



Part 1: Transformative Evaluation Skill-Building Session

Healthy Start Region 4
Meeting

Monday, April 17 from 11:45-12:45



Skill Building: Transformative Mixed Methods Evaluation & Healthy Start

Donna M. Mertens, PhD

Professor Emeritus, Gallaudet University

Healthy Start Grantees' Meeting

Atlanta, GA, April 2023

DONNA M. MERTENS

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



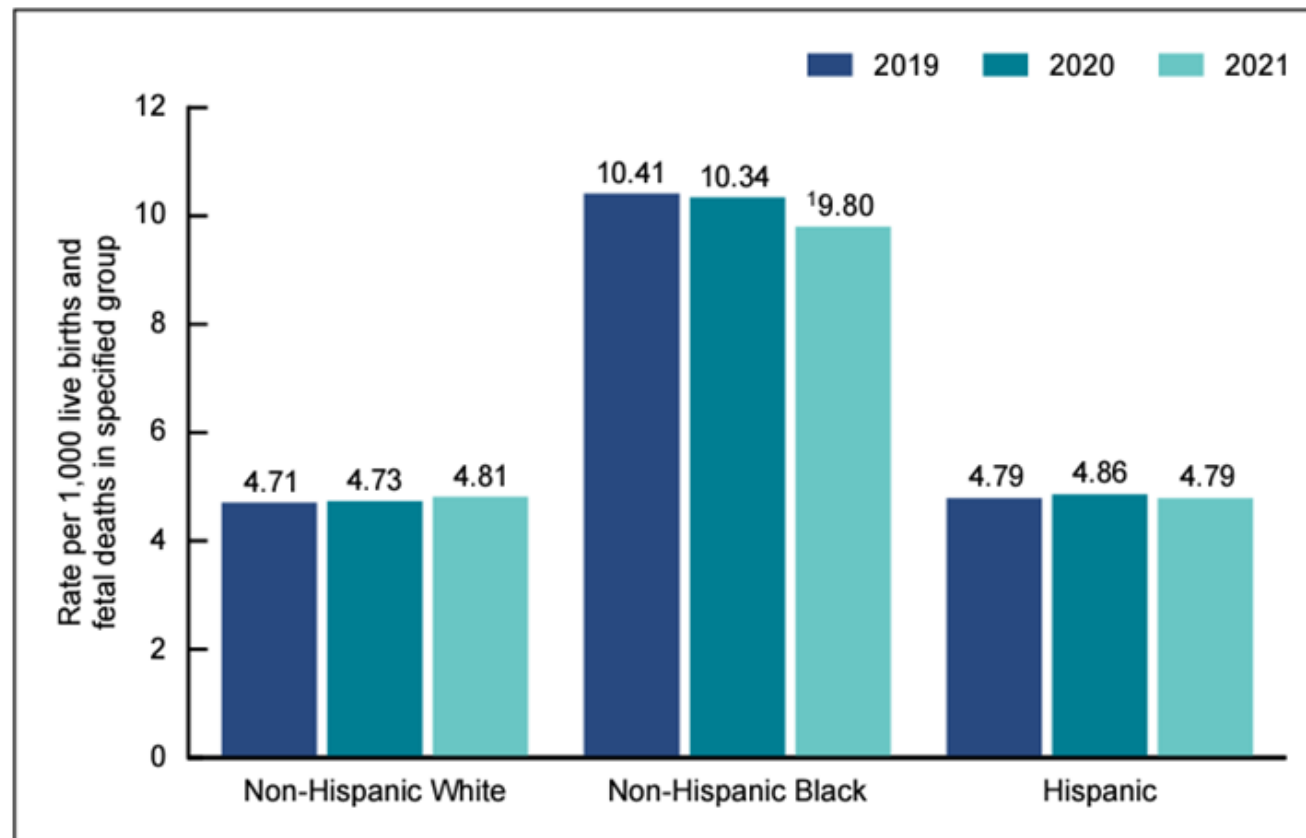
Poll: Who are you?

