

DEVELOPING A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF RESPONSIVENESS IN
EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

by

DIVYA NARENDRA BHEDA

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Department of Education Studies
and the Graduate School of the University of Oregon
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

June 2013

DISSERTATION APPROVAL PAGE

Student: Divya Narendra Bheda

Title: Developing a Theoretical Framework of Responsiveness in Educational Institutions and Non-Profit Organizations

This dissertation has been accepted and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in the Department of Education Studies by:

Dr. Ronald Beghetto	Co-Chair
Dr. Joanna Goode	Co-Chair
Dr. Mia Tuan	Member
Dr. Patricia A. Curtin	Outside Member

and

Dr. Kimberly Andrews Espy	Vice President for Research & Innovation/Dean of the Graduate School
---------------------------	--

Original approval signatures are on file with the University of Oregon Graduate School.

Degree awarded June 2013

© 2013 Divya Narendra Bheda

DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

Divya Narendra Bheda

Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Education Studies

June 2013

Title: Developing a Theoretical Framework of Responsiveness in Educational Institutions and Non-Profit Organizations

A number of education institutions and non-profit organizations seek to be responsive toward the stakeholders they serve. They engage in numerous organizational and evaluative processes to be perceived as responsive. They consider evaluating and improving responsiveness, important to their practice. Unfortunately, such efforts are often impeded because there is a lack of clear understanding regarding what “responsiveness” means. One reason is that the current professional literature on responsiveness provides fragmented, ambiguous, and limited definitions of responsiveness. This theory-building dissertation offers a clear, expansive, and more holistic theoretical understanding of responsiveness. The derived definition and understanding of responsiveness is then used to develop and test a theory-driven process model (*r-CriDo model*) that serves as a tool to catalyze and monitor responsiveness in educational institutions and non-profit organizations. The *r-CriDo* model draws from critical feminist and subaltern theories where *r* stands for reflexive, *Cri* stands for critical and decolonizing, and the *Do* stands for action. This dissertation offers an overview of how professional practice could benefit from the tools derived in this study and ends with a discussion of the model’s strengths, limitations and future research possibilities.

CURRICULUM VITAE

NAME OF AUTHOR: Divya Narendra Bheda

GRADUATE AND UNDERGRADUATE SCHOOLS ATTENDED:

University of Oregon, Eugene, U.S.A

Women's Christian College, Madras University, Chennai, India

Mount Carmel College, Bangalore University, Bengaluru, India

DEGREES AWARDED:

Doctor of Philosophy, Critical and Sociocultural Studies in Education, 2013,
University of Oregon

Master of Science, Educational Leadership, 2009, University of Oregon

Master of Arts, Communication, 2004, Madras University

Bachelor of Arts, Communicative English, Psychology and English Literature,
Bangalore University

AREAS OF SPECIAL INTEREST:

Responsiveness in Education

Program Evaluation in Education

Women's and Gender Studies in Education

Equity, Inclusion, and Representation in Curriculum Development

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

Graduate Research Fellow, Diversity Affairs GTF and Program Coordinator,
Oregon Young Scholars Pipeline Program, Office of Institutional Equity
& Diversity, University of Oregon, 2010-2012

Graduate Research Fellow, Student Accountability and Diversity, Office of the
Dean, College of Education, University of Oregon, 2009-2010

Graduate Administrative Fellow, Program Assistant, Department of Educational
Leadership, College of Education, University of Oregon, 2008-2009

Graduate Teaching Fellow, Teaching Assistant & Discussion Leader for Problems & Issues in Education, Department of Education Studies, College of Education, University of Oregon, 2007-2008

Hindi Language Teaching Instructor, Yamada Language Center, Department of Linguistics, College of Arts and Sciences, University of Oregon, 2007-2008

Coordinator, Special Programs, American English Institute, Department of Linguistics, College of Arts and Sciences, University of Oregon, 2007

Kindergarten & Elementary English teacher, PSBB Learning Leadership Academy, Bangalore, India, 2006

Reebok Fitness and Swami Vivekananda Yoga Anusandhana Samsthana Certified Instructor, Fitness One Studios, Bangalore, India, 2005-2006

Public Relations Consultant and Event Manager, Adroit Public Relations, Chennai, India, 2004-2005

GRANTS, AWARDS, AND HONORS:

Clare Wilkins Chamberlin Research Award and Graduate School Dissertation Research Award, University of Oregon, 2012

General University Scholarship, Office of Student Financial Aid and Scholarships, University of Oregon, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011

Miller Family Scholarship, Women's & Gender Studies, University Of Oregon, 2011

Oregon University System Ryoichi Sasakawa Young Leaders Fellowship Fund, or SYLFF Award from the Nippon Foundation, 2011

Jhamandus Watmull Scholarship Award, International Affairs, University of Oregon, 2010

Center on Diversity & Community, Summer Research Award, University of Oregon, 2010

Graduate Student Service Award, the Graduate School, University of Oregon, 2009

International Outstanding Student of the Year, Office of International Affairs, University of Oregon, 2009

David Moursund Scholarship, College of Education, University of Oregon, 2009
Ken A. Erickson Memorial Award, College of Education, University of Oregon,
2008

Campus Leadership and Involvement Award, Office of International Affairs,
University of Oregon, 2008

Most Deserving Student Award, for service, Mount Carmel College, Bangalore,
2002

National Excellence in Public Speaking, National Cadet Corps, Government of
India, 2001

PUBLICATIONS:

Bheda, D. (2011). En "gendering" Evaluation: Feminist Evaluation but "I Am Not
A Feminist!". *New Directions for Evaluation*, 2011, 131, 53-58.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Dr. Ron Beghetto was the force that gave my ideas, thinking, and knowledge, direction in this theory-building dissertation. He introduced me to the field of evaluation, and offered me the lenses through which I learned to view, conceptualize, and articulate responsiveness as an extension of evaluation. Similarly, the guidance of Dr. Joanna Goode was invaluable. It was her supervision and knowledge that informed my practical application of critical feminist epistemology/ methodology, and enabled the development of this theory. Her constructive questions pushed me to strengthen my theory. Together, it was these faculty's expertise, interest, and mentorship throughout the ideation, design, planning, implementation, and writing of this dissertation that made this work possible.

I also wish to express my sincere appreciation of Dr. Pat Curtin and Dr. Mia Tuan for their close reading of this work from its inception. It was their critical questions and insights that challenged me to be more nuanced and specific in the planning of this study all the way through to representation. Their expertise in qualitative methodology ensured my own precision in employing these methods. It was their focus on the practical use of the models this dissertation offers that helped strengthen the writing of this dissertation.

The anonymous student, staff, and administrator participants in this study are people to whom I am forever grateful. They opened their subjective professional worlds and personal perspectives and willingly invited me in, trusting me to understand and adequately represent their views and words. It must be acknowledged that this theory-building would not be possible without the willingness of my participants to help me; to share, educate, and be open and vulnerable with me about their lived experiences. The theory and model-building would have been impossible without their contribution.

Writing this dissertation and completing my Ph.D. has been possible because of a number of people who at times inspired and motivated, and at other times challenged, mentored, or supported me in my getting here. The journey was not easy, and without them I would have surely failed. To the many students, staff, faculty, and administrators across the University of Oregon and outside—in the professional communities—whose friendship I have come to count on: you cheered me on. Thank you. I could not have done this without you. To friends by my side, whom I made the journey with—thank you.

My family saw me through this process—every step of the way. Without them, this journey could not have been undertaken nor completed, and this manuscript would not be. Amma—your love helped me take this on and see it through. Ada—thank you for your dream. Hemapatti and Ramuthatha—the best story tellers I know—I am here for you and because of you. Sukumama, Jayanthimami—thank you for always being there and the time I spent with you home away from home. Nina, thank you for being the best sister I could ever ask for. Paapu—you bring me back to reality, keep me sane, and give my work meaning. Vasant, Arun, you know you helped. Divya—thank you for being my best friend and for always being just a phone call away. Revathiamma and Gopuappa, thank you for your support. Akshay—thank you for being the best brother I am so lucky to have. Rasika—your diligence motivates. And finally, Bhuv—my better half, you are the reason I got here and go on. I could not have done this without you by my side.

This dissertation was supported in part by Clare Wilkins Chamberlin Research Award and Graduate School Dissertation Research Award, University of Oregon, 2012, and the Oregon University System Ryoichi Sasakawa Young Leaders Fellowship Fund, or SYLFF Award from the Nippon Foundation, 2011.

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother Janaki Chakravarthy, who was, is, and continues to be my inspiration, my strength, my courage, my faith. You are my prayer Amma.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW	1
The Problem.....	1
Purpose and Significance	2
The Audience	3
Research Plan.....	4
An Overview of the Theory-Building Method	4
Empirical Overview	5
Dissertation Overview	6
Chapter II. Existing Literature on Responsiveness.....	6
Chapter III. Defining Responsiveness and Understanding the Gap	6
Chapter IV. Methodology	6
Chapter V. Empirical Contributions to Theory-Building	7
Chapter VI. A Holistic Framework to Improve Responsiveness.....	7
Chapter VII. Strengths, Limitations, and Future Directions.....	8
II. EXISTING LITERATURE ON RESPONSIVENESS	9
Exploring Existing Definitions of Responsiveness and Their Limitations.....	9
Everyday Conceptions	9
Responsiveness as Cultural.....	11
Responsiveness in the Field of Business Management.....	12
Responsiveness in Political Science	15
Responsiveness in Evaluation.....	15

Chapter	Page
Research Questions.....	16
III. DEFINING RESPONSIVENESS AND UNDERSTANDING THE GAP	18
Defining Responsiveness in This Dissertation	18
Defining Needs	19
Defining Community	20
Restricting Responsiveness to EIs and NPOs.....	21
Responsiveness as an Extension of Evaluation	22
Understanding Evaluations	23
Needs Assessment Evaluation within Responsiveness.....	24
The Gap in the Practice of Responsiveness	26
Understanding the Gap: Espoused Theory vs. Theory-in-Use	27
Accountability Concerns and Institutional Pressure Barriers	29
The Challenge of Defensive Practices and Designed Blindness	33
Existing Strategies to Minimize the Gap and Their Limitations	37
Action Science Strategies	37
Evaluation Strategies	43
Limitations of Existing Strategies in Addressing the Gap.....	46
A Meta-Evaluation, Meta-Cognition (Meta-ec) Model as the Answer	51
Understanding Meta-Evaluation	51
Understanding Meta-Cognition	53
The Meta-ec Model.....	53
Chapter Summary	54

Chapter	Page
IV. METHODOLOGY	57
Philosophical Underpinnings	57
Critical Feminist Epistemology	58
Social-Justice Axiology	64
Empowerment Teleology.....	65
Theory-Building Method as Research Design.....	65
Understanding Theory-Building	66
Theory-Building in Context.....	67
The Theory-Building Process	68
The Empirical Elements of Theory-Building	71
The Case-Study Design.....	72
The Case Selection.....	73
Participants.....	74
The Data Collection Process.....	76
A Description of Data Analysis	83
Triangulation.....	94
Representation.....	95
Chapter Summary	99
V. EMPIRICAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO THEORY-BUILDING.....	100
Empirical Support for Responsiveness Process Definition	100
Confirmations of Evaluation within Responsiveness	101
Responsiveness’s Focus on the EI’s Community and Its Needs	102

Chapter	Page
An Additional Theme: Responsiveness as Positive.....	104
Summarizing the Confirmations and Differences.....	105
Insights about Responsiveness from Case-Study Participant Experiences.....	105
Insight 1: A Focus on Diversity Inclusion	106
Insight 2: The Importance of Collaborative Decision-Making.....	111
Insight 3. A Demand for Focusing on Expressed Needs	114
Insight 4: Preference for a Formative Evaluation Approach	119
Insight 5. Responsiveness Must Be Iterative	120
Insight 6. The Importance of Being Proactive	123
Insight 7. Searching for Manifestations of Accountability.....	125
Bringing Participant Themes Together to Operationalize Responsiveness.....	128
Understanding Operationalization	129
The Seven Quality Indicators of Responsiveness.....	130
Operational Questions towards Responsiveness Self-assessment.....	132
The Responsiveness Quality Indicator Matrix.....	134
Arriving at a Final Visual Representation of the Responsiveness Process	137
Empirical Contribution to an Understanding of the Gap	139
Reason 1: Institutional Pressures and Accountability Concerns	141
Reason 2. Issues of Power	156
Reason 3. The Problem of Defensive Practices and Designed Blindness.....	174

Chapter	Page
Summarizing the Empirical Contributions to Understanding the Gap	176
The Need for a Meta-Evaluative-Meta-Cognitive (Meta-ec) Model	178
Chapter Summary	179
VI. A HOLISTIC FRAMEWORK TO IMPROVE RESPONSIVENESS	181
The Initial Conceptualization of the r-CriDo Model	182
Initial Model Developments	183
Original Model for Data Collection	185
An Overview of the Data Collection Process	190
Participant Responses and Empirical Contributions to the r-CriDo Model.....	191
1. Reflexive Agency.....	192
2. Learning	201
3. Critically Understanding Power.....	203
4. Beginning from Marginalized Lived Experiences	211
5. Empathetic Understanding.....	219
6. Practicing Relational Humility	226
7. Challenging Deficit-Thinking.....	232
8. Encouraging Possibility-Thinking	236
9. Doing Mindful Action.....	241
The Final Meta-ec r-CriDo Model	248
An Overview of Participant Feedback	248

Chapter	Page
The Development of the Final Model.....	251
Explaining the Final Model Representation	262
Chapter Summary	272
Answering the Second Research Question Set	272
Addressing Sub-Parts of the Third Research Question Set	274
VII. STRENGTHS, LIMITATIONS, AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS	276
Specifying the Relevance and Applicability of the Model	276
Clarifying the Relevance of the Model.....	276
Model Applicability Conditions	277
Strengths and Limitations of the r-CriDo Model.....	279
A Dissertation Summary.....	281
Revisiting My Entering Assumptions.....	284
Limitations of the Study.....	288
Strengths and Benefits of this Dissertation Endeavor.....	294
Future Directions	297
APPENDICES	301
A. FIRST ROUND OF DATA COLLECTION QUESTIONS TO STAFF, ADMINISTRATORS, AND STUDENTS	301
B. SPECIFICS OF THE SECOND ROUND OF DATA COLLECTION QUESTIONS TO STAFF, ADMINISTRATORS, AND STUDENTS.....	305
REFERENCES CITED.....	308

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. Model of Responsiveness (3-Step Process)—Iteration I	19
2. A Standard Evaluation 6-Step Non-Linear Process	24
3. Model of Responsiveness (2-Step Process)—Iteration II	26
4. Single and Double-Loop Learning.....	39
5. The General Method of Theory-Building Research in Applied Disciplines.....	67
6. The Responsiveness Process Quality Indicator Matrix	135
7. A Cyclical Re-Iterative Representation of the 3-Step Responsiveness Process	137
8. A Cyclical Representation of a Continuous 2-Step Responsiveness Process	138
9. A Representation of the Iterative, Formative, Proactive, Collaborative, Downwardly Accountable Action Process of Responsiveness.....	138
10. A Generic Needs Assessment Process Representation.....	164
11. Initial Diagrammatic Representation of the Reflexive-Critical and Decolonizing-Doing (r-CriDo) Meta-EC Model	184
12. The r-CriDo Model Shared with Participants during Data Collection.	186
13. The r-CriDo Model Deployed within the 6-Step Needs Assessment Evaluation Process of Responsiveness	189
14. Final Meta-Cognitive-Meta-Evaluative (Meta-EC) r-CriDo Model Template to Enhance Responsiveness	252
15. Final Meta-Cognitive-Meta-Evaluative (Meta-EC) r-CriDo Model Template to Enhance Responsiveness with Explanatory Comments	263

LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
1.	Data Collection Indicating the Two Rounds of Data Collected, Method Used, and the Number of Participants in Each.....	80
2.	Seven Responsiveness Quality Indicators	131
3.	Operational Questions To Be Answered to Measure Each of the Seven Quality Indicators of Responsiveness.....	132
4.	Original Seven Elements vs. Final Nine Elements of the r-CriDo Model.....	191
5.	A Linear Representation of Participant Responses to the r-CriDo Model.....	248

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

In an increasingly globalized world with larger discrepancies between the haves and the have-nots, educational institutions (EIs) and non-profit organizations (NPOs) exist to level the playing field. They work for the success of the communities they serve by offering interventions to tackle local social problems. I.e. they offer services and supports to meet their communities' needs. Responsiveness and being responsive is considered essential to what these organizations and institutions (OIs) endeavor to do. This dissertation study speaks directly to these organizations and institutions and seeks to offer a conceptual and theoretical frame to support what they are endeavoring to do.

The Problem

Responsiveness or *being responsive* is commonly used in everyday vocabulary. The dictionary definition of responsiveness reads as “answering” or responding to someone or something, i.e., making a response (Oxforddictionaries.com, 2012). In the context of EIs and NPOs among other OIs, responsiveness is seen in a positive light and is considered desirable (Garrett, Covin, & Slevin, 2009; Gay, 2000; Hood, Hopson, & Frierson, 2005). But beyond that, the understanding of responsiveness is fragmented. A clear definition, understanding, and operationalization of responsiveness does not seem to be present.

The problem is that responsiveness means so many different things to so many different people across so many different fields—from medicine to education, from organizational development to public policy. The who, when, why, what, where, and how of responsiveness are unclear, vary by context, and at times are even contradictory.

There is no widely accepted definition or operationalized understanding of responsiveness. As a result, what responsiveness is and how it works, is not fully understood in professional practice or in scholarly discourse. And yet it is considered essential to the workings of EIs and NPOs and an ideal that these OIs strive toward because it is seen as positive. This is the problem that is explored in this dissertation study—the lack of a clear, specified understanding of responsiveness. And it is this problem that is addressed through this study.

Purpose and Significance

The primary purpose of this dissertation is to gain a better understanding of the term responsiveness or being responsive in relation to its use within educational institutions and non-profit organizations that work toward the social betterment of the local communities they serve. Specifically, the purpose is (a) to clarify the meaning of the word(s) to arrive at a common and precise understanding of the same; (b) to operationalize responsiveness so that it can be measured and monitored within EIs and NPOs; and (c) to develop and offer a holistic framework that can help EI/NPO practitioners better identify and overcome possible challenges as they endeavor engage in and improve responsiveness in their own specific contexts.

A clear, operationalized, and holistic understanding of responsiveness and a framework to overcome barriers to its practice stands to make a significant contribution to the functioning of EIs and NPOs that emphasize the importance of responsiveness in their practice. Moreover, a comprehensive framework will also contribute to the existing and somewhat limited literature in the field on this topic making responsiveness more accessible and useful to practitioners.

The Audience

The audiences for this dissertation are those concerned with evaluation research as well as members of EIs and NPOs. Members of EIs/NPOs include the governing body members, the leaders within EIs and NPOs, the staff within EIs and NPOs, and the evaluators of EIs and NPO. While this dissertation does speak to, and is meant to be useful to an EI/NPO's community (i.e., the public being served by the EI/NPO), it is primarily intended for the practitioners (staff, administrators/ leaders, and evaluators) of these EIs and NPOs. The goal is for practitioners to use the information and theory offered here to improve their practice toward positively impacting their communities.

The audience for this dissertation is also the research community engaged in improving practice in EIs and NPOs. Research in the fields of education, non-profit management, and evaluation are geared toward improvement in practice and involve theorizing and researching organizational/ institutional, as well as individual processes, behaviors, and observations that can result in the social betterment and empowerment of the local communities being served by the EIs and NPOs. This dissertation seeks to add to the academic knowledge around evaluation theory and practice by building and advancing responsiveness theory. The research community and practitioners together can better critique and take this work forward. They can help modify this theory, test it in future case-settings, and apply it in their practice to strengthen the relevance, utility, and applicability of this work.

It is important to note that this dissertation is premised on the belief that the onus of engaging in responsiveness lies with the practitioners (EI staff and administrators and evaluators) because of their expressed commitment to meeting the needs of the

community/ies they serve. While other stakeholder groups can also use this model, and while they all surely engage in their own versions of activism to enable community empowerment and success, this dissertation is representative of this researcher-theorist's activism to enable practitioners to fulfill their responsibilities toward the communities they care for.

Research Plan

This is an iterative and evolving theory-building dissertation. The theorizing that resulted in the writing of this dissertation, and the theorizing that is the result of the writing of this dissertation, makes this endeavor a self-renewing, evolving site of activism that enables and demonstrates my own reflexivity, integrity, and agency, as well as those of my participants (Asher, 2010). My efforts at theorizing are guided by a general theory-building method outlined in Lynham (2002a).

An overview of the theory-building method. The theory-building method (Lynham, 2002a) used in this dissertation allows the theorist to move iteratively from imagination and logic in the mind space, to practice in the real world, to empirical testing (that brings theory and practice together), back to imagination and logic. It is holistic in its approach and—"takes the theorist on the full journey—from imagination to application" (Storberg-Walker, 2006, p. 230).

The theorizing in this dissertation is more "middle-range" (Merton, 1968) in nature, where (a) the theory is tied to practice because it has to be built around phenomena that are observable to generate theory, and (b) the theory has to be amenable to empirical testing. Thus, Lynham's approach to theory-building is the method used because it is well-suited for this task.

This dissertation seeks to both build theory and offer models for use. While models and theories are often used interchangeably (Jaccard & Jacoby, 2010), a model is usually a visual template or framework that can be used to empirically test the applicability of a given theory within different contexts. A model usually represents how things work while a theory also explains the why of it (Ahmad, 2011; Lynham, 2002a). Thus, Lynham's theory-building process is used to both build theory and develop corresponding models in this dissertation.

Empirical overview. Within this overarching general theory-building approach, a qualitative case-study approach (Stake, 2005) is used to engage in the empirical aspects of the theory-building process. The case-study research design includes different qualitative and quantitative methods to collect data in a natural setting and has the goal of exploring and understanding complex phenomenon as it is experienced and observed in one particular context (Yin, 2008). Within this study, the phenomenon being explored is responsiveness.

Within this case-study design, interviews and focus groups are conducted to collect data (Goldenkoff, 2004; Patton, 1990). Simultaneously, the participant observation method is used, and field observations are noted in a journal (Sunstein & Chiseri-Strater, 2007). Additionally, critical, reflexive thoughts are recorded in a reflexive journal to document the researcher-self's thinking, logic, and decision-making with regard to the theory-building (Denzin, 2006). The data analysis is primarily inductive in nature (Charmaz, 2006; Miles & Huberman, 1994) and the findings and themes from the analysis help build the theory around responsiveness and also help build a framework to enhance it.

Dissertation Overview

The theorizing in this dissertation is spread over the next six chapters.

Chapter II. Existing literature on responsiveness. Chapter II begins by laying out the existing literature in the field on the topic of responsiveness and discusses the limitations of these definitions. Offering evidence of the lack of consensus over the existing representations of and references to responsiveness, this chapter sets the stage for responsiveness theorizing to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of the term.

Chapter III. Defining responsiveness and understanding the gap. Chapter III offers a theoretical definition of responsiveness that is ready for empirical testing and modification in a case-study setting. It reviews existing scholarship that offer insights into the common problem that EIs and NPOs often face —the gap in the practice of responsiveness—and discusses the possible barriers that cause this gap in practice.

A theoretical discussion of these barriers that EIs and NPOs often face, that affects responsiveness practice lays the foundation for developing a metric to measure and monitor responsiveness quality. Additionally, existing literature and scholarship's affirmation of the gap validates the focus of the next few chapters—creating a model to enhance and improve responsiveness.

Chapter IV. Methodology. This chapter describes the methodology used to study responsiveness. It establishes the methodological foundation for how the researcher-theorist moves from existing literature to the empirical case-study to theorize a framework of responsiveness in the later chapters. In this chapter, the philosophical underpinnings of this study, the general theory-building research design employed, and

the case-study method used to build and test my theory (including the details of the data collection and analysis procedures, and representation choices) are discussed in detail.

Chapter V. Empirical contributions to theory-building. Chapter V completes the conceptual development and operationalization of responsiveness by drawing from the empirical findings of the case-study to validate the previously presented definition of responsiveness that was derived from theory. These findings from the case-study (i.e., the participants' insights and experience of responsiveness—as observed and inferred through the data analysis of their responses in the focus groups and interviews) clarify, refine, and strengthen the theoretically derived definition of responsiveness. Additionally, a metric to measure and monitor responsiveness is created from participant insights about aspects important to their lived experiences of responsiveness (as practitioners and community members).

Participant responses are presented to confirm the existence of the gaps in responsiveness practice and validate the theoretical reasons for the gap offered in Chapter III. Inferences are made from these responses to elucidate additional reasons that cause the gap. This nuanced understanding of the challenges practitioners face in engaging in responsiveness sets the stage for developing a holistic framework to address and overcome barriers to its practice.

Chapter VI. A holistic framework to improve responsiveness. In this chapter, a holistic framework—aimed at enhancing responsiveness within EIs and NPOs—is developed and described, and participants' feedback about the utility and relevance of this model in their practice is also discussed. Their comments and responses, coded and analyzed, are used to help refine and operationalize the visual representation of the model

to make it more germane and applicable to EI/NPO practitioners. The chapter ends with a presentation of the fine-tuned model that is offered as a tool to develop and enhance responsiveness among practitioners in EIs and NPOs. This functionality of the model is also explained in detail.

Chapter VII. Strengths, limitations, and future directions. The last chapter summarizes the outcomes of this theory-building endeavor. It highlights the contributions that the definition of responsiveness and the models developed in this dissertation make to the field of practice. It notes limitations, and outlines future directions for scholarship in this area as well. Challenges faced and overcome during the theory-building and research process are also shared. The dissertation ends with an invitation for researchers and practitioners in EIs/NPOs to use this responsiveness definition, the derived responsiveness quality indicator metric, and the model to enhance responsiveness, in their practice and help take this work forward toward serving EI/NPO communities better.

CHAPTER II

EXISTING LITERATURE ON RESPONSIVENESS

Myriad and fragmented understandings of responsiveness exist. This chapter offers an overview of the existing definitions of responsiveness and highlights the limitations of these fragmented conceptions. These limitations set the stage for the broad responsiveness-related research questions that drive this dissertation study.

Exploring Existing Definitions of Responsiveness and Their Limitations

Apart from everyday understandings of the term ‘responsiveness,’ this section explores four different disciplinary conceptions of responsiveness, examining how these conceptions of responsiveness are similar and different. The four disciplinary fields of the social sciences referenced in this chapter are education, evaluation, business management, and political science.

Everyday conceptions. The dictionary definition of ‘responsiveness’ reads—“answering” or responding to someone or something, i.e., making a response (Oxforddictionaries.com, 2012). The Free online dictionary (thefreedictionary.com, 2012) defines ‘responsiveness’ as “reacting quickly”; and “as a quality of people, it involves responding with emotion to people and events.” ‘Responsive’ is also explained on this website as readily reacting or responding to suggestions, influences, appeals, or efforts. Merriam-Webster online begins by defining responsiveness as “giving response” or “making a response” (Merriam-webster.com, 2012) and simultaneously also defines responsiveness as the noun version of ‘responsive,’ where ‘responsive’ is defined as “quick to respond, or reacting appropriately or sympathetically.” Cambridge online also defines ‘responsive’ as “making a positive and quick reaction to something or someone”

(Dictionary.Cambridge.org, 2012). Here, ‘responsiveness’ is once again defined as the noun version of ‘responsive.’

Each of these four dictionary definitions define ‘responsiveness’ as encompassing a combined meaning of a process of just responding as well as an attribute (such as courteously, sympathetically, in a timely manner, and the like) of responding. As a result of these dictionary-defined everyday conceptions, responsiveness is often seen as an *attribute* that people (e.g., teachers, evaluators, government officials, members of organizations and business establishments) possess based on how “well” they respond to their stakeholder’s needs. I.e., it can be argued that when an EI/NPO considers itself as responding well to its different stakeholder’s needs (making responsiveness a process where “well” is a standard set by each individual EI/NPO for itself); the EI/NPO can consider itself as possessing the attribute of “responsiveness.”

The above common understandings and use of the term indicate responsiveness being used as a stand-in term for the attributes of being timely or sympathetic in responding to someone. But in these common understandings, the process of responding (also defined as responsiveness in the dictionaries) is not clearly defined.

The attribute of responsiveness implies that a process of responding exists. However, the dictionary definitions and everyday use of the word lack details regarding what the process specifically entails. As is evident, everyday (i.e., dictionary) definitions of responsiveness—which allude to responsiveness as a combined attribute and process—do not clarify what responsiveness is. Conceptions of responsiveness in other areas within the field of social science have similar issues.

Responsiveness as cultural. The first significant understanding of responsiveness in the social sciences is the concept of *cultural* responsiveness. Cultural responsiveness is extensively used in education and evaluation literature in relation to building equity, enacting multicultural values, engaging diversity, and practicing cultural competency.

Cultural responsiveness in education. Within the field of teaching and learning, cultural responsiveness is the way in which teaching takes into account the diverse identities of students within the teaching process. Culturally responsive teaching or CRT as it is called, uses the student's experiences, perspectives, and views based on the student's own identity as a means to teach, engage, and motivate the student (Gay, 2000; Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995). Cultural responsiveness is a process within pedagogy or curriculum of responding sympathetically or sensitively to the cultural identity of the student.

Cultural responsiveness in evaluation. Similar to the field of education, cultural responsiveness within evaluations or a culturally responsive evaluation (CRE) speaks to the way in which an evaluation takes into consideration the diverse identities of the multiple stakeholders and evaluators within the evaluation process. CRE is about building the skills of the evaluator and conducting an evaluation in a manner that enables an evaluator to elicit and include diverse voices within the evaluation process (Hood, Hopson, & Frierson, 2005).

The issues in cultural responsiveness. Within the above understandings in education and evaluation, responsiveness is seen as responding with cultural sensitivity. If one were to separate culture and responsiveness, it would seem that responsiveness is primarily about responding—in this case based on sensitivity or sympathy to culture, but

in another case it could be sensitivity or sympathy to gender, or language, or any number of other aspects of individual identity. As a result, a few questions arise.

Does the term ‘responsiveness,’ reflect a dual meaning—of simultaneously being the *attribute* of sensitivity (toward culture or some other identity element) and the *process* of responding? Without that defining word that captures where the sympathy or sensitivity needs to be directed, is responsiveness just the process of responding? Upon disassociating ‘cultural’ from responsiveness, what would responsiveness allude to? These questions remain unanswered and demonstrate the problems in this understanding of responsiveness within the field of education and evaluation.

Responsiveness in the field of business management. Responsiveness has also been explored in the field of management, marketing, and customer service. Three examples of how responsiveness is conceptualized in the field of business management include (a) the reliability, assurance, tangibles, empathy, and responsiveness (RATER) model (Zeithaml, Parasuraman, & Berry, 1990), (b) the theory of organizational ambidexterity specific to simultaneous adaptability and alignment (Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004), and (c) strategic responsiveness (Goodstein, 1994; Oliver, 1991).

Responsiveness as part of the RATER model. The RATER model (Zeithaml, Parasuraman & Berry, 1990) conceptualizes responsiveness as a *characteristic* (i.e., attribute) of a business or organization reacting appropriately (sympathetically) and in a timely fashion (quick) to its customers and their needs. Responding to the needs of the customer is at the center of responsiveness in this definition which implies that responsiveness is a *process* as well. However, the process has certain attributes. Thus, in this definition responsiveness is both process *and* attribute.

Responsiveness within ambidexterity. Ambidexterity is seen as the ability of an OI to be dynamic in the face of change, and to simultaneously explore and exploit its circumstances to adapt over time (March, 1991; O’Rielly & Tushman, 2007; Raisch, Birkinshaw, Probst, & Tushman, 2009). Responsiveness is a concept that is subsumed within this theorization of ambidexterity (Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004).

Jayachandran, Hewett and Kaufman (2004) state that responsiveness is the characteristic of being constantly adaptive, customizing products and services according to the consumer’s needs, and strategizing in a manner that foresees a need and addresses it, sometimes even before it is expressed. All these above expectations are considered to be aspects of responsiveness.

In this understanding of responsiveness within ambidexterity, once again responsiveness focuses on customer/client needs. Additionally, the organization that fulfills the above expectations of being constantly adaptive and anticipating customer needs and meeting them even before they are expressed is considered as having the *attribute* of responsiveness.

Strategic responsiveness. Goodstein (1994) and Oliver (1991) on the other hand, describe responsiveness as the *process* of responding where the response is directed towards institutional pressures rather than clients. Other conceptions of responsiveness in the field of business management primarily describe responsiveness as directed toward the clients that the EI/NPO is offering its services to (student, families, audience, customer/consumer). In this definition of responsiveness Goodstein (1994) and Oliver (1991) primarily describe responsiveness as the process of responding to institutional pressures and enforcers. Their process is different from other descriptions of

responsiveness that define this process as being directed toward the clients of the OI rather than the institutional pressures that Goldstein or Oliver speak of.

Exploring the contradictions. Existing conceptions of responsiveness within the field of business management raise serious questions about what exactly is meant by responsiveness. As has been discussed, responsiveness seems to have multiple meanings in the field of business management. In some conceptions it is the ‘attribute’ of the organization and is linked to other qualities like timeliness or sympathy. In other conceptions it is the ‘process’ of responding to consumer needs in a specified manner based on knowing the consumers very well.

Beyond the lack of clarity regarding responsiveness being an attribute or a process, it is once defined as existing in relation to its clients—i.e., the process of responsiveness is deemed as being client-oriented. And yet in another definition, it is also defined as existing in relation to stakeholders who exert institutional pressures. Thus, exactly who responsiveness is directed towards and what the very nature of responsiveness itself is are important and seemingly unresolved questions.

The varying conceptions of responsiveness in the field of business management raise several new questions: Is responsiveness an attribute of an OI (EI or an NPO), or can it also be an attribute of an evaluation, or a process, or a practice, or a practitioner? Does responsiveness have to be directed towards one particular stakeholder group only? Does the existence of responsiveness as an attribute within an OI imply that they always possess that attribute irrespective of their processes and actions toward their clients (or their institutional enforcers) in the future? Is responsiveness an always, already existing attribute in an EI/NPO or is it (re)defined each time based on the EI/NPO’s processes

directed at a particular stakeholder or group? Thus, if the EI/NPO is not responding to its clients or consumers at a particular point in time could it still be considered responsive?

All of the above questions remain unanswered. Thus, the shortcomings of the different understandings of responsiveness within the field of business management indicate the need for clarity regarding a common understanding and definition of responsiveness.

Responsiveness in political science. In the field of political science, once again, divergent conceptions of responsiveness exist. Fried and Rabinovitz (1980) for instance, define responsiveness as the ‘congruent relationship’ between public preferences and public policies such that the public finds the work and endeavors of the institution as being useful and valuable to them. Pennock (1952), on the other hand, defines responsiveness as “reflecting and giving expression to the will of the people” (p. 790).

It is evident once again that responsiveness is conceptualized quite differently within the same field. Specifically, one definition of responsiveness focuses on responsiveness being a process of meeting community needs and checking in with the community that its needs have been met, and the other focuses on it being a relationship between the EI/NPO and its people. In these conceptions of responsiveness within the field of political science, it is clear that responsiveness is not seen as an attribute, but what it is—be it a relationship or a process—remains unclear.

Responsiveness in evaluation. Stake (1973) described a certain way of conducting educational evaluations that would make them ‘responsive.’ His definition articulates responsiveness as an attribute.

Stake (1973) stated:

An educational evaluation is a responsive evaluation (1) if it orients more directly to program activities than to program intents, (2) if it responds to audience requirements for information, and (3) if the different value-perspectives of the people at hand are referred to in reporting the success and failure of the program. In these three separate ways an evaluation plan can be responsive. (p. 5)

Within this definition of responsiveness as an attribute or quality of an evaluation there is some clarity regarding what processes result in the existence of the attribute. However, what is unclear is what level of adherence to the above described processes is required for the attribute of responsiveness to exist? Additionally, given that an earlier understanding of responsiveness in evaluation (cultural responsiveness) refers to the term as a process and an attribute, once again there is a lack of clarity in the field regarding responsiveness being a process or an attribute or both. This question and similar questions once again indicate the need for clarity regarding the concept of responsiveness.

Research Questions

The limitation that inheres throughout the various disciplinary conceptions of responsiveness is that it is variously (and sometimes simultaneously) seen as both an attribute and process. Having this dual understanding of responsiveness creates a problem in being able to identify, measure, monitor, or achieve it. Additionally, the term responsiveness is often used in scholarly literature without being defined at all (Bates, Drita, & Ramirez, 2011; Bester & Scholtz, 2012; Maskiewicz & Winters, 2012; Schellenberg & Grothaus, 2009, to name just a few recent studies).

Given these multiple meanings and fragmented conceptions of responsiveness in different fields, and given how dated they are (some as old as 1952), a lingering problem, as Pennock (1952) noted more than half a century ago, remains: “just what responsiveness calls for... is not entirely clear” (Pennock, 1952, p. 791). Having explored the existing fragmented definitions of responsiveness it becomes important to define and theorize responsiveness anew. That is the purpose of this dissertation.

Three research question sets are posed to guide this theory-building work.

1. How can responsiveness be defined, measured, and monitored? What are the perceived and lived barriers faced by EIs, NPOs, and evaluators in practicing responsiveness? What factors contribute to a gap between the espoused theory of EIs and NPOs and their enacted theory?
2. What does a framework/ model/ strategy that addresses these possible barriers and catalyze responsiveness look like? What are its unique elements? What does it offer that the other evaluation models/ approaches thus far have not?
3. What are the model’s strengths and limitations? What is the applicability and relevance of the model/ framework (or lack thereof) in addressing responsiveness in the context of a case-study? What conditions make the model/ framework applicable and relevant in bridging the possible gap between espoused and enacted theory?

The next few chapters attempt to address these questions. They theoretically offer some answers by drawing from current scholarship and literature and thereafter empirically confirm and validate those answers to further theorize responsiveness.

CHAPTER III

DEFINING RESPONSIVENESS AND UNDERSTANDING THE GAP

The fragmented understandings of responsiveness in existing literature and scholarship indicate the need for a comprehensive understanding of responsiveness. This chapter first offers a theoretically derived, i.e., theory-based definition of responsiveness. It explains and restricts that definition to be applicable within the specific context of educational institutions (EIs) and non-profit organizations (NPOs).

The second half of this chapter explores the possible gaps between an EI/NPO's principles or intentions of responsiveness (its espoused theory), and its practice (enacted theory) of responsiveness. Drawing from existing scholarship and literature, the theoretical reasons for the common presence of such gaps are discussed. The limitations of the prevailing strategies in adequately addressing these gaps are highlighted, thereby laying the foundation for a new strategy or framework (i.e., model) to help EIs and NPOs identify such gaps in their practice and address them.

Defining Responsiveness in This Dissertation

To actively step away from common misunderstandings that exist around responsiveness being defined as an attribute, responsiveness, in this dissertation, is defined as a process. Specifically, the noun of "responsiveness" is semantically separated from the adjective use of "responsive." The two words will not be linked semantically any further so as to affirm responsiveness as a process and not an attribute of the EI/NPO. In the following section, I offer the process definition of responsiveness. It is this definition of responsiveness that is referenced within the remainder of this dissertation endeavor whenever the term 'responsiveness' is used.

Responsiveness, in this dissertation, is defined as: *The process of an EI/NPO assessing the needs of its community, meeting those needs, and collecting feedback from the community that its needs have been met.* Figure 1 offers the first model of responsiveness that reflects this process definition of responsiveness visually. The following section clarifies all the various elements of this process definition of responsiveness.



Figure 1. Model of Responsiveness (3-Step Process)—Iteration I

Defining needs. Because this dissertation’s definition of responsiveness is premised upon the needs of the community, it becomes imperative to define ‘needs.’ Needs are defined here, following Povosac and Carey’s (1997) definition of ‘needs’, as something that people must have to be in a satisfactory state of being within a given context where the context is bound by factors inclusive of but not limited to physical location, time, and common group belonging. A need is a basic requirement necessary to sustain the human condition and a community has a right to fulfill that need that they have.

This definition also aligns with Unrau, Gabor, and Grinell’s understanding (2007, p. 115) that a ‘need’ is “a discrepancy between what is and what should be.” As a result, the word ‘need’ is used as a noun in this dissertation rather than a verb. It alludes to a gap in “what is” (Kaufman, 1993).

Unrau, Gabor, and Grinell (2007) argue that a need is inextricably tied to the existence of a social problem where the social problem is an occurrence or event that is undesired by members of our society within a given context. They add that any one social problem may be reflective of multiple needs and as a result, “there is no one procedure or one source of data that provides clear information on needs” (p. 116). Thus, the process of responsiveness will likely involve using multiple methods to discover the needs of the community of the EI/NPO.

Defining community. The *community*, in this dissertation, is defined specifically as those stakeholders or publics (Dewey, 1927) that the EI/NPO has set itself up to serve and impact. Dewey’s publics are groups of citizens who share the effects of a particular action. They are formed, overlap, and disintegrate as a function of the shared common interest and action effect on them. Within the context of this dissertation, the EI/NPO is the source of that common interest and action. Thus, the EI/NPO’s community is automatically formed as a direct result of the very existence of the EI/NPO and the impact of its interventions (i.e., services and programming). The community is formed even if it did not exist prior to the EI/NPO’s existence and interventions.

McMillan and Chavis (1986) state that communities are usually formed based on geographic or territorial proximity or due to relational factors where they share some common ground—such as experiencing a common need or facing a common social problem. Drawing from McMillan and Chavis, this dissertation defines the community as those members who are impacted by the services and programming of the EI/NPO. The community, in this dissertation, does not include other stakeholders of the EI/NPO such as members of its organization. The public that are always-already formed due to the

existence and impact of the EI/NPO are its community. It is *this community's needs* that are the focus of responsiveness.

Restricting responsiveness to EIs and NPOs. This dissertation restricts the definition of responsiveness to EIs and NPOs. The reason for this is because EIs and NPOs are already mostly focused on meeting community needs and thus responsiveness would be integral to the purpose of their existence. An elaboration of this argument is offered below.

Among different kinds of organizations and institutions that can engage in responsiveness, EIs and NPOs are the primary types of OIs that offer and deploy interventions to address the social problems and needs of their respective communities (Povosac & Carey, 1997; Unrau, Gabor, & Grinell, 2007). EIs and NPOs often have mission statements, visions, or guiding principles, and internal process documents or external news release statements that validate their existence to serve their community by ridding them of their social problems or meeting their needs through specific interventions such as education, access to resources, advocacy, or programming.

An intervention is theory and evidence-based planned change to bridge the gap between the real and ideal, where the ideal is driven by broadly accepted community values but is also amenable to change (Reviere, Berkowitz, Carter, & Ferguson, 1996). EIs and NPOs are founded upon these interventions as they attempt to meet the needs of their communities. Thus, within EIs and NPOs, these interventions are offered or prescribed as programs and services to meet the needs of the community to rid the community of their social problems (Unrau, Gabor, & Grinell, 2007).

Given that EIs and NPOs exist to enable a community to overcome one or many of its social problems and work to meet one or many of its community's needs through interventions—i.e., the programming and services they offer, responsiveness is particularly relevant and applicable to EIs and NPOs because the programming and services of EIs and NPOs are geared toward improving the quality of life of those they serve in some way. EIs and NPOs attempt to address the perceived gaps in information, build various skills, and offer support services and resources to enhance the learning and development that the diverse members of the community it seeks to serve are thought to need to be successful in an age of globalization.

Because the definition of responsiveness revolves around the *needs* of the *community*, and is focused on gleaning those needs, meeting them, and collecting feedback from the community that they have been met, the definition of responsiveness would apply and be relevant to those organizations that already primarily exist to meet the needs of their community. It is for this reason that this dissertation restricts the definition of responsiveness to be applicable within the context of EIs and NPOs that are already focused on their community's needs, even though the definition may apply to other types of organizations and institutions as well.

Responsiveness as an Extension of Evaluation

Having specified and circumscribed the fundamental elements of the process definition of responsiveness, the focus shifts to understanding the actual process of responsiveness. Given that the responsiveness process involves the EI/NPO assessing and meeting the needs of its community, and thereafter checking-in with the community that

its needs have been met, an understanding of evaluation offers insights into how this process definition of responsiveness is an extension of evaluation.

Understanding evaluations. Evaluations are the means by which EIs and NPOs meet their accountability expectations (Scriven, 1991). Evaluations involve the systematic collection of information to gauge and make judgments about program quality (Stake, 2004) to improve program effectiveness and inform decisions about future programming (Patton, 2008). Evaluations entail judging the worth or value of a program based on established criteria. Evaluations can be internal (conducted by the staff from within the EI or NPO), external (conducted by evaluators who are not part of the EI or NPO), or some combination of both.

Evaluations are about making program decisions based on valid and reliable evidence gathered by rigorous methods. Evaluations use qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-methods to collect and analyze data that is used for EI/NPO decision-making. An evaluation usually involves six closely interlinked, sometimes non-linear, processes. Please see Figure 2 for a diagrammatic representation of these six steps of an evaluation. These processes are relatively common (if laid out a bit differently) by different evaluation scholars (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, & Worthen, 2011; Hopson, 2010; Mertens, 2009; Grinnell, Gabor, & Unrau, 2011).

These six processes are (1) understanding the program and context, (2) deciding the evaluation questions to be asked and the design to be used, (3) planning and deploying the appropriate methods for data collection and analysis, (4) drawing inferences, conclusions, and making recommendations, (5) making program decisions towards use, and (6) disseminating information to stakeholders. Evaluations include

needs assessments, program theory appraisals, program implementation valuations, outcomes and impact assessments, and progress monitoring (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, & Worthen, 2011).

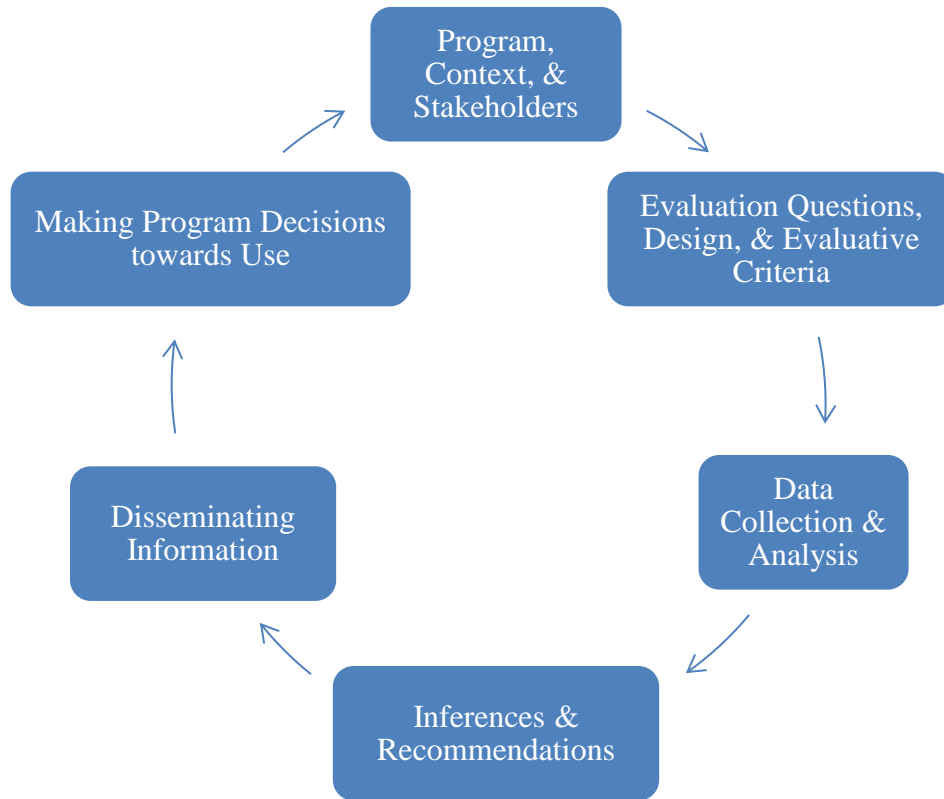


Figure 2. A Standard Evaluation 6-Step Non-Linear Process

In this dissertation, it is the needs assessment evaluation that is elaborated upon and linked to responsiveness. A needs assessment evaluation also mostly follows the 6-step evaluation process. An explanation of the connection between a needs assessment evaluation and responsiveness is offered below.

Needs assessment evaluation within responsiveness. A needs assessment evaluation can be defined as a systematic approach to identifying social problems, determining their extent of impact, accurately defining the target population to be served,

and understanding the nature of their service needs. This definition is derived from Rossi, Lipsey, and Freeman's definition (2003) of a needs assessment. It is the measurement of the discrepancy between what is and what should be for a given group within a given context (Povosac & Carey, 1997). The purpose is "to determine the nature, scope, and locale of a social problem (if one exists), and to identify a feasible, useful, relevant solution(s) to the problem(s)" (Grinnell, Gabor, & Unrau, 2011, p. 128). Thus, a needs assessment can be defined as the systematic and ongoing process of providing relevant information that is usable about the needs of a target population to those who can and will use it to make decisions about the policy and programs of the EI and NPOs (Reviere, Berkowitz, Carter, & Fergusen, 1996).

A needs assessment usually follows the standard six steps of an evaluation. Any needs assessment evaluation process is (a) the collection of information about the social problems and the needs a community experiences, and (b) an assessment of whether a community's needs are being met adequately by the change-interventions of the EI/NPO to determine what more must to be done to meet those needs. Thus, the needs assessment process overlaps with Step 1 and 3 of the responsiveness process that involve (a) assessing the needs of the community (Step 1) to offer programs and services to the community (Step 2), and (b) checking with the community's to ascertain if its needs have been met (Step 3). Thus, Step 1 and 3 of a responsiveness process are combined within the needs assessment process to make evaluation an integral part of responsiveness.

The findings from the needs assessment influence decision-making around what programming and services offered by the EIs/NPOs must be improved or added to better meet the needs of the community which is Step 2 of the responsiveness process. Because

Step 2 involves the EI/NPO changing, improving, modifying, and implementing its interventions)—i.e., the programming and services that the EI/NPO offers (based on the results of the needs assessment, Step 2 of the responsiveness process is referred to as the change-intervention step.

Given this understanding of needs assessment as encompassing step 1 and 3 of responsiveness, the initial visual representation of responsiveness is modified and re-presented in Figure 3 to illustrate responsiveness as a 2-step action process consisting of needs assessment evaluation and change-intervention action.

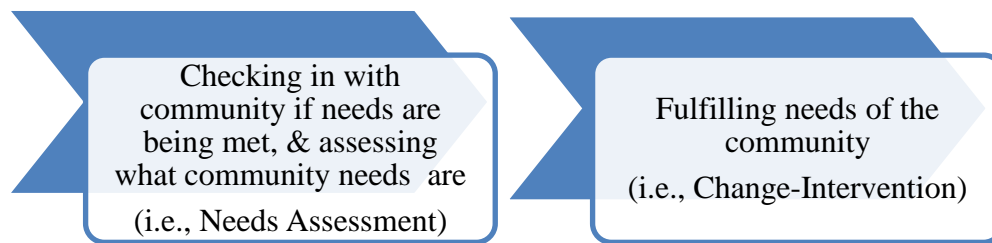


Figure 3. Model of Responsiveness (2-Step Process)—Iteration II

As this model of responsiveness indicates, needs assessment evaluation is integral to and enfolded within responsiveness. Thus, the responsiveness process can be defined as a 2-step action process of an EI/NPO engaging in needs assessment evaluation followed by change-intervention—both of which are directed towards the community they are set up to serve and that community’s needs.

The Gap in the Practice of Responsiveness

Having presented a process definition of responsiveness in the previous section, this section focuses on the gap that often exists in the practice of responsiveness. This gap

is the gap between EI/NPO practitioners' espoused theory of responsiveness and their theory-in-use in the enacted practice of responsiveness. The common reasons for this gap are also discussed.

Understanding the gap: Espoused theory vs. theory-in-use. Argyris and Schon (1978, 1996), and others after them (Brown & Duguid, 1991; Friedman, 2001; Senge, 1990), highlight that most, if not all organizations and institutions, experience a gap between their espoused theory and their enacted practice due to a multitude of contextual reasons. They describe how at the organizational level and at the individual level the theories of action espoused are not enacted in practice because there are different theories-in-use that are deployed (intentionally or unconsciously) by individual practitioners or practitioner groups within the OI. Thus, for example, an EI/NPO may want to be or think it is engaging in responsiveness but it often is not. As Argyris and Schon (1974) summarize:

When someone is asked how s/he would behave under certain circumstances, the answer s/he usually gives is her/his espoused theory of action for that situation. This is the theory of action to which s/he gives allegiance, and which, upon request, s/he communicates to others.

However, the theory that actually governs her/his actions is this theory-in-use. (p. 6-7, dual gender representation added)

And when that theory-in-use is different from the espoused theory of action, then a gap occurs.

As mentioned before, EIs and NPOs implicitly or explicitly express their commitment and service to their community in their mission statements, their guiding

principles, the core values of the organization, or their news releases. With different levels of understanding regarding the historical and institutionalized reification of the social problems and needs of the community, EIs and NPOs often express a commitment to ridding communities of these historical and institutionalized disparities among the haves and the have-nots. They attempt to address the community's social problems and needs through interventions (i.e., programming and services they offer), and they often express goals related to working towards a more egalitarian society.

If one were to assume that the practitioners within EIs and NPOs (consisting of administrators, staff, and evaluators) want to better fulfill their mission and goals towards meeting the needs of their community, the EI/NPO is implicitly espousing a theory of commitment towards engaging in responsiveness (because the responsiveness of an EI/NPO, as defined earlier, is about the EI/NPO assessing and meeting the needs of its community, and checking in with the community that its needs have been met). The EI/NPO is espousing a theory of action towards its community and their needs—of engaging in needs assessment evaluation followed by change-intervention.

However, as the existing literature in this area asserts (Argyris & Schon, 1978; Brown & Duguid, 1991; Friedman, 2001; Senge, 1990), there is often a gap between espoused theory and action. Thus, despite an espoused theory of responsiveness, the actual practice often does not reflect the EI/NPO engaging in a process of responsiveness.

Numerous reasons for the existence of the gap are described in the literature. These reasons include, but are not limited to, factors such as individual reasoning (i.e., circumstantial issues like other conflicting responsibilities or personal priorities that rate higher than responsiveness in terms of importance in the practitioner's mind), motivation

and self-efficacy (such as confidence in one's ability to be successful), incongruent or conflicting perceptions of the EI/NPO and its goals and values (such as beliefs that the EI/NPO does not really value responsiveness as evidenced by the organizational culture, policies, and processes), inadequacy of resources (such as lack of time, money, infrastructure, or human resource support), and perceived institutional pressures that involve meeting accountability expectations of supervisors and institutional enforcers (Argyris & Schon, 1996). Scholars claim that these different inter-related and mutually reinforcing reasons for the gap also serve as rationalizations to justify the continued existence of the gap. They affirm the inevitability of the gap within the practitioner's mind that minimizes the likelihood of the gap being addressed and overcome by the practitioner (Argyris & Schon, 1978, 1985).

There are possibly numerous other context-specific barriers or reasons that result in a gap between espoused theory and enacted practice. But the common outcome of these reasons is the fact that the theory-in-use that drives practice is often very different from the espoused theory of engaging in responsiveness.

Among the many reasons for the gaps in responsiveness practice, two main reasons are theoretically explored (drawing from existing literature) and discussed in this chapter. They include institutional pressures and accountability concerns, and designed blindness and defensive practices.

Accountability concerns and institutional pressure barriers. Accountability is defined (Scriven, 1991) as the responsibility for the justification of one's decisions, expenses, or results of one's efforts. Within EIs and NPOs, accountability involves (Ebrahim, 2009) (a) transparency, (b) answerability or justification, (c) compliance, and

(d) enforcement or sanctions. It is the enforcement/ sanctions that give teeth to any accountability mechanism.

EIs and NPOs are held accountable to primarily three types of stakeholder groups and thus primarily face three kinds of accountability expectations (Ebrahim, 2010b): (a) upwards accountability—answerability to and responsibility to meet the needs of the power-up stakeholders, i.e., funders, legal enforcers, and policy directives; (b) horizontal accountability—commitment and adherence of EI/NPO staff to the mission, vision, values, guiding principles of the organization; and (c) downwards accountability—answerability to, and responsibility to meet the needs of the stakeholders that the EIs and NPOs are set up to serve with their programming and services—the intended and impacted beneficiaries—i.e., its community.

One of the primary reasons for the gap, often cited by scholars and practitioners, is the issue of institutional pressures—i.e., upwards accountability. Practitioners often feel compelled to meet accountability expectations set by those in power. These institutional pressures result in practitioners often not having the time, money, resources, and other such necessities to engage in responsiveness.

“Accountability is about power in that asymmetries in resources become important in influencing who is able to hold whom to account (for what),” (Ebrahim & Weisband, 2007, p. 9). Often compliance (to engage in responsiveness or to carry out other tasks) is made possible by the fear of sanctions enforced top-down by the upwards accountability stakeholders. As a result of these upwards accountability forces, an EI/NPO often prioritizes meeting upwards accountability expectations over engaging in practice that aligns with its espoused theory of community-oriented responsiveness unless

upwards accountability expectations also demand responsiveness. Because accountability is enabled primarily through some form of evaluation (Ebrahim 2009; Scriven, 1991), the EI/NPOs often channel more resources into evaluations that address this upwards accountability need because these evaluations are often commissioned and paid for by upwards accountability stakeholders such as funders or the government. Given the practical limitations of time, personnel, resources and money, when energy is directed towards fulfilling upwards accountability expectations, responsiveness may or may not be engaged in—especially if it is not demanded by the upwards accountability stakeholders (Ebrahim, 2010a).

