

Building the Transformative Impact of Evaluation

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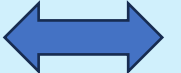


Keynote: Australian Evaluation Society

DONNA M. MERTENS

- Author of best-selling evaluation textbooks
- Past President of AEA
- Former editor of the Journal of Mixed Methods Research
- Professor Emeritus, Gallaudet University



AES Themes

- Reflect – World views and theories  frame evaluations
- Refract – Diversify evaluation theory  value to communities & global challenges
- Refocus – Challenge norms  transform communities
- Respond – Transformative impact of evaluation  action

Transformative Mixed Methods Evaluation

- Recognize power relations;
- Identify the structural causes of inequality and discrimination;
- Determine the impacts of programmes on impoverished people and groups facing discrimination;
- Involve participatory and reflective processes; and
- Aim for the progressive realization of human rights and gender equality

Source: UNEG/UNSSC, 2008; Mertens & Wilson, 2019

Intersectionality

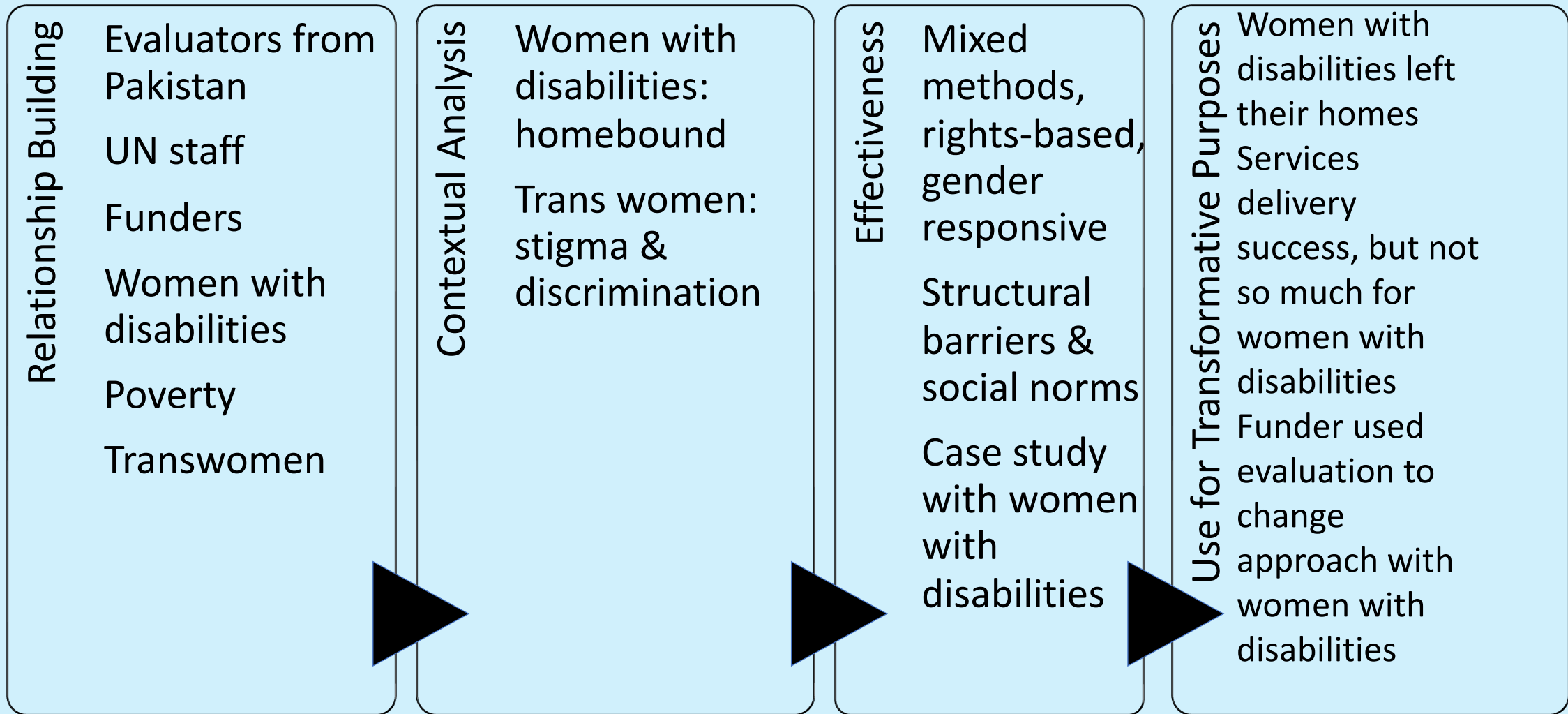
- addresses the question of how multiple forms of inequality
- identity inter-connectedness in different contexts and over time,
- for example, the inter-connectedness of race, class, gender, disability, and so on.
- The term originated in the work of U.S. critical race theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw (1995)

Crenshaw, K. W. (1995). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. In K. Crenshaw, N. Gotanda, G. Peller, & K. Thomas (Eds.), *Critical race theory: The key writings that formed the movement* (pp. 357-383). New York, NY: New Press.

