

## CHAPTER I

# Resilience, Resistance, and Complexities That Challenge

Can research contribute to social transformation? Gustavsen (2006) cited in Reason and Bradbury (2006a) questions the potential role of research for social transformation: “If we really want to become involved in socially significant practical action with demands for long time horizons, for relating to numerous actors and engaging in highly complex activities, perhaps the notion of linking such involvement to research as traditionally conceived is futile” (p. 25). He calls for a transformation of research to engage in a purer form of democracy that will support the development of social relationships that embody a principle of equality for all participants.

[For] the radical transformation of social reality and improvement in the lives of the people involved . . . solutions are viewed as processes through which subjects become social actors . . . by means of grassroots mobilizations in actions intended to transform society. (Selener, 1997, as cited in Gaventa & Cornwall, 2006, p. 77)

### IN THIS CHAPTER . . .

- ▼ The transformative paradigm is introduced as a shift in basic beliefs that guide research and evaluation, based on a need to prioritize the role of such inquiries in addressing human rights and social justice.
- ▼ The need for transformative research and evaluation is supported by examples of inequities in access to culturally appropriate services for people who are pushed to the margins of society.
- ▼ Deficit perspectives of marginalized communities are challenged by focusing on resilience in such communities and examining sample research studies that are based on transformative principles.
- ▼ Examples of theoretical frameworks that are commensurate with the transformative approach to research and evaluation are discussed from international development, feminism, queer, disability rights, and critical race theories.

- ▼ Further support for the need for transformative research and evaluation is provided through the voices of scholars and indigenous peoples, deaf students, policymakers, and professional association leaders.
- ▼ Cultural complexities, ethical concerns, and multicultural validity (Kirkhart, 2005) are also explored as a rationale for transformative research and evaluation.

Social research and program evaluation can be seen as efforts to understand the reality of social phenomenon as through a prism.<sup>1</sup> Just as a prism bends the different frequencies of light into an ever-changing pattern of different colors, dependent upon the light source and the shape and motion of the prism, so we seek ways to understand social reality as it changes, dependent upon the diverse qualities and activities inherent in its creation and interpretation. Through the use of transformative, culturally appropriate, and multiple methods of research and evaluation, we can come to understand patterns of diverging results and their implications.

The purpose of this book is to examine the basic beliefs and methodological implications of the transformative paradigm as a tool that directly engages the complexity encountered by researchers and evaluators in culturally diverse communities when their work is focused on increasing social justice.<sup>2</sup> The transformative paradigm focuses on (1) the tensions that arise when unequal power relationships surround the investigation of what seem to be intransigent social problems and (2) the strength found in communities when their rights are respected and honored. Thus, it does not support a “blame the victim” mentality, nor does it suggest that communities are powerless to effect change. Rather, the paradigm focuses on culturally appropriate strategies to facilitate understandings that will create sustainable social change. Understanding the dynamics of power and privilege and how they can be challenged in the status quo is also a priority.

Recurring tensions coexist somewhat uneasily but, in that way, provide a catalyst for change and hope for a better future. These tensions are reflected in such facets as the dynamics of discrimination/oppression and resilience/resistance, as well as exclusion from and inclusion in positions of power to influence and make decisions. Engagement with participants and other stakeholders who stand to be affected by the research or evaluation outcomes evolves from the first encounter to the encounters that become more complex as the inquiry progresses. Conduct of research and evaluation within the transformative framework is not a linear process; thus, the writing of a book that is, by definition, a linear artifact is complicated

by the need to lead the reader through a process that allows for emergent understandings and course corrections.

The transformative paradigm recognizes that serious problems exist in communities despite their resilience in the process of throwing off the shackles of oppression, as well as making visible the oppressive structures in society. Researchers and evaluators working in any type of community can learn from those who are engaged in this struggle, just as we learn from each other through a critical examination of the assumptions that have historically guided research and evaluation studies. The transformative paradigm, with its associated philosophical assumptions, provides a means of framing ways to address intransigent societal and individual challenges through the valuing of transcultural and transhistorical stances. Through this reciprocal learning relationship, group processes can be viewed in new ways as venues for research. Challenges arise in the context of research and evaluation concerning such issues as the following:

- Differential privilege accorded to scholarly literature versus lived experience.
- Identification of a research or evaluation problem versus context and focus.
- Doing research or evaluation studies on *subjects* versus with *participants* or *co-researchers/evaluators* from the community.
- The potential role of the researcher or evaluator as an instrument of social change.

It should be noted that the transformative paradigm does not romanticize all that is indigenous and traditional because some traditions, in fact, serve to further oppress the oppressed. One example is the tradition in India associated with widows who were child brides. Consequences associated with the death of a husband include living apart from society, not marrying again, and being forced to help sustain the widow community by whatever means she can, including begging and prostitution. Even though the civil law in India permits widows to marry, the 2,000-year-old sacred scripture prohibits such a marriage, and today over 34 million widows live a life of oppression because of the death of their husbands, in keeping with this tradition. The transformative paradigm supports the integration of the wisdom of indigenous peoples, feminists, people with disabilities, and the poor and invisible toward the creation of a constructed knowledge base that furthers social justice and human rights.

## Human Rights Agenda

The transformative paradigm is firmly rooted in a human rights agenda much as it is reflected in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). Although the declarations of the United Nations are situated in a multilateral context, they provide guidance in understanding a basis for transformative work domestically as well as internationally. Human rights is a globally relevant issue; “developed” countries are not exempt from violations of human rights.

The U.N. declaration is based on a recognition of the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family, including the right to life, liberty, security of the person, equal protection under the law, freedom of movement, marriage with the free and full consent of the intending spouses, ownership of property, freedom of thought and religion, freedom of opinion and expression, peaceful assembly, participation in governance, work in just and favorable working conditions, and education. Importantly for this text, article 25 reads:

Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself [*sic*] and of his [*sic*] family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his [*sic*] control. (United Nations, 1948)

The U.N. Universal Declaration contains language indicating that everyone is entitled to these rights, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, or other status. However, the United Nations recognized that its declaration has not resulted in enjoyment of the rights contained therein for all people. They noted that specific attention would need to be given to groups who were not being afforded these rights based on race, disability, gender, age, political standing, or status in the work force. Consequently, they approved the following:

- The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1969), which affirms the necessity of eliminating racial discrimination throughout the world in all its forms and manifestations and of securing understanding of, and respect for, the dignity of the human person.
- The Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons (1975), which

assures people with disabilities the same fundamental rights as their fellow citizens, no matter what the origin, nature, and seriousness of their handicaps and disabilities. In December 2006, the United Nations strengthened its support for people with disabilities when it ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities ([www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable/rights/convtexte.htm](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable/rights/convtexte.htm)).

- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW; 1979), which provides the basis for realizing equality between women and men through ensuring women's equal access to, and equal opportunities in, political and public life—including the right to vote and to stand for election—as well as education, health, and employment.

