



Practice Informed Research Methods for Social Workers

Teresa Morris

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This book describes and discusses research methods for four alternative paradigms. These methodologies are organized according to the stages of a generalist model of social work practice. In my first book on Social Work Research Methods (Morris, 2006) I introduced the idea that social workers can carry out research in a more liberated fashion than is usually outlined in most research methods text books. I gave a philosophical, theoretical, historical and practical foundation for implementing research from four alternative perspectives: positivism, post positivism, critical theory, and constructivism. As well as introducing these paradigms, I integrated research methodologies with social work practice by translating the steps of the generalist, social work, practice model (engagement, assessment, planning, implementation, evaluation, termination and follow up) into the research process (research focus, design, data collection, data analysis, data interpretation, and communication and dissemination of findings). I divided that book into four parts according to each paradigm with a fifth part that addressed cross cutting issues such as ethics, diversity, politics, and technology. This book updates and reorganizes these ideas and methods so that the flow of the discussion more closely parallels the flow of the research process. Instead of being organized according to the paradigms, it is organized according to the stages of the research process. Also, to assist with instruction on this new organization, there are additional resources that contain power point slides, full texts of example student studies using these approaches, test questions, and other supplementary materials. These can be accessed by contacting me at tmorris@csusb.edu I have made these changes because, after using my first book for a few years, I realized that starting with positivism and ending with constructivism has left students who are keen to learn about critical theory and constructivism “cooling their heels” for half of the course. Now, when I integrate the four paradigms throughout the course, I offer a continual comparison of those approaches as we learn about each stage of generalist research methods. Having tried this with drafts of this book, I can honestly say that classroom discussion has become more lively....and demanding.

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