Kearns (1996), Lindenberg and Bryant (2001), and Power (1997) confirm the problems with the focus being on upwards accountability. Their work highlights how EIs and NPOs increasingly focus on upwards accountability expectations today, over and sometimes at the cost of downwards accountability. They explain how external forces of authority (power-up stakeholders) often wield greater power and control over the EI/NPO's functioning or dissolution because of their command over/ access to resources that the EIs and NPOs require to exist. Thus, in today's high-stakes accountability and decision-making environment, EIs and NPOs are constantly held answerable to the power-ups or upwards accountability stakeholders rather than their communities, and they engage in evaluations that are directed toward meeting upwards stakeholder expectations rather than community ones (Power, 1997).

DiMaggio and Powell (1983), Goodstein (1994), and Oliver (1991) claim that OIs find themselves in an “iron cage” of external institutional (upwards accountability) pressures, with constraints such as money, lack of resources, and time, and are only able

to engage in strategic responses to these constraints and pressures. As a result, in practice, EIs and NPOs often cater to upwards accountability rather than downwards accountability stakeholders despite their mission and purpose of existing for the community (Kearns, 1996). Responsiveness is given lesser priority.

Within EIs and NPOs the responsiveness process is at times left incomplete, or the quality of the process is compromised because of bureaucratization, organizational isomorphism, and homogenization (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Goodstein, 1994). Standardization, conformity, and structuration occur to build efficiency within the EI/NPO—often at the cost of the validity, rigor, and quality of the responsiveness process, if responsiveness is engaged in at all. As a result, the espoused theory is not observed in practice, and the commitment of EI/NPO to fulfill its mission and purpose of existence is relinquished because responsiveness is not the theory-in-use. Instead, upwards accountability is. And this upwards accountability results in the gap in the practice of responsiveness.

As a hypothetical example, practitioners may be engaged in completing the required upwards accountability demanded documentation for fear of legal sanction that may affect the EI/NPO if the documentation is not completed. As a result of having to complete this task, they may not have enough time to engage in responsiveness. The leadership within the EI/NPO also encourage meeting upwards accountability expectations as a higher priority over engaging in responsiveness. This lack of leadership support or lack of time due to an upwards accountability focus becomes the practitioner's theory-in-use. And the difference between the theory-in-use and the espoused theory results in the gap. While they may want to, and while they espouse engaging in the

responsiveness process of assessing their community's needs, meeting them, and collecting feedback whether the needs have been met, in practice they may not have time, energy, the incentive, or directive to necessarily focus on responsiveness. Thus, given the constraints of institutional pressures and accountability, a gap in responsiveness often exists.

The challenge of defensive practices and designed blindness. Beyond the reasons of an upwards accountability focus and institutional pressures, studies about the gap between espoused theory and enacted practice in organizations confirm that practitioners often become defensive when they are made aware of the gap in their practice, and they try to avoid taking the responsibility for any such gap between what they say they will do or think they do, and what they actually are doing (Argyris & Schon, 1978; Blair-Loy, Wharton, & Goodstein, 2011; DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; and Goodstein, 1994; among others). Thus, they often continue in practice that sustains the gap to manage the uncertainty, conflict, ambiguity, and/or psychological threat (Argyris, 1985) they face if they accept responsibility in the gap's creation. Argyris (1985) argues that practitioners face similar psychological stress by the fact that the gap needs to be addressed—possibly by them. Instead, they perceive their theories-in-use (i.e., their reasons for not being able to engage in responsiveness such as lack of time, support, resources, or leadership) as strong justifications for the gap between their espoused theory and enacted practice, and their thinking that they are not to blame and that they cannot do anything to address the gap is reified and the gap continues to exist (Argyris, 1985).

This defensive reasoning theoretically implies (a) that EI/NPO practitioners are often not aware that they are not practicing their espoused theory, and (b) even if they are made aware of data and are shown evidence about the existence of a gap between their espoused theories and their actions, they often have rationalizations for why they are unable to embody and enact their espoused theory, and why they cannot address the gap. These rationalizations further allow them to engage in thinking and actions that preserve the gap between espoused theory and enacted practice. The rationalizations help them manage the psychological threat they face in taking responsibility either for the problem or toward overcoming it or both. These rationalizations are also called defensive practices (Argyris, 1985).

To manage uncertainty and avoid embarrassment (that would arise from taking responsibility for their actions and acknowledging their lack of adherence to their espoused theory in their practice), individuals in organizations often engage in defensive practices that lead to and sustain designed blindness within the organization (Friedman, 2001) where the practitioners make the defensive practices within one situation or occasion invisible to themselves and possibly others by using those same rationalizations to justify their thinking and action across the board in their work thereafter. As Friedman elaborates, these rationalizations become a self-fulfilling prophecy of sustained defensive practices (that negatively impact responsiveness) even as they justify the existence of the gap. The actions that practitioners engage in are framed in a way that makes the gap between the espoused theory and enacted practice as well as the possible solutions to overcome this gap invisible.

Defensive practices and designed blindness often result in “making inferences about another person’s behavior without checking whether they are valid” (Edmondson & Moingeon, 1999, p. 161) because it is deeply entrenched in moving the OI toward efficiency and effectiveness rather than learning, change, and transformation. The EI/NPO and its practitioners are unable to engage in reflective, open learning, dialogue, and improvement-oriented practice toward its own and its community’s transformation (Friedman, 2001). Defensive practices and designed blindness come in the way of OI’s learning, improving, and changing (Argyris, 1985; Friedman, 2001; Senge, 1990). The responsiveness process is compromised, the gap remains unaddressed, and the reasons for the gap in responsiveness are accepted and even taken-for-granted.

An example of such defensive reasoning is when EI/NPO practitioners engage in deficit-thinking (Valencia, 1997) toward the communities they espouse responsiveness towards, where they consciously/ unconsciously blame the community members for inherently lacking what is necessary for them to succeed per the EI/NPO’s definition of success. Deficit-thinking allows the EIs and NPOs to dismiss the input or feedback of members of the community because what they inherently lack (per the EI’s deficit-thinking perspective of their community) makes them unreliable witnesses to service quality (DiMaggio & Anheier, 1990). Within the third action step of responsiveness (collecting feedback from the community that its needs have been met), if the community gives feedback to the EI/NPO that it is not meeting the community’s needs, then the EI/NPO can disregard the feedback.

A cultural deprivation rationale (Bereiter & Engelmann, 1966) can also be deployed by the EI/ NPO toward the community, where the community is deemed as

being unable to appreciate the responsiveness of the EI/NPO, and is blamed for the lack of efficacy or success of the programming and services of the EI/NPO. In such cases, the EI/NPO assumes there is no gap between the espoused theory and enacted practice of responsiveness despite the community indicating otherwise. This cultural deprivation rationale or deficit-thinking often results in the “take-it-or-leave it” (Uphoff, 1996, p.25) attitudes of the EI/NPOs with respect to those they serve (Ebrahim, 2010b).

Mishra, Heidi, and Cort (1998), San Martin and Camarero (2005), and Sharma, (1997) argue that EIs/NPOs exist in asymmetrical relationships (of knowledge, information or service) with their clients (community) and enjoy and exert unequal power over their community. This fact they argue, allows many EIs and NPOs to not engage in responsiveness and yet not see the gap and instead blame the community for their dissatisfaction with the way they are having their needs elicited and/or met. EI/NPOs can deny that the gap even exists because the community’s feedback is not to be trusted.

As a result of this type of defensive reasoning and designed blindness, practitioners within these EIs/NPOs usually blame the communities or blame each other (i.e., other practitioners such as the OI leaders or their own colleagues or subordinates) for any gaps in responsiveness and do not take any ownership of the problem. Similarly, upwards accountability stakeholders and the constraints they impose are also blamed. Practitioners absolve themselves of any responsibility to ameliorate the gap.

The EI/NPO’s defensive rationalization and designed blindness allows them to sustain the gap and deny its existence simultaneously. Defensive reasoning, and designed blindness are thus, yet another reason the gap in responsiveness that often exists and continues.

Existing Strategies to Minimize the Gap and Their Limitations

Given that within OIs, the gap between espoused theory and enacted practice often exists, how can EIs and NPOs become aware of this gap in their practice, and better engage in responsiveness to minimize the gap? What are the existing strategies that address the gap? What are the limitations these existing strategies face in doing so? The following section tackles these questions by once again drawing from existing literature and scholarship in the field. Strategies from two different fields are offered: action science and evaluation. The limitations of these strategies are discussed. These limitations call for a new model/ strategy to reduce the gap.

Action science strategies. Action science offers the notion of reflection in action. Argyris (1995) and Schon (1983) and numerous scholars after them including Senge (1990) offer multiple strategies, checklists, and methods to facilitate dialoging within OIs to expose and explore the tacit thinking and culture, and the defensive practices and designed blindness within organizations to arrive at theoretical generalizations about how to effectively address the gap. They have engaged in multiple case-studies to elicit common reasons for the gap in those specific OI contexts to offer strategies that could be applied across different contexts. These extrapolated strategies offer generalized theory and procedures that map on to double-loop learning rather than single-loop learning (Argyris & Schon, 1978) to effectively address the gaps between espoused theory and practice. An overview of single and double-loop learning explains this preference of use.

Single-loop learning. The gap between espoused theory and enacted practice arises and is sustained within EIs and NPOs because they often focus on single-loop learning or model I organizational learning (Argyris & Schon, 1974). Single-loop or

model I learning involves revisiting what was done, but engaging in practice thereafter within the same governing variables without critical reflection in reference to these governing variables (such as limited time, money, resources, other tasks and expectations, OI values, OI culture, and the like), that are seen as the constraints. Because of the existence of designed blindness and the existence of defensive practices, practitioners do not revisit the governing variables nor do practitioners question the theory-in-use which are the reason the OI's action (in this dissertation context—the responsiveness process) is compromised.

One example of single-loop learning is when practitioners faced with the institutional pressure of lack of time, take for granted that it is a barrier and do not question the reasons behind its allocation. Practitioners usually only attempt to become more efficient within the limited time they think they have as opposed to rethinking how they could create more time (for example, revisiting the other tasks and their prioritization) to practice their espoused theory. This is single-loop learning, as Argyris highlights (1974, 1990), where time is a governing variable because it is a dimension that people are trying to keep within acceptable limits by working within its constraints rather than questioning its limitations or allocation.

Double-loop learning. However, model II, or double-loop organizational learning (Argyris & Schon, 1978), enables practitioners to question the assumptions underlying the actions they engage in through a process of critical reflection. It calls on practitioners to challenge the certainty of the governing variables by overcoming defensive reasoning and understanding designed blindness. Double-loop learning involves welcoming honest evaluations to learn and improve. It involves getting past the defensive-reasoning (that

practitioners engage in as a self-preservation mechanism) by being open to exploring one's own assumptions, backing it explicitly with evidence-based reasoning, and taking responsibility for one's actions. Please see Figure 4 for a diagrammatic representation of single and double-loop learning.

Double Loop Learning: Argyris & Schön

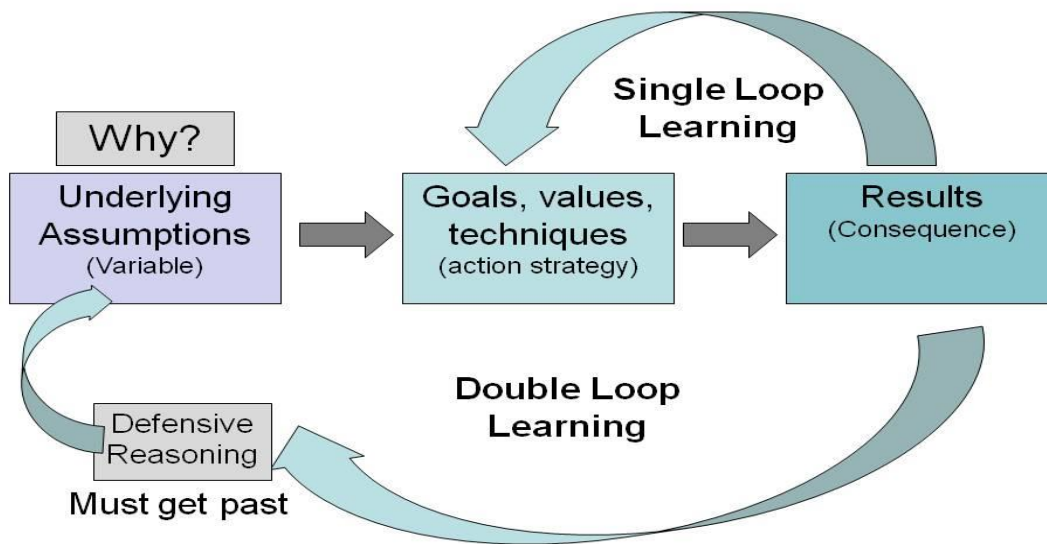


Figure 4. Single and Double-Loop Learning.

Source: http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/agile/Agile_Orientate.html

Characteristics of single-loop and double-loop learning. Argyris, Putnam and McLain Smith (1985) have listed the traits associated with single and double loop learning, i.e., model I and model II learning at the organizational levels. They highlight how model I learning traits reinforce defensive reasoning and related practices and create and sustain designed-blindness. On the other hand, model II learning is more dialogical in nature and, like critical feminist theory (Haraway, 1988) it exposes and explores the ‘partial situated knowledges’ and views of the practitioners to move them constantly

toward adding pieces to the picture that will always be incomplete. The tacit norms and values (i.e., governing variables) are acknowledged and reevaluated to move the practitioners and the OI forward toward shared learning and change (Schon, 1983).

Limitations of single-loop learning solutions in reducing the gap. Solutions to address the gap between espoused theory and enacted practice can be at the single-loop learning level or the double-loop learning level. Solutions such as more money, more time, more resources, effective leadership, and meeting the upwards accountability expectations more efficiently so that extra time may be created to engage in responsiveness can all make responsiveness happen. The effectiveness of these solutions will be contingent upon the context, and they usually come from single-loop learning and a single-loop exploration of the gap (Argyris, 1974, 1990; Argyris, Putnam, & McLain Smith, 1985). However, they do not ensure that responsiveness will be engaged in. And they do not ensure the reduction of the gap between espoused theory and enacted practice of responsiveness.

Because of model I or single-loop learning, OIs tend to engage in “self-fulfilling prophecies, and self-fuelling processes” that are defensive and escalate the errors in practice (Argyris, 1982, p. 8). The practitioners engage in self-reinforcing behavior and action routines based on these defensive theories-in-use. Practitioners usually make assumptions about contexts and hold tight to defensive reasoning and practices that inhibit the detection and correction of these errors by making them real within the practitioner mind and to everyone else. If confronted with the gap, practitioners within a model I learning framework turn and point fingers at those who point out the gaps and inconsistencies of the practitioner (Edmondson & Moingeon, 1999). By doing so,

practitioners build mistrust and self-fulfilling prophecies within the EI/NPO among its practitioners and between the EI/NPO and its community because finger-pointing evokes and promotes defensiveness and stymies reflection, making those who give feedback about practice (such as community members) believe that their feedback is not valued (Edmondson & Moingeon, 1999).

For example, an EI may have good leadership, a lot of time, money, and resources to engage in the needs assessment step or change-intervention step of responsiveness. However, that still would not mean that responsiveness will occur or that the quality of the process will be good. Practitioners are still likely to point to other governing variables as constraints that stymie the practice of responsiveness. Discussing these single-loop solutions is outside the scope of this dissertation.

The question is—within the real world constraints of limited time, money, ineffectual leadership, an uncooperative organizational culture, and other such factors, how can an EI/NPO still engage in responsiveness? How can practitioners embody and enact their espoused theory towards their community within their work despite all the governing variables, i.e., barriers and challenges they face? Beyond that, how can practitioners overcome their own defensive practices and designed blindness that rationalizes their action/ inaction within responsiveness and that does not let them see the gaps between their espoused theory of responsiveness and the lack of its practice?

Double-loop learning as the strategy to reduce the gap. In double-loop learning, the actors (i.e., practitioners) involved in carrying out the program (or action/ behavior) critically examine the governing variables and action strategies and make more real-life, practice-based changes to meet the goals of the EI/NPO. Practitioners are closer to

enacting their espoused theory because assumptions about one's constraints are revisited and explored to call into question the theories that are in use. Engaging in this process enables practitioners to take responsibility for actions and builds self-determination and agency among practitioners as defensive reasoning is overcome. As the OI's practitioners are made aware of the gap that often exists, and as they explore it, and begin to understand why this gap exists, practitioners can begin to take responsibility for their actions within conditions of uncertainty and institutional pressures and overcome the psychological threat associated with them (Argyris, 1985). The actions that result from this process enable one to lessen or bridge the gap between espoused theory and enacted practice (Argyris, 1990).

The field of action science mostly focuses on the double-loop learning strategy or framework to address gaps between espoused theories and enacted practice. It involves using proven methods to uncover useful knowledge and strategies for change within an OI. The double-loop learning model explores the logic and attitudes that underlie action to result in more effective learning (Argyris, Putnam, & McLain Smith, 1985).

This field of action science, also called organizational learning, offers multiple case-studies that demonstrate practical ways to get organizations and their leaders to overcome problematic politics, adversarial relations, and problems that previously were too political to be discussed. The field offers numerous models to judge an OI in terms of its culture or capacity for change. The work of Kouzes and Posner (2002), Marquardt (2002), and Osland, Kolb, Rubin, and Turner (2007), and other such studies are some examples of multiple methods that OIs can use to engage in double-loop learning to become aware and overcome the real world problems and barriers to fulfilling their

mission to live their espoused theory in their practice. Thus, the field of action science offers the model of double-loop learning that can be deployed using numerous context specific processes (such as facilitated dialoging) to become aware of any gaps and address them as necessary.

Evaluation strategies. The field of evaluation also offers numerous models and strategies help OIs reduce any gaps between their espoused theory and enacted practice of responsiveness. And given that evaluation is an integral part of the responsiveness process, any such strategies and approaches to evaluation that seek to make the evaluation process more community-oriented would contribute towards addressing the possible gaps in responsiveness.

Community-oriented evaluation approaches. Evaluation approaches such as empowerment evaluation (Fetterman & Wandersman, 2005), feminist evaluation (Seigart & Brisolara, 2002), deliberative democratic evaluation (House & Howe, 2000), responsive evaluation (Stake, 2004), culturally responsive evaluation (Hood, Hopson, & Frierson, 2005), transformative evaluation (Mertens, 2009), value-engaged evaluation (Greene, 2006), participatory approaches (Cousins & Whitmore, 2007), and utilization and developmental approaches (Patton 2008, 2011), all in different ways offer frameworks and principles to follow to reduce the gap by emphasizing a community-orientation within all the steps of the evaluation process. Discussing the similarities and differences of the frameworks offered by each of these approaches is outside the scope of this dissertation.

However, like double-loop learning, in different ways, these approaches emphasize open dialoging and trust within the evaluation process where the evaluator

usually plays the role of a facilitator and/or educator to help reduce the gap in responsiveness practice within any EI/NPO. These approaches offer frameworks for evaluators (i.e., practitioners) to follow to reduce the gap that include but are not limited to principles such as acknowledging power, exposing implicit values, building relationships among the different stakeholders, having a continuous improvement focus, and ensuring community participation (Greene, DeStefano, Burgon, & Hall, 2006; Hood, 2004; Kirkhart, 2010; Podems, 2010; Yarbrough, Shulha, Hopson, & Caruthers, 2011). Thus, each of these evaluation approaches offers numerous strategies to overcome the gap.

Program theory evaluation. Apart from the above listed *approaches* to evaluation program theory evaluation is one *type* of evaluation focused on facilitating the OI's understanding of its mission and values and aligning that with its actions and outcomes. This type of evaluation is all about highlighting and addressing the gap between theory and practice. Weiss (1972) emphasizes the importance of eliciting and exploring the various program theories that exist in any given evaluation context because funders, policymakers, OI administrators, staff practitioners, and the community derive their program understandings “from radically different perspectives” (p. 15). By understanding these different stakeholders' perspectives of the program's theory of change, the reasons for the existence of the gap between theory and practice are illuminated, and thereafter they can be addressed.

Program theory evaluations offer multiple frameworks to understand and address the issue of this gap between espoused and enacted theory (specific to the mission and purpose of the EI/NPO commissioning the evaluation). They recommend using different

methodological tools and research methods to understand the gaps within the EI/NPO's espoused theory and enacted practice. Logic models are one such tool.

Logic models are mapped to draw attention to the gaps and discrepancies between program assumptions or theory, resources, the processes and activities that are meant to lead to particular program outcomes, and the actual program outcomes and performance (Rossi, Lipsey, & Freeman, 2004). By walking through the steps and articulating how actions lead to outcomes, the gaps are uncovered. Weiss (2000) describes the purpose of logic models and the use of program-theory evaluations (also called theory-based evaluations or TBE) as exploring the “links between what programs assume their activities are accomplishing and what actually happens at each small step along the way,” (p. 35). TBE is “an effort to examine the mechanisms (underlying causal process that are psychosocial or operational in nature) by which programs influence successive stages of participants' behavior,” (p. 35).

However, TBE, usually does not get to the double-loop learning level of the gap and so it does not explore the defensive practices in place, the governing variables, and the implicit assumptions affecting practice “because program theory evaluation focuses mainly on instrumental program theory and not the subtheories and higher-order theories that govern implementation” within EIs and NPOs (Friedman, 2001, p. 164). TBE primarily focuses only on exposing the gap between values/ mission, and action and outcomes (i.e., instrumental function) without going into the underlying defensive practices that affect and shape these instrumental functions of the EI/NPO.

Friedman and others (Argyris, 1982; Friedman & Lipshitz, 1992) argue that it is harder and more “threatening” to practitioners for them to see the “inconsistencies and

contradictions in their own thinking and behavior” (Friedman, 2001, p. 163). As one possible answer, Friedman offers a model that draws from the field of action science to inform TBE to help it elicit and address the underlying gaps between espoused theory and enacted practice (because unlike TBE, action science focuses on both instrumental and defensive functions). Thus, his model also follows the principles of action science to address the gap. As a result it faces the same limitations that action science faces.

Limitations of existing strategies in addressing the gap. The field of evaluation faces challenges that are similar to the challenges that the field of action science faces in addressing the gap between espoused theory and enacted practice that often exists in EIs and NPOs. Existing literature offered insights into the gap and offered an explanation of the reasons for it. Similarly, a brief synthesis of current scholarship offered a glimpse into some solutions that are offered by existing frameworks, and models in the field.

This section, once again draws from existing literature and scholarship to offer a discussion of the similarities and differences in the limitations of the models generated within these two key fields of action science and evaluation. A theoretical understanding of the limitations of existing models and frameworks in addressing the common issue of the gaps in (responsiveness) practice in EIs and NPOs will demonstrate the need for a comprehensive model to reduce any such possible gaps.

Limitations of action science frameworks. To begin with, among action science strategies single-loop learning has already been established as being inadequate in addressing the gaps in the practice of responsiveness (as highlighted in the previous section). This strategy is not usable because it accepts the deeper governing variables such as culture, values, politics, leadership, economics, and other institutional pressures

as unchangeable and unquestionable constraints that act upon the practitioner, and attempts to work within these same governing variables to increase the efficacy of the responsiveness process of the contextual EI/NPO where it is deployed. Additionally, it also leaves room for defensive practices and designed blindness. And this dissertation has already highlighted how these deeper governing variables, defensive reasoning, and designed blindness cause and sustain the gap. Thus, single-loop learning is not an effective strategy to address the gap.

However, double-loop learning has limitations as well. The two main limitations of the double-loop learning model and related strategies in addressing the gap between espoused theory and enacted practice are shared below.

Problems with power and trust. The first issue is the fact that double-loop learning calls for openness and shared control among practitioners at all levels of the OI for them to be able to engage in open dialogue to address defensive practices within the OI to engage in model II, i.e., double-loop learning. This openness may not actually exist in organizations because of the reality of the partisan politics, the existence of coalitions of interest groups and individuals, and the negotiated dispersion of power within a climate or culture of fear of failure (Coopey, 1998; Easterby-Smith & Araujo, 2011).

Scholars (Argyris, 1985) argue that practitioners usually are moving away from some truth about themselves or their practice in order to avoid feelings of incompetence and they usually do not want to face any real world negative consequences as a result of any judgment or evaluation when they share such information (Anderson, 1997; Edmondson & Moingeon, 1999). Because of this kind of defensive reasoning, engaging in double-loop learning is hard within a high stakes environment because practitioners do not trust

each other enough to be open or honest (Anderson, 1997; Edmondson & Moingeon, 1999).

Issues with intervention. The second issue is the interventionist nature of double-loop learning in exploring the gap. The case-studies of using double-loop learning to reduce the gaps highlight the need for an outsider to lead the practitioners through the practical strategies and methods to reduce the gap (Kouzes & Posner, 2002; Marquardt, 2002; and Osland, Kolb, Rubin, & Turner, 2007). Additionally, there are minimal to no examples of sustained double-loop learning case-studies that document an OI following a double-loop learning model as a process template/ checklist in its daily functioning. Thus, while double-loop learning does offer a cross-context, intervention-based strategy to guide practice that has the potential to address and overcome the gaps in responsiveness practice if it is deployed, it does not offer a framework for practitioners to use (once they have learned and understood the framework possibly from a facilitator) to self-reflect, self-assess, self-correct, and address the gap on their own in a sustained manner.

Limitations of evaluation strategies. Among the various evaluation strategies described, the limitations of TBE as a model to address the gap have already been discussed because TBE draws from the field of action science to strengthen its utility and thus it demonstrates the same limitations in addressing the gap that double-loop learning as a strategy does. The other community-oriented evaluation approach models/ strategies face challenges in addressing the gap as well. They are discussed below.

The unchallenged governing variables. Evaluation scholars (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, & Worthen, 2011; Mertens, 2009; Patton 2010) have long argued that evaluation is a political process that necessitates evaluators to work within contextual constraints and

deal with the politics of power, authority, knowledge, limited resources, and the differing values and goals that exist within the OI. Limitations around time, resources, funding, who paid the evaluator and commissioned her/him, and other such factors are all considerations that impact and often constrain practice (Casillas, 2012; Casillas, Hopson, & Gomez, 2012; Juarez & Greene, 2011). These ideological, practical, political, and resource constraints are often not challenged nor questioned by evaluators as they attempt to address the gap in responsiveness within any particular EI/NPO context (Seigart, Bowen, Brisolara, & SenGupta, 2011). Juarez and Greene (2011), argue that an adoption of any model offered by any particular community-oriented evaluation approach does not automatically result in its embodiment and enactment in practice within the evaluation. Thus, just like the single-loop learning strategy, when an evaluator does not challenge the governing variables and constraints while engaging in a community-oriented evaluation approach, it is less likely that the evaluation model or strategy s/he uses will successfully address the gap in responsiveness.

Defensive practice in community-oriented evaluation approach strategies. Given that a gap often exists in the actual practice of these different evaluation approaches that espouse a community orientation—i.e., they do not challenge the governing variables—defensive practices and designed blindness also come into play as issues that add to the ineffectiveness of these evaluation frameworks to be able to address the gaps in responsiveness practice. Practitioners in think-tanks, training workshops, and discussions at conferences (Casillas, 2012; Juarez & Greene, 2011; Seigart, Nov 4, 2011, personal communication; SenGupta, Nov 11, 2010, personal communication) acknowledge that the models they offer do not adequately expose nor overcome the constraints of the

governing variables faced within the evaluation process. More often than not, it is assumed that external constraints—such as client demands, lack of funding, or other such governing factors—cannot be overcome, and evaluators attempt to do their best to address the gap within these constraints—i.e. engage in model I learning once again.

Bamberger, Bowen, Thurston, and Sniukaite (2011), Casillas, Hopson, & Gomez (2012), Fetterman (2009), Juarez and Greene (2011), Seigart, Bowen, Brisolaro, and SenGupta (2011), SenGupta, (Nov 11, 2010, personal communication) discuss how the reality of evaluation practice is that evaluators often rationalize that they tried their best and could not do more to address the gap within the constraining variables of a given context such as a possible lack of buy-in of the client in working toward addressing the gap, or lack of funding support, or lack of time, and other such factors. Thus, defensive reasoning and designed blindness is evident as a problem that needs to be overcome to address the possible gaps within evaluation practice that imply gaps in responsiveness.

The issue of intervention. The issue of an interventionist approach that was discussed as a limitation of the action science strategies continues to be a limitation of evaluation strategies as well. The external evaluator is often the interventionist and this issue creates similar constraints to the ones described previously.

How does a practitioner self-assess, self-monitor, and become self-aware of the gaps in practicing the espoused principles within an evaluation to address them despite the real world barriers (i.e., governing variables) that exist? The answer to this question remains elusive in the field and in the literature.

It is often implied in discourse and across trainings that if the evaluator had the right values, or was truly culturally sensitive or truly committed to inclusive practice s/he

would automatically know or arrive at strategies that address the gap. However, as Juarez and Greene (2011), repeatedly point out—knowledge of principles, commitment, and intention does not necessarily imply or lead to action (due to evaluators’ single-loop learning approach, defensive reasoning, and designed blindness). And this is why workshops and trainings continue with practitioners asking the same questions time and again—how do I apply these principles/ models/ strategies, and my espoused theory within my practice given the real-world constraints that do not allow me to do so?

All of these above discussed limitations are evidence that a more comprehensive framework/ model is needed to help address the gap in responsiveness within EIs and NPOs and the gap in practice in evaluation.

A Meta-Evaluation, Meta-Cognition (meta-ec) Model as the Answer

The above discussed literature and scholarship derived limitations of action science and evaluation frameworks showcase how these frameworks do not offer a meta-evaluative, meta-cognitive template for practitioners to reduce the gap as they engage in responsiveness. The existing field of practice does not offer a normative framework or template to help them become aware of, understand, and explore the gap between their espoused theory and enacted practice at a double-loop learning level within their evaluative practice. Thus, a model to serve a descriptive and diagnostic purpose for practitioners to become cognizant of the gap, proactively explore the gap, and thereafter reduce the gap is needed. A model that combines meta-evaluation and meta-cognition to allow practitioners to self-determine their responsiveness practice to improve it is needed.

Understanding meta-evaluation. Michael Scriven (1991) described meta-evaluation in his Evaluation Thesaurus as: “the evaluation of evaluations—indirectly, the

evaluation of evaluators—and represents an ethical as well as a scientific obligation when the welfare of others is involved” (p. 228). Stufflebeam (2004) acknowledged that the national evaluation standards adopted by the American Evaluation Association were meant to serve as guiding principles to engage in and assess evaluations and were built on Cronbach’s work to check malpractices in the field of research and evaluation as early as 1954. However, there was no strategy offered to evaluators to self-assess if they had indeed lived up to the standards or if they had fallen short, nor were normative frameworks offered that would help them reduce the gap.

Meta-evaluations are formative or summative in nature (Stufflebeam, 2001) and can occur proactively before an evaluation has commenced to serve as guidelines or retroactively towards assessment purposes (Stufflebeam & Shinkfield, 2007). Meta-evaluations seek to improve the quality and utility of the primary evaluation that serves as the evaluand for the meta-evaluation (Patton 1997). Traditionally, evaluation standards have been used to judge the merit of the primary evaluations, though very few meta-evaluations have been conducted in the field of evaluation (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, & Worthen, 2011). Hanssen, Lawrenz, and Dunet (2008) offer the idea of concurrent meta-evaluations rather than the proactive or retroactive meta-evaluations.

A concurrent way of conducting meta-evaluations is a framework of strategies or a meta-evaluative template for EI/NPO practitioners to use even as they are engaging in responsiveness (within the needs assessment evaluation and change-intervention action). And such a concurrent meta-evaluation framework is needed for practitioners within EIs and NPOs to address possible gaps within their responsiveness practice.

Understanding meta-cognition. Similar to meta-evaluation, meta-cognition is knowing about knowing, or cognition about cognition, or thinking about thinking. Flavell (1979) refers to metacognition as one's knowledge regarding one's own cognitive processes. He offers the notion of metacognitive knowledge that consists of regulation and strategies to guide, direct, confirm, and assess one's own learning through self-reflection (Metcalf & Shimamura, 1994). Similarly, Freire (1970) calls for praxis—action and reflection upon the world to transform it—which directly relates to Schon's own later work (1983 onwards) about sense-making through reflection in action.

Freire is more critical theorist in his orientation while Schon is more a pragmatist. But despite these differences, these scholars emphasize the importance of reflection in action, or sensemaking—both of which directly speak to meta-cognitive processes of thinking about why one is thinking or acting in a particular way. And just like concurrent meta-evaluation, concurrent meta-cognition while engaging in practice is also needed. This self-reflection in action model to engage in meta-cognition is needed for practitioners to be able to become aware of, address, and attempt to overcome the gap.

The meta-ec model. Given the understanding of meta-evaluation and meta-cognition, and having discussed the limitations of other existing models in the field, a cross-disciplinary, meta-evaluative-meta-cognitive (hereafter referred to as 'meta-ec') model is needed that an individual practitioner can engage in to dismantle the theories-in-use that come in the way of practitioners not living their espoused values and principles—i.e., espoused theory. The meta-ec model can thus be used to self-assess and self-reflect toward decreasing the gap between theory and practice by enabling practitioners to better adhere to the espoused principles/ theory in their enacted practice.

This meta-ec model must be theory-based, and sustainable, and must offer a critical, self-reflective, normative framework that can be used as a descriptive, meta-evaluative-meta-cognitive (meta-ec) tool—at the individual and OI level—to guide action within different EI/NPO contexts whose mission is to serve a community and meet their needs.

A meta-ec tool offers a practitioner in EIs/NPOs the freedom of self-determination, even as it offers the guidance needed for them to strengthen and improve their own and the EI/NPO's responsiveness. This tool is needed for evaluators to become aware of the gap in their practice, explore it, and address the gap to minimize it within their own practice as well as within the EI/NPO context.

Chapter Summary

This chapter addresses a couple of the elements of the first research question set posed in this dissertation. The first research question set of this dissertation study was—how can responsiveness be defined, measured, and monitored? What are the perceived and lived barriers faced by EIs, NPOs, and evaluators in practicing responsiveness? What factors contribute to possible gaps between espoused and enacted theories of EIs/NPOs?

This chapter began with a 'process' definition of responsiveness—drawn from theory—that divorces itself from the 'attribute' use of the term. Thereafter, the chapter cited current literature to affirm the frequent existence of a gap in responsiveness within EIs and NPOs and the reasons—drawn from literature—behind the same. The chapter offered an overview of existing strategies in the field of action science and evaluation that attempt to address this gap. However, clear limitations in these strategies' ability to serve as a normative, sustainable, self-deployable, meta-cognitive-meta-evaluative framework

to enable the practitioner to become self-aware about the gap and address it, were highlighted.

Thus, the first part of the first sub-question of the first research question set has only been partially answered because the theoretically derived definition of responsiveness is yet to be empirically confirmed. While responsiveness has been partially defined as a holistic process within an EI/NPO, responsiveness is yet to be operationalized. A metric to specifically measure and monitor responsiveness comprehensively as a process has not been offered in this chapter. Experts in the field (Cousins, 2004; Fitzpatrick, Sanders, and Worthen, 2011; Johnson, 2005; King, Cousins & Whitmore, 2007; Kirkhart 2011; Mertens, 2009), have already created some lists and tables to generate metrics and criteria along which scales to assess evaluation processes (that map on to responsiveness) but a metric to measure the comprehensive process of responsiveness as it has been defined in this dissertation has not been offered before. Thus the first sub-question is yet to be comprehensively answered.

Similarly, the sub-questions—what are the perceived and lived barriers faced by EIs, NPOs, and evaluators in practicing responsiveness, and what factors contribute to possible gaps between espoused and enacted theories of EIs/NPOs—have been answered theoretically by drawing from existing literature and current scholarship. However, these two answers are also yet to be empirically confirmed. Thus, this chapter falls short of fully answering the first research question of this study.

The following chapter on methodology details the methods employed to empirically contribute towards the theory-building of responsiveness. It details the research design used to empirically verify (a) the theoretically conceptualized definition

of responsiveness, and (b) the literature based explanations of the gaps in its practice. The chapter details the methods used to derive a metric that can be used to measure and monitor the responsiveness process. Specifically, this chapter also outlines the procedures used to develop and fine-tune a normative, meta-ec, sustainable process model as one possible holistic answer to the common gap in the practice of responsiveness within EIs and NPOs.

CHAPTER IV

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the methods used to build and test the responsiveness framework. The chapter begins with the philosophical orientation that guided the theorizing, design, and the methods used in this study. Thereafter, the details of the theory-building process are shared followed by a description of the empirical methods (including data collection and analysis) that contributed to the theory-building. Finally, the ethics and principles that guided the representation of the participants of this study and the representation of the researcher-self within the written dissertation are also discussed.

This detailed description of the methodology establishes the foundation of theory-building and explains the process of drawing conclusions from the empirical case-study that further inform the theory-building. It is these findings that help arrive at a metric to measure and monitor responsiveness, and develop a theoretical model that attempts to address the possible gaps in responsiveness practice in the next couple of chapters.

Philosophical Underpinnings

Within any empirical study or theory-building exercise, the philosophical orientation of the researcher impacts the study (Ruona & Lynham, 2004). Thus, it is imperative that the researcher be aware of the role of the self in the study of the “other” and engage in an active process of reflection and self-checking to understand how one is impacting one’s own research. Understanding and acknowledging the “being” (ontology), the “knowing” (epistemology) and the “acting” (axiology) that shapes the methodology in one’s research enables researchers/ theorists to increase the quality, rigor, and validity

of their research (Greene, 2006; Harding, 2000; Mertens, 2009) because this self-knowledge helps them conduct the research and theory-building in a manner that aligns with their philosophical orientation while being reflexive about the impact of that orientation.

Critical feminist epistemology. This dissertation is founded upon critical feminist epistemological and methodological foundations that theorists have argued encompasses ontology (Harding, 2004) because no reality can exist without the knower. The critical approach in theory-building acknowledges the role of power and considers the constructed meanings of the participants as foundational knowledge. The critical approach is oriented towards surfacing “underlying, hidden, or unreflected choices to inform reasoned human and organizational choice” (Lynham, 2002a, p. 226) through a process of critiquing ideologies and identifying potential for emancipatory social change where the evolving inquiry unites theory and practice.

This critical third-world feminist orientation assumes that no inquiry can be value-free and impartial (Van de Ven, 2007). The researcher’s own assumptions are critically questioned and reflected upon within every step of the dissertation process. It demands a responsibility to validate and adequately represent the different, possibly contradictory subjective experiences of the participants without falling into the easy answer of relativism. It discourages presenting the meaning-making of the participants in a god-like voice of the researcher-expert.

A critical feminist orientation also denies the separation of the researcher from the researched in the writing and representation of the research and the participants. It enables activism within any research endeavor including in a theory-building one such as

this study. This feminist orientation enabled me—the activist researcher—to critically examine differential power—both my own and that of others. It enabled me to question my own assumptions around what counts as knowledge and recognize the different valuing of knowledge within the writing of this dissertation. Due to this orientation I was able to challenge existing understandings of legitimate and delegitimized knowledge, always questioning the power of the subject (the researcher) over the “objects” of study (the researched)—i.e., the EI case-study participants’ experience/ practice of the responsiveness process. As a critical and subaltern feminist researcher-theory builder, I attempted to engage and represent participants in the study as colleagues in this theory-building endeavor, despite “studying” them.

Locating the self. I entered this study from the intersectional perspective (a) of being a researcher who is a practicing evaluator, (b) of being a member of a community being served by an EI/ NPO, and (c) of being a staff practitioner of the same EI/NPO with clear ambitions and intentions of becoming an administrator of an EI/NPO in the near future. My own lived experiences as a community member offered me particular insights into how responsiveness is experienced within one particular EI/NPO context by different members of its community.

As a staff member of the same EI/NPO that I was being served by as a community member, I had the privilege of understanding the responsiveness process from within—in carrying out the change-intervention steps of responsiveness. Simultaneously, I was also experiencing the responsiveness process as the evaluator who was conducting a needs assessment evaluation (i.e., a step of responsiveness) that involved eliciting the community’s needs and collecting feedback from the community members regarding the

efficacy of the EI/NPO's change-interventions. Experiencing responsiveness first hand from three different intersectional positions offered me insights to take into account about factors that mediated the experience of the responsiveness process depending on positionality and identity. This understanding helped make me more self-critical and aware of the need to adequately represent the nuances in participant lived experiences, responses, and their perspectives within my study.

Locating the study: I approached this theory-building endeavor using a critical, subaltern feminist lens. This critical subaltern feminist lens implies self-checking for patriarchy. As a teacher of evaluation and as an educator of issues of equity, privilege, power, and social-justice that play into the activism and altruism of those working in EIs and NPOs I strongly believe that we do have some element of a “savior attitude” (Mohanty, 1997; Olsson, 1997), and that we have to constantly question and critique our “savior” attitude. For example, this dissertation could be considered as an activism endeavor but could also be seen as a prescriptive endeavor that attempts to impose my responsiveness theory and models on the EI/NPO practitioners in an attempt to “save” them from their fallacies.

Thus constant self-checks need to be done so that we do not lapse into another form of patriarchy or oppression within our own activism where we claim to know better than those we are “helping” with our change-intervention action. This notion directly applies to my own work and frames my study as I attempt to “help” practitioners like me in their activism with this theory-building research endeavor and its findings.

A Foucauldian approach (1979, 1990) to this whole dissertation endeavor would have also been a valid and relevant approach. It would have helped understand the

creation of discourses of ‘truth’ and ‘power’, to examine how spaces of silence and oppression are formed and reinforced within the responsiveness process. It would also have made possible to explore and further create sites of resistance to these existing discourses of power.

Examining the data collected in this dissertation through the analytical lens of a Foucauldian knowledge-power relationship lens would have likely taken this theory-building dissertation endeavor in a different direction. But despite the pertinence of a Foucauldian approach, I use a critical feminist lens because it allows for building theory from the lived realities of participants taking their constructed knowledge and experiences as foundational information to build theory upon rather than analyzing their responses and lived experience as a function of discourse.

My research leans toward organizational learning interests and a corollary systems orientation approach that acknowledges the lived normality of imbalanced and unequal organizational hierarchy and power. Thus, I am not so much interested in the Foucauldian thesis of why and the how this power differential is being created and sustained (though this work is important) as much as its impact on responsiveness. I am interested in enabling EI/NPO practitioners to practice their espoused theory of quality responsiveness within their differential power and organizational hierarchical contexts. My focus is on the impact of and not so much a why and how analysis of this power differential.

Thus, I desist from examining this power differential as a product of embodied performance that is enacted, shaped, reshaped, and mutually reinforced by the individual participants themselves as they attempt to control and define their “truth” of a situation. I

do not engage in discourse analysis to understand how this knowledge-power dynamic is a product of, and a site for hegemonic oppression, nor a site for possible active resistance. Instead, I begin from the lived experiences of practitioners (including myself), accepting the situated knowledges that participants themselves (and I) can revisit, rethink, and redefine.

I follow more of a practical practitioner approach that acknowledges the common hierarchical structure of existing organizations and institutions and seek to validate the various practitioners' lived experience to offer them possible strategies to enhance their practice and improve the lived experiences of the communities they serve. A critical subaltern feminist approach mediated by interests in organizational learning and change that allow for a systems understanding that drives this practitioner-researcher-theory-builder's activism is the frame that guides this study.

Entering assumptions. As described before, a critical feminist epistemology involves reflecting on one's assumptions and taking these assumptions into account through the designing and implementation of the study as well as while interpreting the results. I entered this study with some assumptions that likely did affect the research endeavor—some of which I was aware of from the beginning, and others that I became aware of or was made aware of through the data collection, analysis and interpretation, and representation phases of this dissertation.

The assumptions that I began this study with include the mistaken notion that the term 'social-justice' was understood by all to mean the same thing I understood it to be, and additionally that all stakeholder groups within the responsiveness process—administrators, staff, and the community—were social-justice oriented in similar ways.

This was not the case within the context of my study participants as will be elaborated in the last few chapters of this dissertation.

Second, I assumed that all practitioners wanted to improve their practice and would thus be interested in being exposed to concepts and practices (such as the theory and models built in this dissertation) that would help them improve their responsiveness. I assumed that they would welcome and immediately apply the information that exposed the gap in their practice and would seek to mitigate the causes for the gap. I had overlooked the theoretical evidence and my over lived experiences of defensive practices and designed blindness—both others’ and my own—that pointed to the possibility of this assumption being wrong. A deeper understanding of what I learned about this issue will be offered in the final chapter of this dissertation.

The third big assumption was that within the context of this case-study all practitioner stakeholder groups of the EI—i.e., the EI’s staff and administrators—saw their ‘community’ as the students of the EI (following the theory-drawn definition and understanding of responsiveness developed in the previous chapter of this dissertation). This was not the case as well. The responses of staff and administrators in the next couple of chapters will highlight this issue.

The fourth assumption that came to light only during the writing stage of this dissertation is the fact that I took the existence of the gap as a fact for granted. I assumed that this gap in responsiveness practice existed within all EI/NPO contexts and within all practitioner contexts including my own practice. I believed that there were always gaps in our practice and our constant endeavor had to be to repetitively and continuously seek to minimize and overcome those gaps.

I believed that despite our best efforts and commitments we do have momentary lapses where we do not necessarily practice what we espouse, for various reasons. And I believed that we could either critically question those lapses or engage once again in defensive reasoning and designed blindness to lay the blame for our inaction at someone or something else's door—something we often do. Like all the previous assumptions that I entered this study with, this assumption that all practitioners and all EIs/NPOs experience gaps in their practice of responsiveness was not supported by the literature and could possibly not be true.

These four assumptions shared in this section will be revisited in detail in the forthcoming chapters.

Social-justice axiology. Social-justice values form the axiological and teleological basis of this study. Social-justice values refer to values such as equity and access that challenge existing norms and examine institutional and historic power and privilege to work towards a more egalitarian society. These values constitute social-justice. Lincoln and Lynham (2011) define axiology as—“how we ought to act in acquiring, accumulating, and applying knowledge.” (p. 5). Mertens (2009) defines the axiological question as—what are the set of values underlying the research or evaluation endeavor? This theory-building endeavor was founded on the above mentioned social-justice values. It relied on these values within the research design used and the logic-in-use applied all through this work.

Social-justice values also framed the researcher-researched relationship of data collection and analysis, and these values were constantly in play in the representation of the participants within the research study and in arriving at conclusions based on their

responses. Thus, this whole theory-building endeavor was underwritten by these social-justice values. This social-justice axiological orientation helped me redefine the researcher-researched relationship within this study to be more that of collaborators and consultants (Lassiter, 2005). The implementation and implications of this axiology will be evident in the remainder of this dissertation.

Empowerment teleology. Responsiveness theorizing seeks to offer members of EIs and NPOs a clarified and comprehensive understanding of responsiveness so that it may be used towards bettering the EI/NPO's work. The teleological question is defined as—how is the knowledge we generate to be applied? The explicit answer to this question is as follows: This theory-building dissertation, driven by social-justice values and a subaltern critical feminist orientation, seeks to serve descriptive and explanatory purposes as well as serve normative purposes in enabling EIs/NPOs to better engage in work that aligns with their espoused theories and is meaningful to their communities' success.

In this dissertation, the participants in the study have played an active role in the researcher's knowledge creation—i.e., theory-building. This dissertation seeks to be useful to all practitioners (inclusive of the researcher-self) in building our agency within the EI/NPO to improve the practice of responsiveness.

Theory-Building Method as Research Design

This dissertation study drew primarily from Lynham's (2002a, b) description of theory-building, and a few related strategies presented in Jaccard and Jacoby (2010), to theorize responsiveness and to develop a model to enhance it by minimizing the gap in its practice. Lynham (2002a) argues that theory can be seen as an articulate description and explanation of how things work; of the observations and experiences around us that can

help us improve our actions through our understanding. This articulate description and explanation enables good theory to model real-world phenomena. Thus, good theory, when applied, is realistic, even as it is idealistic by nature (Lynham, 2002b). In the following section, the theory-building research design followed in this dissertation endeavor is laid out.

Understanding theory-building. Theory-building is the ongoing process of producing, confirming, applying, and adapting theory. “The purposeful process or recurring cycle by which *coherent* descriptions, explanations, and representations of observed or experienced phenomena are generated, verified, and refined” is theory-building (Lynham, 2000. pp.161) to develop and accumulate “a system of coherent, disciplined and rigorous knowledge and explanations” (Lynham, 2002a, p. 229).

The five phases of Lynham’s (2002a) theory building method are conceptual development, operationalization, confirmation or disconfirmation, application, and continuous refinement and development of the theory, where the fifth phase weaves across the previous four phases. These five phases can happen in any order and sometimes simultaneously as the theorizer moves between theorizing practice, research, and further theorizing and moves between deductive and inductive reasoning that spans practical application and theory-building simultaneously. Reynolds (1971), notes that qualitative approaches to theory-building usually involve the deductive theory-building process—i.e., theory-to-research strategy of theory-building that involves a process of building theory and then testing it empirically through research. The inductive theory-building process—as in the case of research-to-theory strategy of theory-building is more amenable to quantitative approaches. This dissertation is a deductive theory-building

endeavor because it follows a more qualitative approach to theory-building of first building the theory and then empirically testing it.

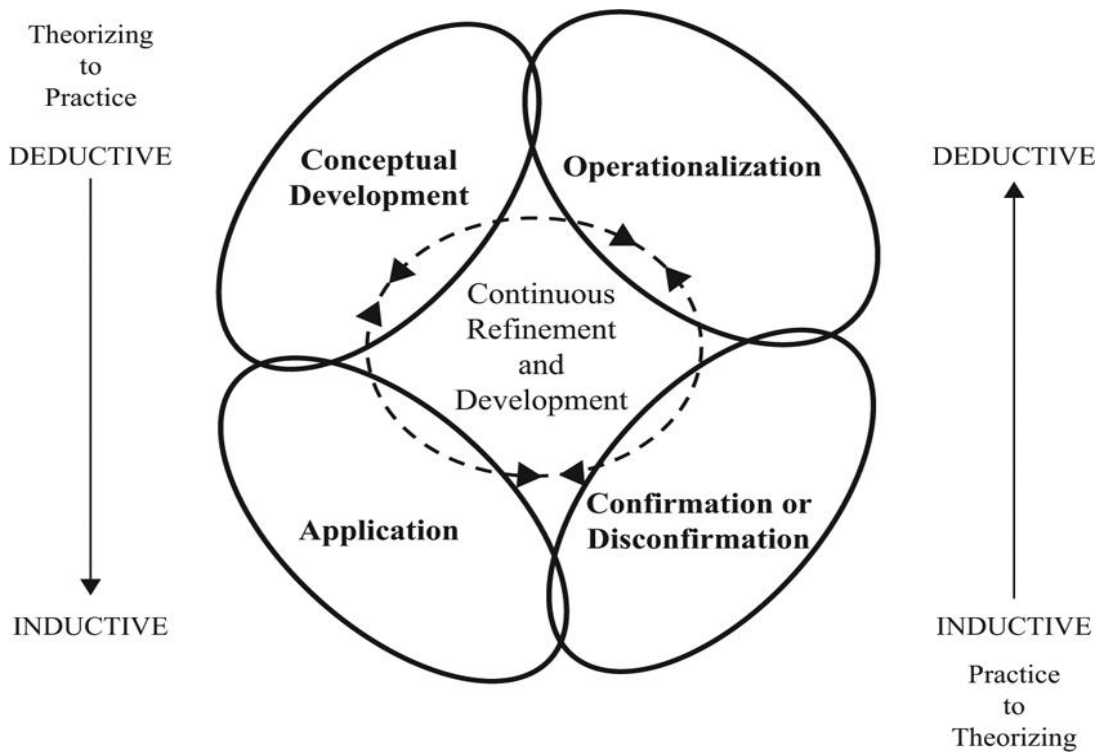


Figure 5. The General Method of Theory-Building Research in Applied Disciplines. Source. Lynham (2002a), p. 231.

Theory-building in context. In this dissertation, primarily, a deductive theory-building approach is used in the first three phases of theory-building—conceptual development, operationalization, and confirmation and disconfirmation. Simultaneously, the theory iteratively undergoes the fourth phase of continuous refinement and development as a result of the empirical testing. Figure 5 offers a visual representation of Lynham’s (2002a) general theory-building method that is used in this dissertation. The application phase for further confirmations and disconfirmations has not occurred.

It is important to reiterate that this theory-building process is an iterative, evolving interaction between theory construction and empirical inquiry. The theory

developed and offered is considered as always being in progress (Dubin, 1978)—and will continue to be in progress even after the completion of this dissertation. The theory built and offered—if it has Van de Ven’s (1989) “validity” and “utility” —can be considered to be “true until shown otherwise” (Lynham, 2002a, p. 230) through future studies and theorizing. Detailing the methodology helps validate the theory (if it holds true when empirically tested), and the findings illustrate whether the theory is useful or not. Both steps are important because the characteristics of a good theory are validity and utility.

The theory-building process of this dissertation study began even before the dissertation study had officially started and it continues to evolve as it is written. This theory-building speaks to Dubin, (1978); Kaplan, (1964); and Weick,’s (1995) arguments that call for an interaction between experience, empirical inquiry, and academic knowledge. “Applied theory-building methods require the theorist to interact with, and be influenced and informed by both her or his experience of the phenomenon in practice and her or his acquired knowledge/mastery of the phenomenon in theory” Lynham (2002a, p. 228). Suffice to say, as a function of my direct lived experiences due to my intersectional positionality and identity, and my exposure to academic concepts and literature that seemed to apply to these lived experiences (too vast to document within the scope of this dissertation), I theorized the problems that I experienced (related to meeting community needs as a practitioner and having my needs met as a community member), and that became the focus of my academic exploration that resulted in the theory-building and empirical testing in this study.

The theory-building process. The theory-building process for this research endeavor can be divided into two stages—(1) conceptualizing and operationalizing

responsiveness, and (2) conceptualizing and operationalizing one possible strategy or meta-ec model to enhance responsiveness.

Stage 1. The first phase of conceptual development in this dissertation study involved a synthesis of the literature to define and critically theorize the problem. Thus, it involved exploring the problems with the existing understanding of responsiveness within EIs and NPOs. My own lived experiences around responsiveness and my exposure to academic literature resulted in this researcher-self having both knowledge of and knowledge about the phenomenon. These two types of knowledge were brought together through an initial, informal theory-building process (Lynham, 2002a). Thereafter, I turned to the empirical testing or operationalization phase to offer greater insight into understanding responsiveness and the issues surrounding its practice in the real world.

I moved between the empirical findings and the information derived from the literature—both of which guided the thinking of this researcher-self. This iterative conversation between the experience of and the knowledge about the phenomenon is what led to an informed imagination, guided by internal, cognitively constructed logic, for me to arrive at an initial conceptual framework of responsiveness.

The operationalization phase of theory-building involved representing the theory as a defined visual framework (i.e., model) that could be empirically applied, tested, and confirmed/disconfirmed using observable indicators (Lynham, 2002a). Empirical data and arguments from the literature enabled the researcher to operationalize responsiveness to arrive at a metric to monitor responsiveness. This model to measure and monitor responsiveness was ready for real-world application, testing, and confirmation/disconfirmation. This concluded the first theorizing stage.

Stage 2. The second part of the study followed a similar theory-building route as the first part but toward a different purpose. Having already gained a theorized and operationalized understanding of responsiveness within the practice of EIs and NPOs, the second stage began with the conceptualization of possible strategies to enhance and catalyze responsiveness. Once again, some initial derivations of the model were developed from the interaction of the literature and my own lived experiences following the deductive theory-building approach. The model is meant to serve as a meta-evaluative-meta-cognitive (meta-ec) template to guide action for practitioners of EIs/NPOs to enhance responsiveness practice.

Having initially conceptualized the framework, this model was then offered to the participants in this study for them to comment upon its relevance, its validity, and utility within their context of practice. A visual representation of the model was created and offered to participants, and each element was explained to them. Their responses offered insights into the limitations of the meta-ec framework and how it could be modified and refined. Using their feedback, the model was refined. A final revised framework (model) was derived by combining all the feedback the initial model generated. And that final model is presented as one of the outcomes of this theory-building dissertation, ready to be confirmed/ disconfirmed through future testing and application.

The simultaneous nature of theory-building. As Lynham (2002a) has stated previously, theory-building is not a linear process. As a result, the first and second stage of theory-building often occurred simultaneously and mutually informed each other. Additionally, even as participants were offering feedback about the utility of the model, parts of the meta-ec framework were being informally tested within my practice as an

evaluator. And while the formal, rigorous, empirical application and confirmation/disconfirmation phase of this theory-building process is not complete, preliminary tentative findings from its informal application seem positive. But this preliminary application of the theory and model generated from this study will not be discussed in this dissertation.