These were followed by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990a) and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (1990b). After 20 years of debate, the United Nations finally approved the Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples (United Nations, 2006c). The United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF), with the endorsement of the International Organization for Cooperation in Evaluation and the International Development Evaluation Association (IDEAS), prepared a report based on a meeting of 85 evaluation organizations that maps the future priorities for evaluation in that context. This excerpt captures the emphasis on human rights:

Within a human rights approach, evaluation should focus on the most vulnerable populations to determine whether public policies are designed to ensure that all people enjoy their rights as citizens, whether disparities are eliminated and equity enhanced, and whether democratic approaches have been adopted that include everyone in decision-making processes that affect their interests. (Segone, 2006, p. 12)

## **The Transformative Paradigm as a Metaphysical Umbrella**

The transformative paradigm provides a metaphysical umbrella with which to explore similarities in the basic beliefs that underlie research and evaluation approaches that have been labeled critical theory, feminist theory, critical race theory, participatory, inclusive, human-rights-based, democratic, and culturally responsive. The transformative paradigm extends the thinking of democratic and responsive inquiry strategies by consciously

including in research and evaluation work the identification of relevant dimensions of diversity and their accompanying relation to discrimination and oppression in the world. An important aspect of the transformative paradigm is the conscious inclusion of a broad range of people who are generally excluded from mainstream society. Relevant characteristics need to be carefully identified in each context; the wise researcher or evaluator acts with a consciousness of the dimensions of diversity that have been historically associated with discrimination: for example, race/ethnicity, gender, disability, social class, religion, age and sexual orientation.

The transformative paradigm provides a philosophical framework that explicitly addresses these issues and builds on a rich base of scholarly literature from mixed-methods research (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003); qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005), participatory action research (Reason & Bradbury, 2006a), feminist researchers (Fine et al., 2004; Madison, 2005), critical ethnography (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002), culturally responsive research and evaluation (Hood, Hopson, & Frierson, 2005; Tillman, 2006), indigenous researchers (Battiste, 2000a; Chilisa, 2005; Cram, Ormond, & Carter, 2004; McCreanor, Tipene-Leach, & Abel, 2004; McCreanor, Watson, & Denny, 2006; Smith, 1999), disability researchers (Gill, 1999; Mertens & McLaughlin, 2004), and researchers and evaluators in the international development community (Bamberger, Rugh & Mabry, 2006; Mikkelsen, 2005). Framed within a historical perspective, the transformative paradigm is compatible with the teachings of educator Paulo Freire (1970a, 1970b, 1973), who worked to raise the consciousness of the oppressed in Brazil through transformative educational processes that improved their literacy and prepared them to resist their oppressors.<sup>3</sup>

The transformative paradigm also provides methodological guidance for researchers and evaluators who work in culturally complex communities in the interest of challenging the status quo and furthering social justice. It prompts the researcher/evaluator to ask the following questions:

- What is the researcher or evaluator's role in uncovering that which has not been stated explicitly within the context of the current research and evaluation climate?
- What dangers lurk in applying the conceptualization of scientifically based inquiry without consideration of important dimensions of diversity?
- Specifically, what is implicit in the mandate of scientifically based

- research and evaluation and in the use of “reliable” and “valid” standardized tests when applied to extremely diverse populations?
- What are the ethical implications of randomly assigning participants to research conditions when other evidence supports a particular course of action as having a higher probability of effectiveness?
  - What are the common denominators and unique facets associated with Africans, African Americans, Latinos, feminists, people with disabilities,<sup>4</sup> indigenous peoples, and others who have been pushed to the margins of society when viewed in relation to forces of discrimination and oppression as well as transformation and resilience?

Gilmore and Smith (2005) note that “research not conforming to the prevailing academic genres still risks being either patronized or denigrated as ‘not real scholarship’” (p. 78). However, taking the risk to blend academic genre with the conventions of the researched is an indication of community solidarity. Those who take risks in research that detract from the conforming standards imposed by those with academic power in fact teach those in power a thing or two (Lincoln & Denzin, 2005). In fact, researchers have much to learn from the researched. Much work lies ahead for us, to “*rewrite and re-right* existing and often damaging academic research” (Gilmore & Smith, 2005, p. 71, emphasis in original).

## **Need for Transformative Research and Evaluation**

The need for transformative research and evaluation is evidenced by current events, scholarly literature, and the voices of those who live in a world that allocates privileges to some and denies those privileges to others based on inherent characteristics. The inequity and intransigence of social problems glare at us from the headlines of the world’s newspapers. The following examples reflect the kinds of salient conditions that could benefit greatly from research and evaluation done from a transformative stance:

- A review of nearly 140,000 mentally ill patients in a national Veteran’s Affairs registry revealed that blacks in the United States are more than four times as likely as whites to be diagnosed with schizophrenia (Blow et al., 2004). This disparity in diagnoses is evident even when controlling for differences in income, wealth, educational background, drug addiction, and other variables. Although there is uncertainty about why schizophrenia is diagnosed more in blacks, researchers hypothesized that diagnostic

measures developed primarily on a white population do not automatically apply to other groups.

- Two catastrophic natural disasters led to social catastrophes associated with poverty and race. The tsunami that hit South Asia (December 2004) and Hurricane Katrina and the subsequent flooding in the U.S. Gulf Coast (August 2005) resulted in an outpouring of aid, arguments about how that aid should be used, and accusations about who was not yet being served by that aid.

- The U.S. Census Bureau reported that between 2000 and 2004, Hispanics accounted for 49% of the nation's population growth (41.3 million Hispanics out of a national population of 293.7 in 2004; Cohn, 2005). Most of the increase is due to children born to first-generation immigrants. What is the appropriate model of education for Hispanic children who, unlike their parents, arrive at school with some knowledge of English, even if they do not have a full command of the language?

- Following an outbreak of gang-related violence in which six young people were stabbed outside their school and at a local shopping mall, Assistant State's Attorney for Montgomery County, Maryland, Jeffrey T. Wennar, said that the county did not adequately focus on prevention (Raghavan & Paley, 2005). He noted that the county eliminated a full-time staff employee who dealt with gang issues some time ago. Evidence from the Justice Policy Institute, however, shows that cities (such as New York) that use extensive social resources (e.g., job training, mentoring, after-school activities, and recreational programs) make significant dents in gang violence (Greene & Pranis, 2007). In contrast, areas that rely heavily on police enforcement, such as Los Angeles, have far less impact.

- African countries are experiencing ongoing famine that threatens the lives of hundreds of thousands (Devereux, 2006). Despite U.N. efforts to provide food, drought, possible vendor profiteering, loss of productivity due to HIV/AIDS, and ongoing conflicts leave people in Somalia, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, and Malawi at risk of starvation.

- A federal judge gave state education officials control over a sizable portion of Baltimore, Maryland's troubled special education system (Reddy, 2005). The basis for the decision involves lapses in providing services, such as physical therapy and counseling, which about 10,000 of the city's special education students were supposed to receive during the last school year.

- Aboriginal languages are the basic media for the transmission and survival of Aboriginal consciousness, cultures, literatures, histories, reli-



gions, political institutions, and values. These languages provide distinctive perspectives on and understandings of the world. The suppression or extermination of their consciousness in education through the destruction of Aboriginal languages is inconsistent with the modern constitutional rights of Aboriginal peoples (Battiste, 2000b, p. 199).

