

PART II

APPROACHES TO QUALITATIVE RESEARCH



## Constructivist Research in Social Work

JAMES W. DRISKO

Strictly speaking there are no such things as facts pure and simple.

—Alfred Schütz, *Collected Papers, Volume 1*

Some authors now argue that all qualitative research must be constructivist research (Denzin and Lincoln 2005). Yet in social work, very little constructivist research is evident. A search of *Social Work Abstracts* in June 2012 yielded almost 22,350 hits for the term “research” but only 117 for “constructivist.” “Constructivist social work research” yields 21 hits, including dissertations, reflections on research methods, and case-based practice analyses. Most constructivist research comes in under the radar, labeled instead as postmodern, critical, narrative, and poststructural research or inquiry. Rodwell’s [O’Connor’s] (1998) excellent, but hard to find, textbook *Social Work Constructivist Research* is the sole American social work text on this topic. Morris’s (2006) research methods text includes constructivist research as one of four focal paradigms. The limited presence of constructivist social work research likely reflects the recent intensive emphasis on large-scale, grant-funded research notable in American academic social work. At the same time, considerable work in allied disciplines and by some European, Canadian, Israeli, and Australian social workers shows growing interest in this area.

There is no single, standard type of constructivist research. There are instead many different and very divergent voices, applying both old and new methods and creating widely varied research reports. This variety is a strength