Having conceptualized and operationalized responsiveness, having offered a metric to measure and monitor it, and having developed one model to enhance its practice in EIs and NPOs, this dissertation study comes to an end at a point where it is ready for future research endeavors to apply and confirm or disconfirm the theory built in this study. The models and metrics generated here can be applied, verified, and tested across different practice contexts, thereby further advancing the responsiveness theory-building that has begun in this dissertation.

The Empirical Elements of Theory-Building

My theory-building integrally required an empirical case-study design that supported the meaning-making from my lived experience and the literature to result in the responsiveness theory and models developed in this dissertation. This empirical aspect of the theory-building method contributed to the conceptual development and operationalization of responsiveness. It led to the development of a metric that could be used to measure and monitor responsiveness in the first stage of theory-building and it led to the development of a meta-ec model to enhance responsiveness in the second stage of theory-building.

These empirical methods are laid out up front in this dissertation, so that conceptual thinking (driven by existing literature and my lived experiences) and the

empirical data offered by the participants within the case-study could be presented simultaneously to be able to confirm or disconfirm the conceptualization and operationalization of responsiveness and validate or challenge the efficacy of the meta-ec model generated to enhance it. These initial participant contributions that included their feedback on the theory, metric, and models built, strengthened my theory-building to make this work ready for real world application, testing, confirmation/ disconfirmation, and/ or modification in future research endeavors.

The case-study design. For the empirical portion of theory-building, a case-study research design was used. As Flyvbjerg (2011) puts it, the case-study method is an in-depth, intensive study of one single unit (an individual, an organization, or one event) to describe or explain a complex phenomenon in detail; in this case—responsiveness. A case-study allows the observation and study of a phenomenon in its natural setting without artificially manipulating it in a controlled environment as experimentation would.

Case-studies help in congruence-testing and process tracing to highlight complex causalities and relationships within particular contexts to enhance theory development, which is the primary purpose of my dissertation (George & Bennett, 2005). It involves the “analyses of persons, events, decisions, periods, projects, policies, institutions, or other systems...studied holistically by one or more methods” (Thomas, 2011, p. 513).

Case-studies are explanatory, exploratory, or descriptive based on the theory that is guiding their use (Yin, 2008). Case-study research is most appropriate in settings where the problem is complex and not necessarily clear, and is embedded in multi-level systems and processes. The case-study method is bounded in terms of its scope, unit of analysis, site, and factors to be explored while allowing for complexity within (LeCompte

& Schensul, 1999). Considering that responsiveness within EIs and NPOs was the problem being explored, the case-study design was appropriate to use to study responsiveness within one EI context.

The case selection. Given that the selection of a case takes on critical importance in any case-study research design, a typical case-site was chosen—a higher education EI unit in the Pacific North West region of the United States of America that I had deep knowledge of and personal connections and commitments to.

The case used. Yin (2008) recommends that a case be selected for being a key case or a typical case. Stake (1995) argues that the case chosen should give unique, deep, rich insights to the researcher because s/he has the most knowledge and influence within the purview of the given case and is able to dig deep and understand the complexity and particularity of the case to gain the most insight into the object of interest that is being explored. It is for this exact reason that I chose this particular EI unit as my case.

The EI unit that was chosen represented a typical case (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2006). The case was a purposive selection because of my prior work and familiarity with the unit that validated it being a typical case. This EI unit exemplified a typical organizational hierarchical structure. As a student services unit, it had the usual EI/NPO purpose of existence—to enable and ensure its community's success. This EI unit was in existence to meet the needs of one particular student community among all the students of the overarching EI. Its purpose of existence was to support its students' personal and academic success within the mission and goals of the overarching institution. Like most EIs and NPOs, this unit too had other responsibilities, institutional expectations, policies, and processes to fulfill.

Apart from student services, the EI unit also served as an institutional enforcer of policies and procedures that demanded compliance from the students (its community), reflecting common expectations that many EI/NPOs today face and have to fulfill to meeting funding, governance, policy, and legal expectations. The student community that this EI unit sought to serve was a historically under-represented, underserved student community. Thus, this case was selected because it reflected a typical case scenario for the study of responsiveness.

Towards generalizing theory in the case-study method. Good theory-building, as Dubin (1978) and Lynham (2002a) note, implies two kinds of knowledge: *outcome knowledge* (, i.e., explanative and predictive knowledge) and *process knowledge* (i.e., an increased understanding of how something works and what it means). If the case-study is based on “good” theory (Lynham, 2002a, p. 222)—i.e., the developed theory showcases outcome and process knowledge—then the theory generated through theory-building could be generalized as applicable across contexts based on the case-study findings (Flyvbjerg, 2011; Yin, 2008). Thus, the theory-built in this dissertation is generalizable if there is sufficient supporting evidence of it being “good theory.” But further research and testing (i.e., the application, and continuous refinement and development of the theory) is always beneficial where the same phenomenon is studied across different cases (Yin, 2006). Doing so helps demonstrate the validity and utility of the theory generated through this type of theoretical work and highlights how generalizable the theory/ model truly is in practice.

Participants. The participants in this study were (a) the students—i.e. the community, (b) the EI unit staff that implemented the programming that served the

student community, and (c) the overall EI administrators and leaders who were working closely with/governing that EI unit within the larger institution. The study involved 15 student-evaluators, 10 EI staff, and 5 EI leaders. The gender, race/ethnicity, culture, English-language ability, sexual orientation status, class, and nationality of the participants in the study varied greatly.

The three different participant groups represented the three different kinds of stakeholder groups of an EI/NPO. But it is important to note that the student participants had a dual identity. Apart from being the EI's community, they also donned the hat of being evaluators for the EI unit who were conducting a needs assessment evaluation of their friends and colleagues' needs (i.e., the EI unit's student community) for the EI unit.

Expedited human subjects compliance approval from the university institutional review board was obtained to conduct this study. Purposive sampling was used to seek out participants (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Dillman, 2000). The staff, administrators, and students were recruited because they were three different types of stakeholders with respect to the EI unit that was the case-setting. There was no forced participation with respect to the focus groups and interviews. All the participants were sent email invitations to participate. All participants signed formal consent forms that informed them that they were participating in a theory-building dissertation working toward understanding and building responsiveness within EIs and NPOs.

The staff were recruited as members of the EI unit (based on their willingness to participate). The administrators were recruited based on who worked most directly with, and/or governed the EI unit (again, based on their willingness and interest to participate). Students were recruited based on their being served by the EI unit. They had been

purposefully recruited to conduct a needs assessment evaluation of the EI unit. Among more than 2,500 students, 18 students responded to an email invitation to learn evaluation skills and be evaluators as part of the needs assessment evaluation of the EI unit. The needs assessment endeavor was reflective of the informal application and confirmation/disconfirmation stage of the theory-building endeavor as mentioned before, and it is yet to be completed.

These 18 students were invited to participate in this research study, and 15 of the 18 students expressed interest in participating. Students were informed that there were no negative repercussions to them not participating and a few chose not to (Briggs, 2003). All data collection from students occurred outside of class time. Additionally, students were informed that their participation in the study and their responses during data collection would not affect their grades. Ultimately it was the participants' interest and willingness to contribute to this theory-building dissertation around responsiveness that resulted in them volunteering to be participants in this study.

The data collection process. Data for this dissertation were collected over a period of four months. Due to the evolving nature of this dissertation, empirical research commenced even as the theory was being theoretically being conceptually developed. The empirical data helped refine my logic-in-use and helped develop, modify, and hone the theory continuously. In-person interviews (Patton, 1990) and focus groups (Goldenkoff, 2004) were used as explicit methods to gather data, along with participant observation (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995; Sunstein & Chiseri-Strater, 2007), and reflexive journaling (Denzin, 2006; Madison, 2005) as the implicit methods of collecting data.

Among the two overt data collection methods used—i.e., focus groups and interviews—the final decision regarding method choice to collect data was dependent on the participants’ availability. Data collection began with focus groups, but if schedules could not be combined or if participants preferred to be interviewed rather than participate in a focus group, then those were conducted. Administrators were mostly interviewed because of their availability and their perceived ability to be more open in a one-on-one situation when reflecting on the EI. Additionally, because they had different relationships and roles in governing or working with the EI unit, it made sense to individually interview them.

Each participant group was considered a discreet group that could not be combined with each other during the data collection process because of their different EI stakeholder roles. The interviews and focus-groups were audio-recorded and they were guided by a semi-structured questionnaire (Kvale, & Brinkmann, 2009). This questionnaire was created based on insights from the literature about the issues surrounding responsiveness within EIs and NPOs.

Focus groups and interviews. Focus groups were used because this method of data collection is not designed to generate consensus on a topic or to decide a course of action. On the contrary, the purpose and strength of focus groups is to gather a range of perceptions and alternative viewpoints from the participants regarding issues around the topic of responsiveness. Data were collected in two rounds.¹ The questions were derived

¹ Please see Appendix A for a list of the questions asked in first round of data collection (first data-set) and Appendix B for data collection process and questions asked in second round of data collection (second data set). It is important to note that not all questions were asked from the questionnaire and the questions varied based on the responses of the participants.

based on existing literature and theory, and my lived experience, and were reviewed by faculty guiding my research. The first round of data collection asked questions related to gaining an understanding of the context, of participants' understanding of responsiveness, and how responsiveness (as defined in this dissertation) played out. In the second round of data collection, focus groups and interviews also helped capture the reactions and responses to the meta-ec model proposed to build responsiveness within EIs and NPOs.

The advantages of using the focus group method is that it offers rich qualitative data that is specific and useful within an exploratory theory-building study like this one. This method elicits the nuances in the understanding and issues around responsiveness as it plays out in the case-study setting (Goldenkoff, 2004; Stake, 2005). Also, focus groups help elicit diverse perspectives because respondents feed off each other's comments.

The interview format on the other hand, allowed participants to share their views with the researcher in a more confidential environment, and offered a depth and breadth of data (unique to the interview method) on the topic of responsiveness in a short span of time (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002). Both formats of data collection were extremely beneficial.

Both the focus groups and interviews served as a forum for participants to engage in meaning-making. The interviews enabled the re-construction of the participants' own reality of responsiveness within their EI context and served as a means for their representation of the same. The interviews offered insight into people's memory, and their narratives of their actions and experiences illustrated their reasoning and motivation around issues related to responsiveness. The participants' perspectives and meanings

informed the theorizing on responsiveness. Their meanings and reasoning shed light on real-world issues related to responsiveness (Atkinson & Coffey, 2003).

The focus group and interview formats allowed for probing as needed and enabled my going deeper into the context specific governing variable constraints around responsiveness—something that could not be done if the data collection format had been that of a survey (Dillman, 2000). The semi-structured questionnaire offered the flexibility to start with some planned key common questions but also offered the space to follow the conversation based on participants' responses to allow their responses to inform the probing (Gubrium & Holstien, 2002).

In all focus groups and interviews, a safe, respectful, and nonjudgmental environment space was strived for to encourage open dialogues among all participants. Within focus groups specifically, ground rules were shared up-front to underscore the fact that everyone's answers were equally valid, needed to be voiced and heard, and that the confidentiality of the discussion was key and was dependent on all focus group participants. Time was spent in building rapport with the participants even before the focus group and interview methods of direct data collection began (Brewer, 2000). Additionally, I was cognizant of my own power and positionality and how that changed, while interacting with the different participant (stakeholder) groups (Briggs, 2003).

Two rounds of interviews or focus groups were conducted with each participant. The focus groups had anywhere from two to ten participants at different points in time. Each interview was about an hour long while each round of focus group was a little more than two hours. Please see Table 1 for a table of the data collection process indicating the number of focus groups and interviews conducted and the number of participants in each

of the two rounds of data collection. The table also indicates the content focus of the questions posed during each of the two rounds of data collection.

Table 1. *Data Collection Indicating the Two Rounds of Data Collected, the Method Used, and the Number of Participants in Each*

Participant Groups	*First Round Data Collection: Method and Number of Participants	^Second Round Data Collection: Method and Number of Participants
Staff	1 st Focus group- 7 staff	One focus group- 8 staff
	2 nd Focus group- 2 staff	
	One interview- 1 staff	
Students	1 st focus group- 10 students	1 st focus group- 9 students
	2 nd focus group- 5 students	2 nd focus group- 3 students
Administrators	Interviews- 5 administrators	Interviews- 3 administrators

**Note.* The first round of data collection was focused on collecting information about responsiveness.

^*Note.* The second round of data collection was focused on feedback about the meta-ec model.

The interviews and focus groups were conducted on site and no monetary compensation was offered to the participants. I was the moderator/ interviewer and took notes as well. After each data collection, the meetings and data collection endeavor was debriefed by writing notes in a reflexive journal that was maintained throughout this research process.

Because I had interacted with all the participants in different capacities outside of this dissertation, additional checks were put in place by reviewing the participant observation notes to check for one's own reactivity in what probes I chose to deploy

during the conversation. Doing so enabled me to be reflexive and check my own assumptions (Denzin, 2003; Pink, 2006). Follow-up check-ins were conducted as needed to clarify aspects of the participants' responses or to follow-up on some dimensions of the conversation that needed to be explored (Rubin & Rubin, 2010). Hand-written notes from each of these data-collection instances were also compiled and they were useful during the analysis phase.

The process of conducting focus groups and interviews. In the first round of focus-groups and interviews, participants were asked questions related to responsiveness, how they defined it, how it played out in their work and context, and what barriers they faced around responsiveness. As mentioned before, the existing literature and my theorizing influenced the questions that were asked of the participants. The staff and administrators were asked the same/similar questions while students were asked questions that were slightly different, but tied to responsiveness nonetheless. The order of the questions posed to the different participant groups differed and some questions were skipped based on individual/ group responses.

The questions posed to the participants were premised on their stakeholder role with respect to the EI. Participants were asked to comment on the relevance of the existing theories and literature that explained the common existence of the gap in responsiveness practice within EIs and NPOs. These were the data collected in the first round of focus groups and interviews.

The second round of focus groups and interviews were conducted when the participants were introduced to the initial meta-ec framework to enhance responsiveness within EIs/NPOs—a model that was derived from a combination of my lived experiences

and the literature. Participants were asked to share their comments, insights, perspectives, and experiences related to how they saw the model presented to them as relevant to their practice/ experience of responsiveness, and how they saw the model presented to them enhancing responsiveness. Participants were asked to share how they would use the meta-ec framework strategies and what constraints they would, or have faced, in trying to do so if they were familiar with any of the elements. As the meta-ec model was shared, feedback was also sought from the participants regarding whether the visual representation of this framework adequately captured and represented the utility and importance of the different elements and strategies of the model and whether the model and its elements needed to be represented in a different way to make them more applicable to practitioners. Based on their direct feedback, the meta-ec framework was refined to address their concerns as they arose. A final holistic framework/model to enhance and catalyze responsiveness within EIs and NPOs was then generated.

Field notes and reflexive journaling. Wolcott (2008), like Harding (2004) makes the case that method is theory because both are irrevocably tied together as they influence and co-construct each other. Thus, the theory that guided the method of this theory-building endeavor was documented, critically examined, and reflected upon to generate new theory. Maintaining field notes and reflexive journaling were key processes that enabled critical examination of the theory and method behind the theory-building around responsiveness.

First, a field-note notebook was maintained during the case-study to take notes on observations and experiences (Sunstein & Chiseri-Strater, 2007) as I engaged in participant observations (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). There was minimal document

analysis (Ryan & Bernard, 2000) to gain a deeper understanding of the context. It is important to note that there is overlap between the three phases of theory-building (conceptual development, operationalization, and continuous refinement and development of theory), at different times during this dissertation because the ‘continuous refinement and development of theory’ phase weaves its way through every other phase within a theory-building process.

While the reflexive journal and the overt data collection methods were the primary data that influenced the conceptual development and operationalization phase in responsiveness theory-building, the participant observation field notes primarily contributed towards the confirmation/ disconfirmation phase that began towards the end of this study when the meta-ec model began to be informally applied in context. The field notes also minimally informed conceptual development and helped shape the logic-in-use by offering a deeper understanding of the case-study context, thus influencing how I coded the participants’ responses to draw meaning from the data.

To keep track of my decisions and thinking (Denzin, 2006; Patton, 2010) and the logic behind the theory-building, a reflexive journal was also maintained to take stock of my position and location within the theory-building, throughout this dissertation. This reflexive journal helped articulate my logic-in-use in building theory (Kaplan, 1964). Keeping track of my cognitive thinking, assumptions, and reasoning helped maintain a rigorous and valid process of theory-building.

A description of data analysis. After data were collected, they were analyzed to inform theory-building. Primarily, Miles and Huberman’s (1994), Charmaz’s (2006), and Foss’s work (2004, 2006) guide my qualitative data analysis. First, I transcribed the

audio-recordings of the two rounds of interviews and focus groups. The transcriptions were rechecked to ensure that the conversations and responses had been accurately transcribed. Transcribing the data helped me get closer to the participants and make more accurate inferences that added strength to the coding process later.

Prepping the data. However, after transcription, the two sets of data needed additional work to be done on them to prep them for analysis. There were two additional steps (described below) that helped me analyze the data more effectively.

Step 1. Contextualizing the comments. To ensure that accurate meaning was captured and represented, each of the transcriptions were perused and references were filled in (in parenthesis) to indicate the unsaid, implicit references made to topics, people, events, concepts. This was important to do especially because comments were made in relation to other members' responses within the focus groups. So while the first response to a question may have been direct, the following responses may have been alluding to an idea in that first, second, or third response. To be clear about what the participants referred to in their responses, based on the notes that I had taken during the data collection and based on my memory, transcriptions were added to and data was filled into participant responses. Please see an example below.

“Our instinct is to say, something didn't go well. What can we do to change it. And then we fall back on what we know... It (reflexivity) doesn't happen as much as it should but if something didn't go well, it is so easy to fall back on what you know...” – Staff B.

Within this quote, I added what “it” refers to in parenthesis—reflexivity.

“We know what it (the mission) means for us but we don’t know if that is the same for the university... they (leadership) need to be clear what that (mission) means.” –Staff A. Within this quote I substituted ‘mission’ for “it,” “they” was referring to the ‘leadership’ while “that” was referring to the ‘mission.’ As is evident, it became important to contextualize the comments so that when the data were separated into coded chunks there would be minimal ambiguity regarding the topics of these chunks. If there were references made that I was unsure about—in terms of what it meant, member-checks with the participant(s) were done and they clarified their specific statements. This step helped me accurately code, make inferences, and represent the participants’ thoughts and ideas better.

Step 2. Maintaining confidentiality. To maintain confidentiality, participants were represented by the participant’s group name and were assigned a random letter within the transcript. For example, an EI leader was called—Administrator A, Administrator B, etc.; a staff member was called—Staff A, Staff B, Staff C, etc.; and a student was referred to as Student A, Student B, Student C, etc. Participants were not given pseudonyms because that would often mean identifying them using gender as a factor when all the participants lived intersectional identities that went beyond gender. Additionally, participants had time and again expressed concerns about confidentiality when represented in this dissertation. They were being vulnerable as human beings and practitioners within the EI/NPO and opening up and sharing their experiences and perspectives with me. The lack of any form of identity recognition was to do their concerns justice. Thereafter, the transcripts were scanned and any references made by participants that involved identity-related factors such as names, affiliations, offices, and references were replaced with

arbitrary letters within the text of the responses so that the confidentiality of the participants could further be maintained. Thereafter, in accordance with human subjects protocol, the original transcripts were deleted.

Please see examples of the changes made below:

“Everyone does not have the same problems. They have different problems.

Needs. I can’t judge for all (XYZ community group) students ... I used to think everyone (other community members) had same problems.”—Student A

“I kind of realized that we (specific group of students) have the same—similar issues. But, like, the perspective of looking at those problems, are different. Like (student F’s) example, if I was not doing well in class I’d think it’s my fault...”—Student C

As can be seen, all identifiers within and outside of the quotes have been removed. The grammar in the text has not been corrected, and the sentences have been left untouched in every other way. With the data now clean, the data were ready for analysis.

Coding the data. Coding is the process used to analyze qualitative data. It can be inductive or deductive in nature. Inductive coding was the type of coding primarily used in the analysis, though deductive coding was also used simultaneously to draw inferences and conclusions. The coding helped generate themes that spoke to the theorizing around responsiveness and the meta-ec model.

The data analysis involved examining the two sets of clean data. One was from the first round of interviews and focus groups about responsiveness and the gaps in its practice, and the second was from the second round of data collected about the meta-ec

model to enhance responsiveness. Data-analysis involved separating the data into chunks of data and coding them descriptively using starter codes/ themes based on the key ideas behind the question that the participants were responding to (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This was a process of open coding (Lincoln & Guba, 1989).

Thereafter, the chunks of data were coded for meta-themes within them using both epic and emic approaches (Fetterman, 2010) due to the theory-building nature of this dissertation that entailed the interaction of practice, literature, and empirical data. Arising themes within these broad starter codes were then clustered together as categories within them. The meta-themes or categories (also known as labels) were created when a cluster of themes were combined and compared at the boundaries of each other (Miles & Huberman, 1994). These meta-themes served an explanatory function and went beyond the descriptive function that the starter codes/ themes had originally served because they were now clustered together using particular logic that resulted in them representing patterns among responses—a mini-step towards theorizing.

Using these categories, all the data were coded once more to see if additional themes arose or if these categories applied across the rest of the data. Differences in themes across participants and groups were noted. These code-clusters or categories (also known as labels or meta-themes) were then revisited to see if they needed to be further generalized or specified.

Thus, while exploring the specifics of the data based on the participants' own words and meaning (emic codes) at the initial levels of coding, I also used existing theory and literature framing this study to engage in a more abstract level of analysis (etic codes) to draw conclusions towards building theory (Fetterman, 2010). It must be noted that the

coding and interpretation was founded upon one's knowledge of the existing literature and lived experiences around responsiveness. Given these different themes that represented clusters of codes, and their emphasis across different participant groups, they were now ready for interpretation based on my logic-in-use.

After coding and analysis, the theory was ready to be represented. Participant quotes were separated and clustered under the categories (Charmaz, 2006) and decisions were made about the representation of quotes in the theory-building text to reflect the inductive and deductive themes generated and how they informed the theory-building and model refinement in this dissertation.

An example of the analysis process. Below, an example of the data analysis process is presented. The data used in this example is from the first set of data collected related to responsiveness. Specifically, the example highlights the kinds of responses participants shared when asked to define responsiveness:

“being open to information other than what's in your own head.

Collect a diverse set of opinions. Taking seriously the information that you get and in some kind of collaborative, collective social manner, not just in one's own head, trying to assess what does this mean in terms of what we should be doing. So it is an attitude of openness. It is the opposite of defensiveness! It does not mean doing what a particular group says is the answer. Well, it might be, but rather, responsiveness is a complex process of assessing problems and possible directions and doing the very best you can to aim for the greatest good for the constituencies to whom you are accountable.”(Administrator C).

“It (responsiveness) depends on which constituency group (responsiveness is towards). With students you want to get ahead of their questions. Be proactive! I would not like to be reactive. Usually if it is reactive you have to do it in a very short time. Less than 24 hours. The main thing about responsiveness to me is setting the expectation correctly at the beginning and meeting or exceeding those expectations. I definitely would prefer to be proactive than reactive” (Administrator D)

“Checking in with us. Responding to our needs, you know. Like, not just sending us surveys and asking us questions... and then they do nothing about it.”(Student B)

“Seeing what’s happening, what’s needed, and creating systems to fix it.” (Staff C)

First, the different responses of participants were first chunked together under the starter code—“Definitions of responsiveness.” This was the first step of coding.

The second step of coding involved taking each response and parsing them out into the different ideas or themes (etic and emic) within that response and descriptively coding those ideas. In the above shared examples they were coded in detail, specifically with just words or phrases selected as representing a particular theme. At other times, responses were coded as themes where larger sentences or phrases or a whole response represented one single theme. Thus, for the first response, it was broken into the following etic and emic codes:

- 1. Being open to information other than what’s in your own head... (Emic code: welcoming feedback, Etic code: collaboration)*

2. *Collect a diverse set of opinions. (Etic code: feedback, Emic code: diversity, Etic code: evaluation)*
3. *Taking seriously the information that you get (Etic code: valuing information for taking action)*
4. *and in some kind of collaborative, collective, social manner, not just in one's own head, (Emic code: collaboration)*
5. *trying to assess what does this mean in terms of what we should be doing (Etic code: decision-making towards taking action to fulfill, Emic code: assessment)*
6. *So it is an attitude of openness. (Etic code: welcoming feedback, Emic code: attitude)*
7. *It is the opposite of defensiveness! (Etic code: welcoming feedback)*
8. *It does not mean doing what a particular group says is the answer. Well, it might be... (Etic code: decision-making towards taking action, Etic: diversity)*
9. *but rather responsiveness is a complex process of assessing problems and possible directions (Emic code: process, assessment; Etic code: evaluation)*
10. *and doing the very best you can to aim for the greatest good for the constituencies (Emic code: doing for good of constituencies; Etic code: action towards fulfilling)*
11. *to whom you are accountable (Emic code: accountability)*

The second response was coded into

1. *With students you want to get ahead of their questions. Be proactive! I would not like to be reactive. (Emic codes: proactive, towards students)*

2. *“It (responsiveness) depends on which constituency group (it is towards). (Etic code: community is diverse, Emic code: responsiveness depends on constituent group)*
3. *Usually if it is reactive you have to do it in a very short time. Less than 24 hours (Etic code: responding quickly)*
4. *The main thing about responsiveness to me is setting the expectation correctly at the beginning (Etic code: setting expectations at the beginning; Etic code: proactive, making commitments)*
5. *and meeting or exceeding those expectations (Etic code: taking action to fulfill; Emic: meeting expectations)*
6. *I definitely would prefer to be proactive than reactive (Etic code: prefer proactive over reactivity)*

The third response was parsed into

1. *Checking in with us. (Etic code: towards students; Etic code: evaluation, welcoming feedback)*
2. *Responding to our needs, you know. (Etic: responding to student needs; Etic: code: taking action to fulfill)*
3. *Like, not just sending us surveys and asking us questions, and then they do nothing about it.” (Etic code: evaluation, taking action to fulfill; Emic code: surveys, questions, doing nothing about them)*

The fourth response was separated into

1. *“Seeing what’s happening, what’s needed (Etic code: evaluation)*
2. *creating systems to fix it” (Etic code: create systems, Etic code: proactive)*

The third step of coding involved clustering the codes/ themes into categories/ meta-clusters/ labels, based on my logic-in-use. These categories were articulated through reasoning in the memos written to the researcher-self and the literature that was referenced. Sometimes, the themes were restricted to occurring only within that overarching question starter code or within one participant/ participant group's response. Sometimes they translated beyond the question. There were yet other times that codes remained as themes that were set aside and not used within this dissertation study.

An example of the third step of coding is: 'Welcoming feedback' and 'valuing information' that were initial etic and emic codes were combined to be a theme later on that was "valuing feedback." During this third step, sometimes the same codes were interpreted as belonging to two separate meta-themes that were equally valid. For example, 'valuing feedback' was combined with 'attention to student needs' and went on to become a meta-theme of 'focusing on expressed needs.' Simultaneously the codes of feedback was combined with other codes like 'collecting information', 'assessment', and the like, and ended up being a meta-theme of 'evaluation' that was interpreted as a confirmation of the definition of responsiveness as encompassing the needs assessment evaluation process.

Thus, the choices made in terms of coding and thereafter representing these coded participant responses to reflect these meta-themes in the dissertation text were decisions based on not just the themes intrinsically arising from participant responses (i.e., emic themes) but etic ones as well that were justified based on my lived experiences and validated by existing literature. As mentioned before, in the third step, common themes across students' responses, staff responses and administrator responses were explored. If

there were significant differences they were noted as well. Thus, within-case and cross-case analysis occurred, where in this situation each case reflected a participant group.

As is evident from the above descriptions, coding was an iterative and evolving process. I drew coding maps that linked and separated codes noting how/ why they spoke to larger themes. Similarly, to keep track of the relationships between codes, to keep track of my own logic-in-use, and to engage in valid analysis and interpretation of participant responses, memos were written to the researcher-self to document and justify my coding decisions.

An example of a memo that reflected my thinking and logic was: R
(responsiveness) is also defined as attitude. But action too. And then that action seems to have a qualitative dimension to it: like, it is not just about collecting feedback but that feedback has to be valued. Or that collecting feedback must be proactive. Students are emphasizing 'us' as in collecting feedback from 'them' and acting on it. So it is not just collecting information or assessing student needs that students are talking about when they are talking about responsiveness. They are talking about other qualitative dimensions of doing that. Why are they emphasizing 'us?' Must explore further.

Later on another memo reflecting my thinking was: *Can I/should I include these other qualitative dimensions within my definition of responsiveness? If I do, but how would they be useful? How would you know if feedback is valued? Must look at student responses again to see if they indicate how they know if it is valued...*

Memos like the ones I have shared helped document my thinking as I theorized about responsiveness based on participant responses to delve deeper into responsiveness theory-building. They played a key role in the analysis and interpretation of the data.

Other memos that I wrote to myself were more directly related to coding and analysis. For example: *Students are emphasizing being asked. Administrators and staff are stressing being collaborative. Would collaborative mean and include asking students? Should these codes be combined together? Do they mean different things to the two different groups?*

Another one: *Is timeliness and prompt action reflective of accountability or being proactive?*

Such memos aided the data-analysis process.

It is important to note that the data analysis in this dissertation is premised on Foss's argument that interpretations of data are usually not wrong. They are just usually more or less useful. "Because I do not find a particular analysis useful because of where I am in my thinking or interests, does not mean it is not useful for others," (Foss, 2006, p. 378). Foss's argument is especially true and directly applies to the data analysis in this dissertation. The data-analysis is driven by the theorizing that was constant through the empirical process. Thus, the analysis was influenced by where I was in my thinking and logic at different points in time during the theory-building process even as it simultaneously informed this theory-building.

Triangulation. Triangulation is a process to ensure the validity of the study and its findings. Triangulation be achieved by researching the same problem through data obtained from different sources, through different methods, analytical approaches, or by engaging multiple data collectors/ analysis coders. It is for this reason that data were collected from three different stakeholder groups of the EI with three different perspectives and experiences of responsiveness with their different views on strategies to

enhance it. Different methods of data collection through focus groups, interviews, and participant observation offered different kinds of data, insights, and perspectives to boost the theory-building and validate the theories offered through this dissertation.

Triangulation is an external mechanism planned into the research design that serves a similar purpose that internally reflexivity does. Through different data sources (based on their stakeholder roles), and different methods, triangulation was ensured in this study.

Representation. Research has historically been colonizing, imperialist, and othering (Smith, 1999). Forced, artificial representations of polarities have reified divides that pathologize people and perspectives (Mutua & Swadener, 2004). As Maanen (1995) points out, critical observations need to be complemented by text work and headwork that challenges the researcher to authentically represent the people and the culture she studies. Constructive dialogue, intercultural representations, and caring interpretations are only possible when the researcher sees the process as a learning experience in as non-judgmental a manner as possible constantly checking for bias (McLaren, 1998).

This dissertation was a theory-building endeavor where the participants were collaborators as the researcher engaged in this theory-building process. Consciously moving away from a historically imperialistic, colonial representation of “the other” (the study’s participants/ consultants), I sought to engage in a collaborative process of dialogue, that positioned me as the researcher-self within the research, requiring me to be critical of my own assumptions and “ways of knowing” that influenced the methodological and theoretical aspects of the study including representation (Marcus & Fischer, 1999).

This theory-building was a collaborative process of looking at things alongside consultants as opposed to over their shoulder (Lassiter, 2005). Collaborative methods involve a process of working with co-intellectuals to produce work that is actually useful to the participants of the study. The collaborative approach also lays the foundation for asking relevant questions about representation such as who has the right to represent whom and for what purposes; whose discourse is being privileged; or who is the audience that the text is intended for. It was taking these issues into consideration that enabled my living my commitment of empowerment for different stakeholders with respect to their involvement in the research process.

It is this collaborative approach that also led me to involve my participants in conceptualizing responsiveness. I moved away from the usual approach of empirically testing an operationalized theory within a case-study where my participants become the objects to be studied rather than valued contributors to my knowledge creation. This decision impacts the empirical and theory-building process considerably in terms of me choosing what and who I choose to represent toward what purpose. The focus on theory-building enabled me to move the representation away from my participants and toward the knowledge they had to share for me to better frame, understand, operationalize, and represent responsiveness and build the strategies to enhance it.

May (1980) argues for covenantal ethics embodied by the researcher, which includes an expectation of responsibility and answerability to the different stakeholders with their differential power, the disciplinary field as a whole, and the researcher self. He asks the researcher to speak on behalf of the participants rather than about the participants. And it is for this reason that I attempted to make sure that this text is

accessible to my collaborators, the general community, and the case-study EI's stakeholders. While the third person style of reference has been used at times in this dissertation, centering the first person self—the 'I' and the emotions of the 'I' is key to critical feminist writing and theorizing and adds validity and rigor to the research endeavor (Hill Collins, 2000; hooks, 2003).

In this dissertation, I have consciously centered the researcher-self and the 'I.' Hill Collins' work on emotionality and the validity of representation of caring in the text (1991) affirms the ethic of not othering my participants—something that I have attempted to achieve in the writing of this dissertation. I have consciously attempted to present the data in a manner that does not pathologize my participants or 'other' them. I attempt to represent multiple different perspectives without privileging one over the other as well.

Davies and Spencer (2010) make the case that subjectivity has not had a negative effect on the field. They further argue that a deep analytical understanding of emotions is part of our state of being during research, and when these emotions are treated with intellectual rigor they inform a better understanding of the worldview. Similarly Coffey (1999) and Chang (2008) argue that a cognizant awareness of self and the creation and negotiation of identity in the interaction between self and other is important for one to be self-reflexive. The fluidity and dynamism of social location and multiple intersecting oppressions that mutually construct features of social organization, which shape and are shaped by individual experiences, were important to keep in mind as a researcher in this responsiveness work. This understanding was important especially related to the data collection, analysis, and interpretation process. I use this literature to support the choices

I have made in representing my participants and my thinking/ logic-in-use (derived from my lived experiences) in this study.

I also employ the auto-ethnographic method sporadically to allow for the researcher-theorist-self-narrative to be articulated and expressed in a critical and constructive manner (Denzin, 2006). This process occurs within the theory-building process to build the validity (i.e., rigor) of the theory by bringing my own thinking as the researcher-theorist under scrutiny into the data analysis and representation process. Auto-ethnography is a way by which the construction of the self in relation to others is explored. Acknowledging emotions and subjectivity, and blurring the line between the researcher and the researched, increases the validity of the representation of the participants and the findings of this study (Chang, 2008; Ellis, 2004, 2009; Reed-Danahay, 1997). Within this dissertation, tools and techniques of auto-ethnographic representation are used as I attempted to document my own thinking, my interaction with the participants, and the theory's development.

A final point of note—traditionally, based on their identity and subjectivity researchers like me—women of color who are outsiders-within are implicitly asked to “objectify themselves in order to develop an objectivity that would allow them to participate in the marginalized community member’s objectification,” (Hill Collins, 2000, p. 142). Through this dissertation I have consistently sought to explore my situated partial knowledge and engage in reflexivity to address power explicitly as I develop my theory of responsiveness, without dehumanizing any participants. I sought to present multiple standpoints as valid, without succumbing to the pressures of relativism. I can only hope I have done justice to my participants and their contributions to this theory-building work.

Chapter Summary

This chapter offered an overview of the overarching theory-building method followed in this dissertation to build responsiveness theory. It presented the specifics of the case-study design used in the empirical testing of the theory around responsiveness. The chapter described the sampling procedures used, the participants within the study, and the data collection and analysis methods employed. Highlighting how the philosophical underpinnings that drove the methodology influenced all aspects of the study including data collection, analysis, and representation, the chapter documented the steps and processes that led to the inferences drawn.

The next chapter shares the findings from the analysis of participant responses that shaped the theory-building around responsiveness. The data collected from the first round of data collection and coding is compared to the theoretical definition of responsiveness offered in Chapter III. Further iterations of the responsiveness model generated as a result of participant inputs, are presented. Additionally, a metric to measure and monitor responsiveness that is developed from the coding and analysis of participant responses is offered.

CHAPTER V

EMPIRICAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO THEORY-BUILDING

This chapter documents the participants' perspectives of responsiveness within the EI case-study. It compares the empirical findings to the theoretical definition and model of responsiveness offered in Chapter III, and it offers a discussion of that definition's confirmation or disconfirmation.

Simultaneously, the chapter maps the development of a metric to measure and monitor responsiveness. This metric arises from the coding of participant responses regarding their experience of responsiveness practice within the EI case-study context. This metric is offered as one possible means to measure and monitor responsiveness within EIs/NPOs and it informs further fine-tuning and modification of the responsiveness model presented in Chapter III.

Finally, the chapter ends with empirical confirmations of the existence of the gap in responsiveness practice. It details some of the barriers and constraints faced by practitioners that cause the gap within the EI case-study context thereby comprehensively answering the first research question set posed in this dissertation.

Empirical Support for Responsiveness Process Definition

The participants in my study had a lot to say about what they thought responsiveness was. Over all, the participants' responses validate the theoretically derived definition of responsiveness presented earlier in this dissertation. Participants' confirmations of the definition are shared below to highlight the alignment between the empirical data and the theoretical definition of responsiveness offered in Chapter III. Differences and additional nuances offered by the participants are also discussed.

Confirmations of evaluation within responsiveness. When asked how they would define responsiveness, i.e., what they understood responsiveness to be, respondents used phrases such as,

“Collecting information, opinions” (Staff C)

“Asking us what our needs are” (Student G)

“Getting feedback” (Administrator B)

“Looking at how things are and seeing what is needed” (Staff B)

“Assessing” (Staff D, Administrator C)

Participants talked about responsiveness as collecting and receiving information to inform decision-making about programming and services (i.e., interventions) toward making the right decisions to do good for as many people as possible.

“Assessing... and helping students achieve success by providing a series of intentional interventions.” (Staff F)

This collection of information and feedback and its assessment to offer interventions confirms the theoretically derived definition of responsiveness offered in Chapter III where responsiveness was defined as a 3-step process of assessing needs, acting to address those needs, and collecting feedback that the needs have been met. Thus, participants’ responses aligned with the previously conceptualized definition of responsiveness.

Participant responses also indicate responsiveness being a process that involves evaluation despite their lack of explicitly saying so. Participants consistently discussed responsiveness as taking appropriate action after some form of assessment and related decision-making. Evaluation process steps were inherent and implicit in their responses

and evaluation terminology such as “collecting,” “assessing,” and similar such terms were explicitly stated. Their responses indicate that when they thought of responsiveness, they thought of engaging in evaluation processes toward take action.

Despite participants not specifying the type of evaluation that responsiveness entailed, staff and administrator participants’ responses implied that it was a needs assessment evaluation because they talked about collecting information and obtaining feedback regarding the needs of those they serve (to take action within the programs that are run by the EI). Student responses also allude to the EI collecting their feedback to take action. These participant responses and understandings aligns with the existing definitions of needs assessment evaluation in the field (Grinnell, Gabor, & Unrau, 2011; Lipsey & Freeman, 2003; Povosac & Carey, 1997; Reviere, Berkowitz, Carter, & Ferguson, 1996) to further validate the 2-step responsiveness definition of responsiveness offered in Chapter III. As a result, overall, participants’ responses regarding their understanding of responsiveness confirms the definition of responsiveness presented in Chapter III, i.e., responsiveness is a combination of evaluation and action, with action (i.e., change-intervention) driven by evaluation, where the evaluation is a needs assessment evaluation.

Responsiveness’s focus on the EI’s community and its needs. A second area of alignment between the empirical findings and the definition of responsiveness offered in Chapter III is the focus of responsiveness on the EI/NPO’s community (i.e., the students) and their needs. When staff and administrators were asked who their unit served, every single one of them began with students as the primary community they existed to serve though they serve other stakeholders too. Similarly, when asked about the mission or

purpose of their unit, all staff and administrators indicated that helping and supporting students was the core purpose. All the administrators' first response regarding who they served or what they existed for was "students." This reply implied that any action they undertook related to programming and services (change-interventions) was for students—their community.

Many of the staff described in detail how students were central to their work. The focus group format resulted in the staff members confirming their agreement by nodding in agreement with those who spoke. When probed, they verbally affirmed their agreement. The following comments are representative of staff and administrator responses,

"We are here for students" (Administrator A).

"Students inspire our work" (Staff A).

"I think we are here to assist the student and we are given the responsibility to support them with their various needs" (Staff E).

Student responses indicate that responsiveness, from the perspective of students, was about responding to them and their needs. Student participants used phrases such as

"meeting our needs" (Student G)

"asking us" (Student B)

"taking our feedback" (Student K)

"taking care of us" (Student O)

Thus, all three stakeholder groups saw responsiveness as being focused on students (i.e., the EI's community), and saw the students' needs as driving the change-intervention actions the EI undertook. This understanding once again aligns with the

definition of responsiveness derived in chapter III that specifies responsiveness as focused on the needs of the EI's community. In this case-study context, the EI's community is the students.

An additional theme: responsiveness as positive.

“We hope your work will maybe help us build responsiveness within our unit.” (Staff A)

“Maybe your (responsiveness) model can be used by our unit once you are done, to improve practice.” (Administrator A)

“Responsiveness is important.” (Administrator C)

“We want to be responsive.” (Staff J)

The above quotes represent the overall staff and administrator perceptions expressed in the interviews and focus groups. My definition of responsiveness had not yet been shared with them when they were asked to define responsiveness. Participants at multiple points in time confirmed that per their understanding, responsiveness was an important and positive form of taking action and responsiveness' existence did benefit the EI.

In the case-study, a majority of the staff and administrator participants verbally expressed to me that they chose to participate in this study because they agreed that responsiveness was needed in their unit. The quotes shared above confirm this as well. Student participants also expressed similar views. During the focus groups many students described how the EI needed to better serve students like them and better meet their needs. Thus, the findings indicate that all three groups of participants saw responsiveness as positive and essential to the EI.

Summarizing the confirmations and differences. All of the participant responses validate the process definition of responsiveness offered in Chapter III that it is a process of checking in with the community about its needs, meeting those needs through interventions, and it involves collecting feedback whether the community's needs have been met—i.e., responsiveness is needs assessment evaluation followed by change-intervention action focused on community needs. Though most participants did not use the word evaluation nor needs assessment, the words they used align with the understanding of what an evaluation is and what a needs assessment evaluation entails; hence the inference regarding the alignment of their responses and the definition, and their validation of the definition.

It is important to note that participants did not restrict the use of responsiveness to only the context of EIs and NPOs as the definition offered in Chapter III had done. However, that restriction is theoretically justified and will be retained in the definitional understanding and theory-building of responsiveness in this dissertation.

Insights about Responsiveness from Case-Study Participant Experiences

Participants had additional perspectives based on their experience of the responsiveness process within their EI context. They described qualitative nuances to the responsiveness process (based on their lived experience with it and practice of it) that they believed were integral and essential to engaging in responsiveness. They shared insights about their experience of/ with responsiveness that drew attention to aspects of the process (not previously clarified or addressed in this dissertation) that needed to be considered while engaging in responsiveness. These nuances and insights are shared in this section.

The coding of participant responses gave rise to seven key themes that highlight the nuances in participants' understanding and experience with and practice of responsiveness.

Insight 1: A focus on diversity inclusion. Within the case-study context, many of the staff and administrator participants discussed the importance of diversity while engaging in responsiveness.

Empirical evidence.

“Not all students are the same. They all come to us with different concerns. Their financial situations are different. Their family backgrounds are different. They handle things different. They are experiencing different things. So yes, their concerns will be different...”

(Staff B)

“ABC group is a big group here. They support each other. They seem to navigate the system well. But LMN students need more support. They are fewer in number and need a different kind of support.” (Staff G)

“Collect a diverse set of opinions... aim for the greatest good...”

(Administrator C)

Staff and administrators expressed their awareness of member differences within the community they served. They expressed that they were aware that the community is not one entity but rather a diverse public. The above quotes speak to this awareness. The staff and administrator participants highlighted the importance of recognizing these differences and diversity even within the common marginalized community group that they were set up to serve. They understood that diversity implied there would be diversity

in needs, and accordingly the change-intervention steps would have to be modified too. And it is for this reason that many staff and administrator participants expressed concern regarding their common experience of only being able to access the majority community group's voice among all the students they served.

Staff and administrators expressed their concerns about the minority students within the community they served and not meeting those students' needs. Given that the EI unit had been set up to serve a historically marginalized group of students, reaching all their students was important to the EI unit. Based on their experiences in collecting feedback about community needs and addressing them, staff and administrator groups affirmed the importance of diversity inclusion within the responsiveness process.

Student participants also expected the staff and administrators to elicit the different needs of the diverse community members, and spoke of the responsiveness process as meeting the diverse community's different needs with various change-interventions.

“Just because they are like me does not mean that they have the same problems as me right?” (Student L)

“Everyone does not have the same problems. They have different problems. Needs. I can't judge for all (XYZ group) students,” (Student A)

“People see things differently I guess. Perspective is like looking at these problems and like what needs to happen for these problems to go away. That (change-intervention action) will be different.” (Student C)

As can be seen from the above responses, diversity considerations and representations were discussed as being meaningful to the responsiveness process. All

student participants agreed that one student's needs or one group's need was not indicative of everyone's needs. Thus, they believed that for the EI to engage in responsiveness, it must not assume that the needs of one group within the community are the needs of the whole community. If it did assume that all students' needs were the same, they added, the EI would not be effective in collecting the needs of the community nor meeting those needs. Thus, it can be inferred that they believed that diversity inclusion was important.

An example of the diversity in the experience of the same phenomenon was evident in some of the perspectives of the student participants—i.e., the community of the EI. Some believed that the EI unit was student oriented and its programming and services were adequate and met their needs, while others felt that the EI unit was not doing as much as it could to serve its students. The quotes below speak to this issue.

“I really like their ABC workshop they organize every year for us. It makes life easier.” (Student N)

“Their workshop is okay I guess. It can be done way better. It is not accessible to everyone. They should take it online and offer it in different languages.” (Student H)

This diversity in the experience of the EI/NPO's programming and services was also evident when student participants shared anecdotes of how they experienced the EI and its service (including their relationships with the staff members of the EI they interacted with). Some found the EI “*very helpful*” (Student B) in supporting them with their needs while others found the EI “*pretty useless*” (Student I) in helping them deal with their problems. The community's diverse experience of the EI/NPO's services

makes the case for as many diverse members of the community as possible to be represented within the EI's needs assessment evaluation process so that a valid and accurate understanding of the utility of the EI's change-interventions can be obtained to strengthen the responsiveness process.

All of the above participant responses confirm that diversity inclusion is relevant to the responsiveness process within the case-study EI because diversity of the community implies diversity in their needs that in turn implies different change interventions that the EI/NPO must undertake. Thus, based on their differentially located experiences of/ with responsiveness, all three groups of participants, within their responses validated the importance of including this diversity of the community and the diversity of their needs within the responsiveness process.

Confirmation of diversity inclusion in scholarship and the field. Scholarship confirms the need for diversity inclusion by affirming the existence of diverse perspectives and needs within one community. McMillan and Chavis (1986) emphasize that a relational, contextually formed community for any EI/NPO is not one mono-cultural, monolithic, uniform group. They argue that members of a community will have differences, even as they share common ground. Diversity and difference in the community revolve around multiple and at times intersectional axes that include, but are not limited to, cultural, economic, social, historical, geo-political elements (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). As a result, the same programming or services impact different community members differently, resulting in the EI/NPO's work possibly being received very differently by different members of the same community. Aspects of individual identity, and intersectional, historical, institutional oppressions create differing, and at

times even conflicting, standpoints among the same community's members (Hill Collins, 2000; Harding, 2006). The different locations of these diverse community members will inform the needs they have and how they experience the EI/NPO's programming. Thus, these scholars and their work confirm the importance of accessing diverse community members within the responsiveness process.

The field of evaluation also affirms this emphasis on diversity by recognizing the importance of it. Within the standards of practice of the field, the field of evaluation centrally acknowledges diversity by asking evaluators to pay attention to community diversity by including different perspectives and voices within the evaluation (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, & Worthen, 2011; Yarbrough, Shulha, Hopson, & Caruthers, 2004, 2011). In addition to the evaluation community, EIs and NPOs today, also focus on issues of diversity. Offices or liaisons of diversity and inclusion are set up in EIs across the country—both at the K-12 and higher education levels today, validating the importance of it within the services and programming of the EI.

Professional communities such as the Association of American Colleges and Universities, the American Evaluation Association, or the American Educational Research Association emphasize issues of diversity on their websites, in their work, in their support of practitioners and researchers through conference topics, scholarships, and in public statements that indicate their political stances and planned activities. As is evident, the emphasis on diversity inclusion is central to these various fields and is evident in scholarship and guidelines on practice. The field and practice confirm participant perspectives regarding the relevance of diversity inclusion within responsiveness—something that was not overtly stated within the definitional process

understanding of responsiveness offered in Chapter III. It is participants who offered this insight of diversity inclusion as relevant to responsiveness.

Insight 2: The importance of collaborative decision-making. Beyond talks about reaching out and including the diverse community members within the needs assessment process and the planning of the change-interventions, all student participants raised the issue of depth of inclusion—i.e. depth of involvement and influence in decision-making (of the diverse students included) within the overall responsiveness process.

Empirical evidence. Students stressed the importance of going beyond representation to actually being involved in the decision-making within the responsiveness process.

“They should talk to us before they make decisions. Not, like, after they have already made a decision and they just want us to say “okay.” Sometimes it’s like they include us just for show.” (Student H)

“We should have a say too right? I mean what they (EI staff and administrators) do, affects us (students) right? So how come we don’t get a say in the matter?” (Student O)

Many of the staff and administrator participants’ responses confirmed this issue raised by students regarding involvement of the community within the responsiveness process, though students were the most vocal about the importance of collaboration. Staff and administrators used words like “*coordination*” (Administrator D), “*understanding*” (Staff F), “*cooperation*” (Staff C), “*working together*” (Administrator B) to highlight the importance of collaborating with students all through the needs assessment and change-

intervention decision-making and implementation. Staff and administrators also talked about how “*working in siloes*” (Staff C) was detrimental and described “*coming together over common interests*” (Staff A) as they discussed the importance of “*sharing knowledge*” (Staff F) with all stakeholders, especially the students. They stressed the importance of involving the community in decision-making and added—

“*It (including students within the decision-making processes) needs to be more than tokenism*” (Staff A)

As can be seen from the above responses, even if diverse voices are included in the responsiveness process, implying a broad spectrum of representation, the depth of their participation, i.e., the involvement of different members of the community in the decision-making process was important to the responsiveness process. Students also talked about trust in relation to collaboration. They explained that a lack of collaborative decision-making, or mere tokenism between the EI and its students, over a period of time resulted in the breakage of trust between the EI and its community.

Because the focus of responsiveness was on community needs, they argued, a lack of a collaborative decision-making process often led to decisions about change-interventions being implemented by the EI that were not adequately reflecting students’ needs, their feedback, nor actually even meeting student needs. Students expressed this to be a common problem within the responsiveness process they experienced. They felt it negatively impacted responsiveness because students’ needs were not reflected in the decisions made regarding the change-interventions to be implemented. Thus, collaborative decision-making was seen as important to responsiveness—something not mentioned in Chapter III; something brought into focus primarily by student participants.

Confirmation of collaborative decision-making in scholarship and the field.

Feminist evaluation (Seigart & Brisolara, 2002) explicitly focuses on and raises this issue of power within evaluations, and between an OI and its community. It centers the question of who influences decision-making within any evaluation and moves the conversation from diversity inclusion to depth of community involvement in decision-making. Feminist evaluators emphasize the importance of community being involved in the decision-making (Mertens, 2009; Podems 2010). Community-oriented evaluation approaches that include participatory evaluation, collaborative evaluation, and empowerment evaluation, also emphasize and affirm their commitment to community involvement in decision-making (American Evaluation Association Presentation, 2010), though each approach argues a different level of depth of involvement as its standard.

Approaches such as culturally responsive evaluation, value-enabled evaluation, and deliberative democratic evaluation—all emphasize community involvement in decision-making (Cousins & Whitmore, 2007; Fetterman & Wandersman, 2005; Greene, 2006; Hood, Hopson, & Frierson, 2005; House & Howe, 2000). The evaluation standards also emphasize collaboration in practice (Yarbrough, Shulha, Hopson, & Caruthers, 2004, 2011), asking evaluators to involve the community within the evaluative process. Different types of participatory evaluations such as collaborative evaluation or empowerment evaluation advocate greater levels of community involvement within the decision-making process within an evaluation than other evaluation approaches. Thus, the scholarship and field of practice also affirm participants' views that collaborative decision-making (i.e., community involvement in decision-making) is essential to responsiveness to make change-interventions deployed more useful and meaningful.

Insight 3. A demand for focusing on expressed needs. Closely linked to the importance of collaborative decision-making is the third theme that arose from participant responses regarding responsiveness—a focus on expressed needs of the community within the responsiveness process. Expressed needs are the needs that the people experiencing the social problems (i.e., the community being served by the EI/NPO), articulate when they talk about the social problems that impact them, and what they think should be done about it. “In short, the users of social services have expressed needs” (Grinnell, Gabor, & Unrau, 2011, p. 62). When members of the community experiencing the programming and the services of the EI/NPO express the need for a service, or share how successfully or satisfactorily they obtained and/or benefitted from that service it is an expressed need, and most student participants emphasized the importance of responsiveness focusing on their expressed needs.

Empirical evidence. Most student participants, in their responses repeatedly used phrases like “*take us seriously!*” (Student L), “*ask us!*” (Student D), “*listen to us*” (Student O), “*check-in with us*” (Student N). All staff and administrators, on the other hand, when asked about what data they relied most upon to make decisions, said that it usually was evidence-based (literature-based) best practices and what other comparator institutions did that drove the decision-making, programming, and services at the institutional level. Most of them stated that students’ feedback was important but that evidence-based best practices carried the most weight in decision-making. As can be seen, students felt that this focus on the needs expressed by them as important was central to responsiveness while staff and administrators acknowledged that despite the fact that student needs did drive responsiveness (often accessed through surveys or sometimes

informally through anecdotal experience), students' 'expressed' needs were not necessarily reliable, and hence, the decisions made within the EI were driven by student needs but not necessarily their expressed needs.

Based on participant responses, it became clear that there was some tension and difference of opinion about the importance of the attention to expressed needs of the community in this case-study context. Staff and administrators highlighted numerous issues such as age, maturity level, and students' lack of understanding about their own social problems and needs, and that of others like them, as some of the many reasons it made more sense to them to base change-intervention decisions on the needs of students as derived by experts who have empirically studied the social problems the students face to offer more reliable and valid data about students' needs to drive decision-making.

Despite staff and administrator ambivalence regarding the importance of paying attention to expressed needs of the EI community, they did not state that student needs were not important. As shared earlier, all staff and administrators believed that responsiveness was student-directed and student-driven because students were the primary community the EI was serving and the focus of responsiveness was on students' needs—just not necessarily their expressed needs.

Student participants, on the other hand, were emphatic about the importance of paying attention to expressed needs within the responsiveness process. They argued that when the EI did not listen to them, it resulted in mistrust in the student-EI relationship and resulted in apathy regarding the responsiveness process that stymied students' participation in it. The responses below capture the overall student perspectives about what a responsiveness process looked like and how a lack of focus in decision-making on

students' expressed needs to inform the change-interventions deployed made students feel like the responsiveness process was meaningless and the EI unit did not care about them.

“Why ask us even, if they already think they know what we need!” (Student L)

“They think ABC center is there for us. To help us. But it does not. They (ABC center) follow these rules to edit our work. They say experts suggest this is the best way for us to learn. But it is not helpful at all. None of us (the student community) go there anymore. They say it is there for us but it is of no help to us. We tried it and it does not work for us.” (Student M)

“Checking in with us. Responding to our needs, you know...”
(Student B).

As can be inferred from the above comments, student participants in the case-study (based on their lived experience of responsiveness) emphasized the importance of the EI seeking and acting on their expressed needs within responsiveness. And despite the fact that there were differences between the views of student participant groups and that of the staff and administrators regarding the importance of paying attention to expressed needs within the responsiveness process, paying attention to expressed needs was a strong, recurring theme among student participant responses as they shared their experience of responsiveness, and hence it has been included in this dissertation.

Understanding different types of needs. Unrau, Gabor, and Grinnell (2007) classify needs as being of different types—types that guide the collection of data from

various sources of information when assessing or determining the needs of the community. These data collected and the needs determined directly impacts the decision-making that the EI or NPO undertakes regarding the actions they must engage in and the services they must provide to their communities. Apart from 'expressed' needs, the different types of needs that inform the choice of data collection sources within an assessment of needs are as follows (Unrau, Gabor, & Grinnell, 2007):

a. Perceived needs. These are the needs that other people (not experiencing the social problem themselves) think that a particular community requires. Perceived needs are the views and opinions of the people who are not directly experiencing the problems themselves. Their perceptions and opinions on the needs of the community are based on research, scholarship, media information, or other reasons that can be personal or anecdotal. It is important to be conscious of which of the above perspectives an evaluator is interested in when seeking feedback about perceived needs from a data source.

b. Normative needs. These needs are those a community is said to require based on the existence of a particular standard or expectation that that need is compared to. Normative needs define what should be, and by comparing what is to what should be, the needs get defined. It is important to note here that the set norms often change and vary depending on the context and the community, and these norms themselves need to constantly be revisited and questioned.

c. Relative needs. These needs are the needs of one group weighted or compared against the needs of another similar group or community within a given context. The comparator criteria could be based on group characteristics, geographic location, timing, and the like but there needs to exist some baseline similarities or established

criteria/benchmarks that make the two groups comparable. Relative needs, normative needs, and perceived needs are not necessarily reflective of expressed needs.