### **Deficit Perspectives**

Researchers and evaluators are using a deficit perspective when they choose to focus only on the problems in a community and ignore the strengths. Chiu (2003) argues that much research in minority ethnic communities suffers from this destructive theoretical and methodological stance. She contends that the reason many intervention studies yield inconclusive and contradictory results is because they focus on community deficits. Her work in the area of minority ethnic women and health care suggests that researchers tend to focus solely on communication and cultural deficits, without recognizing the social context. She states: “The narrow focus on language and culture as barriers to uptake of services has not only hindered a wider theoretical understanding of the problems, but also has had the effect of perpetuating ineffective health promotion practice” (2003, p. 167). When the deficit perspective is used to frame a group as a “problem” with barriers, then the strengths in that community are not as likely to be recognized. Another picture of deficit-based experiences is provided by the following student perspective:

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#### *Student Perspective: Deficit Perspectives and Deafness*

*Deaf students being held back in school or who were just passed along to the next class because they were just too old to be held back any more . . . “graduating” with special diplomas (and often reading far below grade level) . . . being told in the classroom that their speech was fine, but then finding in the real world that people couldn’t understand their speech. Being told [in school] that yes, they can do anything they want to after high school . . . then being limited to menial jobs because they are too far behind in literacy to get better jobs. They cannot even attend community college because they only have a special diploma. Elementary children are being praised for good work in the classroom . . . but being held back because they cannot read on grade level yet. Too much focus on speech instruction and not enough on content instruction. All of this affects adult life, as I have already mentioned—limited to low-paying jobs or dependency on government handouts. Many older deaf adults have given up and will not even consider trying to improve their lives, are bitter toward the world, and fiercely oppose any changes that*

*might reduce or eliminate the monthly checks they get.—Martha Knowles  
(September 2004)*

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While this comment is situated in a deaf context, the essential meaning of the statement would still ring true if one substituted many other dimensions of diversity associated with discrimination and oppression.

### **Combining Social Challenges and Resilience**

One of the major principles underlying transformative research and evaluation is the belief in the strength that is often overlooked in communities that are rising to the challenge of addressing seemingly intransigent problems. Battiste's (2000b) justification for giving serious attention to indigenous knowledge is not to prepare Aboriginal children to compete in the non-Aboriginal world. On the contrary:

It is, rather, that . . . society is sorely in need of what Aboriginal knowledge has to offer. We are witnessing throughout the world the weaknesses in knowledge based on science and technology. It is costing us our air, our water, our earth; our very lives are at stake. No longer are we able to turn to science to rid us of the mistakes of the past or to clean up our planet for the future of our children. Our children's future planet is not secure, and we have contributed to its insecurity by using the knowledge and skills that we received in public schools. Not only have we found that we need to make new decisions about our lifestyles to maintain the planet, but we are also becoming increasingly aware that the limitations of modern knowledge have placed our collective survival in jeopardy. (p. 202)

When theoretical perspectives such as resilience theory, positive psychology, and critical race theory are used to frame a study, then a deliberate and conscious design can reveal the positive aspects, resilience, and acts of resistance needed to promote social change (Mertens, 2005). Ludema, Cooperrider, and Barrett (2006) argue that research has largely failed as an instrument for advancing social-organizational transformation because it maintains a problem-oriented view, rather than focusing on the strengths of a community. Historically, social science research has proceeded from a deficit-based orientation, such that the research problem was derived from the deficits found in the people to be helped by the research. Ludema et al. propose turning away from such a deficit-based view and looking instead at what is positive. Thus, the focus on positive psychology provides one of the bases for developing the appreciative inquiry approach (see Chapter 7 on methods). Thus, social change is seen as emanating from asking uncon-

ditionally positive questions that focus on the life-giving and life-sustaining aspects of people and the communities in which they reside.

### **Challenging the Status Quo**

Fals Borda (2006) challenges the traditional scientific requirement of objectivity as follows: “We felt that colleagues who claimed to work with ‘neutrality’ or ‘objectivity’ supported willingly or unwillingly the status quo, impairing full understanding of the social transformations in which we were immersed or which we wanted to stimulate” (p. 29).

Maori researchers also articulate a responsibility for those in “minoritized spaces” to challenge the status quo by moving to the foreground issues of inequality and social justice (L. T. Smith, 2004, as cited in Cram et al., 2004). After all, at the heart of the Nuremberg Code<sup>5</sup> is a concern that research ethics, and therefore research, should be an instrument of social justice (L. T. Smith, 2004, as cited in Cram et al., 2004, pp. 156–157). To this end, the Maori call for “decentering whiteness” in their writing about research by, for, and with Maori (Cram et al., 2004):

People who are pushed to the margins, like Māori and Deaf people, in other words, are “decentered.” The Māori lost their land and family structures, relationships were unsettled, and their languages were repressed, thus pushing Māori people from the center. Cram et al. (2004, p. 167) argue that “. . . Māori researchers are essentially seeking to decentre ‘whiteness as ownership of the world forever and ever’” (as discussed by black activist DuBois, 1920, cited in Myers, 2004, p. 8). On a parallel note, research with the Deaf community requires decenterizing “hearingness,” so American Sign Language and Deaf culture are given back to Deaf people. Ensuring that research represents the people increases its validity, therefore research in the Deaf community should be by Deaf, for Deaf and with Deaf, like Cram et al. (2004) argue that research involving the Māori has to be done “by Māori, for Māori, with Māori.” (Harris, Holmes, & Mertens, 2009)

In addition, the researchers’ gaze should be turned to those in “majoritized spaces” who are privileged by the status quo (McCreanor & Nairn, 2002). Kendall (2006) prompts the research world to turn its eyes from problems and deficits to resilience and privilege and to ask the following questions:

- How can research be conducted as a means of interrogating white privilege?
- If we broaden the question beyond race, how can the researcher

interrogate those dimensions of diversity associated with unearned privilege that serve to sustain the status quo?

In asking such questions, researchers and evaluators also need to interrogate their own motives for working against discrimination and oppression.

Chilisa (2005) addresses the issue of social justice in research within the context of an HIV/AIDS prevention program in Botswana that made use of a Eurocentric belief system and the associated cost of ignoring indigenous languages and belief systems:

That the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Botswana is escalating amidst volumes of research may be an indication that ongoing research is dominated by Eurocentric research epistemologies and ethics that fail to address the problem from the researched's frame of reference. Creating space for other knowledge systems must begin by recognizing local language and thought forms as an important source of making meanings of what we research. . . . Given the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Sub-Saharan Africa, the need for diversity in research epistemologies has become not a luxury of nationalism of the African Renaissance, but rather an issue of life and death. (p. 678)

Maori researchers' dissatisfaction with mainstream researchers has led to an increased desire and capacity for "by Maori, for Maori, with Maori" research (Cram et al., 2004). Maori researchers ask such questions as:

- How do we decolonize research so that it serves us better?
- How do we create research spaces that allow our stories to be told and heard?
- How do we use research to destabilize existing power structures that hold us in the margins? (Smith, 2004).

Such questions, along with critical reflection, serve as catalysts to the production of research that has transformative potential for the Maori, the researchers, and, by gaining such wisdom, to wider society.

Amsden and VanWynsberghe (2005) work in the area of youth-led participatory action research. They believe that the focus of other research approaches on deficits rather than assets has led to services that either treat young people as problems that need to be solved or simply fail to reflect their realities. Instead, these researchers stress the need to recognize and respect the inclusion of those who have a stake in decision making at community and policy levels. They write:

Young people need to be included in local and broader planning and decision-making processes so that their needs are addressed and their assets mobilized. . . .

Including youth in local decision making requires going beyond traditional adult-run structures, such as committee tables and one-off consultations, to develop processes that engage their unique energy and expertise. Such processes need to offer a fulfilling process and lead to meaningful results. Participatory Action Research (PAR) is a methodological framework that can fill the need for meaningful and engaging approaches to community planning. (p. 358)

Participatory action research is one example of an approach that is compatible with the transformative paradigm when it is applied to the goal of social justice. The next section explores specific examples of transformative research and evaluation work.

### **Examples of Transformative Research and Evaluation**

The principles and implications of the transformative paradigm for the social justice agenda are illustrated by these examples.

