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University–Community Partnership Models: Employing Organizational Management Theories of Paradox and Strategic Contradiction

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Abstract

University–community (U-C) partnerships have the potential to respond to society's most pressing needs through engaged scholarship. Despite this promise, partnerships face paradoxical tensions and inherent contradictions that are often not fully addressed in U-C partnership models or frameworks, or in practice. This article seeks to explore the root causes of tensions from a historical and structural perspective, reexamining traditional models of U-C partnership collaborations. Organizational ideas of paradox and strategic contradiction are then presented as a new lens through which to see and influence collaborative work. A framework for modifying current U-C partnership models is introduced, along with a discussion of limitations and implications for research and practice.

Keywords: university–community partnerships, engaged scholarship, strategic contradiction, paradoxical thinking

Introduction

There is a strong and growing impetus for universities and colleges to ensure that their presence within various communities is productive and transformative *(Boyer, 1990, 1996; Sandmann, 2008)*. This call to action has great potential *(Harkavy & Romer, 1999; Peterson, 2009)*, and the value of reciprocal collaborations is profound *(Barker, 2004; Bringle & Hatcher, 1996; Checkoway, 2001)*. The question of how to structure and organize the work, however, remains confounding. Despite their promise, university–community (U-C) partnerships commonly exhibit imbalance or inconsistency, causing mistrust and miscommunication among contributors *(Dempsey, 2010; Fisher, Fabricant, & Simmons, 2004; Harkavy, 2006; Kezar & Rhoads, 2001; Mayfield, 2001)*. Issues with knowledge transfer *(Best & Holmes, 2010), institutionalization (Westdijk, Koliba, & Hamshaw, 2010)*, and divides between theory and practice *(Jacobson, Butterill, & Goering, 2004; Van de Ven & Johnson, 2006)* are also present.

Though much research has been conducted on successful partnership strategies *(Barker, 2004; Beere, 2009; Stewart & Alrutz, 2012)*, receptivity to multiple perspectives *(Tumiel-Berhalter, Watkins, & Crespo, 2005; Vernon & Ward, 1999)*, paradigms and best practices for sharing power *(Boser, 2006; Sandmann, Kliewer, Kim, & Omerikwa, 2010)*, and responsiveness to community needs *(Bloomgarden, Bombardier, Breitbart, Nagel, & Smith, 2006; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2000)*, conducting engaged scholarship continues to be a challenge for faculty striving to balance the needs of the academy and those of their community partner *(Driscoll & Sandmann, 2016; Saltmarsh, Giles, Ward, & Buglione, 2009)*. To date there is not sufficient discussion on sustainable models of collaboration that account for competing and mutable organizational structures and priorities, an omission that may contribute to perpetuating stalled success in partnerships *(Peterson, 2009; Tinkler, 2010)*. This article seeks to explore root causes of fractured outcomes from a structural perspective, reexamining traditional models of collaboration in U-C partnerships, and will introduce organizational ideas of paradox and strategic contradiction as a new lens through which to see and influence engaged scholarship. A framework to modify current models is then introduced, along with discussion of limitations and implications for research and practice.

Defining Engaged Scholarship

Both practice and paradigm, *engaged scholarship* has been defined in a variety of ways, subject to what Sandmann *(2008)* termed "definitional anarchy." To understand its core tenets, Ernest Boyer's *(1990)* seminal work on the topic provides a foundation for subsequent interpretations. He wrote, "The scholarship of engagement means connecting the rich resources of the university to our most pressing social, civic, and ethical problems, to our children, to our schools, to our teachers, and to our cities" *(Boyer, 1996, p. 32)*. Boyer was calling for responsiveness and urgency in the work of the university. Engaged scholarship involves utilizing the activities of the academy in reciprocal processes toward the production of knowledge *(Barker, 2004)* and can "expand the social, cultural, and human capital of both local communities and universities and generally better our attempts at understanding and addressing social ills" *(Peterson, 2009, p. 541)*.

Community engagement, relatedly, speaks to the university's larger policies and practices toward meaningful interaction with the "non-university" world *(Buys & Bursnall, 2007)*. Theoretical underpinnings of engaged scholarship interact with and chal-

lenge what is meant by traditional engagement, and for the purposes of this article the terms are viewed as symbiotic, conveying a larger directive for intentional and interdisciplinary collaboration through a variety of methodologies to achieve consequential and sustainable change. They are used somewhat interchangeably, given the need to maintain representative terminology employed by included authors, with the understanding that these terms do not share definitional consistency in all circumstances *(Giles, 2016)*.

Engaged scholarship, as defined in this context, wrestles with the traditions and expectations of the academy and the often differing needs and expectations of community-based work *(Brukardt, Percy, & Zimpher, 2006; Hartley, Saltmarsh, & Clayton, 2010)*. "Interdisciplinary collaboration requires cultivating dialogue, developing shared language and understandings, reflection, and deep learning . . . [which are] not often principles promoted in academic life" *(Amey & Brown, 2005, p. 31)*. This piece builds on the proposition that contradiction is ubiquitous and must be addressed continually throughout the collaborative process in order to see more meaningful and persistent change. Van de Ven and Johnson's *(2006)* description of engaged scholarship connects to this context. They define it as "a collaborative form of inquiry in which academics and practitioners leverage their different perspectives and competencies to coproduce knowledge about a complex problem or phenomenon that exists under conditions of uncertainty found in the world" *(p. 803)*. Uncertainty, competing viewpoints, and leveraging processes are critical to engaged scholarship, yet they are not prominent within theoretical frameworks.

