

Week 2 - Overview for Today

- I. **Where do we learn knowledge?**
 - scientific methods

- II. **Why social workers learn research methods**

- III. **Overview of the Research Process**

- IV. **Ethical issues in social work research**
 - Guidelines
 - Weighing cost and benefits
 - Ethical vs. political issues
 - In-Class Exercise

I. WHERE DO WE LEARN KNOWLEDGE?

- Many ways of knowing...
 - scientific methods
- Everything is open to question
- Evidence based on observation
 - “empirical” evidence
- Pursuit of objectivity

II. WHY RESEARCH METHODS?

1. To be a wise consumer of research

- Critically appraise and use research
- Beware of unevenness of existing studies (e.g., “rebirthing” therapy)
- Impetus for evidence-based practice

WHY S.W. RESEARCH METHODS (Continued)

2. To evaluate effectiveness: practice & programs

3. To conduct need assessments

4. Especially out of compassion for clients

- Basic vs. Applied research
- Parallels between research & practice

WHY RESEARCH METHODS? (Continued)

5. To stay in compliance with professional ethics:

NASW website:

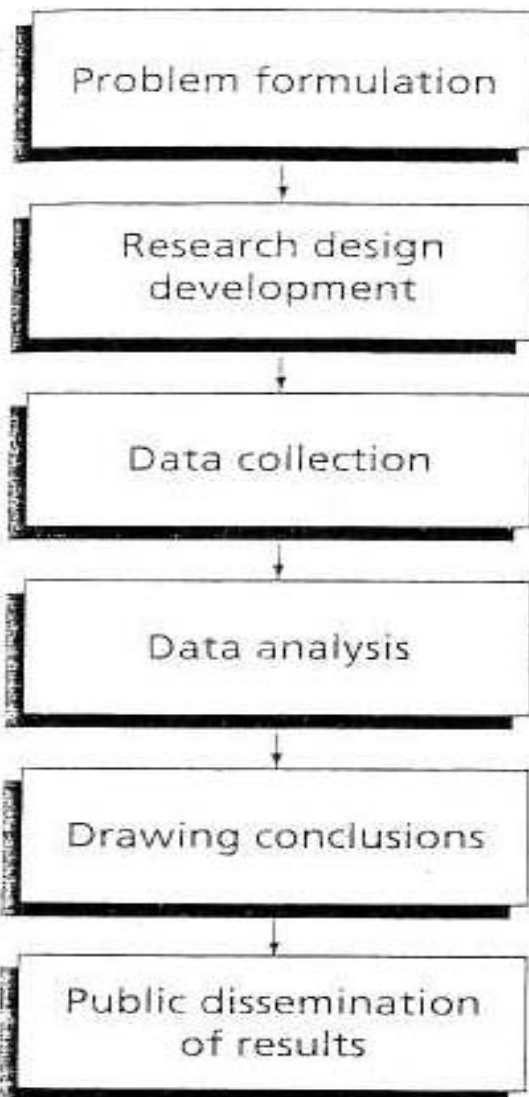
<http://www.socialworkers.org/pubs/code/default.asp>

See section 5.02 SOCIAL WORKERS ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION - “Evaluation and Research”