- The Talent Development (TD) Model of School Reform (Boykin, 2000) is designed to explicitly address the strengths in students and their communities primarily in underresourced urban schools serving low-income students, most of whom are African American (Thomas, 2004). Guided by the TD model, Howard University's Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed at Risk (CRESPAR) developed an evaluation framework based on transformative principles that seeks to provide information that will enlighten and empower those who have been oppressed by, or marginalized in, school systems. The center recognized the alienation felt by many of the poor and African American students from mainstream schooling and took deliberate steps to engage the community in the planning and implementation of the evaluation in such a way that their cultural experiences were highlighted in a positive manner.

- Irwin (2005) used a peace polling strategy to address possible solutions to the troubles in Northern Ireland that have burdened that country with civil unrest for hundreds of years. He developed a series of surveys, involving members of historically acrimonious groups, to find strategies for peace that, although not ideal to any one group, were satisfactory to all. The

results of his peace polling were used as a basis for the peace agreements that led to a significant decrease in violence in that part of the world.

- The American Educational Research Association Commission on Research in Black Education edited a volume entitled *Black Education: A Transformative Research and Action Agenda for the New Century* (King, 2005). Contributors provide an internationally based critique of black education, as well as directives and examples of transformative, culturally sensitive research in the service of advancing the social justice agenda for this population. The authors explicitly acknowledge the need to put the issue of racism on the research agenda as one means to improve the educational experiences of black students in the United States and the world.

- Chilisa's (2005) work in Botswana on HIV/AIDS promotes the use of local understanding of research concepts related to the prevention of this disease, rather than depending on the Western definitions that are not shared by the Botswana population most at risk. Her critique provides insight into possible reasons underlying the failure to stop this epidemic. Subsequently, she has received a grant from the U.S. National Institutes of Health to study prevention of HIV/AIDS in Botswana youth using an indigenous cultural understanding as a basis for development of an intervention (2007, personal communication).

- Elze (2003a) examined the comfort levels of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youths in schools and determined that the majority of these students experience verbal and physical abuse. She used her results to recommend changes in policies and practices in schools, as well as to examine specific ethical implications of research methodologies with this population (Elze, 2003b, 2005).

## Examples of Shifting Paradigms

### ***Feminists, Women, and Development***

Feminists have struggled to include a specific focus on women's issues in international development activities for a very long time. Initially, their efforts were rewarded when a women-in-development (WID) strategy was included in the agendas of many international donor agencies that treated women's issues as separate concerns. Subsequently, a gender-and-development (GAD) approach was developed in which gender relations were analyzed in terms of power differentials between women and men (March, Smyth, & Mukhopadhyay, 1999). Mukhopadhyay (2004) notes that GAD has had the result of mainstreaming gender, as evidenced by

the strategy adopted at the U.N. Fourth World Conference of Women in Beijing to promote the gender equality agenda within development institutions. Using case studies from her work in South Asia and Southern Africa, Mukhopadhyay expressed concern that this mainstreaming of gender normalizes the political project of gender in a way that is ahistorical, apolitical, decontextualized, and technical, and that leaves the prevailing and unequal power relations intact. She suggests that in repositioning gender in development policy and practice, we need to consider how to get back to the political project while not abandoning the present mode of engagement with development institutions. She suggests a shift in focus to gender as a political project that involves working on rights and citizenship issues within development institutions and on the outside to create a “voice” of the most marginalized.

### ***Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer***

Much research done on issues of relevance to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) population does not ask about sexual orientation, gender, and gender identity, and hence conceals identities in a way that may reinforce the cultural hegemony of those who wield power (Dodd, 2009; Mertens et al., 2008). Queer theory has emerged as a way to challenge the two-dimensional separation of male or female—a very imprecise measure of meaning and identity. Such lack of clarity is intensified by a lack of critical reflection on how meaning making involves not only context but also the socially constructed identity of the individual in the setting. For the LGBTQ community, persistent internalized homophobia can conceal discrimination to the degree that subtle degrading manipulation is not even acknowledged or those demeaned feel powerless to challenge the question (see, e.g., Kahn, 1991). By establishing a transformative approach and reaching out to concealed communities, researchers have the opportunity to engage voices that have been traditionally unrecognized or excluded.

### ***Disability Populations***

In the disability community, there is a growing movement toward understanding the sociocultural basis of this population’s experiences (Gill, 1999; Mertens & McLaughlin, 2004; Seelman, 2000; Wilson, 2005). The social model of disability challenges the medical perspective by allowing people with disabilities to take control over their own lives by shifting the focus onto social, rather than the biological, factors in understanding disability. Box 1.1 summarizes the paradigm shift in the disability community.

### BOX 1.1. Paradigm Shift in the Disability Community

#### Underrepresented Groups and Research and Evaluation

- For example: People with disabilities have been framed in terms of a variety of paradigms, including:
  - The medical/deficit model: People who have a disability have a “problem” and they must be fixed.
  - The sociocultural model: People with disabilities form a cultural group that has been systematically discriminated against and oppressed by society. The “problem” is not “in” the people with a disability; rather it is in the inadequate response from society to accommodate their needs.
- Researchers and evaluators have used a variety of paradigms to conduct systematic inquires on/for/with people who are pushed to the margins of society.
  - The transformative paradigm is the approach that most closely parallels the sociocultural view of people with disabilities, as well as people occupying less privileged positions in society who therefore experience discrimination and oppression.

#### *Intersection of Disability and International Development*

When disability is coupled with an additional layer of complexity—that is, working with people with disabilities in an international context—the paradigm shift from a medical/deficits model to a sociocultural participatory model gains another perspective (Wilson, 2005). People with disabilities in developing countries have historically been denied basic social services by their governments and have had to rely on overseas charitable organizations for education, job training, and basic health care. Poor governments, straining to meet the needs of entire populations, typically disregard the needs of their disabled populace and encourage the benevolent contributions made by foreign organizations. Social and participatory action research are a means through which people with disabilities can be heard, empowered, and moved to action to lobby for inclusion in all aspects of society. The U.N. (2003–2004) report on its first 50 years of addressing the needs of people with disabilities provides this picture of the life of a disabled person in the developing world:

Not surprisingly, many of the disabled are poor. The overwhelming majority—perhaps 80 per cent—live in isolated rural areas. Almost that many live in areas where the services needed to help them are unavailable. Too often their



lives are handicapped by physical and social barriers in society which hamper their full participation. Because of this, and in all parts of the world, they often face a life that is segregated and debased, and without help, many will live in isolation and insecurity. (United Nations, 2003–2004)

Wilson (2005) conducted mixed-methods studies in deaf communities in Africa, the Caribbean, and South America. This research became the catalyst for social changes for the deaf participants and their advocates. Wilson took several unique factors into account when conducting research in deaf communities. Because most foreign agencies view deaf people as dependent and disabled, the agencies have focused on the medical impact of deafness rather than on the social impact. As a result these agencies have donated hearing aids, audiology equipment, and vaccines that prevent deafness, and they have supported oralism<sup>6</sup> in the schools they have built, rather than honor the existing indigenous sign languages. By looking at deafness as a medical problem, rather than considering the social barriers that deaf people face because of their inability to communicate easily within the greater community, deaf people have been prevented from developing a political framework with which they can locate and share their experience of having a unique culture and language.