Need for an “ism”–Umbrella



- ▶ Feminist theories
- ▶ Critical Race Theories
- ▶ Critical Theories
- ▶ Human Rights Theories
- ▶ Disability Rights Theories
- ▶ Transformative Participatory Action theories
- ▶ Deafness rights theories
- ▶ Queer theories



Stocker et al. (2020). Economic empowerment of women home based workers and excluded groups in Pakistan. UN Women.

Evaluation Assumptions

Guba and Lincoln

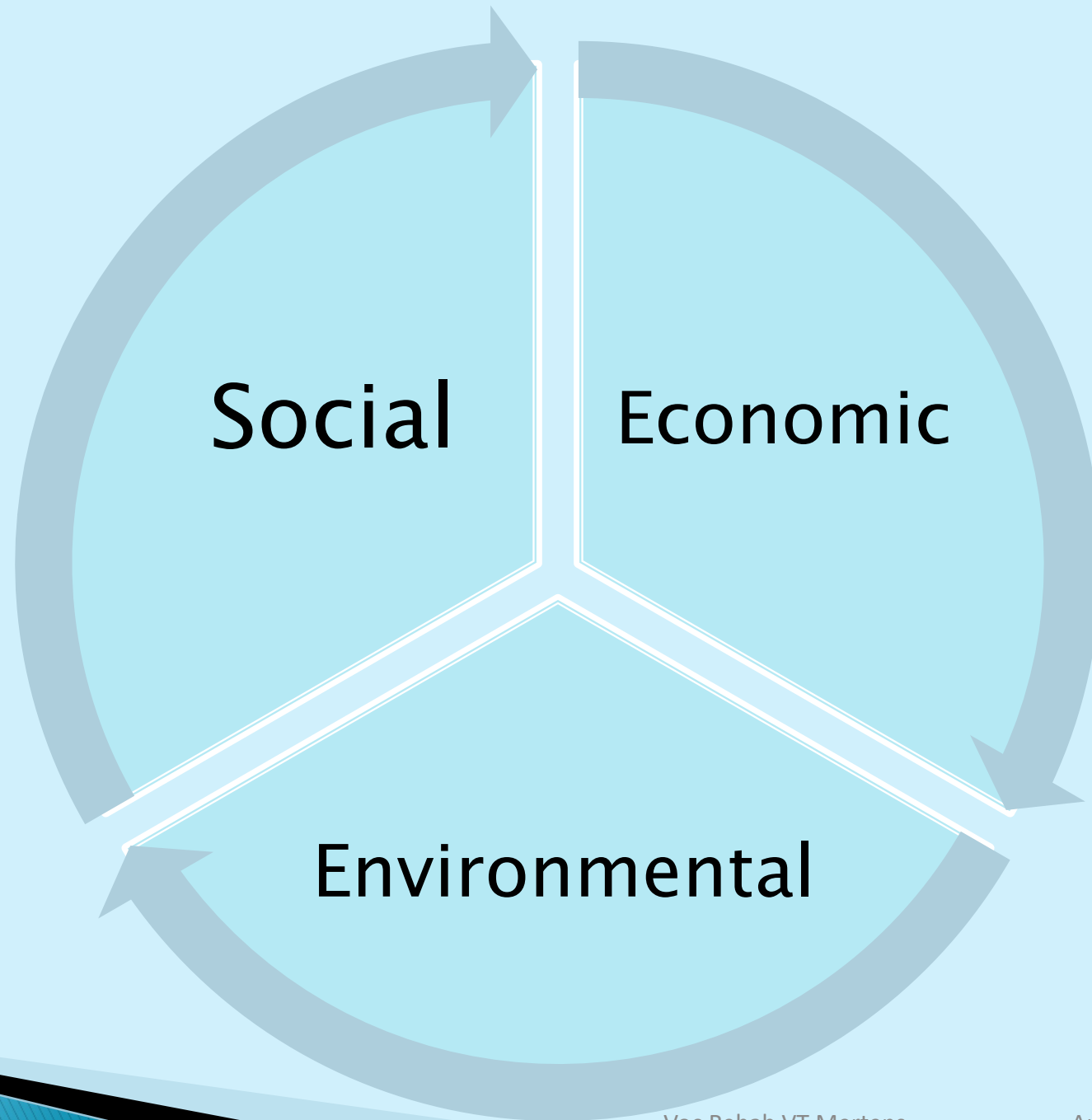
- ▶ Axiological: Nature of Ethics
- ▶ Ontological: Nature of Reality
- ▶ Epistemology: Nature of Knowledge & Relation Between Knower & That Which Would Be Known (Evaluators and Stakeholders)
- ▶ Methodology: Nature of systematic inquiry