Given the strong link between process and outcomes in engagement work *(Amey, Eddy, & Ozaki, 2007; Maurrasse, 2002)*, the failure to fully embrace paradoxical tensions limits a partnership's ability to be successful. Collaborators must reconcile "institutional tensions, conflicts of interests, bureaucratic constraints, poor planning and implementation, lack of ongoing evaluation processes, competition over resources and recognition, stakeholders' differential knowledge and experience, value clashes, mistrust and frequent uncertainty about the viability of the proposed outcomes" *(Strier, 2014, p. 157)*. Without fully acknowledging and utilizing competing self-interests, partnerships are unable to move into wholly integrated behaviors *(Silka, 1999)*. Theoretical frameworks, in turn, need to incorporate a vision for leveraging these tensions to ensure collaborators are prepared when inevitable friction arises.

Organization and management theory can play a role toward that end. Strategic contradiction *(Smith & Lewis, 2011; Smith &*

Tushman, 2005) and paradoxical thinking *(Das & Teng, 2000; Hale, 2008; Poole & Van de Ven, 1989; Strier, 2014)* address how organizations attend to competing demands simultaneously *(Smith & Lewis, 2011)*, with the potential to transform processes and outcomes. "A paradox perspective assumes that tensions persist within complex and dynamic systems. . . . [and that] underlying tensions are not only normal but, if harnessed, can be beneficial and powerful" *(Smith & Lewis, 2011, p. 395)*. In order to examine how organizational theories regarding contradiction and paradox can inform U-C partnership frameworks, the history and context of partnerships will first be considered, followed by an analysis of current models. As the need for appropriately complex models is developed, organizational theories around paradox and contradiction are then introduced to lay a foundation for more responsive partnership frameworks and models designed to enhance practice.

University–Community Partnerships in Context: A Review of the Literature

Community engagement work has grown over the last 30 years *(Harkavy, 2016)*, and literature on the nature and impact of university and community partnerships has grown in turn *(Rubin, 2000)*. Scholars responded to Boyer's *(1990)* prompting "to break out of the tired old teaching versus research debate and define, in more creative ways, what it means to be a scholar . . . [and] recognize the great diversity of functions higher education must perform" *(p. xii)*. Boyer's call for higher education to become more responsive to society's needs and bear responsibility for community work was one of the key punctuations in the history of U-C partnerships and laid the foundation for what is now known as engaged scholarship *(Barker, 2004; Sandmann, 2008)*. The narrative is continuing to evolve as society changes rapidly and the role of higher education is repositioned in the context of its historical roots and future potential *(Ramaley, 2014)*.

Academia has been criticized to varying degrees for its distanced approach to associating with outside entities, a practice derived from positivist epistemology, which tenure and other reward structures reinforce *(Boser, 2006; O'Meara, 2010)*. A cooperative and experiential education movement emerged in the early 20th century *(Peterson, 2009)*, but academia subsequently retreated into a narrow, scientistic approach *(Harkavy & Puckett, 1991)*. Harkavy and Puckett suggested that this shift resulted from conditions in World War I, which led to "an approach that increasingly separated scholarly research from the goal of helping to create a

better society" *(p. 559)*. Throughout the mid-20th century higher education focused more on cosmetic partnerships involving little institutional support *(Tyler & Haberman, 2002)*. That detachment held relatively strong until the late 20th century, when researchers began more actively confronting the question of why successful, privileged, and powerful American universities should succumb to the hard work of institutionalizing collaboration as their "categorical imperative for the new millennium" *(Benson & Harkavy, 2000, p. 49)*. Within this historical context, engaged scholarship has been characterized as a challenge to mainstream academic scholarship, though its core purpose is not to overturn existing forms of scholarship but to deepen and broaden their possibilities within higher education *(Barker, 2004)*.

The transition from positivist epistemological assumptions of distanced objectivist research *(Boser, 2006)* to a more applied and intentional connection of theory to practice has gained traction *(Suarez-Balcazar, Harper, & Lewis, 2005)*. Literature has begun to weigh doing work *on* or *for* a community against doing work *with* the community *(Barker, 2004; Bucher, 2012; Jacoby, 2003; Peterson, 2009; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2000)*. This commentary considers the traditional asymmetry in research partnerships *(Williams, Labonte, Randall, & Muhajarine, 2005)*, also termed the university on the hill *(Harkavy, 2000)*, the ivory tower *(Vernon & Ward, 1999)*, or the professional-expert research model *(Reardon, 1998)*, and calls for increased consideration of community needs and voice within cooperative work. This historical imbalance and one-sidedness of U-C partnerships *(Weerts & Sandmann, 2008)* has influenced the development of theoretical models. The shift away from positivism toward action-oriented models has consequently focused on mutual understanding and respect, shared goals, and building trust *(Beere, 2009; Enos & Morton, 2003; Fogel & Cook, 2006; Holland & Gelmon, 1998)*. Accompanying literature has similarly shifted toward common vision and thorough agreement in goals, activities, and outcomes. Models often include phases or stages through which to progress to achieve heightened levels of reciprocity, communication, and shared outcomes. The goal of the following review is not to demonstrate how these models are inaccurate; they reflect instrumental, critical aspects of collaboration. Rather, the objective is to explore how, if at all, they acknowledge and incorporate organizational ideas of paradox and contradiction to most effectively respond to and improve the collaborative process.

University–Community Partnership Theories and Models

Several theoretical models illustrate the trends reviewed above. Tyler and Haberman *(2002)* suggest grouping partnerships along a continuum from exploitive, to protective, indifferent, supportive, and finally to committed ways of being. The objective is to move along the continuum from exploitive practices to committed behaviors, avoiding traditional pitfalls of imbalance and being mindful of shared goals. Bowen, Newenham-Kahindi, and Herremans *(2010)* built on the continuum of community engagement to develop a typology of three engagement strategies in management literature: transactional, transitional, and transformational engagement. *Transactional* engagement may include charitable donations, volunteering, or information sessions; *transitional* engagement moves into activities such as ongoing dialogue; and *transformational* engagement involves joint project management, joint decision-making, and coownership. These models illustrate how partnerships may develop, and how the shared impact can change as commitments shift and deepen. What they fail to account for, however, is how these shifts occur, under what conditions, and through what processes. Similar to Tyler and Haberman *(2002)*, who acknowledged exploitive behaviors and described how they move into more reciprocal behaviors, Bowen et al. *(2010)* point to the negotiation and leveraging that must take place to keep the collaboration alive. How these phases functionally progress, however, remains unclear.