### ***Positive Psychology and Resilience Theory***

Another shift is evident within the field of psychology with the emergence of positive psychology and resilience theory (Seligman, 2006; Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005). Positive psychology as a theoretical framework changes the focus from one of mental illness to one of mental health. To date, psychology as a discipline has done well at defining “abnormal behavior” and working to improve the lives of individuals who are suffering. However, psychology has much to learn about making happy people happier and studying such constructs as gratitude, wisdom, and finding meaning in life. Szarkowski (2002) conducted a study based on the positive psychology movement and focused on finding positive features within a challenging experience. She describes the ways in which hearing parents of deaf children learn to “make the most” of the situation they have been handed. Many of them come to cherish their child and their experience of raising a deaf child, indicating that it has changed their lives for the better. Their challenges have led to greater meaning and awareness in their lives. This example highlights the use of the transformative paradigm in understanding a situation commonly believed to be “difficult.” In Szarkowski’s study, hearing parents of deaf children were asked about the *positives* associated with their experiences of raising deaf children. The parents not only

defined positive experiences, they also relished the opportunity to think about their children from a new, or often not discussed, perspective. Data from parent journals and interviews revealed that a focus on the positive, rather than the problem-focused discussions to which they had become accustomed, was beneficial to them.

### ***Critical Race Theory***

Another example of a shift in theoretical understanding is provided by critical race theory (CRT) in race-based research (McCaskill, 2005). CRT provides the basis for an analytical model that focuses on the failure of the U.S. education system to adequately educate the majority of culturally and racially subordinated students. CRT shapes data collection within a framework of five broad themes: (1) oral narrative, (2) racism, (3) educational inequity, (4) differential treatment, and (5) interest convergence. CRT posits that the experiential knowledge base of people of color is legitimate and provides them with a forum for sharing and voicing their experiences.

### ***CRT and Intersection with Deafness***

McCaskill (2005) recognizes that the voices of black deaf Americans are rarely heard in the literature. She conducted a mixed-methods research study with black and white deaf, hard-of-hearing, and hearing participants. The CRT framework allowed acknowledgment of the legitimacy of their voices and provided a forum in which their voices could be heard. CRT argues that racism is common throughout society, and racism was clearly a salient factor in the way that white administrators interpreted and administered official policy for black deaf and hard-of-hearing students. School funding is an obvious reflection of educational inequity. Black deaf residential schools suffered with inadequate funding to provide quality education to their students. The most serious and threatening form of racism was evidenced in the differential treatment in deaf schools. Finally, as the interest convergence principle maintains, the white administrators promoted racial advances for black deaf students only when those advances also promoted white self-interest.

## **Need for the Transformative Paradigm and Scholarly Literature**

The need for transformative research and evaluation is evident in scholarly literature that addresses experiences of marginalized groups from a perspective of access to appropriate services. For example, the National Center

on Low-Incidence Disabilities (NCLID) conducted a needs assessments for people who are deaf, blind, or have severe disabilities and they documented needs in the areas of access, literacy, and teaching personnel (Ferrell et al., 2004). They noted critical shortages in personnel to serve low-incidence students, challenges in accessing the general curriculum, and definitions of literacy that emphasize reading and writing and that consequently do not accurately reflect literacy that would encompass alternative modes of understanding and communication.

Two summaries of literature in the personnel preparation area were produced as part of the Center on Personnel Studies in Special Education project. Harold Johnson (2003) addressed the knowledge base and research needs for U.S. deaf education teacher preparation programs, and Anne Corn and Susan Spungin (2003) addressed the personnel crisis for students with visual impairments and blindness. There is a severe shortage in the number of trained teachers available to serve deaf or blind students. Corn and Spungin report that the situation is even more serious for deaf-blind students, as only six programs were operating in 1999, and the percentage of the faculty time in these programs, added together, equaled only four full-time equivalent (FTE) faculty.

If we add the dimension of social and cultural diversity to the low-incidence disability population, we see many other issues. Gerner de Garcia (2004) directed the Literacy for Latino Deaf and Hard of Hearing English Language Learners: Building the Knowledge Base Project. The goal of the project is “to create a scientific review of relevant research literature in deafness, special education, and the education of hearing English Language Learners, as well as Latino children and their families” (p. 7). Her conclusions reveal that many Latino families seek professional help with their deaf children; however, the schools often lack staff with the linguistic and cultural skills to make parent participation a reality. My colleagues and I reached similar conclusions in a national study that focused on parents’ descriptions of their early experiences with their deaf and hard-of-hearing children (Meadow-Orlans et al., 2003). We attempted to disaggregate parent experiences based on a number of characteristics, such as if the child was deaf or hard of hearing, was from a racial/ethnic minority group, had a disability in addition to a hearing loss, or if the child’s parents were deaf.

### ***Voices: Scholarly Literature and Community Members***

The sources I cite support the need for research and evaluation with people from disenfranchised groups. Scholarly literature from representatives of

indigenous communities provides another source of support. Duran and Duran (2000) wrote:

The problem of irrelevant research and clinical practice would not be so destructive to Native American people if institutional racism did not pervade most of the academic settings for research and theoretical construction. These institutions not only discredit thinking that is not Western but also engage in practices that imply that people who do not subscribe to their worldview are genetically inferior. (p. 93)

Chilisa (2005) added:

In research, definitions of terms are first referenced to dictionaries and then operationalized. It is also important to make reference to local meanings attached to experiences. Proverbs, folklore, songs, and myths should be part of the literature review and source of problem identification and meaning making as well as assisting in legitimizing findings. Proverbs, for instance, represent “cultural theories or models of experience, evaluative assertions from a moral perspective, generalized knowledge that can be applied to the interpretation of particular events, and a point of view or certain ways of looking at problems.” (Tippens, Veal, & Wieseman, 1995, p. 2)

Lest we think that the raising of indigenous voices as a critique of Eurocentric thought is a recent phenomena, Henderson (2000) provides a historical perspective by citing a Cherokee in 1777 who commented:

Much has been said of the want of what you term “Civilization” among the Indians. Many proposals have been made to us to adopt your law, your religion, your manners and your customs. We do not see the propriety of such a reformation. We should be better pleased with beholding the good effects of these doctrines in your own practices than with hearing you talk about them or of reading your newspapers on such subjects. (Hill, 1994, as cited in Henderson, 2000, p. 31)

My students at Gallaudet University read a cartoon from the *Wizard of Id* series that depicted the king’s crier announcing that a new poll showed that the king had “high ratings.” The king smirked and said, “There’s a lot to be said for owning your own station.” Cultural note for those readers unfamiliar with this U.S.-based cartoon: The king in the *Wizard of Id* is a tyrannical despot, not a benevolent leader. In response to their interpretation of the cartoon, the graduate students presented their thoughts in the class discussion board as to why they think we need rigorous research

and evaluation for educational and social programs. Their comments were deep and profound and exceeded my expectations. Consider one student's response in which she indicated that the cartoon illustrated an example of what frequently happens in research and evaluation.