Confirmation of focusing on expressed needs in the literature. Bhabha (1998), Grande (2004), Kapoor (2010), Mohanty (1997, 2003), Rieff (2002), Shiva (2006), Smilie, (1995), and Spivak (1999) are just a few of the scholars and researchers whose work in different fields such as women's empowerment, environmental issues, education, health, and foreign aid and development work, focus on how the best intentions of people, EIs, and NPOs in emancipating or helping certain communities (based on experts' perceived, normative, and relative standards) has resulted in the community's further oppression or silence because expressed needs were elicited but then dismissed as indicative of the community's ignorance and as something the EI unit needed to address with its change-interventions.

Their work showcases how instead of informing change-interventions, the expressed needs of the different communities described in their work, become yet another justification for the misguided change-intervention actions that these communities' EIs/NPOs engaged in because the change-intervention was driven by the other types of needs. As a result, in their numerous real-world examples they describe how the community's needs were not really met in the responsiveness process, nor their feedback taken seriously within the needs assessment evaluation and the change-intervention action step. Expressed needs, their work demonstrates, must be prioritized over the normative, relative, and perceived needs of a specific community because these other types of needs often give skewed data that then drives decision-making that is not necessarily in the best interests of the community. Thus, literature supports student

perspectives and their insight regarding the relevance of expressed needs in responsiveness.

Insight 4: Preference for a formative evaluation approach. A preference for a formative approach as opposed to a summative approach to responsiveness was expressed by all staff and most administrator participants. An analysis of student responses did not give rise to this theme.

Empirical evidence.

“I call it the free-consulting opportunity... When someone is giving you feedback that something is not working or needs to be improved you need to listen and use it” (Administrator B).

“We are always looking for ways to improve. We want to improve.”(Staff G)

“Feedback is the opportunity for improvement” (Administrator D)

All the staff and most administrator participants welcomed the opportunity to improve their services (change-interventions) based on whether those change-interventions met their students’ needs. They wanted to know how they could improve their practice and welcomed it. But a common theme that echoed through the responses of all staff and most administrator participants was the fear of repercussions within a high-stakes accountability and performance assessment environment that may show them in a bad light if the feedback from students indicated that the EI was not meeting their needs. They had experience with punitive, summative performance assessments that affected their salary or job, and their motivation as well. Thus, all of the staff and most of the administrator participants shared their preference for a formative approach to

engaging in responsiveness because it made them want to improve, learn, and better serve their community by working better.

Confirmations of the formative approach in literature. Formative evaluations are meant to be tools for the EI/NPO to improve by assessing itself as it is engaging in the program rather than passing a judgment on the efficacy of the program/ or the staff after the program has been completed (Scriven, 1996). Formative evaluations and formative progress monitoring systems involve making continuous improvement decisions developmentally, i.e., in an evolving manner (Patton, 2011) rather than punitively.

Rather than a focus on summarizing performance (as is the case with summative evaluations or performance assessment systems), formative evaluations focus on informing improvement to help growth and change within individuals and organizations to make them adaptable and learning organizations/ individuals—something that is seen as a strength in an EI/NPO, its staff, and its leaders (Patton, 2011; Schon, 1983; Senge, 1990). Thus, literature supports the preference of all staff participants (and most administrators) who offered the valuable insight that a formative approach was important to them as they engage in this responsiveness process.

Insight 5. Responsiveness must be iterative. Most staff and administrator participants shared an insight that the evolving nature of student needs and the subsequent tailoring of the EI's services to meet those needs had to occur in a consistently iterative manner and systems needed to be in place to support that. Based on their experience of it, most staff and administrator participants agreed that the responsiveness process needed to be iterative, sustainable, and working towards continuous improvement to meet the ever changing/ evolving needs of its community.

Empirical evidence. Most participants saw the need for systems and processes in place to engage in responsiveness iteratively.

“Because the work that we do, it’s with humans. It’s never static. So even though we may build traditions, the interactions are never static. Because it is with people. And people change, so what we were doing five years ago does not apply to students today, which is on one level exciting and another level mind boggling. So I see the process of higher education as highly evolving...” (Administrator B)

“It is seven years since our last needs assessment. Informally we do have a sense of what students need.... But we don’t do this (needs assessment) as often as we should. We need to. What students needed seven or even four years ago must have changed to what they need today. The situation was different then and is different now.” (Staff D)

“There are some administrators willing to listen but when that person leaves there is no—you know... it (responsiveness) depends on the administrator—him or herself (who takes the position thereafter). So to prevent that from happening there needs to be some mandatory requirement for the person (staff/ administrator) to follow (as a process). A system in place I guess...” (Student F)

As can be seen from the above quotes, most participants saw the relevance of responsiveness being a continuous, iterative process to meet students’ ever-changing needs, and to keep improving the change-interventions to adequately meet those needs. Having systems in place to carry out responsiveness processes iteratively with a focus on

continuous improvement could help avoid what one staff member called “*reinventing the wheel*” (Staff E). Most staff and administrators and all students described wishing there were systems and structures in place that would enable the continuous repetition of responsiveness, and strengthen the likelihood of it occurring iteratively.

Confirmation of iteration in scholarship. Literature confirms this insight of participants that the steps of the responsiveness process must be iterative. Kaufman (1993) states that the social problems faced by a community and the needs they have keep changing and evolving. Needs are driven by community values and are temporal, ever-changing, and ever-evolving (Povosac and Carey, 1997). If all the needs of the diverse community are met then there would be no reason for that EI to serve that community anymore and the question of responsiveness would be moot. Thus, logically the process of responsiveness is always aspirational because improvement can occur in a multitude of ways within the responsiveness process as the needs keep evolving and the change-intervention phase keeps getting refined to better meet these evolving needs. Thus, responsiveness demands cyclical processes or helical processes of action, evaluation, planning, action, evaluation, planning, etc. in an iterative, always aspirational, sustainable, manner.

Similarly, management scholars (Argyris & Schon, 1996; Senge, 1990; Watkins & Marsick, 1992, among the many others) reiterate the importance of iterative processes of evaluation, data collection, and change-interventions within organizations to revisit decisions, and based on continuous learning, to build capacity for change, improvement, and adaptability. They argue that having systems in place to engage in iterative processes results in greater capacity for learning and improvement thereby strengthening an

organization and building its success. All of these reasons cited in the literature support and confirm participant insights regarding the importance of responsiveness being iterative—not just to keep up with community needs that will keep evolving and changing, but also because an organization that is learning is considered to be a better, stronger organization.

Insight 6. The importance of being proactive. While talking about responsiveness, a number of participants talked about being proactive. They described needing to be proactive both in terms of collecting information through the needs assessment step, as well as while engaging in change-intervention. Responsiveness was seen as timeliness within a reactive context, while responsiveness was meant to be preemptive and proactive, they said.

Empirical evidence. Participants used words and phrases like “*before*” (Staff H), “*prevent*” (Staff B), “*not waiting for it to hit you*” (Staff J), “*setting expectations*” (Administrator D), or “*get ahead*” (Administrator A), to indicate being proactive as they described the responsiveness process. Many of them talked about engaging in change-interventions or the steps of the needs assessment process before either was necessitated due to some big negative incident that forced the EI to make a change or engage in “recovery.” The below responses speak to responsiveness being proactive.

“With students you want to get ahead of their questions. Be proactive! I would not like to be reactive. Usually if it is reactive you have to do it in a very short time. Less than 24 hours. The main thing about responsiveness to me is setting the expectation correctly at the beginning

and meeting or exceeding those expectations. I definitely would prefer to be proactive than reactive” (Administrator D)

“Seeing what’s happening and creating systems to fix it before it explodes... Having programs in place to meet that need before it really gets out of hand.” (Staff C)

Clearly, being proactive and having systems in place to engage in responsiveness was important to staff and administrator participants. Additionally, many student participant responses indicate that when the EI proactively sought their input and feedback and took action based on that feedback (before it was mandated or forced), students felt that the EI cared about them. This perception helped build and strengthen a relationship of trust between the EI and its community. One student’s response reflects this perception,

“We don’t have a platform to share our concerns. So when they ask, and they actually do something about it, you know that they care,”
(Student O).

The above student’s response speaks to systems being in place for the EI to be proactive about seeking students’ feedback/ needs. The need for a platform for students to share their needs without it being solicited by the EI speaks to proactiveness as well where the student now has a forum to initiate the responsiveness process.

All of the above responses indicate that addressing issues before they even arise was considered strength, and being proactive helps avert possible negative situations within responsiveness and within the relationship of the EI/NPO and its community. All staff and administrator participants within the case-study believed responsiveness to

mean and imply—being proactive, and while students did not overtly emphasize it, some did bring it up as important in building better relationships between them and the EI.

Confirmation of proactiveness in the literature. Participant insights regarding the importance of being proactive in responsiveness is confirmed by Jayachandran, Hewett and Kaufman (2004), and by Zeithaml, Parasuraman, & Berry, (1990) who describe how organizations must respond to and adapt as per the needs of their stakeholders in a timely manner, if not preemptively to be effective and successful. Proactiveness, they argue, has the potential to build and strengthen a positive relationship between the EI and its student community, even as experts argue that being proactive in eliciting and responding to community needs helps the organization be change and growth-oriented, improve, and be successful. Thus, literature confirms staff and administrator participant insights about responsiveness being proactive.

Insight 7. Searching for manifestations of accountability. Upon analyzing student responses, another common theme that arose regarding responsiveness was the importance of student-directed accountability—i.e., manifestations by the EI, of transparency, answerability, timeliness, and communication regarding decisions made by the EI within the responsiveness process.

Empirical evidence. Many student participants alluded to this issue multiple times when they expressed that though their feedback was sought, it often did not seem to affect the decisions the EI made within responsiveness. Many a time the reasoning behind the decisions made by the EI were not shared with them and at other times decisions that directly impacted them were made without consulting them. Many felt their feedback, though sought, was not taken into consideration.

“...Like... just sending us surveys and asking us questions... and then they do nothing about it.” (Student B)

Thus, students mostly felt that decisions were made with no answerability or transparency and the reasons for such decisions were not effectively communicated. Additionally, despite their feedback to the EI, they felt that the EI often did not respond in a timely manner to address their needs. One student’s comments highlights how students feel like the EI is not answerable to them—*“I know they care about us. But I don’t think they are accountable to us. I think they try to be though, maybe,”* (Student F). A similar comment from another student highlights the fact that students did not know what happened with their feedback and how it impacted decision-making. Thus, the communication by the EI, of the reasoning behind its decisions was not happening.

“We keep getting these surveys. I actually got five last month. I don’t bother taking them anymore. We don’t know what they do with it. But when I have a problem there is nowhere to go...” (Student K).

Administrators acknowledged this issue as well. *“We don’t do as good a job communicating our plans with students. I know. We could do way better in that area,”* acknowledged Administrator A, referring to student protests that occurred because of the EI not informing, including, and involving students in a change-intervention it began implementing without consulting them or sharing the decision with them, (despite it impacting the students in a big way). The administrator shared a few examples of how this lack of communication built and sustained mistrust between the EI and one minority group among its community members—the exact group for whom this change-intervention had been specifically designed to meet their needs. This experience, among

others made the administrator realize the importance of effective communication with students—directly speaking to answerability and accountability of the EI to its community.

A number of staff participants acknowledged the importance of demonstrating accountability towards the community as well.

“I guess we keep wanting administration to give us an explanation (for the decisions made that impact the staff and their work). To justify their decisions. To include us. I wonder if students feel the same way...about us.” (Staff D)

This recognition of the importance of accountability and downwards communication, answerability, and timeliness speaks to the importance of accountability in responsiveness. Within the case-study, many participants considered responsiveness to be a reflection of accountability, and one went so far as to call responsiveness an accountability process, where it meant, *“accounting for how decisions are made that reflect core values. And how decisions lead to measurable outcomes to explain the why of decisions,”* (Staff B). Thus, participant responses highlight the importance of these manifestations of accountability within responsiveness that help build relationships of trust and cooperation between the EI and its community.

Confirmation of accountability manifestations in literature. A number of scholars in different ways affirm the importance of accountability towards the community—i.e., downwards accountability. Patton (2011) talks about developmental evaluation as a process that involves justifying and recording one’s decisions every step

of the way. He argues that having this record is the one meaningful way the actions can be justified and tracked constantly within an ongoing program or process.

Ebrahim (2009, 2010b), as discussed earlier in this dissertation, has also discussed the importance of downwards accountability and has described at length the benefits and importance of OIs demonstrating downwards accountability. Thus, literature affirms the importance of manifestations of downwards accountability within responsiveness—something participants—especially the students—expressed as important to their experience of the responsiveness practice.

Bringing Participant Themes Together to Operationalize Responsiveness

Within the responsiveness process, the outcome of the needs assessment step is comprehensive information about the needs of the community. The outcomes of the change-intervention step are context specific decisions, and implementation of decisions within internal EI/NPO processes and procedures to design external programming and services directed towards the community. Thus, the better the quality of responsiveness the more valid the findings from the needs assessment and the more specific, useful, and effective the interventions designed and deployed by the EI/NPO to meet the needs of the community. The better the quality of responsiveness, the better the EI is able to fulfill its mission of serving its community.

Given this premise, participants' insights on responsiveness, based on their experience and practice of it discussed in the previous section, highlight how responsiveness plays out in the real world example of this case-study. Thus, far in this dissertation responsiveness has only been defined as a process. A method to measure this process's quality or a way to measure and monitor this process has not been offered. Yet.

In the following section I use the above participant insights to develop a responsiveness process quality matrix. Scholarship in the field suggests that the insights and perspectives shared by the participants in one case-study, drawn from their practice and experience of responsiveness, could be generalized to other similar EI/NPO contexts if it offers both outcome and process knowledge (Flyvbjerg, 2011; Yin, 2008)—something that participant responses have offered in the previous section. Hence the logic-in-use—that the themes from participant responses can be used to create a responsiveness process quality metric that then could be used to measure and monitor responsiveness within various EIs and NPOs—is justified and attempted.

Understanding operationalization. Prior to operationalization, it is important to understand conceptualization within the theory-building process. According to Lynham (2002a), the conceptualization phase of theory-building involves:

The development of the key elements of the theory, an initial explanation of their interdependence, and the general limitations and conditions under which the theoretical framework can be expected to operate. The output of this phase is an explicit, informed, conceptual framework that often takes the form of a model and/or metaphor that is developed from the theorist's knowledge of and experience with the phenomenon, issue, or problem concerned. (p. 232)

Chapter III offered such a model of responsiveness. Responsiveness was theoretically derived and defined, and empirical confirmations of that definition were sought and offered in the beginning of this chapter to validate that definition. Thus, conceptualization commenced.

After conceptualization, the operationalization phase of theory-building involves turning the conceptual theory into a defined framework that can be empirically tested using observable indicators or metrics (Lynham, 2002a). In this section, using participants' insights gathered by analyzing their responses, and the researcher-self's logic-in-use supported by existing literature, the seven themes from participant responses are extrapolated and offered as quality indicators of responsiveness to operationalize it.

The seven quality indicators of responsiveness. Seven indicators of responsiveness quality were derived from participant response themes supported by existing literature and by deploying logic-in-use. Additional quality indicators may be derived from future empirical studies on responsiveness in practice. However, data from within this case-study context offers seven insightful participant themes that are used to build the responsiveness quality metric.

These themes arose based on what participants perceived was qualitatively important to their real world practice and experience of responsiveness. Thus, these themes are practical, and have already been empirically validated and confirmed by literature. All of these reasons make these seven themes appropriate and pertinent to measure responsiveness quality because participant responses in the case-study have already confirmed their relevance and applicability. Thus, my logic-in-use is that they can more easily transition into being indicators to measure and monitor the responsiveness process' quality.

The seven indicators that can be used to measure and monitor responsiveness quality are: diversity inclusion, collaboration, a formative approach, iteration, proactiveness, a focus on expressed needs of community, and downwards accountability

manifestations. Table 2 offers a basic outline understanding of each of these indicators as they have been now theorized and defined.

Table 2. *Table of the Seven Responsiveness Quality Indicators.*

Serial No.	Indicator	Definition
1.	Diversity inclusion	Including community members across different dimensions of identity and social position (like class, race, gender and other dimensions) in the responsiveness process by eliciting their different needs
2.	Collaboration	Going beyond representation to ensure the involvement of diverse community members in all decision-making within the responsiveness process
3.	A formative approach	The focus of responsiveness on continuous improvement
4.	Iteration	Responsiveness as cyclical, repetitive, and evolving built on established systems and processes to engage in it
5.	Proactiveness	Preemptively and actively engaging in responsiveness steps rather than being reactive
6.	A focus on expressed needs of community	Responsiveness as centrally revolving around the ‘expressed’ needs of the community as opposed to other needs elicited through the needs assessment process
7.	Manifestations of downwards accountability	Engaging in communication with the community that demonstrates justification and answerability for decisions

Additional or alternate indicators may arise based on a theory-builder’s logic-in-use, variations in context that result in different data, or based on different themes arising from an alternate analysis of participant responses. Within the scope of this dissertation

however, the responsiveness quality metric is restricted to these seven indicators, and they are used to assess and monitor responsiveness—i.e., operationalize responsiveness.

Operational questions towards responsiveness self-assessment. Table 3 offers a self-assessment tool that can be used to determine the score of each indicator on a pre-defined scale. It offers a list of the operational questions that can help the EI staff and administrators (and their community as well if they choose) to self-assess the quality of their responsiveness along the seven process quality indicators to map the overall quality of responsiveness on a quality indicator matrix. These questions reflect the essence of each quality indicator and have been derived from the researcher-self’s logic-in-use.

The questions that need to be explored to rate the level of any of the seven indicators are a means for the EI/NPO to self-monitor, self-assess, and consider feedback from the community regarding its responsiveness. The questions offered in Table 3 are also meant to enable reflections and conversations to enhance and catalyze responsiveness within an EI/NPO. It must be kept in mind that if quantitative metrics are set for each indicator, they will likely constantly need to account for real world changing circumstances and temporal shifts that impact standardized ratings and scores.

Table 3. Table of Operational Questions To Be Answered to Measure Each of the Seven Quality Indicators of Responsiveness.

Sl. No.	Quality Metric/ Quality Indicator	Answers Responsiveness Key Question—	Questions to be Addressed/Considered*^
1.	Diversity	Who	Are diverse community members included? Ex. Do we understand the axes of diversity within our community? Whose needs are we assessing and meeting and

			who are we collecting feedback from about whether we met their needs?
2.	Expressed Needs	What	Are we taking expressed needs into account? Ex. How do we get at it? How have we analyzed it? How have we considered and prioritized it? How is our change-intervention based on it?
3.	Proactiveness	When	Are we being proactive and timely? Ex. Are we being proactive eliciting needs and taking action, and in implementing processes because we learned, even if something originated as a reaction? Are institutionalized processes in place for community to initiate responsiveness?
4.	Iteration	When	Are we being iterative? Do we engage in each step of the responsiveness process continuously? Are systems in place? Ex. How often do we repeat one round of assessment and action? Is our responsiveness process complete? Do we have structures in place to be iterative?
5.	Formativeness	How	Are we collecting and using the information we obtain towards improvement rather than summatively judging to put labels? Ex. How is the information gathered from the needs assessment being put to use? How are we improving our processes?
6.	Collaboration	How	Are the diverse community members involved? Ex. And how involved are the diverse community members within the data collection step or within the levels of the decision-making?
7.	Downwards Accountability	Why	Are we being downwardly accountable? Ex. Are we communicating with the

			community? Are we justifying our decisions to our community? Are we being transparent in our processes? Does the community have power to influence our responsiveness process?
8.	Other possible indicators	Based on Where.	Are we being

**Note.* Questions to be addressed/ considered within every single step of the six processes of the Needs Assessment action step, and all aspects of the Change-Intervention action step of responsiveness.

^Note. The rating score of each quality indicator on a possible, arbitrary 0-10 rating scale is dependent on the answers to these questions, where zero will imply that that quality indicator does not exist within the responsiveness process and 10 can imply that the responsiveness process cannot get any better at reflecting this quality within its process.

The responsiveness quality indicator matrix. Inspired by Hill-Collins' (2000) work on intersectionality (to go beyond one's own oppression to recognize one's own role in the subordination of others), the principles of the matrix of domination have been used to build the combined framework of the seven indicators to operationalize responsiveness. Please see Figure 6 for a diagrammatic representation of this matrix that combines all seven quality indicators for practitioners to self-evaluate their responsiveness process.

The seven indicators of responsiveness have been placed in a circle. An arbitrary 10 point rating for each indicator has been set, where the score of 10 indicates the highest possible level or score for that indicator while zero indicates the lack of existence of that quality indicator within the responsiveness process. Putting these indicators together, Figure 6 offers one quantitative way of comprehensively measuring the quality of responsiveness.

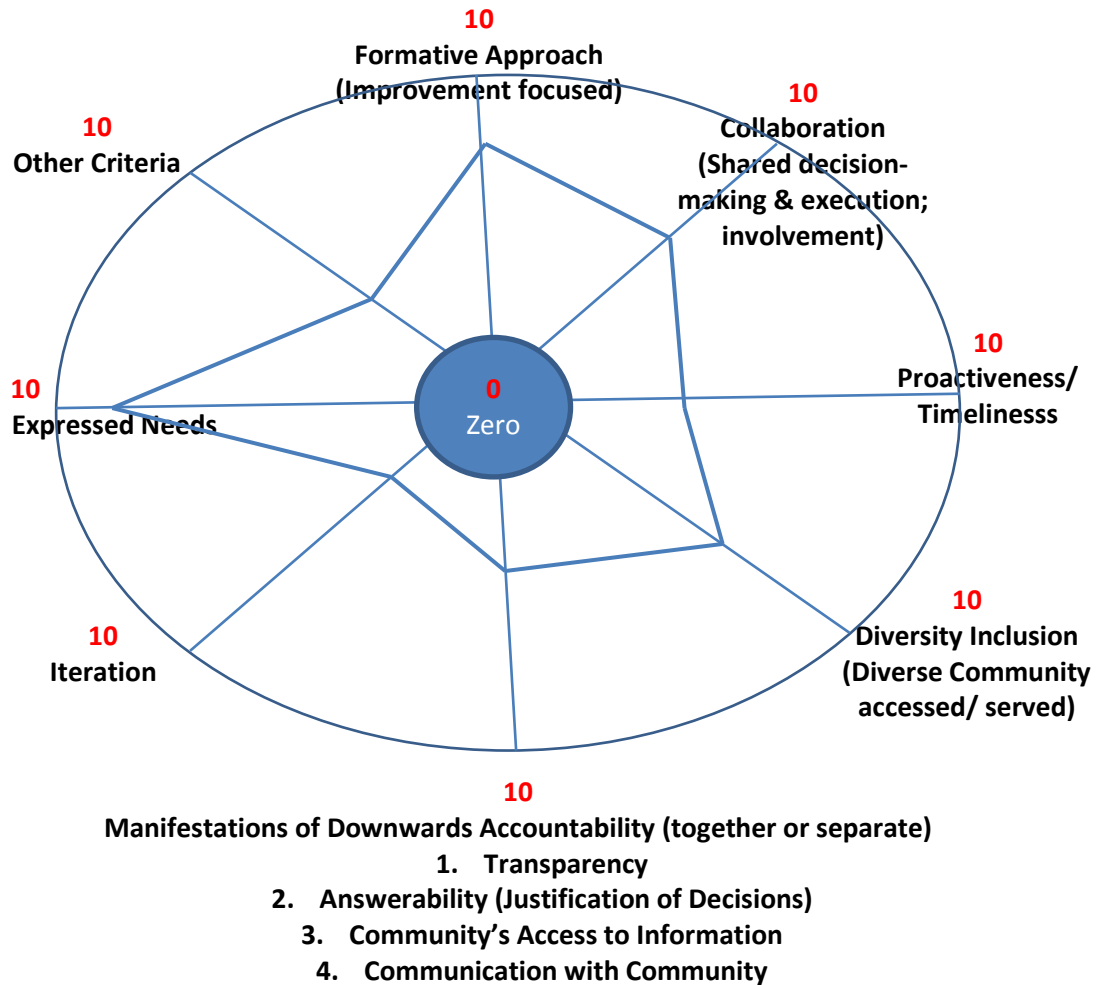


Figure 6. The Responsiveness Process Quality Indicator Matrix

The qualitative specificity of each number on this 0-10 scale can be decided by the contextual EI/NPO engaging in evaluating its own responsiveness process. They may choose to leave it as a 0-10 or even a 0-5 scale where the individuals freely interpret the numbers in between, (hoping for reliability in the scores across multiple self-assessing participants with a similar understanding of the interpretations of what a score of 4 stands for as opposed to a score of 3) or follow a predefined, standardized way of rating. For example, 3 may mean the EI/NPO is doing XYZ things within the responsiveness process, while 4 may mean the EI/NPO is doing XYZ plus ABC things in addition to it,

within responsiveness. Alternately, an EI/NPO may also choose to disregard the ten-point scale and may choose to set a different scale that represents a set of predefined standards along each quality indicator.

Whatever, the choice may be, using the questions offered in Table 3 as a starting point to create further questions to determine the score of each of these quality indicators of responsiveness, EI stakeholders can mark an 'X' along each quality indicator to self-rate it within the responsiveness process. This rating, justified with explanations and comments alongside, will offer the EI/NPO a sense of what areas of responsiveness it needs to improve and work on, and a sense of how to do it as well. Joining these X marks together and measuring the surface area of the web that is created by the connections of these 'X' s will quantify and highlight what the current quality of the overall responsiveness process is, and will allow the EI/NPO to set new goals for itself to improve. The number rating can be reversed as well, where the zero can be on the outside and the 10 can be on the inside. In this, case the goal would be for the surface area of the web to become smaller and smaller.

It is important to note that within a critical subaltern feminist philosophical orientation, offering this framework to quantitatively measure and rate the quality of responsiveness within an EI/NPO implies not summatively judging or rating the EI/NPO based on these indicators, nor rating the OI along these metrics just to compare them with other EIs or NPOs. Rather, this matrix is meant to be used as a self-improvement, self-assessment tool, and not an inter-organizational competitive, comparator tool used to judge or label EIs and NPOs or their practitioners. This responsiveness quality indicator matrix is meant to be used as a constructive tool by practitioners to improve and not as a

punitive tool or a tool to compete with or degrade any practitioner or EI/NPO by judging their responsiveness.

Arriving at a final visual representation of the responsiveness process. In Chapter III, linear visual representations of the responsiveness process—both as a three-step and as a two-step process—were offered. Based on the logic-in-use insight of the responsiveness process being continuously iterative to be of high quality, the linear visual representation of responsiveness has been modified to reflect the continuous iterative process that participants within the EI case-study desired responsiveness to be.

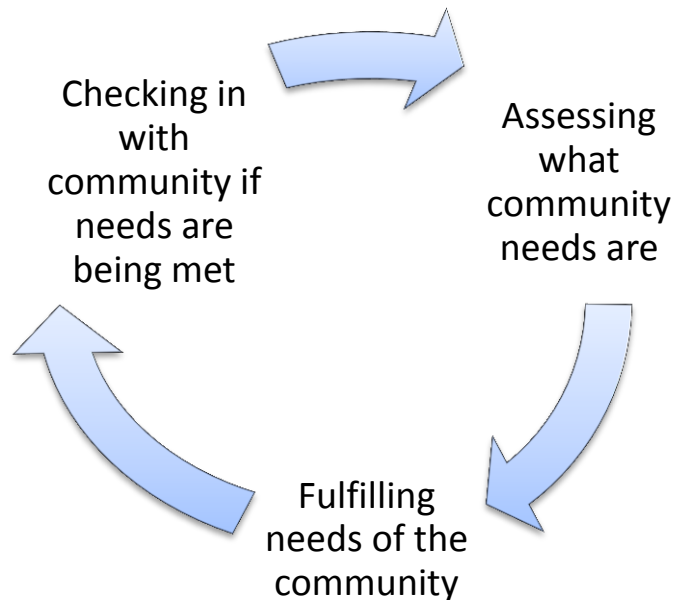


Figure 7. A Cyclical Re-Iterative Representation of the 3-Step Responsiveness Process.

Please see Figure 7 for the cyclical representation of responsiveness, per its 3-step definition. Simultaneously, Figure 8 showcases the iterative responsiveness two-step process of the needs assessment evaluation and change-intervention.

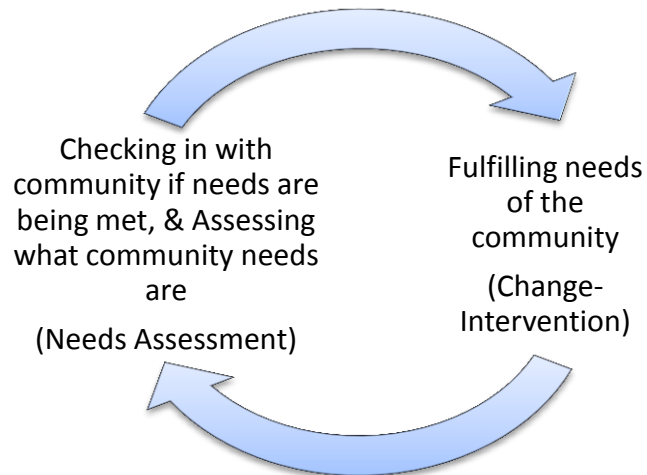
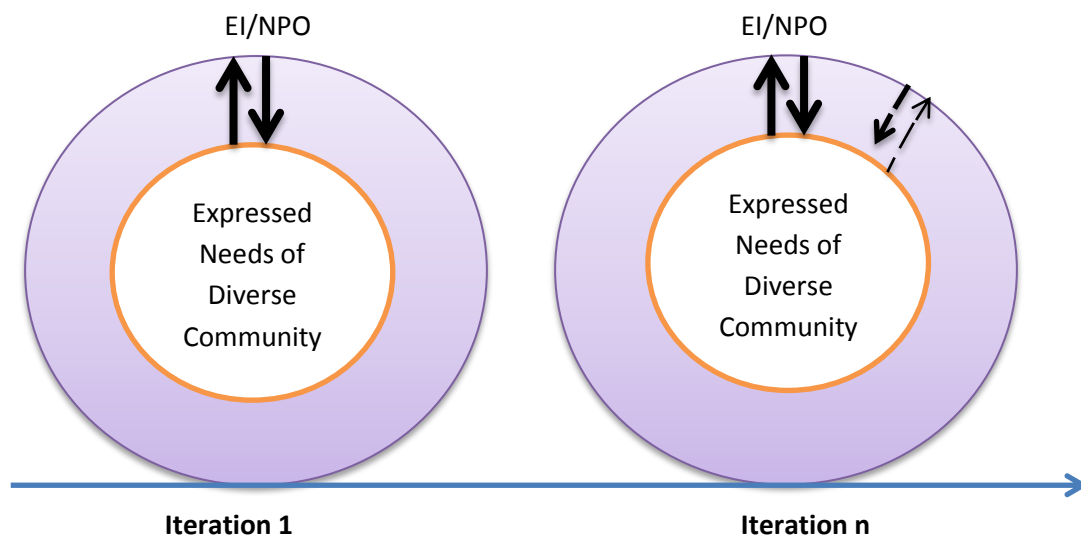


Figure 8. A Cyclical Representation of a Continuous 2-Step Responsiveness Process.

Finally, a diagrammatic representation of the operationalized responsiveness process that includes a consideration of its quality indicators is offered as Figure 9.



Arrow towards EI/NPO from Community represents needs assessment action step.
 Arrow from EI/NPO towards Community represents change-intervention action step.
 Both arrows together comprise one complete iteration of responsiveness. Quality of each responsiveness step is indicated by the completeness/thickness of the arrow line.
 Arrows that don't connect the two rings indicate that the action step was incomplete.

Figure 9. A Representation of the Iterative, Formative, Proactive, Collaborative, Downwardly Accountable Action Process of Responsiveness.

In this final diagrammatic representation of responsiveness, the outer circle represents the EI/NPO's staff and administrators while the inner circle represents the expressed needs of the diverse community. The arrow toward EI/NPO from Community (i.e., inner circle to outer circle) represents the needs assessment action step. The arrow from EI/NPO towards Community (i.e., outer circle to inner circle) represents the change-intervention action step of responsiveness. Both arrows together comprise one-complete iteration of responsiveness. The quality of each responsiveness step determined by the seven indicators is represented by the completeness of the arrow (i.e., dotted line, thin arrow vs. thick arrow). Arrows that don't connect the two rings indicate that the action step was incomplete.

This visual representation is an attempt to help the EI/NPO keep track of its responsiveness process iteratively over time. They can date and contextualize each iteration. They can briefly document the quality of responsiveness of that iteration by outlining the decisions and steps planned or undertaken to improve either of the two action steps of responsiveness (needs assessment and change-intervention) as needed. Thus, the model offers one possible means by which the responsiveness of any EI/NPO can be comprehensively represented as a process model. It also offers the scope to represent each responsiveness iteration's quality to enable the measuring and monitoring of responsiveness within one EI/NPO context in a simple manner over time.

Empirical Contribution to an Understanding of the Gap

This chapter began by empirically validating the theoretically derived definition of responsiveness offered in Chapter III. Thereafter, it offered participant insights—based on their experience with and practice of responsiveness—regarding elements that they

believed were important to the responsiveness process. Not all participants agreed about the importance of all the elements, but existing literature supported their various insights. And based on the researcher-self's logic-in-use, these insights were combined to create a responsiveness quality indicator matrix for EIs and NPOs to self-assess, measure, and monitor responsiveness. Using these participant insight-derived indicators, a final model of responsiveness that included the quality of each iteration of the responsiveness process in its representation was presented.

In sharing their insights about the elements essential to high quality responsiveness, participants also offered insights regarding the barriers they faced while engaging in responsiveness. An analysis of the data gathered from the first round of focus groups and interviews point to numerous gaps in responsiveness in the EI unit. Specifically, although the espoused purpose of the EI unit was to support the needs of historically underrepresented and underserved students, an analysis of the participant responses illustrate that the enacted practice did not always align with this purpose. For example, existing organizational documents and staff responses indicate that it had been nearly a decade since the EI unit had comprehensively assessed the needs of its diverse community. I.e., the EI unit had not engaged in the first step of responsiveness in some time.

Additionally, according to many staff who participated in the focus group, numerous suggestions for change-interventions were made over the years by staff members of the EI unit based on their visits to practitioner conferences, and by drawing from literature and best practices. However, not only were many of these change-intervention suggestions not implemented, but also, student feedback was not collected

systematically and consistently to inform or confirm the effectiveness of most of the programming and services deployed for the students. Thus, as yet, a full iteration of the responsiveness process of needs assessment evaluation and change-intervention action had not occurred as a whole implying that the responsiveness process was incomplete. As a result, the process's quality could not be measured yet. This lack of completion of the responsiveness process empirically confirms the existence of the gap. And the reasons for its lack of completion will be shared later in this section. But there was additional evidence that the gap existed.

Staff and administrators shared numerous barriers they faced in engaging in the responsiveness process and in enacting their espoused theory of meeting students' needs. A discussion of these barriers will once again confirm the existence of the gap. Furthermore, students talked about the various challenges they faced in participating in the responsiveness process. They described the barriers they experienced in giving feedback about their needs, and having that feedback be taken into account by the EI in designing and deploying its change-interventions. Their experience of responsiveness also indicates the existence of gaps between the EI unit's espoused theory and its enacted practice. All three groups of participants shared numerous reasons for the existence of gaps in responsiveness practice within the EI case-study context. And the empirical evidence of the gap, as inferred from their responses was confirmed by existing literature.

Reason 1: Institutional pressures and accountability concerns. Chapter III of this dissertation described existing literature and scholarship that cited institutional pressures and accountability concerns as one of the key reasons for the existence of the gap between espoused theory and enacted practice. Empirical findings confirmed this.

When asked what motivated their work, the common theme that arose among the staff and administrator participants was the idea of serving students. They affirmed that they were in existence for students. Their responses indicate their espoused theory.

“Helping these students succeed, where the student defines their own success as they see it for themselves,” (Staff E)

“Thank God we have them (students). It is a privilege to be working with students. We would not be here if not for students,”
(Administrator C)

“We are here for the students.” (Staff D)

Yet, staff and administrators unanimously answered the question of “who do you hold yourself accountable to?” with “my boss” or the institutional hierarchy that they were part of first, before they talked about being accountable to the community they served (i.e., students). All staff and administrator participants began with upwards accountability stakeholders first, and followed that up with institutional expectations (horizontal accountability). Downwards accountability stakeholders were unintentionally the last on their list. They talked about the fact that on a personal level, it was the students who inspired their work but on a professional level, they were held accountable to those they reported to, who in turn reported to funders, policy-makers, and legal enforcers. Thus, staff and administrators agreed that their accountability was directed upwards despite their downwards community orientation.

Despite this realization, a few staff members and administrators pointed out that their supervisors evaluated them based on their success with students, and so one way or other students were at the center of their accountability processes.

“I mean, ultimately we will be evaluated poorly if we don’t do our jobs well. And our job is to serve students. So indirectly I guess it is downwards accountability (that is prioritized)” (Staff I)

However, they acknowledged the “iron cage” they often found themselves in because, despite personally feeling accountable to students, professionally they were accountable to the institution and its mission, values, and goals. Thus, the tasks and processes that needed to be completed to fulfill the upwards and horizontal stakeholder expectations preceded (in importance) the task process of responsiveness that needed to be engaged in as part of their downwards accountability stakeholder expectations. Staff and administrators clarified that at times, these expectations decided whether they could even do the work that the EI was meant to do and engage in responsiveness.

“I mean, we can’t exist. We will be shut down if we don’t follow government rules and adhere to protocol. Then what will students do? We won’t be able to help them then,” (Staff B)

Thus, as a result of upwards accountability expectations and institutional pressures, staff and administrators faced numerous challenges that caused the gaps between the espoused theory of responsiveness and the enacted practice of it. The practitioner’s theory-in-use of meeting upwards accountability stakeholder expectations first is different from the EI unit’s espoused theory of engaging in responsiveness to meet its students’ needs—the very purpose of its existence. And this theory-in-use of upwards accountability, despite an espoused theory of downwards accountability of engaging in responsiveness, results in numerous challenges to the responsiveness process that create and sustain the gap in its practice. These challenges are explored and discussed below.

1. Perceived lack of alignment of upwards and downwards accountability. The first issue related to the theory-in-use of upwards stakeholder accountability as opposed to an espoused theory of downwards stakeholder accountability is the staff and administrators' experience and belief that upwards accountability and downwards accountability expectations do not align. This meant that they knew that the tasks required to fulfill downwards accountability expectations (like engaging in responsiveness) did not contribute towards meeting upwards accountability expectations and vice-versa. Participants' responses made it evident that they did not see upwards accountability expectations and downwards accountability expectations aligning. It seemed to be more of an either-or situation and very rarely an 'and' situation. When probed further about the possibility of meeting downwards accountability expectations possibly fulfilling upwards accountability expectations or horizontal accountability expectations, most staff and administrators expressed that they did not think it really could.

“They (upwards and downwards accountability expectations) could align. But I think they don't have to and often don't,” (Staff H)

“I see it (downwards accountability expectations) relating to horizontal expectations. Yes. That is more likely. Not so much upwards. Though it could...But often they (upwards and downwards accountability stakeholders) want different things. So we (the staff) have to do very different things to meet the two,” (staff E).

Most staff and administrators saw upwards accountability as a barrier that took them away from engaging in responsiveness because it meant they had to engage in other

tasks related to fulfilling upwards stakeholder accountability expectations. Given that upwards accountability preceded downwards accountability in importance because it was their theory-in-use, staff and administrators prioritized upwards accountability tasks over responsiveness. As a result, first upwards accountability processes were completed. And that did not necessarily leave them the time, resources, or the energy to engage in responsiveness thereafter. Staff and administrator's perception and experience that upwards and downwards accountability expectations could not be met with the same tasks meant that responsiveness was tabled until upwards accountability fulfilling tasks were completed first. Thus, gaps were created within the responsiveness process as staff and administrators acknowledged that they were left with little to no time to complete responsiveness iterations, let alone ensure that it be of high quality.

2. The reifying cage of governing variables. Upwards accountability as the theory-in-use despite the espoused theory of responsiveness and downwards accountability caused additional problems. It reified existing governing variables that were already the reason behind the gaps in the responsiveness process.

The constraints of governing variables. Administrators and staff listed numerous explicit and tacit factors—i.e., governing variables—that resulted in them being unable to engage in responsiveness. It was not only the strong emphasis on fulfilling tasks to meet upwards accountability expectations. Rather, staff discussed factors such as a high turnover in leadership, decentralized administration, different personnel/ leadership values, different goals of the administration compared to the purpose of existence of the EI unit, and other such reasons as barriers to engaging responsiveness. Fulfilling upwards accountability oriented tasks resulted in limited time, resources, and limited budgets that

constrained staff from engaging in responsiveness thereafter. All these factors were constraining governing variables. As one staff member points out,

“We are already over-worked and under-staffed. So we may be doing the 10 things we have to do mediocrely rather than the two things we could have done really well...And we are underpaid.” (Staff B)

This quote reflects the feelings among a majority of the staff members regarding the scarcity of human and monetary resources for staff to adequately engage in quality responsiveness. At the time of this study in 2012, the student community they served had doubled in number to become well over 2,500 students while the number of staff serving that student community remained a constant of 8 members. Thus, the staff members felt overworked with too many things on their plate. They believed that responsiveness was compromised as a result.

In their focus groups and interview, staff shared information regarding how they constantly faced these limitations of time, money, human resources, physical space, and access to other necessary resources while trying to serve students or assess their needs. These institutional constraints (i.e., governing variables) seemed to impede the EI unit’s capacity to engage in and complete a full iteration of responsiveness.

Different administrators in turn discussed government policies (Administrator D and E), a limited budget due to financial pressures (Administrator A and C), and the lack of overarching authority within a decentralized institution (Administrator A, B, C, and D) that contributed to not being able to implement or enforce responsiveness. They shared these constraints in their individual interviews. All administrators acknowledged that a focus on completing tasks that met upwards accountability expectations of the governing

institutional bodies rather than an emphasis on tasks of responsiveness and meeting students' needs, ensured the existence of gaps in the responsiveness practice.

Additionally, they too believed that factors such as dispersed and decentralized leadership and hierarchies, limited funding, lack of time and resources, lack of incentives, and lack of staff appreciation—all, resulted in staff feeling overworked and underpaid—something that additionally caused low staff morale. And it was their experience, they shared, that responsiveness as an iterative process was hard to carry out within these circumstances. Thus, gaps were to be expected, they contended.

Different staff and administrators described so many responsibilities that they were expected to oversee/ carryout within their limited time and resource availability that responsiveness as a process was lower on their priority list.

“There is no obligation to act upon the information or moving the feedback forward. Someone has to take that on in addition to everything else they do.” (Administrator E).

Thus, most administrators and staff agreed that these constraining governing variables led to the lack of systems in place to engage in responsiveness iteratively and systematically. Formal progress-monitoring systems of evaluation (Chen & Rossi, 1980) were not in place and staff and administrators found themselves compromising on responsiveness because upwards accountability stakeholder expectations took precedence.

Ironically, a number of these upwards accountability expectations were in place, enforced by upwards accountability stakeholders, to ensure that the EI carries out its responsibilities to its community. But as scholars (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Goodstein, 1994; Oliver, 1991) have pointed out, the more bureaucratic an institution gets the more

likely it is caught in an iron cage of engaging in bureaucratic tasks and processes that take it away from engaging in the processes of change towards fulfilling its purpose of existence. This issue of bureaucratization held true for the case-study EI and its staff and administrator participants that resulted in staff having to engage and complete a number of what one staff member referred to as “*tedious bureaucratic tasks*” (Staff E) that left them no time or energy for responsiveness.

The resulting cycle of problems. EI documents and institutional memory confirm that the last formal responsiveness iteration within the EI unit had been conducted over seven to eight years ago and the report from that needs assessment was missing. Additionally, no formal cyclical responsiveness processes had occurred thereafter within the EI unit.

This lack of responsiveness meant that the EI unit did not have information that was current and reliable upon which change-intervention decisions about the EI’s programming and services could be made. Because of not engaging in the responsiveness process systematically and iteratively, administrators and staff did not have data or evidence to support their demands for greater resources and funds to do their work and engage in responsiveness to either assess needs or to deploy change-interventions that met their students’ needs. Additionally, the efficacy of their programming and services (change-interventions) could not be demonstrated and thus they could not mobilize resource support among their upwards accountability stakeholders (i.e., investors, governance boards, and funders) for engaging in responsiveness nor for the programming and services they wanted to offer their students to better meet their needs.

Thus, the governing variables were constraining the staff and administrators from engaging in responsiveness. And their lack of responsiveness practice once again reified the governing variables. As can be seen, the limitations around time and resources led to gaps in quality responsiveness that once again caused and sustained the limitations around funding and resources. And the gap in responsiveness was created, sustained, and reified.

3. *Problems with evaluation.* Upwards accountability pressures caused additional problems for staff and administrators as they attempted to engage in responsiveness.

A summative organization culture. As has been discussed before, literature confirms that one of the results of this upwards accountability focus is the fact that EIs and NPOs are often compelled to engage in more summative evaluations that meet upwards accountability expectations (Kearns, 1996; Lindenberg & Bryant, 2001; Power, 1997). The evaluations are more summative because evaluations are often commissioned and paid for by upwards accountability stakeholders who demand judgments that decide the allocation of resources and the implementation of change-interventions. In these evaluations, the community growth or benefit is assessed as opposed to assessing the responsiveness of the EI/NPO (Mertens, 2009; Stake, 2004). This problem held true for the EI case-study context as well.

Staff and administrator responses indicate that a key reason for not engaging in formal needs assessment evaluation processes (resulting in the gap in responsiveness) was the high risk environment created by institutional pressures that resulted in a summative evaluation organizational culture. As a result, a culture of fear around evaluations within the needs assessment process was created that impeded the staff

engaging in the responsiveness process because of a fear of being judged and facing punitive action. Many staff and administrators agreed that the EI organizational culture was one where “*to admit a problem means we are a failure*”—as Administrator B highlighted. As a result, improvement was not as much a focus because of the fear of acknowledging that something was not working well or could be improved.

Many staff participants expressed frustration at the organizational culture and its evaluative practices that resulted in their leadership “*telling us we are bad but not telling us what we can do to improve or how*” (Staff D). As a result, rather than seeing the needs assessment evaluation step of responsiveness as a possibility for improvement within their programming and services (change-interventions), they experienced that if evaluation results indicated that the students’ needs had not been met, they were judged and the EI unit’s reputation was impacted.

“*We are in an assessment culture... It is daunting.*” (Staff I)

The fact that evaluations sometimes affected the salary and benefits of staff who were already overburdened with other tasks (that were oriented towards meeting upwards accountability expectations) was a topic that came up in a couple of administrator interviews. And this was a view repeatedly expressed in the staff focus groups and interview. Thus, it can be inferred that staff faced numerous psychological threats in the face of formal evaluations causing their preference to not engage in it. And this added to the gaps in responsiveness.

The perceived pointlessness of formal evaluations. Many staff shared that they often found formal evaluations to be purposeless because in their experience not only was it punitive, but also, staff felt that they were not adequately supported (in terms of all the

needed resources) in implementing the change-interventions suggested through the formal needs assessment evaluation. And then they were blamed, they said, for not acting on these formal evaluation results by the administration and by their student community when they felt their “*hands were tied*” (Staff I) because they were not being offered the resources they needed to implement the changes recommended that they wanted to, to meet the needs of their students. These staff members expressed anger and frustration at this—

“We have been asking them for more money to run ABC program and they say we don’t have a budget for that. We want XYZ they say we don’t have the money... How are we supposed to change anything if we can’t act on the findings (from evaluations),” (Staff D)

Thus, attempting to engage in formal evaluations as part of responsiveness felt like a pointless exercise to many of them because money, time, and effort was put into conducting these formal evaluations and yet often nothing came out of it.

Informal evaluation practices. However, despite these perceptions and barriers, because of their commitment to students, all staff members and administrators did point out that they did engage in informal evaluations to better understand and meet their students’ needs.

“We don’t really have a formal mechanism in place but every student that comes in with their story informs how we do business. If it is a particular problem that we don’t know how to handle we bring it up in the staff meeting. It’s more anecdotal...,” (Staff C).

The EI unit also had mechanisms like an advisory board set up, and simple evaluation forms distributed and collected at the end of events. Thus, the EI unit did engage in some forms of collecting feedback and did engage in action based on that feedback. Staff and administrators seemed to try to engage in their own informal versions of responsiveness to the best of their ability. However, the action and the feedback was not documented or saved, nor the process formally institutionalized.

Often, if students did not (of their own volition and initiative) reach out to the EI unit, their needs were missed because the staff and administrators were not aware that any problems existed that needed to be addressed. Similarly, per my observations, one year an advisory board was set up and consulted with regarding the change-intervention decisions, while the next year, it met less regularly and was assigned different responsibilities. Similarly, the simple evaluation forms were collated and used in decision-making one year and were not used the next. This was once again because constraints of time or other institutional pressures came in the way of carrying out many of these processes. As a result, these informal processes and systems were forgotten, not completed, or often discontinued thereafter.

“We would do it all if we could. We would.” (Administrator B)

“If only we had the time, we could do a better job (in collecting information about student needs and meeting them).” (Staff A)

All staff and administrators acknowledged the lack of time was a result of their upwards accountability theory-in-use. As a result of these time constraints and other governing variables due to their upwards accountability focus, services and programming (i.e., change-interventions) continued for years within the EI with old, unreliable, invalid, or

informal data and information that guided decision-making. Given the fears and misgivings they had about their organization's summative evaluation culture, the pointlessness of formal evaluation processes, and given the constraints of the governing variables they faced—all of which impeded responsiveness—most staff acknowledged the gaps in responsiveness caused because the staff stopped trusting the evaluation process. And this evaluation process was integral to responsiveness because it comprised the first step of responsiveness—the needs assessment evaluation step. Additional issues in the change-intervention step also existed that added to this gap created in the needs assessment step.

4. *Barriers to change-interventions.* As mentioned before, due to what they believed to be the bureaucratic nature of the institution that created numerous barriers to implementing recommended, essential change-interventions, many staff and administrators acknowledged that there often was resistance to improve the programming and services of the EI. Scholars (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Goodstein, 1994; Oliver, 1991) point out that this iron cage of upwards accountability results in organizations becoming more bureaucratic and more resistant to learning and change—both of which are essential to the responsiveness process because an OI is expected to learn about its community's needs from the needs assessment step and change its interventions to meet those needs adequately on a continuous basis within the responsiveness process.

As discussed before, the limited resources, fear of punitive action, transitional leadership, and lack of systems in place to engage in quality responsiveness—all helped sustain a culture and practice of inaction around improvement. Additionally, practitioner participants described themselves as an overworked, underpaid workforce who felt

restrained by the summative organizational culture that kept practitioners too fearful to challenge the efficacy of existing programming and services. Thus gaps began forming at the change-intervention step in addition to existing in the needs assessment step.

“Reports sit on shelves gathering dust,” acknowledged Staff B, despite the fact that all the staff and administrators welcomed suggestions to improve the responsiveness process itself (as was evident in their earlier quotes and insights about responsiveness in this chapter). Most acknowledged that currently minimal action was taken to improve due to the constraining governing variables and the lack of support, direction, and leadership in implementing change. They were frustrated with this lack of support that led to inaction around implementing change-interventions.

“There has never been measurable goals or outcomes... it is very frustrating to not know the plan but then to be asked to deal with the results... We just wait it out because nothing is going to change.” (Staff G)

All administrators and staff members offered examples of how the bureaucratic nature of the EI and the constraints of the governing variables caused the lack of implementation of suggested change-interventions. Numerous leadership transitions, and a lack of evidence of the EI unit’s efficacy with regard to its purpose of enabling student success reified this lack of institutional support for any change-interventions they planned to carry out.

Additionally, because of these issues of resource scarcity that led to them feeling overworked and unappreciated and unfulfilled about the change-interventions they were not implementing though they wanted to, staff acknowledged their low morale and said that sometimes they gave up and lost faith in the possibility of change.

“We get it (the report) once every year. We don’t even know if there is a plan (to take action),” said Staff H describing the inaction that surrounded taking action on students’ needs. All administrators also attested to this issue with examples of the lack of motivation that their teams had because their staff and they themselves felt overworked, did not feel appreciated, and did not feel like their work was making a positive impact on students. Thus, the low morale and a culture of failure existed in the EI unit that further contributed to the change-intervention step of responsiveness, informed by information gleaned from the needs assessment often not occurring.

Unplanned, random, change-intervention action. Many staff highlighted how change-intervention or evaluation often occurred as a result of something bad happening. Responsiveness, they claimed, was often *“fly by the seat of your pants”* as staff I put it, to *“put out fires.”* One-off evaluations or change-interventions that arose on a case-by-case basis initiated by situational circumstances were conducted (as and when demanded by upwards accountability stakeholders).

These staff members shared (and others agreed) that fresh off a negative incident, with its momentum driving one of the action steps of responsiveness—assessment or intervention—some surface level action was often taken by the EI (often dictated by upwards accountability stakeholders) to address a potential negative situation immediately. However, after that initial action (many times not nearly enough), nothing would happen for the next few years until something else (another incident or “fire”) necessitated the next evaluation or change action.

Staff and administrator participants cited numerous examples of situations in their work when they were “forced” to take action—either to assess or meet a need—only

because of institutional pressures like public relations issues, fear of bad press, emergency situations, or because of the upwards accountability stakeholders reacting to organized protests or activism within the community of students that demanded/ forced responses from the EI. According to participant anecdotes, upwards accountability theory-in-use usually only seemed to result in enforced undertakings of one-off iterations of either/both steps of responsiveness that did not satisfy the desire of case-study participant staff and administrators to engage in quality responsiveness.

All of these problems, arising from the primary issue of a focus on upwards accountability stakeholder expectations and institutional pressures confirm the gap in responsiveness in the case-study context and explain it to a large extent as well. Other reasons for the gap related to the issue of differential relational power between participant groups are discussed below.

Reason 2. Issues of power. Given that staff and administrators acknowledge the numerous institutional pressures they face that usually cause barriers in their practice of responsiveness (despite their desire and espoused theory to engage in it), it becomes necessary to also understand student participant perspectives regarding their experience of the EI's responsiveness process. Student responses offer additional insights into the gaps in the responsiveness process. Their responses bring to light the often invisible underlying issue of differential power that causes and sustains the gaps in responsiveness practice. This issue of differential power is explored and understood as the lived experience of participants before discussing the barriers that arise as a result of this differential power between the stakeholder groups.

Confirmation of differential power. Empirical evidence confirms the existence of differential power between the three participant groups. Despite a temptation to view the student, staff, and administrator relationships through a Foucauldian lens that would be relevant and could demonstrate the role of discourse (interaction of knowledge and power) in preserving and reifying the perceived imbalances of the knowledge-power relationships among the stakeholder groups, I refrain from doing so. Instead, my ideological stance as a researcher-theorist (shared in the methodology section of this dissertation), my lived experiences as a student, as a staff member, and as an evaluator, and my interactions with administrators as well as other staff and students lead me to view the participant relationships through a critical feminist lens that focuses on these power differentials as the lived reality of the participants. My analysis begins from there.

This critical feminist orientation acknowledges the existence of power differentials even as it allows for individuals to move across these differentials due to their intersectional standpoints and their agency. Based on this critical feminist approach, my own lived experiences, and the hierarchical and bureaucratic structure of the institution, I do take for granted within this dissertation that students (as a group) have the least amount of power among all three participant groups relationally, while administrators have the most. Mishra, Heidi and Cort (1998), San Martin and Camarero (2005), and Sharma, (1997) support my case.

Their work confirms that EI/NPOs exist in asymmetrical relationships (of knowledge, information or service) with their clients and exert unequal power over their clients (students in this case-study context) because the very purpose of the EI's existence is to impart information, knowledge, resources, and support to their community, i.e.,

students. Thus, the EI/NPO has more power and control over the community because it is offering the knowledge that the community is “lacking” and its very existence in serving the community affirms this. The EI/NPO has resources of different kinds that it offers the community as programming and services that the community otherwise lacks access to and needs to receive to be successful.

Given this thesis, in this case-study, students are ‘receiving’ the knowledge and learning opportunities from the institution, even as they are expected to follow the rules and regulations of the institution. Thus, according to the logic offered by Mishra, Heidi, and Cort (1998) and others, students experience having lesser power than the EI staff and administrators within the relational context of being the EI’s community. It is important to note that, while individual differences within and across groups based on individual identities and standpoints do exist, and agency to move across these differential power relationships also exists, hypothesizing about them is outside the scope of this endeavor, and has been tabled.

