What type of research philosophy may help social workers strengthen these families?
- a) Feminism
 - b) Deductive
 - c) Quantitative
 - d) Afrocentric

Answer: d

Difficulty: 1

Competence: Diversity in Practice

10. Researchers want to quantify the effects of a solution-focused intervention at improving self-esteem. They recruit 50 people for the study and decide that half will receive solution-focused brief therapy, while the other half will receive no therapy. What do the researchers hope to accomplish?
- a) Discover a new explanation
 - b) Rule-out an explanation
 - c) Support an existing explanation
 - d) Recruit more people

Answer: c

Difficulty: 3

Competence: Research Based Practice

11. Federal funds are being offered for research on the impact of welfare reform. One stipulation for receiving the grant is that the results of the research must be generalizable. What does generalizing the results mean?
- a) Results are abstract
 - b) Results can be generalized from a sample to a larger population
 - c) Results are concrete
 - d) Results thoroughly describe the sample

Answer: b

Difficulty: 3

Competence: Research Based Practice

12. Phil wants to study the impact of cross-cultural adoptions on children's self esteem and academic achievements. Phil is very passionate about the topic and has some strong opinions about cross-cultural adoptions. Further, he wants to use an inductive framework to better understand the holistic experiences of the children. What term best describes Phil's preference for using an inductive framework?
- a) Empirical
 - b) Hypothesis
 - c) Neutral
 - d) Philosophical

Answer: d

Difficulty: 3

Competence: Critical Thinking

13. A study is conducted to explain the academic achievements of students in an experiential learning environment. A student-centered theory frames the study as researchers draw the hypothesis directly from the theoretical expectations. Further, academic achievement is defined as the students' GPA over the course of one calendar year. What type of research is described in this vignette?
- a) Inductive
 - b) Qualitative
 - c) Deductive
 - d) Reductionism

Answer: c

Difficulty: 2

Competence: Critical Thinking

14. Quantitative research methods involve the analysis of numbers and tend to be structured. For instance, a team of researchers may use results from the Beck's anxiety inventory, which is numerical, to determine the impact of a social work intervention. Which of the following is not characteristic of quantitative research methods?
- a) Inductive reasoning
 - b) Linear research process
 - c) Statistical analysis
 - d) Deductive reasoning

Answer: a

Difficulty: 3

Competence: Critical Thinking

15. Students in a social work research methods course are struggling with an assignment on assessing their personal philosophies for conducting research. Some students infer that the concepts are abstract and more instruction is needed. What information can the course instructor provide to help with this dilemma?
- a) Contact information for religious institutions
 - b) How you write your papers may impact this decision
 - c) Your grades may impact this decision
 - d) The social environment dictates philosophy

Answer: b

Difficulty: 3

Competence: Critical Thinking

16. As a mandated component of a social work curriculum, this construct is relevant to multiple facets of being a social worker. It can be described as the tendencies to give attention to the process of reasoning and alternative points of view. What is this construct?
- a) Research
 - b) Hypothesis
 - c) Critical thinking
 - d) Empirical evidence

Answer: c

Difficulty: 2

Competence: Critical Thinking

17. Three tenured social work faculty are interested in facilitating more research opportunities for graduate-level students. They postulate that there is a paucity of graduate-level research because students may not be inspired or motivated. Therefore the social work faculty is planning a qualitative research project to better understand the inhibiting factors. What component will be included in this scholarship?
- a) Deductive reasoning
 - b) Numerical data
 - c) Statistical Analysis
 - d) Word analysis

Answer: D

Difficulty: 2

Competence: Research Based Practice

18. Researchers are interested in the perceptions of first-generation U.S. citizens on Arizona's immigration laws. To accomplish this research goal, thirty first-generation people are located, and each is interviewed for approximately one-hour. Finally the transcripts of the interviews are analyzed for content. This research is:
- a) Deductive
 - b) Quantitative
 - c) Qualitative
 - d) Qualitative and deductive

Answer: c

Difficulty: 2

Competence: Research Based Practice

19. Archeologists discover what appears to be indigenous American totem poles in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. The totem poles are not expected in this region, and subsequently the archeologists' attempt to find more information from first-nation people in the region. Which term most accurately depicts the research philosophy in this vignette?
- a) Deductive
 - b) Quantitative
 - c) Empiricism
 - d) Inductive

Answer: d

Difficulty: 3

Competence: Critical Thinking

20. In regards to the vignette from question #20, the archeologists decide to use the aboriginal theory to understand the impact of their research on the well-being of the first-nations people. They hypothesize that there is a relationship between the research and harmony. Which term most accurately depicts this research process?
- a) Deductive
 - b) Qualitative
 - c) Empiricism
 - d) Inductive

Answer: a

Difficulty: 3

Competence: Critical Thinking

21. Some social work practitioners suggest that clients get hospitalized after inflicting self-injurious behaviors. Other practitioners believe that rigorous boundaries must be maintained if self-injurious behaviors are enacted, whereas all contact is cut-off between the practitioner and client for at least twenty-four hours. Research can clarify best practices for clients who physically harm themselves. According to the text, what dynamics are being inferred in this hypothetical vignette?
- a) Impact of quantitative research
 - b) Wide variety of qualitative methods
 - c) Wide variety of perspectives in approaching a topic
 - d) Impact of inductive philosophy

Answer: c

Difficulty: 2

Competence: Critical Thinking

22. Jim is concerned about the physical environment of his community. He proceeds to inquire if any of his neighbors have the similar concerns, only to find that he is not alone, that dozens of people also have concerns about the physical environment. What would be the first step Jim will implement if he is using participatory action research to better understand the problem(s)?
- a) Train researchers
 - b) Select research team
 - c) Involve stakeholders
 - d) Report findings

Answer: c

Difficulty: 3

Competence: Research Based Practice

23. Social disorganization theory predicts that crime will happen in neighborhoods that have (1) concentrated disadvantage, (2) residential instability, and (3) ethnic heterogeneity. A group of criminologists are going to use this theory as a framework for their research. Their hypothesis is that there is a relationship between poverty and crime rates. What research philosophy are the criminologists using?
- a) Inductive
 - b) Deductive
 - c) Participatory action research
 - d) Empirical

Answer: b

Difficulty: 2

Competence: Critical Thinking

24. Shamika likes analyzing numbers, while her colleague Keith prefers words. They debate about the merits of each research tendency, often agreeing to disagree. What is Shamika's research philosophy?
- a) Deductive
 - b) Qualitative
 - c) Inductive
 - d) Diverse

Answer: a

Difficulty: 2

Competence: Critical Thinking

25. In light of the vignette from question #24, Shamika and Keith decide to conduct research together, and agree to use both numbers and words as data. What type of research method uses data in both numeric and word forms?
- a) Two-pronged
 - b) Integrative
 - c) Dualism
 - d) Mixed-method

Answer: d

Difficulty: 2

Competence: Research Based Practice

Essay Questions

1. In several paragraphs, describe the similarities between an inductive philosophy and qualitative research.

Difficulty: 3

Competence: Research Based Practice

2. In several paragraphs, describe the similarities between a deductive philosophy and quantitative methods.

Difficulty: 3

Competence: Research Based Practice

3. Identify and describe three strengths of qualitative research.

Difficulty: 3

Competence: Research Based Practice

4. Identify and describe three strengths of quantitative research.

Difficulty: 3

Competence: Research Based Practice

5. Identify and describe three paradigms that enable diversity to be incorporated into research methods.

Difficulty: 3

Competence: Diversity in Practice