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*Student Perspective: Importance of Rigor in Research and Evaluation*

*There is a desired result or opinion that the commissioner of the study seeks to prove, and he sets out to prove it through manipulation of the research. The researcher filters the information through his/her own lens and presents it as though it is valid and reliable. . . . Certainly research takes on many forms, and while the king does well in his opinion polls through manipulation and ownership of the study, the question arises as to who the people are who the research is purported to represent. And . . . what would be the impact on the people affected by the results?*

*In the Mertens (2005) text, we see that there is a lack of stakeholder input into the research and that this will unduly influence the results to skew and cater to those in powerful positions. Certainly, this is not the first time that those with power have undertaken a study to take yet more power from those without it. The comic strip emphasizes this point effectively.*

*Interestingly enough, just as in real life, the less powerful may not be aware that this manipulation has taken place, or they feel powerless to address it. In this case, this is a king, not an elected president. To me, this underscores how little powerless subjects are enabled to change the results of ill-completed research, yet must contend with the results. . . . The comic strip suggests that the king is so well liked, he will never have to change the way he behaves in leadership. . . . This comic strip illustrates that we must have valid research so that the king can be forced to look out the window at his subjects rather than at a mirror in arrogance. Without research, we cannot know the true state of affairs for us or for others, and without research, change is impossible.—Risa Briggs (2004)*

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These comments suggest that we need good research and evaluation because there are real lives at stake that are being determined by those in power. The voices of those who are disenfranchised on the basis of gender, race/ethnicity, disability, or other characteristics remind us of the issues of power that surround so much of the public sphere, even those supposedly neutral and objective worlds of research and evaluation. In my own work, I have witnessed many occasions in which issues of power were used to attempt to obscure the real problems that were facing individuals who are deaf, as noted in Box 1.2.

### BOX 1.2. Power and Sexual Abuse

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A study of sexual abuse in a deaf residential school provides one poignant example of the misuse of power (Mertens, 1996). I was contacted by a consulting firm to collect data for a contract they had received from a state's Department of Education. The consulting firm did not mention sexual abuse in our initial communications; however, I discovered the allegations when I asked for a copy of the request for proposals (RFP) and the proposal. The first line in the RFP stated: "Because of serious allegations of sexual abuse at the residential school for the deaf, an external evaluator should be brought into the school to systematically study the context of the school." When I mentioned this serious issue to the consulting firm contact person, they acknowledged it was a problem but suggested that we could address it by asking if the curriculum included sex education and if the students could lock their doors at night. I indicated that I thought the problem was more complex than that, but I was willing to go to the school and discuss the evaluation project with the school officials.

Upon my arrival, I met with the four men who constituted the upper management of the school. For about 30 minutes they talked about the need to look at the curriculum and the administrative structure. They did not mention the topic of sexual abuse. So, I raised the topic, saying, "I'm a bit confused. I have been here for about a half hour, and no one has yet mentioned the issue of sexual abuse, which is the basis for the Department of Education requirement of an external evaluation." After some chair scraping and coughing, one school administrator said, "That happened last year, and I am sure if you ask people, they will say that they just want to move on." The administrators were correct that the incidents resulting in the termination of the superintendent's contract and the jailing of two staff members had happened in the spring of the year, and I was there in the fall. I assured them that it was indeed quite possible that some people would say that they would prefer to move on, but it was important for me to ask a wide range of people two questions: What were the factors that allowed the sexual abuse to happen? What would need to be changed in order to reduce the probability that it would recur? I found that there were many answers to these questions, one of which was a desire to not talk about it and move on. However, allowing those with power to frame the questions would have resulted in a continuation of an overall context that had permitted many young deaf people to be seriously psychologically and physically hurt. A different approach to research and evaluation is needed to address the needs of those who have not been adequately represented in these contexts.

## Need for the Transformative Paradigm and Public Policy

In the United States the requirements set forth in the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation increased awareness of the need for good research and evaluation. The NCLB sets the use of standardized tests and randomized designs, using the scientific method as the desired approach to demonstrate a program's effectiveness ([www.ed.gov/nclb/methods/whatworks/whatworks.html](http://www.ed.gov/nclb/methods/whatworks/whatworks.html)). The privileging of standardized tests and randomized control group designs presents challenges in assessing the effectiveness of interventions in culturally complex communities (and in less complex communities as well).

The American Evaluation Association (AEA) (2003) takes the position that there is not one right way to evaluate the effectiveness of a program. In response to the U.S. Department of Education's requirement for the scientific method, the AEA stated:

While we agree with the intent of ensuring that federally sponsored programs be "evaluated using scientifically based research . . . to determine the effectiveness of a project intervention," we do not agree that "evaluation methods using an experimental design are best for determining project effectiveness." ([www.eval.org/doestatement.htm](http://www.eval.org/doestatement.htm))

AEA (2003) is joined by other organizations, such as the National Education Association (NEA), in providing commentary on NCLB. The NEA communicated with the U.S. Secretary of Education, Rod Paige, cautioning that we need to use an approach other than the scientific method to demonstrate effectiveness of programs. The position specifically advocates that "(1) the evaluation approach used be appropriate for the problem or question the program itself seeks to address; (2) that the evaluation definition and set of priorities used are not so narrow that they effectively preclude the funding of worthwhile programs; and (3) that the Department continue to recognize the importance of third party, independent evaluators" ([www.eval.org/doe.nearesponse.pdf](http://www.eval.org/doe.nearesponse.pdf)).

One of the potentially positive aspects of NCLB is the accountability requirement and the report card. The report card shows how minority groups are faring, and we are finding, not surprisingly, that their levels of achievement are very low. Such data force all of us—educators, parents, researchers, evaluators, and others—to find out why these children are not succeeding and implement changes to make sure that no child is left behind. In order to do this, we need to conduct research about effective practices and evaluate the programs. We need to identify specifically what we need to

evaluate, not just the program as a whole. With so much visibility given to research and evaluation in the NCLB, this is a propitious moment for those concerned with the children who are historically left behind to raise the issue of their experiences in the school system and to propose appropriate ways to capture the complexity of this experience that can lead to higher achievement levels for all.

The American Psychological Association (2008a) maintains a Public Interest Government Relations Office for the specific purpose of supporting its members in researching and advocating for programs in the public interest that relate to children, individuals with disabilities, ethnic minority populations; HIV/AIDS; aging; lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender issues; socioeconomic status; and women's issues. American Psychological Association members are called upon to participate in conversations about public policy as a civic responsibility that is enriched by their particular expertise.

### **Complexities That Challenge**

What challenges are associated with the planning and conducting of research and evaluation in culturally complex communities? How are these challenges exacerbated by corruption, bribery, and war? What challenges are associated with research that meaningfully includes people who are male or female, able-bodied or disabled, members of racial/ethnic groups, and/or those associated with more or less privilege?

The NCLID leadership (Ferrell et al., 2004) identified a number of complexities associated with conducting research and evaluation with people with low-incidence disabilities. Although the NCLID places the issues within this context, many of these complexities are more broadly applicable to other communities who are pushed to the margins of society. For example, there is a lack of systematic empirical methods that are tailored to address the needs of such communities, and there are particular problems associated with the use of control groups determined by random assignment. The educational programs for students with low-incidence disabilities are set forth in an individualized education plan (IEP), one of the legislatively mandated tools designed to identify appropriate accommodations and educational strategies for people with disabilities. The IEP has in its name the term *individual*, thus indicating that this person requires a unique program in order to receive early intervention services or a free appropriate public education. Tensions exist between the legislative mandate to serve persons with disabilities with individually designed services and that of the



NCLB legislation that places priority on random assignment to experimental and control groups, as is illustrated in the following questions.

- Given the individual nature of such a person's needs, how can "treatment" be determined by random assignment?
- How can these students be placed in a control group, which means that they will be denied the carefully identified services that constitute the IEP?
- What are the ethical implications of random assignment when a child's case has been carefully studied to determine strengths and areas in need of improvement, and a small number of personnel with highly specialized skills and knowledge were determined to be needed in order to provide an appropriate educational experience for this child?
- What generalizable concerns arise in working with other communities that are pushed to the margins of society?

Box 1.3 summarizes the complexities that face researchers and evaluators who work with people with disabilities, as well those from other under-represented groups.

