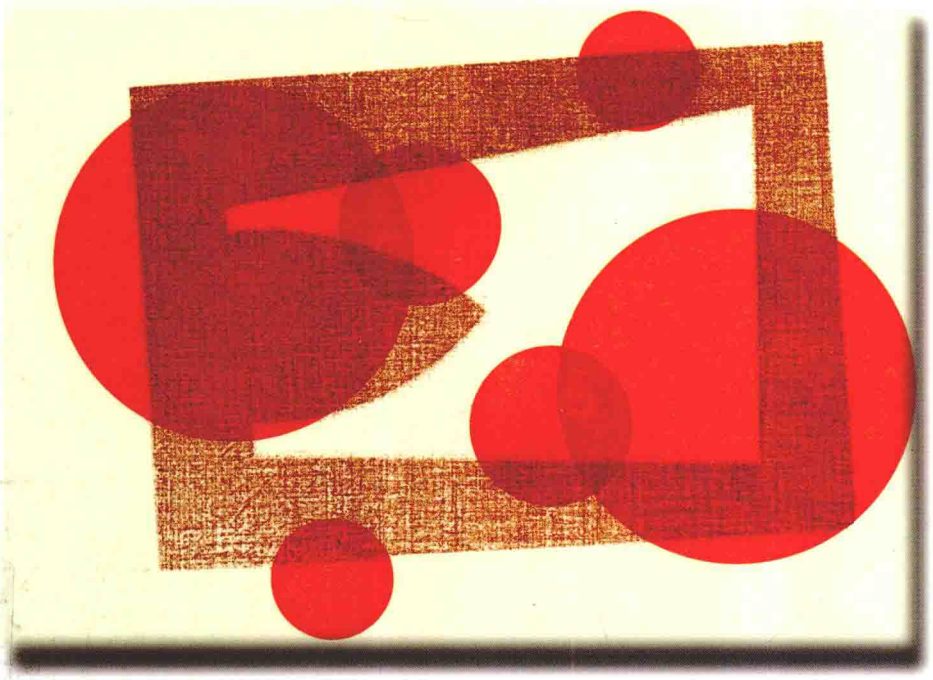
# RESEARCH and EVALUATION in EDUCATION and PSYCHOLOGY

## INTEGRATING DIVERSITY WITH QUANTITATIVE, QUALITATIVE, AND MIXED METHODS

## 2nd EDITION



DONNA M. MERTENS

SAGE

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DONNA M. MERTENS

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# Preface

When I studied about research in my graduate classes many years ago, only one approach to research was taught—a quantitative approach that emphasized closed-ended surveys and experimental designs. My basic statistics courses were taught in the agriculture department, with no emphasis on the messiness that enters into research when you study people compared to animals or types of fertilizers.

As I began conducting research studies myself in the messier world of people and educational and psychological policies and practices, I found that a piece of the puzzle was missing. I felt compelled to study the principles of qualitative approaches to research to get a more complete understanding of the phenomenon that I was researching. Later in my career, I began teaching at Gallaudet University and doing research for the deaf community. At this time, I began to search for approaches to research that could more accurately capture the experiences of people who were not exactly in the mainstream of society.

The idea for a different way of looking at research actually emanated from my work as a teacher of educational psychology. I came across Carol Gilligan's (1982) book *In a Different Voice,* in which she made the point that Kohlberg's theory of moral development had been developed based on data collected only from boys and young men. To further our understanding of the process of moral development, Gilligan explored responses to moral dilemmas by a group of females. Thus Gilligan's work planted the seed that research needed to include people of both genders and that perspectives might be different for males and females on important, fundamental developmental issues.

Reading Gilligan's work led me to seek out other researchers who approached their work from a feminist perspective (e.g., Reinharz, 1992). I was especially interested in exploring the question, What does it mean to conduct research from a feminist perspective? Having worked with deaf people for many years, I could immediately see many parallels between the feminists' statements concerning discrimination and oppression based on gender and the experiences of people with disabilities. Other important sources of information for me were the writings of racial and ethnic minorities on more culturally sensitive approaches to research (e.g., Stanfield & Dennis, 1993).

As I struggled to put the pieces of the puzzle together, I found the organizing framework that I was seeking in the work of Patti Lather (1992) and Guba and Lincoln (1994) in their discussion of paradigms of research. They make clear that researchers' views of the world (i.e., their chosen paradigms) underlie their choices of research approaches. It is not simply a choice of method: Should I use quantitative or qualitative approaches to research, or should I mix the methods? Researchers make methodological choices based on their assumptions about reality and the nature of knowledge that are either implicitly present or explicitly acknowledged.