1. What is your role in Healthy Start ?

- a. Internal evaluator (HS staff or staff of organization that houses HS)
- b. External evaluator (not program/organization staff)
- c. Data manager/Data lead/Data analyst
- d. Project Director or other administrative position
- e. Other HS staff member: _____
- f. Something else: _____

Fetal Mortality in the United States 2019-2021, Gregory et al., 2023

Figure 2: Fetal mortality rate, by race and Hispanic origin of mother: United States, final 2019 and 2020 and provisional 2021 data



¹Significantly lower than 2020 ($p < 0.05$).
SOURCE: National Center for Health Statistics, National Vital Statistics System.

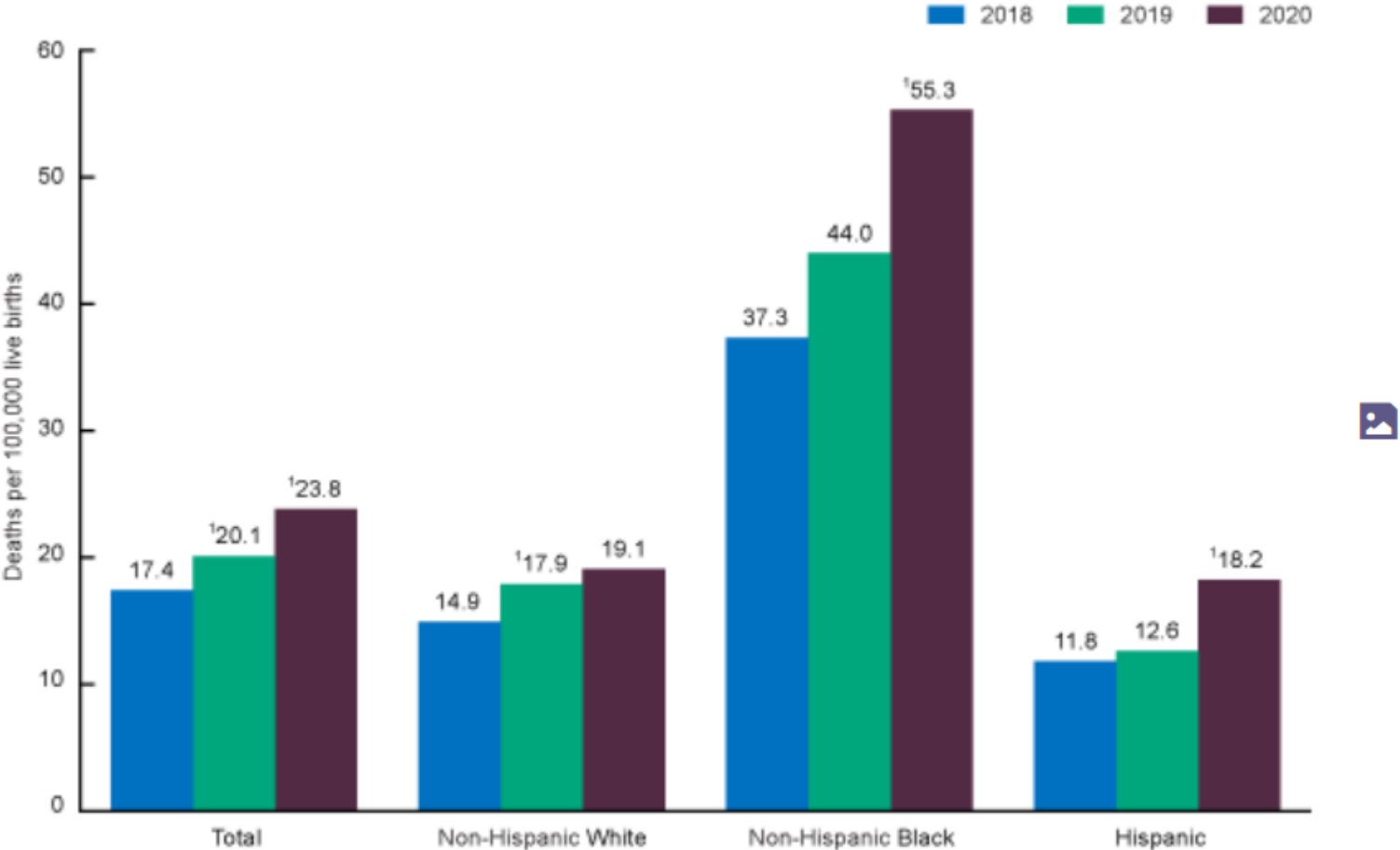
Maternal Mortality

- 1,205 in 2021, up from 861 in 2020 (pandemic)
- Disproportionate:
- Hispanic women: 54 percent increase
- White women: 39 percent increase
- Black women: 26 percent increase

- 2021:
- Black: 69.9/100,000
- Hispanic: 28.0
- White: 26.6

Hoyert, D.L. (2023). Maternal mortality rates in the United States 2021. National Center for Health Statistics Health E-Stats.