Building on the theme of commitment, Bringle and Hatcher *(2002)* frame U-C partnerships as a relationship, offering a model that describes the initiation, development, maintenance, and dissolution of dyadic relationships. The authors discuss exchange theory, in which rewards minus costs (outcomes) must exceed what is minimally expected for a relationship to be initiated and maintained, as well as equity theory, which posits that even when outcomes for both parties are not equal, if the outcomes are perceived as comparable to the inputs, then the relationship will be deemed satisfying *(Bringle & Hatcher, 2002)*. Thus, U-C partnerships should be equitable and fair, but they do not have to be equal in all aspects in order to be satisfactory, signifying that a partnership characterized by recurrent imbalance can still generate beneficial practice.

Bringle and Hatcher *(2002)* examine "who invests more, who commits more, who puts more effort in, and who gains more unique outcomes from the relationship" *(p. 510)* through relative dependency theory. At any time, comparative levels of value or benefit will not be equal, and the management of competing needs points

to paradox, defined as "contradictory yet interrelated elements that exist simultaneously and persist over time" *(Smith & Lewis, 2011, p. 382)*. Fogel and Cook *(2006)* suggest that complications within partnerships ultimately "provide an opportunity to understand areas of conflict and how these conflicts may be avoided" *(p. 603)*; however, complete avoidance of conflict is rare and not a practical aspiration. Models or frameworks could instead incorporate conflict explicitly as a mechanism for discussion and iterative learning. This can assist in constructing "procedures that aid communication, inclusive decision-making, and informed consent" *(Prins, 2005, p. 72)*.

The multidirectional flow and simultaneous interdependence of stages can be seen in additional models, such as the model put forth by Sargent and Waters *(2004)*. Building on the idea of collaboration phases, and drawing from Amabile et al.'s *(2001)* work on determinants of success in cross-profession collaboration, Sargent and Waters used a process framework moving through four stages: initiation, clarification, implementation, and completion. The process is situated within the contextual factors of institutional supports, available resources, and national and institutional climate, and is driven by interpersonal processes involving a social component. By incorporating interrelationships within a procedural model, Sargent and Waters help strengthen understanding of cooperative processes. Buys and Bursnall *(2007)* argue that the linear model does not fully represent the U-C collaborative process, however, suggesting it should be more cyclical and iterative in nature.

Two additional models deepen understanding of cooperative processes. Norris-Tirrell, Lambert-Pennington, and Hyland *(2010)* created a model that utilizes spatial dimensions to extend notions of simultaneous interface. The model consists of three primary dynamics: the philosophical core, the internal and external forces that shape and influence (the higher education institution's) decision-making, and the boundary-spanning points that "generate the demand to create and institutionalize a program that leads to both institutional and community change" *(p. 175)*. Suarez-Balcazar et al. *(2005)* created an interactive and contextual model of collaboration, emphasizing an interdependence among processes, wherein there exists a "need to simultaneously attend to multiple systemic factors" *(p. 86)*. Each factor in the model both influences and is influenced by other factors, and a position within the model does not indicate that directional influence is present. This fluidity within spatial and temporal elements adds a critical illustration of the intricate, multifaceted reality of partnerships in practice. The model does highlight conflict and challenges, yet it doesn't offer a

procedural element for managing these "potential challenges and threats" *(p. 86)*.

Though these models are not exhaustive, they aim to be representative. As idiosyncratic as partnering processes can be, so too are representative models. Table 1 illustrates this point. Many models depict partnerships on a sliding scale or sequential process, concentrating on degrees of association, bonding, and trust. However, models commonly omit references to conflict, power, and paradox that inherently exist throughout the process, which raises the question of how to ensure that representations of U-C partnerships are both idealistic and realistic. For models that do note organizational tension, it is often a stage or a process to be moved through, not an element that permeates the model in a constructive way. By obscuring disagreement and unfulfilled expectations, illustrations can perpetuate illusions about partnerships *(Prins, 2005)*. In the next section, the focus shifts toward organizational theories of paradox and strategic contradiction to address this concern.

Table 1. Illustration of Collaborative Frameworks and Models

Author (Year)	Type of Collaboration	Model Characterization	Theoretical Framework	Contextual Factors	Model References to Conflict
Amey & Brown (2005)	University–community partnerships	Interdisciplinary collaboration model in stages	Dialogical method of inquiry	Implicit: training & rewards; cognitive constructions; leadership	Implicit throughout
Barnes Altimare, Farrell, Brown, Burnett, Gamble, & Davis (2009)	University–community partnerships/ university outreach & engagement	Iterative process wheel	Participatory research foundations	Institutional identity & institutional commitment	No explicit references
Bowen, Newenham-Kahindi, & Herremans (2010	Community engagement strategy	Continuum	Corporate philanthropy	No explicit references	No explicit references
Bringle & Hatcher (2002)	Campus–community partnerships	Phases (of relationships)	Service-learning	Exchanges; equity; distribution of power	Reference to relative dependency & power
Bryson, Crosby, & Stone (2006)	Cross-sector collaboration	Propositional inventory	Organizational collaborative planning	General environment; sector failure; direct antecedents	Contingencies & constraints