The goal of this book is to guide researchers in identifying their own assumptions and examining for themselves the implications of choices about research methodology based on those assumptions. It is my position that the newer paradigms add to our understanding of how to conduct more valid research. They should not be viewed as replacements for the older approaches to research. As a research community (whether we create or use research), we should be constantly building on the information we have from the past. If we know some things about how to conduct surveys from past experience, it is not wise to throw that out just because those learnings came from the original paradigm of research. If we can learn about how to conduct better surveys from feminists, racial and ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, and their advocates, then we should listen to what they are saying. *I believe that knowledge is cumulative and we learn by listening.*

## Organization of This Book

This book is organized according to the logic of conducting a research study. Researchers must first examine their underlying assumptions about the nature of reality and knowledge to make sensible decisions about all of the other steps in the research process. Chapter 1 contains an explanation of the major research paradigms and their associated assumptions. Students who understand the research paradigms and their assumptions will not only be prepared to make methodological decisions about their own research, they will also be prepared to engage meaningfully in the debates in the research community about the most appropriate ways to approach the business of research. In addition, the topic of ethics is discussed in Chapter 1 as a fundamental principle that researchers must keep in the front of their minds as they begin to walk down the research road. Ethical issues are integrated into all of the chapters because they are of central concern throughout the research process.

Chapter 2 provides an overview of program evaluation as a special context for systematic inquiry. Its placement here is meant to underscore the transferability of social science research methods in evaluation, while still recognizing the uniqueness of the context within which evaluation is conducted.

In Chapter 3, the nuts and bolts of conducting a literature review and formulating a research problem are explained. This chapter has value for all students of research, whether they are preparing to conduct their own research or if they view themselves as consumers of research. Even students whose current self-perceptions are that they will use only the research that others produce may find that in future

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years they will be involved in a research team. This text will prepare them to participate in a meaningful way on such a team.

A variety of approaches to systematic inquiry are explained in Chapters 4 through 10, including experimental and quasi-experimental research, causal comparative and correlational research, survey research, single-case research, qualitative methods, history and narrative study of lives, and mixed-methods research. Although the book is somewhat oriented to a step-by-step process of how to do research, each chapter also contains perspectives from the three major paradigms, along with a discussion of issues that are controversial, depending on one's worldview. The final chapters help the student complete the research process.

In Chapter 11, issues of the definition and selection of samples are explained, along with specific ethical concerns when working with human beings in a research context. Both quantitative and qualitative data collection strategies are discussed in Chapter 12, along with standards for judging the quality of the data collected from a variety of perspectives. In Chapter 13, quantitative and qualitative choices for data analysis are presented, and issues related to data interpretation and reporting of research results are discussed. In that chapter, students are also instructed in how to write a research plan, including a management plan and a budget for research that they might propose for thesis or dissertation requirements or for external funding.

## Changes in the Second Edition

The changes in the second edition reflect a growth in understandings of doing research in culturally complex communities that has emerged over the last 7 years, as well as the flourishing of electronic resources available to researchers. One major change is that the term *emancipatory* as a label for one of the major paradigms in the first edition has been changed to *transformative*. I struggled to find the appropriate term as an umbrella for the many approaches that address issues of cultural complexity specifically. The term *transformative* is closer conceptually to the purpose of research and evaluation conducted from this paradigmatic perspective, and therefore I have chosen to use it throughout this edition of the text.

I have already mentioned that the chapter on program evaluation was brought to the front of the book as a way of emphasizing the usefulness of the entire text for the purposes of planning and conducting evaluations. I added a chapter on mixed methods and mixed models of research, and you will find that many electronic resources have been added to each chapter. I have also included a bit more in terms of examples from other countries to enhance the international applications.

## Audiences for This Book

This book is designed for the advanced undergraduate student, master's students, and beginning doctoral students in education and psychology. It can be used by those who will plan and conduct research, as well as by those who see their main goal as learning to locate, read, and critically evaluate research. Students will use the

book differently, depending on their ultimate goal—to be an independent producer of research, a member of a research team, or a consumer of research. For students in the latter two categories, this book is quite comprehensive and could be used as a stand-alone text.

For advanced students who are preparing to conduct independent research, additional course work and resources are necessary. This book provides the foundation for making decisions about what additional study would be necessary. For example, students may need additional course work in statistics or psychometrics, because these topics are discussed at a conceptual level rather than in terms of "how to do it."

References are cited throughout the text that would lead to more depth in specific methodologies, such as survey research or focus groups. Many researchers who teach qualitative approaches to research believe that students should have a mentor to teach them to conduct fieldwork. These are ideas for expanding a student's expertise in different aspects of research once they have acquired the foundational information to guide them in the most appropriate directions.