Figure 1. Maternal mortality rates, by race and Hispanic origin: United States, 2018–2020



¹Statistically significant increase in rate from previous year ($p < 0.05$).

NOTE: Race groups are single race.

SOURCE: National Center for Health Statistics, National Vital Statistics System, Mortality.

Maternal Mortality

- Experts and federal officials acknowledge that addressing maternal mortality means understanding the effects imposed on expectant mothers by racism, housing policy, policing, climate change, pollution – and the pandemic. Kanika Harris, director of maternal and child health at the Black Women’s Health Imperative
- Appears in Akilah Johnson’s March 16, 2023, article: Report: Maternal mortality saw steep rise in 2021, Washington Post, p.A5

Answering the Challenge: Transformative Evaluation

<http://zendaofir.com/the-et-cetera-of-transformative-evaluation/>
Stephen Porter and Donna Mertens (2019)

- underlying assumptions that rely on ethical stances of inclusion and challenging oppressive structures;
- an entry process into the community that is designed to build trust and make goals and strategies transparent;
- dissemination of findings in ways that encourage the use of results to enhance social, environmental and economic justice and human rights
- addressing intersectionality when culturally responsive, feminist, critical race, equity-focused, and Indigenous theories are relevant in the evaluation context

Definition of Mixed Methods

(Mertens & Wilson, 2019)

- Collect and analyze qualitative and quantitative data
- Integrate the data at various levels and stages of the study
- In a single study or a sequence of studies
- Methodologically eclectic
- Synergy between quantitative and qualitative aspects of the study

What approach do you use in your HS evaluations?

- Mostly quantitative
- Mostly qualitative
- Mostly mixed methods

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

Poll: How familiar are you with paradigms and assumptions in evaluation?

Check one:

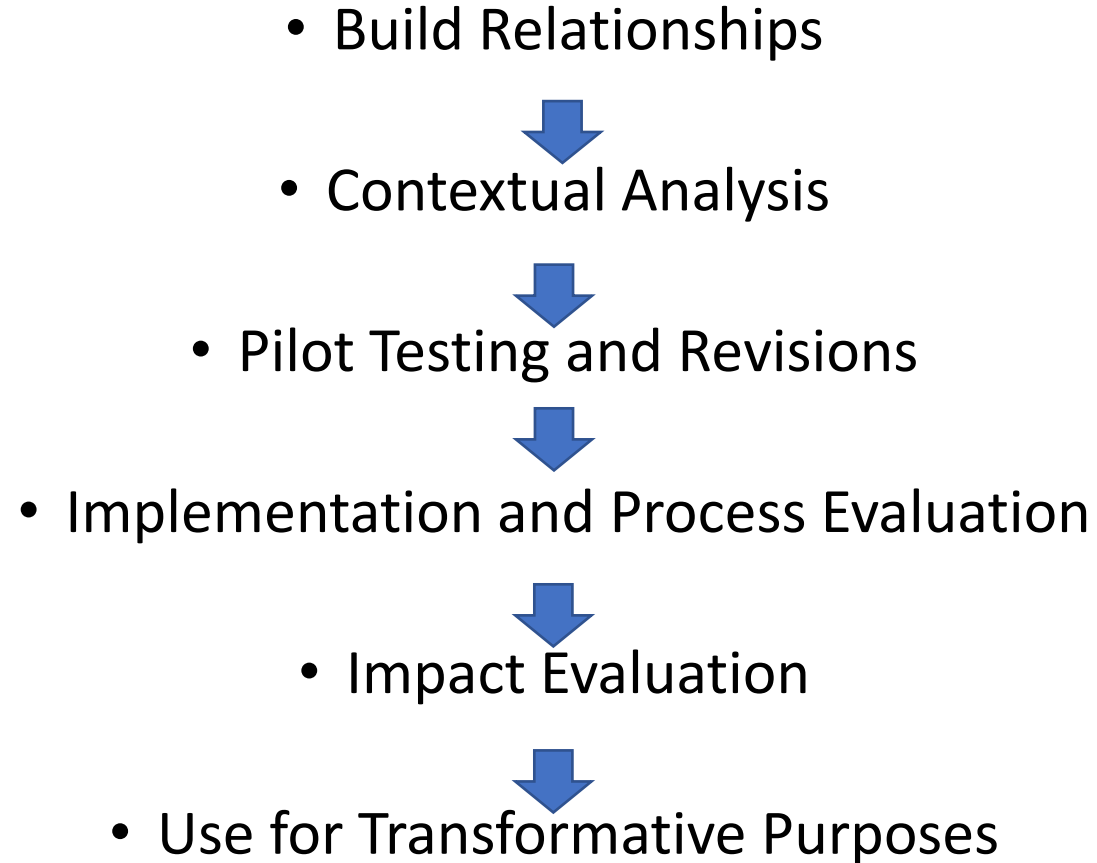
- I am an expert on this topic.
- I am well versed in this topic.
- I have an acquaintance with this topic.
- It is a foreign concept to me.

