

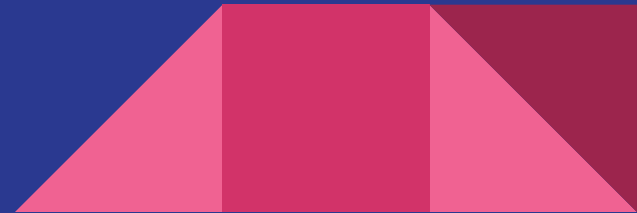
# **Knowledge Building**

**What constitutes a science of social work?**

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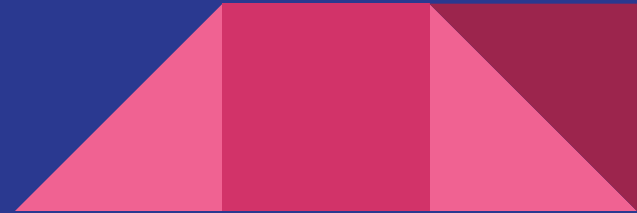
# Intuition, Direct Experience, and Cognitive Bias

- Intuition, or your unconscious way of knowing something, is based on direct experience.
- Direct experience is what you've learned throughout your life simply by experiencing different events. Direct experience can be a powerful force in social work.
- Direct experience can be flawed when it leads to cognitive bias. Cognitive bias is when we develop patterns of thinking that is based on our subjective reality.



# Writing Reflection

Think of a time you used your intuition when presented with a conflict or decision you had to make. What do you think contributed to your intuition pointing you to a certain direction? Did you listen to your intuition? Why or why not?



# How do social workers know what to do?

- Social work research occurs on the micro-, meso-, and macro-level.
- Intuition is a powerful, though woefully incomplete, guide to action in social work.
- All human thought is subject to cognitive biases.
- Scientific inquiry accounts for cognitive biases by applying an organized, logical way of observing and theorizing about the world.

# Social Work Informed By Social Science

The science of humanity, social interactions, and social structure

- Social work research uses organized and intentional procedures to uncover facts or truths about the social world
- Social workers rely on social scientific research to promote individual and social change
- Social sciences are influenced by philosophical ideas and questions such as what is existence/reality, and how do we know that what we know is true?

Oxford definition:

**Epistemology:** branch of philosophy concerned with the study of knowledge, with knowledge traditionally defined as justified true belief

Britannica definition:

**Ontology:** philosophical study of being/reality

# Objective Truth vs. Subjective Truth

- Objective truth- a single truth, observed without bias, that is universally applicable

Ex.

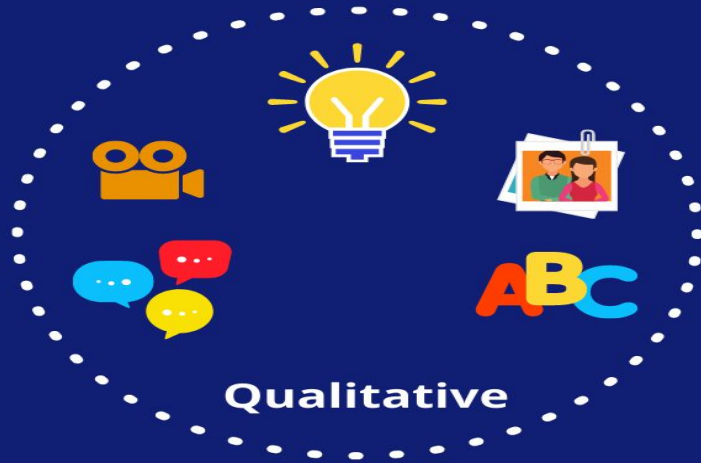
PTSD: a real mental health issue that exists independent of the social worker observing it and that is similar in its symptoms with our client as it would be with other clients

- Subjective truth- one truth among many, bound within a personal, social and cultural perspective, varying from person to person

Ex.

A person experiencing comorbidities expresses that PTSD is the hardest mental health issue to live with

# Qualitative & Quantitative Methods



VS.



**Qualitative methods-** examine words or other media to understand their meaning

**Quantitative methods-** examine numerical data to precisely describe and predict elements of the social world

# Evidence Based Practice

- Evidence Based Practice requires using the best available literature and research combined with your client's unique characteristics to help them. \*
- Part of evidence based practice may involve evaluation research. Evaluation research is used to explore a new approach to treatment or evaluate the outcomes of a policy or program. \*
- An example of an organization that uses evaluation research in order to change policies is Safehouse, a harm reduction organization in Philadelphia. Safehouse conducted research on safe injections sites. Their research has shown that safe injection sites decreased overdoses, decreased instances of HIV and decreased wounds from injecting. In this case, evaluation research is being used to combat stigma in drug use laws.



# Why should we care?

- Whether we know it or not, our everyday lives are shaped by social scientific research.
- Understanding research methods is important for competent and ethical social work practice.
- Understanding social science and research methods can help us become more astute and more responsible consumers of information.
- Knowledge about social scientific research methods is important for ethical practice, as it ensures interventions are based on evidence.

**“Social workers who ignore science and act based on biased or informal observation may actively harm clients.”**

# Questions