Transformative Paradigm

Assumptions	Beliefs
Axiology	Cultural responsiveness; promote social, environmental and economic justice & human rights; address inequities; reciprocity; resilience; interconnectedness (living and nonliving); relationships
Ontology	Multi-faceted; consequences of privilege; historically situated
Epistemology	Interactive; trust; coalition building
Methodology	Transformative, dialogic, culturally responsive, mixed methods; policy change

Voc Rehab VT Mertens

Types of Justice



Environmental Justice and Occupational Support

- ▶ **Occupational Support**
- ▶ Older African Americans in Detroit
- ▶ Quality of the neighborhood affects health and access to employment
- ▶ Fritz & Cutchin (2017)
- ▶ **Economic Development in Indonesia**
- ▶ Farmers sell land; problems in the city
- ▶ Textile mill
- ▶ Organize farmers, politicians, and university folks
- ▶ Widianingsih & Mertens (2019)

Phase 1: Relationship building



Phase 2: Contextual Analysis



Phase 3: Pilot testing



Phase 4: Implementation



Phase 5: Determine effectiveness



Phase 6: Use for transformative purposes

Key Components to Increase Impact

- Build culturally responsive relationships
- Adopt strategies to foster coalition building
- Address power inequities and plan for sustainability

Culturally Responsive Relationships

- Contextual factors: history, dimensions of diversity used as a basis for discrimination, legislation and policies, versions of reality
- **Example: drug addiction (Mertens, 2018b)**
- History: war on drugs vs. public health problem
- Basis for discrimination: In the U.S.: race
- Legislation: Excessive incarceration vs. Diversion programs
- Relationships: Justice system, mental health, social support
- Diversity: persons with disabilities, sexual minorities, veterans
- Quant: uptake of services, recidivism; Qual: content analysis, interviews

Coalitions

- Some funding agencies require them (e.g., Health Resources and Services Administration's Healthy Start and CDC cancer programs)
- Not typically included in mixed methods studies
- Evaluators can learn from strategies used by coalitions to achieve transformative impact

Coalition building: Addressing Poverty and Fast Food

- Reality: kids in high school vs. families that can't make it work
- Fight for \$15: Fast food workers. SEIU with New York Communities for Change (NY 65,000 fast food workers) created a Movement by visiting apartments and fast food restaurants; used Twitter and Facebook; engaged the press (e.g., New York Times) and ministers, rabbis, City Council members, other government officials, members of African American, Latino and LBGT communities, Poor People's Campaign, NAACP
- Result: Fast Food Justice (a workers organization <https://www.fastfoodjustice.org/>) and \$15/hr in 20 states; House passed Raise the Wage Act (July 2019)

Greenhouse, 2019

Transformative Qualitatively Driven Mixed Methods



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- Coalition built
- Power issues
- Context
- Data collection
- Action-oriented
- Attention to persons

Miller, R.L., Rutledge, J. & Ayala, G. (2021). Breaking down barriers to HIV care for gay and bisexual men and transgender women: The Advocacy and Other Community Tactics (ACT) Project. *AIDS and Behavior*, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10461-021-03216-w>