Transformative Paradigm

Assumptions	Beliefs
Axiology	Cultural respect; 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

Mertens Healthy Start
Transformative Mixed
Methods

Transformative Mixed Methods Design



HEALTH DISPARITIES

- Case: Reduce health disparities
- How does the transformative lens open up our understanding of health disparities?



Relationship Building/Coalition

- identify existing community action groups and understand the history of their efforts;
- identify existing formal, informal, and potential leaders;
- identify community needs and gaps in services;
- identify community strengths and opportunities;
- understand your target population (both needs and assets) in order to improve, build, and secure project credibility within the community; and
- create a momentum for project activities by getting community input.

Relationships with Stakeholders

Distant from, neutral, “objective”
Oppressive



Transformative

- Interactive
- Culturally responsive
- Recognizing heterogeneity
- Develop trust
- Build coalitions (Fight for Fifteen)

Versions of Reality: Ontology

Oppressive: If only they would make better choices....



Transformative:

- Poverty, unemployment, educational attainment, wealth
- Access to grocery stores and healthy food and safe places to exercise
- Stress associated with lower SES and systemic discrimination
- Residential segregation
- Access to affordable health care
- Culturally responsive health care

Contextual Analysis



- Cultural
- Historical
- Political
- Environmental
- Legislative
- Power structures

Utilization for Transformative Purposes

- The value of sharing information throughout the course of the evaluation is emphasized to facilitate midcourse corrections if an intervention is not moving toward the desired goal.
- Planning for utilization is essential during the initial design of the study; the topic of the study must be presented to participants in order to ensure that the data are gathered and disseminated in a way that they can be used to achieve the goals of social change and social justice.
- Policy analysis and advocacy are avenues to social change from the perspective of grass-roots organizations.

Break



Part 2: Transformative Evaluation Skill-Building Session

Healthy Start Region 4
Meeting

Monday, April 17 from 1:45-3:30

 **HRSA**
Maternal & Child Health

NICHQ
National Institute for
Children's Health Quality

HEALTHY
start 
TA & SUPPORT CENTER

Questions

- What do you understand the term transformation to mean in your project?
- What are your thoughts regarding how evaluation can contribute to transformative change?
- Which of these principles do you apply in your evaluation?
 - ethical stances of inclusion and challenging oppressive structures
 - entry process into the community: trust and transparency
 - dissemination of findings to further justice
 - intersectionality and appropriate theoretical lens

What are your thoughts about using a transformative approach to evaluation in Healthy Start?

- Is there any hope that you could integrate some of the transformative principles into your evaluation?
- What would it look like if you did try to do that?
- What support would you need to move forward with this?
- How relevant are the ideas in transformative evaluation to the context in which you work?

Questions: Coalitions

- Healthy Start 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?

Questions: Coalitions and Transformation

- In building a coalition, how would you attend to:
- Who sets the coalition agenda?
- Who is engaged?
- How are they engaged?
- What evidence is there that the coalitions include members of marginalized communities in culturally respectful ways?
- How are power differences addressed?
- How do you connect program outcomes with functioning of the collaborative or coalition?

