

## Making professional judgements - confidently

Research just published in the British Journal of Social Work has been looking into the development of confidence of people making professional judgements.

### Confidence



Confidence has an important role in the making of judgements and decisions in our professional lives. Confidence, in this context, refers to the feeling of having done something correctly or incorrectly. As such it is an important aspect of the subjective experience we have during the decision making process and guides us forwards.

It has previously been found that one of the differentiators between a professional making judgements and a novice is confidence. This confidence enables professionals to take in more information and see inconsistencies, whereas uncertainty tends to focus people on one or two aspects of the process to the exclusion of other information. It also has a tendency to make people miss or cancel out inconsistent or contradictory information (as does over confidence).

This study is particularly interesting in that it looks at the confidence of people making judgements in stress situations, where this effect is heightened.

### Findings

The first thing the researchers found was that experienced practitioners and professionals draw on their experience to firstly determine their level of confidence in any situation and secondly to actually make judgements and decisions. Novices and students however rely heavily on their training and models to analyse the situation and draw conclusions.

The researchers also found that students or novices in a situation who lack the confidence in their decision making ability in that situation are very likely to be hyper-reactive to criticism and feedback, particularly negative feedback during the situation. Not only that, but people without experience in a situation and the opposite confidence are much more likely to make assumptions about other people's motivations, reasoning and emotional state than a confident professional. This, the researchers found, may impede the less confident professionals' ability to attune to the emotional states of the people around them and build collaborative relationships.