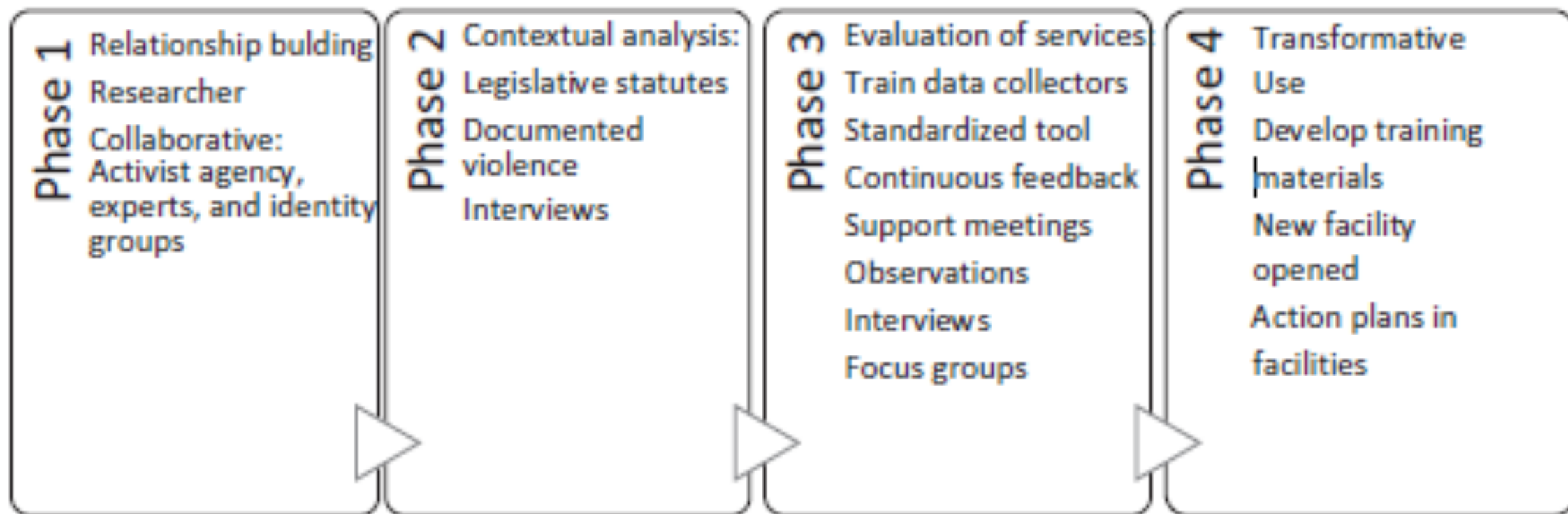


FIGURE 2.4 *Transformative Mixed Methods Design to Improve Health Services for Gay/Bi-Sexual Men and Trans-Women (Adapted from Miller 2020).*

Questions: Coalitions

- Some projects include the use of a coalition/community advisory group
- Are members of this group engaged in the evaluation of your project?
- If so, how?
- If not, what needs to change so they could be?
- What strategies would be useful in bringing a transformative lens into coalition building in service to evaluation?