Other challenges arise because of the need to use multiple measurements, observations, and ongoing assessments. While many good instruments have been developed for use in educational settings, their appropriateness for people from diverse cultural groups, such as those with low-incidence disabilities, must be determined on a case-by-case basis. The highly idiosyncratic characteristics of low-incidence populations also introduces challenges related to rigorous data analysis due to possibly small samples and restricted or highly variable ranges. The uniqueness of the population also creates problems with attempts to replicate findings. Replication makes an assumption that similar people in similar circumstances can be used to demonstrate the generalizability of results. The assumption may not be met in such a population.

The context surrounding research with people who have low-incidence disabilities adds another layer of challenges. For example, the low-incidence population is, by definition, heterogeneous. People who are deaf, blind, or have severe disabilities differ on those dimensions as well as many others, including sex, race/ethnicity, home language, communication preferences, presence of additional disabilities, to name a few. The fact that these are *low-incidence* disabilities means that the affected population involves small numbers of people across large geographic areas.

### BOX 1.3. Complexities That Challenge

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Researchers and evaluators are challenged to employ . . .

- Systematic, empirical methods
- Controls, random assignment
- Different conditions, evaluators, observers
- Multiple measurements, observations, and studies
- Rigorous data analysis
- Replication
- Peer review

When they encounter . . .

- Heterogeneous populations
- Populations with low-incidence disabilities
- Geographic dispersion
- Little federal funding
- Unsophisticated designs
- Inability to replicate
- Few researchers

Finally, small numbers of children with low-incidence disabilities (a redundancy, I know) means that there are a small number of professionals who serve them. Of this small number, much is asked. Adding the conduct of research and evaluation may seem an impossible burden. In addition, the small numbers also mean fewer dollars to support research and evaluation with such populations.

### **Ethical Impetus**

Professional associations in the human sciences have a long history of developing ethical codes to guide research and evaluation studies that involve human participants. In the United States, the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research (1979) issued the Belmont Report that provides guidance for institutional

review boards (IRBs; the legal entities charged with the protection of participants in research). The three ethical principles identified include:

1. **Beneficence:** Maximizing good outcomes for science, humanity, and the individual research participants and minimizing or avoiding unnecessary risk, harm, or wrong.
2. **Respect:** Treating people with respect and courtesy, including those who are not autonomous (e.g., small children, people who have mental retardation or senility).
3. **Justice:** Ensuring that those who bear the risk in the research are the ones who benefit from it; ensuring that the procedures are reasonable, nonexploitative, carefully considered and fairly administered.

The Belmont Report also identified six norms to guide scientific research:

1. **Use of a valid research design:** Faulty research is not useful to anyone and is not only a waste of time and money, but also cannot be conceived of as being ethical in that it does not contribute to the well-being of the participants.
2. **The researcher must be competent to conduct the research.**
3. **Consequences of the research must be identified:** Procedures must respect privacy, ensure confidentiality, maximize benefits, and minimize risks.
4. **The sample selection must be appropriate for the purposes of the study,** representative of the population to benefit from the study, and sufficient in number.
5. **The participants must agree to participate in the study through voluntary informed consent—that is, without threat or undue inducement (voluntary), knowing what a reasonable person in the same situation would want to know before giving consent (informed), and explicitly agreeing to participate (consent).**
6. **The researcher must inform the participants whether harm will be compensated.**

Personally, I cannot argue against any of these principles and norms. In fact, as I am looking over the landscape of ethics, these seem to be quite useful. However, in the conduct of research and evaluation, issues of an ethical nature arise that are not clearly addressed in these principles and norms. In my experience, some ethical issues will surface differently or not at all, depending on the researcher's or evaluator's paradigmatic stance. For example, Chilisa (2005) suggests that research ethics narrowly defined as protection of the individual fail to protect the researched in important ways. Referencing research ethics in the Third World, she highlights the need to

consider ethics in light of respect for and protection of the integrity of the researched communities, ethnicities, societies, and nations: “Researched communities should validate research findings, which are generalized or extrapolated to them. Such an exercise will enable the researched to have full participation in the construction of knowledge that is produced about them” (p. 678).

The revision of the AEA’s (2004) Guiding Principles provides one example of how the use of a different lens to view this code of ethics yields different issues. For example, the original version contained five categories of principles: systematic inquiry, competence, integrity/honest, respect for people, and responsibilities for general and public welfare (see Box 1.4). The original principles were accompanied by a statement that recognized that they were part of an evolving process of self-examination by the profession and should be revisited on a regular basis. When the review process was complete, the categories were essentially unchanged. However, changes did appear in the statements that amplify the meaning of each overarching principle. For example, the following statement was added to the 2004 version of the Guiding Principles under the Competence category:

To ensure recognition, accurate interpretation and respect for diversity, evaluators should ensure that the members of the evaluation team collectively demonstrate cultural competence. Cultural competence would be reflected in evaluators seeking awareness of their own culturally-based assumptions, their understanding of the worldviews of culturally-different participants and stakeholders in the evaluation, and the use of appropriate evaluation strategies and skills in working with culturally different groups. Diversity may be in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, socio-economics, or other factors pertinent to the evaluation context. Retrieved October 14, 2005, from *www.eval.org/Guiding%20Principles.htm*.

The establishment of a causal link between the transformative paradigm and this change in language is not possible. Nevertheless, this change in language arose because evaluators who work in a spirit compatible with the transformative paradigm provided feedback to the association. Hence, this change in language is one example of what happens at the borders and crossroads of research and evaluation paradigms.

Revisions of professional association codes indicate a greater awareness of the need to consciously incorporate principles of cultural competence as a salient dimension of their ethical codes, for example, the ethical codes of the American Psychological Association, American Educational

### BOX 1.4. AEA's Guiding Principles

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- A. **Systematic inquiry:** Evaluators conduct systematic, data-based inquiries about whatever is being evaluated.
- B. **Competence:** Evaluators provide competent performance to stakeholders.
- C. **Integrity/honesty:** Evaluators ensure the honesty and integrity of the entire evaluation process.
- D. **Respect for people:** Evaluators respect the security, dignity, and self-worth of the respondents, program participants, clients, and other stakeholders with whom they interact.
- E. **Responsibilities for general and public welfare:** Evaluators articulate and take into account the diversity of interests and values that may be related to the general and public welfare.

Retrieved February 11, 2008, from [www.eval.org/Guiding%20Principles.htm](http://www.eval.org/Guiding%20Principles.htm).

Research Association, American Evaluation Association, American Sociological Association, American Anthropological Association, and the United Nations. Researcher and evaluator guidelines are also available from indigenous communities that provide insights into ethical grounding of research. The ethical implications of these codes and guidelines are discussed further in Chapter 2 in the section on the axiological assumptions of the transformative paradigm.

## Striving for Improved Validity

Validity in data collection is generally defined as using an instrument that actually measures what it is intended to measure,<sup>7</sup> but *validity* also has broader meanings. Kirkhart (1995, 2005) and Lincoln (1995) provide leadership in the discussion of the integral connection between the quality of the human relations in research and evaluation settings and the validity of the information that is assembled. Kirkhart (2005) proposes specific consideration of what she terms “multicultural validity,”<sup>8</sup> which she describes as referring to the “correctness or authenticity of understandings across multiple, intersecting cultural contexts” (p. 22). She outlines five justifications for multicultural validity:

1. Theoretical: The cultural congruence of theoretical perspectives underlying the program, the evaluation, and assumptions about validity.
2. Experiential: Congruence with the lived experience of participants in the program and in the evaluation process.
3. Consequential: The social consequences of understandings and judgments and the actions taken based upon them.
4. Interpersonal: The quality of the interactions between and among participants in the evaluation process.
5. Methodological: The cultural appropriateness of measurement tools and cultural congruence of design configurations. (Kirkhart, 2005, p. 23)

Additional arguments for the value of placing our work within the transformative paradigm rest on the criteria for quality in research and evaluation identified by Lincoln (1995) and presented in Box 1.5.