Similarly, between staff and administrators within the EI, given their position, the administrators often have greater authority and power to control decision-making than the staff do, making them the most powerful (within a general relational context) among the three participant groups within this EI case-study context. Offering an analysis of all the student and staff responses that confirm these assumptions and inferences about the differential power of the three stakeholder groups is outside the scope of this dissertation. However, participant responses related to their experience of responsiveness within the EI case-study context shared in this section does offer a glimpse into this differential power reality. And literature and critical feminist theory does support this researcher-

theorist's logic-in-use assumption that differential power relationships exist within the EI case-study context with students experiencing the least power in general and administrators experiencing the most overall.

Problems of differential power. This power differential results in numerous problems for students, staff, and administrators as they engage in the responsiveness process. It creates problems of access for students to participate effectively in the responsiveness process, enables differential weighting of student needs by staff and administrators that affects the change-interventions chosen that can once again affect students negatively. And it sustains problems of accountability that limits students' ability to impact the responsiveness process. These three issues are discussed in detail to demonstrate how these power differentials cause various problems that once again result in gaps in the enacted practice of responsiveness.

1. Problems of access. As Collins (2000), and Harding (2006) describe, there is power and hierarchy and powerlessness based on positionality even within a community that further results in the marginalization of those with least access to power. And given that communities in general have limited power and ability to impact an OI's decision-making (Bowen, 2011; Mertens, 2011), community members who already have privilege may be the only ones who have access to the EI.

Numerous problems of access that prevent students from participating in the responsiveness process exist within the context of this study. Participant responses confirm that the issue of access arose time and again in relation to who had access to the EI to be included and consulted with in the processes of needs assessment evaluation and change-intervention action (i.e., responsiveness).

Speaking to this issue within the case-study, many of the student participants said that they believed that larger numbers had greater ability to access the EI and have their needs be heard rather than a single student.

“If I go alone, they (EI) may not listen to me, but if a whole bunch of us go then I feel they (EI) listen better.” (Student H)

“I think we all just agreed that a single person’s opinion is not as important as a group’s opinion (in effecting change).” (Student B)

Student responses also highlighted the numerous real-world barriers that exist for marginalized stakeholders with lesser power to participate within responsiveness.

“For example I tried to set up an appointment with a XYZ unit staff but I never heard back from her for half a month and then when you and ABC (the department head) contacted her she replied back to me right away. Yes. It’s a power thing. As a student I could not reach her but as a staff above her had power and could influence her and she emailed me immediately and set up an appointment with me.” (Student K)

Staff and the administrators of the EI agreed with general student perception that students had limited power. But they pointed out that the student community was not homogenous and differential power existed even within groups and thus students had different levels of access and/or influence with the EI. Power differences existed among students.

Student leaders (i.e., community leaders) also spoke to this reality. They acknowledged that they had greater access to administrators than did other students based on their power and position within the EI. They had greater reach and their voice was

heard by the EI because of their leadership role. They believed that other students did not have this reach and thus their needs were not heard by the EI.

“Some of us are leaders of student groups. So it is easy—no—easier I guess, for us than it is for other students, to express our needs to administrators and to be taken seriously.” (Student I)

“I am a leader. I have been active on campus. I know where to go when I have a problem. To take action. Most students don’t know. Or they may be too scared” (Student K)

All staff members also agreed that not all students had access to participate in the responsiveness process.

“Some students have access. But even for them, for many of them—a student most times, can only go so far up before being stopped” (Staff C)

“Sometimes students are scared. Or shy. Or they just don’t know. And if their English language ability is poor then they may not even be taken seriously, given importance or be understood.” (Staff B)

This was because a common barrier faced by students in the case-study was fear that resulted in the issue of isolation and the students blaming themselves for their problems. As a result, they did not reach out to the EI by expressing their needs or offering feedback about how the change-interventions could possibly be improved to better meet their needs. As one student stated,

“Till now I thought it was my fault. I thought I was the only one...”
(Student J).

And this fact prevented the student from accessing the EI and participating in responsiveness to impact the change-interventions directed at the students.

Additionally, a few administrator participants acknowledged that given that their responsiveness process was more informal, given the limitations of governing variables, and the fear of the punitive action in conducting formal evaluations that could reflect negatively on the unit and themselves, change-interventions were often based on the easier and more practical process of accessing their own student workers within their offices to check-in about the general needs of students towards planning action in terms of services and programming. Administrators shared that their staff would ask these one or two students whether something the EI unit planned in terms of a change-intervention for the whole student community would work. At other times, after implementing a program or activity, they would collect feedback from these in-house students about whether their interventions met the needs of the community. Given this practical reality, these students in these offices had more power to influence the responsiveness process than other students did.

The numerous constraining variables that caused gaps in the responsiveness process triggered this more convenient, intermittent process of collecting feedback from in-house students that in turn resulted in not all students being offered access to give their input or feedback within this informal responsiveness processes engaged in by the EI unit. Thus, staff, administrators, and students alike acknowledged the fact that for various reasons (as described above) the EI unit was not completely successful in reaching diverse students within the community to elicit their feedback and their needs. And these various reasons resulted in members of the community—i.e., students especially those

who experienced having the least power for various reasons—often not having access to the EI to participate in responsiveness, thus resulting in gaps in the responsiveness process.

But issues of access were also created as a result of the methods chosen to access students within the needs assessment step of responsiveness. In their diagrammatic representation (please see Figure 10), Unrau, Gabor, & Grinnell, (2007, p.129) have indicated primarily one method of data collection to collect first-hand data directly from human informants—surveys. This is the typical method used by most EIs and NPOs to collect data, especially given the large numbers of the populations/ community they may be serving. However, surveys alone may not adequately capture the expressed needs of the community.

The survey method usually offers the “demand statistics” (Unrau, Gabor, & Grinnell, 2007, p.127) regarding the frequency of the expressed needs. And these demand statistic indicators capture the prevalence of a need as opposed to its incidence. Prevalence is the number of people who have a particular need or face a particular problem at a specific point in time while incidence refers to the number of people who currently have or have experienced a particular need over a given period of time (Povosac and Carey, 1997). Relying on prevalence to make decisions about programs and services is not an accurate reflection of the need or the problem because the prevalence may be high while the incidence may be low, or vice versa. The needs that arise from such a responsiveness process would not offer valid information regarding the needs of all the students and thus cannot be relied upon to make decisions regarding the change-interventions that need to be undertaken by the EI to better meet the students’ needs.

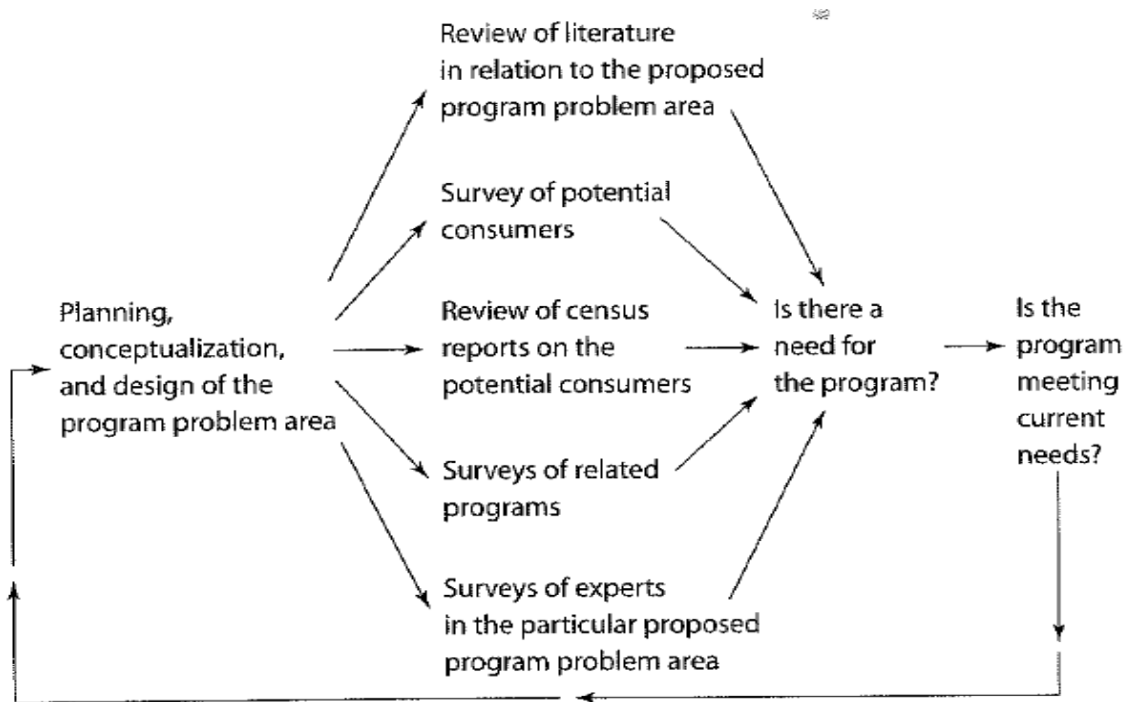


Figure 10. A Generic Needs Assessment Process Representation
 Source. Unrau, Gabor, and Grinnell, 2007, p. 129

Additionally, “*we are data-rich but research-poor*” stated Administrator D, explaining that though data was collected using surveys, often times the right questions were not asked or the data was not used effectively to improve. Administrator C also pointed out that, “*we often measure only what can be measured, often measuring quantity when we say it is quality.*” Administrator C described how hard it was to get to the nuanced, expressed needs of diverse students (based on their lived experiences) through the usual, preferred data collection method of a survey. Similarly, most staff and administrators gave examples of how despite evidence-based data that included student voice, numbers is what usually counted, and it was institutional (numerical quantitative) data that was considered reliable on a day to day basis in making decisions rather than the

anecdotal experiential data that staff often acquired everyday as they interacted with students.

Scholars such as Harding (2004), Hill Collins (2000), and Shiva (2006) argue that these lived experiences of the members of the community offer unique insights that can add to the validity of data to enrich it and make it stronger. Thus, an understanding of these lived experiences could better drive change-intervention decision-making, and would be relevant to consider within the responsiveness process. Using inappropriate methods of data collection in the needs assessment evaluation step of the responsiveness process, asking the wrong questions, or not reaching out to all students within the responsiveness process—all of these issues cause gaps in the responsiveness process. Beyond issues of access, adequately capturing students' expressed needs based on their lived experiences using appropriate methods is also important to responsiveness. However, problems exist in this area as well.

2. *The differential weighting of needs.* Povosac and Carey (1997) highlight that “the definition of need does not rely on people knowing that they have a particular need” (p. 116). They make the case that “people may be unaware of a need... deny a need... misidentify a need” (p. 116) when they need assistance and what they need assistance for. This notion that a community may or may not be aware of its own needs—i.e., the expressed needs of a community cannot be relied upon—results in a community's perceived, normative, and relative needs (i.e., needs obtained from others who are usually not members of the community themselves), often holding more weight in decision-making within the EI's responsiveness process to influence the change-intervention actions undertaken to fulfill the community's needs. And the fact that this happens is also

indicative of students' experiences of lesser power within the relational context of the EI's stakeholder groups.

“As the university president, that person’s voice carries more weight than ours as students,” (Student B)

Unrau, Gabor, and Grinnell, (2007, p. 129) offer an illustration (see Figure 10 presented earlier on p. 164) of the data collection processes to engage in a typical needs assessment evaluation that is part of the responsiveness definition in this dissertation. The illustration highlights how best practices, comparator programs and services, experts in the field, and existing scholarship on the issues are all to be considered data sources within the needs assessment evaluation step in addition to gathering the expressed needs directly from the community (usually using surveys).

These data sources offer information regarding the perceived, normative, and relative needs of the community. With only one data source of expressed need—surveying the potential consumers of the program/ services—and multiple “expert” data sources that speak to perceived needs, normative, and relative needs, weight is often given to the perceived, normative, or relative needs listed by the experts regarding a community as opposed to the expressed needs of that community (Unrau, Gabor, & Grinnell, 2007, 2011).

Feminist and subaltern scholars have already drawn attention to how knowledge is weighted differently. Their work demonstrates how knowledge from experts who engage in certain kinds of scientific research is considered “true” knowledge while the knowledge of the ‘lay’ person is not considered legitimate (Harding, 2004; Hill Collins; 2000; Shiva, 2006). Thus, if there was a difference in nuance, or a conflict between the

expressed needs and the other types of needs, often the expressed needs get prioritized lower because these needs are considered as information collected from a community that does not understand or know what its needs are—once again indicative of the power of the EI to define students and dismiss their knowledge. Many staff and administrator responses confirm this unintentional practice within the EI unit.

“Students are too young to know any better,” (Administrator E)

“Sometimes... they (students) do not what is good for them” (Staff E)

“Many times students... do not get it” (Staff B)

“Students have a lot to learn before they could meaningfully contribute to decision-making” (Staff C)

“They (students) often do not know any better” (Administrator C)

These common responses from staff and administrators when describing students’ expressed needs highlight the fact that they sometimes considered students’ feedback as one more indicator of the necessity of the EI/NPO to play its part to educate the students about what their needs should be, and how their social problems need to be interpreted to inform the change-intervention.

“Our responsibility is to educate them. They are at an age where they are still developing mentally, and so we need to help them understand issues and grow,” (Staff C).

Most staff and administrators acknowledged that the discourse around students’ feedback varied among their colleagues and often times, especially when the feedback was negative, any need illuminated by a student was blamed as the student’s fault. A couple of staff members and administrators described their colleagues’ use of the term

“*problem-child*” to describe how students’ feedback about their needs was often dismissed due to this pathologization that students did not understand their own needs and needed to be educated about it by the EI.

Thus, deficit-thinking was prevalent. It meant that the credibility of other types of needs was higher than the credibility offered to students’ expressed needs because the pervasive belief that existed across EI practitioners was that students were not necessarily the most reliable sources of data about their own needs because they often give “*distorted feedback*” (Administrator C). And this was why practitioners believed that students’ feedback could not be counted on to drive change-intervention decisions.

As a result of this kind of deficit-thinking and logic (Valencia, 1997), staff and administrators, sometimes ended up dismissing the input or feedback of the students as DiMaggio & Anheier (1990) illustrate EIs/NPOs commonly do. Instead, as mentioned before, they used student feedback as further evidence of the need to educate students. Students experienced this dismissal of their expressed needs multiple times and expressed that they felt powerless to change it, and were frustrated by it.

“It’s like we keep telling them. And they think they know but they don’t. And they don’t listen to what we are saying. They tell us what is best for us but they don’t really know. And when we tell them, it does not count! I don’t know why...” (Student M)

Bhabha (1998), Grande (2004), Kapoor (2010), Mohanty (1997, 2003), Rieff (2002), Shiva (2006), Smilie, (1995), and Spivak (1999) confirm that if a significant discrepancy between the expressed needs of the community and the other types of needs (as gathered from these other expert sources) exists, the decisions about what needs to

focus upon and what programs and services must be offered to the community becomes a negotiated process at its best and at its worst a zealous process of the EI/NPO deciding for the community what the community's needs are and what programming and services are best for it. And these scholars' work reflects that this zealous process occurs more often than not.

Participant responses shared in this section indicate that sometimes staff and administrators did decide what was best for students and implemented change-interventions with the best of intentions despite students' expressed needs pointing to a different set of change-interventions as more appropriate. Such practices are demonstrative of the patriarchal, colonizing "savior" who is there to save the community from their own fallacies because the EI/NPO knows what is better for them better than they themselves do.

"One of the weaknesses of student involvement in decision-making is that they know the system from one place and that place may be absolutely legitimate and absolutely right but their angle of vision is limited and so it is good to have students involved but they don't always have the full picture." (Administrator C)

All staff and administrators acknowledged that even if they did pay attention to expressed needs of students, usually other data (such as best practices they gained from experts and comparator institutions for example) drove decision-making. Their reason for doing this, they argued, was not only the fact that different students wanted different things that were many times outside the scope of what the EI could offer, but that not everyone was ever going to be satisfied at the same time by the same things.

“One student group wants something. And another wants something else. And then some are silent. It is complicated. Sometimes we just have to decide what has to be done and do it,” (Administrator A)

Thus, these practitioners believed that it was their job to make the tough decisions and weigh what was of higher priority. That was part of their job.

Many of the staff and administrators did repeatedly indicate that they valued student input. However, this unintentional deficit-thinking (pervasively present in the literature and in everyday practice), possible because of power differentials and evident in participant responses, did lead staff and administrators to unintentionally dismiss or not seek the student input. It caused them to weigh students’ expressed needs lower than the perceived, normative, and relative needs that they gleaned from “experts.” As a result, gaps in the responsiveness process were created because students’ needs were weighted lower, their feedback unintentionally dismissed as a product of students’ ignorance, and their needs thus, not adequately met.

3. Problems of accountability. As demonstrated previously in this chapter, participants did indicate that they believed manifestations of accountability were important to the responsiveness process. However, the differential relational power between the three participant stakeholder groups often resulted in students being unable to hold the EI unit accountable to enact their espoused theory and engage in responsiveness. A common theme within the challenges to responsiveness was the issue of accountability and who the EI/NPO demonstrated accountability towards through effective communication practices, timely responses, and by justifying decisions made. A high level of accountability towards the community would imply a stronger and higher

quality responsiveness process. But as mentioned earlier, the EI unit's theory-in-use was upwards accountability rather than downwards accountability to its student community. Thus, students struggled to hold the EI accountable to engage in responsiveness.

The problems students faced. Ebrahim (2009, 2010a) points out that unless a community has power over its EI/NPO— financial, governance, or political— it is neither able to ensure compliance, nor enforce sanctions so that the EI/NPO is transparent and answerable towards it. Given that EIs/NPOs are often in communities that need these organizations' interventions that meet their needs, the community often lacks the power to enforce accountability towards itself (Mishra, Heidi, & Cort, 1998; San Martin & Camarero, 2005; and Sharma, 1997).

Staff and administrator participants did give examples of rare occasions when students were able to enforce accountability on the EI. Goetz and Jenkins (2005), and Mulgan (2003) point out that these role-reversals do occur in these unequal power-relationships where sometimes community members do gain the power to hold the EI accountable. Staff and administrators gave examples of negative situations that forced the EI into responsiveness action—action that occurred due to members of the community (i.e., students) speaking-up or threatening negative publicity.

These examples speak to this role-reversal where either the leader of an organized group of community members, i.e., students who threatened media exposure or legal action, were able to hold the EI accountable to take action. However, as the case-study participants described, this role-reversal was not permanent. Thus, responsiveness usually occurred partially and as necessary, on a case-by-case basis. But, beyond these one-off

situations, given the lesser power of the student community in this EI unit context, students were unable to hold the EI unit accountable to engage in responsiveness.

Considering accountability involves transparency, and justifying decisions, the student participants within this case-study shared that they did not feel that the EI was accountable to them, nor that they had the power to hold the EI accountable. Even with entities like a community advisory board or community members on an action team or planning committee, there were hardly any occasions where community members had power over the EI to ensure the EI engaging in responsiveness. Most staff and administrators acknowledged this.

“Students are sent the message that they should not rock the boat.

While people do pay attention to them and want them to share their perspective, the student does not have as much power to influence anything in the room as other folks do really.” (Staff C)

Staff, administrators, and students described the “tokenism” that often occurred in having “*the lone student representative*” (Staff B) on decision-making committees of the EI, where the student’s voice was often intentionally/unintentionally not heard or dismissed for various reasons. This was a common problem, they described, and they added that these students were often scared of the repercussions of demanding responsiveness and accountability from the EI when the EI was also had more power than the student in terms of the student’s grades, education, and future career. This issue, they believed, led to the fact that very few students had access to and power over the EI to demand, enforce, inform, or influence the responsiveness process. Additionally, a lack of communication about what was done with the feedback that students were requested to

provide seemed to cause a relationship of mistrust and mutual apathy between the community and the EI. Students felt staff and administrators did not care about them.

“When we tell them something is wrong, they don’t listen to us.

Then when they send out these surveys, then they want us to participate.

What’s the point? It feels like they don’t really care.” (Student H)

The EI perspective. Caring for the students, staff and administrators, on the other hand, saw student participation in responsiveness as a burden being dumped on students within a bureaucratic institution that was slow to change. *“I never thought about students wanting to be involved in the decision-making”* acknowledged Administrator C. They believed that it was not the student’s responsibility to change the institution and ensure it engaged in responsiveness. They believed that the institution was responsible for the student being successful and they wished for the student to not have to *“waste time trying to fix the system”* (Administrator E).

“We get paid for our work. They don’t. They are here to learn,” said Staff J, believing that it was not the students’ responsibility to necessarily even participate in the responsiveness process. As can be seen, there is a difference between how staff and administrators perceived the student role and feedback within the responsiveness process and how the students themselves saw it. Student participant comments spoke to them wanting to engage with the EI unit to ensure responsiveness practice.

“I want to give back” (Student L)

“If I can do something so that no one else goes through what I went through (I want to engage in giving feedback)” (Student D)

However, because upwards accountability was prioritized first (as the theory-in-use), and because staff and administrators recognized the struggle that was the bureaucracy of the EI, staff and administrators believed that it was not fair to be eliciting feedback from students, and/ or involve them in decision-making within the responsiveness process, and/ or have them attempt to hold the EI unit accountable, when they knew that the bureaucratic institution was not going to act on that feedback (due to the numerous constraining governing variables) as it implemented its change-interventions. Thus, staff and administrators attempted to protect students from facing off against a bureaucratic institution that was going to be very slow to change. As a result, once again, students were neither able to ensure nor demand the EI engage in responsiveness even as staff and administrators on their part often attempted to assess and address individual students' needs informally as best they could.

Thus, lack of power (a) led to students not having access to engage in the responsiveness process, (b) led to students having their expressed needs weighted lower and having their feedback dismissed, and (c) led to students being unable to hold the EI unit accountable to engage in responsiveness. All these barriers and issues caused by differential power led to gaps in the responsiveness process. It resulted in interactions between stakeholder groups that reinforced the bureaucracy and imbalanced power differentials, and resulted in the practice of incomplete or low quality responsiveness processes (because the processes engaged in did not adequately carry out the needs assessment nor change-intervention steps of responsiveness).

Reason 3. The problem of defensive practices and designed blindness.

Chapter III shared evidence from existing literature about the existence of defensive

practices and designed blindness among EI/NPO practitioners that sustain the gaps between espoused theory and enacted practice (Argyris, 1985; Argyris & Schon 1978, 1996; Friedman, 2001; Senge, 1990). While, it is possible to analyze and interpret the staff and administrator responses through the lens of these defensive practices and designed blindness concepts, my covenantal ethics (May, 1980) necessitates my not engaging in this analysis within this dissertation to avoid pathologizing these two participant groups in my representation. It would be almost impossible to not “other” my participants by analyzing their responses to make inferences about the possible defensive rationalizations and designed blindness that my staff and administrator participants likely deploy (a) to justify and normalize the gaps in their practice, and (b) to relieve themselves of the psychological stress associated with recognizing their role in its creation and its sustenance, and in accepting their responsibility toward addressing it.

Defensive practices and designed blindness likely do exist within this case-study context as experts claim that they exist to some extent in all OIs (Argyris, 1985; Argyris & Schon 1978, 1996; Friedman, 2001; Senge, 1990). A number of the staff and administrator responses could be examined using this lens to glean what these rationalizations and practices are within this case-study setting. However, as mentioned before, the purpose of this dissertation is not to pathologize, blame, or label any individual, any particular stakeholder group or any OI.

Thus, it becomes pertinent to adequately represent and acknowledge all participants’ lived realities, situated knowledges, and partial standpoints including that of the researcher-self’s. I can and will say that I have engaged in defensive rationalizations and defensive practices to distance myself from my role in sustaining the gap between my

espoused theory and enacted practice when I have been a staff member and evaluator despite my commitment to my community (given my own identity as one) and to responsiveness.

However, a focus on, and an interpretation of EI practitioner responses to spotlight the existence of defensive rationalizations and designed blindness in their practice does not serve any purpose in this responsiveness theory-building dissertation endeavor at this time. In fact, engaging in such an analysis will take away from one of the primary purposes of this dissertation—to offer a meta-evaluative-meta-cognitive model that will enable practitioners of EIs and NPOs to self-reflect, self-assess, and hopefully become self-aware of the various constraints they face in practicing responsiveness (including defensive rationalizations, defensive practices, and designed blindness), and thereafter engage in quality responsiveness.

Rather than being critiqued for the defense mechanisms that we all employ to deal with the psychological stress of the knowledge (or to conceal the knowledge) that our espoused theory does not align with our enacted practice, I seek to offer a framework that practitioners can use to attempt to become aware, acknowledge, explore, and overcome the gap in the practice of responsiveness. Thus, an analysis of participant responses to confirm the existence of defensive practices and designed blindness has been tabled and will not be addressed in this dissertation.

Summarizing the empirical contributions to understanding the gap. This section described the many reasons that cause and sustain the gaps in the practice of responsiveness. Despite staff and administrators' best intentions to better meet the needs of the community (a group of historically underrepresented students on campus) by

engaging in quality responsiveness (needs assessment and change-intervention iteratively and systematically), the existing information and data within the case-study confirms the existence of gaps in responsiveness where the enacted practice does not align with espoused theory. This section offered an understanding of all of the problems and issues that participants experienced that cause and sustain the gap in responsiveness within the EI case-study context.

Participant responses indicated reasons for the gap related to top-down institutional pressures and an upwards accountability focus theory-in-use that resulted in (a) constraining governing variables that came in the way of staff engaging in responsiveness, (b) practitioners too fearful of the punitive summative formal evaluation culture in the organization to engage in formal responsiveness processes, and (c) the creation of a bureaucratic organization resistant to change, thus hindering responsiveness.

Additionally, an acknowledgement and awareness of differential relational power between the three participant groups highlighted the reality of students' lived experiences of responsiveness that once again spotlighted the existence of the gap. Participant responses and existing literature empirically confirm that within the context of the case-study (a) diverse students have limited access to participate in the EI's responsiveness process, (b) inappropriate methods are often used to collect information about student needs that lead to possible wrong decisions about the change-intervention action decision choices, (c) the ubiquitous practice of deficit-thinking does occur and that leads to students' expressed needs being weighted lower or dismissed, (d) students struggle and are unable to consistently hold the EI accountable to them to iteratively engage in responsiveness, and (e) the staff and administrators' are concerned that students will be

negatively impacted if they attempt to enforce the EI's responsiveness because the EI is too entrenched in bureaucracy to change for any student. Thus, participant responses empirically confirm and explain the creation and sustenance of the gap in responsiveness practice within the EI case-study context.

The need for a meta-evaluative-meta-cognitive (meta-ec) model. A common theme underlying my participants' responses and actions (and my own as a practitioner) is the line, "*We should... but we don't*" and even though "*we want to, we can't*." These phrases were repeated when staff, administrators, and students talked about how they wanted to catalyze responsiveness, improve its quality, and ensure its completion on a formal, systemic, and iterative basis.

When the case-study practitioner participants were discussing the challenges they faced in engaging in responsiveness, phrases like "*we need*" or "*if we had*" came up often as they described how they would improve responsiveness if they could—i.e., "*if we had/we need*" more time, money, better leadership, resources, or more staff, formal systems and processes in place, less restrictions on their own authority, and similar such factors. Staff and administrators affirmed that practitioners knew they could do responsiveness better because they did want to practice, enact, and embody their espoused theory.

It was my lived experience of these constraints and my rationalizations (defensive practices and designed blindness) as a practitioner regarding my inability to overcome these barriers (too vast a topic to begin discussing in this dissertation) that led to the initial conceptualization of the theoretical strategies to catalyze responsiveness and reduce the gap between the espoused theory and enacted practice of serving the community's needs well.

A meta-ec model that will facilitate our critical examination of these barriers that cause the gap and enable us to critically explore the governing variables that were previously uncritically accepted as limitations is needed. A model to help us engage in practice that is more aligned with our espoused theory is needed. A normative model that can transcend contextual and disciplinary boundaries in terms of practice, and empower a practitioner to self-reflect and self-determine improvement to reduce the gap in one's own practice is called for. A comprehensive framework that can help practitioners address these barriers in a meta-evaluative-meta-cognitive sustainable manner to improve our practice of responsiveness is needed. The foundations for the reflexive-critical and decolonizing-doing action model (r-CriDo) meta-ec model are thus laid.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the theoretical definitions and diagrammatic representations of responsiveness derived in Chapter III—i.e., the 3-step model, and the 2-step process definition that encompasses the 3-step process model—were empirically confirmed to validate the conceptualized definition of responsiveness. Thereafter, based on common themes drawn from the case-study participants' responses and insights based on their lived experience of responsiveness, a matrix of seven quality indicators of responsiveness was developed. This matrix was offered as one possible way for practitioners to self-assess and monitor their own organization's responsiveness. Thus, after conceptualizing responsiveness in Chapter III, it was operationalized in this chapter.

Informed by the development of the responsiveness quality indicator matrix, a final visual representation of responsiveness that brings together all the nuances of responsiveness theorizing thus far, (including the process and its quality indicators) was

offered. Thus, the first half of this chapter comprehensively answers the first part of the first research question set posed in Chapter II—how can responsiveness be defined, measured, and monitored? Chapter III had only theoretically answered this question. The first half of this chapter empirically confirms the definition of responsiveness derived in Chapter III and goes further to offer the responsiveness quality indicator matrix to measure and monitor responsiveness, thereby answering the question comprehensively.

The second half of this chapter tackled the second part of the first research question set—what are the perceived and lived barriers faced by EIs, NPOs, and evaluators in practicing responsiveness? What factors contribute to a gap between the espoused theory of EIs and NPOs and their enacted theory?

Once again, theoretical answers drawn from existing literature in the field were offered in Chapter III. This chapter uses empirical evidence from the case-study context to confirm some of the theoretical reasons for the existence of the gap offered earlier. It uses participant responses to highlight the lived reality of the barriers and challenges that explain the existence of the gap within the EI case-study context. The confirmation of the gap within this EI case-study and an understanding of the barriers that cause it set the stage to address the second research question set of this theory-building dissertation endeavor—what does a framework/ model/ strategy that addresses these possible barriers and catalyze responsiveness look like? What are its unique elements? What does it offer that the other evaluation models/ approaches thus far have not? The next chapter addresses this set of questions.

CHAPTER VI

A HOLISTIC FRAMEWORK TO IMPROVE RESPONSIVENESS

The purpose of this chapter is to arrive at a holistic model that can be followed to enhance responsiveness. An understanding of the gap between espoused theory and enacted practice within the EI case-study context set the stage to develop this proposed meta-ec framework that seeks to enable participants to improve their responsiveness practice. The empirical confirmations of the gap within the EI case-study calls for a model that can be used by the case-study practitioner participants to address the barriers they face and overcome the gap in their practice of responsiveness.

The chapter begins with a brief overview of the initial, theoretically conceptualized meta-ec model. Thereafter, the step-by-step development of this meta-ec model based on the researcher-self's logic-in-use and the participants' recommendations are mapped to present the detailed elements of the final, refined model. Simultaneously, the chapter also offers empirical confirmation/disconfirmation of the model to highlight the utility and relevance of the model, or lack thereof.

Given the nature of theory-building (Lynham, 2002a), it is important to reiterate that these three aspects—the model elements (drawn from existing literature and lived experiences), the model's utility and relevance (based on participant responses reflecting on their lived experiences of responsiveness), and the model modifications (based on participant suggestions to increase the model's applicability), are presented simultaneously, to reflect the reality of the theory-building process. The chapter ends with a brief discussion and visual representation of the final refined holistic, meta-ec model to improve responsiveness even as it offers an example or two of how to apply the

model in real-world EI/NPO contexts to enhance responsiveness and overcome the gap in its practice to better meet the needs of the community.

The Initial Conceptualization of the r-CriDo Model

The theorizing about strategies to enhance and improve responsiveness had begun even before responsiveness had been clearly theorized (i.e., defined and operationalized) in this dissertation. Following the critical feminist approach, I theorized my lived experiences as a practitioner and sought answers to improve my practice. As a member of the student community I knew the importance of an EI/NPO engaging in responsiveness so that my needs could be adequately met. Thus, the goal was to offer a template or model as a tool for practitioners like me within an EI/NPO to use that would help us serve our respective communities better by offering a meta-ec process checklist (that if adopted could possibly help us enhance responsiveness within our specific EI/NPO contexts).

When this research endeavor formally began, the questions that I was exploring were—how could one’s practice better reflect the values, the principles, the goals, and the commitments that are espoused toward the community, within the constraints of institutional barriers? What tools or templates exist in practice to desist practitioners from pathologizing one another or the communities we serve, and instead take responsibility for our own actions toward becoming aware of and addressing the gaps in our practice of responsiveness? How could I and other practitioners like me overcome our fear, frustration, apathy or tiredness (depending on the day, the situation, and how we were feeling), to consistently improve our practice without losing our sense of agency (self-determination) and empowerment? These were the questions I was grappling with and the

meta-evaluative-meta-cognitive r-CriDo model was conceptualized to answer these questions.

The conceptualized meta-ec r-CriDo model draws from critical feminist and subaltern theories. *r* stands for reflexive, *Cri* stands for critical and decolonizing, and *Do* stands for action. The model's name was inspired and plays off the notion of 'credo' which means values driving action—which is the purpose of this model—acting your values, i.e., enacting and embodying one's espoused theory of quality responsiveness. As a process model template or a mental guide checklist, it seeks to build individual awareness of gaps between espoused theory and behavior and seeks to inspire action through critical reflection, and building self-determination and agency within practitioners like me.

The goal of this dissertation was to offer a middle-range theory (Merton, 1968) as a normative tool that could be used practically by EI/NPO practitioners (including evaluators), and possibly even their communities to improve responsiveness. The r-CriDo model was meant to be a meta-ec self-assessment tool and not an interventionist tool like other double-loop learning strategies discussed in Chapter III. The logic-in-use was that once practitioners engaged in learning about the r-CriDo model to better enact it, they could then continue to use it on their own in a self-sustaining, repetitive manner, and alleviate the gap in their own and their EI/NPO's responsiveness practice.

Initial model developments. The initial model was conceptualized as a result of informal theorizing that involved tentatively combining a few existing concepts from the literature—Caring (Noddings, 1984), Loving (Sandoval, 2000), Serving (Gandhi, 2011), and Hoping (Freire, 1970, 1994; Hooks, 2003; West, 2008). Putting the ideas from these

scholars together, the model was inspired by my lived experiences as an insider-outsider with my intersectional standpoint as a student, practitioner, and evaluator within the various EI and NPO contexts I found myself in. Please see Figure 11 for the initial representation of this model.

The four primary concepts of caring, loving, hoping, and serving were put together as part of a process model that was offered when this theory-building dissertation study was proposed. Critical feminist standpoint theory (Hill Collins, 2000; Harding, 2004) was an integral part of understanding the model even as concepts from organizational learning and non-profit management (Argyris & Schon, 1978; Ebrahim, 2009) were meant to be addressed through the model. But problems arose in this initial conceptualization.

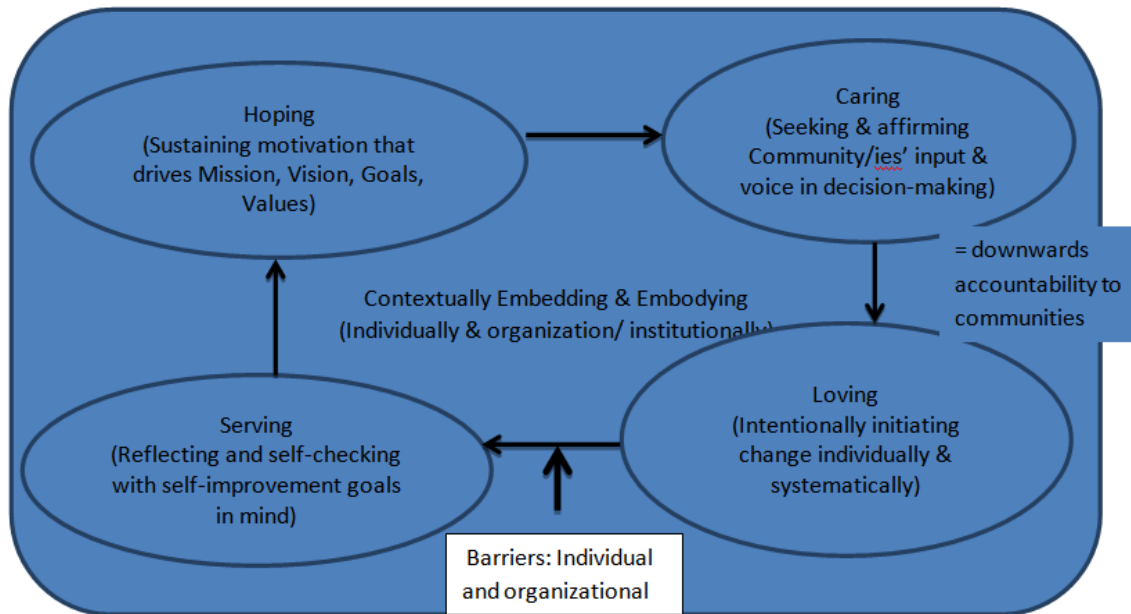


Figure 11. Initial Diagrammatic Representation of the Reflexive-Critical and Decolonizing-Doing (r-CriDo) Meta-EC Model.

This initial r-CriDo model was heavily theory-based in terms of its articulation and representation. The ideas revolved around academic jargonized understanding of everyday words like loving, hoping, caring, and serving, and called for a deep, nuanced understanding of critical and subaltern feminist theory. Because the use of these words in this model could be confused with the common person understanding of loving, hoping, caring, or serving, it became obvious that using this terminology would likely make the meta-ec model less understandable and applicable in the real world. Thus, it became important to use more practice-based, straightforward language, and move away from the academic jargon and ideological articulations (even though the model and theory was founded upon them).

Through meaningful dialogue with advisors, family, friends, and colleagues, and by engaging in idea mapping, these heavily theory-laden terms were replaced with more practitioner-oriented terminology to avoid confusions between the theorized understandings of the words/ concepts and their everyday usage. Multiple modifications, additions, and changes were made to the initial model (Figure 11) to arrive at the r-CriDo model that was shared with case-study participants for data collection purposes. This revised model (please see Figure 12) was shared with participants to obtain their input regarding how the model could be visually better represented to make it more relevant and easier to comprehend and adopt. Participant responses were also sought regarding what the overall model and its individual elements' relevance and utility was in the context of the case-study. This comprised the second round of data-collection.

Original model for data collection. There are six key theories that are the foundation for the r-CriDo (reflexive, critical and decolonizing-doing) model that was

shared with participants. These six theories include—Feminist Standpoint theory (Hill Collins, 2000; Harding, 2004), Caring (Noddings, 1984), Loving (Sandoval, 2000), Serving (Gandhi, 2011), Hoping (Freire, 1970, 1994; Hooks, 2003; West, 2008), and Challenging deficit-thinking (Valencia, 1997, 2010). In the following section the r-CriDo model or framework and its components/ elements (i.e., the various strategies), and their definitions are outlined as they were presented to the participants within the case-study.

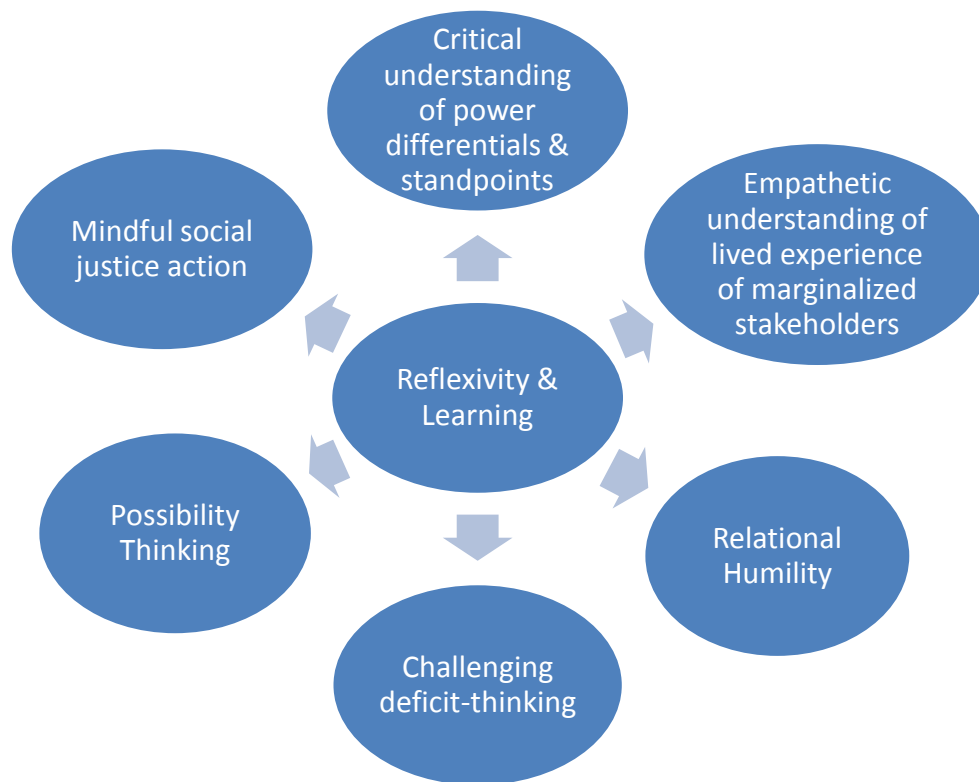


Figure 12. The r-CriDo Model Shared with Participants during Data Collection.

The original seven elements. The r-CriDo model used for data collection purposes had seven conceptual elements as can be seen in Figure 12. In the final model (derived based on participant input and feedback), some of these seven elements were

further delineated while others were combined to give rise to nine elements or meta-ec processes. However, initially, the model had only seven elements and they are:

1. Reflexivity & learning (modified in final model)
2. Critical understanding of power differentials and standpoints (modified in final model)
3. Empathetic understanding of lived experiences of marginalized stakeholders (modified in final model)
4. Relational humility (same as final model)
5. Challenging deficit-thinking (same as final model)
6. Possibility-thinking (same as final model)
7. Social-justice oriented mindful action (modified in final model)

The logic-in-use guiding this model creation was that deploying or practicing each of these seven meta-ec process elements would move the practitioner towards engaging in quality responsiveness, thereby enabling them to enact and embody their commitment to their community in their practice and close any gaps between their espoused theory and enacted practice. Data collection involved collecting participant feedback about the model's utility within the EI case-study context only in relation to the needs assessment evaluation step of responsiveness to empirically demonstrate its relevance within that step. Testing the model's relevance in the change-intervention step of responsiveness has been tabled in this dissertation and can be explored in the future.

Model layout logic. As can be seen in Figure 12, 'reflexivity & learning' were centered in the model because the logic-in-use was that this element spoke to all the other elements of the model. Arrows pointed outwards from 'reflexivity & learning' to each of

the outer six elements implying that reflexivity and learning interacted with each of the other six elements to impact the practitioner's meta-ec engagement with that element.

The r-CriDo model was like a wheel to denote no beginning and no end to these meta-ec processes (inspired by Gandhi's Satyagraha Chakra, 1946; and inspiring as a symbol of India's struggle for independence). Each of the seven elements could serve as entry and exit points to engaging in this meta-ec process to enhance responsiveness.

In addition to Figure 12, Figure 13 was also shared with participants during data collection. It linked the r-CriDo model to the needs assessment evaluation process steps. Having the diagrammatic representation of the seven element r-CriDo model within the evaluation process model (please see Figure 13) helped the participants visualize how the meta-ec model would work as practitioners adopted and applied the r-CriDo model while engaging in the needs assessment evaluation process steps. Using Figure 13, participants were explained to, that all these seven elements are meant to mediate and impact how practitioners engage in each of the six steps of an evaluation process within the needs assessment step of the responsiveness process (such as data collection, data analysis, or dissemination of findings). It was explained that each step of the evaluation process could involve multiple applied turns of this r-CriDo wheel because each element of the model would be visited and considered at least once during each of the six steps of evaluation because the model was not a closed model. The elements were not connected with each other and the model could be deployed with any element as the entry access point meta-ec process. However, I believed and shared with participants that applying the model required each element to be visited at least once as part of treating it like a checklist. This was to ensure the fidelity of practice of the meta-ec process, for maximum benefit.

Participants were offered practical examples that explained the model and the link between the central element and the outer ones such as—within the data collection step of the needs assessment process, engaging in a meta-ec process of reflexivity and learning would enable participants to seek and gain an understanding of the differential powers and standpoints of all the stakeholders within the given context that would then impact how data was collected. Each element would be visited, mediated by reflexivity and learning, to figure out how the data collection step would need to be modified to reflect the new insights gained. This was one example of the model explanation shared.

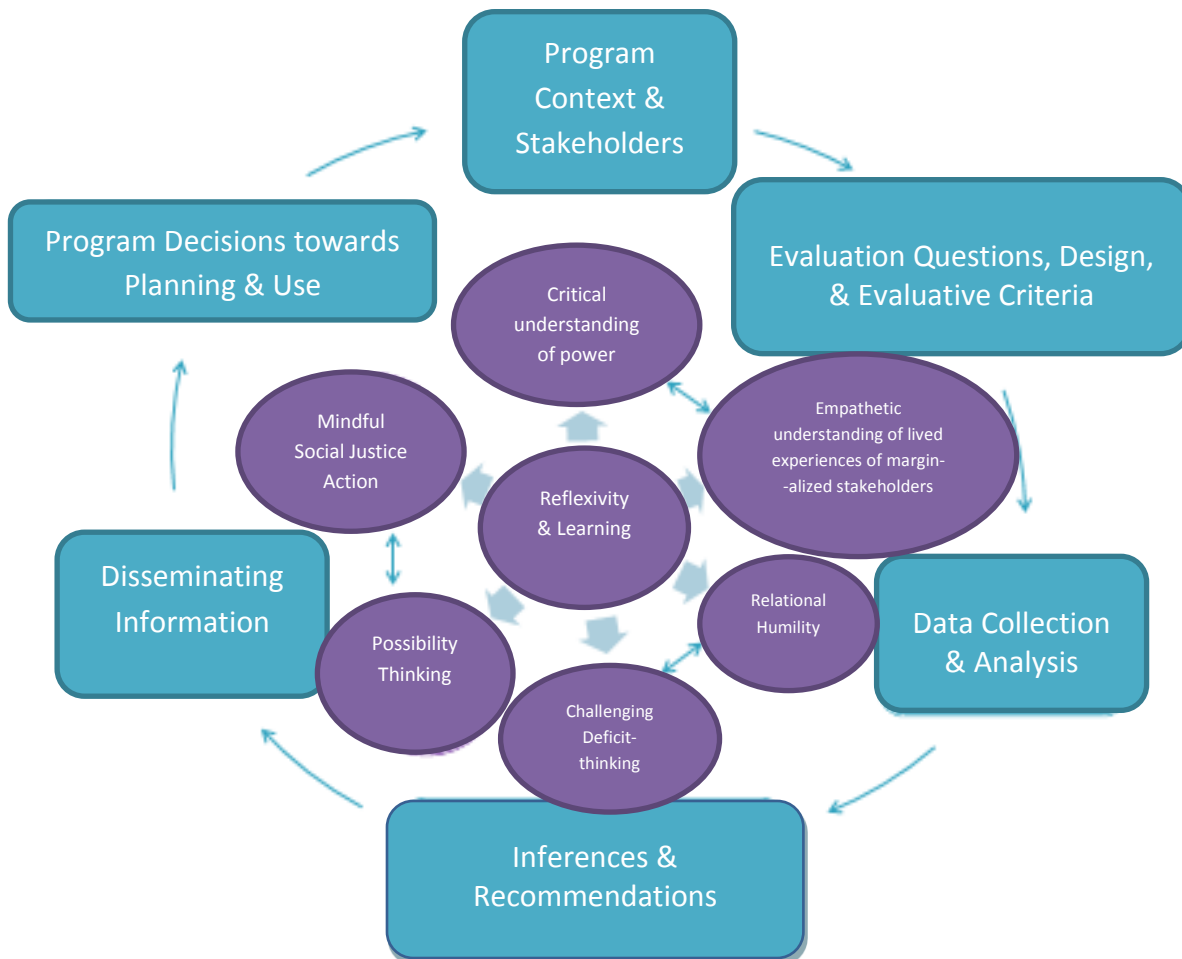


Figure 13. The r-CriDo Model Deployed within the 6-Step Needs Assessment Evaluation Process of Responsiveness.

Areas of ambiguity. When these diagrammatic representations of the r-CriDo model (Figure 12), linked to the steps of a needs assessment evaluation process (Figure 13), were shared with participants, I (as the theory-building researcher) was not clear whether the outer six elements of the r-CriDo model connected with each other and whether they interacted with each other. I was unclear whether the model represented a meta-ec, cyclical, step-wise, linear process that began from ‘critical understanding of power differentials and standpoints’ and ended with the meta-ec process of ‘mindful, social-justice oriented action’—all mediated by ‘reflexivity and learning’—or whether some other form of action in the 6-step needs assessment evaluation process was meant to be the outcome of every element’s meta-ec process.

This ambiguity was one among the many questions I had. I had other doubts such as—which element is central to the r-CriDo model according to participants? At that point I believed ‘reflexivity and learning was.’ Did each element imply action? Was there enough overlap in the understanding and application of any two elements, so much so that they should be collapsed into one element? All these uncertainties needed to be answered by the final r-CriDo model.

An overview of the data collection process. The seven derived tenets/ elements of the initial model were shared with the three participant groups in my study. An outline of each of the seven meta-ec process elements of the r-CriDo model was offered to participants and its elements were explained. The ambiguities I struggled with were also shared to elicit their thoughts and suggestions to improve the model. Each element’s key meta-ec process idea was explained using anecdotes. Both Figure 12 and 13 were shared with practical examples of how the r-CriDo model would be used within the needs

assessment process step of responsiveness. Staff and administrators, and student participants (who at that time had also become evaluators within the case-study setting) were requested to share their feedback about whether the model and its elements were relevant to them in their respective practitioner roles, and whether the model could be improved or better presented to increase its understanding and applicability in the real world.

Participant Responses and Empirical Contributions to the r-CriDo Model

Participant responses and feedback contributed to the original seven elements of the r-CriDo model becoming nine elements instead. Table 4 offers a comparison of the original seven elements and the final nine elements of the r-CriDo model. The final visual representation of the nine-element meta-ec process model also changed based on participant input and this final r-CriDo model will be presented at the end of this chapter.

Table 4. *Original Seven Elements vs. Final Nine Elements of the r-CriDo Model.*

Original Seven Elements	Final Nine Elements
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reflexivity & learning 2. Critical understanding of power differentials and standpoints 3. Empathetic understanding of lived experiences of marginalized stakeholders 4. Relational humility 5. Challenging deficit-thinking 6. Possibility-thinking 7. Social-justice oriented mindful action 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reflexive agency 2. Learning 3. Critically understanding power 4. Beginning from marginalized lived experiences 5. Empathetic understanding 6. Relational humility 7. Challenging deficit-thinking 8. Possibility-thinking 9. Mindful action

As can be seen in the above table, the final r-CriDo model's nine elements are: reflexive agency, learning, critical understanding of power, beginning from marginalized

lived experiences, empathetic understanding, relational humility, challenging deficit-thinking, possibility thinking, and mindful action. I discuss the final nine elements of the r-CriDo model rather than the original seven because the final nine encompass the original seven elements and they also include an explanation of the development of the original seven into the final nine. Thus, only the final nine elements are laid out to avoid the redundancy of explaining the same concept twice.

As each element is presented, simultaneously, participant responses regarding the element's relevance and utility are also discussed. I also share the researcher-theorist-self's (my) logic-in-use (derived from existing literature combined with my lived experiences) that interacted with participants' feedback on the original seven-elements to result in their modification to arrive at nine final elements in the final r-CriDo model.

1. Reflexive agency. In the original seven-element model used for data collection, learning had been combined with reflexivity for the central element to be 'reflexivity and learning.' The logic-in-use being used at the time dictated combining these two elements because learning was only perceived as a direct outcome of reflexivity and so it could be collapsed with reflexivity. The word 'Agency' was not part of the model nor combined with reflexivity at that time. At the end of data collection, 'reflexivity and learning' were separated into two elements and reflexivity was restated as 'reflexive agency.'

Defining reflexive agency. In the r-CriDo model 'reflexive agency' is defined thus: understanding the positionality of the 'I' and the agency of it in relation to others (such as the community or one's colleagues), i.e., taking responsibility for the 'I' and acting on it. Reflexivity has multiple understandings in the literature (Babcock, 1982). Within this dissertation, it is a process of critically exploring one's thoughts, behavior,

and actions with the awareness that they are inherently biased due to one's socialization. It begins with the acknowledgement that we are often not aware of these implicit biases until we begin to explore our role as an active agent within any process to consistently uncover and overcome these biases and explore our privilege that shape our views and understandings of the world even as we act on it to change it (Sandoval, 2000). Similarly, 'agency' is defined in feminist literature as the ability of the individual to not be boxed in by the multiple, intersecting oppression s/he faces and instead deploy the strategies necessary to adopt identities or stances that are required to survive within the oppressive system to engage in social- justice action towards addressing them (Sandoval, 2000).

Thus, 'reflexive agency' enables practitioners to recognize, understand, question, and challenge our own values, unconscious biases, socialized norms, and taken-for-granted beliefs and assumptions with regard to our practice. It requires practitioners to engage more self-critically and consciously in our practice, resulting in greater rigor in carrying out the different responsiveness processes, thereby increasing the validity of the findings.

'Reflexive agency' is thus, a continuous process of self-engagement that enables practitioners to be empowered to revisit and change our actions to affect our relationships and our own practice. This recognition of the 'I' and the awareness that the 'I' as constructed, mobile, dynamic, and the understanding that it does not have to be restricted to one specific set of actions or assumptions allows the I to be acted upon by the self and relocated within any given context. 'Reflexive agency' involves practitioners recognizing our agency and our own role within any situation rather than seeing ourselves as a function of our circumstances.

Within the responsiveness context, reflexive agency would mean that practitioners iteratively revisit our assumptions; that we question premises that have been taken for granted that guide our action. It involves constantly attempting to see what has been overlooked or what one has not considered, and involves challenging what one has taken for granted—especially related to the self. It helps us reflect on our whole context, and enables us to contest the governing variables that constrain our actions, interactions, and relationships with various stakeholders.

Practitioners engaging in reflexive agency are constantly locating themselves within their work and thinking. They are focused on recognizing their own agency to self-determine their practice. They revisit the questions of why and how things are done; they revisit the how and why of their own action. They ask the questions—how do I impact others?, What am I doing?, Why am I not doing...?, Why am I assuming...?, How can I do better?. They are asking these questions to modify their thinking and actions accordingly by taking responsibility for the ‘self’ in the EI, and the responsiveness process.

Describing reflexivity to case-study participants. During data collection, I described reflexivity (and not reflexive agency) to my participants because the original model’s central element was ‘reflexivity and learning.’ I described reflexivity as “*we don’t know what we don’t know*” in terms of most of our knowledge about the world around us. I did not say much about the ‘learning’ part of the element. I assumed that learning would occur with reflexivity and assumed that it did not need to be explained because participants had a ubiquitous understanding of the concept of learning and that was the meaning I was referring to as well.

I described reflexivity to my participants as the process of acknowledging the partiality of our views and knowledge and constantly attempting to get at the knowledge that we don't know that we don't know by going beyond reflection to expose these blind spots of not knowing. Participants were informed that asking the questions—"what am I missing?" and "why are we doing it this way?" meant going consistently deeper with the why questions that would help us be more reflexive as practitioners in our work. Thus, reflexivity was described to participants as a process to be engaged in to explore and expose the partiality and situatedness of our own knowledge. Rather than an interventionist approach, reflexivity was described as an internal process.

Participant responses regarding reflexivity. Given this description of reflexivity, below is a discussion of participant responses regarding their understanding of what they saw as the relevance of 'reflexivity and learning' to their work.

Conflating reflexivity with reflection. Many of the staff and administrator participants seemed to see reflexivity as reflection—most likely because I had not explained reflexivity well enough. But despite their misunderstanding the term, they did see it as being very important to the work they engaged in.

"An organization that is not constantly reflecting on what they do and trying to understand how they can operate better is not going to be successful in the long run... Imagine an organization where the organization never, never take time to reflect on who they are, what they value and whether their core structure is aligned to those values...It would be really difficult for that organization to really be effective!... When you are trying to get from point A to point B, at any given time it would be

important to know where you are exactly and if you are headed the right way, how well you are doing, so that you know if you are way off...”

(Administrator D)

As is evident from the above response, reflexivity was seen as improving one’s work through reflection rather than revisiting one’s own assumptions about what we know, why take what we know as fact for granted, who we are within the different situations, and how we act and impact others.

I see it (reflexivity) happening. It (reflexivity) happens naturally all the time through informal check-ins, through doorway conversations.

There are times when we delve into the “what am I missing questions.”

We do go into—why don’t we ask more questions? Why don’t we call this school... (to learn from them to improve our practice)? Is there an article that tells us how someone handles this (situation with/ need of a student)? ...” (Staff E)

This above response once again demonstrates the conflation of reflection and reflexivity. The staff person is describing their attempts at getting help from others as they *reflect* on how they could improve responsiveness, even as s/he is attempting to question aspects of their practice that they have taken for granted, thus engaging in *reflexivity*. Based on these responses and similar such comments from other staff and administrators, it can be inferred that reflexivity blurred with reflection for most of the staff and administrators because other responses confirmed this confusion. Because I had likely not adequately explained reflexivity to my staff and administrator participants, they conflated it with reflection without realizing that reflexivity was a meta-ec, double-loop

learning process while reflection was a single-loop learning process that did not offer participants the framework to question the constraints and challenge the governing variables they faced that came in the way of them engaging in responsiveness.