Questions: Contextual Analysis

- To what extent do you include contextual analysis in your evaluation?
- Which of the elements of the context do you include (and how)?
 - Cultural
 - Historical
 - Political
 - Environmental
 - Legislative
 - Power structures

Healthy Start Evaluation: Part of the Story

- Risky behaviors: smoking, alcohol, drugs – infant mortality
- Solutions: education and employment
- Duke University: Works for White women
- ‘For Black women, exposure to discrimination and racialized stress throughout the lifespan can negatively impact birth outcomes’
- Imari Z. Smith et al., Fighting at Birth: Eradicating the Black-White Infant Mortality Gap (Oakland: Duke University’s Samuel DuBois Cook Center on Social Equity and Insight Center for Community Economic Development, 2018).
 - Available at:
<https://socialequity.duke.edu/sites/socialequity.duke.edu/files/site-images/EradicatingBlackInfantMortality>

Racism, discrimination, bias: Mixed Methods

- Online survey and in-depth interviews
- Racial concordance patient-healthcare provider: Connection
- Discouragement and misinformation: What works for me?
- Frustration: “did not listen”
- Excluded from decision making: My questions...
- Medical mistrust: Pressuring
- Lack of empathy: Anxiety and nervousness

Rachel G. Logan , Ellen M. Daley, Cheryl A. Vamos, Adetola Louis-Jacques , and Stephanie L. Marhefka (2021). “When Is Health Care Actually Going to Be Care?” The Lived Experience of Family Planning Care Among Young Black Women, *Qualitative Health Research*, 31(6) 1169–1182. DOI: 10.1177/1049732321993094

Health Disparities and History: Mixed methods

- Healthy equity and social determinants of health
- Travel course for public health students in the South
- Journals, blogs, pre and post assessments
- History: HIV, TB and sanatoriums, disasters (hurricanes), oil spills, nuclear test sites, Tuskegee
- Barriers: mistrust, lack of funding
- Social determinants: social, economic and environmental (Katrina)
- Improvements: Collaborative partnerships, one-stop model of care

Fifolt, M. & L. C. McCormick (2020). Advancing Public Health Education Through Place-Based Learning: “On the Road in the Deep South”, *Pedagogy in Health Promotion*, 6(20), 102-112.

Indigenous childbirth: Mixed methods

- Pregnant Indigenous women from rural areas evacuated to hospitals
- Non-native health care providers
- Advisory committee: Indigenous and non-Indigenous government, nonprofits, midwives, and physicians
- Quantitative: Patient Data

Qualitative Data

- Evacuation stress: no family, need for childcare
- Hospital bureaucracy: long waiting time, repetition of information
- Stereotypes: Nonverbal communication style, “noncompliant, rude”

Vang, Z.M. et al., (2018). Interactions Between Indigenous Women Awaiting Childbirth Away From Home and Their Southern, Non-Indigenous Health Care Providers, *Qualitative Health Research*, 28(12), 1858-1870.

Future of Transformative Evaluation: If not now, when?

“The pandemic response reveals with stark and sobering clarity that current paradigms of global health equity are insufficient in counteracting structural oppression.” (p. 4)