Interventions: Culturally Responsive and Transformative



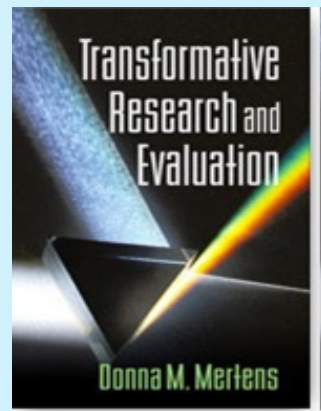
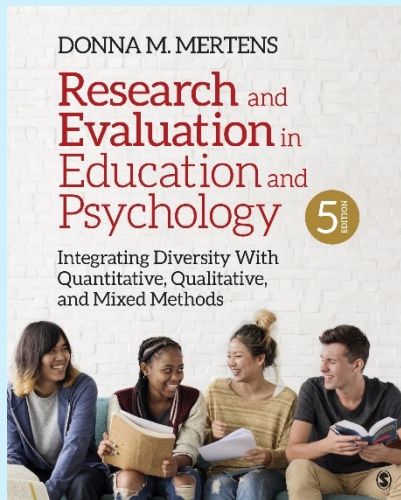
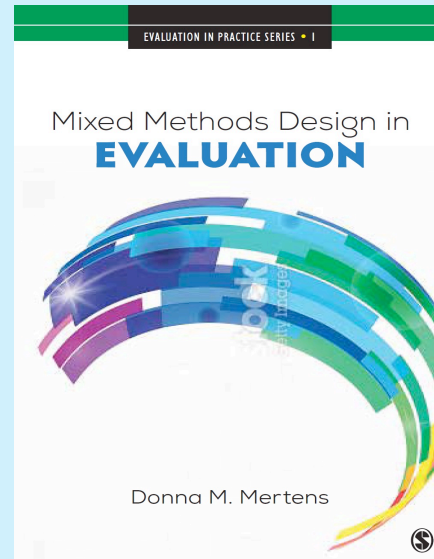
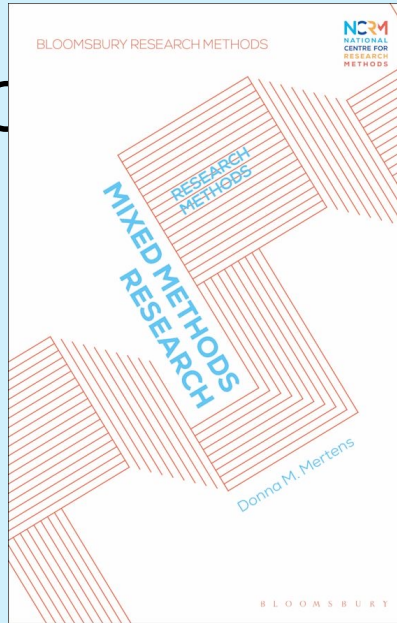
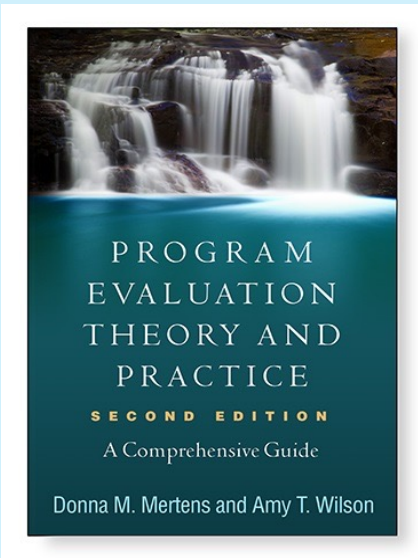
Conclusions: Transformative Mixed Methods

- Raises new kinds of questions
- Innovations to address complexity in addressing wicked problems
- Focuses on relationship building with policy makers and members of marginalized communities
- Cautions us to consider how to support constructive change and avoid introducing additional harm

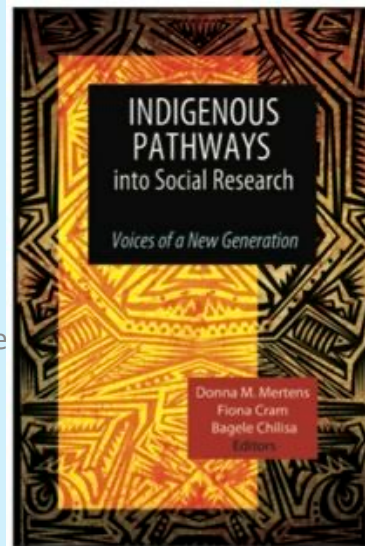
Final Words

- Courage
- Mixed Methods: Capture complexity, address social justice, and ethics
- Teams – researchers/evaluators and coalitions
- Capacity development





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- Mertens, D.M. (2018). *Mixed Methods Design in Evaluation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Mertens, D. M. & Wilson, A. (2019). *Program Evaluation Theory and Practice: A Comprehensive Guide. 2nd ed.* NY: Guilford.
- Mertens, D. M. (2020). *Research and evaluation in education and psychology: Integrating diversity with qual, quant and mixed methods.* 5th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Mertens, D. M. (2009). *Transformative research & evaluation*. NY: Guilford..
- Mertens, D.M., Cram, F., & Chilisa, B. (Eds.) (2013). *Indigenous pathways*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

Resources

- [Transformative Research and Evaluation, Research and Evaluation in Education and Psychology 5th ed. and Program Evaluation Theory and Practice 2nd ed.](#)
- Website: <http://transformativeresearchandevaluation.com/>
- Center for Culturally Responsive Evaluation and Assessment ([CREA](#))
- AEA TIGs (www.eval.org): Feminist, Disability, LGBTQ, Multi-Cultural Issues in Evaluation, and Indigenous
- Widianingsih I. & Mertens D.M. (2019). Transformative research and the sustainable development goals: challenges and a vision from Bandung West Java. *International Journal of Transformative Research*, 6(1), 27-35.

Question for you

- What will you do differently as a result of having actively engaged with the ideas presented in this session?
- It takes all of us working together (Eleanor Roosevelt)
- Donna.mertens@gallaudet.edu
- Transformativeresearchandevaluation.com – my website