## Pedagogical Features

Many pedagogical features are to be found in this text. First, at the beginning of each chapter, students are given a list of the main ideas contained in that chapter. This can be used as an advance organizer for the students, and as an outline for students to keep themselves situated as they move through the complex process of learning about research.

Each chapter contains many electronic resources that are available for researchers and evaluators to use from the Internet. In many chapters, specific research studies are summarized, providing a realistic context for the discussion of the points throughout the chapter. In addition, many chapters explain step-by-step processes for conducting that part of the research process. In every chapter, perspectives from the major paradigms are included as they relate to that chapter's topic, along with discussion of controversies that exist within the broader research community.

Questions for critical analysis are included in each chapter that students can apply in the critical analysis of extant research studies as well as in the critical evaluation of their own planned research processes. Each chapter closes with questions for discussion and activities for application, providing students with an opportunity to further their understandings of the concepts presented in that chapter.

Finally, an outline for the preparation of a research proposal is contained in the appendix and can be used by those students who will be preparing a research proposal either as part of the course requirements, for the purpose of completing a thesis or dissertation, or for requesting funds to support research.

## Acknowledgments

Many people helped me through the years that this book has been in process. I want to thank the members of my professional organizations, especially Bessa Whitmore,

Amy Wilson, and Carole Truman, because they have inspired me through their own work in creating more inclusive and transformative models of research.

I also want to thank the faculty members, graduate students, and office support staff at Gallaudet University who helped me in so many ways, especially Kay Meadow-Orlans, Glenda Mobley, and NiYa Costley. My thanks go also to the many graduate students who attended my classes and challenged, encouraged, and inspired me to produce a textbook that contained representation of the voices of struggling groups.

For their careful and thorough reviews, I wish to thank the following: Dorothy Ettling, Christine Nagy, James Ward, and Edward W. Wolfe. Thank you to Lisa Cuevas, my editor at Sage, and her predecessor, C. Deborah Laughton at Sage, who believed in me and helped me as a professional and a friend. Thanks also to the other staff members at Sage who helped get this book into print by offering professional advice and support in a friendly manner. Robyn Ertwine deserves special recognition as my first indexer and friend.

I want to save my warmest thanks for my husband, Jim Hopper, and my sons, Nathan (age 15) and Jeffrey (age 12), for accepting the sacrifices a family inevitably experiences when "Mom" is writing a book. I am inspired to try to make the world a better place because of the magic I find in the faces of my children.

# A Eulogy to Diversity

In this diversity lies the Truth of humanity
of our being, our richness and our interconnectedness.
In this diversity is the mystery and essence of humanity,
held together
by deep values, of dignity,
of a deep "African laughter" and
the giggle of the village girls knowing happiness from within.

In this diversity is us—you and me,
the individual that we rarely celebrate in the collective.
The diversity of humanity reflects in the beauty of the rainbow.
Yet in this diversity are the
seeds of oppression, of superiority, of "us and them", of "him", "her" and "me".
In this diversity is the manipulation of difference.
Similarities never surfaced.
Yet the truth of our dignity, our future and happiness,
lies in the celebration of the difference.
There is never "us", without "you and me".
Together we are.
In language, thought and feeling, yearning, love, dreams and pain;
our diversity is blurred and merged into the beauty of a rainbow
bringing warm feeling, joy and soothing the pain that is the reality of an African woman today;
smoothing the tears of poverty, HIV/AIDS, wars and violence,
transcending to the realm of collective action and success,
to the terrain of celebrating diversity as the only way to creating that rainbow.
In diversity lies the truth of humanity
and therein lie the seeds of our future with dignity and equality.

Inspired by a training session for the United Nations UNIFEM,
Transformative Evaluation and Dimensions of Diversity
Training conducted by Donna M. Mertens,
Poem written by Nyaradzai Gumbonzvanda
19 November 2003
Pretoria, South Africa

## *In This Chapter*

- Various definitions of research are provided, and a distinction is made between research and evaluation.
- Definitions for important research terminology are provided.
- Four major paradigms—postpositivist, constructivist, transformative, and pragmatic—are explored in terms of their philosophical assumptions and methodological implications.
- Different perspectives on the politics of acceptance for the various paradigms are illustrated through contrasting statements concerning the concept of objectivity as it is currently being debated in the research community.
- Ethical issues in research are discussed in terms of the definitions used by different professional organizations, such as the American Psychological Association (APA), the American Educational Research Association (AERA), and the American Evaluation Association (AEA), as well as from the various paradigmatic perspectives.

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*By Nyaradzai Gumbonzvanda*

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