But despite their different understandings of the term, many of the staff and administrator participants acknowledged that this process of reflexivity/ reflection (as they had conflated it) did not happen as much. Staff and administrator participants consistently noted various barriers (shared below) that came in the way of deploying the r-CriDo model. These barriers to using the model were the same ones as the ones they had shared as barriers to engaging in responsiveness.

“Our instinct is to say, something didn’t go well; what can we do to change it? And then we fall back on what we know. It (reflexivity) doesn’t happen as much as it should but if something didn’t go well, it is so easy to fall back on what you know and justify it (inaction) saying things like “we tried this seven years ago and it did not work”” (Staff B)

“(Practicing the model) needs to come top-down” (Staff A)

“What about economics?” (Staff F),

“if we had a moment to catch our breath then we could (engage in reflexivity)...” (Staff C)

“How are we going to do this (r-Crido process model)?” (Staff G)

“Effective leadership is important (to engage in the model)” (Staff B)

The offering of these constraints as barriers to engaging in the r-CriDo model are evidence of the fact that reflexivity had not been explained adequately nor understood

because reflexivity would call for them to question and challenge these governing variable constraints that they were talking about as coming in the way of engaging with the r-CriDo model. It would also require them to look at their own role in the continued existence of these barriers and explore what they could do to overcome it. Thus, conflating reflexivity and reflection was a problem that came in the way of staff and administrator participants understanding and responding to the ‘reflexivity and learning’ element of the r-CriDo model. They did believe and express that they thought the element was important,

“Because you know, you think you have read so much and know so much but as you’re getting older you are getting more and more stuck (laughs) less reflective and less reflexive... and things are changing,”

noted Administrator A referring to the importance of engaging in it, but their conflated understanding of the term leaves questions about the validity of that relevance.

Relevance of reflexivity. Student participants on the other hand, had been explicitly taught in class what reflexivity meant in detail, and hence they did not seem to conflate the two ideas of reflection and reflexivity. Their responses indicate the relevance of reflexivity in their work as practitioner evaluators of the EI.

“That first reflection essay (where I, the researcher-self, as the instructor had asked my students to talk about what their experiences as a student community member in relation to their experiences with the EI unit were; what brought them to the evaluation work of evaluating the EI unit; and what they hoped to achieve based on their perceptions of the

unit), I had to sit and think about what my biases were. What are my assumptions? Why am I thinking the way I am thinking? What has led to me having those particular values or expectations?... just to know how those got formed, just to know why those things are important for me, that was a very good experience for me to come to terms with who I am and what bothers me—why I am doing what I am doing... so yes, I think reflexivity is important.” (Student J)

“Making the survey questions. I thought it was going to be easy but then I learned and realized it was challenging. That you could put a comma in there or a word here and it completely changes the meaning, the question. And I realized I was asking people certain questions assuming that they have experienced this or thought that... like there is bias. Like completely. Like all the time. So I realized that you really have to be very clear about what you are asking and what you are actually doing and what is going through your head while you are asking those questions.”

(Student F)

These above responses, and similar others that illustrated the use of reflexivity by student participant practitioner confirmed the importance of reflexivity. Their responses affirm their understanding that it is about locating the ‘I’ within the work and understanding and owning one’s own work, motivations, and assumptions. Students gave examples of the applicability of reflexivity within the EI context demonstrate its utility and relevance to the needs assessment process steps of responsiveness. For example,

“When I was analyzing the data. I kept asking why I was coding it this way. Why do I think this quote is important? How are my values affecting how I see this? What are my assumptions? Am I being biased? Yeah. Reflexivity played a role in that.” (Student D)

Thus, participant responses confirm the relevance of reflexivity.

Changing reflexivity to reflexive agency. All staff and administrator responses, when analyzed, made it clear that I needed to have done a better job explaining reflexivity as locating the self within the process. And that was why ‘reflexivity’ was changed to ‘reflexive agency’ in the final version of the model. Agency implied self-determination, and that was key within reflexivity for participants to engage with the meta-ec model to improve responsiveness. Closer to the end of the data collection process, a couple of staff members and one administrator spoke to this ‘agency.’

“I guess we could be doing more too (related to addressing the barriers responsiveness faces)” (Staff B).

“I don’t agree (with another staff member’s earlier response that engaging in the r-CriDo model takes more time). I guess the whole point of the model is—what more can we do?” (Staff A)

These responses confirm the importance of the intentional agency of the individual practitioner. Agency was previously implicitly understood within reflexivity as locating the ‘I’ in our thoughts, assumptions, and action, and thus, it was not elaborated upon. However, explicit agency becomes necessary—especially when so many constraints surround an individual engaging in responsiveness as is the case with practitioners within this case-study context.

Student participants' feedback about the relevance of reflexivity confirmed this understanding of agency as part of reflexivity because they had been exposed to the literature on it. To ensure this was the case with future practitioners who would apply the r-CriDo model, (so that they clearly understood and applied the reflexivity and agency element), the word 'agency' was added explicitly to the model for the central element to become 'reflexive agency.'

2. Learning. Learning was an important foundational element within the r-CriDo model. During data collection it was combined with reflexivity and thus specific responses regarding its relevance were not accessed from participants because they focused on reflexivity and subsumed learning within it. After data collection reflexivity and learning were parsed out as two separate elements within the r-CriDo model.

Defining learning. Dewey (1916) describes learning as experience and experimentation. Discovery—about oneself and about all things around us is learning. In this model, learning is defined in the way it is colloquially understood. It is the acquisition of knowledge or skills through experience, practice, or through studying and being taught. Learning is pervasive and there are different schools of thought that theorize learning (from cognitive to constructivist views).

Within the r-CriDo model and theory-building, learning is the process of drawing meaning from our experiences with the world, and within our own minds and emotions that results in knowledge that then informs how we think and act on the world and ourselves. The learning that I am referencing in this dissertation was originally conceived as this generation of knowledge about the responsiveness process that happened as a direct result of being reflexive. However, I realized learning encompassed more.

Parsing out learning. Participant responses informed my decision to separate learning from reflexivity. First, student participants' responses in the case-study (i.e., their deeper understanding of reflexivity due to learning about it in class as opposed to hearing about it in a two minute presentation as administrators and staff did during this data-collection), led to my logic-in-use that learning needed to be separated from reflexivity. I realized that time needed to be spent learning about the elements of the r-CriDo model and how to apply them to enhance responsiveness. An administrator's request to me to teach the model elements within a staff training of an EI unit this administrator oversaw so that they may revisit their practice of responsiveness and apply the model's elements, makes it evident that some primary learning of the model and its elements needs to occur even before the model is implemented and enacted, or reflexivity is engaged in. It is for these reasons that in the final model, 'Reflexive Agency' and 'Learning' were separated as two different elements.

Learning occurs within reflexive agency but it also occurs at other times and due to other factors within the model such as the outcome of direct lived experiences. On an organizational level the process of reflexive agency, can be seen as resulting in double-loop or transformational learning. However, learning each of the elements of the model and learning how to apply them in context had to also be included and represented in the 'learning' element of the model. Thus, 'learning' was separated to be a stand-alone element in the final model to reflect its versatility in occurring in multiple ways through multiple means for multiple reasons.

Relevance of learning. Specific empirical data to assert the relevance of learning was not collected in the dissertation because learning was initially combined with

reflexivity and only parsed out after understanding its role beyond its ties to reflexivity. This is one limitation of establishing the relevance of the ‘learning’ element of the model. However, student practitioner responses about the relevance of reflexivity in their evaluative practice speak to the relevance of ‘learning’. Students discussed their learning of the model and engaging in reflexivity that in turn led to their awareness and learning of how their assumptions played a role in their work.

All three participant groups used phrases such as, “*I realized*” (Student C), “*I now know*” (Student G), “*I became aware*” (Student L), “*you learn*” (Administrator A), “*we understood*” (Staff D) when talking about applying elements of the r-CriDo model in their responsiveness practice. These phrases indicate that learning occurred and was integral to the r-CriDo model. Thus, ‘learning’ was retained within the final r-CriDo model—but as a separate element.

3. Critically understanding power. Originally this element of the model had been called ‘critical understanding of power differentials and standpoints.’ Thereafter, for a little while, it was labeled ‘critical understanding of power and positionality.’ In the end, in the final model it was shortened to ‘critically understanding power.’

Theoretical underpinnings. This element of the r-CriDo model draws from critical feminist theory (Hill Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2003; Harding, 2004) which highlights how historically some forms of knowledge have been privileged as more legitimate truths. Critically understanding power and positionality involves not just the simplistic understanding about who has authority within a given context, but it also involves going deeper, to see the more invisible issues of power and privilege in context, as a result of the historic, institutional, socio-cultural, economic, political, and other

hegemonic influences on the practitioner and other stakeholders within the process. Hill Collins (2000) argues that within the intersecting historical, institutional oppressions of race, gender, class, sexuality, and other identity dimensions, a political consciousness gained to survive becomes a reality for members who face these intersecting oppressions as their everyday lived experience. And it is this lived intersectional reality that she calls—standpoint.

The struggle to gain this standpoint allows one to recognize and illuminate the previously invisible effects of power and privilege in shaping the whole context—i.e., the relationships between the different stakeholders, the knowledge that is valued, and the interactions and communication between people. It lays the foundation for the existence and experience of multiple “realities” due to intersecting oppressions and privileges.

Having an awareness of these issues enables evaluators/ practitioners to gain a nuanced understanding of the differential powers of the different stakeholders. It helps us recognize and appreciate marginalized standpoints and the barriers these standpoints face in being included in the responsiveness process. Engaging in this process of illuminating the invisible power and privilege that mediates every aspect of practice including one’s own is what critically understanding power is. And using that information to begin assessing whether the marginalized stakeholders are accessed and served within responsiveness, I believed, has the potential to catalyze responsiveness.

Describing the element to participants. To the participants and practitioners in the case-study, I explained that ‘critical understanding of power differentials and standpoints’ meant not just recognizing the obvious authority defined by the hierarchical position of the stakeholder, and the power of that authority, but to also seek and

recognize the implicit, invisible, historic, institutional, systemic power and privilege that we practitioners and others around us have. There are also historic institutional oppressive forces we practitioners face based on our intersectional personal and professional identities. It is about understanding the existence of the same power, privilege, or lack thereof and resulting oppression, in others—like community members, colleagues, or supervisors that we work with.

When discussing this element with my participants, I asked them to consider questions like—whose version of truth is considered as truth when collecting and using information to guide decision-making and action? Whose views are considered untrue or invalid? Whose knowledge is considered to be more trustworthy within decision-making and why?

I shared with my participants that silences become important—who is silent (including ourselves)? When are they/ we silent? Why? Where? How? About what are they/ we silent? Is it forced or by choice? Why? Who has power, in what situations? In what contexts does the power shift (if it does)?

I shared with the participants that when one began engaging in the r-CriDo model element, the silences begin to matter—the who, when, where, how, why, and what of it. Understanding the reasons behind silences, the meaning of silences, and uncovering the voice behind the silences becomes important to expose and explore power.

I noted that an understanding of intersectionality, power, position, authority, and intersecting oppressions that affect the individual identity and the institutional role of the individual, must be explored for individuals to understand themselves and those around them adequately to interpret the silences and explore them in context. It lays the

foundation for the existence and experience of multiple “realities” due to overlapping oppressions and intersectionality. After briefly explaining this element to my participants, they shared their thoughts on its relevance with respect to their work, with me.

Relevance of element. My practitioner participants acknowledged that power did play a role—especially when considering authority. They talked about how power and privilege played out in every decision-making situation. They also spoke about power and privilege from a place where they recognized when they did not have it. A staff member’s complaint below highlights this issue.

“Even in the search committees (where things are supposed to be equal in terms of representation of the committee members) the higher level is still the higher level. It is not an even playing field. The person in power will have to set that (equalization of power) and take more work to do that (level the playing field).” (Staff G, speaking to their lack of power in certain situations.)

This tendency of recognizing when one does not have power or privilege, and always speaking from a position of lesser power and privilege often makes our own power and privilege in other situations invisible. One administrator articulated best—

“Oh gosh yes (laughs)! It (power) always does (play a role in practice) right?... Sometimes it’s a little disconcerting because for someone like me who has both visible and non-visible minority statuses, it’s a little jarring sometimes to realize that “Oh! I have this privilege and that privilege. So you can be “both/and” and that’s tricky but real... (laughs)” (Administrator A)

Literature (Hill Collins, 2000) confirms that when one does have power and privilege, it is usually more invisible as compared to when one does not have power and privilege. Most staff participants agreed that critically understanding power and addressing it needed to occur as a process led by those who had power and privilege because the meta-ec process would involve them making visible the invisible power they themselves had. And that would go a long way in them beginning to realize the oppression and the lack of power of others, and their own role and complicity in it (awareness gained as a result of reflexive-agency interacting with this element).

But participants who responded also believed that critically understanding power and addressing it was not a process that could be *imposed* on anyone.

“I don’t think people in power would appreciate it. Like if we were to go up to ABC (administrator) in a meeting and say “well you are in a position of power. We’d really appreciate it if you wouldn’t talk as much. (laughs) I feel like it wouldn’t work,” said one Staff A alluding to how despite a critical understanding of power, it couldn’t be addressed unless the motivation to address it came internally from within oneself—especially for those who did have the power.

Practitioners discussed barriers to addressing power because of existing discourses that reified the power of those who already had it by justifying its legitimacy. But they did acknowledge that addressing power was still something important to try and do.

“If you are thinking about decision-making, if the people in power get to make the decisions, it might be more efficient. It is expedient. But if you are going to address power and bring more people in to have more

diverse voices then it's going to take longer. But it may get a better result though," said Staff H even as Staff D added, *"In my mind- in the long term it (addressing power and empowering others) is more efficient. It's an investment as a long term strategy but people have to see it that way."*

These responses from staff members among others from additional staff and some administrators point to many of the participants' belief that a critical understanding of power would positively impact responsiveness and improve the EI culture and processes as a whole in the long run—making this element relevant and useful.

My logic-in-use in conceptualizing and including this element in the r-CriDo model was that within the responsiveness context, an awareness of the differential power and privilege of different individual and groups of stakeholders impacts what actions are taken to include or involve participants. For example, how much attention is paid to the expressed needs of different community members, who has access, and whose voices are heard within decision-making, defines the responsiveness process, and power or the lack of it mediates each of these aspects of responsiveness.

Who has the power to initiate, complete, and act within responsiveness affects the outcomes of the process that then impacts the EI/NPO fulfilling its mission. The invisible nature of power and privilege, one's awareness about it, and whether it is addressed, impacts the quality and validity of responsiveness and affects whether the community's needs are met. It impacts whether the community member benefits from the EI/NPO's change-interventions and whether it is able to hold the EI/NPO accountable and impact the EI/NPO to better serve it. All these aspects of responsiveness depend on understanding power critically. This logic-in-use was confirmed by almost all

participants verbally/ non-verbally. They agreed that exploring power critically is important within responsiveness to catalyze it by addressing power inequities.

Participant contributions to this element. Participant feedback resulted in two big contributions to and modifications of this element.

Changing the element name. It was participant feedback that drove the name change of this element from ‘critical understanding of power differentials and standpoints’ to ‘critically understanding power.’ Originally, the words standpoint or positionality were used because of its specific critical feminist-theory based meaning that acknowledged a recognition of differential power that mediated the recognition of what was considered valid knowledge (relevant to how the community feedback was perceived). It also implied a struggle towards alleviating and ameliorating intersecting oppressions within contexts that was pertinent to disenfranchised communities fighting for their rights. Based on participants not really knowing what the academic significance of the word was, it made sense to remove both words. But some participants offered feedback that the elements were too heavily jargonized and were phrased too long.

They suggested that if the elements’ names could be shortened without them losing their essence and meaning, to make them more accessible at first glance, there was a greater likelihood of its use among practitioners. As a result of this feedback, the word ‘critically’ was used to encompass critical feminist theory and the connotations and expectations of understanding positionality and standpoints. This understanding of the element would be explained in the initial learning of the r-CriDo model by practitioners.

Analyzing governing variables as part of ‘Critically Understanding Power.’ Due to my not articulating reflexivity well enough to the staff and administrator participants in

my study as mentioned before, these two stakeholder groups often brought up constraints to engaging in the r-CriDo model—constraints that were exactly similar to the barriers that came in the way of them engaging in quality responsiveness. When asked about the changes they thought my model needed, a couple of staff members in the focus group brought up the issues of these governing variables and stated that it might make sense to include these governing variables in the r-CriDo model representation to illustrate that these governing variables do bind the effectiveness and implementation of the r-CriDo model.

As has been explained before, governing variables cause and represent a multitude of explicit and implicit aspects of an organization. These include but are not limited to organizational culture and the various aspects that relate to organizational culture such as time, resources, leadership, values, and other such factors. These two staff members (and a few others who nodded their agreement) suggested that it would make sense to include these governing variables as boundaries to the r-CriDo model that would mediate the model's efficacy in enhancing responsiveness.

But, two other staff members (Staff C and E) who did understand reflexivity, understood the purpose of the model—that this model was meant to act on those variables rather than have those governing variables acting on the model. In the focus group, once this clarification was made explicitly, all staff members acknowledged that governing variables were meant to be addressed by this r-CriDo model rather than the model being bound by these variables. One of the staff members thereafter (Staff B), suggested listing the governing variables within critically understanding power to illustrate how these governing variables of time, organizational culture and values, money, and authority,

could be explored to understand underlying issues of power, prioritization, and privilege, so that practitioners could engage in reflexive agency thereafter, and turn around and address their own and others' power to change these variables' control of the practitioners' action.

Thus, critically understanding power includes revising and challenging these upwards accountability driven governing variable constraints that we take for granted that define the organizational culture that impacts responsiveness. This idea, as a result of valuable participant suggestions, have been subsumed within this element, and in the final model 'critically understanding power' would require revisiting these variables and challenging their constraining effect on practitioners' thinking and action—something that will once again be taught in the initial learning of the r-CriDo model and its elements.

4. Beginning from marginalized lived experiences. When this r-CriDo model was originally presented to the case-study participants, this element of 'beginning from marginalized lived experiences' was not a separate element. So, when the participants responded to it as it was enfolded within 'empathetic understanding of lived experiences of marginalized stakeholders,' they often seemed to ignore the marginalized stakeholder section and responded more to the relevance of 'empathetic understanding.'

Theoretical underpinnings of this element. Existing literature has already established that individuals are shaped by their social location, power, and positionality, which is in turn a function of—the various intersecting oppressions acting on them, their resistance to those oppressive forces, their complicity with it, and/or their agency within it to work around its hegemonic force (Hill Collins, 2000). With its roots in Marxism,

standpoint theory has been appropriated and most developed by feminist theorists who have pushed the envelope to challenge traditional dominant views of truth, knowledge and objectivity by centering the role of power in the creation and validation of what is considered as knowledge. To begin with Standpoint theory (Haraway, 2003; Harding, 2004) —a critical feminist offering—exposes and examines the privileging of certain ways of knowing and knowledge as opposed to others.

As described previously, by recognizing the collective marginalized consciousness that has been historically dialogically shaped, it acknowledges that what is deemed as truth, knowledge, or objectivity, are shaped and mediated by embodied subjective lived experiences. Standpoint theory then centers deconstructing the role of power and privilege in shaping what is considered legitimate truth or knowledge. Dominant dualistic thinking sets up society in binaries where one has the power to define the other. This power allows the dominant group to devalue the subjectivity and knowledge of those they have power over and to objectify them (Hill Collins, 2000).

Feminist scholars have centered the lived experiences of historically marginalized groups who have faced multiple intersecting oppressions to highlight how those who have been historically, institutionally marginalized and oppressed have been denied access to education, and the opportunities to voice their thoughts and insights on the dominant systems and structures that oppresses and suppress them while they have simultaneously been denied the intellectual space to define and represent themselves (Hill Collins, 2000). This has made the marginalized group into objects of knowledge in multiples ways rather than being the subjects of it. The survival of this group has been possible because of their ability to resist and struggle against dominant definitions and

claims of who they are, as they have been told—definitions that have been imposed on these communities by the dominant groups that enable those with power and privilege to devalue this group’s knowledge claims. Beginning from marginalized lived experiences within the responsiveness process to access community members’ needs and feedback reflects this exact goal and struggle.

Given that there is differential power and differential valuing of knowledge, I argue (like the feminist scholars before me) that beginning from marginalized lived experiences offers greater validity, quality, depth and objectivity to any research or evaluation endeavor (Harding, 2004). Because power and privilege often work invisibly and thus have to be questioned to be exposed, the knowledge that is offered from a position of power that is assumed to be valid and true can only be challenged by the knowledge that is gathered from those who do not have access to that power and privilege—the historically marginalized.

It is important to make the “objects” of knowledge—often marginalized communities of EIs/NPOs—the “subjects” of their own lived experiences. Thus, beginning from the lived experiences of those who have historically been objectified in discourse would enable the EI/NPO practitioner to gain a richer and deeper understanding of the context and begin addressing the needs of this group, making it an important to the practice of responsiveness.

Understanding marginalization and beginning from there. In this model a marginalized stakeholder is the one who historically and institutionally has not had a voice in the decision-making; the individuals or groups who do not have access to power to influence the EI/NPO; members who have historically had their needs not met, or least

prioritized, and are unable to enforce change nor elicit accountability historically, consistently.

Within this theory-building endeavor, these are the defined marginalized stakeholders within any EI/NPO context. However, beyond this clarification participants did not. Depending on the context, these marginalized stakeholders could very well be the entire community of the EI/NPO or it could be those members within an already marginalized community who are further marginalized and made invisible (like the ‘untouchables’ with the ‘shudra’ community in parts of India for example). It is important to note that within one context a group may be considered to be ‘marginalized’ while in another they may be ‘privileged.’

My logic-in-use in including this element in the r-CriDo model is that when a practitioner critically begins paying attention to issues related to power and how they influence what the governing variables are, and whose knowledge is privileged, the practitioner begins to gain a nuanced understanding of the differential powers of stakeholders in different settings and begins to recognize and appreciate marginalized standpoints of those who face multiple oppressions along different axes (Hill Collins, 2000). Engaging in this process of exploring and illuminating the invisible power and privilege that mediates every aspect of practice better enables the practitioner to understand the points of access and entry to act within any situation to address this inequitable power.

Critically understanding differential power and recognizing the marginalization of certain standpoints as they are silent or silenced or invisible offers practitioners the ability to recognize marginalization and lays the foundation for them to then explore the lived

experiences of marginalized stakeholders. It thus enables practitioners to pay attention to the needs and experiences of those most oppressed or marginalized to address the issues this group faces to change the dynamics of power and enable empowerment of the community (Mertens, 2009). It also allows for the creation of alliances and coalitions to address the inequitable power within a given context (Sandoval, 2000) to better address the needs of the marginalized lived experiences through quality responsiveness practice.

Relevance of beginning from marginalized lived experiences. As I have acknowledged previously in this section, my logic-in-use in conceptualizing this meta-ec process element of ‘beginning from marginalized lived experiences’ as a separate element was so that the practitioner gets a more comprehensive, nuanced understanding of the context because s/he recognizes the multiple experiences of the exact same experience based on differential power, and explores previous silences and power dynamics to access the marginalized lived experiences first. Doing this results in more comprehensive and valid findings regarding community needs within the responsiveness process. As explained before, and understanding of this lived experience offers insight into how the EI/NPO can better serve the needs of its diverse community—especially those marginalized.

As has been discussed before, power and privilege are often invisible when one has it. Thus, beginning from the marginalized experiences of those who traditionally do not have access to power will enable practitioners to critically examine power as they seek out these lived experiences.

This element was also separated from ‘empathetic understanding’ because participants did not recognize its significance as was evident in all their responses that

only focused on ‘empathetic understanding’ without commenting or delving into the notion of ‘marginalized lived experiences’ within the same element. Hence, the two were separated in the final model.

But because this element was subsumed within ‘empathetic understanding’ in the original model offered for data collection, the participants did not necessarily confirm its relevance as a separate element explicitly. So I offer an example from my lived experiences that confirms practitioner findings (Fetterman & Wandersman, 2005; Shiva, 2006) that eliciting the lived experiences of those who have most been marginalized (often community members of the EI/NPO from under represented backgrounds) will increase the validity and utility of the decisions made to serve them.

A non-profit that was set up to serve teenage girls offered numerous curriculum-based, research-proven programming and services focused on increasing girls’ self-esteem and educating them to make better life choices. The NPO’s staff, leadership, and the board of the organization affirmed the effectiveness of their programming because they believed that the information, services, and programming that they provided were what girls needed to be successful.

In a needs assessment conducted for the organization thereafter, rather than only go by what the NPO practitioners and leaders had suggested as programming to serve the girls better, and rather than rely on what experts in the literature said or what parents and teachers said girls needed, we (my fellow evaluators and I) engaged in asking the girls directly (in focus groups rather than surveys) what it was like to be them, what their lived experiences were, and what they thought they needed to become strong and independent youth. We wanted to begin from the marginalized lived experiences of

the girls who were usually the objects of studies and programming rather than being the subjects of describing to us what they needed to be successful.

Through our needs assessment we found that the programming and services offered by the NPO did meet some of the needs of the girls. But that girls also needed more activity-oriented programming that they usually did not have access to, to give them opportunities to explore themselves in ways they had not before. For example the physical sports activities in their schools were usually so boys oriented that girls felt a need for spaces where they could engage in physical sports too without having boys around.

In understanding the lived experiences of girls we realized that as much as girls, boys needed some programming and services too (something that had not come up in the literature, nor had been suggested by the other stakeholders) that would educate them on treating girls with respect to become better men. We learned that it was not just girls who needed curriculum-based interventions about self-esteem and making healthy life choices but that boys needed this same instruction too because they impacted girls' success as did girls impact the boys.'

As a result of beginning from their lived experiences we also found that within the majority white community, girls of color had the hardest time in finding spaces to socialize and just be themselves and that they needed some services and programming to support them as well but not necessarily the programming and focus that the NPO was currently offering. What they needed the most was not lessons on self-esteem but rather a safe space where they were not being judged and where they were not the only ones of color. These girls experienced the least amount of services and programming directed at

them in a culturally appropriate manner and they experienced self-esteem and anger issues because they were treated differently that often resulted in them being labeled “at-risk.” Thus, from these girls’ feedback we realized that the NPO needed to engage in targeted, culturally sensitive programming and services for this group of girls.

When we presented our finding and conclusions, and recommendations to them, the staff, leadership, and the board informed us that in previous needs assessments the NPO had not received such insightful data and information. Within a few months, the NPO was able to establish girls-of-color groups and offer more activity-based programming for girls even as it was laying the foundation to work with another organization to reach out to boys. While the efficacy of this new programming and change-interventions need to be assessed, initial feedback from girls confirmed its success . The significantly increased participation numbers and the increased diversity of girls visiting the NPO and making use of its services also reflected the relevance of the programming and services of the EI to the girls. We (the evaluators) knew that if it had not been for us beginning from the lived experiences of the girls (including the traditionally marginalized girls of color), we would not have had such useful and valid data to offer the NPO upon which they could base their programming.

This example is one among many examples shared by other feminist evaluators in conferences (Bowen, 2011; Mertens, 2011) regarding the richer and stronger needs assessment data that drove their decision-making when they began from the lived experiences of marginalized stakeholders. It confirms the logic-in-use that an understanding of power and positionality allows practitioners to explore silences. Beginning from these marginalized spaces to obtain more in-depth, nuanced information

that can lead to a greater validity of findings and inform more relevant action decisions to better fulfill the EI/NPO's mission and address gaps in responsiveness.

5. Empathetic understanding. 'Empathetic understanding' draws heavily from the work of Caring (Gilligan, 1995; Noddings, 1984). This element was separated from 'beginning from marginalized lived experiences' to separate the two different ideas. My logic-in-use was that a practitioner could focus on marginalized lived experiences but if they did not empathetically understand those experiences, community feedback, or community needs, then a focus on those marginalized lived experiences could end up being pointless and redundant, or worse still—pathologizing and further oppressing.

Theoretical underpinnings of empathetic understanding (of lived experiences).

The idea that when you care about someone you try to look at things and understand experiences through their perspective—what Noddings calls Inclusion, involves the one-caring (the care-giver) fully being engrossed in and receiving the one-cared for (the receiver), thus seeing the world with two sets of eyes—their own and the eyes of the one they are caring-for. This dual perspective and relational process is termed “inclusion,” is not dictatorial nor practiced by “sleazy” motivation to gain obedience. Rather, it elicits effectance motivation (Harter, 1979) through confirmation. It validates the lived experiences of the one-cared for, by establishing an authentic relationship that allows the one-cared-for to design their own success and work towards it. The one-caring does not impose their definition of success on the one-cared for.

I apply this theory to EI/NPO contexts, i.e., the EI/NPO personnel (the one-caring) would be able to see their community's perspective (the cared-for's perspective) as they experience responsiveness. Thus, centering the lived experiences of community

members because one empathetically understands them, to inform decisions made about the community's needs and the EI's services is what this element calls for. The goal is not for the EI to empathize so that it can better exert its will on the community by informing the community what it thinks is best for it. Rather, the goal is to allow the community to self-determine what it needs are. An empathetic understanding can build trust between the community and the EI resulting in greater cooperation, collaboration, and communication between both entities.

The relevance of the element. Given that EIs and NPOs usually exist in communities that have been historically marginalized, it is this lived experience of the marginalized community members that needs to be accessed by the EI/NPO to engage in responsiveness. And this lived experience has to be accessed empathetically.

Utility in practice. All practitioners in different ways agreed that empathetic understanding was important—as something that needed to be fostered with the community, and as something that needed to happen across all levels of the EI. However, it was the student participants who believed that this element was the most important element of the r-CriDo model in practice. Student participants repeatedly talked about how they did not feel like practitioners had an understanding of what their lived experience was like.

“They called me and asked me to share with them what needed to be improved in the department. But after a point you could just see it. They kept nodding but they did not understand.” (Student A)

This quote was one example of the many times that student participants expressed how they felt that most practitioners did not understand their lived experiences even

though the staff and administrators, and sometimes even other students thought they did. A common theme across the students' and practitioners' responses was the issue of identity and positionality of those in power. The more those in power could identify with the marginalized perspectives (because of their own lived experience or identity or positionality), the more likely students believed that there would be empathetic understanding, and thus community-oriented decision-making in the EI. Students gave numerous examples of when the members of the EI who had served them most or worked with them best were members who themselves had had similar experiences and thus were empathetic.

“The people in power, the more diverse experiences they have the more broadminded and better outreach they will have,” (Student C).

This student's response among others alluded to students' perception that it was important for people in power to be able to recognize their privilege and understand the lived experiences of those who had lesser power.

When students became practitioner evaluators, as they had in this case-study, students, due to their empathetic understanding based on their own lived experiences, were able to switch languages and collect data for the needs assessment evaluation in the native language of those who were not as fluent in English. They said that demonstrating empathy in this way allowed those members who were previously silent because of language barriers to begin participating in the needs assessment responsiveness process. Additionally, an awareness of this empathetic understanding helped the community trust the practitioner better to open up and offer honest feedback. This relationship of trust was highlighted in one student practitioner's response.

“Students felt comfortable coming and telling us what they felt about the university because they knew we would understand because we had been there too,” (Student L)

This student’s response among others, confirms the role of empathetic understanding in reaching out to the community and building trust to get at their lived experiences.

All student practitioner participants in the case-study shared that they thought that they were better able to represent the community in the needs assessment because they had similar lived experiences and had faced similar issues of power and privilege as did the community whose needs they were trying to ascertain. Their empathetic understanding, they believed helped them better articulate the expressed needs of the community and enabled the EI to be more downwardly accountable because it gave rise to more valid and comprehensive data from the needs assessment process of responsiveness. Participant observations confirmed this student perception as the student participants in the case-study (who were evaluators too) connected with their student data sources in the needs assessment to make the students more comfortable in sharing their needs by asking the right nuanced question because of their empathetic understanding.

Nuances to the element’s applicability in practice. Despite their confirmation of the importance of ‘empathetic understanding’ to their practice as well as their lived experience as community members, students warned about what they called “pseudo” empathy where they believed practitioners showed empathy only to get what they wanted from the students but did not really understand or take any action based on the information they received. Most staff and administrators agreed that inauthentic empathy was a problem that did exist.

“Within a big organization constantly someone has the power and someone feels as though they don’t. So I am constantly having those conversations everyday with people. And it’s very hard because it’s their experience. So it might not be your reality or your thought but there it is. It is their experience and you have to respond to it... But sometimes it is hard to do that and then I think the empathy is less authentic. When you are not resonating with what that person says, then you are not really credible and so here you are judging someone else’s experiences. And so that does happen,” acknowledged Administrator A.

A staff member called it *“empathetic non-understanding”* (Staff B) where people could be kind and sensitive and sympathetic or empathetic but they had *“absolutely no clue”* about what the individual they were responding to was going through. They were *“not knowledgeable”* about the lived experiences of those they served. Different staff members pointed out how on different occasions, they had not been able to relate to students because they had not *“walked in their shoes”* (Staff B).

One student alluded to this difference between empathetic understanding and empathetic non- understanding as,

“They (the EI) can hear us all they want. But are they listening?”

(Student L)

“You can intellectually understand something like, what it is like to be a woman or a woman of color for that matter, but I can’t really live it. So you can only relate theoretically but really you don’t know (what it is like). Then it (empathetic understanding) doesn’t work.” (Student D)

Thus, empathetic understanding means that practitioners actively seek to wholeheartedly—mind and body—understand the lived experiences of their community, beginning from the marginalized lived experiences as discussed in the previous element.

Building coalitions and alliances. Staff members agreed that empathetic understanding was important and had to occur in both directions between the EI and the community because they agreed that when fostered in the community, empathetic understanding builds relationships of trust and understanding where the community also empathizes with the EI and works well with the EI to enhance responsiveness due to this understanding.

This theme of empathetic understanding and building trust and mutual understanding is evident in students' responses. In their role as evaluators, student communicated with staff and asked them questions about their lived experiences and the challenges the staff faced in meeting students' needs (as parts of the needs assessment process). Reflecting on their findings, students' responses seem to indicate that they empathetically began to understand staff constraints in practicing responsiveness.

“Before I used to think that if the school (EI) wanted to serve students well it was just a matter of whether they wanted it or not. And now I am realizing that there are a lot of barriers between here is the plan and how to execute that” (Student G)

“Before I did my interview with the staff (for the needs assessment), I thought I should blame them because they didn't do a good job of serving the students...I realized they did not have any funds to improve their services” (Student B)

As a result of this empathetic understanding student practitioners were also able to collaborate with staff to come up with novel ideas to improve responsiveness within the EI. They came up with the suggestion for student groups and associations to move away from their focus on only organizing events, and instead take on some of the small, easier student support functions (such as orienting new students to the campus or partnering with them to mentor them as seniors) that would enable students to interact more often. This possible solution would also directly meet one of the students' expressed needs—of having more opportunities and being able to spend more time together and help students like themselves.

Student practitioners believed that this idea of working together with student associations to better meet students' needs would free up the staff to take on the bigger tasks to support students—something that staff confirmed. Student practitioners shared that such ideas and many others were generated as a result of their empathetic understanding of staff struggles with responsiveness. Staff affirmed that this was the case.

“It (empathetic understanding) helps build understanding and know what everyone is doing. It helps in transparency and better communication and overall efficiency. (Otherwise) they (students and administrators) don't know exactly how much we do here.” (Staff E)

Student participant practitioners also discussed how when people faced similar oppressions, they could form alliances across difference to work as coalitions towards meaningful change. Empathetic understanding they believed, was the key to engaging each other. Empathetic understanding could lead to coalition building and activism across difference to promote common interests—especially in situations where numerous

institutional pressures and resource constraints exist. Empathetic understanding could result in fostering and sharing strategies to mutually benefit the diverse community groups within the given resource limitations.

“When I went to XYZ office to interview them (the staff and students), I found that they were struggling just like us. Their students also don’t get enough support. They have less funds. They were as bad as us. A lot of what we were asking for us, they needed too,” (Student D)

The above quote alludes to some of the students’ description of other EI units and other student communities being served by those EI units who were facing similar barriers to responsiveness. An empathetic understanding of different student experiences and different EI unit constraints they believed, could help people (the EI units and the communities) to come together to support each other , thereby enhancing responsiveness.

All of these responses confirms the relevance of empathetic understanding and justifies its presence in the r-CriDo model. An empathetic understanding needs to be fostered and actively engaged in by practitioners (aided by reflexive agency) to build a stronger relationship between the EI and its community. Empathetic understanding, students emphasized helps build trust for better collaboration, greater emphasis on expressed needs, and thus results in a stronger responsiveness processes.

6. Practicing relational humility. This element of the r-CriDo model is derived from my personal cultural and religious values, from Noddings’ work on ‘caring’ (1984), and from Gandhi’s principles of service (2011). This element is about a reciprocal relationship where the EI/NPO practitioners hold their communities in higher esteem or regard that they hold themselves.

Theoretical underpinnings of relational humility. A number of theoretical concepts underlie this element of the r-CriDo model.

Caring's influence. Noddings' (1984) thesis on 'Caring' offers the idea of reciprocity: that you get as much as you give in any caring relationship; i.e., it is not one-sided selfless giving and receiving but rather a two-way giving and receiving. Noddings (1984) points out that "when this attitude of acceptance and trust is missed, the one who is the object of caretaking feels like an object," (p. 65). Within the r-CriDo model to enhance responsiveness this would mean the EI/NPO not view the community as the 'object' that is 'receiving' their services. Rather, it would mean that the EI/NPO practitioners realize that they are gaining from the community as well.

Noddings highlights that the one-caring (EIs and NPOs) must meet the one cared-for, (i.e., the Community receiving the services of the EIs and NPOs), as subject and "not as an object to be manipulated nor as a data source," (p. 72). She also states that a reciprocal relationship cannot be demanded and is not demonstrated by the gratefulness or acknowledgement of the caring that one has received. Rather it is the empowerment and independence of the one cared-for and the friendship between the two that diminishes the power differential between the cared-for and the one-caring that demonstrates reciprocity. When this concept is transposed to this dissertation context, it would mean that the EI not expect the student community to be grateful to the EI but instead expect them to be engaged with the EI in an empowered manner.

Nodding (1984) says,

"Indeed this recognition of the freedom-as-subject of the cared-for is a fundamental result of her genuine receiving of the one-caring. The

cared-for, in the fullness of the caring relation, feels the recognition of freedom and grows under its expansive support,” (p. 72).

Applying Nodding’s idea to the case-study context, encouraging a reciprocal caring relationship of relational humility between the EI and the community would be one where the EI nurtures the empowerment of its community—i.e., the community would likely be empowered to begin demanding accountability and responsiveness from the EI.

Influence of eastern philosophy. The element of practicing relational humility was also derived based on my cultural and religious heritage. Mostly, an EI/NPO’s work requires its practitioners to be experts or to be knowledgeable in areas relevant to the EI/NPO’s purpose of existence—serving its community. That expertise often results in unconscious or self-conscious egotism. Hinduism is rife with fables that speak to this issue of ‘Ahankaar.’ It teaches that humility must be practiced by the individual who is the carrier of knowledge—i.e., humility must be practiced by ‘experts.’ It is a paradoxical expectation but the roots of Hinduism ask the carrier of the knowledge to be most humble and engage in practices to subdue and minimize the ego that one develops as a result of one’s excellence or expertise (Chakravarthy, personal communication, Sep 5, 2011).

Hindu religious philosophy also highlights the importance of being a servant while performing one's duties, honoring those that one serves (Chakravarthy, personal communication, Sep 5, 2011). Gandhi's work (2011) on ‘Serving’ also speaks to this and Karma yoga is the practical reflection of this notion—a practice of selfless service. Thus, by applying these logics to the EI/NPO context, serving and service become a privileged responsibility of the EIs and NPOs (that they undertake by the very fact of their existence).

“The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.”

Gandhi’s maxim speaks directly to the idea of being vulnerable. Relational humility asks EIs/NPOs to diminish their own power and status within the relationship where they are thought to be the ones giving the services and meeting the needs of the community that is receiving their services. Relational humility calls for moving away from an egotism about the self and instead focusing on the strengths of the other instead—i.e., holding the other (in this case the community) in a power-up status. This practice of relational humility would be evident in all interactions with the community, and would also be reflected in the community’s stronger role in the responsiveness process, including in decision-making.

Within an organization-client relationship that the EI/NPO has with its community one could easily apply Gandhi’s words in his 1980 speech summarily to define the concept of relational humility—

“A customer is the most important visitor on our premises. S/he is not dependent on us. We are dependent on her/him. S/he is not an interruption in our work. S/he is the purpose of it. S/he is not an outsider in our business. S/he is part of it. We are not doing her/him a favor by serving her/him. S/he is doing us a favor by giving us an opportunity to do so.” (dual gender representations added)

Thus, relational humility is the practice of appreciating the community and its perspectives and moving away from the self-aggrandizing that sometimes/ often happens because the EI-community relationship is seen as a one-sided relationship of power and knowledge where the EI is the generous giver and the community is the lucky receiver.

My logic-in-use in including ‘practicing relational humility’ within the r-CriDo model was that the recognition and understanding of humility would help mitigate the wielding of power by practitioners to enable greater levels of collaboration between the EI and the community. Relational humility directly speaks to increasing downwards accountability because it requires practitioners communicating with our communities and colleagues in a manner where their perspectives are not just sought but also appreciated. Similarly, relational humility encourages a formative approach because a humble self does not work with judging others but focuses on self-improvement instead. Relational humility directly speaks to Greenleaf’s (1977) notions of the servant-leader and aligns with the EI/NPO’s mission of practitioners working to better serve their communities. This rationale drove my decision to include relational humility in the model.

Description of relational humility to participants. I described practicing this relational humility to participants as embodying a reciprocal relationship where they as practitioners carry this knowledge in their work and practice—that they are gaining as much as they give to the community. This awareness about receiving makes the community-EI relationship a two-sided relationship rather than the one-sided relationship that is often portrayed or perceived (with the EI/NPO giving and the community only receiving).

I described how relational humility would also mean that if the EI/NPO cared for the community they would engage in actions that would demonstrate this caring and be accountable for it without demanding gratefulness in return but rather encourage an equal power relationship of respect and friendship where the community is empowered to act in its self-interest. I shared with my participants that relational humility would mean a

willingness to learn, an acknowledgement that we as practitioners don't have all the answers and could be wrong (and the community could be right), and an effort to convey and ensure the community felt appreciated for what they were offering the EI.

Relevance of relational humility. All my participants agreed that relational humility was important to the responsiveness process and to working with their colleagues within the EI towards better fulfilling the goals of the EU unit. But, all the three participant groups also had members who expressed concern that relational humility should not turn into a seeming lack of expertise. Students expressed concern that one should not sound “*too unprepared*” (Student F) when expressing to others (as part of practicing relational humility) that they were here to learn, as much as they were considered experts.

Staff expressed how sometimes they were forced to don the role of the expert because students or colleagues expected them to have answers, and if they did not they were deemed incompetent. Thus, while they could try to be humble and while they were willing to learn from others, they functionally were expected to be experts in “*that one area you have to cover*” (Staff G) in terms of work. Thus, they believed that they could not overtly demonstrate relational humility because it seemed like incompetence.

Administrators talked about playing themselves down with self-deprecating jokes, or seeking input from their subordinates as evidence of practicing relational humility. All three administrators agreed that relational humility should be practiced. But one of them—Administrator B—described how relational humility did not work within power dynamics and political situations where the administrator's authority was threatened. And all three administrators acknowledged that practicing relational humility could easily be

perceived as incompetence by others, or as lack of effective leadership and it was for this reason that “*relational humility is good—to some extent,*” Administrator A.

These mixed responses from participants—i.e., the fact that they all confirmed the importance of relational humility in theory and in principle but also shared some reservations regarding actually practicing it—made me ask them if this element should be removed as an element within the r-CriDo model. I was unanimously informed that I should not. Thus, ‘relational humility’ as a practitioner trait and practice was considered important to pursue as part of the r-CriDo model, and consistently be aware of to better relationships with those around us.

Practicing relational humility helped me as a practitioner within a needs assessment I led. *I realized that I needed to be reflexive about practicing relational humility because when activities were not going my way, the tendency was to become authoritative as an instructor and lead-evaluator, and forget relational humility. Practicing relational humility helped me move away from judging and pathologizing others around me (especially my subordinates) and instead focus on what I could do better. It enabled me to have an open, welcoming attitude to other people’s inputs and perspectives to influence the decision-making over which I originally had the most power.* Thus, relational humility was relevant. It enables EI practitioners to be improvement oriented and seek the community’s input (among others with lesser power) in all aspects of practice by acknowledging their knowledge and wisdom too, and one’s own limitations of being the expert.

7. Challenging deficit-thinking. Deficit thinking, as elaborated by Valencia (1997, 2011), is built on cultural, intellectual, psychological, and genetic deprivation

theories that follow a model of victim-blaming, pathologizing, and marginalization, often based on race, class, and other aspects of diversity that ignore historic, structural and systemic barriers at play in the academic failure of students of color and students from the lower social economic strata within the educational system (Bereiter & Engelmann, 1966; Ogbu & Simons, 1998). As a result, their cultural capital is not valued (Bourdieu, 1984). Usually due to differential power statuses, those who belong to dominant groups have the power and ability to label and define those who do not have access to the same systems of power and representation (Hill Collins, 2000; Harding, 2004). Historically, these dominant groups have defined others as “less than” or “less capable than” and have often dismissed the voices and expressed concerns and needs of the less powerful group by blaming them for their own lack of power or success.

Theoretical underpinnings of challenging deficit-thinking. Existing scholarship and literature affirms the practice of deficit-thinking in EI-NPO relationships with their community. Scholars (Mishra, Heidi & Cort, 1998; San Martin & Camarero, 2005; Sharma, 1997; Uphoff, 1996) confirm that often feedback given by the community regarding its needs, or the suggestions offered by them for program improvement, or the accountability demanded by them is dismissed due to program staff and upwards accountability stakeholders engaging in (possibly unintentional) deficit-thinking regarding the community (usually due to the very fact that they receive the services of the EI/ NPO).

Empirical data offered in the previous chapter confirmed the existence of this deficit-thinking in the EI practitioner and student relationship in the case-study. As has been described previously, the asymmetrical knowledge-power relationship between the EI

and students seems to encourage deficit-thinking and affects the credibility of any negative judgment or feedback the community offers the EI/NPO, unintentionally but often, invalidating the voice of the community within the needs assessment evaluation process.

Describing deficit-thinking to participants. In explaining deficit-thinking, I shared with participants that deficit-thinking highlights the general proclivity of institutions to blame the individuals for their failure in relation to EI/NPO or upwards accountability stakeholders' standards and definitions of success. As a result, these EIs/NPOs often do not take a look at what they themselves can be doing to improve or change the situation or themselves, and only focus on the community in terms of what interventions must be administered to fix the community because they are to be blamed for their failure, lack of success, or need. I explained to the participants that this kind of deficit-thinking allows EIs and NPOs to dismiss the input or feedback of the community who are deemed unreliable witnesses to service quality (DiMaggio & Anheier, 1990).

In describing the meta-ec process of challenging deficit-thinking, I explained to participants that the element is about becoming self-conscious about the narratives we have in our head and the judgments we make about others; the defensive thinking and behavior we engage in when we feel threatened or criticized—especially when/if the community we think we are “helping” lets us know through their expressed needs or feedback that as practitioners, we are not helping them or serving them as well as we think we are and that we need to improve. Within responsiveness, challenging deficit-thinking allows the practitioner to question our rationalizing narratives about “others” and bring the focus back on our own reflexive-agency. The goal of including ‘challenging

deficit-thinking' as a meta-ec process element within the r-CriDo model was so that practitioners are able to begin seeing everyone as full human-beings, take feedback and weigh it as relevant, and begin establishing more equal relationships with our community and with each other within the EI.

Participant responses to deficit-thinking and its relevance. Deficit-thinking was a concept that resonated with all my participants immediately. Staff, administrators, and student practitioners acknowledged the existence of deficit-thinking in their practice, even as student responses (described in the previous chapter) also confirmed their experience of being on the receiving end of this practice with the EI practitioners engaging in deficit-thinking towards them sometimes. Below are some of the responses that confirm the existence of deficit-thinking.

“We think they (students) need something. We think they don't know that they need something. But there is a part of our profession that kind of assumes that... science has shown, cognitively at their age,... their frontal lobe is not fully developed. So we assume we have to guide them in making good decisions. So that institutionalizes deficit-thinking! (Exaggerated gesture to emphasize the irony of the situation, and then laughs)... But that doesn't mean that we cannot listen to the student... there has to be a balance there,” (Staff E)

“They (EI staff and administrators) do it (deficit-thinking) to us. But I guess we do it too right? About them (the staff and administrators of the EI)?” (Student E).

“They think we don't know about our problems?!” (Student G)

Similarly administrators agreed that deficit-think was very common. One administrator's response best highlights the issue of deficit-thinking and also ties it to other elements within the model in a way that reflects the symbiotic nature of the relationships between all the model elements.

“I see us doing this (deficit-thinking) often when things don't go our way. We think we are the man! It is them! They don't understand! And we get fed up! And then relational humility is gone. Challenging deficit-thinking is gone. And then we just have a whole bunch of power!”

(Administrator A).

From the above responses it is evident that deficit-thinking is pervasive. All participants agreed that it needed to be challenged at the practitioner level in their practice. Even students acknowledged their own practice of it.

Thus, self-awareness about engaging in deficit-thinking is needed because it helps challenge assumptions about others and questions the differential weighting of “truths” within the responsiveness process. All student, staff, and administrator practitioners acknowledged that naming this phenomenon—deficit-thinking (because this was the first time they had come across the this theorized term)—helped them recognize it and they could now begin addressing it in their own practice by engaging in reflexive-agency.

8. Encouraging possibility-thinking. It is Freire's (1994), hooks' (2003), and West's (2008) concepts of 'hoping' that lay the foundation for 'encouraging possibility thinking' to be added as an element within the r-CriDo model.

Theoretical underpinnings and understanding of possibility thinking. Through their work, these scholars point out that hope must exist or be nurtured because it is

essential to any social-justice oriented action because just being critical is not enough. Applying this concept to this dissertation, this hope—i.e., possibility-thinking—would be necessary within the EI/NPO and its community to overcome a culture of failure or apathy that may exist that serves as a reifying barrier to individual or organizational change, learning, improvement, and community empowerment. This ‘hope’ has been re-termed as ‘possibility-thinking’ in this dissertation for reasons related to ‘possibility-thinking’ being more practitioner-oriented as a term than the word ‘hope’.

Possibility-thinking as an element within the r-CriDo model is thus the faith in the possibility of a better tomorrow despite there being no evidence to support that belief. It is needed to practice and promote freedom in one’s thinking, work, and actions (hooks, 2003), and it is needed by the community and by the EI/NPO as they work towards societal betterment and public good.

When Freire (1994) talks about ‘hope’ he talks about hope being central to critical pedagogy and critical thinking because it is not just about the practitioner being critical and exposing historic, colonizing, institutional inequities and systemic injustices, rather a critical framework requires the practitioner to offer an alternative view of the world and a better possibility to strive toward. And to be able to do that (tear a system down to expose its inequities and injustices) one must have hope and be able to envision a different, better alternative. For Freire, hope is humanistic and emancipatory and supports radical love—i.e., action. It seeks positive change. This possibility-thinking would be necessary for practitioners who are facing numerous governing variable constraints and seemingly insurmountable barriers that come in the way of them engaging in responsiveness and enacting their commitment to their community.

Hope is integral to working towards tearing oppressive systems and structures down to transform society through empowerment. The purpose of the r-CriDo model is to enhance responsiveness, thereby enabling EIs/NPOs to live their commitment to serve their communities. Drawing from this work on ‘hope’, in the r-CriDo model, I offer that the practitioner must be guided by possibility-thinking as they work to expose power and address systemic inequities to improve responsiveness. The practitioner’s role would be to nurture and stimulate this possibility-thinking all through the responsiveness process—within the EI/NPO, within the community, and within one-self.

As West puts it in one of his many speeches,

“There is a need for audacious hope. And it’s not optimism. I’m in no way an optimist. I’ve been black in America for 39 years. No ground for optimism here, given the progress and regress and three steps forward and four steps backward. Optimism is a notion that there’s sufficient evidence that would allow us to infer that if we keep doing what we’re doing, things will get better. I don’t believe that. I’m a prisoner of hope, that’s something else. Cutting against the grain, against the evidence. William James said it so well in that grand and masterful essay of his of 1879 called “The Sentiment of Rationality,” where he talked about faith being the courage to act when doubt is warranted. And that’s what I’m talking about.”

Describing possibility-thinking. When possibility-thinking was presented to the case-study participants, I talked about faith vs. belief and how even if there was no evidence to indicate a better future in terms of practitioners being able to overcome the

numerous barriers they faced and engage in responsiveness, practitioners needed to engage in action with the possibility-thinking and faith of it being better. Engaging in possibility-thinking per my logic-in-use was required to overcome the barriers to responsiveness. As an element within the r-CriDo model, I shared with participants that I believed practicing it would help practitioners generate novel, innovative ideas and solutions to address the many problems that came in the way of responsiveness.

I explained that within the responsiveness process possibility-thinking, as an r-CriDo element involved “thinking-outside the box” guided by the faith that to build responsiveness and serve the community better, unusual methods might need to be adopted and pursued. As Freire (1970) had alluded to—the oppressed cannot look to the pedagogy of the oppressor to be liberated. Lorde (1984) has also noted, “The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House” (p. 13). Thus, possibility-thinking, I concluded requires thinking from a different world-view to make the seemingly impossible tasks possible—in thinking and in action—to overcome the numerous barriers to responsiveness that practitioners faced.

Participant responses about the relevance of possibility-thinking. It was all the administrators who resonated most with this element. Administrators believed that this element of possibility-thinking was the most important element of the r-CriDo model—this was what they struggled with the most because they believed that their staff had lost faith in the EI being able change. There was a culture of failure and an apathy to engage in any positive change because they and their staff did not feel supported nor appreciated as they struggled to overcome the barriers they faced and engage in responsiveness. One administrator gave an example of this.

S/he was within a context where the relationship between the EI unit and one group of its community had gone bad for many reasons the whole year, bringing the entire EI unit's planning and work to a standstill. It left the unit staff feeling like they were doing their best for the community and yet the community was unappreciative. As a result, all responsiveness actions had come to a stop.

“It is morale-busting. We wasted a whole year. We tried everything. It seems like it is all for nothing,” said Administrator A.

This administrator was seeking ways for the EI to regroup and figure out what it could do to build and sustain a strong relationship with its community and engage in high quality responsiveness once again.

Administrators unanimously agreed that possibility-thinking was needed to struggle through a bureaucratic system.

“If you have that (hope/ possibility-thinking), everything else will follow.”
(Administrator C)

Similar to administrators, all student practitioners and all staff members also confirmed that possibility-thinking was relevant to the r-CriDo model. However, both groups—staff and students agreed that they believed some amount of evidence was required to drive action.

“Some inkling of success (is needed to do work). You have to have that to hold on to. Otherwise, you just get so bogged down...” said Staff C, referring to challenges the EI unit and the staff were currently facing that made them almost give up hope of anything changing in the EI.

Thus, some evidence of a positive change in their circumstances, or some small evidence of success in overcoming any barrier to responsiveness they said was necessary sometimes for them to regroup, re-engage in possibility-thinking, and reform responsiveness when circumstances had led them to give up any hope for change. The staff and administrator participants agreed that having possibility-thinking explicitly there in the r-CriDo model would enable them to actively engage in it and would help them move away from the failure narratives that interfere with action towards improving responsiveness.

Student practitioners on the other hand, did not have much to say apart from the fact that this element was pertinent to the r-CriDo model. However, they did acknowledge that as community members they required this possibility-thinking to continue their activism and hope that their needs would be met; that change-interventions that would better meet their needs would be implemented. They shared that they did use possibility-thinking to attempt new ways to figure out how to engage and enable the EI to engage in responsiveness, so that they could have their needs met and be successful. Their participation as evaluators within the EI unit's needs assessment process was the outcome of such possibility-thinking.

Thus, overall, participants agreed that possibility-thinking was a key element of the r-CriDo model and that it actively needed to be engaged in and promoted within the EI and the community as well.

9. Doing mindful action. This was the last element that was shared as part of the r-CriDo model and was previously called 'engaging in social-justice-oriented mindful action.' Mindful action that is social-justice-oriented was derived from the concepts of

caring (Nodding, 1984) and loving (Sandoval, 2000). The understanding of social-justice aligns with the previous definition of it offered in the methodology section of this dissertation—striving towards a more egalitarian society where historic, institutional oppressions, and privilege are constantly questioned and challenged.

