

CONTEXT & CONCEPTUALIZATION

Twin Columns Supporting Evaluation

That Is Grounded in Lived Experiences

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A SCENARIO PROVIDING REFERENCE POINT FOR THESE REMARKS

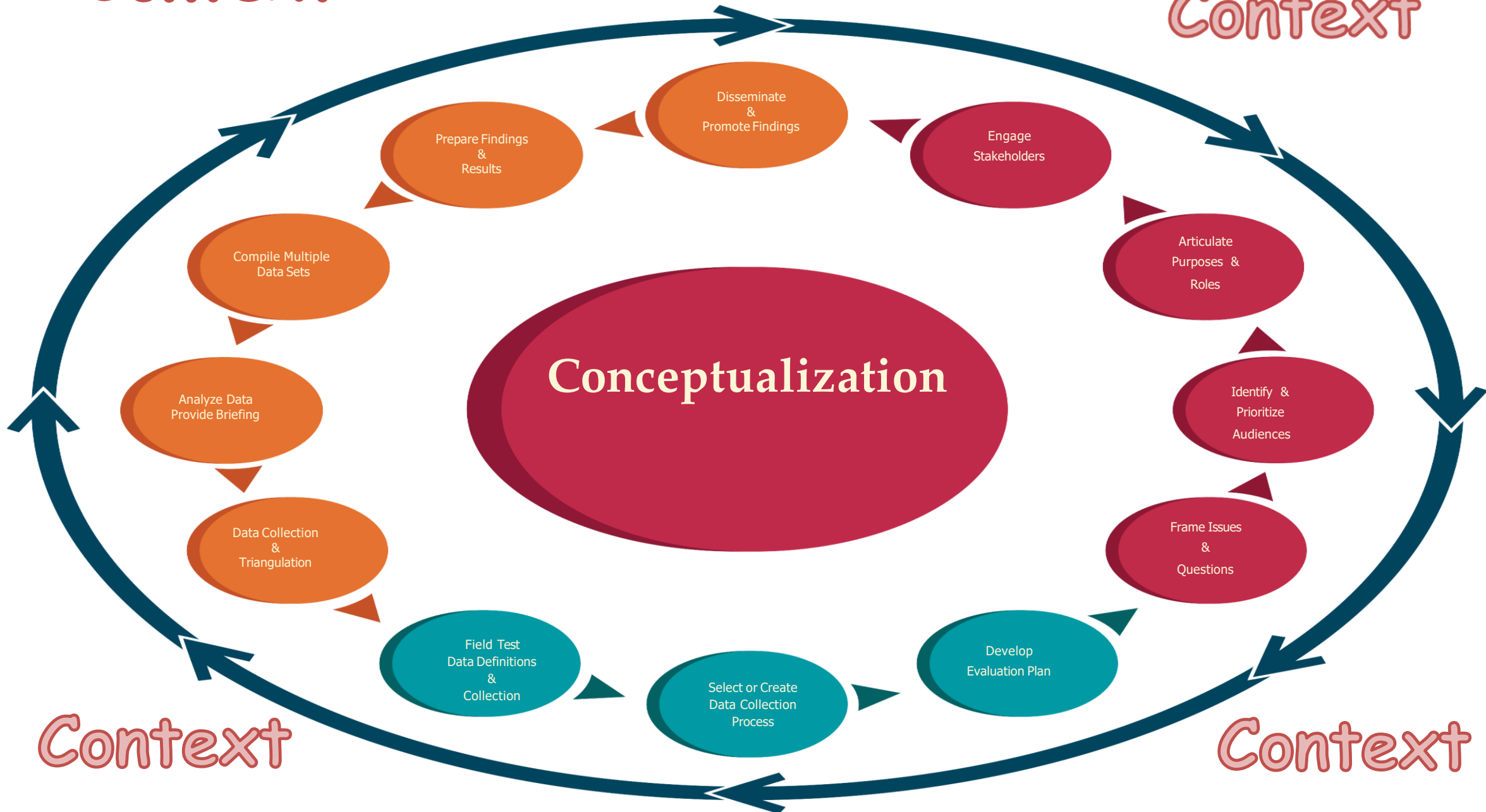
- Successful entrepreneur Samantha (Sam) wants to expand her Silicon Valley-based business by creating a business unit in her home town located in Michigan
- The town, Westlake, is abuzz regarding this wonderful development
- (1) the sign-up team, who have the job of actively recruiting new customers; (2) the customer service team, who provide an ear and expertise to current customers with questions or complaints; and (3) the idea team, who have the job of “percolating ideas with abandon”, ideas for improving or expanding or redirecting the company's vision and creative responses to emerging and dynamic markets. Future teams will be added, as StoreIt adapts to the Michigan context. **So, no manufacturing jobs** will be coming to Westlake, because the plant in California can readily handle an expansion of the business. Rather, the jobs that are coming are **jobs requiring experience and/or training**. And that training is being **promised to all who wish to attend**.