Author (Year)	Type of Collaboration	Model Characterization	Theoretical Framework	Contextual Factors	Model References to Conflict
Buys & Bursnall (2007)	University–community partnerships	Sargent & Waters's (2004) inductive process model	University engagement	Institutional issues; national & international differences in climate	Reference to disparate interests
Norris-Tirrell, Lambert-Pennington, & Hyland (2010)	Engaged scholarship	Philosophical core; internal & external forces; boundary-spanning points	Engaged service-learning	Leadership vision; external demands & opportunities; internal critical mass	No explicit references
Sargent & Waters (2004)	Academic research collaborations	Inductive process	University research	Institutional supports; resources; climate: national & institutional; interpersonal & social aspects	No explicit references
Suarez-Balcazar, Harper, & Lewis (2005)	Community–university partnerships	Nondirectional phases; interactive & contextual	Participatory action research	Potential challenges & threats; power & resource inequality; time commitment; conflicts of interest; funding	Conflicts of interest, power & resource inequality, & time commitment; budgets
Tyler & Haberman (2002)	Education–community partnerships	Continuum	Community partnerships with community perspective	No explicit references	No explicit references; insight on power and conflict throughout text

Note. Efforts were made to preserve the specific language employed by each author.

Exploring Organizational Theories of Paradox and Contradiction in the University–Community Partnership Context

Many theorists view organizations as social action systems constructed by individuals who use them as arenas in which to achieve their goals and ambitions *(Poole & Van de Ven, 1989)*. Activity within these systems therefore lies in the "structural properties of a social system, the purposive actions of people, and the relationship of system and action" *(Poole & Van de Ven, 1989, p. 567)*. Theorists and researchers have tried to determine what the purposive actions of people will be when interacting within various social systems or constructs. However, paradoxical theorists argue that simplified

models will not adequately predict or capture actions, given the inherent tensions, strategic contradictions, and direct conflicts at play *(Coleman, 1986; Lewis, 2000; Poole & Van de Ven, 1989; Smith & Lewis, 2011; Smith & Tushman, 2005)*. Such models may also fail to provide "a theory grounded in purposive action of individuals" that accounts for impacts at the system level *(Coleman, 1986, p. 1312)*. By embracing paradox, models are expected to be more responsive to competing elements at work, without the need to fully resolve inherent conflicts to the point of nonexistence.

"*Paradox* denotes contradictory yet interrelated elements . . . [which] seem logical in isolation but absurd and irrational when appearing simultaneously" *(Lewis, 2000, p. 760)*. Smith and Lewis *(2011)* add that these contradictory yet interrelated elements persist over time. In U-C partnerships, these elements often include the need to deepen relationships while simultaneously improving collaborative efficiency, positioning time-intensive practices against time-cutting ones *(Silka, 1999; Strier, 2014)*. The factor of time is recurring in paradox theory and has implications for how it is conceptualized. Logical paradox, which exists in "timeless, abstract thought," is different from social scientific paradox, which is responsible to the real world, subject to its temporal and spatial constraints *(Poole & Van de Ven, 1989, p. 565)*. Engaged scholarship fits within social scientific paradox. Limitations and stressors due to time, space, and context have influence, from seasonal or semester scheduling, the pace of activity, and other logistical minutiae such as arranging meeting spaces or agreeing on timelines *(Fogel & Cook, 2006)*. In these challenges, the university process is likely to be slower than that offered by community settings, and use of space can serve to either alleviate or exacerbate power imbalances *(Dempsey, 2010)*.

Social paradoxes are not strictly logical and are often somewhat vague *(Poole & Van de Ven, 1989)*. Social paradox theory, as defined by Ford and Backoff *(1988)*, is "some 'thing' constructed by individuals when oppositional tendencies are brought into recognizable proximity through reflection or interaction" *(p. 89)*. Paradox in this context utilizes Coleman's *(1986)* juxtaposition of individual action against structures (or systems), and Poole and Van de Ven *(1989)* characterize the tension as the Action:Structure paradox. They outline three basic aspects of working with paradox: (a) There is ambiguity surrounding the genesis of action and structure, (b) there are contrary ontological assumptions about structure and action, and (c) there are explanatory tensions between objective and interpretive methods. These aspects shed light on many facets of U-C relations, particularly the role of faculty in nav-

igating academic systems. Faculty members may attempt to operate as individual actors, but they are tied to structures, processes, and relationships that influence their ability to then interact with individuals and systems outside academia. Within this tension, faculty must navigate both the objective and subjective ways in which their institution operates, as well as the organizational myths that drive values and meaning-making *(Birnbaum, 1988; O'Meara, Eatman, & Petersen, 2015)*.

Paradoxical frameworks have been developed that facilitate the use of organizational tensions advantageously in theoretical models *(e.g., Poole & Van de Ven, 1989)*. Smith and Tushman's *(2005)* work is one such framework, and its authors explore the negotiation of short-term performance and long-term adaptability, focus and flexibility, and exploratory and exploitive activities within organizations. "Exploratory activities require experimentation, flexibility, divergent thinking, and increasing variance while exploitive activities demand efficiency, focus, convergent thinking and reducing variance" *(p. 523)*. These competing goals necessitate thoughtful management. Within the U-C partnership context, exploratory activities may include brainstorming, serving on a committee, innovative pilot programs, or other activities that develop through ongoing trial and error. Exploitive activities may take the form of more streamlined, agreed-upon activities such as a controlled research study.