Theoretical underpinnings of mindful action. Nodding’s work on caring highlights that ‘caring-for’ someone or something involves action and not just intent. I.e., caring-about someone or something is not the same as caring-for someone or something. ‘Caring-for’ implies a lived ethic or commitment that requires the cared-for to feel cared for by the one-caring. And that requires the development of a relationship of trust and reciprocity through action that cannot stop with “good intentions” alone.

Adding to the notion of ‘caring-for’ that drives action is Sandoval’s (2000) concept of loving. Sandoval links Foucault’s advice on liberating the individual—i.e., giving up this individual desire for power—to create new citizen-subjects who can be free from domination by insisting on the “possibilities of affinity through difference... that allows for the guided use of any tool at one’s disposal in order to ensure survival and to remake the world” (p. 170-171). This is love, and it is an understanding and a coalitional consciousness that accepts and “demands a new subjectivity, a political revision that denies any one ideology as the final answer, while instead positing a *tactical subjectivity* with the capacity to de and re-center, given the forms of power to be moved.” (p. 58-59).

Sandoval argues one can move or shuttle between ideologies/ travel across worlds of meaning to be an outsider-within to pick a strategic essentialism based on the need of the moment to combat the oppression that one needs to at that specific time and place to

engage in social-justice action. This is loving, she argues. This ‘love’ is the differential oppositional consciousness and social movement that recognizes the bonds across the different ideologies that work towards equal social relations in particular contexts.

Sandoval demonstrates the self-consciousness involved and recognizes the pain of giving up part of oneself in a moment, i.e. participating in the dominant structures to preserve another part of the self, and to ensure the survival of that part of oneself in fighting against oppression. That consciousness is love, she argues.

It is Sandoval’s work on loving that informs my inclusion of this last element in the r-CriDo model. It is the principle of engaging in social-justice-oriented action using any means at one’s disposal. Within EI and NPO contexts, engaging in social-justice action speaks to the idea of practitioners doing what it takes to enable quality responsiveness within the challenging constraints they possibly face. Given the limitations of practitioners’ roles, their multiple, sometimes intersecting identities and loyalties, and given the tenuous, political nature of the power they have, loving asks them to deploy the strategies necessary—after careful, reflexive consideration—to create an empowered context where the community has a strong voice within the responsiveness process. I use this loving to underwrite my last element because it calls for action that can be systematically sustained all through the responsiveness process to address and alleviate oppression by asking practitioners to adopt the required situated ideology to do so thoughtfully and with consciousness.

This loving or action is also mediated and inspired by Hanh’s (2002) Engaged Buddhism which calls for a mindful practice. Mindfulness is spiritual in its orientation and in this r-CriDo model, it involves acting within responsiveness towards public good,

while considering and keeping in mind the consequences of one's actions. Elements of practicing Karma (from Hindu philosophy) where one does the right thing (as arrived at after careful consideration of the situation within a particular context) without attachment to the fruits of one's labor (Chakravarthy, personal communication, Jan 2, 2012) or any other such self-interest motivated action, serve as guiding principles as well. This mindfulness enables practitioners to work toward social transformation and community empowerment through responsiveness. Reflexive agency and learning play a critical role in evaluators trying to be critical and self-conscious in their determination of the right course of action toward alleviating oppression, working toward social-justice, and enabling public good through responsiveness processes. Hence, it was included in the r-CriDo model.

Describing this element to participants. I explained the key concepts, drawn from theory, to my participants and asked for their feedback regarding the relevance of this element and its utility. To explain this element to my participants, I gave some practical examples and strategies it could involve. I shared that social-justice-oriented mindful action included engaging in authentic dialogue, could involve creating buy-in, or could be about engaging in subversive practice as needed. This subversive practice of working towards social-justice within one's constraints by engaging in more covert action to improve responsiveness I term backdoor pedagogy, borrowing from Martinez (2011). Thus, I explained to my participants that this social-justice-oriented mindful action was included in the r-CriDo model because without this kind of action, once again the r-CriDo model could end up being just an espoused theory that no one really followed as a meta-ec process template because no action was an outcome of it.

Participant responses and element relevance. Once again, all my participants saw the importance of this action element in the r-Crido model and some expressed excitement in engaging in the practices of dialogue, creating buy-in, and working towards one's goals subversively as suggested because they had not previously considered it as a means to greater self-determination and action.

Many staff members and student participants emphasized how there was no point in anyone "caring" if that caring was not followed by action to demonstrate that caring. It was while talking about action that once again the constraining governing variables came up strongly as barriers to action. Staff talked about their limited power and inability to act on what they thought needed to be done despite best intentions. A couple of administrators also expressed concerns about carrying out action, given the limitations they faced. But they all agreed that they "*had to keep trying*" (Administrator C) and "*do the best we can do*" (Staff E) to engage in action towards improving responsiveness.

One administrator expressed the desire to use the r-CriDo model to engage in the meta-ec reflective process immediately, deciding to engage in action that would be useful to them.

"I really would want to use your model to help us... We need to be doing reflexivity. We need to challenge our deficit-thinking. Look at our power... We had some big issues this year... We can moan and groan and blame everyone else... but you can only go so far... so when we get negative feedback... how can we stop responding emotionally... we need to be doing this (engaging in the model) now. We could start to put some things into the model and let it cook and let's see what happens... take a

step back and put it (our actions and justifications) in the model to see what happens and then remember what we need to do to get back,” said Administrator A requesting a training session to teach the model and its elements to the staff of the administrator’s unit, once the r-CriDo model was fine-tuned and finalized as a meta-ec model.

This administrator desired action to be undertaken. Other administrator participants also expressed an interest in receiving the final r-CriDo model for them to use it in their staff meetings to enable action towards responsiveness. Thus, administrators found this element relevant and found it to be integral to the model.

Staff members saw this element of the r-CriDo model as the most important element of the model. Staff participants saw action the way I had perceived reflexivity—as central to the r-CriDo model. All the other elements had no meaning if action did not occur, many stated time and again. Learning and action, they believed was a natural and required outcome of reflexive-agency, else reflexivity was not really useful. It had to be undertaken or else the whole model was useless. One administrator’s declaration when they were presented with this element—*“take it (action) and blaze the trail,”* reflects all the staff members’ expressed feelings regarding the urgency and important of action.

Students also said that it was action that finally mattered. They believed that action was the outcome of reflexivity and learning as it interacted with each of the other elements within the r-CriDo model. The action was entwined into the responsiveness process—the outer circle in Figure 13. Thus, all participants noticed and commented upon the fact that the rest of the elements of the model were tied to action and that action was central to the model.

The separation of social-justice from mindful action. The primary reason that the word ‘social-justice’ was removed from the element was because members of all three participant groups recommended removing the phrase ‘social-justice’ from the action element of the model and leaving ‘mindful’ in there. There were two primary reasons for this.

All members of all three groups articulated that social-justice meant different things to different people and having that terminology there, despite them agreeing with it, made it confusing as to what it meant. This feedback from participants negates one of the primary assumptions that I had when I entered this study—that all participants understood what social-justice meant—that it meant the same thing to everyone.

The second reason for all staff and most administrators suggesting the two terms be separated was the fact that as practitioners their experience with such models and strategies to improve their work and improve the organization had made them realize that each element within the r-CriDo model should only stand for one concept to simplify the model and make it precise. This precision and simplicity, they knew based on their experience, would increase the r-CriDo model’s applicability and utility in the real world. And because mindful was less political and more universally understood, they preferred ‘mindful action’ over ‘social-justice-oriented action’.

When I had originally conceptualized this model and shared it with the participants of the case-study, my logic-in-use was that social-justice needed to be explicit somewhere in the r-CriDo model. But participant input made me recognize the multiple meanings associated with this word. Additionally, participants expressed that the word had a lot of political connotations that had polarizing effects among members of the

EI, and this issue added to participants’ expressed misgivings about the use of that word. Thus, it did make sense to remove the word considering all three participant groups recommended doing so.

The Final Meta-ec r-CriDo Model

The previous sections described each element of the r-CriDo model, its relevance as the participants in the case-study saw it, and the conditions for its use. This section briefly maps how all the elements came together, based on participants’ feedback and my own logic-in-use, to result in the final r-CriDo model as it evolved to be.

An overview of participant feedback. Table 5 summarizes all the feedback and suggestions participants offered regarding the r-CriDo model. Their input was used to modify and refine the seven-element model to make it the final nine-element process model. I also share some reactionary, reflective thoughts documented in my journal that arose as a result of their feedback that informed the creation and representation of the final r-CriDo model.

Table 5. *A Linear Representation of Participant Responses to the r-CriDo Model.*

	Feedback Overview	Reflective thoughts on each feedback item from my participants.
Staff Participants	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do not use “social-justice” when referring to action. It has too many political and value connotations that people may not be aware of or not agree with. It is too strong. Mindful action works. 2. Where are the foundational parameters that affect this model represented—economics or money, resources, access, leadership, and time? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I agree. I have seen this in practice. Social-justice values drive my work but using word not important. Want to invite people in to practice model. Not be threatened. 2. Yes. I need to represent them. But they are not really relevant to my model because my model seeks to manipulate them.

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Do those boundaries limit the model or does the model address those boundaries? 4. These parameters or boundaries of time, money, leadership, and resources, could be listed under critical understanding of power. 5. Combine reflexivity, learning and possibility thinking. 6. The arrows pointing outwards from reflexivity and learning (to all the six other elements) needs to be pointing both ways because there is interplay between them right? The other elements do affect reflexivity and learning and vice-versa? 7. What assumptions about shared values drive this model? And where are those values represented? Where can model be practiced? 8. Put mindful action in the center and the reflexivity, learning and possibility thinking, can be the double headed arrows between action and the other elements. 9. All elements are important and none redundant. No one element stands out. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. My model seeks to address the boundaries. Not be bound by it. 4. They could be. That is a great idea. It will address the ‘what’ of analyzing power. I have to think about it. 5. Let me take that into consideration. 6. That is exactly right! The other elements do affect reflexivity and learning. It is a two-way street. And two-way arrows represent a cyclical process as well. It has to be continuous. 7. That people are committed to responsiveness. Want to help community they serve. Practice model everywhere 8. That is a great idea! Still not sure about possibility-thinking but reflexivity and learning can be the guiding processes for all elements. 9. That is good.
Student Participants	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Link critical understanding of power and empathetic understanding. Tied together. One affects other. 2. Linking empathetic understanding to challenging deficit-thinking. One causes the other. 3. All elements need to be connected. They can influence each other. 4. Where do you see organizational culture playing a role? Where is that represented? 5. Where do you see values and 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes, I already did that in my head. The six elements were paired-off. 2. No. Even if empathetic understanding, you could engage in deficit-thinking. 3. I have to do that. That is true. I will connect them. 4. Great question! I have to think. Does my model affect it? Or it vice-verse? 5. Yes. I have to represent the values and ethics that guide this model somewhere. 6. Okay. Same feedback as staff. Does learning play a

	<p>ethics playing a role? Where is that represented?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Remove social-justice. Just say mindful. People may not know what it means. It has a negative meaning too. 7. Mindful action should be in the middle. That is why people want to consider this model. So its leads to action. 8. Can people customize model and use only certain sections of the cycle depending on context? Where is that represented? 9. Empathetic understanding is most important element. 10. Like reflexivity and learning to be the double headed arrows between action and everything else. (after I suggested it) 11. Start with critical understanding of power and end with possibility thinking in applying model. 12. No element redundant. All important. 	<p>role here to teach meaning of social-justice?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Same as staff. Interesting. I still think reflexivity and learning weave through all elements. But must revisit. 8. Yes. That is what I aim for. But I seem to start at power and end at action in explaining. So I have steps? Linear model? 9. As a student I agree. Action seems important too. 10. Good. Now I have to revisit model again to represent that. Will it work to have action in center? 11. That is the big question. Is it a step-wise model or random entry access? 12. That is great to hear! Now how do I put them together?
<p>Administrator Participants</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Words are hard. Don't make sense easily. Have to be explained. Can anything be done about that? 2. Lived experiences of marginalized stakeholders—too much going on there. 3. Reflexivity is tough to understand. 4. Possibility thinking is most important and easiest to understand. 5. Action should be an outer circle around all other elements. Outside. Separate. These elements lead to action and possibility-thinking is in the center driving action. 6. Term social-justice can be used but maybe not for larger applicability. 7. The why of your model must be at the center? What is outcome? 8. The how gets you to everything 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I wish I could make it easier but they have to be explained initially. 2. Yes. I have doubts about that. Which of the two ideas is primary focus? 3. Can try to explain it better. 4. That is different from staff and student responses. 5. That is exactly it! My model seeks to understand how to do things differently. I need to revisit model. change model? 6. Yes. I am still ambivalent about use of words. 7. So no element in the center? The why is the mission Or values? 8. Yes. I need to figure out how to operationalize the

	<p>else (i.e. all the elements of the model). So something else altogether in the center.</p> <p>9. Lots of stuff going on here. Are you self-conscious of what the values of those who apply this model into their practice are? Does that matter?</p> <p>10. Don't like you bundling these ideas (referring to thin arrows pairing elements). They need to be separate. They can affect each other separately.</p> <p>11. All elements are important. None redundant.</p>	<p>meta-ec processes I am talking about.</p> <p>9. My logic is that they are trying to help community. So we all need to be self-critical to improve. Maybe leadership value important? Think.</p> <p>10. Yes. I now agree. All elements are separate but closely related. CFA at some point?</p> <p>11. Doing some quantitative analysis on my model may be interesting. Exploring the strength of the relationships would be interesting.</p>
--	---	---

Within this theory-building process, using participant feedback to reconsider and review the original seven-element r-CriDo model resulted in the final nine-element meta-ec r-CriDo model (see Figure 14). Participants shared these above questions, comments, and suggestions based on their insights about the model's applicability and relevance to them, and their lived experiences within the case-study context. My corresponding reflection on the model and my theoretically and empirically informed logic-in-use led to the modification of the model presented in Figure 12 and 13 and helped in the creation and representation of the final meta-EC process-oriented r-CriDo model as seen in Figure 14.

The development of the final model. As mentioned before, the original r-CriDo model was offered as a tentative meta-ec model template to enhance responsiveness. It was conceptualized from the interaction of existing literature and theory, with my lived experiences as a practitioner and community member. The final model offered in Figure

14 is a product of empirical data (drawn from participant responses) informing this theory-building researcher's logic-in-use that acted upon and modified the original conceptualization. An elaboration of how participant feedback informed my thinking and logic-in-use, and impacted the final r-CriDo model creation and representation is detailed below.

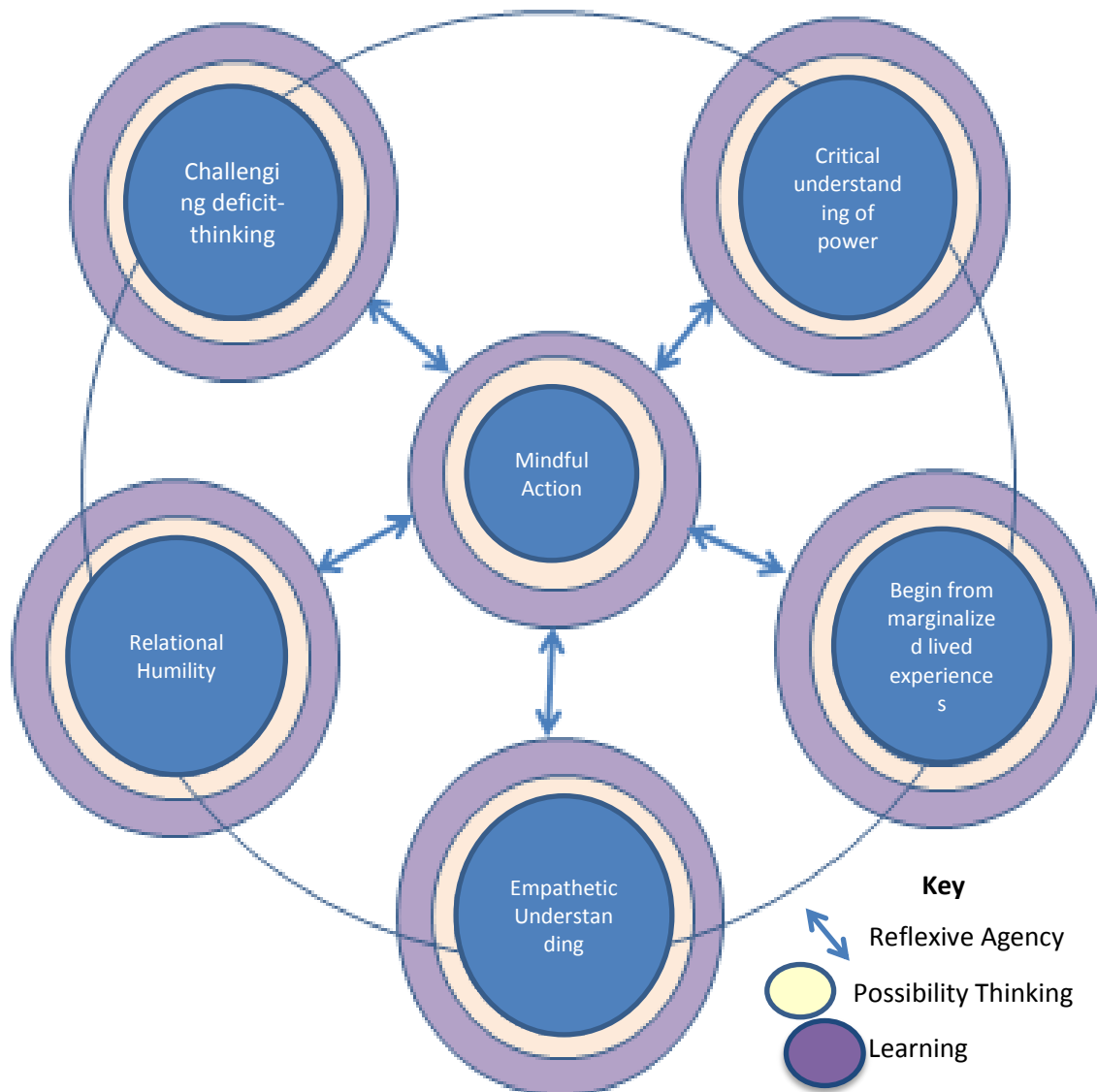


Figure 14. Final Meta-Cognitive-Meta-Evaluative (Meta-EC) r-CriDo Model Template to Enhance Responsiveness.

Unchanging elements of the r-CriDo model. Of the final nine, three elements—relational humility, challenging deficit-thinking, and critical understanding of power—were retained as-is from the original model. In their responses, participants had confirmed the relevance of these three elements to their practice. Thereafter, when asked to comment on the original model presentation and layout (i.e., Figure 12 and 13) these three elements were the only ones that all three groups of participants felt, need not be moved nor modified within the model. Thus, these three elements were retained in the final model as they were within the original model. Some terminology was changed though. ‘Critical understanding of power differentials and standpoints’ was changed to ‘critically understanding power’ to make the language simpler as part of an effort to make the model and its visual representation more accessible to practitioners so that they could better apply it.

The question of combining some model elements. Though it was not visually represented in the model initially, the possibility of collapsing a few elements because they seemed to be too closely related theoretically and conceptually was considered. This possible option of combining these elements with arrows between these pairs of elements to collapse them into single combined elements was shared with the participants towards the end of the data collection process. They were asked if they thought these following elements should be combined—

1. Critical understanding of power differentials and standpoints, and empathetic understanding of lived experiences of marginalized stakeholders
2. Relational humility, and challenging deficit-thinking
3. Possibility-thinking and social-justice oriented mindful action

Please see Figure 13 (p. 189 of this dissertation) which shows the double-headed arrows between each of these pairs of elements indicating that they were being considered to be combined. The logic-in-use that guided this consideration was that action could not happen without possibility thinking, deficit-thinking required relational humility, and an understanding of power and standpoints defined and enabled empathetic understanding of marginalized stakeholders' lived experiences. Thus, it made sense that they probably should be combined and I suggested this to participants while seeking their feedback about the model.

Participants in the case-study, while acknowledging that all the elements in my model were at least minimally linked to each other in some way, unanimously disagreed with the idea that the elements should be combined the way I had suggested. Members of all three participant groups commented that they believed that the elements needed to stay separate because each of these concepts, while they may overlap, were unique. Each of these elements needed to be engaged in as a separate meta-ec process while following the r-CriDo model. Combining these elements would likely result in any one of them being overlooked and the r-CRiDo model being less effective as a meta-ec tool/template in enhancing responsiveness

Thus, despite initially tentatively combining 'relational humility' and 'challenging deficit-thinking,' and 'critical understanding of power differentials and standpoints' and 'empathetic understanding of lived experiences of marginalized stakeholders,' and 'possibility thinking' and 'social-justice-oriented mindful action,' because participants saw them as different entities and did not want them combined, they were left alone as separate elements. Participants, however, did note that all the elements of the r-CriDo

model were closely related. Once again, future studies and application of the model may generate information regarding the overlap of the elements. At this time, the model is seen as having nine unique meta-ec process elements to be followed.

The separation of a few elements. As explained earlier in this chapter, the seven elements gave way to nine. First, reflexivity was changed to reflexive-agency. As an element, it was separated from learning. Thus, the combined single element of ‘reflexivity and learning’ gave rise to two separate unique elements of ‘reflexive agency’ and ‘learning.’ Additionally, ‘empathetic understanding of lived experiences of marginalized stakeholders’ was parsed out into two elements—‘beginning from marginalized lived experiences’ and ‘empathetic understanding.’

The reason for this separation was because all participant groups including student practitioners seemed to overlook the concept of who was marginalized and how, and only focused on empathetic understanding. The concept of understanding who was marginalized within a context and how and why was important as I have already established while discussing this element earlier in this chapter. Additionally, empathetic understanding could be applied to anyone within a context without a focus on marginalized stakeholders and their lived experiences. Thus, participant responses highlighted that the original model element had two concepts within one element. As a result, to emphasize the importance of both ideas they were separated, this original single element was separated into two.

Finally, based on participant feedback, the term social-justice was removed from the element of ‘social-justice-oriented mindful action’ for the element to become ‘mindful action.’ The reasons for this separation have already been discussed.

All of these separated elements reflect the effort to delineate unique concepts and represent them as distinctive elements within the meta-ec r-CriDo model to enable practitioners to better apply the model with greater fidelity.

Representing element importance within the model. To signify their importance or centrality within the r-CriDo model, ‘reflexivity and learning’, ‘possibility-thinking,’ and ‘mindful social-justice-oriented action’ were constantly moved around in the visual representation of the model. All three participant groups of staff, students, and administrators recognized (evident in their responses) that the action piece was the goal of the meta-EC process—something I myself had not consciously realized in my own theorizing yet. So they (those participants who responded) recommended centering action within the r-CriDo model.

As mentioned before, among the elements, the student community found empathetic understanding of the lived experiences of marginalized stakeholders to be the most important element, the staff found mindful action to be most important, while the administrators emphasized that possibility thinking was the most important element within the model as a meta-ec process. One possible interpretation for these differences in emphasis of the elements could relate to the different lived experiences of these stakeholder groups in terms of their power and what element impacted their lives and work the most.

It could be that students—as those with least power and due to their lived experiences—want to be heard and understood with empathy, while administrators, in their role as leaders want their EI staff to believe in change and be willing to change, and so emphasize thinking and acting with possibility. Staff were focused on action, on what

needed to get done at the ground level, and because of their role they likely saw that element of mindful action as important. My role as the researcher-theorist also explains my emphasis on ‘reflexivity and learning’ as being the central element of this model because I am offering a model as a tool that I believe can be deployed only if it taught and only if practitioners are reflexive about themselves and their contexts.

Despite the different emphasis of the elements’ importance within the model, all three groups centered action in the model because the bottom-line was that this element was most important with regards to the relevance of the model. All the other processes were wasted, they believed, if action did not happen. I too came around to realizing the same thing. The whole model would be wasted if no action occurred. Thus I considered placing it in the center.

One administrator suggested action to be a separate outer ring of the R-CriDo model (see Figure 12) interacting with the evaluation process cycle steps. And it made sense to me when the administrator suggested it because the essence, as other participants had indicated was “*to get to action through the model*” (Student C). I did try out a few ways of representing the model as was suggested—by putting the action step outside as a separate ring, but doing so compromised the interconnectivity of the different elements and ‘action’ mutually informing each other and made the visual representation more complicated than the model was actually meant to be. Hence, this idea was tabled.

One staff member pointed out that the arrows from reflexivity to the rest of the elements in my model should not be unidirectional. Rather, it had to be bi-directional to indicate that all the r-CriDo model elements influenced ‘reflexivity and learning’ just as much as they were informed by reflexivity and learning. As an example, theoretically,

reflexivity informed the critical understanding of power, and that understanding once again informed reflexivity. That was my logic-in-use as well. So that change was incorporated.

Some of the staff suggested combining possibility-thinking and ‘reflexivity and learning.’ I wasn’t as sure about combining the two. However, I did see the strong connection between possibility thinking and action, and that connection got stronger and stronger as I received feedback from additional participant groups. Without possibility-thinking there could be no action because even if a ‘critical understanding of power’ did exist, for example, no action need be taken about it because of various defensive reasons or governing variables at play. Thus, it took possibility-thinking to explore a better course of practice (i.e., action).

As I analyzed the feedback from my participants as the nine separate elements of the final model evolved, it was clear that ‘reflexivity and learning,’ ‘possibility-thinking,’ and ‘mindful action’ spoke to all the other elements in my model more strongly than the other elements spoke to each other. There was also a linear or direct relationship between ‘possibility-thinking’ and ‘mindful action,’ where the action was premised upon ‘possibility-thinking.’ The distinction between reflexivity and learning in the final model allowed the separation of the two elements as described before. Reflexivity was the process and learning was the outcome. And even as I came to this understanding, I also realized that this learning was the foundation to possibility thinking and action because learning (about the model, about the gap, about participant needs, about marginalized lived experiences, etc. was the first step start thinking about possible ways to engage in action.

Thus, the r-CriDo model had to represent these new under-currents of relationships among the elements.

Participant questions that the model needed to address. Participants in the case-study raised a number of considerations that they believed needed to be incorporated into the visual representation of the model.

The question of governing variables and values. I was asked by all participant groups to illustrate the constraint of differing values within the r-CriDo model. I was asked where those values would be represented in the final model, given that practitioners' different values would affect the r-CriDo model's efficacy. Similarly, staff and administrator groups raised the issue of governing variables such as organizational culture, leadership, resources, and similar such constraints that were "*foundational boundaries*" (Staff G) to the adoption and implementation of the whole meta-ec r-CriDo model. The comments below are indicative of these issues raised.

"People talk about these values rhetorically. They are committed in principle... but they don't really believe in it or act on it," (Student A)

"Your work assumes that people in the institution have a shared value set. That is not the case," (Staff M)

"I am student-oriented because of my values. But the person before me did not have the same values," (Administrator C)

"We can have these social-justice values but if the leadership does not support these values and our work, then there is no point trying,"
(Staff H)

Given this feedback from participants, the decision not to represent these constraining variables nor ‘values’ within the model was a conscious one.

First, the r-CriDo model seeks to address the constraints that people place upon themselves and their practice and offers them a meta-ec process to resolve that constraint—through dialoging, subversive action (that is derived from backdoor pedagogy), or working toward buy-in. The logic-in-use, supported by theory and empirical data is that the r-CriDo model is meant to act on the constraints to overcome them. Not be acted upon by these boundaries. Including these governing variables as constraints of the r-CriDo model would negate the very purpose of the model. As a result, these barriers/ boundaries/ governing variables are intentionally not included in the model.

However, per the suggestion of Staff B as described previously in this chapter, it is expected that these variables will be explored within the ‘critically understanding power’ element of the model so that they can be acted upon, and though it is not represented in the model for clarity and simplicity purposes, when the model is taught and put to use, it will be explained.

Similarly, I choose not to represent ‘values’ within this model because this theory-building researcher’s logic-in-use (derived from scholarship, lived experiences, and empirical data) is that it is the espoused theory of the EI/NPO that one needs to focus on to catalyze and improve responsiveness and not the constraints of differing values. Differing values are reflective of differing theories-in-use. The purpose of the meta-ec model is to expose and address the constraints raised by the different values/ theories-in-use among practitioners. Thus, the relevance of including the constraint of ‘value’ to the

model is almost the same as including the concept of ‘governing variables/ boundaries’ to the model. Both are meant to be overcome as practitioners engage in the meta-ec r-CriDo model that would enable them to enact their espoused theory by overcoming these constraints. Thus, they were not included.

Because the r-CriDo model is set up as a meta-ec process template that will enable practitioners to become aware of, explore, and address their possible different values, or the foundational boundaries they face and come to terms with them to engage in action toward improving responsiveness, the suggestion include these two concepts in the r-CriDo model’s illustration was ignored.

Finally, it must be acknowledged that this r-CriDo model is social-justice oriented. Different participants from all three participant groups noticed that and commented on it. I have acknowledged my philosophical underpinnings related to social-justice that drives this complete theory-building work. But it is my logic-in-use—based on participant responses and the literature—that using the word social-justice can only serve to possibly alienate or confuse those who are not familiar or aligned with the terminology or the theory behind it. Hence, the term has been excised from the model.

Addressing the jargon of this model. The final issue raised by participants was the heavy language. The academic, heavily conceptualized, theoretical underpinnings of many of these elements of the r-CriDo model were in evidence when the model was shared with participants. This jargon was also evident earlier in this chapter when the model elements’ theoretical underpinnings were shared. While doing the best I could to make the language and description of each element more accessible, it was hard to do

away with the jargon altogether because the jargon brought the nuance that was important to ensure the fidelity of practice of this model.

It is important to tie the elements to their theoretical meaningful roots so that this model can be critically analyzed, revisited, and rethought in the future because its roots are present for all to modify or critique. This model is inspired by theory and is a commitment to scholars and practitioners who have engaged in this hard work before this model was conceptualized. Hence, no additional changes were made to change the language, because then in practice the implementation of the model could be grotesquely different from what the elements of the model actually stand for, if the language were removed. I find (at this point in time of the theory-building) that there is no way to really get around the issue of jargon more than what I have attempted to do in the final model.

Fitzpatrick (2007) highlights how it is okay to train evaluators on competencies when they do not have it already. Given that one of the foundational elements is learning, we can see that an initial learning around these elements will ease the possibly problematic and heavy language. Thus, practitioners would have to be introduced to this model, its ideas, and the terminology, and learn them before they can engage in the self-sustaining practice of it on their own thereafter.

Explaining the final model representation. Please see Figure 15 for an explanatory representation of the final modified meta-ec r-Crido model that can be used within the two phases of responsiveness (needs assessment evaluation and change-intervention action) to mediate each step of the six steps of the needs assessment process. It can also be used to mediate any and all steps of the change-intervention processes of responsiveness to catalyze and enhance responsiveness in all its action steps.

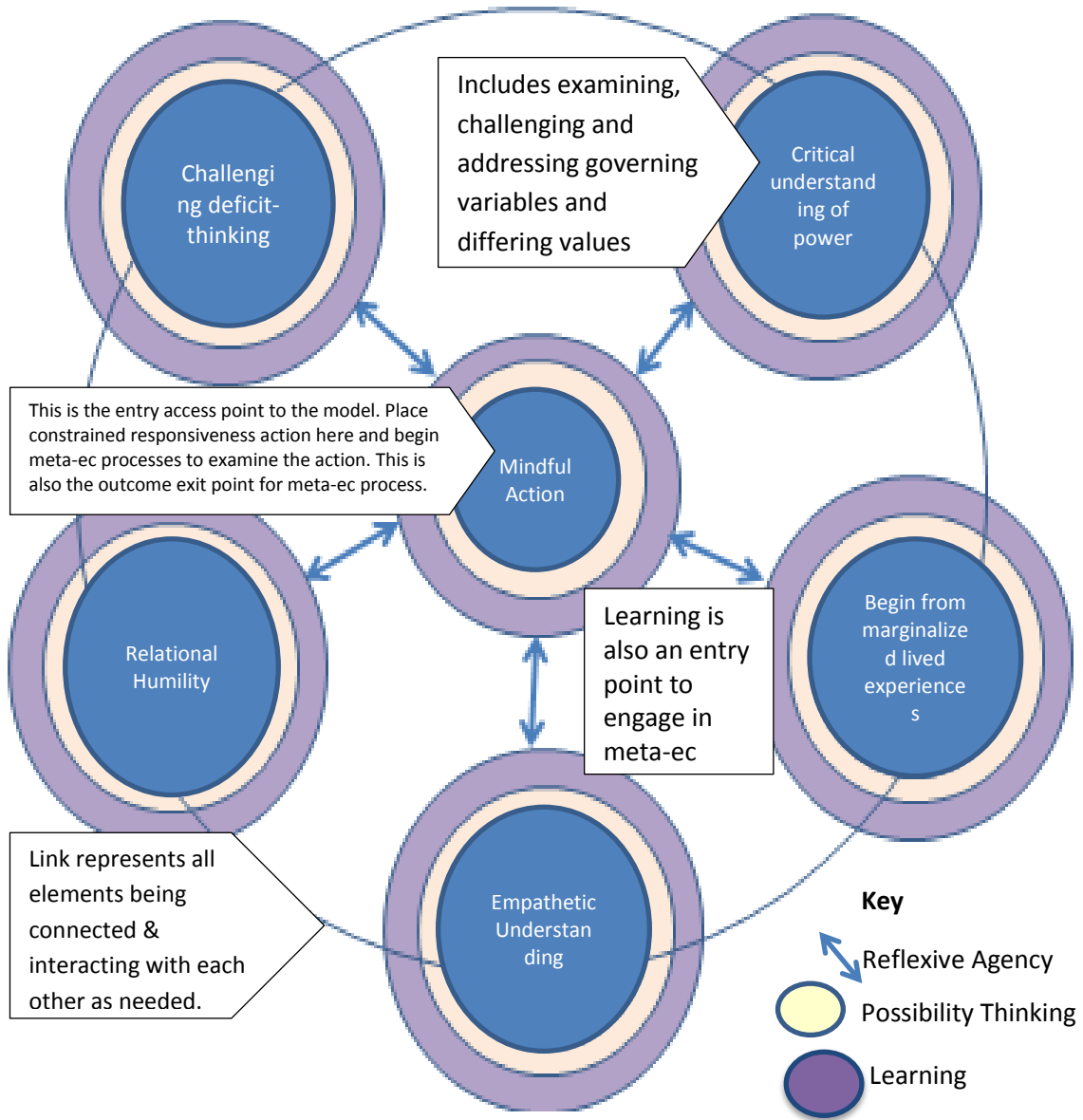


Figure 15. Final Meta-Cognitive-Meta-Evaluative (Meta-EC) r-CriDo Model Template to Enhance Responsiveness with Explanatory Comments

The model begins with ‘learning’ (about the model and its elements). This is why ‘learning’ is the foundational circle in the model underlying every other element of the model. ‘Possibility thinking’ is seen as an element that must be engaged in every time learning occurs. Thus, it is placed as the layer over ‘learning’ but also underlies every

other element of the model because learning and possibility thinking mediate all other elements. ‘Reflexive agency’ is represented as the double-headed arrows that move between the central element of ‘mindful action,’ linking it to every other element in the model.

Thus, ‘mindful action’ or ‘learning’ is the entry point of the model that leads to possibility-thinking and any other element being deployed. Engaging in ‘reflexive agency’ about any constraint bound action can result in a focus on any one of the remaining five elements. And engaging in that meta-ec process element results in ‘learning’ and ‘possibility-thinking’ that drives ‘reflexive agency’ once again to enable ‘mindful action’ towards enhancing responsiveness.

It is important to note that depending on the step within responsiveness and the EI/NPO context, different meta-ec elements of the r-CriDo model would be more pertinent to be engaged in. For example, in one particular circumstance such as the data collection step of the needs assessment evaluation process of responsiveness, engaging in a ‘critical understanding of power’ to ‘begin from marginalized experiences’ would possibly be the most pertinent meta-ec process of the r-CriDo model to deploy, while in another context for the same data collection step, ‘relational humility’ would be most pertinent to get the input from the community or another practitioner about what would be the most appropriate method to use to collect data. Similarly, ‘challenging deficit-thinking’ would be extremely relevant in the data-analysis step to arrive at the most valid inferences and make the right recommendations to improve the change-interventions of responsiveness in one situation while a differential understanding of power will enable the most valid lenses to use during analysis. Alternately, it could also be that for different

steps of the needs assessment process, some meta-ec elements of the r-CriDo model are most pertinent while others are almost irrelevant. Depending on the context and the circumstances such possibilities can apply and must be explored in future research endeavors.

The same goes for ‘mindful action.’ In one context the mindful action may be to build consensus while in another situation it would require being subversive. Thus, further studies would contextually elucidate any trends in what elements are most pertinent to improve what steps of the responsiveness process. Additionally, given the associated nature of all of these elements that mediate, inform, and complement each other, the outer circle all the five elements of the model represents this interconnectedness of the elements that sometimes relational humility may lead to empathetic understanding, or anti-deficit-thinking leads to a critical understanding of power, and vice versa.

How the final r-CriDo meta-ec model works. A few administrative and staff participants asked a question right at the end of the data collection process—“*so how would this model work?*” They saw the relevance and applicability of the model but requested a step-by-step explanation of the how of practicing this meta-ec model.

The practice of this model can be done in the following manner. Take any action or step that is being constrained, or any barrier that an individual or OI is facing due to explicit foundational boundaries or unknown issues affecting it, and place it in the mindful action element/ step that is at the center of the final r-CriDo model. Engage in the meta-ec r-CriDo model elements for the processes to enable empowered action that positively affects that same original action that the practitioner began with.

To clarify how this model works, a vignette is offered as a description of r-CriDo meta-ec process.

Let us say that a College of Education as an EI has one particular program specifically designed for a group of students from a historically underrepresented background. The College is conducting annual exit surveys and has a student advisory board to collect feedback about the overall college's students' needs and whether their needs are being met by the curriculum, pedagogy, faculty and staff of the students, and the student support services and programming that the College is providing (i.e., its change-interventions). Thus, evidence exists that a form of needs assessment and change-intervention is being conducted within this EI, indicative of the existence of an iterative responsiveness process.

However, the group of underrepresented students in the program are not having a positive experience, despite overall numbers in the college-wide survey indicating satisfaction with the College's services and education. And no action has been undertaken for a few years to address this issue. The lone student representatives of that student group are unable to raise these issues in the student-advisory board meetings because they feel they will not be heard. They are apathetic and/ or frustrated and/ or fearful because they have historically faced punitive repercussions for having raised such issues in the advisory board meetings.

If deficit-thinking is prevalent in the College among its practitioners (staff, faculty, administrators), the negative experiences of this group of students may be pathologized as a product of the College dealing with 'problem students' in some way. Or defensive rationalizations could justify a dismissal of this group of students' feedback

because of the assumption that there will always be some students who are dissatisfied and the college can never address all students' needs to everyone's satisfaction. This thinking would rationalize the College's defensive theory-in-use that it can't cater to every student's need; that it has tried everything within its power to make things better, and it must do justice to the needs of other students in the College as well who do seem to be having a positive experience in the College. Thus a gap in responsiveness (with respect to this group of students that the College has as its mission to serve) does exist.

The College could use the responsiveness quality indicator matrix and see how it is faring on each of the quality indicators with respect to this group of students. It is important to note here that this whole theory-building endeavor, as mentioned before, offers a normative framework to engage in responsiveness but that framework is always aspirational implying that I take for granted that gaps in responsiveness will keep being formed, and our job as practitioners is to keep attempting to address the gap to better serve our communities by engaging in quality responsiveness.

Thus, the college can always look at its majority students who are happy with its programming and services and feel good about its work or it can always look for ways to improve and impact those who are commonly least served. Getting back to the vignette, given this premise, if the College does want to improve its responsiveness quality and work towards meeting its entire community's needs as best as it can, it can adopt the r-CriDo model as a college-wide template to encourage practitioners to engage in meta-ec processes to improve—in an always aspirational manner continuously.

If the r-CriDo model were engaged in, it would first involve learning about the meta-ec model, all its elements, and its goal of enhancing responsiveness and reducing

the gap between espoused theory and enacted practice. With that learning, when possibility-thinking is engaged in and reflexive-agency is practiced as meta-ec processes, it would lead to a staff or faculty member (practitioner) or all practitioners in their own way taking action and paying attention to this negative experience of this group of students. It would involve them taking a deeper look at the differential power relationships that exist between this group of students and faculty, themselves, and even between this group of students and other students who form the majority in the college.

Critically understanding power would enable them to challenge the governing variables (such as lack of time, resources, lack of leadership, differing values, and the like) and overcome them, and explore the taken for granted 'truths' of the organizational culture and its values that result in inaction around meeting this particular's group's needs. This critical understanding of power would make visible the invisible power differentials because it would imply exploring the places and spaces of silence and would result in the practitioner attempting to understand the lived experiences of this group of historically marginalized students.

An example of some of the barriers these students raise as issues that cause their negative experience can be: (a) a lack of cultural sensitivity among certain faculty regarding their interactions with students, (b) a curriculum that does not meet their needs in terms of a career they are planning, or (c) the lack of funding opportunities the students have access to, to support their own education. It could any other reason for that matter.

Learning about these issues would lead to a practitioner attempting to understand why these issues are being faced by this group of students and whether it applies to

others as well. This leads to once again revisiting power and exploring how these students are impacted due to their identity and/or other factors. An understanding of this group of students' lived experiences and the practitioner's reflexive agency would lead to the decision to take some action collaboratively (as a result of practicing relational humility) to come up with some suggestions for change-interventions that the college can engage in to make these students' experiences positive. The goal would thus be to reduce the gap between espoused theory of the success of students that the College was trying to serve and the enacted practice of apathy or resignation that the College was too bureaucratic to change (or there was no time, no resources, no leadership, or some other such barriers) that resulted in negative experiences that were causing students tremendous stress that even resulted in some of them dropping out.

'Reflexive agency' would lead to an empathetic understanding of these students' lived experiences and needs that would involve challenging the deficit-thinking narratives in practitioner minds and a discourse that is often pervasive about why these students are having a negative experience in the College when other students seem satisfied. Critically understanding power would once again offer insights into how and why these deficit-thinking narratives come to be and how they can be challenged. The learning and understanding of who has power to effect change and the possibility-thinking of how to make that change happen (by thinking-outside the box to challenge and overcome the various governing variable constraints the practitioner faces) so that this group of students has a positive experience leads to reflexive agency about what the practitioner can do to engage in mindful action toward enacting their espoused theory.

All through, the critical understanding of power enables the practitioner to keep in mind the impact on the lived experiences of those who have least power and understand the urgency required in addressing their needs. Reflexive agency enables them to take on the responsibility to be the agent of change rather than imposing that or expecting that of others alone. Reflexive agency empowers participants to take the best course of action by building alliances as needed, mindful of the consequences of the same.

Acting mindfully using these same meta-ec processes to inform and create change-intervention action, practitioners will work toward better meeting this group of marginalized students' needs. This change-intervention action would be collaborative, and could be dialogue-oriented, buy-in oriented, or subversive to overcome existing barriers to meet the needs of this student group by practicing relational humility.

Any action—be it training faculty and staff to be respectful of cultural differences, be it offering more job opportunities and scholarships for students, or revisiting the curriculum to examine its relevance in the job markets that students aspire to—would likely lead to all students and the whole College eventually benefitting from this process (an effect of beginning from marginalized student experiences). Engaging in relational humility, by asking this group of students to share their insights about existing cultural sensitivity training modules and have them help make it better and more effective for the practitioners in the College to be trained better would also benefit the College.

Finally, after all the change-interventions are deployed based on this improved responsiveness process, feedback can once again be collected from the students about the utility and relevance of these change-interventions to the community—once again

deploying this same r-CriDo model. And the existing responsiveness feedback mechanisms in place could also be revisited using the r-CriDo meta-ec model lens to look at how the structures and systems in place could be enhanced to better serve students and better capture their needs, navigating through their fears, silences and possibly even loudness. And the cycle of responsiveness will continue.

As a result of engaging in the r-CriDo model, practitioners can set up systems and processes to engage in this kind of higher quality responsiveness iteratively—engaging in a whole iteration of responsiveness or addressing just a single step context of responsiveness such as enabling students to feel secure and empowered in offering feedback within a student-advisory board setting, or enabling that feedback be taken seriously to inform change-intervention in a timely manner openly. Thus the organization culture, as a result of practicing the r-CriDo model will become one where practitioners are constantly searching for ways to further improve responsiveness quality.

Given the above example, this r-CriDo model can be used in similar situations for practitioners to enable their different EI/NPOs to better serve their communities and meet their communities' needs, thereby better enacting their espoused theory.

Thus, over all the meta-ec r-CriDo model works in the following manner—when a constraint, problem, or challenge in the responsiveness process is placed in the central circle of mindful action after learning about the r-CriDo model, possibility-thinking creates options for the practitioner to engage in reflexive-agency regarding what action they can take to enhance responsiveness. Each of the remaining five elements of critically understanding power, beginning from marginalized lived experiences, empathetic understanding, relational humility, and anti-deficit-thinking will need to be visited in

relation to (and as relevant to) what has been placed in the mindful action element. By engaging in reflexive-agency all the barriers to the action are explored, new information is learned, and by engaging in possibility-thinking the constraints are overcome for the practitioner to take mindful action towards fulfilling the espoused theory.

Chapter Summary

This chapter addressed the second research question set—what does a framework/ model/ strategy that addresses the possible barriers (to practicing responsiveness) and catalyze responsiveness look like? What are its unique elements? What does it offer that the other evaluation models/ approaches thus far have not?

Answering the second research question set. Having established the existence of gaps in the responsiveness process both theoretically and empirically, the previous chapter established the need for a meta-ec model that could help enhance and improve responsiveness practice. This chapter described the conceptual r-CriDo model and mapped its development using participant responses, the researcher-theorist's logic-in-use, her lived experiences, and the literature, to arrive at the final nine-element meta-cognitive-meta-evaluative (meta-ec) 'r'eflexive-CRItical and decolonizing-DOing (r-CRiDo) model.

Each of this model's unique elements were described to offer this model as a normative template/ tool that practitioners can engage in to access the gap between their espoused theory and enacted practice and thereafter address that gap in responsiveness by engaging in this meta-ec process model. The visual representation of the model and its elements was also shared to answer the first and second question of this three-part

question set. This model (Figure 14 and 15) represents the meta-ec processes that the practitioner will engage in when using the r-CriDo model to catalyze responsiveness.

Finally, the last question in this second set of research questions—what does this model offer that other evaluation approaches/ models thus far have not—has also been answered. Earlier in this dissertation, Chapter III had offered a discussion of existing strategies to recognize and address the gap between espoused theory and enacted practice. The chapter discussed the limitations of these existing strategies (in evaluation and in other fields) to highlight how they did not adequately address the gaps between the espoused theory of responsiveness and its enacted practice (and the barriers that cause them). This discussion in Chapter III answered the question—what does this model offer that other evaluation approaches/ models thus far have not—in part. This chapter offers the rest of the answer to that question and confirms the model’s relevance.

This model is the first meta-ec model of its kind to serve as a self-assessment self-enhancement tool that can comprehensively guide practitioners’ thinking and actions to improve responsiveness. It is a meta-ec model that can guide evaluation practice, inform EI/NPO programming, and that can be used toward self-improvement—something other models do not offer. None of the other models have explicitly described themselves as a meta-ec model towards enhancing responsiveness.

After sharing the r-CriDo model with participants (Figure 12 and 13) participant practitioners were asked if there was any element missing that should have been included into the r-CriDo model to benefit responsiveness practice. All three groups stated that this model was a comprehensive model and did not need any additional elements to make it more relevant and applicable to practitioners. As a holistic meta-ec model to address the

gap between the espoused theory of responsiveness and its enacted practice within EI/NPO contexts, this model is likely the first of its kind. All administrator participants in different ways stated their appreciation of this model as being one of a kind (per their knowledge) in bringing critical and feminist theory concepts to organizational learning strategies to help OIs better carry out their responsibilities and serve their communities.

Addressing sub-parts of the third research question set. This chapter also attempted to answer one of the questions from the third research question set—what is the applicability and relevance of the model/ framework (or lack thereof) in addressing responsiveness in the context of a case-study?

The purpose of this dissertation was to create this model as part of a responsiveness theory-building endeavor. Testing its applicability and relevance of the final model created as it is used will come next. Thus, discussing the efficacy of the responsiveness quality indicator matrix or the meta-ec r-CriDo model in real world case-study contexts will have to be tabled for another study.

However, in answer to the above question, participants did offer empirical evidence to confirm the relevance and utility of the model as they considered its applicability within their case-study context, as they reflected on their experience and practice of responsiveness. Their responses established the validity of the model elements within the EI context in this study. They saw the model's applicability, relevance, and utility to their practice of responsiveness and they wanted to use the model when it was ready to be used.

The purpose of this dissertation was to create this model. The model was refined based on participant feedback and the final meta-ec r-CriDo model created is now ready

for further application and testing to empirically confirm/ disconfirm its relevance and utility in other EI/NPO contexts where this model may be deployed and used.

It is important to reiterate that this dissertation did not document nor describe the effectiveness of the r-CriDo model (or lack thereof) in actual use in the real world because it was still being developed and fine-tuned within the case-study context. Thus, it has not been empirically applied (as a model-in-use) within a case-study setting for one to be able to draw conclusions about its utility or applicability in that sense. One can only hypothesize (as the vignette did) its effectiveness at this point. Only further research can confirm the model-in-use's applicability and relevance. Thus, the first question of the third set of research questions has been answered in some ways and has not been answered in some ways.

The next chapter addresses the last research question set of this dissertation. Thereafter, it briefly summarizes this complete theory-building endeavor, highlighting the theory-building and empirical processes' strengths and weaknesses.

CHAPTER VII

STRENGTHS, LIMITATIONS, AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This chapter begins by tackling the final two remaining questions of the third research questions set—what are the model’s strengths and limitations? What conditions make the model/ framework applicable and relevant in bridging the possible gap between espoused and enacted theory? One additional question of the third research question set—what is the applicability and relevance of the model/ framework (or lack thereof) in addressing responsiveness in the context of a case-study—has already been addressed in this dissertation.

Specifying the Relevance and Applicability of the Model

Before expanding on the strengths and limitations of the model, I clarify the relevance of the model and then discuss the optimum conditions for its use.

Clarifying the relevance of the model. Participant responses have confirmed the applicability and relevance of the model in addressing responsiveness within the case-study context theoretically. By this I mean that participants did not deploy the model elements or the model (in its final form) to enhance their responsiveness process and then comment on its relevance, applicability, and utility. Instead, their comments are based on their experiences of the barriers they commonly face while attempting to practice responsiveness and what they see perceive as the relevance and applicability of the model elements to their practice given their experiences.

Because the model was still being developed (based on their input on it) even as data was being collected from them about its applicability and relevance, participants did not have an opportunity to apply the model in their practice and then comment on its

utility. This dissertation is a theory-building process and participants were integral to the responsiveness theory-building process and the r-CriDo model development. The next phase of this dissertation will be the confirmation/ disconfirmation of the model after applying it in real world case-contexts and that will offer further information regarding the model's utility and relevance (Lynham, 2002a).

In this study, participants were introduced to and explained the different elements of the model, and were asked to comment on what they thought its applicability and relevance within the EI context given their experience with responsiveness and the barriers they faced in engaging in it. Thus, it is important to note that the inferences made about the model's relevance, applicability, and utility are not based on participants deploying the model in the case-study setting but rather based on participant reflections on how well the model elements mapped on to their lived experiences and the barriers to responsiveness they faced (based on their experience it). Thus, the real world applied relevance of the final r-CriDo model in its entirety in use is yet to be confirmed.

Model applicability conditions. It would take further case-studies and the actual application of this model in different EI/NPO settings to comprehensively answer the research question posed—what conditions make the model/ framework applicable and relevant in bridging the possible gap between espoused and enacted theory? However, I do offer an initial tentative response.

Contextual applicability of model. My own lived experiences and informal application of this model even as I was creating it leads me to hypothesize that if the concept of responsiveness and the gap in its practice is understood and accepted by practitioners within an EI/NPO and if this r-CriDo model is adopted as a template tool to

follow to enhance responsiveness practice, by any/ all practitioners within the EI/NPO, the r-CriDo has the potential to change the conditions or organizational culture that bar its use rather than be constrained by the governing variables and other problems that create the barriers to responsiveness. I have numerous examples from my lived experience to justify this initial tentative response but sharing and describing each of them would be outside the scope of this dissertation. However, the philosophical underpinnings each of my model elements and the body of work behind them justify this response because they offer evidence, in multiple works of scholarship and empirical studies, of shifting whole schools of thought, and of having changed the way people think and act.

While my tentative response can only be validated upon further testing of this model in different case-study settings, it is based on this hypothesis that when I was asked about where I saw this model being practiced—“*Can it be practiced in the Chinese Central government under a dictatorship?*” (Staff C), my answer to that question was a cautious yes. I offer that this model would be applicable to anyone (person or people) who is interested in practicing quality responsiveness as it has been defined in this dissertation; to anyone who espouses the theory/ principles of responsiveness; to move them forward in their work.

Thus, this model can be practiced by the community, the OI staff or the leadership, or even upwards accountability stakeholders as long as they want to enact their espoused theory of responsiveness and take up the responsibility to ensure its quality. This r-CriDo model seeks to enable them to practice their espoused theory and take action on their commitment to their community. I do believe that different

stakeholders will likely benefit differently through the application of this model, but uncovering what that is, is beyond the scope of this dissertation at this point in time.

Model fidelity for relevance. An additional factor in the model's relevance, utility, and applicability is the condition of model fidelity. Participants, when presented with the model, directly addressed its relevance and utility and confirmed the validity of the model. They anecdotally recounted numerous examples of how the elements of the model played out in practice and were meaningful to improve responsiveness.

Evidence from the case-study suggests that giving in to the governing variables and assuming no responsibility for engaging in action toward overcoming the barriers to responsiveness occur when the model elements are not understood or learned well. And governing variables would then continue being a constraint that would negatively affect the effective use of the r-CriDo template to improve responsiveness. Thus, fidelity of r-CriDo model deployment is necessary for responsiveness to be enhanced by engaging in the model.

Strengths and limitations of the r-CriDo model. The last research question to be addressed in this dissertation is—what are the model's strengths and limitations?

Strengths. The primary strength of the model is that it offers a self-determining meta-ec template that has not been offered thus far for the gap between espoused theory and enacted practice to be reduced. This model is the first meta-ec model of its kind to serve as a self-assessment self-enhancement tool that can comprehensively guide practitioners' thinking and actions to improve responsiveness. It is a meta-ec model that can guide evaluation practice, inform EI/NPO programming, and it can be used toward

self-improvement—something other models do not offer. None of the other models have explicitly described themselves as a meta-ec model towards enhancing responsiveness.

Additionally, the model can be used at the individual level or the group process level because it is both a meta-cognitive and a meta-evaluative tool. Its comprehensive approach enables it to be applied across different contexts. But because it is normative, it requires a fidelity of practice to be effective in that all the elements of the model have to be conceptually understood really well in terms of how they apply to action and how they are pertinent to the responsiveness process. Using the model with fidelity, I would argue, ensures practitioners address the barriers to responsiveness. Participants confirmed this argument of mine when they shared with me that the second round of data collection itself was a process that resulted in some thinking and movement toward improvement and change in the EI's practice of responsiveness.

A second key strength of the model is its ability (per its final creation and representation) to be customizable. I was asked by Student N in the student practitioner focus group whether the r-CriDo process could be customized. My response was that I had built this model for it to be customized. While the goal is for practitioners to engage in all the elements, there are times when, deficit-thinking would likely be more relevant within a particular action step of responsiveness rather than empathetic understanding or vice-versa. As I have described in the previous chapter, certain elements of the model could be used independently depending on the need and context. However, the whole model is always more useful to the practitioner than just a few elements—especially given their ability to inform each other as meta-ec process steps (An example: the way

relational humility complements deficit-thinking or empathetic understanding speaks to critically understanding power, and vice versa).

Limitations. The main limitation of the model is that if practitioners are not using the model to act on their barriers, and instead allow the barriers to act on the model, i.e., if practitioners do not grasp the meta-evaluative-meta-cognitive nature of the model, nor the reflexive-agency element of the model adequately, then the model likely will have limited benefits in addressing the gap. Thus, the primary condition required to practice the model is an understanding of meta-ec processes and the espoused theory of quality responsiveness.

Additionally, the model has to be learned initially by the practitioners and its deep theoretical nuances need to be understood well for it to be practiced as an effective tool to catalyze responsiveness. I offer (with little to no direct empirical evidence at this point in time to substantiate the claim) that the model is applicable across different contexts so long as the practitioner is espousing practicing quality responsiveness and is interested in enacting their espoused theory. Without model fidelity, the model would not be useful.

A final limitation of the model is possibly its two-dimensional representation. The layering of the model and the connections between the elements could be better represented in a 3-D model. Also, understanding the meta-ec r-CriDo process by visually following the model representation takes some learning and a lot of understanding—something that can desist its use and applicability among practitioners.

A Dissertation Summary

I began this dissertation with three broad research question sets:

Question 1. How can responsiveness be defined, measured, and monitored? What are the perceived and lived barriers faced by EIs, NPOs, and evaluators in practicing responsiveness? What factors contribute to a gap between the espoused theory of EIs and NPOs and their enacted theory?