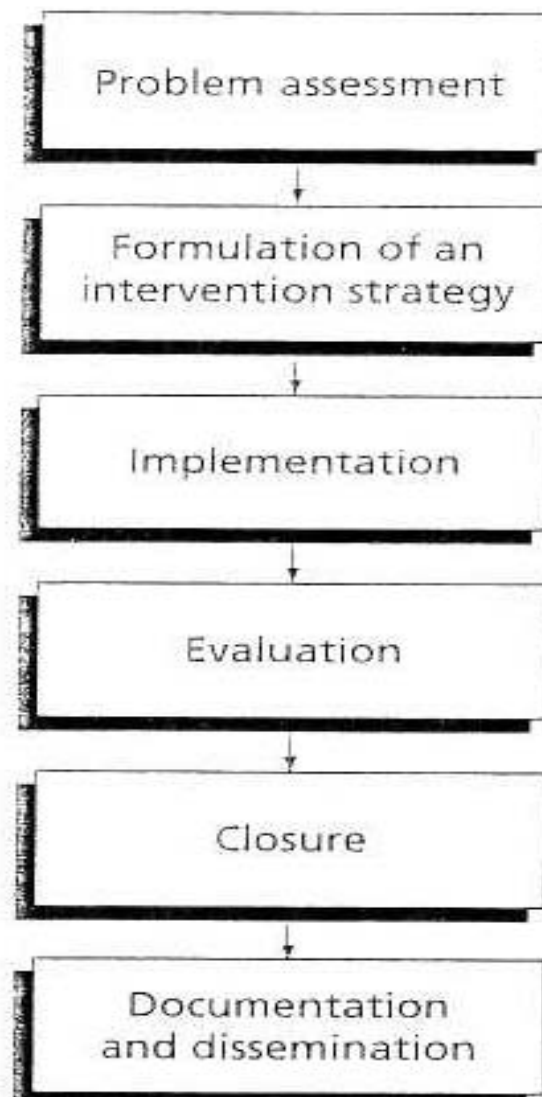
III. Overview of the Research Process

- 1. Problem formulation** (including research questions, lit review)
- 2. Methodology**
 - Operationalization and measurement
 - Study population and sampling
 - Research design
 - Data collection
 - Data analysis plan
- 3. Implementation** – Data collection
- 4. Data analysis**
- 5. Dissemination**

Stages of Social Research



Steps in Human Service Practice



IV. ETHICAL ISSUES: Guidelines

1) Voluntary Participation

- Must be voluntary
- No coercion
- Institutional Review Board (IRB)

2) Informed Consent

- Entitlement
- IRB approval

II. ETHICAL ISSUES: Guidelines (Continued)

3) Cause No harm/Distress to Participants

- When: Choosing research design, analyzing data, & reporting findings
- IRB approval

4) Ensure Privacy

- Handling subject's identity
- Anonymity - Confidentiality
- IRB approval

II. ETHICAL ISSUES: Guidelines (Continued)

5) Avoid Deception

- If necessary, should be *strongly* justified
- IRB approval

6) Avoid Scientific Fraud and Misconduct

- Obligation to professional colleagues

7) Avoid Bias and Insensitivity Regarding Diversity

- Inherently subjective decisions
- No objective formula

III. ETHICAL ISSUES: Ethical vs. Political Issues

- Research methods
vs.
Utilization of research findings
- Formal codes of conducts
- Values, politics and ideology
- Ethical Issues – Class Exercise

Ethical Issues in Social Work – Class Exercise

Listed below are some research situations that you may encounter in your professional practice. Identify possible violation of either ethical guidelines discussed in the class or the social work profession's code of ethics.

1. While parents await their children in the waiting room of a Child Guidance Center, the center's social worker staff instructs them to complete a questionnaire on child-rearing attitudes. The staff will use the findings of this study to prepare a proposal for funding for a parent education program.
2. A community organizer decides to observe and interview people, and write about a demonstration against police brutality that is expected to be lawful. The demonstration unexpectedly becomes violent, and property is destroyed. Law enforcement officials show up and demand that the organizer identify people observed breaking the law. Rather than risk arrest as an accomplice after the fact, the organizer complies.
3. Social workers in a battered person's program conduct an evaluation of the effectiveness of the services provided by the program, hoping to bring visibility and resources to the program by publishing the findings. The findings, however, unexpectedly indicate that the services are not effective. In light of these findings the social workers decide they must not have conducted a proper study of the services that they are convinced are effective, and decide not to let anyone know about the study.
4. Two social work students decide to conduct for their class research a project that involves observing the nocturnal activities at a shelter for the homeless. The shelter has a limited number of beds and cannot accommodate everyone seeking housing. The two students show up and wait in line early enough to get beds and then watch and record the goings on at night while they pretend to be asleep.
5. A new intervention is advertised as an extremely effective, powerful grief therapy for posttraumatic stress disorder among victims of sexual assaults. Although sufficient resources exist to provide this treatment to all clients at a rape crisis center, the decision is made to provide it to only half the clients, so its effects can be compared to the effects of the center's routine services

NEXT WEEK

**ETHICAL ISSUES – additional readings &
discussion**

**RESEARCH PROCESS OVERVIEW - Continued
RESEARCH PROBLEM FORMULATION
LOCATING & USING ARTICLE DATABASES**