A SCENARIO PROVIDING REFERENCE POINT FOR THESE REMARKS

- Now a small city of 350,000 residents, Westlake's demographic portrait is like that of other "rustbelt" cities: 50% minority (35% African American, 10% Latino/a, and 5% Native American and other), 40% white, and 10% recent immigrants from Somalia and southeast Asia. Economically, a disproportionate number of Westlake's residents are considered "poor", with incomes below the poverty line.
- Two issues of currency in urban areas throughout the US are indeed present in Westlake today:
 - One, gun violence continues to plague particular neighborhoods and to strain community-police relationships.
 - Two, Westlake's city school system was significantly desegregated 25 years ago, on the initiative of the city's educational leaders, an initiative strongly supported by residents. Sam herself attended Westlake's Central (public) High School, considered by many as a model of successful integration across race and class. Yet, with the recent emergence and spread of semi-private charter schools, this integration is beginning to fray.

Context

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BASIS & SIGNIFICANCE OF "GROUNDED"

- We live our lives **narratively** and thereby more richly than detached methods can capture
- The **patterns** of our lives are interpretive **extensions** of lived experiences, not themselves lived experiences
- When evaluation seeks to penetrate the **predictive validity** sphere and respond to what motivates, animates, and inspires it must tap directly into lived experiences, often in ways respondents do not regularly accomplish
- **Granularity** is a key construct to govern and support decision-making in evaluation; it is not always useful to sift for the finest grains of understanding, but often critical that we sift further than has been tradition.

ABOUT GRANULARITY

- The things we will talk about today can be addressed at different levels of granularity or finer analysis, picking the right level of specificity and detail serves our cause well
- This is comparable to unit of analysis, but it is about the **level of detail attempted in examining the unit of analysis**
- Interventions aimed at the individual level require finer grained analysis than those defined at the group level.
- The evaluation's role or purpose is also key to determining how fine-grained an analysis is needed.

ATTENTION TO CONTEXT

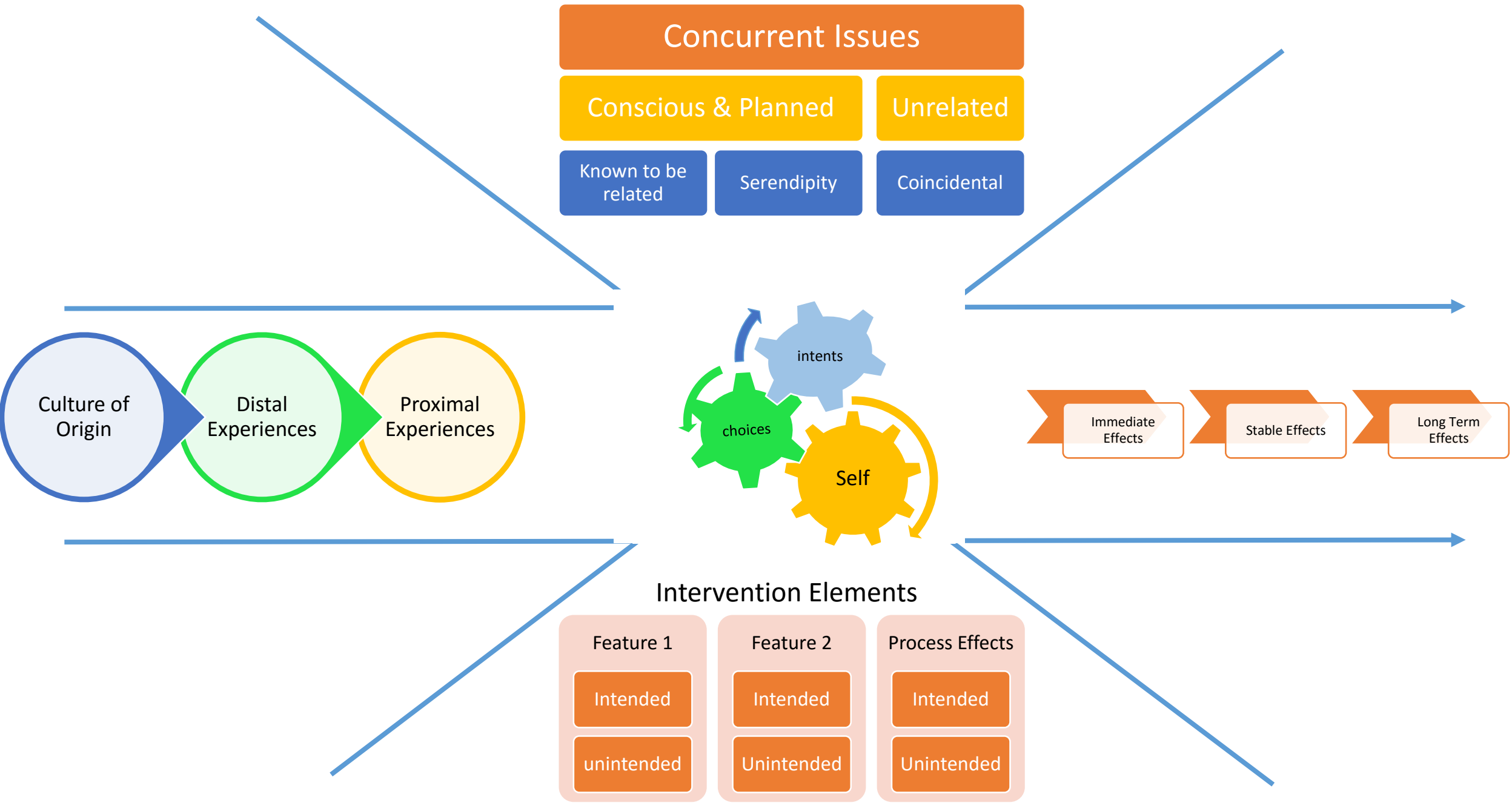
- Provides a uniform way to capture meaning of the intervention in terms that relate directly to the context
- Provides information to assist in determining salience and centrality of intervention influence
- Provides definition of conditions under which evaluand has been shown to work or not work
- Includes information key to understanding the "whys" of the outcomes and limits on generalizability of observations
- Honors the perceptual field of participants by including salient features that impact their interaction with the evaluand, into the evaluation...resulting in an evaluation more likely to match up with stakeholder lived experiences with the evaluand
- Captures relationships and priorities that serve as a backdrop to the evaluand.