Question 2. What does a framework/ model/ strategy that addresses these possible barriers and catalyze responsiveness look like? What are its unique elements? What does it offer that the other evaluation models/ approaches thus far have not?

Question 3. What are the model's strengths and limitations? What is the applicability and relevance of the model/ framework (or lack thereof) in addressing responsiveness in the context of a case-study? What conditions make the model/ framework applicable and relevant in bridging the possible gap between espoused and enacted theory?

The purpose of this dissertation was to build responsiveness theory and offer frameworks to enhance its practice. To begin with, this dissertation offered a theoretically conceptualized process definition of responsiveness—assessing community needs, meeting their needs and collecting feedback that their needs have been met (Figure 1). This 3-step process was diagrammatically modeled and justified as a 2-step process that involved the 6-step needs assessment evaluation process and the necessary resulting change-intervention action step(s). This 2-step process was also diagrammatically represented (Figure 3).

Thereafter, empirical confirmations of this definition of responsiveness was sought from three participant groups within an EI unit set up to serve a group of students from historically underrepresented backgrounds —the EI unit staff, the EI administrators,

and student evaluators who were members of the community being served by the EI unit while simultaneously also being evaluators who were engaging in a needs assessment for the EI unit about its community's needs. An analysis of all three participant groups' responses confirmed the theoretically derived process definition of responsiveness and validated the diagrammatic representation offered earlier.

Participants' additional insights about the responsiveness process, offered based on their lived experience of responsiveness and practice of it, helped this theory-building research to develop a responsiveness quality indicator matrix (Figure 6) that helped operationalize responsiveness. The seven indicators of responsiveness quality were derived from participant themes regarding what they experienced as important to the responsiveness process. These seven indicators include—diversity inclusion, collaboration, a formative approach, a focus on expressed needs, proactiveness, being iterative, and manifestations of downwards accountability by the EI.

A brief description of how to measure and monitor responsiveness using this quality indicator matrix was shared. Thereafter, using these indicators, a final model of responsiveness was derived to incorporate a representation of responsiveness quality within the representation of responsiveness to enable monitoring the process over time by documenting the process and its quality as each iteration of responsiveness commenced (Figure 9).

Having offered a comprehensive definition and understanding of responsiveness, this dissertation also endeavored to offer a model to enhance its practice. Current scholarship and empirical data from the case-study confirm the existence of numerous gaps in the practice of responsiveness despite the espoused theory of the EI being about

serving its student community and meeting their needs to ensure their success. Numerous literature-based, theoretical reasons, and as many empirically elucidating reasons and barriers were discussed as participants confirmed how they challenged and constrained the practice of responsiveness.

The r-CriDo model was conceptualized (from theory and my lived experiences) as one possible means to catalyze and improve responsiveness practice by overcoming the barriers practitioners face in engaging in responsiveness (See Figure 12 and 13).

Participant perspectives were sought on how the model could be better represented and/or modified (by adding to, changing, or removing elements from the original model).

Additionally, participant feedback was also sought regarding the model and its elements' relevance, applicability, and utility, based on their experience of/ with responsiveness.

Participant comments about the model elements confirmed the model's relevance within the EI case-study context and contributed to the creation of the final meta-ec r-CriDo model (Figure 14 and 15). The r-CriDo model is now ready to be applied by EI/NPO practitioners to reduce the gap between their espoused theory of quality responsiveness and their enacted practice of it. The model's relevance and utility is ready to be tested and confirmed/disconfirmed within real world case-study contexts of its deployment and use.

Revisiting my entering assumptions. Having summarized what the purpose of this theory-building dissertation was, how it went about fulfilling its intentions and having described and discussed the theory and models it does offer, my critical feminist epistemology dictates my revisiting my entering assumptions to be reflexive about what I

learned during this theory-building research endeavor. Thereafter, I reflect on the limitations of this theory-building research study.

As discussed previously, I began this dissertation endeavor assuming that all practitioners knew what social-justice meant; that they all perceived it to mean the same thing, and that they all felt strongly about social-justice and were driven by these values in the same way as I was. Participant responses and reactions to the r-CRiDo model confirm that that is not the case based on their live experiences. Their responses made me realize that not everybody has the same social-justice values nor do they all perceive it the same way as I do (as something positive). Thanks to my participants I was able to recognize the fallacies of my assumption and I used this knowledge in modifying and fine-tuning my r-CriDo model.

My second assumption was that I believed that all practitioners would want to improve their practice. However, I did not account for the defensive reasoning and designed blindness that created a culture of apathy and failure within the organization that combined with a summative, punitive organizational culture to make those who wanted to bring about any positive change, tired of fighting the bureaucratic system and give up. As a researcher-theorist who was trying to build responsiveness theory and offer tools to enhance responsiveness practice, it was surprising how often I myself wanted to give up because of the governing variable hurdles I faced along the way. This realization made me empathize with practitioners even as I was committed to the community.

I understood that the barriers that practitioners faced were often severely constraining governing variables that were reinforcing a defensive discourse of failure and apathy that ensured the lack of responsiveness that in turn once again reinforced the

constraining governing variables making them stronger and harder to overcome. Thus, it was not just defensive reasoning and designed blindness (that seems to pathologize those who engage in it) that needed to be overcome, but real world challenges that necessitated engaging in the various elements of the r-CRiDo model for these barriers to be ameliorated (including building coalitional alliances, support, and agency among practitioners and their community and thinking out-of-the-box).

Through my observation of administrators and their sharing of their lived experiences I learned that the higher up one went in the hierarchical organization the more the community of the EI for the practitioner became multiple entities that went beyond students to include the parents, alumni, faculty, staff, and even upwards accountability stakeholders. And given that practitioners did not see upwards and downwards accountability expectations aligning, it became clear that serving the community meant multiple things to multiple practitioners and their various responsibilities did not align with students' needs. Thus, the need for a clear mission was highlighted to center the community and its service as goals of the organization.

Alumni, parents, faculty, and even staff could be served by the EI as a function of ensuring student success, i.e., as complementary to serving students, but the centrality of who the institution is really serving would often be lost due to the numerous tasks and responsibilities that practitioners had to undertake to serve other groups. Thus, clarifying who the community is for the EI/NPO and defining that group clearly in the minds of practitioners is important for them to be able to engage in quality responsiveness directed at the right community even as they may be primarily serving another group of stakeholders. A constant reminder about who the community of the EI/NPO is (in the

form of the organization's mission statement or vision or goals) helps make the responsiveness meaningful within the EI/NPO. In this EI unit case-study context, such a mission statement had not been created yet.

The final realization I had was the fact that I had unconsciously taken the existence of the gap in the practice of responsiveness within EIs and NPOs for granted. I assumed that this gap existed in all EIs and NPOs to some extent. Based on my lived experiences and observations of different EI and NPO practitioners I had assumed this to be true and was not conscious of this fact until it came up in the writing of this dissertation. In revisiting this assumption I realize that I still do assume that gaps exist in all EIs and NPOs and among practitioners' enactment of their espoused theory as well. I still believe this, despite not having any literature in place to support this assumption.

It may be a wrong assumption but I believe that as a practitioner and as human beings we all likely have the best of intentions that does not necessarily translate to our practice and actions for various reasons depending on who we are and our circumstances. Thus, I believe the gap likely exists and we can either see it, acknowledge it, and attempt to address it or just carry on assuming that either there is no gap or that we have done all that we can to address it and if it still exists then that is just the way it is.

Surprisingly, thanks to one of my participants I even learned to see the existence of the gap in a positive light and sought to offer that to my audience in this dissertation as well. This administrator pointed out, "*in some ways it is good to have the gap right? That way we have something to constantly aspire to and strive towards that motivates us. Imagine if we all enacted our espoused theory. Then what would we do? There would be nothing to improve.*" Thus, to view the gap as a positive motivating force that

necessitates our constant critical and decolonizing reflection and reflexivity to recognize our own agency in making a difference to the community we care about and are seeking to serve, was a constructive insight and a helpful realization I gained through this dissertation process.

Limitations of the study. There are a number of limitations of this dissertation study that must be discussed to increase the validity of the findings and the theory built in this study.

Methodological issues. Primarily, it must be acknowledged that as my first-ever theory-building endeavor, the evolving nature of this dissertation, and the constant move between literature, lived experience, my logic-in-use thinking, and the beginnings of informal application, led to a somewhat flexible, evolving research design that was absolutely required to build theory, but that was a challenge for me as I embarked on the empirical portions of the study and attempted the representation of the study as a whole in this written dissertation.

Due to the evolving theory-building nature of this study, changes in the research design impacted the data collected and the findings. Theory-building and interpretation occurred all the way through the writing up of this dissertation. The initial plan for data collection and analysis underwent changes to keep up with the logic-in-use that evolved and was being employed at any given time. These changes likely impacted the findings from the analysis.

The EI unit that was selected as the case-study had specific characteristics and the participants faced particular constraints and had particular perspectives that influenced the development of the theory around responsiveness and the r-CriDo model in this

dissertation. It is possible that, had another case-study site been chosen, the model may have evolved differently and the theory added to or disregarded accordingly. Thus, the case-study defined the theory-development for better or worse.

Data collection issues. There were delays in human subjects approval that in turn delayed the data collection and analysis. As a result of this delay, and due to the vast scope of this theory-building endeavor, I had to exclude the testing of the final r-CriDo model in a needs assessment evaluation being undertaken within the case-study EI unit. I was thus unable to confirm/ disconfirm the final model's utility and applicability within a real-world applied context—something that has been tabled for the future.

Another limitation was that as the sole data collector, sometimes additional nuances that could meaningfully inform the data collected and add to theory-building were lost because I did not follow-up with the participants because I had possibly missed them. The focus group format was a challenge because of my being a single moderator who had to do the multiple tasks of keeping time, ensuring all participants were sharing their views, and jotting notes to probe. And this multi-tasking could have resulted in possible mis-steps or my possibly not following up on leads in data collection that could have benefitted this study.

The data collection format of focus-groups and interviews meant that many times it was one participant responding while others only nodding or silent. Thus, I may not have adequately captured all my participants' perspective. Also, different probes were used depending on the focus-group dynamic or the interviewee. Thus, once again nuances were missed and sometimes ancillary questions did not do justice to the information

desired. All my participants had very limited time and thus they often could not be contacted again for further in-depth long duration data collection follow-ups.

Data analysis challenges. During the analysis stage of this dissertation, an additional coder was not used. Due to the evolving nature of this dissertation, I had also collected more data than I could possibly analyze for one study. Analyzing that much data was not an easy task for one coder and mistakes were possibly made as much as attempts were made to be rigorous. A number of themes that arose during the analysis phase spoke to multiple meta-themes and thus, my single perspective influenced where these themes were placed and if they were included within larger theory-building ideas appropriately. An additional colleague I could work with would have helped validate the coding of themes and would have been beneficial to brainstorm my theory with.

As a critical, subaltern feminist theorist-researcher-practitioner-community member I believe in collaboration and building my own coalitional consciousness. I welcome and seek the positive learning and growth that happens as you work with someone else. I believe that while my standpoint and my resulting analysis and findings are valid, it would have been beneficial to have additional colleagues who were not invested in my conceptualized theories, but who were working with me to sharpen my logic, my analysis, my inferences, and possibly even my theory-building.

Limitations in representation. In representing the participants of this study, concerns around confidentiality played a huge role in the quotes that were selected to be shared. Numerous specific anecdotes were not shared because they compromised the confidentiality of the participants. The shared anecdotes would have gone a long way in demonstrating the real-world applied utility and relevance of the model. Due to many

participants' strong concerns against its use, I did not share these examples. These anecdotes would have made the theory stronger and would have more succinctly demonstrated the relevance of the theory and the models derived.

Apart from confidentiality, the key issue that could be raised as a limitation is possibly the heavy jargonized language drawn from theory that explains the essence of some of the elements. Given its nascent stages of development the model's language and representation will likely evolve further to make this jargon more accessible to practitioners—i.e., to make the language and understanding of responsiveness, its quality indicator matrix, and the meta-ec r-CriDo model more crisp, concise, precise, nuanced, and practice-oriented for practitioners to be able to easily understand and apply them.

A key representation limitation of this study is the fact that, due to the structure of this dissertation (a piece of formal academic scholarship), I was unable to document the journey of theory-building temporally as it actually occurred. I believe that I was not adequately able to articulate my logic-in-use that led to the theory generated. The representation format may have contributed to gaps in the representation of the theory but I was painfully aware that I was constrained by style and at times even by language in adequately representing my own ideas (especially related to eastern philosophy) and the thinking shared with me (primarily from the student participants who were not native English language speakers). Thus, whole chunks of process details and data have been left out of this representation in the documentation of this journey. Future presentations and alternate representations of this dissertation study could address this limitation.

Finally, this type of practice-oriented theorizing, I would argue, usually benefits from visual representations and succinct phrases, tables, figure, and illustrations—

something I have attempted to include in this dissertation to make my theory stronger and more accessible to different groups of audiences. A verbal explanation of the concepts and written material that follows more of a workshop learning style (oriented towards presentations, checklists, and discussions) would align with the goals of use of this theory-building work. However, the majority of the representation in this dissertation follows a more academic written style of representation to document the theory-building process to fulfill the academic expectations governing this dissertation. And this becomes a limitation because it is not the most appropriate choice nor is it conducive to practitioner engagement or use. The theory developed in this dissertation will thus have to be re-presented differently to practitioners later for them to apply this work on responsiveness to benefit their practice and serve their communities better.

Content limitations of the study. The central limitation of this study relates to the fact that in this dissertation, the actual application of the responsiveness theory and the r-Crido model have not occurred. It is proposed that the r-Crido model will increase the quality of responsiveness. This needs to be proved in a future study where responsiveness of an EI/NPO is first measured using the quality indicators derived from this dissertation; thereafter, the r-CriDo model is implemented; and then responsiveness is measured yet again over time repeatedly to empirically prove that the r-Crido model, when practiced with fidelity does result in improvement in responsiveness.

This dissertation study sought to be a theory-building study and it succeeded in building a quality indicator matrix for responsiveness, and a meta-ec r-CriDo model to enhance that responsiveness. The empirical testing of the theory—conceptualized, derived, and operationalized in this dissertation—was too vast a project to be completed

within the scope of this study. The central claim made in this study that the r-CriDo model will enhance responsiveness has yet to be empirically tested. Thus, further research in this area would be required to test the applicability of the theory and the relevance of the models (as they are used), generated in this study.

Participants in this case-study did confirm the model's relevance and applicability to their practice but the efficacy of the model in actually reducing the gap has yet to be tested and proved. The efficacy of the r-crido model in improving responsiveness in terms of actually rating responsiveness indicators and demonstrating increase has not been confirmed in this study because the responsiveness indicators arose simultaneously as the r-CriDo model was developed in this study. Participant responses confirmed high validity, high relevance, high utility. However, the actual connection has not been tested between responsiveness and the r-crido model.

Additionally, prior to testing the r-CriDo model, the quality indicators of responsiveness are also yet to be empirically tested. A confirmatory factor analysis could demonstrate that some of these indicators are too closely related or could be collapsed together or that some quality indicator has been overlooked or misidentified. Thus, further studies are needed to confirm the validity and utility of the indicators empirically within different case-study contexts. These two issues are the key content limitations of this study. However, they set the stage for further research in this area.

Other practical limitations. One important limitation in the use and applicability of this model is the fact that the words responsive and responsiveness will be hard to separate in the real world, semantically in people's mind. And that can result in some confusion in understanding the theory and practicing responsiveness. Participants did not

necessarily consciously differentiate between responsiveness as a process and responsive—the attribute. Many participants used the terminology interchangeably even as they described responsiveness as a process. Even after being offered the definition of responsiveness as a process, many participants continued to use the word ‘responsive’ to refer to the responsiveness process action, and at times the attributes of timeliness or sympathy. This struggle with semantic differentiation can cause problems in the conceptual understanding of responsiveness and the application of the r-CriDo model in a non-attributive, non-pathologizing, non-judgmental manner.

Additionally, a final limitation of this dissertation endeavor is about to my limited literature review in a field pertinent to my theory-building. My lack of deep familiarity and knowledge about organizational management theory and models is also a limitation that can be addressed in future research studies. This theory-building dissertation transcends disciplinary boundaries. Upon informally sharing aspects of this model with business management faculty, they expressed interest in learning about the model and commented on its relevance in the field of organizational learning and change. This theory-building endeavor could have benefitted from delving deeper into the literature of that field to make this theory-building work stronger, more defensible, and possibly more applicable.

Strengths and benefits of this dissertation endeavor. Despite its limitations this dissertation has a lot to offer the field of practice. The first major contribution of this dissertation to the field is a clear conceptual process definition of responsiveness that has been validated empirically and that can be applied in the field by practitioners including evaluators. The second contribution of the dissertation is offering the seven quality

indicators of responsiveness that helps practitioners self-assess our own responsiveness quality, as well as those of our organizations. As a result of this theory and model building, some practical ways (such as using the final responsiveness quality process model) to document responsiveness practice over time to build and preserve institutional memory were created and offered.

What is important to note is that in this dissertation, the r-CriDo meta-ec model and the responsiveness quality indicator matrix seek to be self-assessment and self-determining tools, that are sustainable and empowering rather than tools used to label or judge one another or the organization. It is for this reasons that responsiveness was theorized as a process rather than as an attribute because the attribute use of the term has often been used to pathologize individuals and organizations by saying that they are ‘not responsive’ rather than offering a set of tools to improve the attribute.

In this dissertation, the theory, matrix, and model seek to normalize mistakes; to normalize learning and change. The positive view that I gained about that gap—that it enables practitioners to work towards bettering themselves—is the orientation of this whole theory-building endeavor. The meta-ec r-CriDo model seeks to reinforce a positive thinking and action orientation that nurtures empowerment and agency. It does not seek to pathologize. The same is true for the quality indicator matrix. This dissertation offers a theory that encourages practitioners to see the gap as natural to normalize improvement. Thus, this theorizing is hopefully more beneficial to practitioners because it does not seek to blame them or criticize them but rather seeks to empathize with their lived experiences and offer them the tools to make responsiveness possible. And it is for this reason that the r-CriDo meta-ec model stresses the importance

of this r-CriDo model being an internal process model that the ‘self’ engages in, rather than it being imposed by an interventionist. For it to work, it has to become second nature to constantly check-in with oneself regarding our narratives and actions using the different elements of the r-CriDo model as a reference checklist.

While this dissertation is premised on the assumption that it is the EI/NPO and the practitioners’ responsibility to engage in responsiveness if their espoused theory is to serve the community they care about whose betterment that they exist for, it is important to avoid sliding and drifting into patriarchal thinking and actions that lead to the EI/NPO and its practitioners attempting to ‘save’ the community they serve. This is not the case. As Freire (1970, p. 54) puts it, “No pedagogy which is truly liberating can remain distant from the oppressed by treating them as unfortunates and by presenting for their emulation models from among the oppressors. The oppressed must be their own example in the struggle for their redemption.” There is a lot of literature and real world evidence that points to the community activism and agency that Freire is referencing. So that body of work cannot be ignored and we practitioner must be wary of our intent.

To reflect on my own intent, this dissertation is speaking to practitioners who want to make a difference and change the bureaucratic system to better care for their communities but don’t know where to start. I offer the responsiveness theory built, the responsiveness quality indicator matrix, and the meta-ec r-CriDo model with humility; as a fellow practitioner who hopes to benefit from it as much as I hope it will benefit others. Despite the r-CriDo model seeking to be a normative framework to guide responsiveness practice, I am sure that it is not the be all and end all of strategies that can be applied by practitioners and EIs/NPOs to better serve their communities and meet their needs. To

treat is as such would be once again to be drifting into a patriarchal assumption of this model's superiority over other lived experience strategies of success. Thus, it is important not to assume that this model has all the answers. It is just one possible framework to guide thinking and action to enhance responsiveness. The goal is not to save others. The goal is to improve ourselves and our practice; live our responsibilities, and fulfill our commitments.

The third key contribution of this dissertation to evaluation and other fields of professional practice such as organizational learning and management, educational administration, and social service, is the sustainable meta-evaluative-meta-cognitive (meta-ec) reflexive-critical and decolonizing-doing model—i.e., the r-CriDo model that serves as a normative, self-assessment template that can be applied cross-context to catalyze and improve responsiveness. One faculty member in the field of organizational learning and change (with whom I shared this r-CriDo model informally) shared that this was the first time they had seen critical and subaltern feminist theory be combined with evaluation and management ideas to offer professional practitioner oriented models and frameworks. They were excited by the possibilities that this offered in taking the field further. Thus, these three contributions of this dissertation lay the foundation for future research and practice in this field.

Future directions. The limitations cited in this chapter serve as reasons to engage in further research in this field of study. The importance of responsiveness in EIs and NPOs fulfilling their mission and living their espoused theory of meeting the needs of their community, illustrates the importance of continuing this line of research.

Further testing. As mentioned above, applicability testing (Lynham, 2002a) of the theory and frameworks derived from this dissertation study are needed. The r-CriDo model and the responsiveness quality indicator matrix need to be tested and applied across different contexts to further test the utility and validity of the theory-building that occurred in this dissertation study. Quality responsiveness, if pursued by EIs and NPOs, and the r-CriDo model if engaged in, has a strong potential for positive change in organizational culture and practices to affirm their commitment to their community.

Additional theory testing and model testing initiated by other researchers and evaluators, as they apply these models and the quality indicator matrix in their own work, is also needed. Further confirmation and disconfirmation will be embarked upon in future research endeavors that will help confirm if the theory developed in this dissertation does really help organizations and institutions live up to their espoused theory of community empowerment and responsiveness.

This study could be strengthened by possibly designing a more quantitative study around the indicators derived or the elements of the r-CriDo model where propositional statements representing each element of the r-CriDo model and each quality indicator of responsiveness could be developed and disseminated to the same or another group of participants within a case-study context or (multiple contexts for a cross-case study) who could then individually rate and confirm/disconfirm the relevance of each element or indicator. This type of study can strengthen the utility and validity of the responsiveness quality indicator matrix and the r-CriDo model further because every participant's perspectives on the model will be captured and quantified.

This dissertation focuses on the creation and development of a theoretical model. In this dissertation one case was used as an initial step toward testing and refining the theory-building and model development. In the future, multiple cases can be used for cross-case comparison and further theory development and refinement. Using multiple cases allows for cross-case comparison to develop an understanding regarding how the theory generated in this study could play out within different contexts. These future studies can also possibly expand the definition of responsiveness to decontextualize it and make it relevant to OIs beyond just EIs and NPOs.

Fulfilling commitments to my case-study participants. I will be sharing the matrix of indicators and the final refined r-CriDo model with my participants as soon as I complete my dissertation, so that they can possibly use this theorizing and models in their own practice to improve responsiveness. Sharing this model and enabling its use within the case-study is the first priority upon completion of this dissertation because participants played a significant role in this theory's development. The wait to share this model with them is because of the fact that even through the writing of this dissertation, theory was being generated and the r-CriDo model was being refined. Participants have already requested brief trainings on the model to apply it in their practice. Their feedback after application will also benefit the further refinement of this theory. Through sharing of my model with my participants upon the completion of this dissertation endeavor, I seek for them to be able to directly apply and use this work that is a product of their contributions to my conceptualizations, in their practice.

As mentioned before, this study encourages practitioners to adopt and apply the r-CriDo model to enhance their responsiveness practice. One possible way of doing that

would be if administrators or staff requested a training session for the whole EI unit where the model and its use are formally explained to them in detail. Handouts, checklists, and visual representations of the r-CriDo model and the responsiveness quality indicator matrix (to be created for the better use and convenience of practitioners to apply this work) will be offered to those being trained. I will also develop more practitioner-oriented visual representations of the model (as a constant reminder and positive reinforcement device) that can be placed in the physical spaces of the EI unit for practitioners to see it every day and be aware of the meta-ec processes they can engage in to better serve their community.

An invitation to colleagues to take this work forward. This responsiveness theory conceptualized—inclusive of the quality indicators developed, and the r-Crido model that can be used as a template to improve responsiveness—is theory that can be used in different fields of practice—from evaluation, to organizational learning to public policy, to education and similar such fields. It has potential to be tested, applied, and further developed by those interested in the empowerment of the community and the improvement of the organizations. Thus, the future research and scholarship directions include testing this model in different case-study settings to test its validity, utility, and impact as it informs the practice of EIs/NPOs and practitioners, and impacts the experience of the community.

I seek to build a body of work in this area and take this work forward in professional and academic endeavors as I collaborate with practitioners and community members, who could also be researcher-theorists as we work together to build responsiveness.

APPENDIX A

FIRST ROUND OF DATA COLLECTION QUESTIONS TO STAFF, ADMINISTRATORS, AND STUDENTS

a. First round of questions for administrators and staff.

1. *What do you see as the goal, mission, purpose of your organization/ office?*
2. *Who do you serve? What motivates you?*
3. *Who do you see yourself as accountable to?*
4. *How do you know you are fulfilling your mission/ doing a good job?*
5. *What barriers do you face in fulfilling your mission?*
6. *What are some perceptions (good and bad) that exist, among students, and other stakeholders regarding your office?*
7. *What about this office makes you proud?*
8. *What do you think the students you serve need?*
9. *How involved are the students in informing the services you offer?*
10. *What institutional feedback mechanisms/ channels of communication (if any) do you have in place (formal and informal) for students to give you feedback regarding what they appreciate or do not appreciate about your office or this institution, or what they need?*
11. *How relevant do you think it will be to include and institutionalize the inclusion of student voices in decision-making around the programming and services of this department? What are some strengths and weaknesses to students offering consistent feedback (good and bad) to the office?*

- a. *Could you give an example/ some examples when intl students influenced the decisions made in this office and helped inform changes in your services and/or programming?*
 - b. *Could you give some examples of when it did not?*
- 12. *What data is most valued in directing the change for this office- student input, institutional data? Best practices in other institutions? Research? Other? –rate!*
- 13. *What are the barriers to including student voices systematically?*
- 14. *What are the steps that you think this office needs to take to improve? How do you know?*
- 15. *When you think of doing an evaluation what are some thoughts and feelings that come to mind?*
- 16. *What is the discourse that exists around students that give negative feedback?*
- 17. *What drives action in this office?*
- 18. *How would you define responsiveness?*
- 19. I explain the concept of upwards, horizontal and downwards accountability and ask them to tell me which accountability type they think their organization focuses on and why, how is that accountability enforced, and what is given least focus and why?
- 20. I explain the theory of action and explain the argument of the existence of the gap between theory and action in organizations. Then I ask them to

comment on whether they believe this gap exists within their unit and why/how?

b. First round of questions for students.

1. *What do you see as the goal and mission of the organization/ office?*
2. *Who do you think they serve? What do you think motivates and inspires them to do what they do?*
3. *Who do you think the office holds itself accountable to?*
 - a) *How do you think they know if they are doing a good job?*
 - b) *What barriers do you think they face?*
4. *Why do you think their work is needed?*
5. *Who do you think makes the decisions regarding what services are offered? How are these decisions made? Do you think you should be participating in the decision-making? Why/ why not?*
6. *Do you know if the office has feedback mechanisms in place that help them know if there are areas that need to be improved or changed or that there are areas that are working really well? Could you please tell me more about them...*
7. *How involved are you in informing the services the office offers?*
8. *What are the ways in which you give feedback?*
9. *How do you think the office reacts to feedback?*
10. *What do you think are the barriers to including voices like yours systematically?*
11. *What do you think are the needs of others like you?*

12. *Among people like you who do you think have the most influence or connection to the office with the power to influence them and who has the least influence or connection to your office? Who do you think needs their services the most and why do you think so?*
13. *What do you think are some of the discourses that exist about students who give negative feedback?*
14. I explain the concept of upwards, horizontal and downwards accountability and ask them to tell me which accountability type they think their organization focuses on and why, how is that accountability enforced, and what is given least focus and why?
15. I explain the theory of action and explain the argument of the existence of the gap between theory and action in organizations. Then I ask them to comment on whether they believe this gap exists within the unit and why/how?

APPENDIX B

SPECIFICS OF THE SECOND ROUND OF DATA COLLECTION QUESTIONS TO STAFF, ADMINISTRATORS, AND STUDENTS

All three participant groups were offered my strategies to improve responsiveness in detail. They were asked to comment on the relevance of my r-CriDo process model elements to their work in the organization, how it applied or did not apply, share some examples and anecdotes of the same. They were asked to comment upon any one element being more useful than another. They were asked if any strategy was redundant, or if anything was missing that they were aware of. Thereafter, they were asked to comment on the combined framework I offered (of all my strategies put together in a visual representation). I asked them for suggestion regarding how the framework could be improved, better represented or focused to catalyze responsiveness.

The model represented in Figure 12 and 13 were the ones that were shared with the participants, as each element was explained to them. Participants offered invaluable feedback when the model was shared with them. As mentioned in the methods section, due to their limited availability, this model was shared with only eight of the ten staff in the first focus group, then with only 12 of the 15 students in a second focus-group, and then with only three of the five administrators in an individual interview format.

After sharing each element of the model and seeking their response regarding its relevance and applicability (to be discussed later in this chapter) three primary questions related to the overall model elements and representation were posed to them.

1. What would you change, if anything at all, to this model?

2. What do you think are the most important elements of this model and what is redundant?
3. What elements are missing in this model? What would you add to it?

A rapport had already been established with the participants as this was the second round of data collection. Participants were made aware that their feedback on this r-CriDo model would help improve the model; and that I was seeking their criticism and suggestions for improvement and they would not hurt my feelings when they did so. Their feedback as practitioners on my model in terms of how it applied to their work (within both steps of responsiveness) was important to understand the relevance and applicability of the r-CriDo model. After they discussed the elements of the model and shared its utility or relevance, they tackled the above three questions.

On occasion, if nobody responded to the question about how they would visually better represent this model, after an appropriate wait time, I would share with them my initial ideas for changing the model (like combining the pairs of elements), and that would kick start the conversation and begin their critiquing my model. Again, as mentioned before, my initial ideas for model modifications included combining (a) critical understanding of power differentials and standpoints, and empathetic understanding of lived experiences of marginalized stakeholders, (b) relational humility, and challenging deficit-thinking, and (c) possibility thinking, and mindful, social-justice action.

Within the focus groups, not all the participants gave me feedback about my model. Some gave me feedback, others were silent. And yet others would comment on

someone else's suggestion. It is the participants' feedback that has helped shape the final r-CriDo model.

I did not change the model after each iteration of the feedback from each participant group. I collected data first from staff, then students, and then administrators due to each group's availability. The key ideas from their feedback is shared in Table 5 where all the big ideas that were discussed or shared have been represented. My thoughts based on analyzing their responses right after I obtained them are also represented in the box where the corresponding numbers indicate the connection of my thought response and logic-in-use to their feedback.

I began my data collection with a short introduction that my r-CriDo model is a process model that is always aspirational, iterative and cyclical, dynamic, and seeks to make responsiveness sustainable (consistently high quality), by engaging in the processes of this r-CriDo model. Thereafter, for my practitioner participants (staff and administrators) I described each element of the model and asked them to share how each element did or did not apply to them, their work, their experiences, their EI unit, their colleagues, the community they served, their relationship with the institution, with leadership , and with their colleagues. My student participants were taking an evaluation class with me to learn evaluation skills, and who (at that time of my data collection), were engaging in a needs assessment related to the EI unit that was my case-study). I asked them to speak to the relevance of the elements of my model as they saw it, wearing their dual hats—as the student community being served by the EI, and as insider-outsider evaluators who were practitioners in some way.

REFERENCES CITED

- Abrams, K. (1999). From autonomy to agency: Feminist perspectives on self-direction. *William & Mary Law Review*, 40(6), 805-846. Retrieved from <http://scholarship.law.wm.edu/wmlr/vol40/iss3/6>
- Ahmad, S. (2011). *What is the difference between a theory and a model in management?* Blog retrieved from <http://corporatethinking.wordpress.com/2011/08/09/what-is-the-difference-between-a-theory-and-a-model-in-management/>
- Anderson, M. C. (1997). Multigeneration Organization Design: Accelerating Strategic Change at Amoco. *Organization Development Journal*, 15, 1, 62-75.
- Argyris, C. (1974). *Behind the front page*, San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- Argyris, C. (1982). *Reasoning, learning, and action: Individual and organizational*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Argyris, C. (1985). *Strategy, change & defensive routines*, Boston, MA: Pitman.
- Argyris, C. (1990). *Overcoming Organizational Defenses. Facilitating organizational learning*, Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Argyris, . C. (1995). Action science and organizational learning. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 10, 6, 20-26.
- Argyris, C. and Schön, D. (1974). *Theory in practice: Increasing professional effectiveness*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Argyris, C., and Schön, D. (1978). *Organizational learning: A theory of action perspective*, Reading, MA: Addison Wesley.
- Argyris, C. and Schön, D. (1996) *Organizational learning II: Theory, method and practice*, Reading, MA: Addison Wesley.
- Argyris, C., Putnam, R., & McLain Smith, D. (1985) *Action science: concepts, methods, and skills for research and intervention*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Asher, N. (2010). How Does the Postcolonial, Feminist Academic Lead? A Perspective from the US South. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 13, 63-76.
- Atkinson, P., & Coffey, A. (2003). Revisiting the relationship between participant observation and interviewing. In J. F. Gubrium, & J. A Holstein (Eds.), *Postmodern Interviewing*, (109-122) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Babcock, A. E. (1982). *Portraits of artists: Reflexivity in Gidean fiction, 1902-1946*. York, S.C: French Literature Publications Co.

- Bamberger, M., Bowen, K., Thurston, L., & Sniukaite, I. (2011). (Eds). *Feminist Evaluation Workshop proceedings at American evaluation Association Conference, Anaheim, CA.*
- Bates, A. J., Drita, D., & Ramirez, L. A. (2011). Self-Awareness and Enactment of Supervisory Stance: Influences on Responsiveness toward Student Teacher Learning. *Teacher Education Quarterly*. 38(3), 69-87.
- Bereiter, C , & Engelmann, S. (1966). *Teaching disadvantaged children in the preschool*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1966.
- Bester, M., & Scholtz, D. (2012). Mapping Our Way to Coherence, Alignment and Responsiveness. *South African Journal of Higher Education*. 26(2), 282-299.
- Bhabha, H. K. (1998). *The location of culture*. London: Routledge.
- Blair-Loy, M., Wharton, A. S., & Goodstein, J. (2011). Exploring the relationship between mission statements and work-life practices in organizations. *Organization Studies*, 32, 3, 427-450.
- Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.
- Bowen, K. (2011). Paper-presentation. Gender-responsive evaluation for those facing drug rehabilitation and mental health treatment. American Evaluation Association Conference. Anaheim, CA.
- Brewer, J. D. (2000). *Ethnography*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- Briggs, C. (2003). Interviewing, power/knowledge, and social inequality. In J. F. Gubrium, & J. A Holstein (Eds.), *Postmodern Interviewing*, (243-254) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Brown, J. S., & Duguid, P. (1991). Organizational learning and communities-of-practice: Toward a unified view of working, learning, and innovating. *Organization Science*, 2, 40-51.
- Casillas, W. D. (2012). *Cultural responsiveness in STEM program planning, implementation, and evaluation*. (Masters Thesis). Cornell University. Retrieved from Worldcat.org.
- Casillas, W. D., Hopson, R. K., & Gomez, R. (under review). Making culturally Responsive Decisions in Evaluation Practice.
- Chang, H. (2008). *Autoethnography as method*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. London: Sage Publications.
- Chen, H. T., & Rossi, P. (1980). The Multi-goal, theory-driven approach to evaluation: A model linking basic and applied social science. *Social Forces*, 59, 106-122.
- Coopey, J. (1998) 'Learning to trust and trusting to learn: a role for radical theatre' *Management Learning* 29(3): 365-82.
- Corbin, J. M., & Strauss, A. L. (2008). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*. Los Angeles: Sage.
- Cousins, J. B. (2004). Commentary: Minimizing Evaluation Misuse as Principled Practice. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 25, 3, 391-397.
- Denzin, N. K. (2003). The cinematic society and the reflexive interview. In J. F. Gubrium, & J. A Holstein (Eds.), *Postmodern Interviewing*, (141-156) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Denzin, N. K. (October 01, 2006). Pedagogy, performance, and autoethnography. *Text and Performance Quarterly*, 26, 333-338.
- Dewey, J. (1916). *Democracy and education: An introduction to the philosophy of education*. New York: Macmillan.
- Dewey, J. (1927). *The public and its problems*. New York: H. Holt and Company.
- Dillman, D. A. (2000). *Mail and internet surveys: The tailored design method*. New York: Wiley.
- DiMaggio, P. J., & Anheier, H. K. (1990). The Sociology of Nonprofit Organizations and Sectors. *Annual Review of Sociology* 16 (August): 137-59.
- DiMaggio, P. J., & Powell, W. W. (1983). The iron cage revisited: Institutional isomorphism and collective rationality in organizational fields. *American Sociological Review*, 48, 147-160.
- Dubin, R. (1978). *Theory building*. New York: Free Press.
- Ebrahim, A. (2009). Placing the Normative Logics of Accountability in "Thick" Perspective. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 52, 6, 885-904.
- Ebrahim, A. (2010a). Nonprofit agency challenges. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 29, 3, 628-632.

- Ebrahim, A. (2010b). The many faces of nonprofit accountability. In D.O Renz & R. D. Herman (Eds.), *The Jossey-Bass handbook of nonprofit leadership and management*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Ebrahim, A., & Weisband, E. (2007). *Global accountabilities: Participation, pluralism, and public ethics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Edmondson, A., & Moingeon, B. (1999). From organizational learning to the learning organization. *Human Resource Abstracts*, 34, 41-53.
- Ellis, C. (2004). *The ethnographic I: A methodological novel about autoethnography*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.
- Ellis, C. (2009). Autoethnography as Method (review). *Biography*, 32, 2, 360-363.
- Emerson, R.M., Fretz, R.I., & Shaw, L.L. (1995). *Writing ethnographic field notes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Easterby-Smith, M., & Lyles, M. (January 01, 2011). In Praise of Organizational Forgetting. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 20, 3, 311-316.
- Fetterman, D. M. (2010). *Ethnography: Step-by-step*. Los Angeles: Sage.
- Fetterman, D. (2009). (Ed.) Empowerment Evaluation workshop proceedings. American Evaluation Association Conference. Orlando, MI.
- Fetterman, D. M., & Wandersman, A. (2005). *Empowerment evaluation principles in practice*. New York: Guilford.
- Fitzpatrick, J. L. (2007). Evaluation of the Fun With Books Program: An Interview With Katrina Bledsoe. *American Journal of Evaluation American Journal of Evaluation*, 28(4), 522-535.
- Fitzpatrick, J. L., Sanders, J. R., Worthen, B. R., & Worthen, B. R. (2011). *Program evaluation: Alternative approaches and practical guidelines*. Upper Saddle River, N.J: Pearson Education.
- Flavell, J. H. (1979). Metacognition and cognitive monitoring: A new area of cognitive-developmental inquiry. *American Psychologist*, 34, 10, 906-911.
- Flyvbjerg, B. (2011). Case study, in N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln, (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 4th Edition, (301-316). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Foss, S. K. (2004). *Rhetorical criticism: Exploration & practice*. Long Grove, IL: Waveland.

- Foss, S. K. (2006). Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Rhetorical Criticism: Rhetorical Criticism as Synecdoche for Agency. *Rhetoric Review*, 25, 375-379.
- Foucault, M. (1979). *Discipline and punish* (A. Sheridan, Trans.). New York: Vintage Books.
- Foucault, M. (1990). *The history of sexuality: Vol.1: An introduction* (R. Hurley, Trans.). New York: Vintage Books.
- Frahm, J., & Brown, K. (2007). Developing communicative competencies for a learning organization. *Human Resources Abstracts*, 42, 22-28.
- Freire, P., & Ramos, M. B. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Seabury Press.
- Freire, P., & Freire, A. M. A. (1994). *Pedagogy of hope: Reliving Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Continuum.
- Fried, R. C., and Rabinovitz, F.F. (1980). *Comparative Urban Politics—A Performance Approach*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Friedman, V. J. (2001). Designed blindness: An action science perspective on program theory evaluation. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 22, 161-175.
- Friedman, V. J., & Lipshitz, R. (January 01, 1992). Teaching People to Shift Cognitive Gears: Overcoming Resistance on the Road to Model II. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 28, 1, 118.-130.
- Gandhi, M. K. (2011). *An autobiography, or, The story of my experiments with truth*. New Delhi: Rupa & Co.
- Garrett R.P., Covin J.G., and D.P. Slevin (2009). Market responsiveness, top management risk taking, and the role of strategic learning as determinants of market pioneering. *Journal of Business Research*, 62, 782-788.
- Gay, G. (2000). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- George, A. L., & Bennett, A. (2005). *Case studies and theory development in the social sciences*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Gibson, C. B. and Birkinshaw, J. (2004). The antecedents, consequences and mediating role of organizational ambidexterity. *Academy of Management Journal*. 47, 209-226.

- Gilligan, C. (1995). Hearing the difference: Theorizing connection. *Hypatia*, 10, 120-127.
- Goetz, A. M., & Jenkins, R. (2005). *Reinventing accountability: Making democracy work for human development*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Goldenkoff, R. (2004). *Using focus groups*. In J. S. Wholey, H. P. Hatry, & K. E. Newcomer (Eds.), *Handbook of Practical Program Evaluation*, 2nd Edition, (340-362). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Goodstein, J. (1994). Institutional pressures and strategic responsiveness: employer involvement in work-family issues. *Academy of Management Journal*, 37, 350-382.
- Grande, S. (2004). *Red pedagogy: Native American social and political thought*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Greene, J. C. (2006). Evaluation, democracy, and social change. In I. F. Shaw, J. C. Greene, & M. M. Mark (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Evaluation*, (118-140). London: Sage.
- Greene, J., DeStefano, L., Burgon, H., & Hall, J. (2006). An Educative, Values-Engaged Approach to Evaluating STEM Educational Programs. *New Directions for Evaluation*, 2006, 109, 53-71.
- Greenleaf, R. K. (1977). *Servant leadership: A journey into the nature of legitimate power and greatness*. New York: Paulist Press.
- Grinnell, R. M., Gabor, P., Unrau, Y. A., & Gabor, P. (2011). *Program evaluation for social workers: Foundations of evidence-based programs*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gubrium, J. F., & Holstein, J. A. (2002). *Handbook of interview research: Context & method*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Hanssen, C. E., Lawrenz, F., & Dunet, D. O. (2008). Concurrent meta-evaluation: A critique. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 29, 4, 572-582.
- Haraway, D. (1988). Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective. *Feminist Studies*, 14, 3, 575-599.
- Haraway, D. J. (2003). *The Haraway reader*. New York: Routledge.
- Harter, S. (1978). Effectance Motivation Reconsidered Toward a Developmental Model. *Human Development*, 21, 1, 34-64.

- Harding, S. (2004). *The feminist standpoint theory reader: Intellectual and political controversies*. New York: Routledge.
- Harding, S. (2006). *Science and social inequality: Feminist and postcolonial issues*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Hill Collins, P. (1991). On Our Own Terms: Self-Defined Standpoints and Curriculum Transformation. *Nwsa Journal*, 3, 3, 367-381.
- Hill Collins, P. (2000). *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment*. New York: Routledge.
- Holstein, J. A., & Gubrium, J. F. (2003). *Inside interviewing: New lenses, new concerns*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Hood, S., Hopson, R. K., & Frierson, H. T. (2005). *The role of culture and cultural context: A mandate for inclusion, the discovery of truth and understanding in evaluative theory and practice*. Greenwich, CT: IAP.
- Hooks, B. (2003). *Teaching community: A pedagogy of hope*. New York: Routledge.
- Hopson, R. (2010). American Evaluation Association-AEA360 Blog. Retrieved from <http://aea365.org/blog/?p=247>
- House, E. R., & Howe, K. R. (2000). Deliberative Democratic Evaluation. *New Directions for Evaluation*, 2000, 85, 3-12.
- Jaccard, J., & Jacoby, J. (2010). *Theory construction and model-building skills: A practical guide for social scientists*. New York: Guilford.
- Jayachandran, S., Hewett, K., & Kaufman, P. (2004). Customer response capability in a sense-and-response era: The role of customer knowledge process. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing*. 2, 219-233.
- Johnson, E. (2005). The use of contextually relevant evaluation practices with programs designed to increase participation of minorities in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education. In S. Hood, R. Hopson, & H. Frierson (Ed.), *The role of culture and cultural context: A mandate for inclusion, the discovery of truth, and understanding evaluative theory and practice* (pp. 217-235). Greenwich, CT: Information Age Publishing.
- Juarez, Gabriela & Greene, Jennifer C. (2011). To Be or Not to Be: Culturally Competent versus Culturally Responsive Evaluator. *Paper Presented at the 2011 American Evaluation Conference*, Anaheim, CA.

- Kaplan, A. (1964). *The conduct of inquiry: Methodology for behavioral science*. San Francisco: Chandler.
- Kapoor, D., & Shizha, E. (2010). *Indigenous knowledge and learning in Asia/Pacific and Africa: Perspectives on development, education, and culture*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Kaufman, M. (1993). A Federal Perspective on Improving Practices, Programs, and Policies in Special Education. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 16, 3, 263-69.
- Kearns, K. P. (1996). *Managing for accountability: Preserving the public trust in public and nonprofit organizations*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- King, J. A., Cousins, J. B., & Whitmore, E. (2007). Making sense of participatory evaluation: Framing participatory evaluation. *New Directions for Evaluation*, 2007, 114, 83-105.
- Kirkhart, K. (2010). Eyes on the Prize: Multicultural Validity and Evaluation Theory. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 31, 3, 400-413.
- Kirkhart, K. E. (2011). Culture and Influence in Multisite Evaluation. *New Directions for Evaluation*, 129(129), 73-85.
- Kouzes, J. M., & Posner, B. Z. (2002). *The leadership challenge*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Kvale, S., & Brinkmann, S. (2009). *InterViews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing*. Los Angeles: Sage.
- Lassiter, L. E. (2005). *The Chicago guide to collaborative ethnography*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- LeCompte, M. D., & Schensul, J. J. (1999). *Designing & conducting ethnographic research*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira.
- Lindenberg, M., & Bryant, C. (2001). *Going global: Transforming relief and development NGOs*. Bloomfield, CT: Kumarian Press.
- Lorde, A. (1984). *Sister outsider: Essays and speeches*. Trumansburg, NY: Crossing Press.
- Lincoln, Y. S. & Guba, E. G., (1989). *Fourth generation evaluation*. Newbury Park, Calif: Sage Publications.

- Lincoln, Y., & Lynham, S. (2011). Criteria for assessing theory in human resource development from an interpretive perspective. *Human Resource Development International, 14*, 1, 3-22.
- Lynham, S. A. (2000). Theory Building in the human resource development profession. *Human Resource Development Quarterly, 11*, 159-78.
- Lynham, S. A. (2002a). The general method of theory-building research in applied disciplines. *Advances in Developing Human Resources, 4*, 221-241.
- Lynham, S. A. (2002b). Quantitative research and theory building. *Advances in Developing Human Resources, 4*, 242-276.
- Maanen, V. J. (1995). *Representation in ethnography*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Madison, D. S. (2005). *Critical ethnography: Method, ethics, and performance*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- March, J. G. (1991). How Decisions Happen in Organizations. *Human-computer Interaction, 6*, 2, 95-117.
- Marcus, G. E., & Fischer, M. M. J. (1999). *Anthropology as cultural critique: An experimental moment in the human sciences*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Marquardt, M.J. (2002). *Building the learning organization: Mastering the 5 elements for corporate learning*. Palo Alto, CA: Davies-Black Publishing, Inc.
- Martinez, E. (2011). Backdoor Pedagogy. Paper presentation at the University of Oregon in Eugene Oregon.
- Maskiewicz, A. C., & Winters, V. A. (2012). Understanding the Co-construction of Inquiry Practices: A Case Study of a Responsive Teaching Environment. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching, 49*(4), 429-464.
- May, W. F. (1980). Doing Ethics: The Bearing of Ethical Theories on Fieldwork. *Social Problems, 27*, 358-370.
- McLaren, M. (1998). *Interpreting cultural differences: The challenge of intercultural communication*. Dereham, Norfolk, UK: Peter Francis Publishers.
- McMillan, D. W. & Chavis, D. M. (1986). Sense of community: A definition and theory. *Journal of Community Psychology, 14*, 6-23.
- Metcalfe, J., & Shimamura, A. P. (1994). *Metacognition: Knowing about knowing*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

- Mertens, D. M. (2009). *Transformative research and evaluation*. New York: Guilford.
- Mertens, D. (2011). Transformative Evaluation. Key-note presentation at Oregon Program evaluators Network Conference, Portland, OR.
- Merton, R. K. (1968). *Social theory and social structure*. New York: Free Press.
- Miles, M.B. & Huberman, A.M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis*, 2nd Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Mishra, D. P., Heide, J. B., & Cort, S. G. (1998). Information asymmetry and levels of agency relationships. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 35, 277-295.
- Mohanty, C. T. (1997). Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses. *Cultural Politics*, 11, 255-277.
- Mohanty, C. (2003). *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. London: Duke University Press.
- Mulgan, R. (2003) *Holding Power to Account: Accountability in Modern Democracies*, Hampshire, U.K: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Mutua, K., & Swadener, B. B. (2004). *Decolonizing research in cross-cultural contexts: Critical personal narratives*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Noddings, N. (1984). *Caring, a feminine approach to ethics & moral education*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- O'Reilly, C. A., & Tushman, M. L. (2007). Ambidexterity as a dynamic capability: Resolving the innovator's dilemma. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 28, 185-201.
- Ogbu, J. U., & Simons, H. D. (1998). Voluntary and involuntary minorities: A cultural-ecological theory of school performance with Some implications for education. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 29, 2, 155-188.
- Oliver, C. (1991). Strategic responses to institutional processes. *Academy of Management Review*, 16, 145-179.
- Osland, J.S., Kolb, D.A., Rubin, J.M. & Turner, M.E. (2007). *Organizational behavior: An experiential approach*. New Jersey: Pearson/Prentice Hall.
- Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

- Patton, M. Q. (2008). *Utilization-focused evaluation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Patton, M. Q. (2011). *Developmental evaluation: Applying complexity concepts to enhance innovation and use*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Pennock, J. R. (1952). Responsiveness, responsibility, and majority rule. *The American Political Science Review*, 46, 790-807.
- Pink, S. (2006). *The future of visual anthropology: Engaging the senses*. London: Routledge.
- Podems. (2010). Feminist Evaluation and Gender Approaches: There's a Difference?. *Journal of MultiDisciplinary Evaluation*. Retrieved from http://survey.ate.wmich.edu/jmde/index.php/jmde_1/article/view/199/291
- Povosac, E. J., & Carey, R. G. (1992). *Program evaluation: Methods and case studies*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Power, M. (1997). *The audit society: Rituals of verification*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Raisch, S., Birkinshaw, J., Probst, G., & Tushman, M. L. (2009). Organizational ambidexterity: Balancing exploitation and exploration for sustained performance. *Organization Science*, 20, 4, 685-695.
- Reed-Danahay, D. (1997). *Auto/ethnography: Rewriting the self and the social*. Oxford: Berg.
- Revier, R., Berkowitz, s., Carter, C., & Ferguson, S. (1996). *Needs assessment: A creative and practical guide for social scientists*. Washington, D.C: Taylor & Francis.
- Reynolds, P. D. (1971). *A primer in theory construction*. New York: Macmillan.
- Rieff, D. (2002). *A bed for the night: Humanitarianism in crisis*. New York, N.Y: Simon & Schuster.
- Rossi, P. H., Lipsey, M. W., & Freeman, H. E. (2004). *Evaluation: A systematic approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. S. (2010). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Ruona, W., & Lynham, S. (2004). A philosophical framework for thought and practice in human resource development. *Human Resource Development International*, 7, 151-164.

- Ryan, G.W. & Bernard, H.R. (2000). Data management and analysis methods. In N.K. Denizen & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research*, 2nd Edition. (769-802). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Sandoval, C. (2000). *Methodology of the oppressed*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- San Martín, S. & Camarero, C. (2005). Consumer reactions to firm signals in asymmetric relationships. *Journal of Service Research*, 8, 79-97.
- Schellenberg, R., & Grothaus, T. (2009). Promoting Cultural Responsiveness and Closing the Achievement Gap with Standards Blending. *Professional School Counseling*. 12(6), 440-449.
- Schön, D. A. (1983). *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action*. New York: Basic Books.
- Scriven, M. (1991). *Evaluation thesaurus*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Scriven, M. (1996). Types of Evaluation and Types of Evaluator. *Evaluation Practice*, 17, 2, 151-61.
- Seigart, D. M., & Brisolara, S. (2002). *Feminist evaluation: Explorations and experiences*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Seigart, D., Bowen, K., Brisolara, S., & SenGupta, S. (2011). Feminist Evaluation proceedings, American Evaluation Association conference proceedings, Feminist Topic Interest Group Sessions, Anaheim, CA.
- Senge, P. M. (1990). *The fifth discipline: The art and practice of the learning organization*. New York: Doubleday/Currency.
- Sharma, A. (1997). Professional as agent: knowledge asymmetry in agency exchange. *Academic Management Review*. 22, 758–98.
- Shiva, V. (2006). *Earth democracy: Justice, sustainability and peace*. London: Zed.
- Smillie, I. (1995). *The alms bazaar: Altruism under fire: non-profit organizations and international development*. London: Intermediate Technology.
- Spivak, G. C. (1999). *A critique of postcolonial reason: Toward a history of the vanishing present*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Stake, R. E. (1973). *Responsive evaluation*. Urbana, Ill: University of Illinois.
- Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case-study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Stake, R. E. (2004). *Standards-based & responsive evaluation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Stake, R. E. (2005). Qualitative research case-studies. In N. K. Denzin, & Y. S. Lincoln, (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 3rd Edition (443-466). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Storberg-Walker, J. (2006). From imagination to application: Making the case for the general method of theory-building research in applied disciplines. *Human Resource Development International*, 9, 227-259.
- Stufflebeam, D. L. (2001). The Metaevaluation Imperative. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 22, 183-209.
- Stufflebeam, D. L. (2004). A Note on the Purposes, Development, and Applicability of the Joint Committee Evaluation Standards. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 25, 1, 99-102.
- Stufflebeam, D. L., & Shinkfield, A. J. (2007). *Evaluation theory, models, and applications*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Sunstein, B.S. & Chiseri-Strater, E. (2007) *Fieldworking: Reading and writing research*. 3rd Ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's.
- Hanh, V. T. N. (2002). The 14 Precepts of Engaged Buddhism. *Social Policy*, 33, 1, 39-40.
- Thomas, G. (2011). A typology for the case study in social science following a review of definition, discourse, and structure. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 17, 511-521.
- Thompson-Robinson, M., Hopson, R. K., SenGupta, S., & American Evaluation Association. (2004). *In search of cultural competence in evaluation: Toward principles and practices*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Unrau, Y. A., Gabor, P., Grinnell, R. M., & Unrau, Y. A. (2007). *Evaluation in social work: The art and science of practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Uphoff, N. (1996) "Why NGOs are not a third sector: A sectoral analysis with some thoughts on accountability, sustainability, and evaluation", in M. Edwards and D. Hulme (eds). In *Beyond the Magic Bullet: NGO Performance and Accountability in the Post-Cold War World*. West Hartford, Conn: Kumarian.
- Valencia, R. R. (1997). *The evolution of deficit thinking: Educational thought and practice*. London: Falmer Press.

- Valencia, R. R. (2010). *Dismantling Contemporary Deficit Thinking: Educational Thought and Practice*. Hoboken: Taylor & Francis.
- Van de Ven, A. H. (1989). Nothing is quite so practical as a good theory. *Academy of Management Review*, 14, 486-489.
- Van de Ven, A. H. (2007). *Engaged Scholarship: A Guide to Organizational and Social Research*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Watkins, K. & Marsick, V. (1992). 'Building the learning organization: a new role for human resource developers', in *Studies in Continuing Education* 14(2), 115-29.
- Weick, K. E. (1995). What theory is not, theorizing is. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 40, 385-390.
- Weiss, C. H. (1972). *Evaluation research: Methods for assessing program effectiveness*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice-Hall.
- Weiss, C. H. (September 01, 2000). Which Links in Which Theories Shall We Evaluate?. *New Directions for Evaluation*, 2000, 87, 35-46.
- West, C. (2008). "Post-racial" politics. *Rolling Stone*, 1048, 36-42.
- Wlodkowski, R. J., & Ginsberg, M. B. (1995). *Diversity and motivation: Culturally responsive teaching*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Wolcott, H. F. (2008). *Ethnography: A way of seeing*. Lanham, MD: Altamira Press. Yin, R. K. (2006). *Applications of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Yarbrough, D. B., Shulha, L. M., & Caruthers, F. (2004). Background and history of the joint committee's program evaluation standards. *New Directions for Evaluation*, 104, 15-30.
- Yarbrough, D. B., Shulha, L. M., Hopson, R. K., and Caruthers, F. A. (2011). *The program evaluation standards: A guide for evaluators and evaluation users* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Yin, R. K. (2008). *Case study research: Design and methods*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Zeithaml, V. A., Parasuraman, A., & Berry, L. L. (1990). *Delivering quality service: Balancing customer perceptions and expectations*. New York: Free Press.