Differentiating competing activities, conflicts, tensions, and actual paradox is needed to further clarify the use of paradoxical thinking in managing embedded contradictions. Smith and Lewis's *(2011)* dynamic equilibrium model of organizing addresses this need. "Dynamic equilibrium . . . assumes constant motion across opposing forces. The system maintains equilibrium by adapting to a continuous pull in opposing directions . . . the role of leadership is to support opposing forces and harness the constant tension between them" *(p. 386)*. Opposing forces manifest differently, and the authors differentiate among dilemmas, dialectics, and paradox to reflect the gradation. *Dilemmas* involve competing choices, each with advantages and disadvantages, whereas *dialectics* involve contradictory elements (thesis and antithesis) resolved through integration (synthesis), which may prove paradoxical if they persist over significant amounts of time. Dilemmas and dialectics each imply that resolution can be reached, without expectation for ongoing tension, whereas management of paradox does not *(Smith & Lewis, 2011)*. In attempting to identify what paradox means within U-C partnership work, distinctions need to be made between what

constitutes a dilemma, a dialectic, or a true paradox to appropriately address any identified conflicts, tensions, or obstinacy.

It is *paradox* that can hold sustained tensions, which are not expected to disappear as partnerships unfold. Academia may never fully resolve the tension between objectivist and applied stances, but paradoxical theory suggests it need not do so. In fact, engaged scholarship may be an avenue by which to harness inherent tensions. Smith and Lewis *(2011)* assert that a dynamic equilibrium model, fostering a theory of paradox, aids learning and creativity, cultivates flexibility and resilience, and unleashes human potential, thereby increasing sustainability. A dynamic equilibrium model of organizing is designed to nurture and reinforce a commitment to multiple agendas in competition with one another, and to attend to salient and latent tensions with different management strategies depending on the context.

This matters for two key reasons. First, the model includes both salient tensions, which are more explicit to organizational actors (i.e., a community partner, faculty member, or student), and latent tensions, which are "contradictory yet interrelated elements embedded in organizing processes that persist because of organizational complexity and adaptation" *(Smith & Lewis, 2011, p. 389)*. Latent tensions are effectively dormant or imperceptible. They become salient when they are experienced by organizational actors *(Smith & Lewis, 2011)*, which the authors propose happens in conditions of scarcity, plurality, or change. The historical context of U-C partnerships becomes integral in identifying these tensions, as it aids in understanding many of the latent tensions that are less evident but may still inform processes. This includes organizational dynamics like loose coupling *(Weick, 1976)* or organizational norms, strategies, and characteristics of academe that influence behaviors and attitudes at higher education institutions *(Birnbaum, 1988; Kecskes, 2006; Norris-Tirrell et al., 2010)*. A tension, such as an expectation for faculty to publish in a top journal, may be latent for a period of time but rise to the surface when a faculty member is asked to confront a scarcity of time and prioritize among ongoing research efforts. This person is then confronted with Poole and Van de Ven's *(1989)* Action:Structure paradox, as contrary ontological assumptions about structure and action persist (e.g., "I am relational and take time to invest" or "I am solitary and efficient").

Second, the model involves multiple contingencies and demonstrates that processes can produce positive or negative outcomes, what Smith and Lewis *(2011)* name vicious or virtuous cycles. Bryson, Crosby, and Stone *(2006)* include in their model on cross-

sector collaborations contingencies and constraints, which involve power imbalances and competing institutional logics that must be incorporated into practice. Because U-C partnerships are highly relational processes, they could benefit from these models' attention to specific behaviors and capacities that generate more productive outcomes. Smith and Lewis discuss one's ability to sit with ambiguity, entertain an internal open-mindedness, and engage the process, which they connect to human potential. Many of the models available regarding U-C partnerships discuss capacity building or empowerment as desired outcomes of the engagement process *(e.g., Nichols, Gaetz, & Phipps, 2015; Norris-Tirrell et al., 2010)*, and Smith and Lewis's model could help inform how, and under what circumstances, that may be cultivated.

A Proposed Framework for Model Modification

The central argument of this piece is that by integrating an additional element into U-C partnership models and frameworks, one that employs paradoxical theory to advantage, models can better address embedded contradictions. Literature from both the engaged scholarship and organizational management domains, described in greater detail below, suggests this element should include a willingness to engage with inherent conflicts and tension. The element should encourage the identification of paradox throughout partnership processes, not to induce anxiety, inertia, or unnecessary strain, but as a mechanism to continually leverage possibilities toward short-term wins that build to long-term success *(Smith & Lewis, 2011)*. It should involve the cocreation of solutions, as collaborators examine distinctive paradoxical perspectives and explore what commonalities and synergies exist, as well as what differences and alternatives might offer a better path forward. These components then link together to form a continual loop aimed at harnessing engaged scholarship and its potential in U-C partnership work to maximize both procedural effectiveness and partnership outcomes.

The Framework Elements

The following four components are proposed as an interconnected approach to modify existing models toward integrating theories of paradox and strategic contradiction into practice. They are introduced collectively as *employing paradox* and are derived from a synthesis of the two main literature bases, presented conceptually for the first time in this article. They include (1) individual commit-

ment and transparency *(Lewis, 2000; Prins, 2005),* (2) identification of organizational tensions *(Jaeger, Jameson, & Clayton, 2012; Smith & Lewis, 2011),* (3) development of shared paradoxical frames *(Silka, 1999; Smith and Tushman, 2005),* and (4) sustained differentiating and integrating practices *(Ferman & Hill, 2004; Smith & Tushman, 2005)*. Together, these components offer a means toward realizing the goal of sustainable models of collaboration that account for competing and mutable organizational structures and priorities (see Figure 1).

