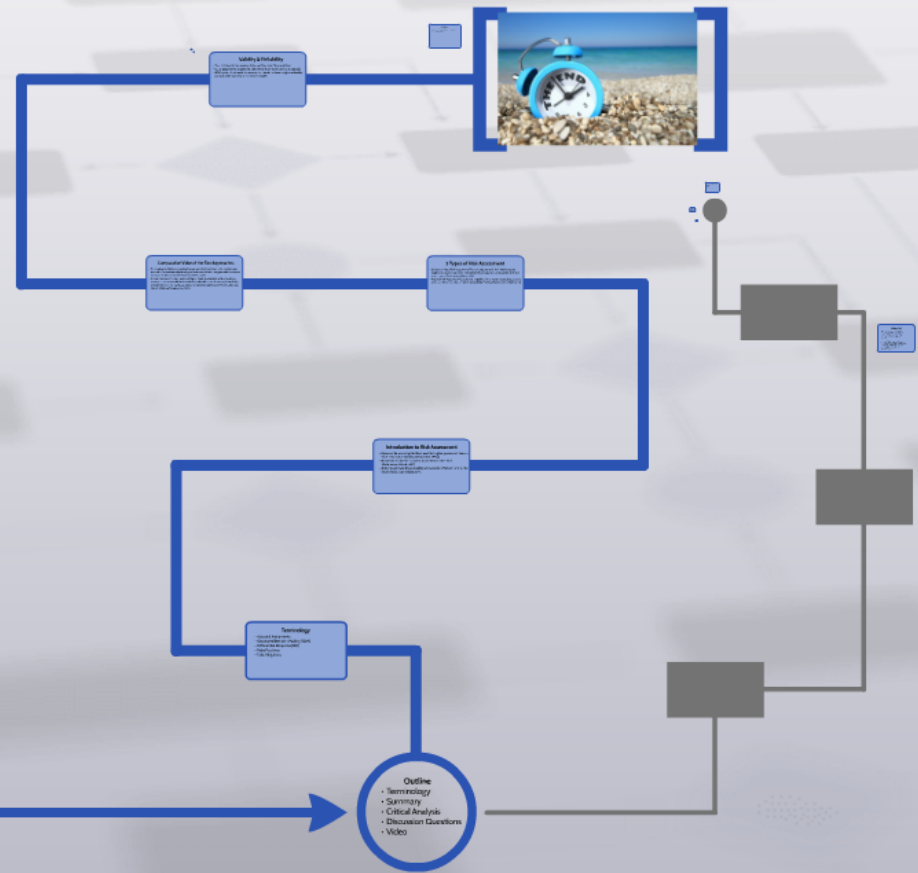


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Risk Assessment in Child Welfare: Use and Misuse

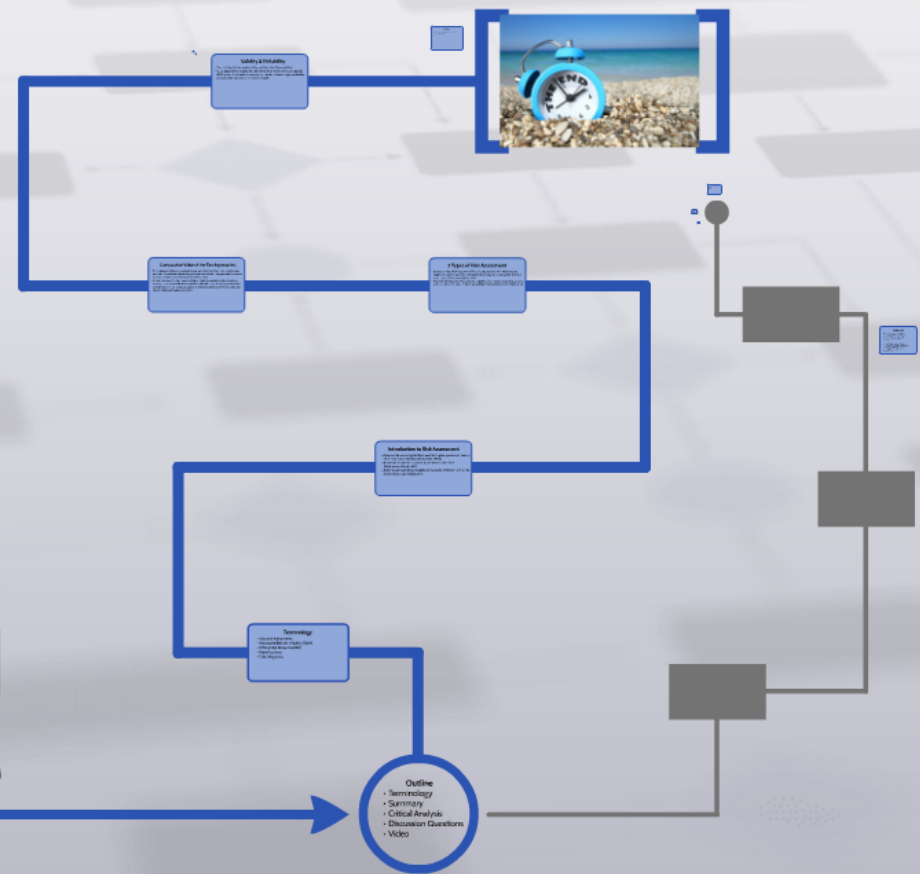
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Outline

- Terminology
- Summary
- Critical Analysis
- Discussion Questions
- Video

Introduction to Risk Assessment

- A process for assessing the likelihood that a given person will harm a child in the future (Wald & Woolverton, 1990)
- An activity designed to prevent future harm to the child (Christianson-Wood, 2011)
- Ability to estimate the probability and severity of future harm to the child (Christianson-Wood, 2011)

Terminology

- Actuarial Instruments
- Structured Decision Making (SDM)
- Differential Response (DR)
- False Positives
- False Negatives

2 Types of Risk Assessment

- *Consensus-Based Risk Assessment*: The variables seen and their weightings are applied using an interpretive method which can vary worker to worker and from case to case (Christianson-Wood, 2011)
- *Actuarial Risk Assessment*: Uses formal, repetitive information processing systems such as statistical analysis to identify predictive factors (Christianson-Wood, 2011)

Comparative Value of the Two Approaches

- Knowledge and skills are required to use actuarial instruments but workers are warned to be cautious about using an instrument that is not grounded in a casual theory of maltreatment(Christianson-Wood,2011)
- Consensus-based system require a higher level of education and experience, making its use vulnerable to error when used with a lack of training, knowledge, or experience, or not having access to competent supervision (Reder & Duncan, 2004; Wald and Woolverton, 1990)

Validity & Reliability

- The instrument can produce false positives and false negatives
- Value judgment is required to determine how much error is acceptable
- SDM system's actuarial risk assessment tends to have a higher reliability compared to two-consensus based models