Is it easy to address issues of social justice through transformative research and evaluation? We can take inspiration from those who took on this charge during the civil rights era in the United States, as well as from members of indigenous communities who remind us of the need for courage, as illustrated in these quotations:

- “You cannot be afraid if you want to accomplish something. You got to have the willin’, the spirit and, above all, you got to have the get-up” (National Public Radio, Hidden Kitchens, March 4, 2005). This quotation is from Georgia Gillmore, who was fired after speaking against the white bus driver who kicked her off his bus in 1956 in Alabama. She opened her own “kitchen,” sold food to raise funds for the civil rights movement, and died 25 years later—still cooking.

- In another sense, courage is about Maori researchers themselves embracing the margins that they have found themselves occupying, including being marginal to mainstream research institutions and marginal because they are the arbiters of research findings that unsettle the status quo (L. T. Smith, 2004).

- It also takes courage when we are confronted by the day-to-day hardship that many of our people are experiencing, even if this is what makes us so determined that their voices should be heard and that any research ethic must be about social justice (McIntosh, 2004; Pomare et al., 1995, as cited in Ormond, Cram, & Carter, 2004, p. 164).

## BOX 1.5. Criteria for Quality in Research and Evaluation

### AUTHENTICITY

*Authenticity* refers to the presentation of a balanced view of all perspectives, values, and beliefs (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). It answers the question, has the researcher been fair in presenting views? Among the criteria identified by Lincoln and Guba to judge the authenticity of investigations are the following:

*Fairness*—This criterion answers the question, to what extent are different constructions and their underlying value structures solicited and honored in the process? To be fair, the researcher must identify the respondents and how information about their constructions was obtained. Conflicts and value differences should be displayed. There should also be open negotiation of the recommendations and agenda for future actions.

*Ontological authenticity*—This criterion refers to the degree to which the individual's or group's conscious experience of the world became more informed or sophisticated as a result of the research experience. The presence of this type of authenticity can be determined by checking with members of the community to determine their changed understandings or by means of an audit trail that documents changes in individuals' constructions throughout the process.

*Catalytic authenticity*—This criterion refers to the extent to which action is stimulated by the inquiry process. Techniques for determining the extent to which this type of authenticity occurred include respondent testimony and documentation of actions that were taken during and after the study.

### POSITIONALITY OR STANDPOINT EPISTEMOLOGY

Lincoln (1995) describes the inherent characteristic of all research as being representative of the position or standpoint of the author. Therefore, researchers should acknowledge that all texts are incomplete and represent specific positions in terms of sexuality, ethnicity, and so on. Texts cannot claim to contain all universal truth because all knowledge is contextual; therefore, the researcher must acknowledge the context of the research.

### COMMUNITY

Research takes place within, and affects, a community (Lincoln, 1995). The researcher should know the community well enough to link the research results to positive action within that community.

(continued)

**BOX 1.5.** *(continued)***ATTENTION TO VOICE**

Lincoln (1995) cites the question that bell hooks (1990) has asked in her writing: Who speaks for whom? Who speaks for those who do not have access to the academy? The researcher must seek out those who are silent and must involve those who are marginalized.

**CRITICAL REFLEXIVITY**

The researcher must be able to enter into a high level of awareness that understands the psychological state of others to uncover dialectical relationships (Lincoln, 1995). The researcher needs to have a heightened degree of self-awareness for personal transformation and critical subjectivity.

**RECIPROCITY**

The researcher needs to demonstrate that a method of study was used that allowed the researcher to develop a sense of trust and mutuality with the participants (Lincoln, 1995).

**SHARING THE PERQUISITES OF PRIVILEGE**

Researchers should be prepared to share in the royalties of books or other publications that result from the research. Lincoln (1995) says: "We owe a debt to the persons whose lives we portray." In her closing remarks at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Lincoln (1995) envisioned a different set of criteria for judging the quality of research from what is currently used in most academic settings: "Try to imagine an academic world in which judgments about promotion, tenure, and merit pay were made on the basis of the extent of our involvement with research participants, rather than on our presumed distance."

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Based largely on Lincoln (1995).



## Summary

- ✓ The prism is used as a metaphor for transformative research and evaluation because of its multiple facets and the resulting unique outcomes that reflect ever-changing contextual factors.
- ✓ The purpose of this text is to make explicit the underlying assumptions and methodological implications of working from the transformative paradigm, which prioritizes the furtherance of human rights and social justice.
- ✓ The transformative paradigm is put forward as a metaphysical umbrella that covers research and evaluation that is designed to challenge the status quo.
- ✓ The need for the transformative paradigm is discussed in terms of societal inequities; movement from a deficit-based to a resilience-based perspective; examples of transformative study outcomes; and the shifting paradigms evidenced in various contexts, including international development, feminism, disability rights, and critical race theory.
- ✓ The need for the transformative paradigm is also explored in terms of scholarly literature, which documents the needs of particular populations, as well as public policy, which contains implications for research and evaluation that are culturally responsive.
- ✓ This chapter also discusses the complexities that challenge researchers and evaluators who work in culturally diverse communities.
- ✓ A growing awareness of the need to reframe ethics and validity to encompass cultural competence is the final topic addressed in Chapter 1.

### MOVING ON TO CHAPTER 2 . . .

Following a general discussion of the meaning of paradigms in research and evaluation, the basic beliefs of the transformative paradigm are explained in detail along with examples of theories that are commensurate with transformative work.



If you twist a prism hanging in the window on a sunny day, you can see changing patterns of light. If you use your imagination, you can see the colors dancing around the room.

### Notes

1. For more about how prisms work, see Appendix A.
2. At the moment, the world of research and evaluation is operating with several competing paradigms: the post-positivist, the constructivist, the pragmatic, and the transformative. Research and evaluation methods texts are available that explore the first three paradigms and very few that explore all four paradigms (Mertens, 2005).
3. Readers interested in further exploration of similar philosophical treatments of transformation are referred to Habermas's (1981, 1996) communicative action theory and Foucault (1980), Lyotard (1984), and Todorov (1995) on the academic rhetoric supportive of institutional forms of power, values, domination, and control.
4. Disability rights activists have suggested the term *temporarily able-bodied*, as we all go through periods of our lives when we are disabled in some respect. For example, I may be able-bodied now, but at times my back goes out. Then I am temporarily disabled. Also, many deaf people prefer to be thought of as part of a cultural group, rather than as part of a group with a disability.
5. The Nuremberg Code provides a historical basis for the protection of human participants in research and evaluation. It is discussed further in the section on ethics in this chapter.
6. Oralism is an approach to communication for deaf people that emphasizes speech training, lip reading, and technology (e.g., hearing aids and cochlear implants) to enhance residual hearing. While this approach is successful for some people with hearing loss, exclusive use of oral-based communication has had a detrimental effect on deaf people who benefit more from visual communication strategies, such as sign languages. This emphasis on oral strategies has been a source of much acrimonious debate for centuries.
7. This concept is further explored in Chapter 8 on data collection.
8. Kirkhart first introduced the term *multicultural validity* in 1995; she expanded the concept considerably in her 2005 chapter.