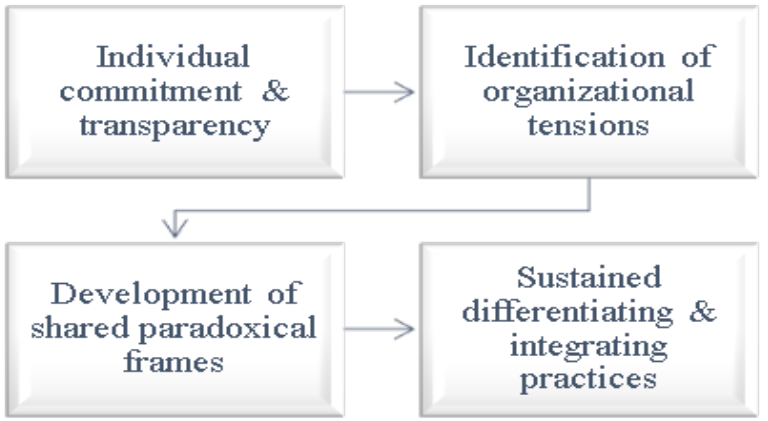

Figure 1. Employing Paradox

Individual commitment and transparency. Prins *(2005)* calls attention to the fact that "unequal interests, power, and status inherent in universities and community organizations structure our actions in unconscious, unintended ways. Ignoring these differences can perpetuate inequitable relationships" *(p. 71)*. It is therefore vital to enter into the collaboration with transparency in order to expose any unconscious perpetuation of defensiveness and inflexibility. The clarification of goals, values, and expectations as a part of that process is similarly important, as ambiguity regarding the mission and individual roles can lead to confusion about who should lead and what should be done *(Holland, Gelmon, Green, Greene-Moton, & Stanton, 2003; Prins, 2005)*. Also, when partners continue to meet and commit to the value of the project, conflict can lead to growth rather than dissolution *(Dempsey, 2010; Prins, 2005)*. Lewis *(2000)* notes that exemplars within this type of organizational work strive for an ongoing process of bringing balance to opposing forces that encourage commitment, trust, and creativity while maintaining efficiency, discipline, and order, all vital to the functioning of engaged scholarship work. Community partners

have expectations of their university counterparts, including a commitment to outcomes, sharing authority and financial management, supporting the work within the community, and incorporating community representatives into universities' structures and roles *(Brukardt et al., 2006)*. These expectations need to be identified and committed to in order to avoid ambiguity and distrust as the partnership unfolds, setting the stage for more open, reciprocal communication strategies throughout the collaboration *(Dempsey, 2010)*.

Identification of organizational tensions. Organizational tensions must be identified in order to be strategically managed, a process that should be ongoing. "In all the phases of the development cycle of U-C partnerships it is common for issues to arise and require clarification, suggesting that partners may need to frequently revisit goals and objectives as they evolve and change over time" *(Buys & Bursnall, 2007, p. 83)*. Not only objectives, but paradoxical tensions as well, should be revisited regularly. Jaeger et al. *(2012)* "believe that a paradox exists between community engagement efforts and various messages received by faculty members at universities that are both land-grant and research universities" *(p. 149)*. The authors use research and experience to clarify the nature of this paradox. Various communities of scholars and practitioners can similarly identify paradoxes at work, developing this process further.

Strier *(2014)* provides more concrete examples of how paradox permeates much of a U-C partnership's establishment, management, and development. Strier's first paradox describes a "top down" versus a "bottom up" grassroots orientation. Elements of power must be yielded by the institution or other authorities (i.e., the top) to allow for the empowerment of participants instead (i.e., bottom up) as they self-direct and facilitate the work. The relinquishing of control by the top is at odds with its directive to maintain order and predictability. A second paradox involves improving the quality of relations among contributors versus increasing organizational effectiveness, or the need to harmonize internally (i.e., build the relationship) while simultaneously keeping up with external demands for output (i.e., demonstrate productivity). Exposing unequal power relations versus strengthening trust is a third identified paradox, and a fourth involves trying to foster an egalitarian approach while respecting and navigating hierarchies. Hierarchies have a long history in university settings *(Wade & Demb, 2010)*, and overcoming structural norms and reward systems is a persistent tension *(Fisher et al., 2004)*.

Strier's fifth paradox centers on navigating how to achieve transformational goals versus tangible achievements, or how to achieve transformational change while bound to short-term wins, a tension also reflected in the Smith and Lewis *(2011)* model. The sixth involves concurrently encouraging a shared esprit de corps versus respecting the multiplicity of identities, and, finally, the seventh paradox examines having discipline for long-term involvement versus generating permanent innovation. This last paradox echoes Smith and Tushman's *(2005)* reference to managing exploitive and exploratory activities discussed above. Though each of these persistent organizational tensions may always be present, there is an actionable component within paradoxical thinking, as interrelationships are used to explore contradictions and advance organizational purposes.

U-C partnerships must identify potential issues as dilemmas, dialectics, or paradoxical tensions. This allows for more appropriate approaches to embedded contradictions and/or identified contingencies and constraints *(Bryson et al., 2006)*. Literature has identified a multitude of such issues. Those frequently cited include mistrust, temporal and spatial issues, communication, incentive structures, institutional support, prior "baggage," resources, balancing power, lack of knowledge and/or leadership, cultural differences, informal versus formal commitments, problem-solving styles, and interpersonal dynamics *(Amabile et al., 2001; Amey & Brown, 2005; Barnes et al., 2009; Buys & Bursnall, 2007; Ferman & Hill, 2004; Fogel & Cook, 2006; Sargent & Waters, 2004)*. Prins *(2005)* writes, "Since partnerships bring together people from institutions with distinct interests, cultures, and practices, tensions may arise about partner roles, decision-making, grant management, reward structures, diverging agendas, modes of work, mismatched timelines, forms of knowledge, and status differences" *(p. 59)*. For land-grant, research universities in particular, Jaeger et al. *(2012)* identify systemic and individual tensions at play that may both inhibit and advance engaged scholarship. Chief among these tensions are funding support; reappointment, promotion, and tenure policies; and faculty commitment. By identifying possible tensions, it is possible to begin to work with them.