CONTEXT DEFINITION/DIFFERENTIATION IS EVERYTHING!

- HBCUs have successfully educated students of color, both men and women, in key STEM disciplines. They do so in a context clearly marked by differences, **but do we know which of those contextual differences matter and provide invaluable lessons on broadening participation?**
- Contextualized student outcome assessment is critical for identifying the key contributors to student success, and avoiding the “no significant results” challenge
- The student success literature is deficient in ideas relevant to the reforms we wish to make in the **real contexts for learning involving students of color at both PWI and HBCUs**

THINKING WELL ABOUT THE CONTEXT OF LEARNING

- Context is multidimensional and includes **time and place** as well as our perceptions of other important features
- Observations and the meaning we make of them, involve our perception of context...**the same observation in a different context will have different meaning and therefore different value**
- Some aspects of context are more fluid than others, but **not all scene changes materially impact context—can you identify which ones are salient?**
- Because **context** is perceived it is **subject to our perceptual field and dispositions**
- To understand how and why interventions work we must understand how those involved perceive and interpret the intervention not just what we intended for them to experience



CULTURAL CONTEXT

- Those elements of context that have cultural, discipline, legal, and power differential elements are both critically important and challenging to understand fully
- Culture is a lens through which context is viewed; **and** cultural context elements are also interactive
- Using the concept of stereotype threat as it relates to STEM behavior, we can better understand how this dual **lens and context** element combination works—also, how **microaggressions can be better understood**
- Intersectionality and selective identity perceptions are presumably at work here
- Performance Indicator Realities Such As Stimulus Error can also be explained

BASIS & SIGNIFICANCE OF "EVALUATION"

- Broadening Participation programs are efforts to prop up a broken system, if it were not broken our broadening participation programs would not be needed
- Evaluation can and should be considered a part of that system, so what fix must we make to evaluation to repair the broader system of STEM workforce development (or at least spotlight the issues)?
- Our people are the reason and resource behind this system, so why do we default to fixing them, rather than the systems that are not serving them well
- **Program Evaluation** must engage in reflection and reflexive practice to discontinue its complicity in the brokenness of our systems. Its focus and role has to expand to examine the elements of the system that perpetuate the need for broader participation programs.

THE RESULTS OF AN EFFORT AT
CONTEXT-FREE EVALUATION ARE
SIMILAR TO RESEARCH FINDINGS BUT
FAR LESS USEFUL.

RESEARCH SEEKS VALIDITY OF
INFERENCE IN A GENERAL CONTEXT -
EVALUATION THAT IS CONTEXT-FREE
HAS NO CLAIM ON VALID APPLICATION
ANYWHERE, BECAUSE IN EVALUATION
MEANING COMES FROM CONTEXT!

THANKS FOR LISTENING!

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