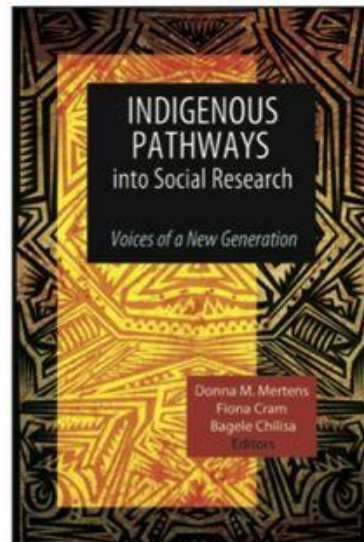
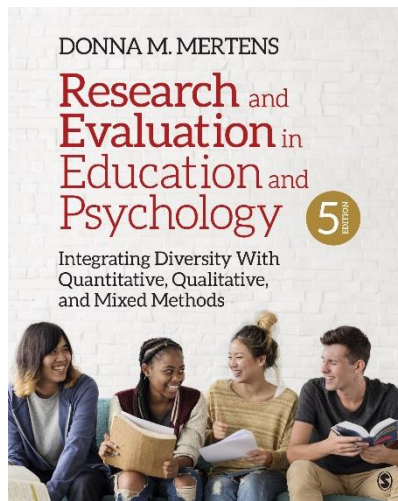
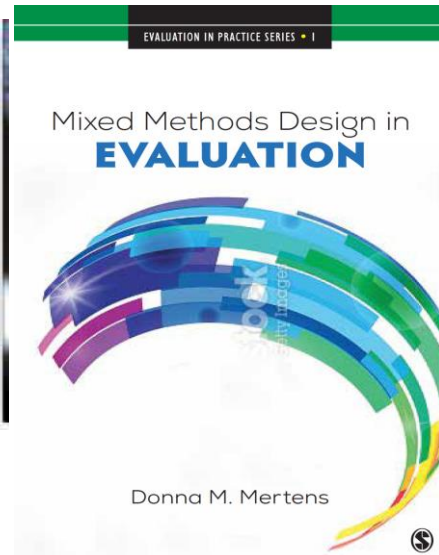
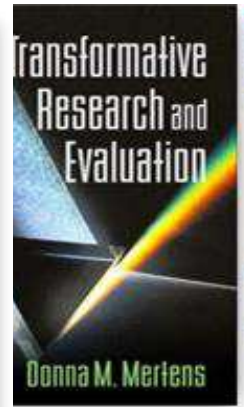
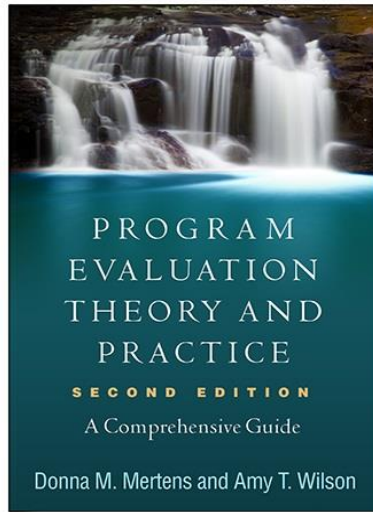
Büyüm A.M., C. Kenney, A. Koris, L. Mkumba, and Y. Raveendran (2020), ‘Decolonising global health: if not now, when?’, *British Medical Journal Global Health*, e003394. doi:10.1136/bmjgh-2020-003394

How do you address systemic racism in your evaluation in Health Start?

1. It is not a relevant concept in our program.
2. We are aware of it, but we don't collect data
3. We recognize it is a problem, but we don't know what to do about it.
4. We want to collect data about it, but we don't have the resources to do it.
5. We do collect data, but we are not satisfied with the results.
6. We are doing this on a regular basis and using it for transformative purposes.

Questions: Data Reporting & Use

- Who would you include in the preparation and dissemination of findings?
- How would you include members of the community in this process?
- What challenges might you anticipate encountering at this stage of your study?
- How would you deal with power differences among those involved in these activities?
- What is your thinking about ownership of the data and how would you handle this issue?
- What aspects of the transformative paradigm are most salient at this point in the study?
- How would you include constructive action for improved relationships, coalitions, intervention, and policy?



- ▶ Mertens, D.M. (2023). Mixed methods research. Bloomsbury.
- ▶ 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.

References

- Gregory, E.C.W., Valenzuela, C.P., & Martin, J.A. (2023). NVSS vital statistics rapid release. Report NO. 26. CDC.
- Hoyert, D.L. (2023). Maternal mortality rates in the United States 2021. National Center for Health Statistics Health E-Stats.
- Johnson, A. (March 16, 2023). Report: Maternal mortality saw steep rise in 2021. *Washington Post*, p. A5

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](#))
- Bagele Chilisa, Professor at the University of Botswana, [Indigenous Research Methodologies](#)
- Maori community in New Zealand: [Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples](#)
- AEA TIGs (www.eval.org): Feminist, Disability, LGBTQ, Multi-Cultural Issues in Evaluation, and Indigenous

Homework

- What will you do differently as a result of having participated in this session?
- It takes all of us working together (Eleanor Roosevelt)
- Donna.mertens@gallaudet.edu
- Transformativeresearchandevaluation.com



Thank you!

*Healthy Start Region 4 Regional Meeting
Hosted by the Healthy Start TA & Support Center at NICHQ*

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Children's Health Quality

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