Development of shared paradoxical frames. The development of shared paradoxical frames emerges from conversations that first identify the tensions and paradoxes present. Identified issues commonly involve differences in exploratory and exploitive objectives. Smith and Tushman *(2005)* offer two organizational designs to manage the balancing act between exploratory and

exploitive activities: *leadercentric* and *teamcentric* teams. In leadercentric teams, conflicts are managed by one person or a small group of people, whereas in teamcentric teams, "the teams themselves integrate the contradictory agendas" *(p. 531)*. Leadercentric teams manage conflict by trying to moderate it through a central leader or leaders, whereas in teamcentric teams more conflict abounds. However, teams that use conflict can balance contradictions, leading to enhanced decision-making. The authors pose that sustained organizational performance may lie in "the senior team's ability to successfully attend to and deal with the challenges of operating in different timeframes and strategic logics" *(p. 533)*. What constitutes a "senior team" among U-C partnership efforts may vary widely, from a team of two to a large-scale institutional initiative. Therefore, learning from different types of individual and organizational pairings engaged in paradoxical leadership, and adapting them properly, is essential to integrating the concept into U-C practice.

Universities commonly exhibit a decentralized organizational environment *(Birnbaum, 1988)*, and partnership work is predisposed to remain somewhat disconnected from other disciplines, departments, and offices *(Silka, 1999)*. Consequently, individuals bear much of the weight in integrating contradictory agendas and seeing their partnership through to successful outcomes. Situating this role within Smith and Tushman's *(2005)* work, the teamcentric design may prove most useful to U-C partnerships. In leadercentric models, different subordinates can pursue exploiting or exploring activities independently, whereas in teamcentric teams each individual must embody both roles. The authors call this "sharing paradoxical frames," which enables collaborators to "build a collective understanding of the team's complex goals and a collective acknowledgement of the tensions and conflicts between their contrasting agendas" *(Smith & Tushman, 2005, p. 531)*. Within the U-C context, Silka *(1999)* describes a sharing of frames as different stakeholders, representing "very different perspectives" *(p. 354)*, drawing on and returning to cocreated generative images or shared metaphors to discuss their community challenges. Sharing a conceptual vision enables better integration of contradictory agendas.

Smith and Tushman *(2005)* suggested that high quality interactions are associated with the amount of information revealed and exchanged, as well as the cultivation of understanding among team members and team leaders, and among teams themselves. Collaborators strive to reach an understanding of what needs to be dealt with, what concerns are present, and the process by which

they plan to attend to them. In the case of U-C partnerships, this could take many forms. Kecskes *(2006)* used a cultural theory approach to conceptualize differences in perceptions and subsequent approaches to community–campus partnership work. The use of framing such as Kecskes put forth may inform ways in which the sharing of paradoxical frames translates to the U-C context. By better identifying and conveying one's own orientations and agendas, partners may achieve high quality interactions. This element is also dependent on identifying what types of conflict truly exist, be it dilemmas, dialectics, or paradoxes, so that expectations align. If complete resolution is unlikely, determining this at the outset can help mitigate unreasonable anticipated outcomes that would lead to more frustration and conflict.

Sustained differentiating and integrating practices. Sustained differentiating and integrating practices are the fourth element, and they are aimed at exploiting the advantages of competing needs. Differentiating involves "clarifying differences in strategy and organizational architectures," whereas integrating involves "identifying synergies between strategy and organizational architectures" *(Smith & Tushman, 2005, p. 528)*. As an ongoing process, differentiating and integrating pull apart and bring back together ideas in ways most advantageous to achieving desired outcomes. For U-C partnerships, this would likely involve revealing the ways in which a project or partnership has different goals or paradigms while continuing to seek out ways in which each organizational and individual actor could heighten the realization of successful outcomes.

Boundary spanners, whatever their primary role, capacity, or organizational perspective, could help facilitate this work for engaged scholarship *(Ramaley, 2014; Weerts & Sandmann, 2010)*. Boundary spanners are individuals who do not fully identify as academics or practitioners; rather, they have the shrewdness and capacity to respond to both groups as having something of value for the other *(Bartunek, 2007)*. Norris-Tirrell et al. *(2010)* discussed the need for setting up an infrastructure to support boundary-spanning activities, or the bringing together of different parties and sectors to explore and facilitate collaborative potential, which could include differentiating and integrating practices at the outset and throughout the engagement process. Boundary spanners are able to convene and reimagine new ways of solving messy, complicated problems *(Ramaley, 2014)* and may serve as the structural and relational drivers of differentiating and integrating.

Toward Model Modification

As these four components begin to coalesce, an iterative loop should manifest to increase benefits in engagement work. The presence of individual commitment and transparency is a needed precursor. This orientation to employing paradox invites the tackling of inherent conflict and tension and facilitates subsequent ways of joining together. The presence of commitment and transparency supports the loop of activity that starts with identifying organizational tensions, leading to the development of shared paradoxical frames, which in turn supports sustained differentiating and integrating practices. This loop of activity is introduced as *employing paradox*. The model modification is intended to be included in U-C models and frameworks to enhance theory and subsequent practice by leveraging inherent tensions to ensure collaborators are prepared when inevitable friction arises.

In Tyler and Haberman's *(2002)* work, employing paradox may serve as a linking strategy to demonstrate how phases functionally progress. It may connect each phase or certain phases, as partners negotiate their way from exploitive to committed ways of being. Bringle and Hatcher's *(2002)* model could incorporate employing paradox into relationship-building, particularly in the development phase as terms are negotiated, or as a possible element to mitigate the dissolution of partnerships. Bryson et al. *(2006)* could replace the contingencies and constraints component with employing paradox to more fully address its functionality, or include it within the component as an added strategy. In Suarez-Balcazar et al.'s *(2005)* model, employing paradox could be introduced as the procedural element for managing potential challenges and threats. These examples are included as illustrative possibilities for model modification, requiring additional consideration for use.

Discussion and Limitations

The path to finding the balance and sustained reciprocity that both U-C partnership models and corresponding practice aim to achieve may lie in embracing rather than avoiding contradictions *(Smith & Tushman, 2005)*. Although there is a strong case for this, there is also no question as to why conflict is customarily avoided. It is difficult to handle and relies on intra- and interpersonal competence. Smith and Lewis *(2011)* note, "Attending to competing demands simultaneously requires cognitive and behavioral complexity, emotional equanimity, and dynamic organizational capabilities" *(p. 391)*. Not everyone participating in the process will have

such capabilities, and therefore trainings and/or guidelines may be an important consideration in cultivating this framework and resulting practice.

The proposed framework must balance opening up the complexities and contradictions at play without so confounding the process that they render it useless. Peterson *(2009)* suggests that each partner, including students, community members, and professors, "should be giving and receiving in different ways as they are able, creating a balanced sense of reciprocity" *(p. 548)*. However, it remains unclear how each actor, and particularly student actors, should be involved in the processes of creating transparency, engaging in negotiation, and exhibiting commitment. Complicating factors include time and course limitations, personal development, and positionality within the work.

Organizations also face contradictions at multiple levels *(Poole & Van de Ven, 1989; Smith & Tushman, 2005)*. The existence of various levels can serve to separate paradoxical tensions *(Poole & Van de Ven, 1989)*, but it also creates layers of paradox that influence the process in implicit and explicit ways. When institutions are viewed through the lens of loose coupling *(Weick, 1976)* and/or as decentralized, multifaceted systems *(Birnbaum, 1988)*, paradoxical tensions may look different within various elements (i.e., departments or units). In attempts to address these varying paradoxical tensions, collaborations might generate confusion that outweighs any intended benefit. As Poole and Van de Ven *(1989)* warn, "The complexity and interdependence of individuals and organizations typically exceed researchers' capabilities to describe or explain them with coherent and consistent theories" *(p. 576)*. Furthermore, collaborators may be able to identify paradoxes at play but feel restricted in how to address or exploit those occurring at a different organizational level.

There are also challenges with resources, and going through processes of negotiation requires variable amounts of time, effort, and emotional energy *(Sandy & Holland, 2006)*. Engaged scholarship efforts are a place-based practice, and each setting uniquely transforms the ways in which core elements of experiential learning pedagogies are interpreted and played out *(McNall et al., 2015)*. Moreover, engaged scholarship is oriented toward public or social good, yet it may manifest contrarily in short-term, narrow outcomes or in long-term, broad outcomes *(Barker, 2004; Eddy, 2010)*. This proposed framework has the advantage of not being explicitly linear, nor space or time bound, but it requires internalization and practice that likely cannot be reproduced systematically.

Finally, this framework requires further development. It has only begun to introduce, much less unlock, the power of paradoxical thinking, an issue that extends to organizational literature as well. Smith and Tushman *(2005)* have suggested that despite the growing literature on important topics such as exploratory and exploitive activity, "there is limited literature on the characteristics of the senior team that can manage these complex strategies as associated complex organizational forms" *(p. 534)*. What constitutes a senior team in the context of U-C partnerships is also in question. Given the dynamics of engaged scholarship, does a greater burden to facilitate the employment of paradox fall on the postsecondary institution? Literature on strategic alliances *(Das & Teng, 2000)*, collective leadership in pluralistic organizations *(Denis, Lamothe, & Langley, 2000)*, exploration versus exploitation *(Andriopoulos & Lewis, 2009; Lavie, Stettner, & Tushman, 2010)*, and the gap between theory and practice *(Bechara & Van de Ven, 2007; Best & Holmes, 2010; Carver, 1996; Hale, 2008; Van de Ven & Johnson, 2006)* all have the potential to inform this emerging conversation. U-C partnerships, in turn, may be uniquely positioned to inform organizational theory development on these areas of scholarship.

Implications for Research and Practice

There is opportunity to move engaged scholarship forward by integrating practices built on realistic goal-setting, sustainable interaction, and shared paradigms. Bartunek *(2007)* suggests the following to help build academic–practitioner relationships and reduce the obstinacy in perceptions of the other: (1) boundary spanning, (2) forums to flesh out what implications journal articles may have for practice, and (3) opportunities to discuss topics of common interest among different groups. Future research could explore how these activities incorporate the employment of paradox to deepen understanding of paradoxical tensions and other conflicts and contradictions within engaged scholarship. Communications of best practices among collaborators from both campus and community could add further insight.

Research to clarify and deepen understanding of this proposed framework is also needed, particularly in the identification and operationalization of terms. This article has attempted to provide examples of paradox, contradiction, and conflicts present within U-C partnerships to shed light on the prevalence of each not only historically but currently, and within theoretical models and frameworks. This is a starting point for further refinement of understanding exactly what paradoxical tensions are involved

in this work. What are the latent and salient tensions in engaged scholarship? What are concrete examples of dilemmas, dialectics, and paradoxes? A typology could be generated, facilitating better identification of conflict and leading to better mechanisms to address it. In addition to scholarship that better clarifies concepts, research is needed regarding implementation of these ideas in practice. Prins *(2005)* suggests that if a willingness to learn and deliberate is cultivated, inherent tensions could become the means by which more productive, responsible collaboration is realized.

Conclusion

As engaged scholarship gains momentum, it is important that models and frameworks not only respond to emerging practice but help define it. This article has attempted to review current models and frameworks of U-C partnerships in the context of historical and emerging trends and to introduce theories of paradox and strategic contradiction as a way to more effectively address inherent tensions and conflicts found within such collaborative efforts. This piece attempts to improve theory by improving the theorizing process, which cannot be done "until we describe it more explicitly" *(Weick, 1989, p. 516)*. Enhanced theory and practice will further engaged scholarship's capacity to transform the potential of collaborative work between higher education institutions and the communities with which they work. Though they have a complex history, universities and communities have the opportunity to find new life and relevance through the deployment of one another.

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